

The Forces' favourite paper

Glamour & horror of WWI for pilots
● See page 17



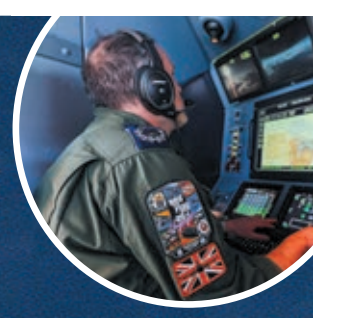
Battle of Britain in words of The Few
● See R'n'R page 5



ROYAL AIR FORCE
Friday, February 21, 2025
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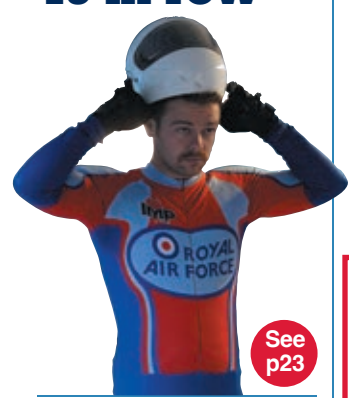
RAF News

Red Flag 25 is XL at Nellis



See pages 14-15

Skeleton Going for 19 in row



See p23

Alpine Battling for Inters spots



● See pages 26-27

Paragliding CAS drops in



● See p28

Oberon deal lifts UK space power



EMOTIONS RAN high as the latest RAF Regiment graduates hit the parade ground at Honington. Delighted Families and friends joined 24 jubilant Gunners who completed the demanding Meiktila Flight course ahead of mission specific training for contingency operations. PHOTO: ASI HARRIS WILLIAMS



ISR ASSET: Technicians work on the Tyche satellite launched last year

Simon Mander

RAF SPACE acs will be able to track enemy forces across the globe from space following the signing of a £127 million deal to launch two new satellites. The Oberon system of Synthetic Aperture Radar devices capable of transmitting detailed real-time footage of targets anywhere on Earth are expected to launch in 2027, Space Command chiefs say. The announcement follows last year's launch of UK Defence's first sovereign space vehicle Tyche, which is already delivering vital surveillance from low earth orbit. ● See page 5

BiteSize

“The guys have been great, the song’s always on in the office”



Photog and musician AS1 Martin Goffin releases music track *6am*
See p3

“Juliet is super sassy and opinionated”



Gerardine Sacdalan plays the title role in new musical hit *'& Juliet'*
See R'n'R pp4-5

“It’s important for RAF players to be involved in high-end competitions”



AS1 Alex Naughty reaches national semi-final with club side Bucks
See p28



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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Summit backs aid

Simon Mander

DEFENCE LEADERS have confirmed a new £150 million package of military aid including air defence systems for Ukraine as US President Donald Trump pushes for talks to end the conflict with Russia.

Defence Secretary John Healey made the announcement alongside US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth after he became the first European leader to chair a summit of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

Mr Healey said: “This is the critical year for the war in Ukraine.

“Ukrainians continue to fight with huge courage – military and civilians alike – and their bravery, fused with our support, has proved a lethal combination.”

The £150 million package includes thousands of drones, dozens of battle tanks, armoured vehicles and air defence systems.



SUPPORT: Defence Secretary John Healey (2nd left) joined CDS Admiral Sir Tony Radakin (left), and US and Ukrainian military chiefs

This Week In History



1984
Hunter withdrawal

THIRTY YEARS of Hunter operations in Germany come to an end with the withdrawal of 16 Sqn from Laarbruch.

1943
WWII raids

THE RAF'S Bomber Command begins 'round the clock' intensive bombing raids on targets in Germany and Nazi-occupied territories across Europe.



2001
Merlin lands at Benson

THE FIRST European Helicopter Industries Merlin HC3 is delivered to RAF Benson in Oxfordshire.

Extracts from *The Royal Air Force Day By Day* by Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork (The History Press)

Tonka meltdown

Gulf War era jet parts recycled to produce new Tempest prototype



Simon Mander

TORNADO PARTS are to be used as new components for the futuristic Tempest fighter.

Bits from the retired jet are to be ground down and 3D printed into parts for the UK's next generation military aircraft in a first of its kind initiative for the RAF.

It is hoped the development could save taxpayers money by reducing the UK's reliance on global supply chains of high-value metals and produce parts that

are lighter, stronger and longer lasting than those made through traditional forging techniques.

Procurement Minister Maria Eagle said: "The Tornado 2 Tempest project highlights the creativity, ingenuity and innovation Defence employs in our approach to national security. By working with key industry partners, we can deliver savings, reduce reliance on global supply chains and ensure our Armed Forces have the very best kit to keep our country safe."



Many of the MOD's surplus assets contain high quality steel, aluminium and titanium, and the Tornado 2 Tempest project

team have been identifying whether these could be atomised into powders to make new parts using 3D-printing techniques

Tornado parts containing titanium, including jet engine compressor blades, were selected, cleaned and recycled into a 3D-printed nose cone by Additive Manufacturing Solutions Limited – Rolls-Royce's part of the Tempest programme.

Funded by UK Strategic Command's Defence Support

Organisation, the feat shows that turning old parts into new is viable. And the Tornado 2 Tempest Rolls-Royce Team recently received a Chief of Defence Logistics and Support Commendation in recognition of their improvement of support to the frontline.

Rolls Royce Vice-President Andrew Eady said: "This project is bold, exciting and innovative, and a demonstration of exemplary collaboration between the MOD and industry."

FOCUS ON MUSIC:
Coningsby-based
photographer AS1
Martin Goffin

Snapper Mart eyes chart

Tracey Allen

A SERVICE photographer is shooting for stardom with the release of his debut single on the world's top music streaming sites

Out under the name 'Only Martin' the new single, called '6am', is inspired by AS1 Martin Goffin's memories of getting up early in the morning for a job he hated.

He said: "Everyone knows how it feels to get up early and work a horrible job, when all you want to do is switch that alarm off and go back to sleep."

Based at Coningsby, he joined the RAF in 2023, transferring from the Army. His serious interest in music started in his twenties with

urban, hip-hop, and UK rap; but it was in the Army that 'Only Martin' took shape. He said: "It began in Cyprus when I had singing lessons, and that laid the foundations for me. I love indie and soft rock and that was the music I wanted to make."

'6am' took just three days to write but Martin spent almost 12 months deciding whether he was going to release any music at all. Two more singles from his coming album are also due to be released on Apple Music and Spotify, he said.

Martin balances his busy career with being a dad of three, with another child on the way. He said: "Everyone at work has been great; the guys put '6am' on in the office and just listened to it."

Colleague Cpl Shauna Martin said: "He's a guy who can turn his hand to anything, success in the Army, now as a photographer in the RAF and to add to that he's a talented singer and songwriter. We all love it, Martin – just remember us when you're famous."

Coningsby Station Commander Gp Capt Paul O'Grady said: "It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there and invest so much of your own experiences in your music. Congratulations Martin, publishing anything for the first time, whether it's a book, or a painting, or a song, takes hard work and dedication."



Recruit boost

JOINING THE RAF will become quicker and easier under a new recruitment service that cuts red tape.

Computer whizzes will also get a new direct entry system with reduced basic training, a starting salary of £40,000 and specialist training.

The combined Armed Forces Recruitment Service aims to streamline the process to attract the best talent.

Candidates will complete one application and one medical via a single, digital system that will see applications reviewed, offers made and training begin at a faster pace, the MOD said.



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Bulletin



GRAND DESIGNS: New Digby SLA block

Digby revamp

Staff Reporter

JUNIOR RANKS at Britain's oldest RAF station are to get new bedrooms when work starts on a £65 million project next month.

Established in 1918, four blocks of new Single Living Accommodation are to be created, each with a kitchenette, drying rooms, laundry rooms and social spaces, as well as 69 single en suite rooms.

The buildings will also benefit from solar panels, be heated using air source heat pumps and have electric car charging points. The contract also includes provision of car parking, street lighting and landscaped outdoor communal areas.

Station Commander Wg Cdr Neil Hallett said: "This is an eagerly anticipated announcement welcomed by the Servicemen and women stationed here.

"The development of modern accommodation will significantly improve the lived experience and there is buzz of excitement across the station following this contract award."

Chief Executive of contractor Galliford Try, Bill Hocking, said: "We are continuing our partnership with the DIO to deliver this much-needed facility for those serving at RAF Digby."



Ober-watch

Latest £127 million Oberon satellites to lift UK Space power



SPACE RACE: SpaceX rocket carrying Tyche satellite takes off from California last year. Inset above, Heathrow airport image taken from low earth orbit

Simon Mander

ARMED FORCES personnel will get the latest space-based imagery for military operations following a new £127 million deal.

The Oberon system of two Synthetic Aperture Radar satellites able to capture day and night-time images of the Earth's surface is expected to launch in 2027.

Both satellites form part of the UK Defence space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance programme –

ISTARI – which will deliver a constellation of satellites and supporting ground systems by 2031, the MOD said.

Oberon will support military operations, monitoring adversary activities, natural disaster responses, the development of mapping information and track the impact of climate change around the world.

UK Space Commander Maj Gen Paul Tedman said: "Oberon will allow us to observe what's happening on Earth from space at any time and through any weather."

Constellations of ISR satellites can use a range of different sensors, allowing operators to switch quickly from one area of the world to another. In contrast to conventional cameras, Oberon will use Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) to capture imagery in all-weather conditions.

The contract was awarded to Airbus and builds on UK Space Command's first satellite, Tyche, launched in August, which has captured high-resolution images of Heathrow Airport, Sydney,

Washington DC and the California wildfires, all from low earth orbit.

Airbus chief Ben Bridge said: "Oberon's satellites will give the UK a much-needed sovereign capability and greatly enhance its space surveillance autonomy.

"Airbus in the UK has more than 45 years' experience in the design and build of high-resolution radar satellites and, once in orbit, these spacecraft will play a vital role in keeping our Armed Forces safe around the world."

Sub-hunters head for the Med

Simon Mander

ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE experts from Lossiemouth are heading to Italy next month to take part in a major Nato exercise.

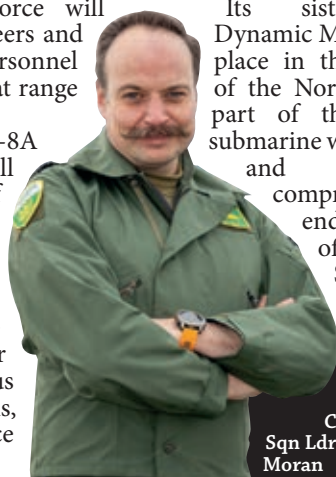
Dynamic Manta is an annual event, first run in 2013, in which each submarine will take turns hunting and being hunted.

Detachment Commander Sqn Ldr David Moran, from 120 Sqn, said: "Dynamic Manta is Nato's most complex anti-submarine warfare exercise and provides valuable opportunities to collaborate and improve the lethality of the Alliance.

"The Poseidon Force will deploy aircrew, engineers and mission support personnel to operate effectively at range from Lossiemouth."

A 70-strong P-8A Poseidon crew will operate out of Sigonella Naval Air Station in Italy.

Dynamic Manta is one of nearly a dozen Nato maritime exercises held each year in addition to numerous national combat drills, to increase Alliance defences.



Its sister exercise, Dynamic Mongoose, takes place in the cold waters of the North Atlantic, as part of the continuous submarine warfare training and cooperation comprising the high-end submarines of Allies and Sweden.

NATO SECURITY: Detachment Commander Sqn Ldr David Moran





STONYHURST

AGES 3-18

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Bully for you

Simon Mander

A FULL-SIZE 'raging bull' has taken pride of place where RAF Marham's vintage Tornado gate guard once stood.

The bomber, which is now displayed opposite the station headquarters and replaced the Cold War era Victor aircraft, was a familiar sight to visitors to the Norfolk station.

Now they will be greeted by the aluminium statue bought by the Warrant Officers and Seniors Mess as a nod to the blue bull featured on Marham's Crest.

Purchased from local company Home and Garden UK, it weighs in at 180kg and at night is lit up.

Introduced in 1957, the bull is a symbol of deterrence and features blue lights to symbolise the Blue Danube, the RAF's first atomic bomb.



In Brief



CHALLENGE: Waddington-based military mum Lois with Flynn

Lois hits the road

MILITARY MUM Lois O'Connor is on track for the London Marathon to raise funds for the Air Force charity which stepped in when her newborn son Flynn underwent life-saving surgery.

The Royal Air Forces Association's welfare team provide financial support to help the Waddington-based Logistics ace and husband Josh to stay close to the specialist neo-natal unit at Leicester Royal Infirmary, where Flynn was being treated for a heart problem.

Now Flynn is home and thriving, Lois is hitting the road in the capital to raise funds for the charity as a thank-you.

She said: "RAFA really went above and beyond for us. I could say thank you until the cows come home, but it wouldn't be enough for what the team did."

● Go to: [justgiving.com/page/loisamyoc-runforrafa](https://www.justgiving.com/page/loisamyoc-runforrafa)

Tests pave way for Protector's UK role

Simon Mander

THE UK'S latest intelligence aircraft has taken to the skies above Lincolnshire for its latest flight tests before entering service.

Protector, which replaces Reaper in the battle against terrorism, took off from RAF Waddington this month.

The second flight of the unmanned system was undertaken with an all-British crew flying from the new ground station at the Lincolnshire base.

Officer Commanding 56 Sqn Wg Cdr Richard Podmore said: "The flight was a culmination of a huge effort across the entire Protector enterprise."

"The test team should be tremendously proud noting this event marks the start of key integration and operational testing for the platform."

Engineers from 31 Sqn completed the assembly and initial testing of Protector, prior to the test and evaluation programme, led by 56 Sqn.

The ground control station and simulator have been delivered and installed at Waddington following the delivery of the first Protector in September 2023.

There are currently four in the UK, three are being used for evaluation and training in the USA.

All expected aircraft deliveries will be completed this year.

Controlled remotely, the



GROUND CONTROL: Waddington command centre

Protector platform can fly up to 40,000 feet for more than 30 hours and carries 500lb Paveway IV laser-guided bombs and high-precision Brimstone missiles.

As well as its military use, it can fly in British airspace aiding civilian authorities facing natural and environmental disasters.

The UK is investing in 16

Protectors capable of operating anywhere in the world.

Waddington will be the home of the Force and the site of launch and recovery.

ROYAL
AIR FORCE
museum

TORNADO CHALLENGE

We are celebrating the Panavia Tornado, and the amazing stories of its pilots and ground crew.

Sign up to the Tornado Challenge and help the Royal Air Force Museum soar!

Your entry and fundraising will all go towards supporting The Royal Air Force Museum, so we can continue to share the extraordinary stories of our Royal Air Force.

Run, walk or cycle your way to the finish line. We are asking challengers to set their own distance and pledge to raise £50.

Once you hit your target distance you will get a medal, if you hit your £50 pledge then you will receive one of our amazing Tornado t-shirts too!



The challenge starts on the 31 January and you have until Friday 28 February to complete it.

Scan for more
information





Trainees Lyne up

TECHNICIANS WHO will operate the weapons of the future met the Chief of the Air Staff during a recent visit to MOD Lyneham.

The former air base now teaches Trade Group 5 and ground engineering alongside Royal Navy and Army disciplines.

The Defence College of Technical Training equips 16,000 people each year with the skills they need to support Defence.

ACM Sir Rich Knighton said: "I had great pleasure meeting the staff and trainees at Lyneham."

TRADING PLACES: Sir Richard Knighton chats to Tri-Service trainees and instructors at Lyneham



CRANWELL'S AS1 Karim Bachu was presented with the station's Fitness Challenge Trophy after outgunning rivals by putting in more than 50 hours in the gym in a single month. Speaking after receiving the

award from Force Development chief Sqn Ldr Liam Roseblade, he said: "It's been quite an experience competing against other gym members who have given me a good run for my money."

Brize crew goes Wild

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE personnel swapped their day jobs to become assistant zookeepers.

Brize Norton-based staff volunteered for a day at the Cotswold Wildlife Park in Burford, less than five miles from their Oxfordshire base.

Blending in with their camouflage uniforms they maintained and improved many of the animal enclosures at the site.

"We've seen the rhinos, we've helped redo a couple of enclosures, we've built a beach today," said Flt Lt Jordan Jones.

Leaves were raked, beaches were laid out, capybaras – who are the largest living rodent and native to South America – were petted, and penguins were fed.

The change of scenery was welcomed by AS Cam Begbie-Dilks, who spends most of his time in a hangar.

"It's nice to actually go out and see some trees instead of a metal tin," he said.

The park's permanent staff, responsible for maintaining 160 acres, appreciated their efforts.

"Doing these big jobs would take a lot of effort and time and we'd need a lot of personnel to do it," section head of Primates, Mammals and Small Birds



PARK LIFE: Volunteer meets one of the Cotswold Wildlife Park's lemurs. Above, heavyweight tasking with the rhinos



Natalie Horner explained.

"Having an extra 20 people for the day really does make a difference."

RAF personnel have been helping out at their local zoo for the last seven years.

Ms Horner said: "The team from

Base Support Wing helped keepers with several jobs that required extra people power to complete.

"Some of the bigger jobs were re-perching the vultures and mucking out the zebra stables, as well as creating a beach area for our scarlet ibis and Inca terns.

"As a thank-you for their hard work, they went behind the scenes to meet our rhinos and helped feed the giraffes, lemurs and penguins.

"Our animals will see the benefit from the improvements we've been able to make."

In Brief



BIG PLANS: New learning centre

Funding win for museum

RAF MUSEUM Midlands has received a £650,000 grant from the Wolfson Foundation for its Midlands Development Programme.

The money will be used for a new learning centre promoting science, technology, engineering and maths, and art and design, and an exhibition on the role of the RAF since 1980.

Museum chief Maggie Appleton said: "The learning centre will transform our offer for school groups, enabling us to accommodate an additional 8,000 students per year.

"We are deeply grateful to the Wolfson Foundation."

Cadet award for Sqn Ldrs

A PAIR of Air Cadet volunteers have been honoured for their outstanding service and devotion to duty.

Sqn Ldr Ken Lavender and Sqn Ldr Chris Stubbs, of No 1 Welsh Wing, received The King's Coronation Medal at a recent ceremony.

News

Canyon plunge hero

Simon Mander

A HERO AIRMAN ran three miles through snow to rescue a Canadian climber who suffered serious injuries when she plunged into a ravine in Utah.

Sgt Mark Benstead – who is stationed in Las Vegas – ran through Zion National Park to raise the alarm after the tourist fell more than 25 feet, breaking her wrists, ankles and fracturing her lower back.

He was halfway through a 12km hike with his wife when he saw the woman, who had been abseiling, slip and fall into an icy riverbed in the popular climbing spot.

He made his way down to her, then ran several miles to relay details to emergency services, who scrambled an air ambulance.

“I felt that time was critical to ensure a safe rescue,” he said.

“It was evident to me she was unable to walk due to her leg and back injuries. I left her husband, who was in shock, to comfort her and keep her warm while I ran as far out of the canyon as I could until I could get a satellite signal.

“I felt a huge sense of relief and satisfaction once I received

confirmation that help was on the way.”

Ensuring the woman was positioned to allow a helicopter rescue to take place, Sgt Benstead sent the GPS coordinates.

“One of the biggest threats was her lying in the freezing riverbed. She would have eventually suffered from serious hypothermia,” he added.

“On our way out of the canyon, we saw the helicopter flying down with her strapped into a stretcher. This was the moment where I felt the most relieved.”

US Air Chiefs praised Sgt Benstead’s ‘extraordinary courage and selflessness,’ during the incident.

“Sgt Mark Benstead is an absolute hero,” said the British Defence Attaché to the US Rear Admiral Tim Woods.

“His actions on the day in question were simply exceptional.”

Mr Woods said Sgt Benstead’s timely reaction enabled the swift deployment of an air ambulance, park rangers and police.

The injured tourist is now recuperating at home after her ordeal.



UTAH SAINT: Vegas-based airman Sgt Mark Benstead ran three miles to get a phone signal and alert emergency services in a remote area of the Zion National Park



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Sqn Ldr Clare Thomas

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www.rafcf.org.uk



'Unite veterans with their pensions'

THE LARGEST campaign appeal to date is being funded by the Forces Pension Society Charitable Fund (FPSCF), the charity arm of the Forces Pension Society (FPS).

It will involve a major advertising campaign in a wide spectrum of military media across all three services. The campaign theme is "Help us unite Veterans with their pensions."

This latest appeal is part of an ongoing campaign, begun by the FPS, which identified the fact that historically, around 2,000 preserved Armed Forces pensions go unclaimed each year.

Currently there are almost 15,000 pensions that remain unclaimed, many involving significant sums of money.

Pensions are not paid automatically. Veterans must apply to Veterans UK, using AFPS Form 8, or telephone 0800 085 3600.

In addition to seeking help from the military community to unite Veterans with their entitlements, the FPSCF, will campaign for a change in the rules, insisting the issue can be addressed via improvements to current practices. The charity will also encourage donations to help fund the programme.

Group Captain (Retired) Jonathan Wheeler OBE, Chairman of the FPSCF said: "For most former service personnel, a pension makes a

Campaign appeal from society charitable fund

considerable difference. And it is only right the MoD pays Veterans the pensions to which they are entitled.

"To this end, we will seek the support of the military community in identifying those who should be united with their pension.

"That's why our campaign will reach across all three services delivering our powerful message in large space sizes and directing people to dedicated web pages.

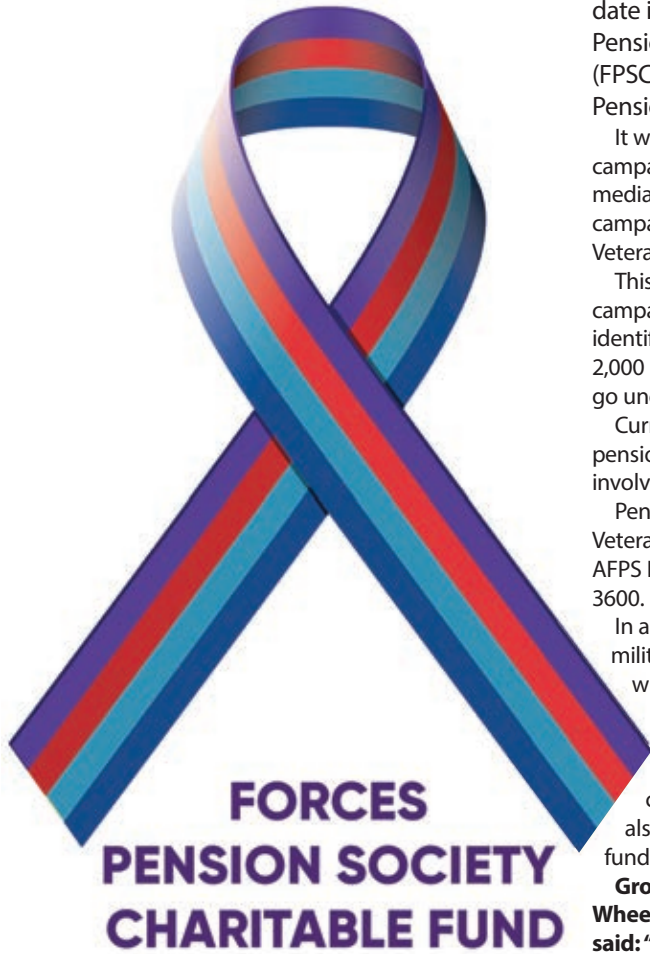
"Additionally, we will press for reform of the current arrangements whereby the application rules result in Veterans missing out. We believe change is consistent with the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant."

● FPSCF is the charitable arm of the FPS. The Charity supports the charitable work undertaken by the FPS and works with the War Widows and the Single Service Widow Associations, members of the Forces

Pension Society or persons who served in the Armed Forces of the Crown (whether or not they were members of the Forces Pension Society) who are in need by virtue of financial hardship, sickness, disability or the effects of old age.

The FPSCF is a charity registered with the Charity Commission, charity number 264524.

● **Group Captain (Retired) Jonathan Wheeler OBE**



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Royal Air Force In Concert

Lincoln Cathedral VE Day 80

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Lincoln Cathedral Choir

Compere Melvyn Prior

7.30pm Saturday 17 May 2025

Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 11 July 2025

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 19 September 2025

Cast, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

3pm Sunday 21 September 2025

Epsom Playhouse

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7pm Friday 17 October 2025



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PHOTO: ANDREW WHEELER

Tributes at UK stations for 21 who died in autobahn horror

Band tragedy musicians are remembered



MEMORIAL: Headstone to dead at Cranwell, and band plays (top)

Staff Reporter

RESCUERS WHO helped survivors of one of Britain's worst peacetime RAF disasters have paid tribute to 21 comrades who died.

A total of 19 musicians, a police officer and a civilian driver were killed when their coach collided with an aviation tanker on the autobahn in Langenbruck, Germany, on February 11, 1985.

On the 40th anniversary of the accident, memorial services were held at Northolt and Cranwell memorial gardens – both have a monument inscribed with the names of those who died.

During the services *The Last Post* was sounded followed by the laying of floral tributes accompanied by music from the RAF bands.

Among those at RAF Northolt was Flt

Lt (Ret'd) Wyver, who was the Adjutant of the Winter Survival School in Bad Kohlgrub at the time who helped set up a field hospital in a local hotel, comforted the survivors throughout the night and organised two Puma helicopters to fly the injured to hospital.

Earlier, the Band of the RAF Regiment performed a musical tribute at St Clement Danes in front of a drum stack made up of the original instruments

from the Band of Royal Air Force Germany.

RAF Principal Director of Music Wg Cdr Richard Murray said: "On the fortieth anniversary of this devastating accident, RAF Music is truly honoured to share musical tributes with the families of those who lost their lives.

"The tragic event that took the lives of 21 people in Langenbruck on February 11th, 1985 will be forever in our thoughts."



ANNIVERSARY MARCH: A Flt 63 Sqn celebrate their achievement at Akrotiri

Gunners put it on the tab for Fund

A GROUP of gunners are feeling on top of the world after smashing their fundraising target for a charity, having completed a loaded march.

The 32 members of A Flight 63 Sqn King's Colour Sqn took on the march – known as a tab – to commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the Regiment in 1942.

They have so far raised £2,340 for the RAF Benevolent

Fund – exceeding their goal of £1,942.

The team, based at RAF Northolt, marched 19.42 miles at RAF Akrotiri, each carrying a Bergen weighing 35lb and their individual rifle, weighing five kg.

Team member Sgt Lee Broster said: "My family were supported by the Fund when my older brother, Shaun, sadly passed away in 2006 whilst

serving in the Regiment.

"LCpl Jared Coombs was keen to organise an event in support of the Fund and suggested the tab. The combination of a physical endurance event, the fact it was in celebration of the RAF Regiment's anniversary and in aid of the Fund all ticked the boxes for an event I'd want to take part in."

● Go to: [justgiving.com/page/63sqn-tab](https://www.justgiving.com/page/63sqn-tab) to donate.

Feature Exercise Red Flag



SORTIES: Voyager (left) and 6 Sqn Typhoon crews (above) at Nellis Air Force Base
ALL PHOTOS: AS1 LEAH JONES



FILL-UP: RAF Typhoons on the Exercise are refuelled by Voyager



RAF Top guns raised the stakes in Vegas as they went head to head with best in the west in the USAF's vast Nevada training area during Exercise Red Flag.

Facing off against simulated enemy forces in the skies over the desert and the west coast, the UK's Typhoon pilots fought their way through to designated targets taking out adversaries with just a handful of 'casualties', alongside US and Australian fighter crews.

Typhoon pilot Flt Lt Liam Mathews said: "Throughout the exercise we shot down various and multiple simulated enemy aircraft, with limited losses on our side."

He said the swing role aircraft were kept in their air-to-air role escorting combat search and rescue and defensive air missions.

Throughout the two-week long exercise the RAF completed eight night time sorties and nine day sorties of four Typhoons, each supported by Voyager air-to-air refuelling.

Replicating the high tempo of real combat operations, Voyager took off 17 times, day and night, delivering around 320 tonnes and more than 140 individual refuels to USAF F-35Bs, Royal Australian Air Force EA-18 Growlers, and the UK's FGR4 Typhoons. Each tanker can deliver 60,000kg of fuel per mission, acting as a flying gas station for the jets.

The exercise was split into two phases. The first was flown from Nellis Air Base in Nevada, covering 12,000 square miles

of airspace and giving international teams the opportunity to plan together and 'fight' against real aircraft playing the roles of adversaries in a realistic scenario.

Over the years US planners have expanded the combat area to challenge crews to overcome what they call the 'Tyranny of Distance', in addition to normal challenges.

The second phase, Bamboo Eagle, saw fighter squadrons disperse to locations along the west coast of the US where they continued to fight in a huge training area

over 500 miles off the US Pacific coast, taking in Utah and California.

UK detachment commander Gp Capt Guy Lefroy said: "Red Flag gives our people and the UK a unique opportunity to boost our interoperability and integration with US and Australian forces, including fifth-generation and cutting-edge capabilities, and match them against current threats."

"Bamboo Eagle will test our ability to synchronise air, space and cyber effects with the focus and agility needed to outmatch today's threats.

"Throughout, we will develop our people's ability to dynamically deliver air power through effective risk management and innovation."

Exercise Bamboo Eagle is designed to put the lessons of Red Flag into a realistic contested environment, testing crews' combat skills in war conditions.

It is a unique opportunity for British US and Australian forces to use their capabilities to match current threats, air chiefs say.

The Typhoons integrated with US and

by Simon Mander

Warfighters spread their wings with Bamboo Eagle

Typhoon pilots face aggressor aircraft as Red Flag goes XL



RAF VOYAGER:
Essential asset

Australian F-35 fighters, using the swing-role fighter's advanced radars to locate targets and engage them with long-range missiles.

Red Flag is the biggest event in the combat air training calendar and is now in its 50th year, marking 48 years of UK participation.

Sqn Ldr Raeburn, a 6 Sqn pilot, added: "Red Flag provides pilots with the opportunity to plan and execute complex air missions in a high tempo and realistic environment, working alongside our

allies to develop our training tactics and procedures. The exercise is renowned for its use of aggressor forces, including simulated enemy fighter aircraft, ground-based radars and simulated surface-to-air missiles – and even cyber and space-based elements that simulate threats for each mission.

"The Tactical Command and Control team's role is to manage and control all of those aircraft, alongside other elements and units working in the ground, maritime, cyber and space-based

domains, to accomplish the mission.

"The scale and complexity of Exercise Red Flag Nellis cannot be replicated elsewhere, which makes it an outstanding place to build experience and reinforce a close working relationship with the United States and Australia."

This year RAF personnel taking part included 51 Sqn Rivet Joint aircrew, Air Operations Controllers from 19 and 20 Sqs, and aircrew and engineers from 6, 10 and 101 Sqs.

The USAF established Red Flag in 1975,

after the Vietnam War, and this year's focus was preparing to fight a potential adversary in the Indo-Pacific region.

Generations of RAF aviators have attended this exercise over the five decades on the Nevada Test and Training Range, and further to the southwest of the United States with maritime units.

More than 3,000 personnel including over 370 from the UK and up to 100 aircraft took part in the exercise as Allied forces train to counter growing threats across the Pacific area.



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Book Review



RARE MOMENT TO RELAX: 40 Squadron RAF officers, Bruay, France, April 1918



ARTHUR GOULD LEE: With 46 Sqn RFC Sopwith Camel, probably late 1917



CECIL LEWIS: Eight victories with 56 Sqn RFC in summer 1917



EDWARD 'MICK' MANNOCK: 61 confirmed victories with 3 Sqn



FINAL RESTING PLACE: Freshly dug graves somewhere in France. The aviators' graves are marked by cut-down propellers for crosses

A flight of fancy

ROYAL FLYING Corps aircrew in World War I lived their lives in a strange dichotomy as they moved from safety to dire danger and back again in a matter of hours.

WWI in the air was a strange mixture of glamour and horror. Utilising new and exotic technology, the 'knights of the air' were celebrated in newspapers and propaganda efforts, with the supposed chivalry of the 'cavalry of the clouds' standing in stark contrast to the mechanised slaughter below.

However, in reality war flying was a grim business. In a time when parachutes were too heavy for the feeble-framed and under-powered aircraft to carry, being shot down could mean helplessly falling thousands of feet to your death, with the choice between burning to death in a flaming aircraft or leaping into the void to die on impact. The life expectancy of aircrew could be brutally short. The ethos of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) (combined in April 1918 to form the Royal Air Force) was always one of aggression; pushing beyond the frontlines to take the fight to the enemy, even during times when their aircraft were hopelessly out-classed. Aircrew could only expect to last a few weeks or even just a few days at particularly bleak times when the Germans held the upper hand in the constant race to build better and more effective aircraft.

In stark juxtaposition to the hard realities of their life in the air, to those on the outside the life

Glamorous image of WWI's knights of the air belies grim reality of stark conditions and often minimal odds of survival



TOP SOPWITH CAMEL PILOT: Lt DV Armstrong (right) larks about with Lt HH Balfour on 60 Sqn RFC, late 1916

of a British pilot on the ground could seem positively luxurious when compared to the constantly rotating tours of trench life and rear-area barracks endured by the infantry. The young men (many only in their late teens) of the RFC

and RNAS are still famous in the popular imagination for their high-spirited parties, hard-drinking, and womanising, perhaps most outrageously encapsulated in the cultural phenomenon *Blackadder Goes Forth*.

But these stories are at least partly mythological (and in the case of Rik Mayall's superb 'Lord Flashheart' from that series, almost entirely so). Some squadrons were known for the leaden atmosphere of their messes, and while others did cut loose on regular occasions, who could blame them when death was a constant companion, and each day could be their last?

Peter Hart and Gary Bain's book *Laugh or Fly: The air war*



Copies up for grabs

WE HAVE copies of *Laugh or Fly* to win. For your chance to own one, tell us: **When was the RFC combined with the RNAS to form the RAF?**

Email your answer, marked Laugh Or Fly book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 7.

Win!

on the Western Front, 1914-1918 (pen-and-sword.co.uk) is a follow-up to their previous *Laugh or Cry*, looking at the daily life of British soldiers on the ground during WWI.

In their latest book they take to the skies over the Western Front to explore the lives of the men of the RFC and RNAS, as well as occasionally the Germans. They primarily follow aircrew, and mostly famous names whose own memoirs or letters are already well known – Albert Ball, 'Mick' Mannock, Arthur Gould Lee, Cecil Lewis, Louis Strange and Duncan Grinnell-Milne to name but a few. But while their words might already be familiar to any WWI aviation enthusiast, the way that Hart and Bain string them together, and intersperse them with lesser-known aircrew and ground crew memoirs still make this work worth exploring.

They weave a comprehensive picture of the struggle in the air and life on the ground, bringing the war and the men who fought

it vividly to life. Individual incidents or issues are explored from numerous angles, bringing fresh texture to the experiences of these men, and fresh insights into how they lived and coped.

The book starts with a chapter on those who learned to fly pre-war, establishing the unconventional background and attitudes of those involved, and the daredevil ethos cultivated by these early pioneers of flight. Subsequent chapters follow a broadly chronological approach to the war, plotting the history of the flying services through their highs and lows, and following the evolving stories of those involved.

While heavily reliant on quotes from those who were there, these eyewitness accounts are interspersed with historical background and insightful analysis. It is no mere book of quotations, but a carefully crafted biography of a generation of aviators as they struggle with almost unimaginable stresses and dangers.

Review by Stuart Hadaway



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Belgian heroine of the resistance Comète Line Andrée 'Nadine' Dumon

Brave young woman risked all to help Allied airmen evade Nazis

ANDRÉE DUMON, whose codename was 'Nadine', has died aged 102. She was a Belgian heroine who helped save the lives of many Allied airmen as a courier on the Comète Escape Line, taking evaders through checkpoints and to the south-west of France before they were escorted across the Pyrenees.

Andrée was born in Brussels in 1922. As a 17-year-old student, she was shocked and saddened at the rapid capitulation of Belgium following the German invasion on May 10, 1940. Her family soon joined the emerging resistance movement. 'Nadine' began her resistance work in a modest way, distributing leaflets. With the encouragement of her father, she joined her elder sister Micheline in the Comète in December 1941.

Comète was a resistance group that helped Allied airmen shot down behind enemy lines to escape. This group was co-founded by another legendary Brussels resistance woman, Andrée De Jongh, alias Dédé. The escape line ran from Brussels to Paris and on foot across the Basque Pyrenees to reach San Sebastian. Those not interned by the Spanish were taken on to Gibraltar before being returned to Britain.

Travelling on false papers, Nadine guided evading airmen from Brussels to Paris, where she handed them over to the next escort. Her very young and innocent appearance, some said she looked 15 years old, were an asset but she still had to be extremely alert, ready with cover stories if questioned by police or customs officials, often explaining that her companions were deaf-mutes.

The Germans soon became aware that local people were assisting airmen who had baled out of their aircraft and the Gestapo increased its efforts to find those helping them to avoid capture. More than 700 Comète resistance fighters were arrested, often after betrayal. Nearly 300 of them died by execution, torture or ill-treatment in the concentration camps.

Fate struck on August 11, 1942, when Nadine and several others were betrayed by an informant.



NADINE: Looked young for her age

ANDRÉE DUMON: Decorated by UK, Belgium, France and US

The Secret Field Police knocked at her grandparents' door, in the adjacent house. Her grandfather shouted a warning, but Nadine and her parents were arrested. She was subjected to brutal beatings, threatened with execution and blackmailed with a threat to arrest her elderly grandparents.

She did not break, so was categorised under the Nacht und Nebel (Night and Fog) orders, a decree issued by Hitler targeting political activists and resistance 'helpers'. Families were not aware of their whereabouts and most died in captivity.

On the deportation train from Brussels, Nadine suddenly had the chance to see her father for the first time since their arrest.

He was also being transported as a Nacht und Nebel prisoner. They were able to speak briefly, but their happiness was short-lived as it was their last conversation. Eugène Dumon died on February 9, 1945, in the Gross-Rosen concentration camp.

For Nadine, Nacht und Nebel marked the beginning of a dreadful ordeal. She was used as forced labour in various prisons before being transferred to the Gross-Strehlitz concentration camp. There, she met Nina Vankerhove, an acquaintance from the resistance. Together, they attempted an escape. However, within just two hours, a local farmer discovered them and informed the camp guards, and they were soon back in prison.

Nadine was subsequently deported to Ravensbrück, the concentration camp for women. From there, she was sent to Mauthausen in Austria. The journey lasted four days, in bitter cold and with hardly any food or drink. Upon arrival, she was a shadow of her former self. Completely exhausted, she collapsed into the snow. With the help of fellow prisoners, she managed to get back on her feet and limp onward, since exhausted prisoners were shot.

At the end of hostilities, she was rescued and was met by her mother Marie in Brussels station, their first meeting in three years. Both were shocked by each other's appearance. Marie, dressed in black, was very emaciated and

looked years older. Nadine was so bad that she took two years to recover. Infested with typhoid and paratyphoid, she spent the first few months after returning home in hospital.

After the war, she married Gustave Antoine. Together they built a successful textile company and had two children. But the memories of the war and the resistance never left her. Given the large number of women who were active in the Comète network, she also fought for the recognition of female resistance fighters.

For many years, she rarely spoke of her wartime experiences. She did not break her silence until she was 70 years old. She started to speak in schools, took part in debates and television programmes and became actively committed to memorial projects. Until the age of 98, she continued to support the Belgian Intelligence Studies Centre.

More than 800 airmen and 300 soldiers owed their freedom to the men and women of the Comète Line. Among the many airmen she assisted was RAF pilot Robert Horsley. When his daughter Erica was born, she was given Andrée as her middle name. They remained in regular contact, and she was present at Nadine's 100th birthday. Erica commented: "Today I am honoured to carry a name that is connected to such an important part of our history."

Nadine stayed in contact with many pilots and soldiers she saved and regularly invited them to Belgium. In turn, she travelled to the UK, Australia, Canada and America to meet them. She was a regular visitor to Britain and to the annual reunions of the RAF Escaping Society and its successor, today's Escape Lines Memorial Society.

With her unwavering courage and lifelong commitment, Andrée 'Nadine' Dumon is remembered as one of the great resistance women of Belgium.

She was highly decorated by Belgium and by France. The British appointed her OBE and awarded her The King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom. She was also decorated by the United States.

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Tim Morris

Kia Ceed Sportswagon 1.5 TGD i MT '2' (from £23,850 otr)

Motoring



An ex-Ceed-ingly sturdy Kia

IT WASN'T my fault. The tree didn't indicate.

This week's review starts with the news that I've killed another car... And it was, soooo, the tree's fault.

There I was bumbling along, through one of the most dangerous storms that the UK has seen in years, when, out of the blue, a large tree emerged from a wood and assaulted my Kia Ceed Sportswagon.

It was big, sprawling and solid. I hit the brakes and Kia's ABS started to go about the business of fighting to find tiny patches of grip between the slimy leaves and the drenched tarmac.

It was a race... Ceed brakes v the forces of nature. Then BANG, the tree landed. There followed a chilling sound of bending metal, cracking glass and snapping branches, before the Ceed stopped, a lethal spear of wood touching the windscreen, directly in front of my face. That little Kia had saved my bacon. It had taken a battering in the process too.

The Ceed Sportswagon is a brilliantly robust bit of kit and, I've said it before, an honest family motor, that does what it says on the tin. It's a great all-rounder.

It comes with a slick 6-speed manual gearbox, actual instruments, heater controls on the dash, a real handbrake and

a physical key that you put into the ignition. This is all stuff that, 20 years ago, would have been commonplace. With the rise of multiple displays and hidden menus however, these features have largely become extinct. The Ceed's deliberate simplicity helps to make it one of the most organic family cars on the market.

Exterior

Estate cars are not usually known for their sleek lines and sporty prowess but Kia has made a pretty good effort with the Ceed Sportswagon. A lower contour slopes gradually upward from the front wheel arch as it heads toward the rear, finally swooping over the back arch. This gives the visual effect of making the rear arches look bigger and more defined. The angular air vents on the front and rear bumpers also help to make it stand out, while the 17-inch alloy wheels continue the angular detailing. Note the optional bonnet ornament that I fitted to my test car... A good chunk of tree. The dents, scratches and cracked windscreen are also retro-fitted optional extras... Just for clarity.

Interior

The driving position is spot on for taller drivers and the controls are all well-aligned. The driver's

Kia Ceed Sportswagon

Pros

- Handles well for an estate
- Plenty of space for load and passengers
- Well-priced
- Best warranty going

Cons

- Could do with more seat adjustment for short drivers
- Feels underpowered at times

Verdict

The Ceed Sportswagon is a solid small estate whose simplicity is its best quality. If you want a car to be a brilliant family motor that's stupendously easy to live with in everyday life, this is as honest as it gets. It also stands up to monster storms and tree attacks rather well. Not sure if I mentioned that.

seat could do with a little more adjustment for short drivers but most will get along fine.

There's plenty of room inside for passengers to spread out and the Sportswagon has a good amount of real estate in the load area. It's a practical small estate. Everything feels well bolted together too.

It's the details that make you smile. I've already said that you get physical clocks and controls, but switches feel nicely damped. The squishy plastics used on the dash are also nice to the touch. Details matter.

Our test car was the level '3' trim (Kia's trim levels are simply

numbered, 2 upwards). The infotainment system featured the usual offering of DAB radio, Bluetooth and Apple CarPlay/Android Auto smartphone mirroring, plus built-in sat-nav via a 10.25-inch touchscreen. This is mounted nice and high, the graphics are clear and the menus are simple. As systems go, it's pretty quick to respond too. A row of shortcut buttons below allows you to quickly switch between different menus, which is really useful.

On The Road

I do like the Ceed. Handling is pretty sharp for an estate, in part

thanks to the fully independent rear suspension. The quick steering and nice weighting give the Sportswagon an assured feel. You can really thread it through the bends on a winding road, the 6-speed manual gearbox allowing you to judge the ins and outs perfectly.

The only downside is that you can forget you're throwing a boxy estate around, until you push it too hard. At that point the back end will remind you to know your place and a suite of stability aids will kick in.

It rides well, especially around town. It's a massive improvement over Kias of yesteryear, soaking up speed bumps and potholes with relative ease.

Our test car was the 1.5 TGD i, producing 158bhp. The stats were 0-62mph in 8.6, a top end of 130mph and combined fuel economy figure of 48.7mpg. The turbocharger does a brilliant job of compensating for the small power output, but you do have to drive to the car. In short, get your revs up in advance and keep them up if you need to move with any enthusiasm. Otherwise, you can get a worrying flat spot.

As you can imagine, you're not going to win any drag races here but it's no slouch, rather a good long-range tourer that won't break the bank.



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ICE SPORTS

Going for 19 in a row

It's 'hammer time in Norway for skeleton stars



WINNING STREAK: RAF skeleton team

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF'S ice sports stars are looking to put the IS hammer down as they take to the world-famous Lillehammer track in Norway.

Bolstered by mixes of experience and new talent, all three disciplines head into the two days of action on March 6-7 defending titles, with the skeleton team looking for an incredible 19th win in a row, luge seven and bobsleigh out to retain their crown.

Following a hugely successful Novice/Development camp in Bludenz, Austria and Le Plain, France for the skeleton and luge teams, both principals spoke to *RAF News Sport* about the upcoming championships.

Skeleton captain Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury said: "We are in a great place after a superb camp, where we took 12 personnel out to Bludenz, a track we had never before visited.

"Two new novice girls, Cpl Alyce Whittle and AS1 Mia Terry, will now be added to the women's team, who will have Flt Lt Nicole Burger as captain, so I am hopeful of great things.

"The men's team is looking good. We're bringing out new IS guys in Flt Lt Dan Mills, AS1 Sion Mansel and Sgt Ed Burton, and four experienced sliders makes for a strong team. I've no doubt we'll win again and get to 19."

Looking to make it a magnificent seven luge titles, Sgt John-Paul Kibble said: "The camp was hugely successful. We're seeing more and more talent coming through.

"We held trial events at RAF



TITLE HOLDERS: Bobsleigh team

Halton throughout last summer to build up confidence and sled awareness and we took 12 to Austria."

Two new sliders, Cpl Toni Cook and Cpl James Bradman, will be in the team in Norway.

Kibble added "We're defending the team title once more, and I am looking to defend the men's title for the third year running, so I am gunning for both, no questions.

"We have a good balance of new upcoming sliders and experienced ones. Everyone has a part to play, and they understand that, and our overall goal is bringing the trophy home.

"We also have another ace up our sleeve in our team manager for the Inters, Fg Off Luke Farrar, so I know we will be in very good hands while we are there."

Defending both titles the bobsleigh fraternity will be without many of its former major players as Olympian Cpl Shanwayne Stephens (coaching), Cpl Alex Cartagena (Team GB duties) and Sgt John Stanbridge (injured) are unavailable.

Bobsleigh team OIC Flt Lt Keigh McLaughlin relished the changes and the exciting



LUGE TEAM: Bidding for magnificent seven titles

prospect of the newlook RAF teams, saying: "It's a unique opportunity for the newcomers to shine, we have lost three world-class athletes, so it's time for the novices to stand up.

"As we enter the event everything is up for grabs as we have yet to decide the teams, so it is exciting for everyone concerned.

"We lost the IS in 2023 at Lillehammer, so we are looking to slay that beast and come out triumphant once again.

"We had a great camp in December and from there will

be taking 18 athletes across both disciplines.

"We have some great kit thanks in part to the Central Fund backing and great coaches in team manager Sgt Darren Goodger, with Sgt Darren Brown and Flt Lt Jonny Anderson.

"I fully back the athletes and coaches that we have, come race day they will rise to the challenge."

All teams for the three disciplines are to be confirmed on arrival at Lillehammer.

● Follow RAF winter sports on Instagram @rafwsaa.

GRIDIRON



AUTUMN CLASH: RAF v Army

Navy match rescheduled

ALL THINGS RAF American football are on spring watch as they prepare for the newly-scheduled Inter-Service clash versus the Royal Navy on March 14.

The Mustangs – who beat their Naval counterparts 27-6 in last October's championships, before losing their crown 18-6 to the Army Jackals – have agreed to the move, which could be the future of the event due to Naval work commitments. The game will now be held in Bournemouth, with a lunchtime kick-off.

Head coach Chf Tech Paul Wakeford said: "Things are moving quickly now. This is a new era for the IS, and we are in the process of building that.

"We play the Navy now and the Army will play them in October for now, but it will all change to spring next year, hopefully."

Speaking to *RAF News Sport* after his side's defeat in October, Wakeford had called for the association to seek new players to build for the 2025 campaign, so what impact has the new spring date had on those plans?

"It has made things difficult. We have not had much prep time," he said.

"We are aiming to get potential new players to visit local teams, to be better prepared for our camp in March prior to the game."

The Mustangs camp will be held at RAF Northolt the week before the clash, with the team then travelling to Bournemouth University's Chapel Gate Field for the game.

● Follow RAF American Football on Instagram @rafamericanfootball.

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RUGBY UNION

We're Quin it to win it

Looking good for the Inter-Services

RAF Men	38
Oxford Quins	19

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS the almost the perfect night of Service rugby for head coach FS Tom Gardner and his charges after their 38-19 IS warm-up win over Oxford Quins.

Gardner's side, which featured 11 changes from their last match at Cardiff Met Uni, produced a high-tempo display.

The game featured tries from AS1 Jay Smith, AS1 Kieron Prescott, Flt Lt Jacob Seddon and Cpls Sam Boxhall, Morgan Davies and Christian Williams.

Gardner said: "It was a good try-scoring display but, more importantly for me, was getting to test the depth of the squad and run my eye over 29 of our players."

"They all got game time, along with seeing how several of them adapted to a lot of issues in the game early on and stepping up to deal with it well."

He added: "I believe if players are good enough, they are old enough and all I can say is the future is bright for some of our youngsters on tonight's display."

Facing five aviators who were left to play for their Quins club side, a tactic Gardner and his coaches used to increase exposure and game time for his team, the military men lost their captain,



POWERHOUSE: AS1 George Cook steams forward for RAF and Cpl Mark Williams passes, below left

Fg Off Alex Stanley, with an eye injury after 12 minutes.

AS1 Will Lewellyn stepped into the role superbly.

Gardner said: "The loss of Alex, coupled with him being our line-out caller, meant the lads had a lot to deal with, which they did."

"We had two yellow cards in the first half and one in the second, which also caused us a few issues, but the lads took it in their stride."

"We knew Quins would counterattack if we got into a kicking game, but we wanted to deal with that. Our backs – Prescott, Smith and Seddon – did an excellent job, each getting a try, Smith at



HAND-OFF: AR Freddie Richardson on a run

just 19 and on his debut.

"We stepped things up, we could have scored more, but this was a perfect test."

"My experience as a player and coach tells me that for this time of the build-up, we are in a good place, and Alex's injury will be cleared up by our next game."

RUGBY UNION

Dream start for Williams and her side

RAF Women	65
Ruislip Women	10

A THUMPING 65-10 victory over Ruislip saw the RAF Women's senior team kick off 2025 in style under new head coach Sgt Sian Williams.

On a night of freezing conditions at Brunel University Sports Park, the Service side that featured a mixture of experience and youth saw newcomer AS1 Shannon Pasotti run in a hat-trick of tries to win player of the match.

The victory, which followed a training camp at RAF Northolt, saw AS1 Kim Grundy return to the squad, making an immediate impact with several pitch-long, jinking runs from full back.

Assistant coach Sqn Ldr Ian Cokayne said: "There were lots of fresh faces in light blue who will be eager to feature in this year's Inter-Services campaign."

Outside the team's IS preparations, Cpl Orla Proctor and Flt Lt Carys Williams have been playing in the Celtic Cup, with a view to breaking into Scotland and Wales Six Nations squads, respectively.

While AR Daisy Aspinall was again selected for the England U20 squad. Aspinall joined the RAF Reserves (606 Sqn) last year and plays in the Premiership for current back-to-back champions Gloucester Hartpury.

Flt Lts Amy Cokayne and Sarah Bonar have also been in international camp ahead of the women's Six Nations tournament, which starts on March 23.

PLAYER OF THE MATCH: Newcomer AS1 Shannon Pasotti



Former aviator Pollard is Athletes' Athlete of the Year



RAF STAR: Pollard represented Service

ATHLETICS

FORMER RAF athletics star SAC Luke Pollard (Ret'd) has been named the 2024 male Athletes' Athlete of the Year.

The award, in its second year, is presented by the British Elite Athletes Association following nominations and votes for the winner by Britain's Olympic and Paralympic-level athletes.

Pollard guided visually impaired Dave Ellis to Paralympic gold in the PTVI para triathlon event in Paris last year.

The former aviator was given the award alongside Ellis following their successes at the Paralympics, World Championships and European Championships, claiming para triathlon's triple crown in 2024.

He said: "To be recognised by fellow athletes is absolutely unbelievable. I didn't really believe it to start off with."

Ellis added: "It is so nice that people have recognised us in this way. The shortlist had some great athletes on there and even just to make that nomination

list was unbelievable. I'm blown away to actually win the award."

After joining the RAF in 2011, Pollard rose through the triathlon ranks and was enrolled on the Service's Elite Athlete Scheme, which enabled him to focus on his athletic career full-time.

Pollard, who was voted RAF Sportsman of the Year in 2021, became Ellis's guide in 2019. The pair now hold three World titles, three European titles, a Commonwealth title and Paralympic title.



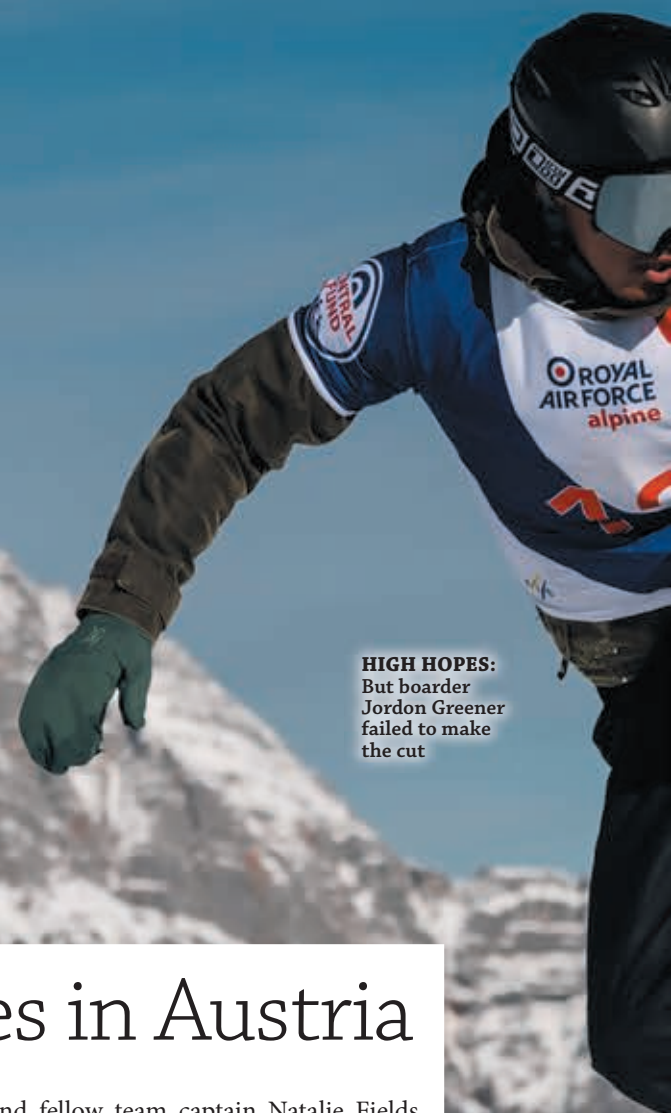
OLYMPIAN: Triathlete Pollard with Dave Ellis

Sport

All aboard



TELEMARK TEAM:
Flt Lt Hannah Witchalls



HIGH HOPES:
But boarder
Jordon Greener
failed to make
the cut

Alpine stars battle it out for IS places in Austria

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE ALPINE sports lit up the slopes of Saalbach Hinterglemm as the RAF Championships fortnight produced thrills and spills in preparation for the upcoming Inter-Services championships in Meribel.

The ski, snowboard and telemark teams held their annual training and competition selections to finalise IS teams, with Air Cdre Martin Cunningham, chair of RAF Alpine Challenge, proclaiming the fortnight 'a great success'.

He added: "Saalbach was where personnel seized opportunities to develop resilience and learn alpine skills.

"The event showcased the RAF's dedication to comprehensive training, ensuring our personnel are equipped with the mental and physical fortitude for any mission. Best of luck to our teams heading to France for the Inter-Service Championships."

Looking to defend the men's IS ski title in his debut year as captain, AS1 (T) Ricky Santamaria said: "It's a great privilege to once again compete at such a prestigious military sporting competition.

"Following a successful RAF Alpine Challenge, we have selected a highly-motivated team and aim to deliver victorious results in a challenging and competitive Tri-Service environment."

Racing in the men's events, Fg Off Jed McNab secured his IS team selection after taking firsts in Giant Slalom and Individual Slalom to win the Overall Combined Ski Champion title. He was joined by Sqn Ldr Claire Nixon, who won the GS, before coming second in the individual slalom

behind Cpl Rachel Hughes, to win the women's Overall Champion title and an IS team place.

Women's team captain Cpl Melissa Gaffey said: "The RAF Championships represented the culmination of an excellent year of development for the RAF Ski Team. We have brought together a team who are ready to achieve amazing things at the Inter-Services. For half of the RAF Athletes, this will be their first Inter-Services, underlining how well we have brought on new talent."



With the men's snowboard title to defend, team captain Chf Tech Martin Boon said: "It was a good Champs, we avoided any injuries, everybody looked after themselves.

"We thought we knew our team, but we had one surprise from our team ride out on the last day. AS1(T) Josh Brown joined us and, suffice to say, he earned another two weeks snowboarding.

"We had thought he would be a possible for the Hill Team, but he may now be in the 10-man team."

Boon and fellow team captain Natalie Fields won the Overall Combined Snowboard Champion titles, with Boon victorious in the men's slopestyle event, while Sqn Ldr Barney Polden took the Parallel GS and Cpl Darrell Manning the Boarder Cross, while Fields took the women's GS, with Shona Kinnear taking first in the boarder cross and slopestyle.

Fields said: "This year's championships brought many new faces to RAF snowboarding. It was great to have new pathway events for those who have not raced before. Overall, the team did really well in the individual events.

"It will be a great year to develop the women's team and get the newer riders out on some bigger, steeper terrains. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone perform to the best of their ability in the Inters."

With an historic women's telemark IS title to defend, the team were looking for a positive Champs. AS1 Dean Gillon took the Open GS, GS and Sprint races to become Combined Overall champion and win team selection.

Women's captain Wg Cdr Lex Smyth took the Open GS and Sprint races, while team member Flt Lt Hannah Witchalls took the GS and the Overall Champion title.

Team spokesman Sqn Ldr Jonny Young said: "We had a great Champs with good weather and snow conditions for training and racing. The team welcomed two new team members who will travel to Meribel with us. I'll be there to represent the discipline for the RAF and we are looking forward to a great event."

● The full Inter-Services teams – see right.

for Meribel



SLOPE STAR:
Sqn Ldr
Claire
Nixon

Teams for the Inter-Services

SKI

Men

- AS1(T) Ricky Santamaria
- Fg Off Ollie Weeks
- Fg Off Jed McNab
- Flt Lt Simon Cook
- AS1(T) Alex Morley
- Cpl William Gilliat
- AS1(T) James Liquorish
- Fg Off John Lewis
- AS1(T) Odian Came

Women

- Cpl Melissa Gaffey
- Sqn Ldr Claire Nixon
- AS1 Georgina Davis
- Flt Lt Abby Christen
- Flt Lt Gemma Cooke
- Flt Lt Lauren Williams

TELEMARK

Men

- Sgt Steve Fryer (Captain)
- Sqn Ldr Matt Smyth
- Flt Lt Ben Tawney
- AS1 Dean Gillon
- Sqn Ldr Fin Farthing
- Flt Lt Kenny Docherty

Women

- Wg Cdr Lex Smyth (Captain)
- Flt Lt Hannah Witchalls

SNOWBOARD

Men

- Chf Tech Martin Boon
- Cpl Adam Woolley
- FS Andy Amphlett
- Flt Lt Charlie Hatch
- Flt Lt Luke Shaw
- AS1(T) James Mitchell
- Cpl Mike Tyrer
- AS1(T) Jack Bishop
- Sqn Ldr Partick Morris
- FS Josh Rathbone
- AS1(T) Josh Brown

Women

- Cpl Nat Fields
- Cpl Hayley Phillips
- Wg Cdr Natalie Feeney
- Cpl Charlotte Wolverson
- Flt Lt Shani Spence
- AS1(T) Charlie Metcalfe

WOMEN'S SKI CAPTAIN:
Cpl Mel Gaffey (right) with
AS1 Georgina Davis

CAS drops in

● From back page

at the blue riband event, Exercise Alpine Challenge 25.

Qualified Flying Instructor for XXV(F) Sqn Flt Lt Geoff Corser flew Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton over the snow-covered resort.

Corser said: "It seemed a wonderful symbiosis: providing flying and fun for those at the championships while simultaneously honing skills and boosting flying currency."

Corser, who flew three sorties for guests including CAS during the Champs, added: "Sir Richard had expressed interest in paragliding to me at one of the social events and was keen to make the most of the perfect flying weather.

"Take-off is all about teamwork, it takes synergy to safely inflate 42 square metres of canopy and get it flying.

"It's not every day you get to shout 'run, run, run' at the head of the RAF but the wind had dropped and we needed a flat-out sprint to achieve take-off speed.

"The flight was a serene glide across the Hintertglen. Sir Richard seemed to thoroughly enjoy the experience."

Having captured the imagination of all involved, RAFHPA looks set to expand the project for 2026's championships.

Wg Cdr Matthew Tandy, Deputy Chairman of RAFHPA, said: "Having successfully proven the concept of conducting tandem paragliding activity within Exercise Alpine Challenge 25, the aspiration is now to build upon this for 2026 and beyond.

"Combining the two endeavours means that we will be able to maximise the opportunity that the Champs presents.

"The opportunity to get RAF personnel both on and above the slopes, introducing them to paragliding, is one thing, highlighting that they can undertake the training through the JSAT scheme to become qualified and an active pilot is another.

"Initial planning suggests that it should be possible to field three tandem paragliders to conduct six flights per day.

"We have a goal of flying a minimum of 50 personnel during the week of concurrent activity; however, if the weather is kind to us, we should be able to fly many more."

● Follow Royal Air Force Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association on Facebook @ RAFHPA.

5 RAF Sport

pages of



COUNTY AND SERVICE STAR: ASI Alex Naughalty, centre

The Bucks stops here

National semis heartache for Alex

HOCKEY Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE HOCKEY star ASI Alex Naughalty suffered national championship semi-final heartache after seeing her side lose on penalties having led 5-4 with three seconds remaining against Surbiton.

Naughalty said: "It was a great game that ebbed and flowed, with both sides on top, putting pressure on. We worked hard throughout, and secured a two-goal lead at 5-3 but they kept putting the pressure on towards the end of the game. It was frustrating that we could not hold on with only three seconds remaining."

RAF indoor and outdoor hockey stalwart Naughalty's Bucks team finished third in the England Hockey Division One North league, qualifying for the finals day behind Surbiton, who topped the league.

Buckinghamshire blazed a trail through the semi-final stage matches in the first of the two days of heated competition at Repton School, Derby, beating

Guildford 4-2, Harlston Magpies 5-4, Repton 4-3, Sutton Coldfield 5-1 and Slough 3-1, with 3-3 draws against Surbiton and Holcombe before facing Surbiton again.

The aviator added: "That's sport, that's why we love it, you must take the rough with the smooth. This is the sixth finals day in six years that Buckinghamshire have made, so it's another excellent indoor season and we go on to the outdoor league now."

Naughalty's Bucks team now enter the second half of the England Hockey Division One North league sitting third – hoping to carry a positive indoor run outdoors.

Naughalty added: "I think it's great for RAF hockey to have players involved in the high end of competitions such as this."

"It keeps interest in the national sport for personnel. I have been receiving a lot of messages about how the tournament went with personnel and association members watching online and so on."

● Follow RAF Hockey on Instagram @rafhockey.



The Boss drops in

THE RAF alpine championships hit new heights as CAS took to the skies above Saalbach-Hinterglemm for a tandem paraglide in a stunt that may become a regular occurrence.

Seasoned RAF skier Wg Cdr Caitlin Wroe came up with the idea as a way of integrating the two associations

● Continued on page 27



Ex Alpine Challenge: pp26-27

R'n'R

Girl power: & Juliet the musical

● See
pages
4-5



Win Jim
Henson's The
Storyteller
Complete
Collection on
DVD ● p4





IT'S TIME TO BREW AND BAKE FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH.

We all know it's good to talk. Host a Brew and Bake coffee morning or bake sale on station, at home, or in your community and make a life-changing difference to a veteran whilst having a brew, some banter and a slice of cake.



Simply sign up online for your free fundraising pack. Raise funds by asking for donations in return for a delicious brew and some baked goodies.

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

CINEMA

Film review
The Fire Inside (12A)
 In cinemas now

T-Rex fights for survival



BURNING AMBITION: Boxer Claressa Shields (Ryan Destiny)

THE FIRE INSIDE follows the true story of boxing phenom Claressa 'T-Rex' Shields on her road from poverty in Flint, Michigan to Olympian, but crucially examining what happened next, or rather, what didn't happen.

What begins as a conventional underdog boxing story set against the backdrop of a sport that has yet to fully embrace women – making its Olympic debut at the 2012 London Games – evolves into something far more compelling.

Claressa (Ryan Destiny) comes from humble beginnings, but more than that, the trials she faces at home appear to fill her with rage, that titular fire, that she can channel in the ring. Themes of destitution and abuse are brought to light, but the glossy direction at times feels at odds with the rawness of her story.

Aided by her coach, Jason Crutchfield (Brian Tyree Henry), Claressa's determination propels her to the world stage. Destiny does a great job of capturing the ferocious hooks of Shields during her fights, however these scenes are all shot so similarly that they feel almost identical, from training at the local gym to competing for the Olympic gold.

Where a typical sports movie might conclude, win or lose, *The Fire Inside* sticks around to explore the stark reality faced by



TENSIONS: Claressa with coach Jason Crutchfield (Brian Tyree Henry)

female athletes. The film draws attention to the disparity in pay between men and women in sport, as well as the expectations surrounding their behaviour. Aggression, it seems, is a privilege reserved for men.

Struggling to secure endorsement deals, when male counterparts are plastered on magazines and cereal boxes, the battle never ceases. Tensions will rise between Claressa and her coach, and move their

dynamic beyond the cliché motivational mantras to a conflict brought on by the system being rigged against them.

Shields' story is undeniably inspiring, and while much of its runtime treads familiar ground, it feels essential to witness the harsh realities that follow the typical Hollywood happy ending.

Review by Sam Cooney

Three roundels out of five ●●●

Music

Chesney Hawkes
 New releases and tours

Chesney's *Loud* and proud dad

CHESNEY HAWKES is best known for his mega-hit *The One and Only*, released back in 1991. The son of Chip Hawkes, singer and bassist with the 1960s band The Tremeloes, Chesney has just released his new single, *Loud*, ahead of his forthcoming album *Living Arrows*, out on April 4. And he's supporting James Blunt on his current arena tour across Europe.

Now a 54-year-old, father-of-three, Chesney, who had his massive hit when he was just 19, said *Loud* is written about his experiences of grief and loss.

He explained: "Most of us have experienced some kind of loss at some point. This song is very close to my heart and has given me comfort with my own experiences. I really hope that these lyrics can help others through their own difficult times."

The album takes its name from *On Children*, a poem by Lebanese-American writer, poet and artist Kahlil Gibran, which addresses the importance of nurturing children while also accepting that their independence has to be a parent's ultimate priority.

Chesney added: "Something I didn't realise straight away, when I started putting these songs together, is that I was creating a sort of roadmap for my kids. I had them in mind the whole time, because the messages on songs like *Live Forever* are all to do with taking life by the horns, doing what you love and following your instincts.

"One thing that happens as a parent, especially when your kids start getting a



FAMILY MAN: Father-of-three Chesney Hawkes

little older, is that you realise you have to let them go. You have to let them do their own things – make their own mistakes. So I realised that's what I was doing with this record, I'm trying to give them the right advice."

Living Arrows features guest appearances from friends including Nik Kershaw and Chesney's brother Jodie.

Mental health struggles are a recurring theme in the album, and Chesney has become an ambassador for the suicide prevention charity Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM).

His Live in '25 UK headline tour, in March and April, will be his first in over a decade. It's also a family affair, with the band including Jodie on drums and Chesney's son Indiana on guitar.

● **Go to:** chesneyhawkes.com/gigs/ for full tour details.



Theatre Review

Birdsong (15+)
 On tour: birdsongplay.com

The horror of The Somme

BASED ON the bestselling book of the same name by Sebastian Faulks, this 30th anniversary touring production of *Birdsong* is a highly memorable show.

Max Bowden (best known as Ben Mitchell in *EastEnders*) delivers a powerful performance as sapper Jack Firebrace, caught in the horror of The Somme in World War I, desperate to get home to his wife and young son who he learns by letter is in hospital with diphtheria.

It was a surprise to discover that James Esler makes his professional stage debut as Stephen Wrayford here as he is such an accomplished performer. His portrayal of the young Englishman desperately in love with the beautiful Isabelle (Charlie Russell) – another man's wife – is so moving, as are his scenes on the battlefield with plucky Jack, who saves his life.

And Raif Clarke is excellent as the scared witless young Tipper, who, at 15, has lied about his age to serve his country and now can't cope with the awful reality of war.

Produced by Original Theatre and JAS Theatricals, and in support of the Royal British Legion, the show carries a number of trigger warnings as it has loud explosions, gunshots, swearing and nudity.

The clever stage sets put the audience right in the action, conveying



TRENCHES: Scene from play PHOTO: PAMELA RAITH

the dirty, cramped, practically unbearable conditions the soldiers are in. The silhouetted scene when the men go over the top is stunning.

Despite the hellishness of it, the hungry and weary soldiers manage to maintain their camaraderie and when that gives way to grief, it gets visceral.

The lovely music interspersing the production adds a haunting atmosphere that heightens the way in which the worst situations man makes can somehow bring out the best in us.

When I saw the show at a mid-week packed performance at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre the audience, who had remained spellbound throughout (it's a three-hour affair, including two intervals) gave it a well-deserved standing ovation.

Review by Tracey Allen

Four roundels out of five ●●●●

R'n'R



DVDs

Jim Henson's
The Storyteller (U)

Complete
Collection
Out on DVD
from February 24
Fabulous Films
Ltd/Spirit
Entertainment



Win!

Telling tales

THIS COMPLETE collection, from the creators of *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*, comprises all nine episodes of Jim Henson's *The Storyteller* series narrated by John Hurt (*The Elephant Man*), plus all four episodes of Jim Henson's *The Storyteller: Greek Myths*, narrated by Sir Michael Gambon (Albus Dumbledore).

The Storyteller featured both human actors and creations from Henson's Creature Shop, and won two BAFTAs and a Primetime Emmy Award.

Henson's daughter Lisa studied folklore as an undergraduate at Harvard, and suggested to her father that his creature shop could bring the European folk tales to life. It took two years for Academy-Award winning writer/director Anthony Minghella (*The English Patient*) to write, and perfect the nine original episodes. The series included the darker, scarier side of these traditional tales with their often bleak endings.

The stellar cast of *The Storyteller* includes Miranda Richardson, Jane Horrocks, Sean Bean, Jonathan Pryce, Brenda Blethyn, Jennifer Saunders, Joely Richardson and Dawn French, with the *Greek Myths* starring Derek Jacobi, Pat Roach and Art Malik.

Narrated by Hurt and aided by his cynical dog, the original *The Storyteller* series cleverly retells classic folk tales, fables and legends such as *The Three Ravens* and *The Heartless Giant*.

The Storyteller: Greek Myths retells *Daedalus and Icarus*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Perseus and Gorgon*, and *Theseus and the Minotaur* and is narrated by Gambon, once again assisted by his talking dog.

You could win a copy of this great box set (rrp £49.99). To be in with a chance of owning it, answer this question correctly:

Who narrates *The Storyteller*?

Email your answer, marked The Storyteller DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 7.



Theatre

& Juliet
UK tour

Juliet is a woman for modern age

THE GLOBAL musical sensation *& Juliet* is now on a UK tour, running until June 28. Created by David West Read, the Emmy-winning writer from *Schitt's Creek*, the musical flips the script on the greatest love story ever told and asks, what would happen next if Juliet didn't end it all over Romeo?

The show's cast is led by Steps star Lee Latchford-Evans as Lance and *The Wanted* member and *Strictly Come Dancing* winner Jay McGuinness as Shakespeare. Joining them are Gerardine Saccalan as Juliet, Lara Denning as Anne, Sandra Marvin as Angelique, Jack Danson as Romeo, Kyle Cox as Francois and Jordan Broatch as May.

It visits venues including Woking's New Victoria Theatre, The Alhambra Theatre Bradford, Milton Keynes Theatre, the Theatre Royal, Nottingham, Birmingham's Hippodrome, the Lyceum Theatre Sheffield, Newcastle Theatre Royal and the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff.

Juliet's new story bursts to life through a playlist of pop anthems including Britney Spears' *...Baby One More Time*, Katy Perry's *Roar* and chart toppers *Since U Been Gone*, *It's My Life*, *I Want It That Way* and *Can't Stop the Feeling!*

Since its world premiere in September 2019, *& Juliet* has been performed on four continents. It began at the Manchester Opera House before moving to London's West End from 2019-2023, where it won three Olivier Awards, and six WhatsOnStage Awards. The show had its North American premiere in July 2022 in Toronto, before heading to

Broadway, where it broke box office records and plays nightly to sold-out crowds.

McGuinness said: "I play William Shakespeare and together with the aid of his wife we rewrite the

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL: But Shakespeare and Anne (Jay McGuinness and Lara Denning) are engaged in a battle of wills about the play's storyline



story from Juliet's perspective, it's her story and she takes control of it. So, you see Juliet decide that she is still a young woman, has her whole life ahead of her and that she is able to make her own choices and not live by ones others have made for her.

"Shakespeare and his wife Anne are overseeing the story as it evolves. They argue back and forth about their ideas and about how this play should go - with Shakespeare trying to keep it true to his original script and his wife trying to introduce new characters and all kinds of hare-brained (but brilliantly funny) schemes. Shakespeare, I guess, uses Romeo as his little mascot and Anne uses Juliet as her mascot. They both sort of play a game of chess, trying to have their outcome win by the end of the musical."

McGuinness described his character as 'a bit of an egomaniac'.

He explained: "When he comes out on stage he really has to give it some welly and believe that he is the cat's pyjamas. He's a bit of a showman; he likes to perform; he likes to show off his moves and his voice. I did that for years with the boys in *The Wanted* and in the musicals I've done since then."

"I'd also say that Shakespeare is a little bit of a relic from the past. He's got an old school view of things and playing that sort of one-rotation-out-of-the-cool-club aspect is something that I'm acutely familiar with because my boy band are currently part of pop history, not the pop present."

He added: "I did Shakespeare to secondary school level and I really enjoyed it. I was also in one of his plays in secondary school. It was *The Tempest* and I played Caliban. Around the time that I played him the *Lord of the Rings* movies were massive, so my Caliban was basically a rip-off of Gollum. I always appreciated Shakespeare. It was hard to get through the lingo and discover what he was actually saying underneath that period style of speaking, but once you do it's just brilliant."

McGuinness starred in a touring production of Danny Robins' spooky hit thriller *2:22 A Ghost Story* last year.

He said: "I loved being in my first straight play. This [*& Juliet*] was an opportunity to go back on stage and sing and dance, which I hadn't done for a long time. And then the script itself just made me laugh out loud, because you don't

SASSY: Juliet (Gerardine Saccalan)



Books

Lost Voices of the Battle of Britain

Max Arthur (augustbooks.co)



The Few tell their story

IN THE summer of 1940, the British frontlines were the skies above southern England.

Spitfires and Hurricanes took on the might of the Luftwaffe and its feared Messerschmitt fighters, dogfighting high above civilians watching on in awe.

Lost Voices of the Battle of Britain by Max Arthur (August Books, augustbooks.co) features the personal accounts of the pilots who fought and survived that battle.

Hitler was determined to invade Britain and close down the Western Front for good. But his plan – Operation Sea Lion – could not begin while the RAF could still harry an invasion fleet. It had to be broken.

Up to five times a day, the pilots of RAF Fighter Command scrambled to meet the inbound Luftwaffe. At one point, every available British fighter plane was airborne – the country was tested to its limits. Against all



ICONIC: BoB Spitfire



odds ‘The Few’, as they came to be known, bought Britain’s freedom – many with their lives.

We have copies of this absorbing book to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

What was the name of Hitler’s plan to invade

Britain in World War II?

Email your answer, marked Lost Voices book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 7. Please include your full postal address with your entry.



STEPPING UP: Former pop star Lee Latchford-Evans plays Lance

The Mooch headlines Chalke

THE POPULAR annual Chalke History Festival takes place this year from June 23-29. The line-up for the festival programme is taking shape with Anthony Scaramucci confirmed as one of the headline acts and billed to take part in a number of events.

Nicknamed ‘The Mooch’, he served on President Donald Trump’s Presidential Transition Team Executive Committee in 2016 and briefly as White House Communications Director in July 2017. He is currently the co-host of two podcasts, *The Rest Is Politics US* and *Open Book*.

Other VIPs due to appear at Chalke include: the author behind the major BBC TV drama *SAS: Rogue Heroes* Ben Macintyre, who will be talking about the 1980 Iranian Embassy Siege; social media sensation Alice Loxton, who will be discussing her latest book *A History of Britain in 18 Young Lives*; and Tom Parker-Bowles, who will be recounting tales of royal kitchens, chefs and culinary traditions and discussing recipes from Queen Victoria to King Charles III.

Also confirmed are the UK’s top-selling true crime writer, and bestselling author of *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*, Kate Summerscale, who will be presenting her latest page-turner



STAR TURNS: The D-Day Darlings and, below, Anthony Scaramucci

The Murders at 10 Rillington Place; one of the world’s leading historians of modern Germany, Richard Evans, who will be discussing Hitler’s inner circle and asking just how far individuals will go when so many normal moral constraints have disappeared; bestselling medieval historian and TV presenter Helen Castor, who will be recounting the lives and reigns of Richard II and Henry IV – two cousins whose rivalry brought their nation to the brink of disintegration; and renowned author, journalist and broadcaster Max Hastings, who will be telling the gripping story

of how British and American troops landed on Sword Beach on D-Day.

And ITV’s *Britain’s Got Talent* finalists The D-Day Darlings will return to Chalke to entertain the crowds on the Saturday night.

The festival will take place at Church Bottom, Broad Chalke, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 5DP.

● **Go to: chalkefestival.com for more details.**



really know what to expect from the twists within the plot. It makes fun of theatre, I thought that was really clever. I also like the costume, so it’s a little bit of a vanity thing.”

He added that he’s looking forward to being on stage at Nottingham’s Theatre Royal from April 14-19. “I’m from Newark-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire and it’s going to be great to be at the Theatre Royal because 90 per cent of my family will be there,” he added.

Gerardine Sacdalan, who plays Juliet, said: “Juliet here is super sassy and very opinionated but she doesn’t quite know where to direct those traits. She is such a fiery

character and I actually see quite a lot of myself in Juliet, although she’s like a heightened version, super silly, who faces every problem head on.

“She tries to hone in on her strong opinions as she seeks to find her way through life. Jack Danson, who plays Romeo, is great because he gives me a lot of things to play off. She definitely wears the trousers in this relationship, especially later on. She finds herself standing up for herself, which is something I completely admire about her and something that I think a lot of young people could learn from.”

● **Go to: andjulietthemusical.co.uk for full tour details.**



Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

Death

LOVELL Richard Sqn Ldr, known as Dick, passed away on January 30, aged 73. Funeral at St Andrew's Church, Cheddar at 1pm on February 26. No flowers but donations to Royal British Legion and Macmillan Cancer Support.

Dick, who trained as a navigator, joined the RAF in March, 1972 and served for 35 years. He worked on aircraft including the Hercules, Nimrod and Dominie and was based at stations including Kinloss, Finningley, Waddington, and Lyneham. He leaves wife Pam, son Steven and Steven's girlfriend Kirsty and grandson Benjamin, and son David and his wife Ann and granddaughter Rosa.



Sqn Ldr Dick Lovell

Reunions

CALLING all former TG11 T/phonist, TPOs, Tels, Wop Spec, TCO, TCC, TRC, all are welcome to attend the TG11 Association reunion to be held Friday, March 21 to Sunday March 23 at the Marriott Delta Hotels Nottingham Belfry, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham NG8 6PY. See website: tg11association.com.

THE Southend Group of the National Service (Royal Air Force) Association holds its

next social lunch on Wednesday, March 26 at 1pm at the Castle Hadleigh. All RAF veterans and guests are invited. For details and bookings contact Ron Spack 01268 779697.

ALL ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to contact the undersigned with a view to arranging a reunion in 2025. Please email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com

30 Sqn RAF Association. Reunion and Dinner, April 25-26, 2025. Please contact Tony Main at: 30sqnassnchair@gmail.com. All previous Sqn members welcome.

103RD Entry RAF Halton Apprentices Reunion October 17, 2025 at the The Park House Hotel in Shifnal, TF11 9BA, 7pm. Contact Mick Woodhouse on: 07811 401040, email: mickwoodhouse1946@gmail.com or through: 103rd-entry.org. uk.

28TH entry RAF Cosford, June 1956 to November 1957. Trade Group 19. How many of us left? Contact: David Slough. d.slough@outlook.com

Associations

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never..!). Its aim is to foster esprit de corps and comradeship, to promote and maintain the ethos and heritage of this incredible Signals Unit. Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: www.591suassociation.co.uk for membership details and news of the next annual reunion along with other upcoming events for 2025.

WHAT do you know about the

2 Halifax RAF Sqns 346 and 347 which flew from RAF Elvington near York in World War II? Why not join the Sud-Ouest France Branch of RAFA to find out more? You will be welcomed with open arms or un Accueil Chaleureux! For further details contact Terry Dennett at Admin@Rafsudouest.fr or call: 0033546953889

RAF Armourers past and present: RAF Association's Armourers Branch aims to provide welfare support and comradeship for all who have served or currently serve as an RAF Armourer. Please see: rafaarmourers.co.uk or please contact the committee via email: plumbersrest@outlook.com.

IF you trained as an RAF Administrative Apprentice (or are related to one) we would be delighted to welcome you to the RAFAA Association. Please see: rafadappassn.org; or you can contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

RAF Physical Training Instructors Association holds an Annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend, plus locally organised events. Please contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown on: ptisec@outlook.com for membership enquiries. To become a member of the Association you will have had to have successfully passed the RAF Physical Training Instructors Basic Training Course. The Association was formed in 1996 to bring together serving and retired PTIs.

Lost

LOST – a small gold pendant of an aircraft, bought at Skinners in London in the 1970s, of great sentimental value. Has anyone got a replacement for this article? Please contact Mrs B Green: 01427 752635.

Princess is RS & G's third Royal patron



ADMIRER: The Princess Royal pictured at Brize Norton at a parade marking the end of 57 years of the Hercules in RAF service

THE PRINCESS Royal is the new Patron of veterans' charity Royal Star & Garter, its third Patron since it was founded in 1916, succeeding her late mother, Queen Elizabeth II.

Royal Star & Garter provides care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, from homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe. It has also launched new services reaching out into the community.

The charity was established on January 14, 1916 to care for severely injured men returning from the battlegrounds of World War I, following concern expressed by Queen Mary. She charged the British Red Cross Society with finding them a

'permanent haven' and became the charity's first Patron.

Queen Elizabeth II was Royal Star & Garter's Patron from 1953 until her death in 2022.

Maj Gen Tim Tyler, Chair at Royal Star & Garter, said: "We are honoured to welcome The Princess Royal as our new Patron. The Princess is admired for her dedication to good causes and her devotion to public work, as well as her long association with the Armed Forces. We look forward to welcoming Her Royal Highness to our Homes to meet the veterans and partners we care for."

Princess Alexandra will remain as the charity's President, a role she has served in for 60 years, since 1964.

BoB memorial service

EACH YEAR the Royal Air Force commemorates the Battle of Britain and those who flew and fought in the air and on the ground, at a service in Westminster Abbey.

The RAF Ceremonial Office is seeking to improve its knowledge of this unique demographic and to offer places at the formal Battle of Britain Thanksgiving and Rededication Service, this year planned for Sunday, September 21, and in subsequent years.

We would very much like to hear from the widows, family descendants and any other family members of those who participated in the Battle. If you are a family member, or know someone who is, please write to: Mrs Michele

Small, Ceremonial Office, Bentley Priory Building, RAF Northolt, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6NG, providing details of your relationship to your relative who served in the RAF between July and October 1940 and your email address and a contact phone number.

Additionally, for the purpose of allocating tickets, please also send your full name, home address, date and place of birth, and passport or driving licence number (at any time and without notice or justification the RAF reserves the right to void tickets and refuse entry to Westminster Abbey before or on the day). This information is also required for any additional guests who wish to attend the Service with you – thank you.

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535.

We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or by post to: **Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.**

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Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to:
tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

Charity gets a rebrand

ONE OF the oldest veterans' charities, previously known as Stoll and The War Seal Foundation, has rebranded as The Stoll Foundation.

Founded in 1916, the charity, which provides housing in West London and Aldershot to vulnerable veterans, has supported hundreds of ex Service personnel. Its new name pays tribute to founder, theatre impresario and Royal Variety Performance creator Sir Oswald Stoll (inset, right).

CEO Will Campbell-Wroe said: "A consistent piece of feedback we've received from



HOME FROM HOME: Stoll residents at Chiswick War Memorial House, part of The Stoll Foundation



tenants is their desire for us to put 'Foundation' back in our name. We're proud to have provided life-changing housing and support services to hundreds of veterans for over a century."

The organisation's new logo celebrates the charity's heritage by drawing inspiration from the War Seal, a small diamond shaped stamp sold during World War I in Sir Oswald's theatres and in Selfridges and Boots stores to fund his first block of housing

for veterans. The War Seal is featured in an elaborate mosaic on the front of Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions, the charity's original home in Fulham. It is preparing to move most of the residents of Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions (pictured left) to the nearby luxury riverside King's Road Park development, following the sale of the building to neighbours Chelsea FC, said a spokesperson for The Stoll Foundation.

● Go to: stoll.org.uk for more information.



TALENTED: From left, 2024 winner Morgan with curator Cat Boxall and fundraising head Cat Stuart-Yapp

Calling young artists

THE BRITISH Motor Museum has launched a new Young Artists Competition to celebrate the opening of the exhibition The Gallery 2025 on April 4.

The contest, with the theme 'The car and the environment', gives young artists the rare chance to display their work at the Museum in Warwickshire.

There will be a winner for each age category: under 11s, 12-16, and 17-20. Entries close on April

28. The winning artwork will go on display in the Museum from May 29-June 27 and the winners will each receive a half-day workshop with an esteemed artist featured in the exhibition said a Museum spokeswoman.

Stephen Laing, the Museum's head of collections & engagement said: "It's going to be an exciting few months for artists of all ages."

● Go to: britishmotormuseum.co.uk for more details.

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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 379

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 10 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft.

Across

- 1. Footwear quiet outside office (4)
- 8. Apes rose up disturbed by adverse weather conditions (3-7)
- 9. Advertisement doing the rounds (8)
- 10. Neighbour returning instrument (4)
- 12. Dot's fabric? (6)
- 14. After Paris fiasco, left curling (6)
- 15. Frequent in heat, ten dehydrating (6)
- 17. Bold, revolutionary key turned (6)
- 18. Originally, Adele recorded Iolanthe's amusing song (4)
- 19. He complains about pointless jam in here (8)
- 21. Reverend's sister upsets RAF personnel (10)
- 22. Baking involves southern present (4)

Down

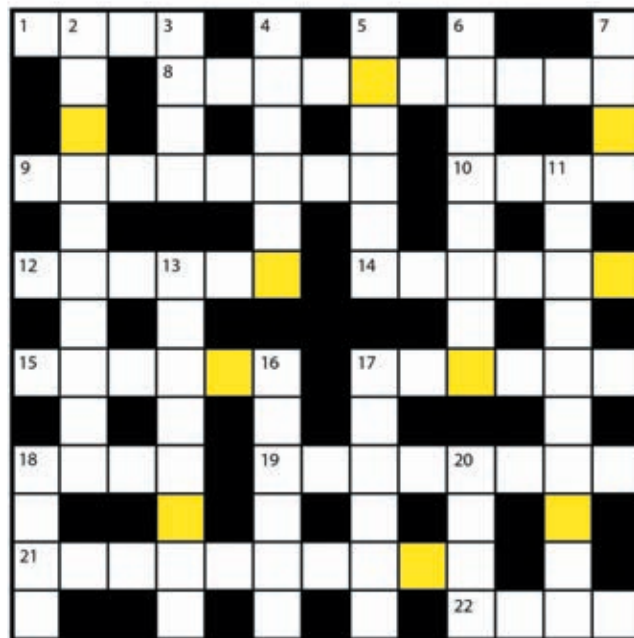
- 2. RAF aircraft maybe there in returning the Italian policeman (10)
- 3. Heroic Spice loses head and gets confused (4)
- 4. Attack Nevada Naval Air Station (6)
- 5. Gets on ship where actors tread (6)
- 6. RAF plane will act as a dragon does (8)
- 7. Parts of China, Siam and so on are in this part of the world (4)
- 11. Evil birds attack US choppers (5,5)
- 13. What a girl turns into after 12 (8)
- 16. Briefly Virginia Jude confused by familiar sensation (4,2)
- 17. Laugh when Air Training group goes east (6)
- 18. Tinker Bell, mostly fresh and unstuffy (4)
- 20. Squash enjoyed by horses (4)

Name:

Address:

RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 379

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top military title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by March 7, 2025. Prize Crossword No. 378 winner is: L Barnes, Lincoln.



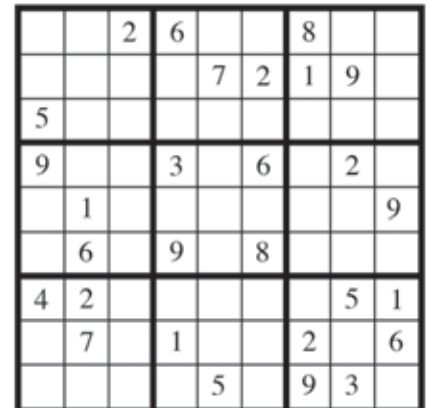
Solution to Crossword No. 378
Across – 6. Of Peace 7. Baker 9. Genie 10. Mission 12. Firmin Sword 14. Combat-ready 18. Abandon 19. Drone 21. Atlas 22. Gunners
Down – 1. Often 2. Gemini 3. Ace 4. Warsaw 5. Memoirs 8. Pioneer 11. Emotion 13. Wombats 15. Bantam 16. Daring 17. Entry 20. Jug
RAF station – Akrotiri



Prize Su Doku No. 389

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 7, 2025. The winner of Su Doku No: 387 is: Mr DG Fraser, Aviemore.



Solution to Su Doku No. 388

9	2	6	3	1	7	8	5	4
7	8	5	9	6	4	1	3	2
3	1	4	8	2	5	6	7	9
4	6	8	2	7	9	3	1	5
2	9	1	6	5	3	7	4	8
5	7	3	4	8	1	9	2	6
1	3	9	5	4	6	2	8	7
6	4	2	7	3	8	5	9	1
8	5	7	1	9	2	4	6	3



Film review The Girl in the Pool (15)

Streaming on digital platforms now

Pool party after killing has Hitchcock feel to it

TOM'S LIFE is damn near perfect: a gorgeous wife, two incredible kids, a beautiful home... and his mistress's dead body stashed by the swimming pool.

We join Tom (Freddie Prinze Jr.) just after the murder. The details are initially unclear, but we see flashes of the young woman (Gabrielle Haugh) in the family pool, very much alive and seductive, smashed together with images of her limp and bloody, dumped in a storage bin by Tom in a panic. Today is his birthday, and sure enough everyone will soon be at the house for a surprise party – all the while Tom has to keep the corpse hidden and work out what to do next.

There's a Hitchcockian framing to *The Girl in the Pool*: it takes place over the course of a day in this one location – the scene of a crime that has yet to be discovered. So, whilst guests sneak away from the party to smoke a joint or secretly eat some cake, we know that they are



inches away from the victim.

Meanwhile, tension builds elsewhere. Tom's wife Kristen (Monica Potter) can barely hide her disdain for her husband, and their rocky relationship is on display for all to see. Kevin Pollak adds some fun antagonism as the untrusting father-in-law, though the age difference doesn't quite add up.

As the plot twists and secrets are revealed, it becomes increasingly farcical and at points laugh-out-loud funny; however, you're unsure how much of this is intentional.

Freddie Prinze Jr. gives a confused performance. When he's not giving himself pep talks in the mirror, he's out of breath (perhaps from straining to act so much). One second he is almost having a panic attack, the next he is distracted by something completely trivial.

Although it is very contrived, and the thriller elements give way to comedy, it is certainly entertaining, perhaps because of the strange performance at its centre.

Two roundels out of five **Review by Sam Cooney**



Books Yugoslavia and Greece 1940-41

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The Axis air war over the Eastern Mediterranean

THE GREECE campaign was launched by Italy in October 1940, the first large-scale campaign of the Italian Air Force outside North Africa, and its last major solo effort.

With the German involvement in April 1941, and with the invasion of Yugoslavia, the Balkans saw the last large-scale Axis air campaign in Europe before the invasion of the USSR.

It was also the campaign that saw expeditionary units of the RAF fighting alongside the Greeks – most famously, the handful of Hurricanes that fought to the end from makeshift olive-grove airfields, among them the Hurricane ace and future novelist Roald Dahl.

In *Yugoslavia and Greece 1940-41* (ospreypublishing.com) a new

illustrated history of the German and Italian air campaigns in the invasions of those countries – the last full-scale Axis air offensives before Operation Barbarossa – renowned historian Pier Paolo

Battistelli and air power expert Basilio di Martino explain how this unique campaign was fought.

They highlight elements such as the Italians' development of air-to-ground support while carrying out, for the first and only time, an airborne operation, and how the Germans refined their tactics from the 1940 campaign in the West, while now also playing a major anti-shiping role.

Illustrated throughout with rare photos, original paintings, maps and 3D diagrams, this is an expert account of the air war over the eastern Mediterranean.

