

The Forces' favourite paper

Unsung hero of Battle of Britain
 ● See R'n'R page 5



Win!

Story of London's Heathrow Airport
 ● See R'n'R page 5



Win!

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, January 24, 2025
 Edition No.1600 **Only 99p**

RAF NEWS



Top Guns have AI enemies in their sights
 ● See p3

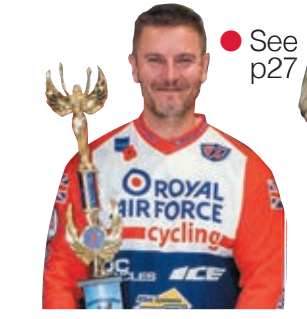


Sport
Chief in driving seat
 ● See p23

Rugby
Tributes to former WO



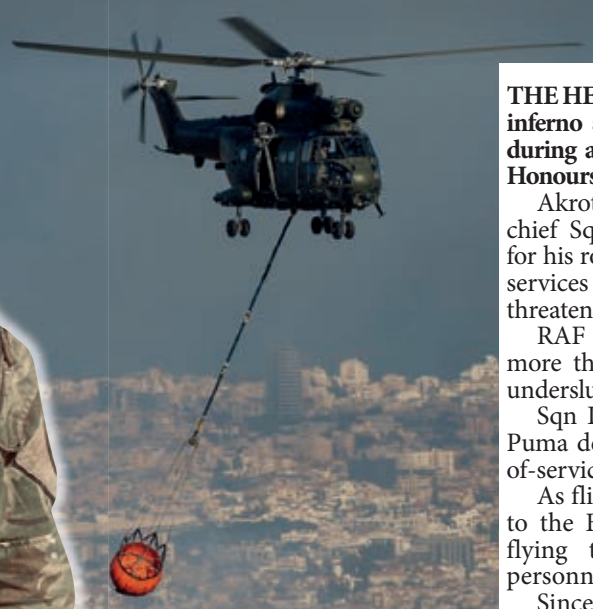
BMX
Big race joy for Corporal



All fired up

Cyprus blaze hero

Dusko heads honours



THE HELICOPTER pilot who flew into an inferno as wildfires ripped across Cyprus during a 48°C heatwave led the New Year Honours after being awarded the MBE.

Akrotiri's 84 Sqn Puma operations chief Sqn Ldr Dusko Frost was praised for his role supporting Cypriot emergency services struggling to halt the blaze which threatened to engulf residential areas.

RAF crews doused the fire with more than 60 tonnes of sea water from underslung buckets during the mission.

Sqn Ldr Frost volunteered to lead the Puma deployment after the aircraft's out-of-service date was extended.

As flight commander he also deployed to the Baltic on Op Aluminium before flying three aircraft and around 50 personnel to the Mediterranean.

Since the Israel-Hamas conflict began, 84 Sqn has also transported key visitors including the Armed Forces Minister, Defence Secretary, and the Prime Minister near the war zone.

LIFESAVER: Sqn Ldr Dusko Frost is awarded the MBE for his role with 84 Sqn in Cyprus, the Baltic and the Middle East. *Inset above*, 84 Sqn fly into wildfires during Cyprus heatwave.

● See pp-4-5 and 14-15 for more Honours

BiteSize

“I don’t see myself in that sort of category at all,”



103-year-old former Mosquito pilot Colin Bell DFC on being awarded the BEM in the New Year Honours
See p9

“Honouring the memory of those from WWI is so important,”



Ex-EastEnder Max Bowden stars in WWI stage version of Birdsong
See R’n’R pp4-5

“Places for Inter-Services are still up for grabs,”



Snowboard captain Cpl Natalie Fields on the RAF Alpine Champs
See p28



ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

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Reading lands GCAP

Simon Mander

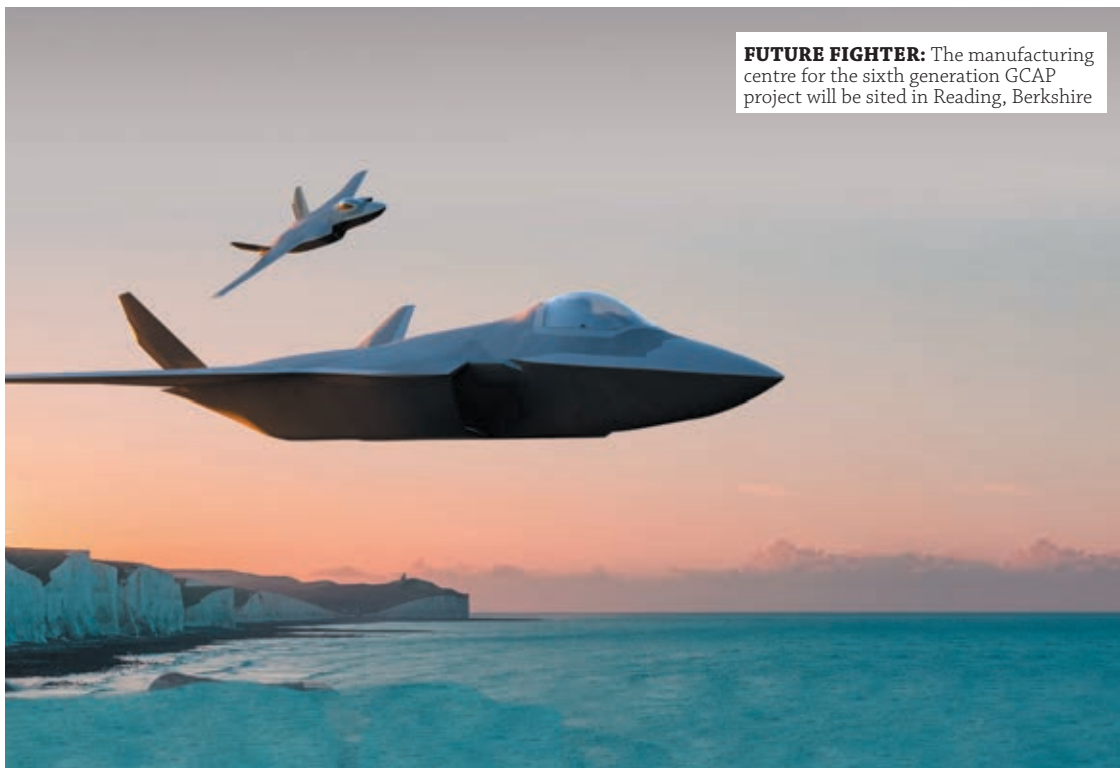
BRITAIN WILL host the future fighter jets programme, it has been announced.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the headquarters for the joint Global Combat Air Programme between the UK, Japan and Italy will be in Reading, Berkshire.

The headquarters for building the new stealth fighter, known as the GCAP International Government Organisation, will be led by Japanese Chief Executive Oka Masami to strengthen each country’s combat air industrial capability.

More than 3,500 people are employed on GCAP across the UK and in December, BAE Systems, Leonardo and Japan Aircraft Industrial Enhancement signed a Joint Venture Agreement to create a new company.

Later this year, the UK’s Carrier Strike Group will collaborate with the Japanese Self Defence Forces.



FUTURE FIGHTER: The manufacturing centre for the sixth generation GCAP project will be sited in Reading, Berkshire

This Week In History



1945 Long March starts

ALLIED AIRMEN held at the Nazi Stalag Luft III PoW camp are given an hour to gather their belongings before being force-marched from Sagan in Poland to Germany as Soviet Forces close in.

**1971
Puma arrives**
THE FIRST Westland Aerospatiale Puma helicopter is delivered to Air Support Command. The RAF order 48 aircraft which are initially operated by 33 Sqn at Odiham.



**1991
Buccaneers on Desert Storm**
BUCCANEERS FLY their first operational sorties during Operation Desert Storm, providing laser designation for Tornados.

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



BIDDING BATTLE: Medals haul up for sale
PHOTO: NOONANS

Bismarck medals to hit £100k

Simon Mander

MEDALS BELONGING to a fearless WWII airman who helped sink the Bismarck have been put up for sale for £100,000.

Gunner Don Bunce was part of the crew of one of six Fairey Swordfish biplane bombers that chased German ships attempting to break out from the French port of Brest into the Channel.

But the firepower of the enemy fleet – who were protected by Messerschmitts, Fw 190s, six destroyers and 34 E-boats – made it a 'suicide mission'.

Plt Off Bunce, stayed at his gun even when his aircraft was on fire and managed to take out a swarming enemy fighter before ditching and being plucked from the icy water by a Motor Torpedo Boat.

All six Swordfishes were destroyed, and only five of the 18 aircrew survived.

Plt Off Bunce, aged 20, earned the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for his "coolness, which was unshaken".

His medals are going under the hammer at London-based auctioneers Noonans.

Don left the Service in 1946 and died in September 2008.

The medal group consists of the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, Atlantic Star, Africa Star and Defence and war medals.

VIRTUAL THREAT: Pioneering ATARS system projects augmented reality targets on to pilot visor
PHOTO: CPL GARETH MCGARVIE



Pilots target AI with fast jet training first

Simon Mander

FUTURE TOP GUNS have flown for the first time using revolutionary augmented reality display technology which allows them to engage with 'enemy' fighters during live training sorties.

American contractor Red 6 has developed Advanced Tactical Augmented Reality Systems

(ATARS) to enable pilots to shoot down virtual enemies programmed to react as a pilot would in hostile combat, and cooperate with synthetic support aircraft whilst airborne.

Partnering with BAE Systems, in-flight demonstrations evaluated the equipment on a Hawk T2 jet at



HAWK T2

RAF Valley recently.

If adopted, augmented reality displays could be developed so flight training can be constantly updated.

Air chiefs say ATARS could reduce the cost of launching combat jets to test pilots' dog fighting skills in live training sorties

and could boost the number of frontline pilots.

Head of Flying Training, Air Cdre Rob Caine, said: "Exploiting novel technologies like this is essential to ensuring the RAF can sustain its combat edge."

"This latest development is a huge opportunity to improve training quality and lower overheads like aircraft, airspace and instructors."

New UK combat chief for Typhoon and F-35

Staff Reporter

BRITAIN'S COMBAT fighter jets have come under the command of a new boss.

F-35 stealth aircraft at Marham and Typhoons based at Coningsby and Lossiemouth will be led by Air Cdre Chris Layden, who takes over from Air Cdre Howie Edwards.

Air Cdre Layden said: "I'm delighted to be returning to the Combat Air Force, and privileged to help steer it through its next chapter."

Air Cdre Edwards added: "As I depart, I reflect on the



UK FIREPOWER: F-35 stealth fighters outstanding achievements and professionalism of my people in their work securing UK skies and I wish my successor all the very best."



HANDOVER: Air Cdre Edwards (left) welcomes Air Cdre Layden
PHOTO: AS1 SHAUNA MARTIN

In Brief



Lossie visit

VETERANS AND People Minister Alistair Carns joined Station executives and personnel at Lossiemouth in Moray, Scotland, during a visit to sample life at the northern Scottish base.

News

New Year honours for to caring for families

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE personnel from fast jet pilots targeting Houthi rebels and protecting shipping in the Red Sea to the organisers of the RAF's role in the late Queen's funeral and The King's Coronation are among those recognised in the latest New Year's Honours list.

And a hero helicopter officer whose Puma crews have not only saved lives but also helped transport VIPs seeking to solve the Gaza crisis has also been given an award.

Wg Cdr Kevin Terrett gets the OBE for commanding four Typhoons and two Voyager refuelling aircraft on Operation Shader. Twice daily, six days a week, for four months he flew alongside coalition assets, conducting airstrikes in Houthi-controlled Yemen to deter attacks on Red Sea shipping.

During his first mission, a malfunction meant one of his weapons did not release but, unfazed, he stayed overhead, ensuring he had imagery of the other impacts before jettisoning the bomb into a safe area. All 13 targets were destroyed.

Sqn Ldr Dusko Frost is made an MBE for life-saving operations in support of British Forces Cyprus.

Since the Israel-Hamas conflict began, 84 Sqn has also played a vital role on the island in support of the UK's response to the Gaza crisis by transporting visitors including the Minister for Armed Forces, Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister.

Former Northolt Station Commander **Gp Capt (now Air Cdre) Victoria McPhaden** is awarded a CBE for the role she played in the Service's response to the passing of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of His Majesty the King in the full glare of the world's media.

Former **AVM (now AM) Paul Godfrey** is made a CB for his role as the first Commander of the United Kingdom Space Command whose output has proven critical to national, Nato and Ukrainian security.

A former Carrier Strike and F-35 programme chief, he is said to have strengthened national and international security, bringing space to the heart of Defence.

Brize Norton's **Flt Sgt Jane Corban** is awarded the MBE for coordinating support to family members with a spouse or partner on military operations.

Over the last 12 years, she has supported 4,000 families and helped find £160,000 to turn eight derelict houses into welfare homes.

The makeover has enabled 250 families to benefit from contact with their loved ones and has generated more than £25,000 of income per annum.

Ex-Commander of the UK's Counter-Uncrewed Aerial Systems at Erbil Air Base, **Sqn Ldr Simon Bracewell**, is made an MBE for his work with the wider base defence team's ability to rapidly adapt under fire.

As the senior British officer, he mentored US Army personnel who were air defenders by trade into a cohesive team integrated with his RAF

colleagues and used radar to improve engagement procedures.

Lossiemouth's former 6 Sqn boss **Wg Cdr Noel Rees** is awarded the OBE for empowering his deputies to run the outfit overseas in his absence when a permanent medical issue resulted in a premature end to his flying career and command.

One week before his unit deployed, his work led to 6 Sqn delivering the busiest period on Operation Shader since 2015, suppressing Daesh on a multitude of occasions.

Whilst at home, Rees took sole responsibility for the delivery of the Coronation Flypast, involving 70 aircraft over central London, to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty The King.

Typhoon avionics technician **Cpl Olivia Brindley** gets an MBE for her work as a member of Coningsby's voluntary Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics team.

Cpl Brindley regularly attends schools and events and leads groups of up to 30 children at a time to undertake engaging engineering activities whilst increasing their knowledge of technology. She has personally played a crucial role in inspiring thousands of young people.

Wittering Catering Flight Accountant **AS1 Christopher Foley** has been recommended for a Chief of the Air Staff's commendation for his work managing a £100,000 budget which keeps five flying squadrons operational.

He has also been selected to trial new accounting software to be rolled out to air bases nationwide, and his knowledge of the Station Support Squadron is so complete he was able



FLT LT CLIFTON: AOC 2 Gp Commendation



to manage around 800 bed spaces when Covid struck the unit.

His citation said: "Air Specialist 1st Class Foley optimises flexibility, fierce loyalty to his unit and has responsibility well above his current rank, he is thoroughly deserving of formal recognition."

Flt Lt Wade Clifton, currently serving in the Falklands, got news of his AOC 2 Gp commendation from the islands' Commander of British Forces.

He was honoured for his service at Halton as OC Works Service Flight, where his dedication and selfless commitment was described as exceptional.

Flt Lt Clifton was praised for volunteering for ceremonial duties, bonfire night and Poppy Day collecting, and supporting other short-staffed station sections.

He will receive his commendation on his return to the UK, where he will be posted to Wittering.

● See pp14-15 for the full New Year's Honours listing.



airstrikes on terrorists of deployed personnel



OBE: Former 6 Sqn chief Wg Cdr Noel Rees was instrumental to Op Shader missions



BEST OF THE RAF: Flt Sgt Jane Corban MBE with bears for children of those on ops (above); Gp Capt (now Air Cdre) Victoria McPhaden is awarded a CBE for royal duties including the funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She is pictured left with HRH Princess Anne and Sir Timothy Laurence. And accounts whizz AS1 Christopher Foley (right) was commended by the Chief of the Air Staff for his work, which keeps five flying squadrons operational



SPACE COMMANDER: AVM (now AM) Paul Godfrey is made a CB



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Dambusters kit smashes it at auction



HISTORY UNDER THE HAMMER: Items including pilot's face mask and Guy Gibson's 'wings' doubled original estimates at auction. *Main image:* The Eder dam destroyed in the WWII raid that cost the lives of 53 airmen



Simon Mander

A SALE of Dambusters memorabilia smashed estimates when it went under the hammer this month.

A private collection of 54 lots including signed photographs, books, uniforms, paintings and aircraft equipment sold for £24,000 – doubling auctioneers' valuations.

The items were collected by the Coventry-based press photographer Derrick Warren, who died in 2022.

Until its closure in 2023, the collection was displayed in the Heritage Centre of the unit's

former Scampton base.

A Lancaster Bomber steering yoke soared beyond its estimate of £300 to make £3,400 on the day.

Another highlight was a pair of RAF cloth wings, displayed in an engraved silver-plated frame, removed from Gibson's uniform and given to Warren in 1994 with a handwritten letter valued at £1,500, that sold for £4,200.

A photograph of a Lancaster signed by bouncing bomb inventor Barnes Wallace sold



for £550 against a valuation of £300, while a World War II flying cap, respirator and part harness estimated at £300 realised £800.

A facsimile copy of Gibson's logbook featuring autographs from WWII Bomber Command chief Arthur 'Bomber' Harris had a guide price of £500 and fetched £2,000.

Gildings auctioneers' director Mark Gildings said: "The items were all estimated to go for about £10,000, so I'm really amazed at

the final sale. We consistently saw memorabilia across the 54 lots beating their estimates, which shows the magic that can happen when determined collectors go head-to-head at auction.

"These things are unlikely to be on the market again anytime soon, so buyers knew they had to jump at the chance as they would go quickly."

The Dambusters night raid took place in May 1943, and of 133 men involved 53 were killed, with 48 surviving the war.

Guy Gibson was killed aged 26 in September 1944 when his Mosquito crashed returning from a raid on Germany.



CELEBRATION: Amy and her family tuck in at the Star and Garter. *Below,* feeding pigeons in Trafalgar Square during WWII

Chocs away

AN AIR Force veteran who helped bring down deadly Nazi V-rockets and later assisted with Allied attacks on occupied territory in World War II, has celebrated her 100th birthday.

Amy Wein marked her centenary alongside her sons and grandsons, who travelled from Australia and New Zealand, by tucking into chocolate birthday cake at the Royal Star and Garter home in Surbiton where she lives.

Amy joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) at 17, training to operate barrage balloons used to protect targets from enemy air attacks.

She also worked as a plotter following the Allied invasion of Europe.

She recalled: "It was a very interesting job. By then it was our planes that were going out in droves to bomb Berlin and industrial areas."

"We were plotting out hundreds of aircraft. And then, as so many of them struggled back, we plotted them back home."



In Brief



SUPPORT: BTW founder Jilly Carrell

Funding win

A NEW charity to support grieving Forces families has received £30k funding to set up a bereavement hub.

Beyond the Wire says the service will provide practical help and guidance on available support across the Forces community.

History man Seb takes a bow

Tracey Allen

THE CUSTODIAN of the priceless collection of images recording the history of the RAF is standing down after 28 years at the Air Historical Branch.

Seb Cox is the longest holder of the position since the Branch was formed in 1918. His successor is Dr Seb Ritchie, currently deputy Head of the AHB, based at RAF Northolt.

After working at the RAF



AHB CHIEF SEB COX

Museum, Mr Cox joined the archive team in September 1984 and became its head in May 1996. He was awarded the OBE in 2017 for services to Air Force history and heritage and was historical advisor to the Bomber Command Memorial, opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 2012.

He is the 10th head of the AHB since it was formed in 1918 and the first civilian who had not previously served in the Armed Forces to take on the role.

He said: "I shall miss my

colleagues but will be keeping in touch as I am chair of the RAF Museum's Research Advisory Board and on the committee of the RAF Historical Society."

He is also president of the British Commission for Military History.

He added: "I was always interested in military history from childhood, but I don't have any strong RAF family connections – my father was in the Royal Marines in WWII."

Seb now plans to write a book about the last two years of Bomber Command's war.

Educated at the King Edward School Bath, Warwick University

and King's, his role as AHB Head has included writing internal classified and unclassified histories of recent RAF policies and operations. He has also produced unclassified versions of histories for the AHB's website – established since Seb became Head. And he has given advice to the RAF on historical issues and questions.

He said: "We have a photographic collection which goes back to well before WWI which is being digitised."

He has lectured on five different continents and during his career has worked for 10 different Chiefs of the Air Staff.



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Ding gong!

103-year-old daredevil vet Colin 'Dinger' Bell nets BEM



AB FAB: WWII Mosquito hero Colin completes his 17-storey fundraising stunt in 2023



Tracey Allen

AT 103 years old, WWII hero and champion fundraiser Colin 'Dinger' Bell has been awarded the British Empire Medal in The King's New Year's Honours – the oldest recipient on this year's list.

The former Mosquito pilot's reaction to the news of the honour was typically humble. He said: "I was amazed. I was quite bowled over. I don't see myself in that sort of category at all but, well, as I've got it, it's very good for the family CV."

Fearless Colin raised more than £15,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund, London's Air Ambulance and The Royal College of Nursing Foundation, smashing his £2,500 target, when he abseiled 17 storeys and more than 300ft down the Royal

London Hospital in 2023, aged 102.

The RAFBF said: "Heartfelt congratulations from everyone at the Fund to Colin Bell on receiving a British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours List for his charitable fundraising, and public speaking about Bomber Command in WWII."

Colin, from Tunbridge Wells, joined up in 1940 and carried out more than 50 bombing raids over Germany, including 13 on Berlin. He was later awarded the DFC for his bravery.

When he took on the abseiling challenge he joked that it was 'money for old rope'. He added: "I don't scare easily, when I was at the top, I was thoughtful; it seemed a long way down."

He said the secret to his youthful appearance was 'a combination of exercise, alcohol and the love of good women.. with the odd bad one thrown in.'

Colin also completed a three-day sponsored walk visiting places significant to his wartime role during WWII and a talk he gave on Jersey raised another £12,800 for good causes.



PRICKLY PROBLEM: Sgt Paul Smith prepares to release another rescued hedgehog in the rewilded areas of St Mawgan

Animal rescue goes wild at St Mawgan

Tara Stiles

St Mawgan

ST MAWGAN has become one of Cornwall's largest wildlife sanctuaries after animal conservationists released more than 100 rescued hedgehogs at the sprawling military site.

Local animal charity Prickles and Paws has placed 20 nest boxes at the military training and support station after appealing to their local RAF chiefs for help resettling injured hedgehogs rescued by volunteers.

This month RAF personnel backing the project helped release the latest arrivals into the wooded areas where they are safe from natural predators and traffic.

Prickles and Paws co-founder Katy South said: "St Mawgan is the perfect release site for hedgehogs, particularly hoglets, who end up

at our rescue from unknown or unsafe locations.

"It is a large, safe area, free from natural predators, with lots of space and habitat for them to roam.

"We also use other sites for releases, but RAF St Mawgan is the largest and has several rewilded areas dedicated to hedgehog conservation.



The team there are absolutely fantastic, they are so interested in our work and in helping these amazing creatures."

Air Force volunteer Sgt Paul Smith added: "We're in the fortunate position of being able to provide a safe and suitable habitat for these vulnerable creatures due to uniquely being a training establishment rather than an active flying unit.

"Our estate has everything a hedgehog needs and that is showing in a growing population with many released animals choosing to stay on site after release."

Nominate Service stars for an award

SUPPORTERS WHO went the extra mile in 2024 to help the RAF Benevolent Fund are being asked to put their names forward for an award.

Dedicated individuals and exceptional stations and commercial partners are to be recognised by the accolade.

Fund Controller AVM Chris Elliot said: "Our awards present a special opportunity to honour those who work relentlessly to help improve the lives of the Royal Air Force Family.

"These awards celebrate the outstanding efforts that

enable us to keep supporting veterans, serving personnel and their families, making a lasting difference to those people who rely on us."

Nominations for categories including fundraiser, partner, station, and RAF formation of the year, along with a special 'Above and Beyond' category for an extraordinary individual who has made a difference to life in the Service, will remain open until February 7.

● Go to rafbf.org/awards for more information and to submit your nominations.



Crash tribute

THE BAND of the RAF Regiment will be giving a free performance at the RAF church, St Clement Danes next month in memory of the 21 people who died, including 19 RAF musicians, in a devastating coach crash in Germany.

Called *A Musical Tribute*, it takes place on February 10 and marks the 40th anniversary of the crash.

The Band of the Royal Air Force Germany, based at RAF Rheindahlen, was travelling by double-decker coach to an engagement at the RAF Winter Survival School in Bavaria in icy conditions when the vehicle collided with an aviation tanker on the autobahn.

News



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Bluebird bid for Grob ace



Simon Mander

AN AIR Force pilot is backing a bid to set a new world record in Donald Campbell's ill-fated hydroplane, alongside the son of legendary Australian water speed king Ken Warby on Coniston Water later this year.

Dave Warby is to take the controls of Bluebird K7, the Ruskin Museum has announced, supported by UK reserve pilot Flt Lt David-John Gibbs.

Museum director Tracy Hodgson said: "This is yet another step in putting Bluebird back on Coniston Water for the first time since the crash which killed Donald Campbell on January 4, 1967.

"Two Orpheus engines are being examined and prepared for use and the announcement is another step towards our goal."

Dave Warby added: "Bluebird K7 is the most iconic water speed record boat in the world.

"Seeing my father design and build his boat Spirit of Australia in the family backyard, then setting two

world water speed records was a huge inspiration for me."

Ken Warby achieved the record in 1978, reaching 317mph. He died last year and the trophy has been reunited with K7.

Flt Lt Gibbs said: "I'm looking forward to not only driving the boat, but also working closely with the Ruskin Museum and the team as we bring Bluebird back to running order."

The RAF officer is Commanding Tutor Standards Flight and to date he has logged over 6,000 flying hours on 50 types of aircraft, including the Grob Tutor.

He is an active pilot outside Service life and instructs on the Jet Provost, L29 Delfin, Chipmunk and Tiger Moth, and operates a collection of vintage gliders.



FLT LT GIBBS

Thanks a Million

THE FLYING sword crest of the RAAF's 24 Sqn has been returned to the RAF's 'Millionaires Squadron' 65 years after it was first gifted to Australia.

The Air Force treasure remained Down Under as a symbol of the connection between the two sister divisions, but originally belonged to UK's 601 Squadron before it was disbanded in 1957.

RAAF Air Cdre Robert Graham handed back the memorabilia to 601 Sqn's chief AVM Malcolm Brecht at RAAF Base Amberley.

"24 Sqn were honoured to safeguard the Flying Sword for 601 Sqn, recognising the unit's distinguished service during WWII," Air Cdre Graham said.

Formed as the first RAF auxiliary unit in 1925, 601 Sqn originally flew Hurricanes and Spitfires from Northolt.

The squadron was known as 'The Millionaires' in the 1930s because of its members' lavish lifestyles. It was the former squadron of Great Escaper Roger Bushell.

601 Sqn was reformed in 2017



REUNITED: Air Cdre Graham (left) with AVM Brecht

providing industry and business support. The two squadrons continue a close association, and the Flying Sword now rests in its new home, at the RAF Club.

AVM Brecht said: "601 Sqn are delighted to bring this historic and iconic item of memorabilia home and are hugely grateful to 24 Sqn RAAF for taking care of it while the Sqn was in abeyance. The Sword is now in pride of place in the 601 Sqn Room at the RAF Club."

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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



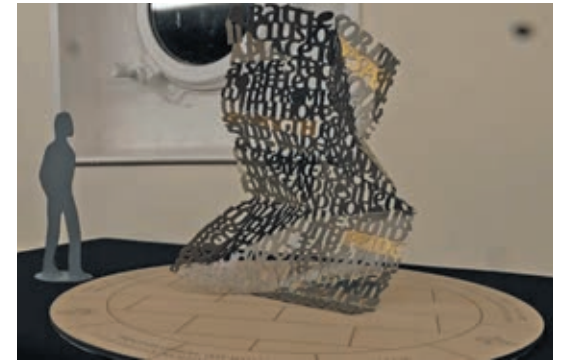
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£350k grant for stunning sculpture at National Memorial Arboretum

Red-letter day for gay community of Armed Forces



STRIKING: Winning design for the new LGBTQ+ memorial

Simon Mander

A NEW memorial for the Armed Forces gay community will be constructed in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The construction, overseen by military charity Fighting with Pride, is being funded by a £350,000 grant from the Office for Veterans' Affairs in the Ministry of Defence.

Abraxas Academy's design – entitled Crumpled Letter – was selected by a judging panel earlier this month at an event attended by veterans and serving

personnel, Service charities and artists.

The memorial represents three of the 49 recommendations made in Lord Etherton's independent review into the Service and the experiences of veterans who served during the ban on homosexuals in the Forces before 2000.

Fighting With Pride chairman Ed Hall said: "It's a mark of how far we've come as a society that the competition for this prestigious commission has been so fiercely contested by some amazing creative minds.

"We received 38 exceptionally high standard designs for the panel of judges

to choose from and we now have an outstanding, worthy winner."

The statute is of a crumpled, free-standing letter made from forged bronze symbolising swearing the oath of allegiance, evidence of mistreatment of LGBTQ+ personnel that was discarded and the comfort of letters from home while away on operation.

Last month, the MOD opened applications to the Financial Recognition Scheme to enable those impacted by the ban to apply for recognition payments.

The government also announced restorative measures, including the

restoration of rank.

Veterans Minister Alistair Carns said: "When I joined the Royal Marines in 1999, this abhorrent ban was still in place. A quarter of a century later, we turn a page on that shameful chapter in our national story."

He said the government was committed to enacting every recommendation of Lord Etherton's review.

He added: "I thank the LGBTQ+ community and the charities that supported it, particularly Fighting with Pride, for their courage and continued efforts to bring this to a resolution."



SERVICE: St Clement Danes
PHOTO: ASI DOMINIC GRAVES

AIR FORCE personnel gathered in the RAF's church to mark the 25th anniversary since the ban was lifted on lesbian, gay or bisexual people serving in the UK Armed Forces.

The Service of Commemoration at St Clement Danes was attended by Defence Ministers, top brass, other ranks from across the military and veterans.

Among those present was Caroline Paige MBE, Chief Executive of Fighting with Pride, an organization that supports those affected by the pre-2000 ban.

She said: "I served 19 years during the ban era but survived to serve 16 more in an RAF that became free of this shameful burden and grew to be the openly

Marking 25th anniversary of lifting of ban

inclusive Service we all knew it was meant to be."

As the congregation left the church, there was a sense of shared purpose in continuing to champion diversity in the Armed Forces.

The service was recorded by BBC Radio 4 and will be broadcast as part of the Sunday Worship programme during LGBTQ+ History Month in February.

Air Commodore John Lyle said: "Although the lifting of the ban did not immediately end discrimination

being faced by members of the LGBTQ+ community, it was an incredibly important step on the path to ensuring all members of the Armed Forces are accepted and supported in their service, regardless of their sexual orientation.

"I was pleased to see in the congregation veterans and campaigners who had done so much to drive forward progress, especially Lord Etherton and Caroline Paige."

Feature NEW YEAR HONOURS 2025

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH

As Companion (CB)
AVM (now AM) P.A. Godfrey
AVM S.S. Edwards
AVM T.N. Jennings OBE

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Commanders (CBE)
Air Cdre N.T. Bradshaw
Air Cdre J.E. Savage OBE
Gp Capt (now Air Cdre) V.C. McPhaden

As Officers (OBE)
Gp Capt T.R. Cade
Gp Capt M.J. Wilson
Wg Cdr (now Gp Capt) N.O. Atkins
Wg Cdr (now Gp Capt) J.P. Buckle
Wg Cdr R.W. Barnes
Wg Cdr N.J. Rees

As Members (MBE)
Wg Cdr R.J. Collis
Sqn Ldr (now Wg Cdr) C.J. Lynn
Sqn Ldr (now Acting Wg Cdr) R.A. May
Sqn Ldr S.A. Devenish
Sqn Ldr D.M.K. Frost
Sqn Ldr J. Palfrey
Sqn Ldr A.J. Sweeney
Fg Off (Acting Flt Lt) J.E. Laird
WO P.A. Chadwick
FS J. Corban
FS P.M. Thomas
Sgt (now Chf Tech) B. Parry
Cpl O. Brindley

KING'S VOLUNTEER RESERVES MEDAL
FS (now Acting WO) C.R. Ward
Acting Cpl S.G. Doughty

CIVILIAN DIVISION

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE CIVILIAN DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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Mr S.R. Brathwaite

MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL

MAcr M.A. Bradley MBE
WO S.R. Foulkes
WO A.J. Gillett
WO L.J. Goupillot
WO J.E. Henderson-Bowyer
WO C.A. Jones
MAcr G.E. Mallam
WO K.C. Mason
WO D.S. Moore
WO S. Rezazadeh-Wilson
WO G.P. Smith
WO T. Stead
WO A. Thomas MBE
Acting WO G.F. Bleasdale
Acting WO N.M. Cooper
Acting WO M.C. McDonald
Acting MAcr R.M. White
FS D.F. Beattie
FS A.D. Gray
SSgt S.J. Griffiths (British Army)



CORONATION OF HM CHARLES III: Former RAF Northolt chief Air Cdre Victoria McPhaden awarded a CBE for her part in event

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FS D.M. Swift MBE
Sgt (now FS) L. Bibby

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Wg Cdr M.T. Hughes
Wg Cdr P.J. Lavallée
Wg Cdr M. Page
Sqn Ldr H.M. Ratnage-Black
FS D.E. Mogford-Banks
Sgt S.N. Raine
Acting Cpl C.L. Piddington
Acting AS1 Tech B.T. Cole
Acting AS1 Tech R. Nagar
AS1 C. Foley

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- Project ARTEMIS
- Joint Service Adventurous Training Air Activities Team
- Robson Resilience Centre Grantown-on-Spey Support Staff
- GUARDIAN – Falkland Islands
- No. 1 Space Operations Squadron
- No. 230 (Tiger) Squadron

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DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF COMMENDATIONS

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Sgt G.L. Burns
Acting Cpl W.G. Whittle
Mrs J.L. Alpert
Mr P. Bhullar
Ms T. Franks
Mrs N. Gasan
Mrs L.M. Short

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- TCoS Specialist Re-selection Cell

- Air Finance MI & Analytics, RAF High Wycombe

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Wg Cdr C.M. Jacob
Wg Cdr E.C. Jones
Wg Cdr S.A. Micklewright
Sqn Ldr (now Wg Cdr) M.J. Burley
Sqn Ldr (now Wg Cdr) P. Leask
Sqn Ldr (now Wg Cdr) E.N.A. Spencer
Sqn Ldr N.F. Andrews
Sqn Ldr J.A. Ballantine
Sqn Ldr M.J.I. Douglas
Sqn Ldr B.J. Satterthwaite
Sqn Ldr T.D. Spaighton
Sqn Ldr D.A. Stark
Sqn Ldr M.R. Willers
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Flt Lt C. Arthur
Flt Lt A.E. Dolding
Flt Lt A. Gilbert
Flt Lt M.M. Welton
FS J.L. Churchill
FS M.D. Cootes
Acting Chf Tech (now Chf Tech) G.C. West
Sgt J.W. Bye
Sgt M.A. Hadfield
Cpl R. Hamson
Cpl A.D. Toms
Acting AS1 Tech J.E. Selby
Mr H.S. Wadsworth
Mr M. Welford

Team Commendations

- Strategic Support Programme Op BILOXI Planning Team
- Royal Air Force Apprenticeship Management Team
- Atlantic Rocks
- Total Safety & Support Section, No. 617 Squadron
- MOD Delivery Squadron
- Joint Uncrewed Air System Test and Evaluation Flight
- United Kingdom Mobile Air Movements Squadron Op CHAMBRAV Detachment
- No. 45 Squadron Mission

Aircrew ISR Electronic Warfare Parametric Team
● London and South East Region Permanent Staff, RAF Air Cadets

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Sqn Ldr D.J. Leigh
Sqn Ldr D. Pollard
Flt Lt C.L. Edmondson
Flt Lt D.J. Hewitt
Flt Lt T. Shortland
Acting Flt Lt (now Flt Lt) B.K. Stanton
Acting Flt Lt J.S. Cashmore
MAcr N.J. Benton
WO M.S. White
CPO S. Arkley (Royal Navy)
FS N.S. Carpenter
FS T.C. Evans
FS J.G. Gibson
FS M. Ridgway
Acting FS J.I. Humphreys
Acting FS A.C. Rawson
Chf Tech S.R. Ball
Chf Tech S. Cairns
Sgt A.G. Combe
Sgt T.R. Walden
Cpl (now Acting Sgt) R. Taylor
Cpl S.L. Abbotts
Cpl M.R. Booth
Cpl D.M. Wilkie
Acting AS1 Tech L. Woodworth
Mrs T.M. Green
Mr N.I. Russell
Mr P. Wetherell

Team Commendations

- Air Command & Control Review No. 1 Group Project Team
- Exercise RED FLAG 24 Ground Support Systems Team
- No. 207 Squadron, Issue Centre
- No. 3 (Fighter) Squadron Training Cell
- No. 206 Squadron Role Equipment Specialist Team

- Commando Merlin to HMS ALBION Operational Capability Expansion Trial Team
- European Common Radar System Mark 2 Team
- Merlin Crowsnest Combined Flight Test Team
- Typhoon – UK National Change Programme – Software Development Team

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Sqn Ldr G.A.P. Clark
Rev (Sqn Ldr) J.F.A. Critchley
Sqn Ldr J.P. Ellis
Rev (Sqn Ldr) J.C. Harrison
Sqn Ldr M. Hobson
Sqn Ldr G. Parker

Flt Lt (now Acting Sqn Ldr) T.T. Green
Flt Lt N.S. Burton
Flt Lt S. Perkes
Flt Lt F.S. Sherborne
Flt Lt L.A. Trinder
Acting Flt Lt (now Flt Lt) W.A. Clifton
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Sgt C.A. Clarke
Sgt M.J.P. Estep
Sgt L.J. Hewitt
Sgt C.R.A. Marchant
Sgt D.G. McCullough
Sgt F. Parisi
Sgt N. Rees
Sgt J.A. Tointon
Acting Sgt T.J. Morgan
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Cpl A.J.P. Burton
Cpl C.S. Gilbert
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AS1 C.L. Roberts
Mr L. Arderton
Mrs N. Cleaver
Mr S. Gibson
Mr C.T. Price



AKROTIRI: Sqn Ldr Dusko Frost of 84 Sqn

Mr J. Ridge
Mrs E.A. Starmer

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- No. 93 (Expeditionary Armament) Squadron – Logistics Team
- Fuels Support Team, No. 1 Expeditionary Logistics Squadron
- RAF Brize Norton Media and Communications Team
- RAF Brize Norton Service Funds Internal Audit Board
- Logistics Squadron, RAF Cosford
- RAF Cosford Police & Security Flight
- Armament Engineering Flight, RAF Honington
- Fuels and Lubricants Section, Logistics Support Squadron, RAF Leeming
- Mechanical Transport Flight, No. 607 (County of Durham) Squadron

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Sqn Ldr S.W. Nile
FS B.J. Bright
AS1 J.A. Price

Team Commendation
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Sqn Ldr A.P. Baatz
Sqn Ldr J.A. Pilling
Maj G. Scott (RCAF)
Lt Cdr M.H. Win (RNZN)
Acting Sqn Ldr (now Flt Lt) B.P. Mason
Capt O.G. Longley (British Army)
Flt Lt R.J. Tomala
Flt Lt R.J. Town
WO T.E. Stabler
SSgt R.D.C. Cryans (British Army)
FS S.J. McDermott
Sgt J. Arnott
Sgt P.B. Perratt
PO J. Collin (Royal Navy)
Cpl D-M. Gibson
Mrs K. Bannister
Miss G. Leithead



honoured for life-saving missions on Cyprus



TYPHOON FORCE: There were honours for pilots involved in strikes on Houthi rebels attacking shipping in the Red Sea

Team Commendations

- Air Safety, Assurance, Regulation & Engineering International Air Cadet Exchange Team
- Defence College of Air and Space Operations Performance Enhancement Package Team
- No. 238 Squadron, No. 2 School of Technical Training
- Defence School of CIS Enhanced Training System Team
- Team Charter Workshop Project Team
- Business Systems Team, E Squadron, Royal Air Force Officer Training Academy
- Civil Servant Secretariat (CSS), Royal Air Force Officer Training Academy
- Recruit Training Squadron, Defence Operational Shooting Policy 2022 Team

AIR OFFICER COMMANDING NO. 22 GROUP COMMENDATIONS – RAF AIR CADET PERSONNEL
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Sqn Ldr S.E.G. Dunn
Sqn Ldr A.J. Woods
WO K. Roswell
Flt Lt A.J. Brittain
Flt Lt K.T. Kisley
Mr P.J. Thompson

Team Commendations

- Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Wing Cadet Training Flight (RAF Air Cadets)
- International Air Cadet Exchange UK Team

CHAPLAIN-IN-CHIEF (ROYAL AIR FORCE) COMMENDATIONS
Rev (Sqn Ldr) P.A. Johnson

Team Commendation
The Chaplaincy Team, RAF Leeming

COMMANDER UK SPACE COMMAND COMMENDATION
Sgt S. Kirk

DIRECTOR CAPABILITY AND PROGRAMMES COMMENDATIONS
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Sqn Ldr C.J. Harding
Mrs A. Gold
Mr J. Rasbash

DIRECTOR PEOPLE COMMENDATIONS
Wg Cdr J.A. Hone
Sqn Ldr S.J. Hilditch
WO G. Lawrence
FS R.T. McDowall
FS M.F. Prall
Mrs D. Crow
Mrs P. Knall
Team Commendation
Service Funds Assurance Team

DIRECTOR SUPPORT COMMENDATIONS
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Flt Lt S.D. St Brice
Mr A.R. Davis

Team Commendations

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- Department of Community Mental Health, RAF Digby

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Flt Lt A.L. Allum
FS K.D. Ackroyd
Mrs S. Lewis

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Air CySC Protector Team, RAF Waddington

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(United States Air Force)
Sqn Ldr (now Acting Wg Cdr) S. Agnew

DIRECTOR RESERVES COMMENDATIONS
Sqn Ldr J.A. Roylance
Sgt J.F. Dunn

Team Commendation
RLSW OSPREY Recovery Team

DIRECTOR RESOURCES COMMENDATIONS
Ms J.L. Abraham

Team Commendations

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- Capability Equipment Plan Finance Business Partner Team, RAF High Wycombe
- RAF Delivery Support Team Air Finance Operations, RAF High Wycombe

VICE CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF COMMENDATIONS
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Wg Cdr A.S. Malbon
Sqn Ldr P. Holt

COMMANDER UK STRATEGIC COMMAND COMMENDATIONS
Wg Cdr J.M.N. Holt
Sqn Ldr L.P. Bryden

COMMANDER FIELD ARMY AND COMMANDER STANDING JOINT COMMAND (UK) COMMENDATIONS

COMMANDER FIELD ARMY COMMENDATION
Maj R.J. Bennett (British Army)

COMMANDER STANDING JOINT COMMAND (UK) COMMENDATIONS
Fg Off C.E. Webster
Cpl D.P. Bucknole

COMMANDER JOINT AVIATION COMMAND COMMENDATIONS
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FS I.M. Emery
FS J.F. Law
Chf Tech S.J. Bird
Sgt K.E. Molloy
Acting Sgt D.N. Lee
Acting AS1 Tech C.J. Richards
Mrs M. Mason

Team Commendations

- Logs Squadron, Movements Supply Flight Team, RAF Benson
- Service Catering Flight, RAF Benson
- No. 7 Squadron Engineering Training Cell, RAF Odiham

ARMED FORCES OPERATIONAL AWARDS

APPOINTMENT TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE As Officer (OBE)
Wg Cdr K.J. Terrett

As Member (MBE)
Sqn Ldr S.S. Bracewell

Mention in Despatches (MiD)
Flt Lt P.J. Morris

CHIEF OF JOINT OPERATIONS, JOINT COMMANDER'S COMMENDATIONS

JOINT COMMANDER'S COMMENDATIONS
Gp Capt J. Sjoberg OBE
Sqn Ldr J.P. Baughan
Sqn Ldr R. Fewings
Sqn Ldr A. Sharp
Sqn Ldr W.P. Sheard
WO S.J. Bell
FS R.L. Mills
Acting Sgt B.R.W. Lewis
Acting Sgt L. Montague

Team Commendations

- Air Mobility Detachment, 903 Expeditionary Air Wing
- C-UAS Base Defence, Op SHADER 17/18

LAND COMPONENT COMMANDER'S COMMENDATION
Acting Wg Cdr (now Sqn Ldr) N.J.K. Welsh

RAF INCIDENTAL GALLANTRY AWARDS – COMMENDATIONS

AIR AND SPACE COMMANDER AND AIR MEMBER FOR OPERATIONS COMMENDATION
LS (now PO) A.A.J. Snowdon (Royal Navy)
AS1 (now Acting AS1 Tech) J.R. Harper

Team Commendation
Training Operations, Defence Fire Training Unit

AIR OFFICER COMMANDING NO. 2 GROUP COMMENDATION
Cpl A.M. Toms

'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.

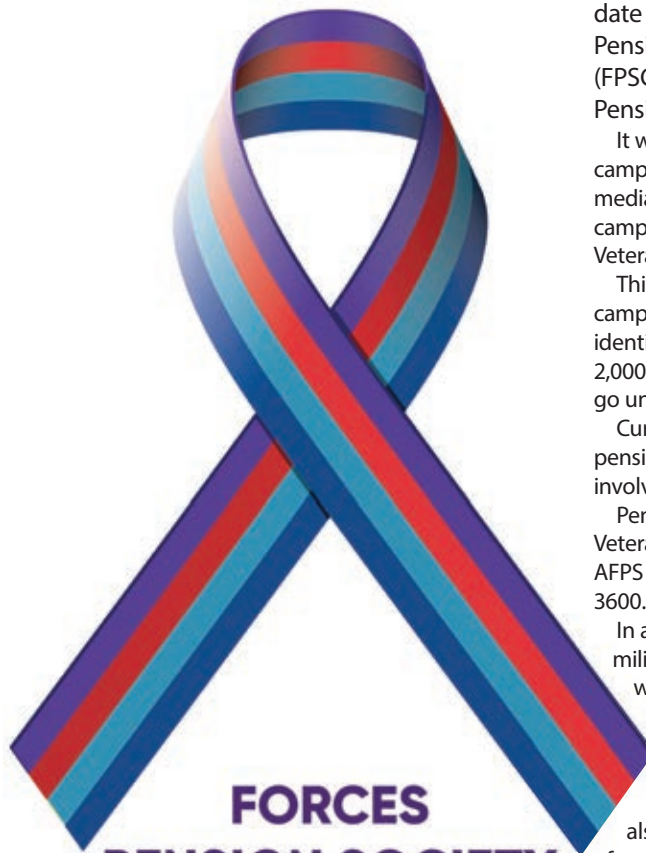
"To this end, we will seek the support of the military community in identifying those who should be united with their pension.

"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.

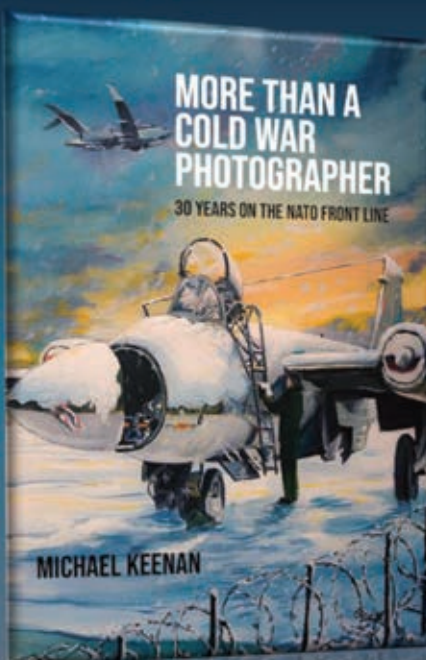
● **Group Captain (Retired) Jonathan Wheeler OBE**



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Equerry to the Queen and bomber sqn chief

Commander survived mid-air collision over RAF Tengah in which four died

SQUADRON LEADER Christopher Blount, who has died aged 99, commanded an RAF jet bomber squadron, served as an equerry to The Queen and became a banker in the City of London.

He was the son of Air Vice-Marshal Charles Blount CB, CBE, MC, a Royal Flying Corps veteran who was killed in a flying accident near Hendon airfield in October 1940. Christopher joined the RAF in 1942 and was first sent to Trinity College, Cambridge.

In 1943, he began his training to be a pilot, which he completed as the war in Europe was ending. He then flew Mosquitos in the night fighter role before becoming a flying instructor.

In 1950 he left for Aden to join 8 Squadron, which had recently been equipped with the twin-engine Brigand ground attack aircraft. In addition to patrolling areas where dissident tribesmen were always active, the squadron also spent time at Shaibah in Iraq during rioting against the Anglo-Iranian oil company.

Late 1951 marked the end of five years of muscle-flexing around the Arabian Peninsula, a period known as "the quiet years", with disturbances increasing in the Aden Protectorate, the Persian Gulf and in Iraq.

Aden

After almost two years on 8 Sqn, Blount was appointed to be the ADC to the Air Officer Commanding British Forces Aden, Air Vice-Marshal Douglas Macfadyen. This was at a time that saw him travelling widely around the Middle East and East Africa with his chief. His time in Aden was an appointment – and a country – he enjoyed the most and, together with his wife, he returned to Yemen twice for a holiday in the 1970s.

After his tour in Aden, he was sent to Biggin Hill. He was approached in the bar to see if he was interested in delivering single-engine Vampires to India. Despite never having flown the type, he assured his enquirer that he had done so and was prepared to take on this "freelance" venture. Before delivering the first aircraft from the De Havilland factory, he spent the night studying the pilot's notes. All went well until the fourth delivery when the aircraft caught fire on take-off at Jodhpur.

He was rewarded with £200 for each delivery flight.

In 1954 Blount was appointed to be an equerry to The Queen in the early years of her reign. Amongst many visits, he accompanied her when she toured Nigeria in 1956 and during a state visit to Portugal a year later. It was a period Blount enjoyed greatly, in particular his visits to Sandringham and Balmoral. At the end of this three-year duty, he was appointed MVO.

Singapore

In November 1957, Blount was appointed to command 45 Squadron based in Singapore, where it was operating the single-seat Venom fighter bomber and preparing to re-equip with the twin-engine Canberra bomber. Eight crews, including Blount and his two navigators, were training on the aircraft at a base in Lincolnshire prior to deploying to Singapore.

On December 7, 1957, four aircraft, led by Blount, left the UK on a route that took them via Idris, Cyprus, Bahrain, Karachi, and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where one of the aircraft was delayed. Blount and the other two pressed on to Butterworth, near Penang, before heading for Singapore. As they approached RAF Tengah, they entered cloud when one of the aircraft collided with the rear of Blount's aircraft, severing its tail and making it uncontrollable. Blount and one of his navigators ejected at 5,000 feet.

Blount's difficulties were not over. The aircraft was inverted when he ejected, and the Martin Baker ejector seats fitted to his aircraft were an early model without the sophisticated performance and stabilisation of later seats. By the time Blount had separated from the seat, he was at low level and the parachute was open for barely 30 seconds before he landed with minor injuries in a plantation. Sadly, his second navigator was killed, as were the three men in the other Canberra. It was a tragic beginning to a new era for 45 Sqn.

After his eventful arrival in Singapore to take command of 45 Sqn, more aircraft reached the squadron and it was soon in action in support of Operation Firedog, the campaign against communist terrorists in the Malayan jungle. On March 18, 1958, Blount led the squadron's



CLOSE SHAVE: Blount walks away after making a belly landing in his Canberra when the undercarriage failed to lower after an exercise near Bangkok in 1959

first bombing mission when four aircraft dropped six 500lb bombs each on targets in the jungles of northern Malaya.

In addition to flying operations, the squadron regularly deployed to other airfields in south-east Asia to participate in regional exercises. On an exercise to Don Muang near Bangkok in March 1959, the undercarriage of Blount's Canberra would not lower, and he made a smooth landing on the aircraft's belly. Once the aircraft was recovered and jacked up, the reluctant wheel was pumped down. The damage appeared

superficial, so Blount flew the aircraft back to Singapore. In the event, the aircraft was more seriously damaged and did not fly for another six months.

On August 17, 1959, 45 Sqn flew its last Operation Firedog mission when Blount led three aircraft to bomb a terrorist camp. A few weeks later, he and his crew won a bombing competition against other local squadrons. May 26, 1960, marked the end of the popular and highly respected Blount's period in command of 45 Sqn and he handed over to his successor.

Later in 1960, Blount chose

to leave the RAF and enter the banking world in the City of London.

The debonair, quiet Blount was the oldest surviving equerry to The Queen.

In 1965, the Blount family suffered further tragedy when Christopher's elder brother, Air Commodore John Blount DFC, a former Spitfire photographic reconnaissance pilot and POW, was killed when a Whirlwind helicopter of The Queen's Flight crashed when a rotor blade failed, killing the four occupants. At the time, John was the Captain of The Queen's Flight.

ROYAL AIR FORCE RED ARROWS™



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To celebrate the Red Arrows' 60th and the Hawk's 50th anniversary, we are offering a limited edition silver hallmarked version of our wired artwork.

Each model has a 150mm wingspan, polished pure silver control surfaces, hallmark to the port rudder and the limited edition number etched backwards on the starboard rudder.

Each one is framed with deep dark flock surrounding it, to make the shape of the model and plaques stand out. In addition, each frame contains a highly reflective mirror set at 45°, conferring a second view, 90° to the main model. It is in the reflected image, on the tail, that you see the model's limited number.

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Queen's Colour chief was officer and gentleman

AIR COMMODORE Dempster Anderson, who has died aged 91, served in the RAF Regiment and commanded the RAF's Queen's Colour Squadron (QCS) on many important ceremonial occasions.

He began his National Service with the RAF Regiment in 1951 and was soon identified as officer material. He was commissioned and in 1952 elected to remain in the Service.

He first served as a flight commander with No. 194 (Rifle) Squadron. The following year he was selected to join the specially-formed RAF Regiment Coronation Squadron to represent the Corps as part of the marching procession through the streets of London on Coronation Day for HM The Queen on June 3, 1953 – his first experience of a major state ceremonial.

He then went to the Suez Canal, Egypt, and joined HQ 5 Wing RAF Regiment as signals officer. This was a very turbulent time in the Arab States as mob rule caused unrest with the military lurking in the background. King Farouk was deposed and the Wing was redeployed to RAF Habbaniya in Iraq. When the decision was made to leave Iraq, Anderson took part in the royal guard of honour for King Faisal on the formal handing over of the airfield to the Iraqi army.

The Wing then moved again, to RAF Amman, Jordan, to reinforce the defence of the station and look after the interests of the British residents.

In March 1959 Anderson joined the directing staff at the RAF College Cranwell, where his bearing, style and precision made a great and lasting impact with the flight cadets.

Singapore

This was followed by a flight commander appointment to No. 26 (Light Anti-Aircraft) Squadron, a unit equipped with the Bofors 40mm L40/70 gun. First the squadron served in Cyprus, during the Greek/Turkish unrest, and then in Singapore, where it was redeployed to reinforce the low-level air defence of the large airfield at RAF Changi during the confrontation with Indonesia. Whilst with 26 Squadron he led the parachute-trained element of the Command Desert and Jungle Parachute Rescue Teams.

In May 1967, the immaculately smart Anderson began his prestigious appointment in command of the QCS (now The King's Colour Squadron). Custodians of the RAF's Sovereign's Colour, the squadron is the RAF's dedicated ceremonial unit, responsible for representing the RAF at both state and national ceremonial occasions, and providing Guards of Honour for the Royal Family, Heads of State, dignitaries and other VIPs.

Anderson's two-year tenure was a busy period for the QCS.



CEREMONIAL COMMANDER: Anderson, right, on one of many duties with QCS

1967 was the 25th anniversary of the RAF Regiment and 1968 the 50th anniversary of the RAF. At the latter, he commanded the Royal Guard of Honour at RAF Odiham when The Queen reviewed the Royal Air Force.

He took the Regiment back to public duties at Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London, Windsor Castle and the Bank of England for the very first time since World War II – a success for the Regiment, which still shares those duties with the Brigade of Guards on a regular basis.

In 1967 he wrote the script for the Regiment's performance at the Royal Tournament in Earls Court, London – "Into action with the RAF Regiment" – with abseiling from the roof and his riflemen depicting the roles of the Regiment in protecting RAF assets at home and abroad. For the finale he introduced

for the very first time a 72-man continuity drill squad – normally it was 36-strong. With special lighting effects, and to the tune from *Thunderbirds*, the sequence, without a single word of command, was a spectacular success, and the spectators were enthralled. This event illustrated Anderson's style and panache at its best.

Panache

On completion of his tour with the QCS he was appointed MBE.

After command of the QCS, Anderson returned to Cranwell for his second tour on the staff with responsibilities for leadership training, drill and ceremonial. This afforded him the ideal opportunity to display his style and panache. He introduced a revised graduation parade, replacing the traditional

rather sombre "stop-start" RAF parade and introducing a full free-flowing one utilising all the parade ground with a change of pace from quick to slow time on the march – a delicate movement synchronised with the band. All this was with the full support of the Director of Music of the RAF College Band, with whom Anderson also introduced music from the American musicals.

The College Warrant Officer and his drill instructors were pleased. The student population was delighted, and it brought a smile to the faces of the spectators. He was not fully convinced that he had the full support of the more traditional "old and bold". However, on a future visit to the College by The Queen and Prince Philip, he noticed Prince Philip keeping time with his right foot to the tune of *When the Saints Go Marching In*. He recognised this as Royal approval.

He commanded the graduation parade for Prince Charles from the College. As a secondary duty he was appointed officer in charge of College athletics. He took a course to qualify as an Amateur Athletics Association track judge and in that capacity officiated at many major RAF sports events over the years.

In 1972 he assumed command of No. 63 Squadron RAF Regiment and oversaw its conversion to the Rapier surface-to-air missile system, the first British unit to be equipped with the capability. He took the squadron to Northern Ireland on three occasions at the height of the troubles.

Anderson was appointed to command No. 5 Wing at RAF Wittering (the full circle from his early days in Egypt) with Nos. 15 and 51 Squadrons under command. When deployed to Germany those two squadrons were in support of the Harrier Force when it deployed to its field sites. The squadrons were also involved in the roulement deployment to Northern Ireland.

After a period on the Directing Staff at the National Defence College, Latimer, he was promoted to become the Deputy Command Security Officer at Strike Command, followed on

promotion to Group Captain by a similar post at HQ RAF Germany, where he was appointed ADC to Her Majesty the Queen.

During the Falklands War he remained at HQ Strike Command as Senior Regiment Adviser to the Commander in Chief. He returned to Wittering in June 1982 to command the parade for the 40th Anniversary Royal Review of the Regiment by Her Majesty The Queen, accompanied by The Duke of Edinburgh.

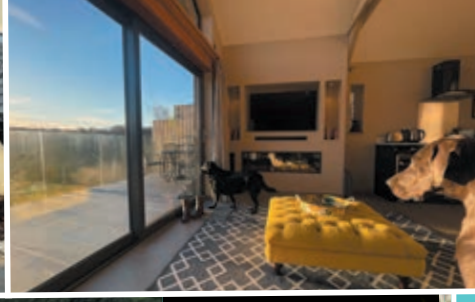
Shortly before he retired in 1987, a 90-man squad of the QCS performed a total of 2,722,662 drill movements at RAF Uxbridge from memory and without a word of command for 23hrs 55 mins to establish a Guinness World Record. Anderson and his wife paid them a visit at 0400hrs to offer support and encouragement at a point when they could be getting tired and flagging. They seemed surprised and very impressed that the Air Commodore was about at such an early hour.

Resourceful

Anderson covered the whole spectrum of Regiment duties from officer training, in-command appointments at all levels and senior staff appointments, including three tours at the Ministry of Defence, the last as Air Commodore and Director of the RAF Regiment and professional Head of the Corps.

He was the epitome of an officer and a gentleman, greatly respected at all rank levels and throughout the RAF. He was highly intelligent, resourceful, resolute and articulate, his soft Scottish tone – akin to Sean Connery – was relaxing and encouraging.

A former Regiment officer and Regimental Secretary commented: "Few people have made such a significant impact upon the Corps. He set the conditions for – and was a key ingredient of – its continued success. He was a model officer and mentor to so many over the years and served the RAF Regiment and his Service with distinction."



BRITAIN, LAND of green hills, sandy beaches and shimmering seas. Yes, our own green and pleasant land is one of the most beautiful places on Earth... if only we could guarantee the weather.

Pick it right and there are few places on the planet that rival Devon for natural beauty. June can be blissfully warm, while January brings highs of 10°C/50°F and lows of 5°C/41°F. Even at this time of year you can get amazing days of dazzling sunshine.

It's appealing, at the best of times, but I bet that many of you will have family members who will love it even more than you. These are the same family members who you can't just hop on a flight with to the Bahamas – the furry 'children'.

Devon is one of the most dog-friendly counties in the UK, with several beaches that allow hound access year-round, along with many attractions that will welcome pets. Stately homes, gardens and steam trains are all accessible with your four-legged family, so it's the perfect break to make tails wag.

Relax

Beach walks at sunset have to be at the top of our 'Relax' list and many beaches in Devon welcome dogs all year. Saunton Sands is a great place to start, while Branscombe Beach and Beer Beach both provide relaxing strolls and puppy paddles.

The South West Coast Path is also exceptional for walking. Numerous garden attractions, including several National Trust properties, will welcome you and your hound. Bicton Botanical Gardens is a great example as you pay just a £1 to take your dog. Poo bags are even provided.

Adventure

Our top tip here is a cruise down the Jurassic Coast with Stuart Line Cruises (stuartlinecruises.co.uk/dog-friendly). Dogs are welcome and vessels are large enough for it to be a relaxing experience. A cruise costs £10 per person and there is no additional charge for dogs. Bonus!

Stay

There are many dog-friendly places to stay, including hotels, holiday cottages, campsites and holiday parks, but the 'gold-standard' is Higher Wiscombe Holiday Cottages.

Nestled within the peaceful East Devon Landscape, these Five Star cottages are the perfect place to unwind. The complex sits in a 52-acre private valley, just four miles from the pristine beaches of Beer, Sidmouth and Branscombe. It's a very short drive to reach the iconic Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and those picture postcard seaside resorts.

The accommodation feels exclusive, because it is. Back in the 1970s this was home to the famous Hank Marvin, lead guitarist with The Shadows. It still has the air of being a millionaire's hideaway today, yet you don't feel like you need to stand on ceremony. In fact, the RAF family feels particularly welcome. The owners, Lorna and Alistair, have a special connection. Alistair's father served during World War II and his brother served in the 1970s. It was a



DEVON HEAVEN: (Above, left to right) Beer Beach, Beer pub, exterior of Hank's Annexe and its living area

HANK MARVIN: Loves Devon's dog-friendly beaches

Bringing dogs out from the Shadows at Hank's retreat

real pleasure hearing about their exploits.

The site is small and exclusive, with accommodation that caters for guests ranging from a party of two to a group of 34. It feels special, no matter what time of the year you visit. During the warmer months, you can enjoy the heated outdoor swimming pool and, off-season, you can cuddle up next to a cozy fire. A relaxing walk around the grounds with your dog is a joy, year-round, with a babbling stream that they will love paddling in. This is probably the most dog-friendly place in the UK. Easy access to rolling fields and cottages with private gardens are just two of the many reasons to visit.

Every cottage is well-equipped, with breathtaking rural views and a balcony area. Each boasts an en suite bathroom in every bedroom and the cottages are beautifully appointed. We stayed in Hank's Annexe, with its spacious, open plan, living area, modern kitchen, feature bath, walk-in shower room and useful office area. Bright, colourful, with bags of charisma, Lorna has done an amazing job

with the design of this captivating living area. You have to love it.

A two-night stay in Hank's Annexe, during January, costs around £650 (higherwiscombe.com).

Eat

You can immerse yourself in the culinary delights of the region, with numerous outstanding local foodie options nearby. Pick up some fresh seafood from the fishmonger on Beer Beach to cook yourself, or explore the local restaurants and pubs. Many of these allow dogs to dine with you.

Verdict

It doesn't matter whether you're considering booking your main holidobos in the Bahamas for 2025, Devon is an idyllic destination that shouldn't be missed. It's well worth booking a second trip, especially if you have hounds. If you don't have dogs, staying in Hank Marvin's private seaside retreat is still worth every penny.



HANK'S ANNEXE: Room with a view



Tim Morris

Golf R-Line 1.5-litre eTSI 150 PS 7-spd DSG (from £32,300 otr)

Motoring



FEW CARS have evolved as well as a Golf. It's a legend in the motoring world and so well engineered that it's practically indestructible.

I put that to the test last month when an idiot in an Audi SQ2, doing double the speed limit, bounced off the front wing of my test car. It had only arrived that morning and had already been fighting!

Dented, yes, scarred, yes, but incapacitated? Hell no. The golf even snapped off a bit of Audi shrapnel in an alloy wheel. Heinrich, the Audi slayer, didn't miss a beat. What a car!

I've always had a soft spot for the Golf. I had a Mk I and a Mk II way back and now, more than 50 years later, we're on the Mk IIX. It's a brilliant bit of kit.

Exterior

The latest version of the Golf is a sleek machine that remains faithful to its original profile, while flaunting new styling cues and contours that bring it bang up to date. An illuminated VW nose badge, 3D rear lights and 17-inch Coventry alloy wheels all add to the effect.

It looks good and, having decided that pictures of a car crash wouldn't be likely to sell many motors, VW kindly sent me a replacement Golf, with a tongue-in-cheek, 007-style request... 'Please do try to return this one in one piece'. Q, have I ever let you down?

Interior

The Golf has evolved well over the years. The dashboard, infotainment system and seats are all nicely updated. It's classy and as solid as you'd expect a Golf's interior to be.

The technology has really caught up with this model. Improved connectivity, paired with VW's latest MIB4 infotainment system, massively improve the car's functionality. The 12.9-inch touchscreen utilises the same operating system that you'll find in the Golf's Passat and Tiguan siblings. It's powered by a faster processor that makes the system a big improvement on the previous model.

There's still a lack of physical buttons, but the controls are now illuminated at night and there's an easy to operate row of customisable shortcut buttons. These take you, instantly, to the driver assist functions, which



Golf is tough as they come

Test car brushes off road hog skirmish

means you can shut down that annoying speed limit warning! The aircon and heated seat controls are also easy to find on the move.

On The Road

On the open road, the Golf feels as agile as it ever was. You grip the chunky steering wheel as you throw it into the bends and you can feel the weight shift in a reassuringly predictive way. Our R-Line car came with Driver Profile Selection. This allows you to engage 'Sport mode', which weights up the steering nicely and sharpens all the controls. It still feels like a Golf through fast bends, while the lighter steering makes it a nimble friend around town.

Performance varies, depending on which model you go for. The TSI 115 is a cheap way to land yourself a Golf, but the TSI 150 is a more rounded machine, with greater oomph off the mark and better range at motorway speeds. The stats on our 1.5 litre test car were 0-62mph in 8.4 secs and a top end of 139mph. Official fuel economy, on a combined cycle, was reportedly 52.6 mpg. We came close, at times.

For anyone, who wants real hot-hatch performance, however, the Golf GTI is still available at the top end. I know... going fast, having fun and hurling a car around tight bends... that's so 20th century... Who would want such a thing?

Pros

- A stylish icon
- Holds value well
- Punchy engine range
- Built like a brick privy (slays Audis)

Cons

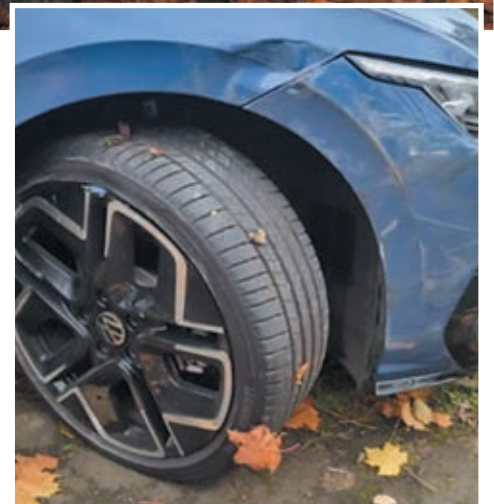
- Slow-witted auto gearbox
- A tad of road/wind noise
- Some rivals are more spacious

Verdict

VOLKSWAGEN'S GOLF has been a class leader for over half a century and remains a top choice family wagon. Some rivals, these

VW Golf

days, are better to drive and others flaunt flashier interiors, but the 2025 car is a tough act to beat for the money. It comes in many guises too. We loved our R-Line 1.5-litre eTSI 150 PS test car, but company car drivers may be better off with the eHybrid, which has a class-leading electric-only range. Then there's the GTi, which is fast, fun and solid. The Golf's still in showrooms. You know what to do.





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RAF SPORTS PEOPLE OF THE YEAR: Olympic weightlifting ace Cpl Michael Cutler and table tennis player AS1 Darcie Proud were honoured at awards ceremony at Halton House in November, inset

'Free personnel to take part in sport'

You'll reap the rewards in the workplace, Air Cdre tells chiefs

Daniel Abrahams

DIRECTOR OF RAF Sport Air Cdre Rich Fogden's clarion call for 2025 is 'To do more.'

He is not just appealing to personnel – who have continued to raise the bar – but especially to heads of departments.

A year into the biggest transformation in Air Force sport following the merger of the RAF Central Fund and Sports Federation, Fogden has told bosses that releasing personnel for sporting pursuits will bring its own rewards in the workplace.

He told them: "Heads of departments and station commanders, get your people ready and free for sport and you will get them back better people. People who are not only fit for Service life but fit for life."

"I will champion personnel getting involved, but I call on others to chip in as well. We like to say Service life is no ordinary job, but the RAF is no ordinary team and sport is the reason for that."

The Sports Federation is overseeing steady improvements to facilities – an aspect Fogden sees as key to enticing personnel into sport.

"The appetite for this is huge

and it is working, some of it on our own and some in partnership with others; such as with Donington Park for motorsport and Shrewsbury Town for football. These link-ups have worked beautifully. We are on the case, and we will get there.

"The merger was a big task, especially if you consider the 37 associations who moved with us.

"We are looking to 2025 to further leverage sport, and improve on attendance at outside venues

and to steadily improve our own facilities.

"It's a big change but the right change – professionalising sport with a small 'p'. It's something we are becoming increasingly

comfortable with."

On the widening field of sport and sports, Fogden added: "To us, the chief – Air Mshl Cab Townsend (AOC 22 Group) – participation is what 'good' looks like and I want to get everybody to have a go at something.

"We had a great year in 2024: personnel in the Olympics for one [AS1 Liam Sanford (hockey) and Gp Capt Ray Morley (boxing official)], but for me one of the reasons I feel it was a great year, was the increase in fixtures and overseas trips.

"Also, look at the sports awards – table tennis player AS1 Darcie Proud and Olympic weightlifting's Cpl Michael Cutler were the main winners, this highlights that we now offer sports across the whole spectrum, for all ages and interests. Touch Rugby is a perfect example of a sport open to all, which is growing at speed in the Service [see page 26].

"We have 90 disciplines across the sports and we are open to more."

The importance of sport to the harder aspects of Service life are clear, says Fogden. "As we get busier with operations people think we may not have time for sport, but if you make time, you



OLYMPIAN: Hockey's AS1 Liam Sanford

will be ready for operations. Sport is mission rehearsal.

"How do personnel cope with uncertainty and challenge that operations may bring? Well, get to the startline of a sport, because you will cope with them there, so you will be better as a result to face the operational requirements that are going to present themselves in all sorts of ways."

He added: "There have been too many highlights to mention in 2024, and I know I will be feeling the same in 2025. Let's get to it."



IN THE DRIVING SEAT: RAF Sports chief Air Cdre Rich Fogden is on a mission

Would you like to see your sport featured in RAF News? Send a short report (max 300 words) and a couple of photos (attached hi-res jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk



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RUGBY UNION

Tributes to rugby stalwart Worrall

Daniel Abrahams

RAF AND Forces rugby union paid its respects to one of its favourite sons this week after the death of WO Steve Worrall (Ret'd) MBE.

Worrall, 64, who played for and coached the senior men's and Combined Services teams, passed away on January 2.

He captained the CS side against New Zealand during his 35-year Service career.

Worrall was hailed as 'outstanding' by director of RAF rugby WO Tug Wilson and 'a leader and mentor' by WO Pete Taylor (Ret'd), who added: "The tributes show what Steve achieved and how highly regarded he was. I've never known anyone to say a bad word about him."

Worrall, who was working as head coach for Weston-super-Mare RFC at the time of his death, played RAF/CS rugby between 1982-96, earning a then record 28 caps for his service. During his time in RAF colours, Worrall played alongside England internationals Rory Underwood and Paul Hull.

He played six times for the CS against international tourists, captaining the side against New Zealand in 1993, kicking a penalty in a 13-3 defeat. The following year he led CS to victory over Canada, 15-12.

Taylor coached alongside Worrall between 1992 and 2009, before Worrall became Assistant Director of RAF rugby – having coached for the Service for 15 years between 1997 and 2012.

Worrall was awarded the MBE in 2011 before leaving the RAF the following year.

He later worked within the Military Aviation Authority as a civil servant at MOD Abbey Wood in Bristol, before moving into an



PLAYER & COACH: Steve (above right & inset below) was RAF and Combined Services star

Explosives Safety Licensing Team Manager position within the Defence Ordnance Safety Group in January 2014. He later returned

to the aerospace industry as a manager within Combat Air's Crew Escape Systems Team.

Wilson said: "It's with great sadness that the RAFRU was informed of Steve's passing, he was an outstanding scrum half who dedicated many decades of Service in the name of rugby, both within civilian clubs and Armed Forces rugby.

"He used his rugby knowledge and passion for the game in coaching nationally. He will be sadly missed."

Taylor, who now works as England Rugby Area Training Manager, added: "Steve was a friend, player, coach, leader and mentor to so many over so many years. I'm truly privileged to have spent so much time with him over the 35 years in the Service that saw us become very close friends."

To mark Worrall's passing his club side held a minute's silence before their next game following the announcement of his death.

He is survived by wife Jackie and daughters Meghan and Ellen.



RUGBY LEAGUE

Giant move for League's amazing Grace

RAF RUGBY league star AS1(T) Grace Burnett has joined RFL Women's Super League side Huddersfield Giants.

The signing sees the RAF women's captain trade one WSL side for another as she moves from Warrington Wolves.

Over the 2024 season, Burnett played 13 times for Warrington, scoring once.

The Cyberspace Communications Specialist said: "I have many new goals and team-mates/staff that are incredibly supportive. I did find it difficult taking the leap from Warrington Wolves to Huddersfield Giants – although I believe that the new environment is something that is more fitting for me."

Leeming-based Burnett, 22, has found the shorter commute to her new club allows her to increase her training time.

She said: "I've not only unlocked plenty of potential training time, I'm also getting the chance to see another Super League team's processes and routines.

"I have learned so much over the past 18 months about how to work as a team, and on my individual efforts too.

"I cannot wait to bring some of that experience to the RAF squad this season. This signing only increases my credibility, whether that be as a player or being granted a leadership role, such as my captaincy for the Inter-Services campaign in 2024.

"One of my goals within RAF rugby league is to encourage the perspective of enjoyment that surrounds it, no matter what level you play at."

● Go to @_rafrugbyleague on Instagram to follow RAF women's rugby league.

BASKETBALL

Hoop stars are SHAPE-ing up

HAVING SEEN out 2024 in solid style UKAF hoop stars are focusing on the new season with a spring match against GB Police.

The military set-up boasts 11 aviators, including players, coaches and managers in the men's and women's teams.

The air force links helped guide the women's team to a respectable sixth place at the SHAPE International Basketball Tournament (IBT) to close out 2024 in Mons in Belgium.

The understrength men's team struggled against strong opposition. Despite being the underdog in every game the men, under the guidance of head coach Gp Capt Chris Macintyre, gave Estonia and France (runners-up) especially tough games and were unlucky to lose to Belgium.

The IBT event is held over two weeks with friendly fixtures and training, followed by a week-long tournament between NATO military teams around the world; this year including UKAF, Netherlands, Belgium, France, USA (winners), Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

The men's team included Cpl Gabriel Cousin, Flt Lt Jamie Rodwell, AS1 Oliver Tate, AS1 Oliver Putt and Sgt Ashley Hands. The female team included AS1 Abbey Nadine, Cpl Rachel Kerr, Flt Lt Melissa Brown (Team Manager), Flt Lt Craig Percival (coach) and AS1 Stephanie Cornell – meaning the RAF had the most participants of the three Services at the SHAPE event.

Percival said: "There is little doubt that the UKAF Women are headed in the right direction. We have a core of players that are now experienced at the tournament, and the association is attempting to increase our operations in the UK.



TEAM MEMBER: AS1 Abbey Nadine

"I have no doubt that we can continue to exceed expectation and compete for a top-four finish at next year's tournament."

UKAF will now face GB Police on March 16 at Worcester Police Headquarters, Hindlip Hall, Worcester.

Social media manager AS1 Josh Gorman, added: "We're looking forward to March with our upcoming game against the Police as it's the first opportunity in years that the UKAF squad have got together for training and a game outside of the SHAPE IBT.

"This is a signal of intent for what UKAF Basketball wants to accomplish. We can only get better by playing more regularly together and working hard with one another, more training camps and fixtures in the UK and throughout the year prepare us to be a better team than we have ever been as we try to cause some upsets at SHAPE in 2025."

● Follow UKAF basketball on Instagram @ukafsport.



RAF CAPTAIN: AS1 Burnett in Inter-Services action against Royal Navy

PHOTO: SBS

Sport

TOUCH

The winning touch

Non-contact rugby a good FIT for sports chiefs

Daniel Abrahams

TOUCH RUGBY could be the Service's first non-contact, one-size-fits-all sport, if Sqn Ldr Heather Ratnage-Black and her team have their way.

She spoke to *RAF News* about the push to promote the sport which she sees as a 'dynamic solution to career-long sporting involvement'.

A series of introductory touch rugby events were held last year: the Binbrook Bomb (rugby union), the Clayton's Cup (rugby league), a Benevolent Fund invitational and a defence engagement exercise at RAF Northolt with the Japanese Navy.

The initiative is led by the RAF, working alongside England Touch – the national governing body for the sport.

SO2 Sports Policy Ratnage-Black said: "As a sport, touch rugby has long been used to develop youngsters in the two codes of rugby. We are looking to introduce it Service-wide, under Federation of International Touch (FIT) rules.

"I feel it's the perfect sport for the Service. For example, where stations are struggling to field 15-a-side teams, they can field a touch team [six players on the pitch per side at any one time] which can be played as mixed.

"Touch avoids concerns about contact and so reduces potential injuries for someone wanting to try a new, high-tempo sport, or those returning to sport after injury or time out for other reasons."

There has been interest from University Air Squadrons with cadets who, along with personnel on phase one and two training, are not allowed to take part in contact sports.

"The impact of the sport can be seen when Gp Capt Jon Hough – Deputy Director of Royal Air Force Community Rugby Union

– who tried the sport during the recent defence engagement event at Northolt, has now taken it under his RAFRU wing," the Sqn Ldr added.

"We're hoping for the sport to become embedded into grassroots Service sport.

"We have the opportunity to help personnel be active for longer in their careers, to help with their mental health and that is a huge positive for retention."

Ratnage-Black, who will be handing over the baton for all things touch to Flt Lts Chris Blandford and James Ingram later in the year, believes the next steps for the sport will be to offer regional taster games and events for personnel and to further develop engagement with England Touch officials and coaches.

● **To find out more search Directorate of Sport on Modnet.**



CHAMPION: Gp Capt Jon Hough takes part in the match against the Japanese Navy
PHOTO: AS2 DOMINIC GRAVES



SPORT FOR

ALL: Sports chief Sqn Ldr Heather Ratnage-Black (right) believes events such as the defence engagement match between RAF Northolt and Japan's Navy (left) will help promote the appeal of touch rugby to a wider audience within the RAF and the other UK Armed Forces



HOCKEY

65 sign up for 'chess on legs'



GRAND MASTERS:
AS1(T) Oscar Hill v Sqn Ldr Phil Rea

THE SERVICE'S squash players are taking to the court for three days of action at the RAF championships later this month at the Wolverhampton lawn tennis and squash club.

The Champs, which have seen entry numbers grow this year from 50 to 65, will be held from January 28-30 and feature Open, Ladies, U25s and Masters competitions. Tournament Director and

event OIC FS Simon Carr said: "The Champs are the most anticipated tournament of the year. The highest number of entrants in five years has 65 distinguished players - ranging from AS2 to Wg Cdr - who will be competing for the titles.

"More than 180 matches are set to be crammed into an action-packed, three-day event in games of 'chess on legs'"

HOCKEY

Hockey team aiming for historic 8 IS titles in row

A WINTER training camp at RAF Cosford was the venue for the start of an historic IS title defence for the Service's hockey stars.

Members of the Men's Senior squad held the strength and conditioning training camp as their preparations to retain the outdoor IS title once again began.

RAF hockey's deputy chair, Wg Cdr David Oatley, said: "Retention this year will extend the team's record level of dominance to eight consecutive years. This level of domination has never been achieved by any men's Service hockey side throughout the history of the competition."



STRONG CHANCE: Gym strength training

This year's Inter-Service championships are scheduled for March 20-23 at HMS Temeraire, Portsmouth.

● Follow RAF hockey on Instagram @rafhockey.

BMX



OUT IN FRONT:
Cpl Taylor leads the pack in Tulsa

Tulsa's Grand for Cpl Taylor

US debut third for RAF rider Chris

Daniel Abrahams

RAF BMX rider Chris Taylor snatched third place on his USA race debut at the Grand National Finals in Tulsa.

The corporal blasted his way to the podium after a composed push on the penultimate corner at the 'Biggest BMX race on Earth'.

The dynamic duo of Sgt Matt Haywood and Cpl Taylor were among around 3,500 riders from across the globe attending the annual event at the SageNet Expo Centre, comprising more than 900 motos [races] and culminating in the Grand Final.

Haywood was up first in the Race of Champions in a tough 31+ Open category. Despite his best efforts he couldn't quite manage to progress beyond the qualifying stages.

In the Grands, he was in the 45-50 Cruiser class. He was third in the first qualifying race but needed to place in the top two spots for the quarter-finals.

In his second qualifier he was looking to take the win but a collision with another rider down the first straight put the aviator off balance and sent him off the side of the second jump, ending his chances of progressing further.

Next up, Taylor in the 51-55 Intermediate class was looking for some luck after Haywood's lack of it.



'LITTLE' SOUVENIR: Cpl Chris Taylor with his giant trophy, flanked by Sgt Matt Haywood (left) and safety co-ordinator AS1(T) Callum Haywood

The airmen had arrived late to the weekend due to work commitments and were unable to attend the allocated practice day, so Taylor's first taste of the track was in his opening qualifier.

After a shaky start, he soon hit the front of the pack and led to the finish line for a win in his debut race, that saw him secure a quarter-finals berth.

He produced the same result next time out to go through to the semis, and again for a place in the finals.

A poor start in the big one saw the aviator keep a level head and begin a push to third, which he held to the line for a podium place.

● Follow RAF BMX on Instagram @bmx_raf.

5

pages of the best of **RAF** Sports action



Giants move for RL Grace

ALPINE

Up for the Challenge

Alpine warriors ready to fight for Inter-Services places



PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES: RAFWSAA chief Air Cdre Martin Cunningham



SKIER-TURNED-BOARDER:
New captain
Cpl Natalie
Fields
PHOTO: SGT
BRYANY LOWE

Daniel Abrahams

THE GREAT and the good of RAF Alpine sports have descended on Austria as the Service's championships signals the start of the 2025 season.

Exercise Alpine Challenge 25 sees ski, snowboard and telemark stars get a chance to fight for Inter-Service places, while novice personnel get a taster of the competition for the first time, looking to impress enough to win a potential starting or Hill Team spot.

Air Cdre Martin Cunningham, RAFWSAA chair, said: "This event is the culmination of over a year of tireless efforts of my entire team. Our aim is to provide opportunity from grassroots training to the

highest levels of representative sport, paving the way for Inter-Services and national selection."

One change is in the men's ski team, with ASI(T) Ricky Santamaria taking the captain's armband after the 2024 men's victory in Meribel.

He said: "It's a great honour to go to the Champs as captain. We have most of our team sorted. The Champs is a great environment to help people learn. Defending the title won't be easy, there will be great competition. We are definitely not complacent."

Fg Off Kirsty Guest, women's ski team captain, said: "We're excited for the season. We're expecting the Champs to be a fierce competition and we'll be watching the results with interest as we have a few gaps to fill for our Inter-Services squad and the girls on the development team have been

extremely impressive this year.

"My vice-captain from last year, Cpl Mel Gaffey, will be heading up the IS charge in France, where I think we have a good chance of glory."

After winning an historic first women's title in 2024, the Telemark team are facing a transitional year with men's team captain Cpl Steve Fryer injured and no current holder for the women's captain's post.

Deputy Chair of Telemark, Sqn Ldr Jonno Young, said: "We're looking forward to the

RAF Champs to develop some new talent and hopefully find some more ready to take the fight to the other Services in Meribel.

"This year will involve an element of rebuilding for both teams."

With the defence of the men's snowboard gold on the line, team captain Chf Tech Martin Boon said: "We won in 2017, 2018 and then 2024, so we're looking for consistency, we are looking to develop from the Champs.

"We've seen a change in personnel, but still have Cpl

Adam Woolley and Sqn Ldr Paddy Morris."

Debutant women's snowboard captain Cpl Natalie Fields is looking to carry on her love affair with the competition.

Fields, who went to the Champs as a skier in 2018 but came away a boarder, said: "I love the energy of the Champs and I'll be looking for that in others. We have a lot of riders but just two set team places for the Inter-Services, so the rest are up for grabs."

● Follow @RAFWSAA on Instagram.

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R'n'R



Win top aviation titles ● p5

Shylock – Tracy -Ann Oberman stars

● See page 5

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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



Film Review

Maria (12A)
In cinemas now

Jolie excels as haunted Callas

PABLO LARRAÍN'S third in an unofficial trilogy of iconic women of the 20th century, following Princess Diana and Jackie Kennedy, *Maria* is centred on Maria Callas, the legendary opera singer, in the week before her death in 1977.

Angelina Jolie is Maria, always carrying herself with an elegance that never betrays her image

– of which she is frightfully aware. Thinking about singing again for the first time in a long time, her doting housemaid (Alba Rohrwacher) and butler (Pierfrancesco Favino) do their best to care for Maria, encouraging her to eat instead of dipping into her cabinet of pills and tinctures. But Maria claims never to feel

hunger, visiting restaurants only to be adored. Cloaking her fragility, the only giveaway that something is not right, is in her 'visions'. Poised, proper but plagued by hallucinations, she will hold court with apparitions,



TOWERING PERFORMANCE: Angelina Jolie stars as haunted opera star Maria Callas in Pablo Larraín's latest film

unfazed as to whether they are real or not.

Throughout the film, Maria is interviewed by a television crew, all of whom are imagined – perhaps a Dickensian spectre of her approaching death – asking her to reflect on the past, on when and why she stopped singing. Clearly this is a story that she feels she needs to tell, to herself if anyone.

The film has the ghostly feel

of *Spencer* with its empty, palatial rooms – and with the same period and familiarity, you half expect Natalie Portman to make a cameo reprising her role as First Lady. It is paced languidly, as though at Maria's leisure, though we know that she is quickly approaching the end.

Jolie gives a towering performance, and is wholly convincing, having to lip sync many a song, managing to

capture that difficult conflict of vulnerability and empowerment through her performance, particularly as her character becomes physically weaker.

Maria is a haunting elegy to a woman who lived for her art, even as it consumed her, with Jolie delivering a performance as transcendent as the voice she seeks to reclaim.

4 out of 5 roundels ●●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Film Review

Hard Truths (12A)
In cinemas January 31

Angry Pansy sucks the joy out of everyone's life

A TERMINALLY bitter woman tries to get through her day without exploding at the minor transgressions of her family or passing strangers in Mike Leigh's uncomfortable new drama.

Pansy (Marianne Jean-Baptiste) is an intensely challenging character to watch, the polar opposite of Sally Hawkins's Poppy in Leigh's *Happy-Go-Lucky*, brimming with unrelenting positivity. Pansy is a toxic cloud, spreading negativity to whoever is closest.

Leigh uses his grounded observational style to examine the life of this woman as she clashes with all manner of people, venting over something as small as cheery charity workers in the street.

Husband Curtley (David Webber) and son Moses (Tuwaine Barrett) seem resigned to her outbursts, responding by shutting down completely. Marianne Jean-Baptiste gives a staggering performance – formidable and immensely negative, but utterly and uncomfortably believable.

Pansy's sister Chantelle (Michele Austin), the yin to her yang, is bubbly beyond belief, cheerily chatting with her hairdressing clients and constantly laughing with her two daughters. It's hard to imagine these two being acquaintances, let alone sisters. By presenting this stark contrast of personalities, the film forces



NEGATIVITY: Pansy (Marianne Jean-Baptiste)

us to consider what causes this divide. Is there a choice in how we respond to life's stresses, or is it an inherited trait? Pansy is undeniably struggling, a victim of her moods as much as anyone else, but the film does not extend sympathy in the usual manner.

You would normally expect insight into why a character is disagreeable, offering them an opportunity to change and see the error of their ways. *Hard Truths* is much more subtle than this: uninterested in explaining or transforming, it offers a stark and realistic slice of life, as painful as that may be.

4 out of 5 roundels ●●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Comedy

A Manford All Seasons
UK tour

Manford feeling the love as his tour doubles in size

FOLLOWING HUGE demand for tickets, entertainer Jason Manford has announced an additional 89 shows as part of his new live tour – *A Manford All Seasons*.

He said: "I'm absolutely blown away by the response to this tour so far. I love touring and bringing some chuckles in these difficult times and so adding these dates means I can see even more of you all over the country"

The tour, now 176 dates, kicks off on February 9 in Brighton and finishes on November 29 in Blackpool.

Salford-born Manford is considered one of the UK's leading multi-talented performers, with a career also spanning acting, presenting and singing on both stage and screen.

A seasoned presenter, he's fronted hit shows for ITV and the BBC and presents an award-winning three-hour show every Sunday on Absolute Radio.

His other TV credits include *Scarborough* (BBC One), *Live at the Apollo* (BBC One) and *Waterloo Road* (BBC One), as the head teacher.

On stage, he's starred in musicals in the West End and across the UK, including *Sweeney Todd*, *The Producers*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Guys and Dolls* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

● **Go to: JasonManford.com for full tour details.**



BUSY: Most days in 2025 are date nights for Jason



Theatre

Birdsong

UK tour

AWARD-WINNING actor Max Bowden is currently on tour with the stage version of Sebastian Faulks' acclaimed World War I novel *Birdsong*.

Bowden, who played Ben Mitchell in *EastEnders*, stars in the Original Theatre production as Jack Firebrace in the epic story of love and loss. This new production, which returned to the stage last year following a tour in 2015-16, marks the 30th anniversary of the international bestseller.

Directed by Alastair Whatley, *Birdsong* tells the story of one man's journey through an all-consuming love affair and into the horror of WWI. It's at Birmingham Rep from, January

27-February 1, Brighton's Theatre Royal from February 4-8, Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre from February 11-15, His Majesty's Theatre Aberdeen from February 18-22 and ends at Alexandra Palace, London from February 27 - March 8.

Bowden said: "Jack is a sapper, one of the Royal Engineers, and he has a lot of heart and charisma. He's representative of the kind of camaraderie a lot of the men had in the trenches. He's always trying to lift the others up, even though he's suffering from missing his wife and son back home. He's a real testament to the 'keep calm and carry on spirit' of the time."

Why does he think Faulks' novel continues to resonate with people?

"Thematically, it's as pertinent as it has ever been," he explained. "Sadly, we are living in a more divided society, in a world in conflict. The story contains all of the beauty and the cruelty of mankind. I also think it's important to inform the youth of today and their decisions by showing them what their ancestors went through to fight for their freedom. It's such an important time to tell stories like this."

He added: "The production cleverly emulates the way that war is so harsh on the senses. The creative and technical team have created a brilliant design and soundscape that really takes you into the Western Front, while also juxtaposing it with the softness and beauty of what came before. So it really echoes the evolution of the story, which is set before, during and after the war."

Original Theatre has just marked its 20th anniversary - what does the actor like about working with them?

He said: "Alastair [Whatley], the director, always puts together such an amazing company. His attention to detail is amazing, and I've seen that grow over the past 10 years. I got to watch him do some auditions recently and it just blew me away, the notes he gave were fascinating. That's



30 years of WWI's Birdsong

BOWDEN: Stars as Jack Firebrace



WAITING: On home front

why he's able to put together such a talented team."

Bowden left *EastEnders* after five years playing Ben Mitchell.

"*EastEnders* is one of the hardest gigs, if not the hardest gig, in acting, because a lot of the time you have to strip away your technique and

rely on impulse," he explained. "I carry quite a lot of 'the method' in my approach to my acting, and it's easy to get a bit lost in the work as a result. So it's shaped me in that I no longer approach anything with fear. It's a brilliant place to hone your skills, so I'm very grateful for

my time there."

Was it emotional bidding farewell to Ben?

"To an extent, in that you always wonder what they're doing now. Some characters are harder to say goodbye to than others. Ben and I had had a bit of a falling out,



Exhibitions

Leigh Bowery!

Tate Modern, February 27 to August 31

The flamboyant and provocative Leigh Bowery!



BOLD: Fergus Greer, Leigh Bowery Session 1 Look 2, 1988 © Fergus Greer Courtesy The Michael Hoppen Gallery

THIS SPRING Tate Modern will celebrate the provocative and boundary-pushing career of Leigh Bowery.

In his short but extraordinary life, Bowery (1961-1994) forged a unique path. Known variously as an artist, performer, club kid, model, TV personality, fashion designer and musician, he took on many different roles but always refused to be limited by convention, said a Tate Modern spokesperson.

"He reimagined clothing and makeup as forms of sculpture and painting, tested the limits of decorum, and created a new form of performance art to explore the body as a shape-shifting tool with the power to challenge norms of aesthetics, sexuality and gender," the spokesperson added.

"For the first time, Tate Modern will bring together Bowery's outlandish and dazzling costumes alongside paintings, photography and videos to explore how he changed art, fashion and popular culture forever.

Charting the journey of a young boy from the quiet suburb of Sunshine in Melbourne, Australia, who became a globally recognised cultural figure, *Leigh Bowery!* offers a portrait of an outrageous, complex and creative figure who left a distinct and undeniable mark on contemporary art and beyond."

Moving from the club to the stage, to the gallery and beyond, visitors are invited to step inside Bowery's dynamic creative world. Opening with his arrival in London from Australia in 1980, the exhibition, which runs from February 27 to August 31, will delve into Bowery's impact on the city's infamous nightlife scene.

Bowery cemented his international reputation with the launch of his own club night called 'Taboo' in 1985 - a liberating space offering Bowery and friends the freedom to explore their identity and transform themselves. Visitors will be able to get up close to the intricate costumes he hand-crafted with collaborator Nicola



PORTRAIT: Leigh Bowery 1991, Lucian Freud © The Lucian Freud Archive

Rainbird, who later became his wife, and corsetier Mr Pearl,

Bowery pirouetted out of the nightclub and onto the stages of the dance and art worlds. In 1984, he was invited to design the costumes

Edited by Tracey Allen



Books

A Spitfire Pilot's Story & Heathrow Airport
 amberley-books.com

Unsung hero of Battle of Britain and story of London's Heathrow

IT'S SAID that Pat Hughes is perhaps the greatest unsung hero of the Battle of Britain. Ranked sixth in the 'ace of aces' of the aerial campaign of summer 1940, he shot down at least 14 enemy aircraft, mostly the Spitfire's closely matched rival the Messerschmitt Me 109.

As a flight commander in 234 Sqn he advocated bold, close-in tactics and during July 1940 scored the squadron's first victories of the epic battle for air supremacy.

The burden of command fell on his shoulders before the squadron transferred to the heart of the Battle in the south east of England, where he endured the heaviest and most sustained period of fighting of the Battle of Britain.

Revered by his fellow pilots, Hughes began a shooting spree on August 15 that only ended when he was killed during the first huge daylight attack on London on September 7.

In his last three days alone, he contributed at least six kills.

His death in mysterious circumstances left Kathleen, his bride of just six weeks, a war widow.

A Spitfire Pilot's Story, Pat Hughes: Battle of Britain Top Gun by Dennis Newton (amberley-books.com) features more than 40 photographs, including many from his family that have never before been published.



IN THE lavishly-illustrated *Heathrow Airport, The Post-War Years* by Charles Woodley (amberley-books.com) the author reveals how the airport established itself as the country's leading aviation hub. It tracks the story from Heathrow's opening on January 1, 1946 until the transfer of long-haul services to the Central Area in the late 1950s. This era included the operations of BOAC up to the



Comet 4, as well as many foreign airlines that have since become extinct.

The book contains rare and previously unseen images throughout and is a nostalgic look back at a golden period of aviation history.

We have copies of each of these new titles up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

How many enemy aircraft did Pat Hughes shoot down in the summer of 1940?

Email your answer, marked Amberley Books 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 February 7.

Please mark on your entry whether you would prefer to win *A Spitfire Pilot's Story* or *Heathrow Airport, The Post-War Years*.



Theatre

Merchant of Venice
 UK tour

The Battle of Cable Street meets *Merchant of Venice*

FOLLOWING A sold-out run at the Criterion Theatre last year, *The Merchant of Venice 1936* starts a UK tour in February.

Tracy-Ann Oberman (*EastEnders*, *Doctor Who*, *Friday Night Dinner*) is joined by Joseph Millson (*The Last Kingdom*, *The Forsyte Saga*, RSC Associate Artist) in the critically acclaimed production.

Shakespeare's enduring classic is transported to 1930s East London against a backdrop of political unrest and the Battle of Cable Street.

Millson, whose credits include Netflix's *The Last Kingdom*, Marvel's *Moon Knight*, and Soames in *The Forsyte Saga*, plays Antonio alongside Tracy-Ann's Shylock.

Oberman said: "Having Joe join the cast of MOV36 as the merchant Antonio is the dream. He's such a wonderful actor with a great Shakespearean pedigree



TOUGH PAWNBROKER: Tracy-Ann Oberman stars as Shylock alongside Joseph Millson, inset, who plays merchant Antonio. Main photo and front: Marc Brenner

and I've always admired his work. He's not only a great friend but also an actor who I

love being on stage with." The production tours for eight weeks from February 4

visiting Liverpool, Bath, Leeds, Salford, Fareham, Cardiff, Southend and culminating in Birmingham on April 5.

With the city on the brink of political unrest, fascism sweeping across Europe and Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists threatening a paramilitary march through the Jewish East End, strong-willed single mother Shylock runs a pawnbroking business from her house in Cable Street where Mosley will march. When charismatic, anti-Semitic aristocrat Antonio comes to her for a loan, a high-stakes deal is struck. Will Shylock take her revenge, and who will pay the ultimate price?

● Goto: Merchantofvenice1936.co.uk for full tour details.

so I think it was right for me to say goodbye to him when I did," he said. Bowden first starting acting as a child. He explained: "When I was about 10 my Mum took me to a Saturday drama class in Addlestone, in Surrey, not far from where we lived. I think she realised quite quickly I had a knack for it, so from then on, I wasn't allowed to do anything else! My Dad worked in TV, so he was quite resistant to me doing it professionally because he knew the nature of the business. But I think part of Mum wanted to do it herself when she was younger, so she was always very supportive."

He also teaches acting - what advice does he give to his students?

He revealed: "Teaching is my biggest love. I love giving back and helping someone else learn the process and then flourish. I've got a profound interest in young people's development, especially since becoming a father myself. My major piece of advice is to educate yourself. Go to art galleries, listen to classical music, read history and immerse yourself in stories. If you want to be truly great you have to put the graft in."

What does he think it means to honour the memory of men like Jack Firebrace?

He said: "Honouring the memory of anybody from that era is so important. But I think Jack is particularly special. He's selfless, and sees it as his duty to keep everybody's morale up and focused on their purpose. He's a real master of that. I think he represents the everyman who fought in the trenches, so for me it's just so important to keep telling his story."

● **Interview by Theo Bosanquet**
 ● Go to: birdsongplay.com for booking details.

High Bowery

for Michael Clark's dance works, beginning a collaboration that would last almost a decade. His work with Clark will be represented in the exhibition through excerpts of Charles Atlas's quasi-fictionalised documentary *Hail the New Puritan* 1985, and the film *Because We Must* 1989.

Bowery's close friendship with Lucian Freud marked a turning point in his relationship with the contemporary art world in the late 1980s. Several of Freud's personal portraits of Bowery will be displayed at Tate Modern, showing how the renowned artist presented a fresh view of this flamboyant performer.

Bowery's final performance at London's Freedom Café in November 1994 was attended by a young Lee 'Alexander' McQueen and Lucian Freud, demonstrating how far-reaching his influence on the worlds of both art and fashion had become.

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



Your Announcements

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

Death

MAGGS Anthony, 'Tony' Maggs FS. It is with sadness that I inform you that Anthony 'Tony' Maggs, my uncle, passed away on New Year's Day. He had suffered with ill health in later years, resulting in a move from Kent to South Wales to be amongst family. Tony served at several locations with a great group of colleagues, all fondly remembered by Tony during chats about his RAF life. Postings included Akrotiri, Henlow, Swinderby, Benson, Oman, Afghanistan and Norfolk amongst others. He leaves wife Elaine, amongst family who fondly and vividly regale us with tales of their RAF life. RIP Tony.



FS Tony Maggs

Reunions

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

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, 2025, at the Marriott Delta Hotels Nottingham Belfry, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse

Way, Nottingham NG8 6PY. See website: tg11association.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: mickjwoodhouse1946@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

SUAS – have you been a member of Southampton University Air Squadron as a student or staff member? If so, please join our Facebook page, 'Southampton UAS Association' or email: 6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk to join our association community so that we can welcome you back.

Associations

TO all members and supporters of the RAF Association, Beccles and Southwold Area RMG, the New Year will bring challenges for us all, so please remember your less agile colleagues who would appreciate a voice on the telephone now and again. President Brian and the RAFA Committee, RAF Association, Beccles and Southwold Area RMG.

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. See: rafaarmourers.co.uk or please contact the committee via email: plumbersrest@outlook.com.

THE Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) is a lively, friendly, world-wide networking group. Please visit our website: arafwo.co.uk and discover the benefits of membership, plus see what activities and events we offer all over the world.

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: rafadappasn.org; or contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. For more information send an email to: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

RAF Physical Training Instructors Association holds an Annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend plus locally organised events. Please contact RAFTIA 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.



MAN AT THE TOP: Steven Sweeney is the new CEO of Forces Children Scotland

Children's charity appoints new CEO

FORCES CHILDREN Scotland has appointed Steven Sweeney as its new Chief Executive Officer. He was previously CEO at Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire.

The charity, which supports more than 13,000 children and young people from Armed Forces communities, has launched tailored digital support to help young people overcome unique challenges of deployment.

A spokesman for the charity said: "An interactive deployment rollercoaster is at its heart providing lots of information, advice and downloadable resources to help this community to navigate and understand how they may be feeling at various points of the deployment cycle.

"Deployment can be a challenging time, bringing feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and isolation throughout the seven stages of the cycle. Consultations led by the charity with this community evidenced a need for child-friendly, accessible

information," he added.

Funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and BFBS Big Salute enabled Forces Children Scotland to work directly with young people over the past year, the spokesperson said.

"Those involved shared personal experiences of deployment to co-design an interactive digital landing page and supporting downloadable resources to help alleviate challenges which can impact mental health and wellbeing, education and learning, and much more."

A young person involved in the co-production process said: "It feels great knowing that we will make a change in other people's lives and that what we have been working towards is happening and we are a part of it."

"I hope that we can help young people, especially in Armed Forces families, not stress as much about their parent being deployed, and find ways to relieve some of that stress."

Run for RAF Museum

THE RAF Museum is encouraging the public to get 2025 off to a running start.

A spokesperson said: "With the funds people raise we can open our doors for free and share extraordinary stories to thousands each year. You can support us by taking part in races such as half marathons, 10Ks and 5Ks.

"You can even take part in a Tough Mudder for us. Visit our 'Fly High and Fundraise' webpage to choose from our range of races.

"We also have exclusive access to tickets for sold-out runs, such as the Hackney Half Marathon."

● Go to: rafmuseum.org.uk/support-us/fundraise for more details.

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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



BEST FEET FORWARD: Some of the pupils taking part in the walk. *Inset*, veteran Heather Perkins

Pupils walk for vets

A SCHOOL in Surbiton is helping veterans at its local care home by taking part in a charity walk. Twenty pupils and teachers from Southborough High School will raise money for Royal Star & Garter when they take part in the 10km Winter Walk through London on January 25. Pupils visit the charity's Surbiton home regularly, working towards their Young Leaders Award, and hope to raise £1,500.

Royal Star & Garter residents have also been to Southborough

High to give talks to Year 7 students.

RAF veterans Heather Perkins and Ryan O'Connor are joining the walk to fundraise.

Heather, Senior Partnerships Officer at Royal Star & Garter, said: "This is our first fundraiser of the year and we'd love to start with a bang and raise as much money as possible, to help the veterans we care for."

● Go to: justgiving.com/page/young-leaders-charity-ambassadors to make a donation.

James joins The Long March

THIS WEEKEND British Red Cross worker James Castle is taking part in The Long March, in memory of his great-uncle, Flt Lt Tony Parsons.

James will be joining the 60-mile march from January 24-26, from Stalag Luft III (Sagan) to Spremberg in Germany.

He said: "During the march I will be carrying the flag of the DMWS (St John and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service) along the whole route and fundraising on their behalf."

"I will be proud to carry the flag of the Defence Medical Welfare Service in tribute to the prisoners of war and the support they received."

"As a Royal British Legion Standard Bearer, I am keen to show my support for the Armed Forces community."

"More than 10,000 POWs were force-marched by the Germans away from the advancing Russians. One of the POWs on the original march was my great-uncle."

"He was shot down in December 1941 and spent the next four days in an open dinghy



in the North Sea. Sadly, two of his crew died in the dinghy from hypothermia, but two of them were rescued by the German Navy.

"He spent the next year in various hospitals being treated for frostbite, before ending up at Stalag Luft III."

James added: "The Joint

Committee of the Order of St John and the Red Cross is now called the St John and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service. The Joint Committee provided the food and clothing parcels as well as the mail to the POWs."

● Go to: justgiving.com/campaign/dmwssthealongmarch to find out more and donate.



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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 377

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the nine letters in yellow squares to find an RAF station.

Across

- 1. See 17 Across
- 8. In general, a well-directed golf shot, we hear (2,3,5)
- 9. See 17 Across
- 10. Small disagreement over computer format (4)
- 12. Some rival Leyland base (6)
- 14. Desert South Africa before Scarlett decapitated (6)
- 15. Introduce the Spanish at accommodation (6)
- 17. **And 9 Across, 1 Across.** Gently whiskered, Ada upsets RAF aircraft (6,8,4)
- 18. Because Artificial Intelligence returns to this area (4)
- 19. Pilots proclaim in favour of civil engineer (3,5)
- 21. RAF system Saint George avoided, presumably (10)
- 22. At first, no underwear, divesting everything, exposed! (4)

Down

- 2. No gravitas, perhaps, but they help pilots (10)
- 3. A little takes nothing from detestable character (4)
- 4. Larking about while attending 'Macbeth' (2,4)
- 5. Bainbridge's gemstones? (6)
- 6. Television programme with songbird present (4,4)
- 7. Insect fosters first complaint (4)
- 11. Unbelievable it may affect herd (3-7)
- 13. Halt Grey disturbing sloth (8)
- 16. Studied Shakespearean King at National Theatre (6)
- 17. Pointless, badgers RAF Marshal (6)
- 18. Lieutenant's daft idea (4)
- 20. Stove found in middle of Dover North (4)

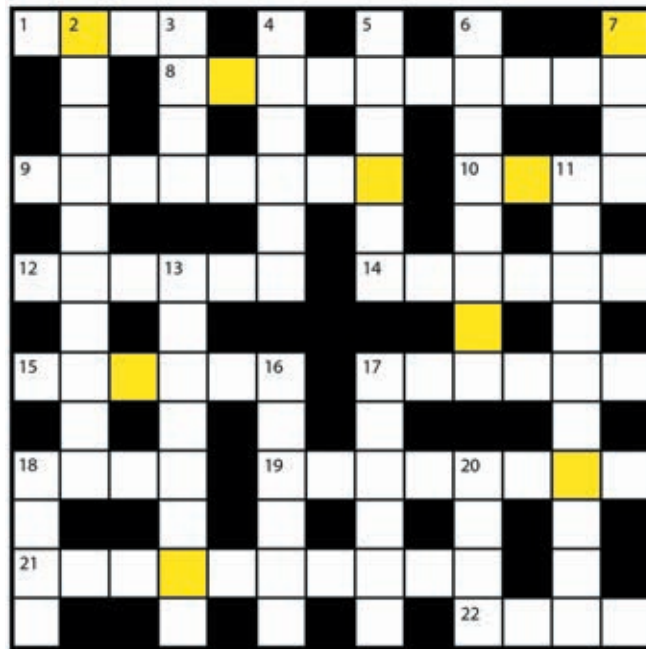
Name:

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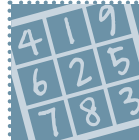
RAF station: Crossword No. 377

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 February 7, 2025. Prize Crossword No. 376 winner is: Mr John Maw, Leeds.



Solution to Crossword No. 376

Across – 7. Odiham 8. Merino 10. Karaoke 11. Green 12. Iago 13. Again 17. Costa 18. Aria 22. Brize 23. Ill Wind 24. Norton 25. Del Sol
Down – 1. Cockpit 2. Air Rage 3. Baron 4. Penguin 5. Rivet 6. Joint 9. Wedgetail 14. Boredom 15. Traipse 16. Mandela 19. Ebony 20. Diary 21. Fleet
RAF term – Protector

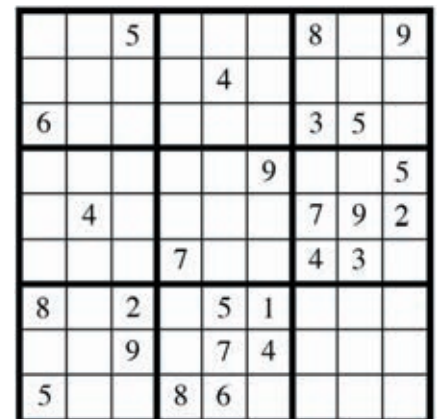


Prize Su Doku No. 387

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 February 7, 2025.

The winner of Su Doku No: 385 is: Mr P Carruthers, Pickering, North Yorkshire.



Solution to Su Doku No. 386

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



Film review We Live In Time (15)

In cinemas now

Pugh romance fail

A COUPLE play with their daughter, meet for the first time, and discuss whether they should have kids in this jumbled timeline of a romantic drama that takes place over the course of a decade.

Almut (Florence Pugh) is a fine-dining chef, who has bundles of accolades and achievements, as well as part-owning a restaurant. Tobias (Andrew Garfield) works in middle management for Weetabix, and is going through a divorce. The two collide – quite literally – when Tobias, clad in a bathrobe and chasing a dropped chocolate orange into the road, is struck by Almut's car.

This dramatic yet comical collision sparks a whirlwind romance. Played out of sequence, the film forgoes traditional rhythms, leaving us to wonder how things will happen rather than if they will at all. The drama then comes from somewhere else, from a future that is presented alongside their excited, early courtship.

Signposted by the score, the looming melancholy of *We Live In Time* reveals itself through a cancer diagnosis that will upend the protagonists' lives and force them to confront decisions about career and family planning. Tinged with a tragedy that has yet to surface, the antagonist to this love story is time itself.

Pugh gives a formidable yet grounded performance as Almut, a headstrong woman whose talents seem boundless.

By comparison, Garfield's teary-eyed Tobias, though sensitive, struggles to match her strength.



TOUGH DECISIONS AHEAD: Almut (Pugh) and Tobias (Garfield)

Meant to be the realist of the pair, his character often comes across as snivelling and possessive at his worst.

Director John Crowley, who demonstrated a tender observational style in period drama *Brooklyn*, offers moments of levity, but they feel all too contrived. Rather than adding complexity or emotional depth, the time jumps interrupt the flow, leaving many scenes feeling incomplete.

Though the film feels incredibly artificial on the whole, the bond between Tobias and Almut is convincing, and their chemistry provides a glimmer of authenticity that may give audiences with a way in.

Two roundels out of five 🟡🟡

Review by Sam Cooney



Food An Evening With Rick Stein

UK tour

Stein's got a taste for touring

MULTI-AWARD-winning chef, restaurateur, writer and presenter Rick Stein is heading back out on the road in March following the success of his tour last year.

Kicking off in Brighton on March 2 at the Theatre Royal, the 11-date tour will travel to theatres around the country, culminating on March 15 at Kendal's Leisure Centre.

An Evening with Rick Stein will see the culinary legend dish up his favourite memories from nearly 50 years of gastronomic experience. Delving deep into his lifelong love affair with cooking, this live stage show will explore his unwavering devotion to the brilliance of great British produce. Revelations from the kitchen, musical delights, poetic interludes and stories of global adventures are all on the menu.

Stein said: "I loved touring in 2024 – as I said before, it's a bit like being in a band – so I'm really looking forward to these new dates and visiting other parts of the country. I hope that more people will come to hear my stories and enjoy them as much as I do telling them."



RICK STEIN: Love affair with food

With more than 25 cookery books, 30 TV programmes including 12 cookery series, 10 restaurants and several hotels, Stein is one of the country's most well-known chefs.

● Go to: RickStein.Live for full tour details.