

The Forces' favourite paper

Duchess meets personnel and families during Wittering visit

See page 13



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, March 7, 2025
Edition No. 1603

Only 99p

RAF NEWS



Highland fling for 28(AC) Sqn

See pages 14-15



Rugby Women in late winner



See p23

Darts Double joy at arrows



See p25

Alpine IS gold rush



See pages 27-28

Warrior nations



Simon Mander
BRITAIN'S TOP air training event takes off from RAF air stations across the country this month.
More than 50 aircraft are taking part in the latest Exercise Cobra Warrior, the largest RAF-run combat drill with Nato allies and partners from the Gulf.
● See page 3 for report

BiteSize

“I’m determined to achieve the goal of flying solo”



Brize Norton pilot scholarship winner AS1(T) Joshua Dodwell See p7

“I was born in London in 1943... I was aware what war did to flesh”



War Horse author Michael Morpurgo See R'n'R pp4-5

“I thank the players for their efforts and the memories they’ve given me”



U23s football boss Sgt Danny Bartley signs off after four seasons at helm See p26



ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

RAF News Room 68 Lancaster Building HQ Air Command High Wycombe Buckinghamshire HP14 4UE

Editor: Simon Williams Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk

Features Editor: Tracey Allen Email: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

News Editor: Simon Mander

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

All advertising: Edwin Rodrigues Tel: 07482 571535 Email: edwin.rodrigues@rafnews.co.uk

Subscriptions and distribution: RAF News Subscriptions c/o Intermedia, Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre, Kelvin Lane, Crawley RH10 9PE Tel: 01293 312191 Email: rafnews@intermedia.co.uk

Defence budget boost

PRIME MINISTER Sir Keir Starmer has announced that the budget for UK Defence will rise to 2.5 per cent of the nation's economic output by 2027.

In a further boost for the British Armed Forces he said the government was committed to increasing spending on defence to three per cent following the next General Election.

The Prime Minister made the pledge ahead of high-level talks with US President Donald Trump in Washington and comes as the war in Ukraine enters its fourth year.

Prime Minister Starmer said: “In an ever more dangerous world, increasing the resilience of our country so we can protect the British people, resist future shocks and bolster British interests is vital.

“By spending more on defence, we will deliver the stability that underpins economic growth and will unlock prosperity through new jobs, skills and opportunity across the country.”



BUDGET PLEDGE: PM Sir Keir Starmer chats to RAF personnel during a recent trip to Akrotiri

This Week In History



1941 Halifax debut

THE FIRST bombing operation by the RAF's Halifax is mounted as 35 Sqn take part in a raid on the French port of Le Havre.

1944 Stalag break-out

ALLIED AIRMEN stage a mass break-out from the Stalag Luft III camp in Poland by tunnelling under the wire in what later became known as The Great Escape.



1975 Vietnam evacuation

A RAF Hercules evacuates civilians from Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, in the final hours of the war in Vietnam.

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

Strength in numbers



FLIGHT CHECKS: Ground crew work on F-16

Allies put interoperability to test on Europe's biggest air exercise



FIREPOWER: Royal Saudi Air Force F-15

● **Continued from front page**

Royal Saudi Air Force F-15s, Turkish Air Force F-16s and French Air Force Rafales flew into Waddington to train alongside UK Typhoons from Lossiemouth and Coningsby.

Waddington OC Operations Wg Cdr Colin Melvin said: "Exercise Cobra Warrior is collective training with our allies and partners and what the public should see is a lot of activity from fast jets and air transport coming in and out.

"What we get out of it is being able to make operations more successful in the future."

The manoeuvres pit pilots against air defences and electronic jamming devices at Spadeadam, Otterburn and across England to simulate realistic threats they will face if called on to fight.

Cyber communication specialists from 90 Signals Unit are setting up and maintaining secure communication links and Tactical Air Traffic Controllers and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers will take part in the exercise.

Meteor-ic rise of F-35



A US Marine Corps F-35B has conducted the first test flights of the Meteor missile at the US Naval Air Station at Patuxent River, ahead of planned use on the UK's own Lockheed stealth jets.

Air Cdre Al Roberts said: "Inclusion of Meteor onto the Lightning II will bring this formidable air combat capability

to the UK and to the burgeoning F-35 community, significantly enhancing security among allies."

Meteor is the UK's primary air-to-air weapons system and is already in use on the Typhoon Eurofighter.



FRENCH RAFALE

Directing staff based at Waddington will orchestrate missions from multiple locations including bases at Lossiemouth, Coningsby, Brize Norton and Leeming.

Exercise director Gp Capt Jim Calvert said: "We are extremely fortunate in the UK to run and host the premier air exercise in Europe.

"Exercise Cobra Warrior 25-1 is where we are now, with Cobra Warrior 25-2 happening later in the year.

"The key aim of the Exercise is to integrate with the other nations, ensuring compatibility between what we do."



RAF A400M

Support comes from air-to-air refuelling tankers and transport aircraft with the French MRTT working with RAF C-17, A400M and Voyagers flying from Brize Norton.

Rotary-wing aircraft also have a role, with Chinooks flying out of Leeming.



**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**



We're here to support you

Whether you've served for a day or decades, as a Regular or Reserve, we're here for you and your family.

- ✓ Wellbeing support including counselling
- ✓ Financial assistance
- ✓ Relationship, family and youth support
- ✓ Mobility and home adaptations
- ✓ Welfare breaks
- ✓ Friendship and connections



Scan
me with
your
camera



Visit rafbf.org/get-support

Call our helpline **0300 102 1919**

Horsa hero who cheated death by a few inches

Bullet smashed into cockpit and hit cig pack - now Walter marks 101st



LUCKY STRIKE: Top, Cigarette box took Nazi round during Allied Horsa glider mission launched as part of Operation Varsity. Inset below, Walter Martin in 1945 and last year. PHOTOS: AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH



Simon Mander

ONE OF the last surviving pilots of the Allied operation to cross the Rhine into central German in the final months of World War II has revealed how he cheated death when his cigarette packet was pierced by a bullet.

Walter Martin will be marking the 80th anniversary of Operation Varsity as he prepares to celebrate his 101st birthday at his Eastbourne home.

The campaign, to establish a bridgehead over the River Rhine, involved 1,300 gliders and he was one of only 39 pilots out of 600 who managed to land their Horsa aircraft.

And it was thanks to some Sweet Caporal cigarettes that Walter survived when a bullet smashed through his windscreen, missing him by inches.

He said: "There was quite a bit of flak being sent up to greet us as we approached to land and a rifle bullet made a hole through a packet of cigarettes just by my side in the cockpit. They had been given to me by our Canadian tow pilot just before we took off."

Operation Varsity took place in March 1945 when Allied airmen and troops boarded British Horsas and Hamilcars, big enough to carry a seven-ton tank, to



be flown to the Hamminkeln and Wesel area.

Flight time from take-off in Essex to destination was three and three-quarter hours and the RAF had spent all night bombing Wesel in preparation for the drop.

Mr Martin said: "We had a few tense moments. Landing, I pushed the stick forward to make the nose wheel dig in, take some speed off and make the aircraft stall. It did! The Jerries were

sniping at us and my co-pilot and I ran and laid low in a ditch.

"We returned to the aircraft 45 minutes later and the Jeep, the gun, the ammunition and the troops we were carrying had all gone."

RAF personnel were not expected to fight with the Army and were given POWs to guard.

Mr Martin said: "The atmosphere tended to be light-hearted, but we were reminded that this was war when, making a sort of headquarters, we realised that a tree above us held the dead body of a paratrooper, hanging upside down by his straps.

"Another grim facet of war was revealed to me when I came across one of the Army glider pilots cutting off the finger of a dead soldier to take his ring.

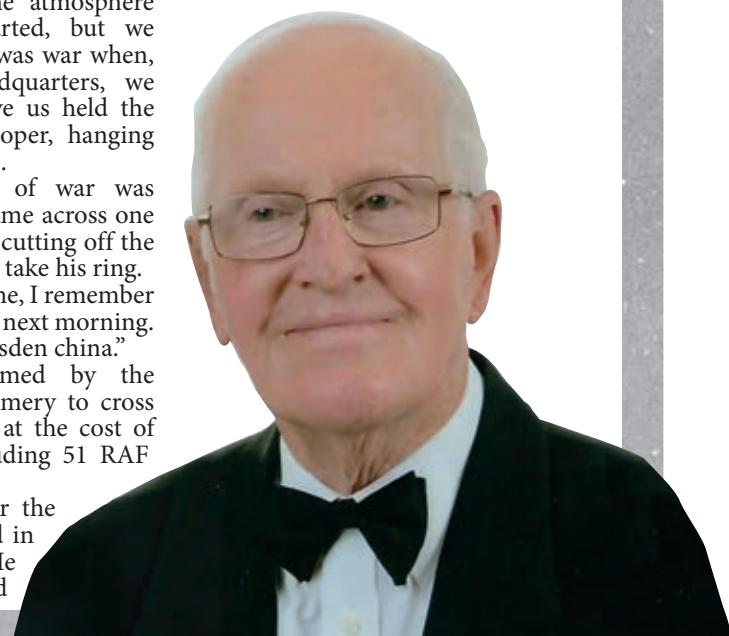
"Lastly, and to my shame, I remember looting a farm cottage the next morning. I stole some pieces of Dresden china."

The bridgehead formed by the mission enabled Montgomery to cross the Rhine in a day, but at the cost of more than 2,000 - including 51 RAF pilots.

Walter volunteered for the RAF aged 19 and trained in Canada and Arizona. He graduated and returned

to the UK and was seconded to fly gliders with 600 new RAF pilots used to make up the Army's disastrous losses at Arnhem.

The Horsa was made of plywood by furniture companies and carried two pilots and up to 30 troops. With a wingspan of 88 feet it was as big as the Dakota used to tow it.





STONYHURST

AGES 3-18

Creating **men & women** *for others*



Forces families pay no more than 10% of the annual CEA allowance.
7 day full boarding tradition and child centred academic pathway.
Stonyhurst offers accompanied travel and on-site accommodation
for visiting forces families.



Scan the QR code
to book your place



Open Days **in March & May**



Co-ed 3-18 | Boarding & Day | Jesuit, Catholic School



stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays

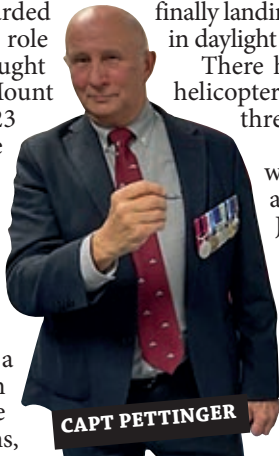
Falklands hero signs on

Simon Mander

A FORMER Para who won the Distinguished Conduct Medal during the Falklands War has signed on Cranwell's Wall of Honour – after returning from personally delivering humanitarian aid in Ukraine.

Capt (Ret'd) John 'JP' Pettinger was awarded the decoration for his role during the bitterly fought night-time assault on Mount Longdon in which 23 British troops were killed.

Speaking to Aircrew SERE Training Centre students following their survival training, 'JP' told how, after signing up in the Army as a Junior Soldier a little ahead of his 15th birthday in 1968, he served in campaigns,



including Northern Ireland and Malaya.

In April 1982 JP and 3 Para were called back from leave and joined the Canberra to sail to the South Atlantic.

On board HMS Intrepid, he witnessed the death of close friends when a Sea King was forced to ditch off the stern, and sailed on, finally landing at Port San Carlos in daylight by landing craft.

There he saw two Gazelle helicopters shot down killing three pilots and crew.

Spending weeks with little support and limited kit, JP often crawled within feet of enemy troops at night as they slept or chatted in their trenches, gathering crucial intelligence.

After tabbing

towards Port Stanley, the unit found themselves tasked to recce Mount Longdon.

His citation for the DCM awarded after the battle reads: 'Whilst acting with dash and determination he carried out many assaults against strong points that night killing at least three enemy. He displayed the highest standards of professional skill, alertness and accuracy of reporting, coolness in the face of the enemy as well as courage during the actual assault.'

After completing his regular service with the Army as a WO1 and RSM, JP joined the TA (10 Para) as a C/Sgt and was then commissioned to become the Admin Officer for 144 Parachute Medical Sqn.

After 36 years' service he worked in close protection and sailing instruction, from which he recently retired.



Robo-dog is Spot on

DEFENCE BOFFINS unleashed their latest weapon against the IED threat – a robotic dog equipped with a high-energy 'distrupter'.

During the latest tests, the Boston Dynamic-built 'Spot the Dog' robot neutralised an explosive device using the carbon-fire gadget which

shoots a high-energy projectile or fluid into the threat to destroy critical components.

A spokesman for the MOD said: "Robots that can defuse explosives are set to revolutionise bomb disposal operations and significantly reduce the risk to military personnel."

Off to a flyer

Brize debutants net scholarships

Alex Gill

Brize Norton

BRIZE PERSONNEL from across the ranks are taking to the skies after clinching the station's flying scholarships.

This year more than 450 would-be pilots applied for the seven places on the Junior Ranks and Officers Pilot Scholarship Scheme and Introductory Flight Scholarship.

Both schemes are funded by the RAF Charitable Trust to give personnel in non-flying roles exposure to flight and the ability to follow their passion for aviation.

The JROPSS is a 15-hour flying scholarship with the aim of allowing students to fly a light aircraft solo. The IFS is a one-hour introductory flight, giving the individuals a basic introduction.

Among this year's successful candidates is AS1 Joshua Dodwell who is aiming to gain his Private Pilot's Licence with the help of 15 hours of free training.

He said: "I was absolutely thrilled to hear from the Station Commander that I'd been awarded the scholarship.

"This was my fourth time applying for the scheme as it's always been something I've wanted to do, so I kept persevering and was finally selected. I'm determined to achieve the goal of flying solo at the end of my 15 hours and take



READY FOR TAKE-OFF: Scholarship winners Fg Off Genevieve Roos (left), AS1(T) Joshua Dodwell and AS1 Kezia Cannon (right), with Station Commander Gp Capt Lou Henton

my flying even further with the hopes of achieving my Private Pilot's Licence."

Other winners of the JROPSS scheme are Fg Off Tully, AS1 Cannon and AS1 Glynn. The winners of the shorter introductory course are Fg Off Genevieve Roos,

AS1 Jackson and Cpl Cook.

Brize Station Commander Lou Henton said: "I had the privilege today of informing a handful of our personnel that they'd been selected for this scheme, which was a closely kept secret and a complete surprise for them.

"The team have done incredibly well to have been selected from such a large group of applicants and it's fantastic that they now get to go and experience flying, utilising our very own flying club facility here at RAF Brize Norton."



PLEDGE: Defence Secretary Healey during a recent meeting with President Zelensky

Ukraine aid

Simon Mander

BRITAIN IS doubling funding for medical and rehabilitation services in Ukraine to £20million to help rebuild a military hospital damaged by Russian airstrikes.

The initiative aims to strengthen Ukraine's ability to care for wounded soldiers after three years of war.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "Ukrainians need our support to keep them in the fight and to put their nation in the strongest possible position ahead of any talks."

British military medics have produced 50 instruction videos, and 100 Ukrainian surgeons, doctors and nurses will train in the UK this year.

Defence Medical Services personnel are working closely with the Armed Forces' Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall, a world-leading facility for treating battlefield injuries.

The UK has already invested in Ukraine's rehabilitation facilities, covering major structural repairs, £300,000 in gym equipment and £400,000 in prosthetics and medical supplies.

This latest medical aid package is part of a £4.5bn UK military support plan for Ukraine this year.



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III
MEDALLISTS
WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD
BROMSGROVE



WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

Specialists in the manufacture and supply
of full and miniature size medals,
medal mounting and framing.

Visit Our Website:
www.worcmedals.com

+44(0)1527 835375

sales@worcmedals.com

124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ



In Brief



TAKE-OFF: Ground crews clear snow and ice on the runway at Mount Pleasant

Runway success

Staff Reporter
Mount Pleasant

WORK TO resurface part of the airfield in the Falkland Islands has been completed ahead of schedule.

The Mount Pleasant Complex is the RAF's air link with the UK.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation awarded a £20 million contract to Mitie in October and the work was undertaken by specialist sub-contractors from Britain.

It saw the removal of 20,000 square metres of tarmac and its replacement with a high quality asphalt.

Resurfacing took place on the Foxtrot taxiway, where aircraft touch down when landing.

All equipment and materials had to be transported by ship 8,000 miles from the UK.

Mitie managing director Charlie Antelme said: "The dedication shown by all has paid off in the form of an early completion ahead of the winter."

The project was supported by Royal Engineers who ensured the team could work effectively around continuing air operations without needing lengthy pauses to either flying operations or construction.

Chop Gun

Doug's saddling up with 70s icon for Dambusters anniversary ride



OLD SCHOOL: Veteran Doug is clocking up the miles on his vintage Raleigh Chopper during training for his tribute ride

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE veteran Douglas Gowans is saddling up for a ride from Derbyshire to Germany in memory of the Dambusters – on his vintage Raleigh Chopper.

The former Binbrook Serviceman and Hullavington mobile balloon team member hopes his iconic 70s machine will raise money for MIND and The Royal British Legion.

He said: "The little bike breaks down barriers in a way that a standard-looking bike never can. It's great as a means of informing people about what you are doing and why, and helps with donations."

"I have a 10-mile route that I do which takes about 55 minutes on my normal bike. It took me over two hours to get round it on the Raleigh Chopper as a result of people stopping to talk to me."

Mr Gowans, who lives in Chapel-en-le-Frith, was inspired by his local war memorial – dedicated to Dambuster Flt Lt Bill Astell, who flew on the first wave of nine aircraft attacking the Mohne Dam.

He said: "Sadly his aircraft was shot down on the outbound leg, crashing in a field near Marbeck in Germany, where there is a small memorial to the crew."

On the anniversary of the mission Mr Gowans has arranged a service of remembrance where the local vicar will bless a wreath he will take to Germany.

He will set off on the Raleigh Chopper to Hull docks for an overnight ferry and ride on through Holland, hoping to arrive at Marbeck after another four days in the saddle

"I'll meet two ex-RAF pals and as the sun sets we will have a short ceremony at

the crash site memorial and lay the wreath," said Mr Gowans.

In 2018, Doug rode from Whitehaven to Tynemouth on a borrowed Chopper, raising £3,500 for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

And in 2019, he was part of a group of three riders completing the same 132-mile route non-stop in 15 hours and 46 minutes, riding through the night for Macmillan Cancer Support and Children with Cancer UK.

Mr Gowans said: "Serving at RAF Binbrook opened my eyes to the sacrifice made by the volunteer aircrews in WWII."

"Binbrook's 460 RAAF Sqn had among the highest losses of any bomber base, with more than 1,050 aircrew killed in 18 months"

● To support Doug's mission go to: [justgiving.com/page/douglas-gowans-1730567450412](https://www.justgiving.com/page/douglas-gowans-1730567450412)

Squadron memorial marks anniversary

Staff Reporter
RAF Coningsby

CONINGSBY'S 12 Sqn marked its 110th anniversary with the unveiling of a new memorial in honour of more than 1,000 personnel who have died in the line of duty since its formation as part of the Royal Flying Corps in 1915.

The service was led by station chaplain, Rev Wg Cdr Ian Brown, and attended by serving members of the squadron, a

team from the nearby Binbrook Collection and the RAF Wickenby Memorial Museum, where the unit was originally based.

Speaking during the dedication service, Rev Brown said: "The memorial is a lasting tribute, and sign of deep gratitude to those who have worn the squadron's badge."

"Their memory continues to inspire us and we commit ourselves anew to the values of freedom and sacrifice."



SACRIFICE: Rev Ian Brown leads the service at the dedication of the new 12 Sqn memorial at RAF Coningsby



Malay day

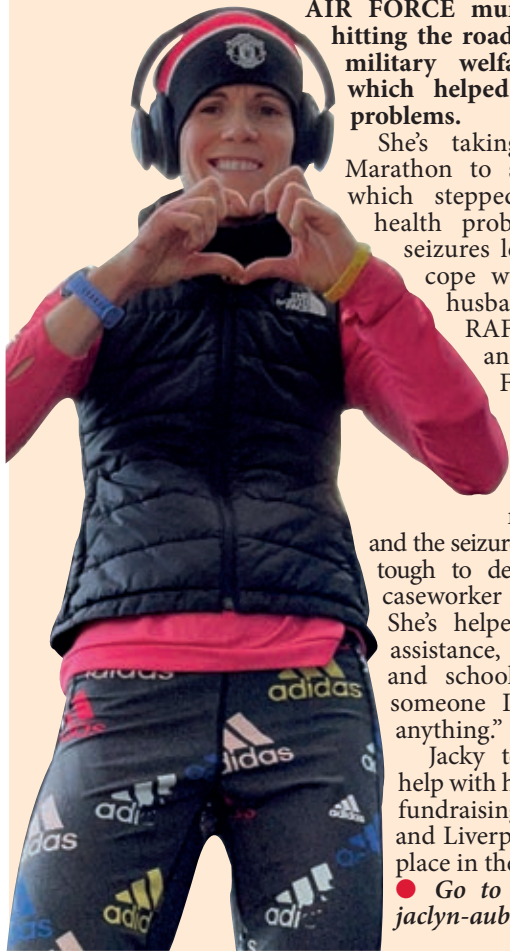
AIRMAN FS Dave Burton is backing a charity bid to complete a 660km ride across Malaysia to support local veterans.

He is part of the team helping Army pals Maj Doug Webster and Lt Cdr Tom Hanks, who will brave tropical heat to climb to more than 8,000m during the challenge to raise funds for the Penang Veterans Association.

News

Mum's on the run

Staff Reporter



AIR FORCE mum Jacky Aubrey is hitting the road to raise money for military welfare group SSAFA, which helped her battle health problems.

She's taking on the London Marathon to support the charity which stepped in when mental health problems and epileptic seizures left her struggling to cope with family life with husband John, based at RAF High Wycombe, and two young children Freya and Zac.

Jacky, who grew up in an RAF family, said: "I've struggled with my physical and mental health for years and the seizures have been especially tough to deal with. My SSAFA caseworker has been amazing. She's helped me find medical assistance, liaised with doctors and schools, and generally is someone I can talk to about anything."

Jacky took up running to help with her symptoms and did fundraising runs in Brighton and Liverpool before winning a place in the London Marathon.

● Go to justgiving.com/page/jaclyn-aubrey

Tanks a lot

A400 fuels Typhoon anti-terror mission



TYPHOONS ON operations against Daesh Islamist terrorists have refuelled for the first time from a Luftwaffe A400M.

The day and night manoeuvres, known as taking on 'Purple Gas,' are designed to increase UK capability while fighting as part of the international Coalition in Iraq and eastern Syria.

Middle East chief Wg Cdr Chris Pearson said: "Developing this new capability is extremely

important as it adds increased flexibility and agility to our air operations here. Operating together strengthens the Coalition collectively."

Voyagers from Brize regularly refuel other partners' aircraft.

An RAF Typhoon pilot added: "Refuelling from A400M was different because of subtleties such as refuelling airspeed, hose response, markings, basket size, shape and aircraft lighting at night.

"The German crews were extremely professional and we enjoy working with them a great deal."

CAPABILITY LUFT: UK Typhoon closes in on German A400M for refuelling during a sortie targeting Daesh terrorists

RAF SPORTS LOTTERY

THE VITAL LIFELINE FOR RAF SPORT

DID YOU KNOW? Your membership helps to provide the majority of the much needed funding for sport in the RAF.

Support your RAF charity by playing today at:

www.rafcf.org.uk



1ST PRIZE
£10,000

2ND PRIZE
£3,000

3RD PRIZE
£2,000

RAFCentralFund

BeGambleAware.org

The RAF Sports Lottery operates as a society lottery within the Royal Air Force Central Fund and is licensed and regulated by the Gambling Commission (www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk). The Royal Air Force Central Fund is a company registered in England and Wales 8555984, Charity registered in England and Wales 1152560, Charity registered in Scotland SC044299.

You may know of some of those in need. Help us locate them.

Together we can make this a happier year for the thousands of Veterans who have failed to claim the pensions to which they are entitled. Every year, some 2,000 Armed Forces pensions go unclaimed. According to the latest AFPS Annual Report, almost 15,000 pensions in total have yet to be claimed.

The Forces Pension Society Charitable Fund (the charity arm of the Forces Pension Society) has a primary aim of providing relief for those who served in the Armed Forces and are in need by virtue of financial hardship, sickness, disability, or the effects of old age. Now we're calling on the military community, and those in the wider society, to help us ensure unclaimed pensions find their way into the hands of those who earned them; in many cases, involving substantial sums.

Why is this happening?

Armed Forces Pensions are not paid automatically. Veterans have to apply to Veterans UK using AFPS Form 8. Many have left the services without appreciating they have to make a formal application. It's a system that needs reform and we will campaign for all Veterans to be notified of their pension entitlement. But for the present, anyone serving after April 1975, now aged 60 or over, could have an Armed Forces pension if they served for two years or more.

What you can do to help

You may know some of those in need. Please consider whether there is anyone you served with or you know who might not be receiving any Armed Forces pension income. And if they aren't, please direct them to the Forces Pension Society's website using the QR code below or by visiting our special Unclaimed Pensions Help page at forcespensionsociety.org/unclaimedpensions

You can also support our campaign with a donation or via a legacy the details of which you will also find on our web page.

Unclaimed Pensions and the Armed Forces Covenant

The Government has indicated its strong support for the Armed Forces Covenant. In that spirit, we invite it to do two things: update the rules so that all Veterans, current and future are notified of their pension entitlement, and to increase their efforts to identify those who have not claimed their pension to date and endeavour to contact them.



**! Help us unite Veterans
with their pensions**

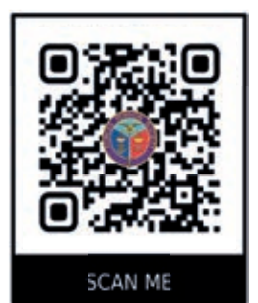
Forces Pension Society Charitable Fund

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL

T: 020 7820 9988

forcespensionsociety.org/unclaimedpensions

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



SCAN ME

Royal Air Force In Concert

Lincoln Cathedral VE Day 80

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Lincoln Cathedral Choir

Compere Melvyn Prior

7.30pm Saturday 17 May 2025

Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 11 July 2025

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 19 September 2025

Cast, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

3pm Sunday 21 September 2025

Epsom Playhouse

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7pm Friday 17 October 2025



 **ROYAL AIR FORCE Music**
Charitable Trust

www.rafmct.uk





HONOUR: Flt Lt Langan at West Point

Jim's on Point

CAS FELLOWSHIP scholar Flt Lt James Langan took to the podium at the US West Point academy to present his research on UK strategic alliances over the last three centuries.

The former NCO addressed US top brass at the legendary academy's annual security seminar after completing his studies on a Chief of the Air Staff's Fellowship at Cambridge University.

Flt Lt Langan said: "It was an incredible honour and a highlight of my career. I take the RAF's investment in me seriously?"

Forces families first for Sophie

THE DUCHESS of Edinburgh was introduced to Forces families at Wittering as the station marked its royal links this month.

HRH Sophie, who is an Honorary Air Commodore at the base, was introduced to RAF parents and their children during a tour of the community projects before chatting to personnel at 3 Mobile Catering Sqn, the Tutor Display team and Cambridge University Air Squadron students.

She was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Station Commander Wg Cdr Nikki Duncan's daughter, Amelia.

Wg Cdr Duncan said: "It was a tremendous honour to welcome Her Royal Highness, whose interest in our work and time spent engaging with personnel at all levels made this a truly memorable visit."



SCRAMBLE: Lossiemouth Mountain Rescue team stretcher one of the hikers stranded in Arctic conditions in the Highlands

Highland SOS for stranded hikers

Simon Mander

AIR FORCE rescuers worked through the night to save two stranded walkers from treacherous terrain in Scotland's Glencoe.

Climbers from Lossiemouth's Mountain Rescue Team were called in while on their way for routine winter training after the pair became stuck 700m up in hazardous conditions which grounded the Coastguard helicopter.

Braving high winds, poor

visibility and unstable snow, the RAF advance party scaled Buachaille Etive Mòr and located two casualties after hearing whistle blasts and spotting torchlight.

A primary assessment revealed that one of them had suffered a shoulder injury and was unable to walk, while the second, though mildly hypothermic, could descend with assistance.

The rescue team split into two groups, one to establish anchor points for a multi-stage stretcher lower, and another to deliver

medical and technical rescue equipment to the site.

Lowering the injured walker onto a stretcher, the second casualty was assisted using an abseil and after 12 hours of intense effort the uninjured walker reached their vehicle at the roadside, while the injured casualty was handed over to an ambulance.

The combined effort by the Lossiemouth and the civilian Lochaber Mountain rescue team likely saved the lives of the two civilians.

St Mawgan nets Sanctuary double

Tara Stiles

St Mawgan

GREEN SCHEMES at an RAF station are up for two of this year's Sanctuary Awards.

St Mawgan, near Newquay in Cornwall, has been nominated in both the Heritage and Environmental Enhancement Award categories.

In 2024, its Ribbon of Poppies living memorial to those who have died in war aimed to reverse a 97 per cent decline of the nation's wildflowers since World War II, when veterans and Service children joined personnel to sow seeds at the memorial stone.

The base also tapped into its location on the Cornish coast and its Coastal Command history by transforming scallop shells and local cane bamboo into 'poppies,' planted around the monument.

The station is also seeking an environmental enhancement award for its Wellbeing Garden, developed during the Covid pandemic.

A community garden followed, and landscaping has transformed the derelict area, formerly the site of the guardroom, into rewilded areas with play zones.

St Mawgan also embraced 'No Mow May,' which led to cuts in the use of 100 litres of herbicide



GREEN SCHEME: Volunteers in action



and 400 litres of fuel, and a hedgehog release site was established, since which 100 of the animals have been freed.

Personnel and children planted more than 300 mixed fruit trees alongside 200 broadleaf trees under The Queen's Green Canopy initiative, known as the 'Platinum Orchard.'

Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard said: "With the deeply concerning effects of climate change being felt around the globe, the Ministry of Defence has an increasingly important need to preserve its capabilities through innovative sustainable initiatives, ensuring there is no detrimental impact on the UK's ability to fight and win in an ever more hostile and unforgiving world."

Northern exposure

COMBAT helicopters have deployed to remote parts of Scotland to hone the agile combat skills they will need in the war zone.

Exercise Kukri Dawn is the final assessment pilots, crew members and engineers from Benson-based 28 (Army Co-operation) Sqn are put through by its Operational Conversion Unit before being posted to their first frontline mission.

Navigator Sqn Ldr Chris Middleton, who planned the training, said: "It is the culmination of all the skills we have taught the students over the last eight months, which are now being applied in an incredibly intense and challenging environment."

Leuchars

The aircraft operate from the former RAF Leuchars airbase on the Fife coast, which policed northern UK air space throughout the Cold War before being transferred to the Army in 2015. And its location, as a former home for Phantom and Tornado aircraft and search and rescue helicopters, is ideal for the trainees.

"It is of massive operational benefit for the students to be based at Leuchars Station," said Sqn Ldr Middleton.

"The local environment's weather and terrain allows us to mirror the real-life taskings the trainees will one day have to undertake.

Mountains

"Critically, the nearby mountains give the students the opportunity to apply their learning to a more challenging landscape, relevant when they conduct evasive manoeuvres."

Students on 28 Sqn flying Chinook and Puma will be tested on a variety of real-life scenarios in their final pass or fail exercise.

This can vary from carrying troops to austere locations in the Highlands to evading simulated air to ground threats or supporting the police on large-scale crowd-control exercises.

While based at Leuchars aircrew work alongside soldiers from 2REME, 51 Brigade and the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, ferrying troops into the Highlands as they would in real life.

Still fast and agile, the Puma can carry 16 passengers, 12 fully-equipped troops or up to two tonnes of equipment, some of it stowed in the cabin.



PLANNING: Personnel ensure all goes smoothly

In its medical evacuation role, it carries up to six stretchers and the aircraft can be broken down and flown across the world by C-17 transporters.

Puma student Flt Lt Patrick Osborne said: "This exercise is really beneficial because rehearsing troop movements and being tested on casualty evacuations whilst in unfamiliar airspace is a good way to test us and all the skills we have learned over the eight-month course."

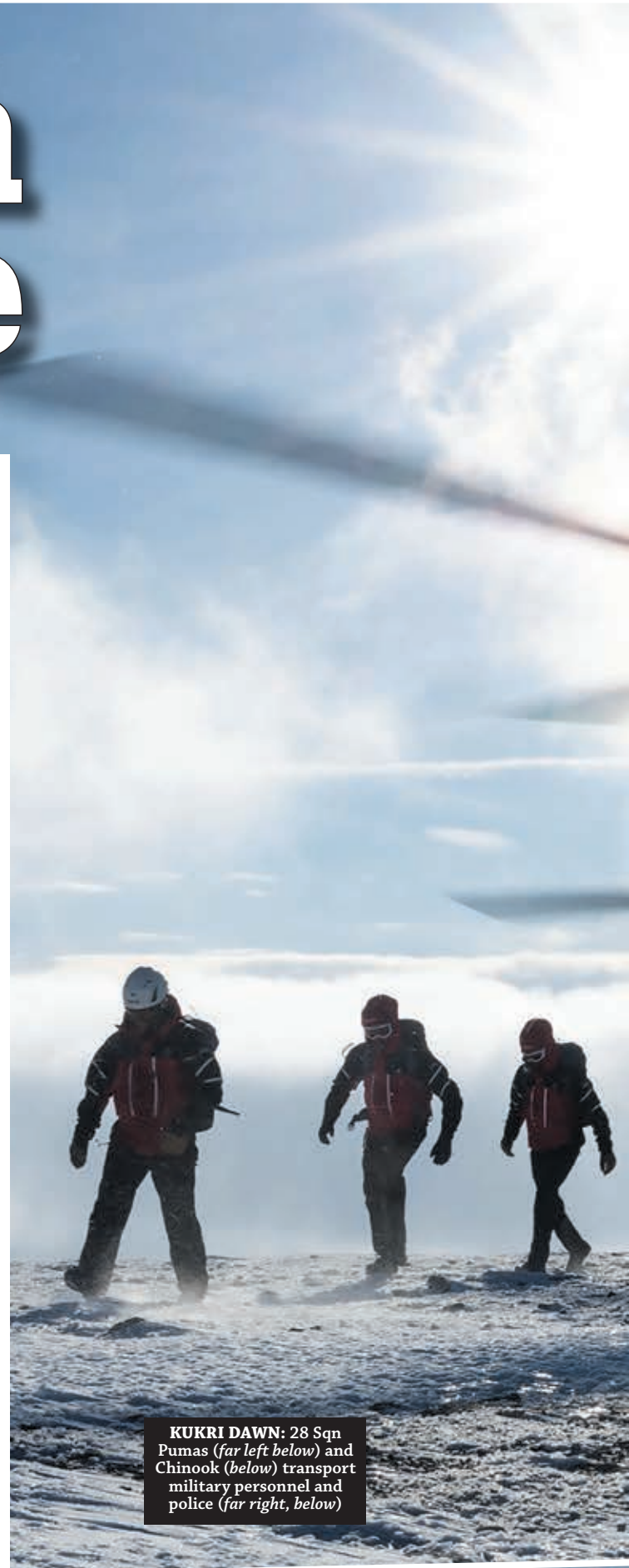
Chinook students were also deployed to Leuchars to conduct underslung loading sorties under the watchful eye of Joint Helicopter Support Sqn personnel.

The 10-strong team practised landings in different and often remote locations, and support sorties requiring the students to carry underslung loads including the Panther protected mobility vehicle, Land Rover and trailer.

Police

RAF Benson in South Oxfordshire is a support helicopter main operating base currently home to two frontline Puma HC2 helicopter squadrons and one Operational Conversion Unit, flying a mix of Puma and Chinook helicopters. It is also home to 22 Sqn.

The base is also home to the civilian National Police Air Service and the Thames Valley Air Ambulance, which operates 24 hours a day.



KUKRI DAWN: 28 Sqn Pumas (far left below) and Chinook (below) transport military personnel and police (far right, below)



by Simon Mander

Highland Kukri Dawn honing chopper crews for the frontline



There's time to paws with therapy dogs

A QUARTET of springer spaniel assistance dogs arrived on the Highland frontline as air crews wound up operations following the 10-day war drill.

The canine companions made the flying visit to the exercise detachment with owner Kerry Irvine (*below*), who works with military vets suffering from mental health issues.



Kerry, who runs the Max Out organisation from his base in the Lake District, said: "It was a great honour to join with the team and spend some time with 28 Squadron and the dogs thoroughly enjoyed meeting and greeting the students on their break."

Sqn Ldr Chris Middleton added: "It's always great to meet inspiring people like Kerry, who have made huge strides to help those in the military with mental health issues, and learn of his huge charity fundraising."

"We talked of recent operations and how many of us have experienced difficult times. Kerry is doing what we all need to do, namely more talking and spreading the burden."

DROP-OFF: 28 Sqn Chinook brings people in for Exercise PHOTOS: AS1 NATHAN EVANS





2 DAY EVENT
26-27 MARCH 2025

FARNBOROUGH
 INTERNATIONAL

**EXHIBITION &
 CONFERENCE
 CENTRE**

3000+
Attendees

220+
**Exhibition
 Stands**

120+
Sessions



CONFIRMED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS INCLUDE

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
|  Maria Eagle MP Minister of State, Minister for Defence Procurement & Industry |  Andrew Forzani Director General Commercial, Ministry of Defence |  Tim Sheldon Chief Delivery Officer, Dstl |  Avril Jolliffe Director General Industry, Trade and Economic Security Ministry of Defence |  Julie Brettell Supply Chain Director, Ministry of Defence |  Lt. General Sir Rob Magowan KCB CBE Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Military Capability), Ministry of Defence |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|

DP RTE 2025 WILL FOCUS ON THE MAIN EVENT THEMES BELOW

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
|  Infrastructure & Estates |  Digital, Data & Technology |  Science & Innovation |  Market Engagement and Exporting |  Equipment & Supplies |  Supply Chain & Partnering |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|

REGISTER TODAY FOR YOUR COMPLIMENTARY MOD/PUBLIC SECTOR TICKET www.dprte.co.uk

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT PARTNERS



EVENT DELIVERED BY



BiP
 SOLUTIONS
 Inspiring Innovation and
 Excellence Since 1984

Please note letters must be a maximum of 300 words and any accompanying pictures sent as attached, hi-res JPEG files.

Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk Post: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE

Letters

RAF News competition book prizes made our day



JUST A quick note to thank you for the book prize about Cyprus that I was lucky enough to win (*Long Shadow In Cyprus* by MJW Clark).

I had the privilege of serving at both Nicosia and Akrotiri between 1962 and 1964. They were great times, as island-wide travel was easily done, all restrictions having been lifted. I'm sure the book will bring back many happy memories.

Once again, very many thanks from an avid *RAF News* reader.
Dennis Songhurst

I HAVE just returned home from a few days away and found the book *One of Our Pilots is Safe* by Sqn Ldr William Simpson DFC, OBE on my desk, awaiting my arrival.

So, just a short email to thank you very much indeed for this - I have entered many competitions in the past which have proved unsuccessful, so to be successful is most pleasing!

Thank you once again
William Bishop

THANK YOU for my book prize, *Spitfire Pilot, Air Commodore Geoffrey Stephenson*. Wonderful surprise.

Rick Aldous



NEW MAN: Dr Seb Ritchie takes over from Seb Cox, right and below

Seb Cox is leading historian of Service

THE RETIREMENT of Seb Cox, OBE as Head of Air Historical Branch is a sad moment after so many years, though it is pleasing to note that he intends to remain active in the field of RAF history.

Many would argue that he is the leading, living, historian of the Service. His contribution to our understanding of the development of military aviation has been immense.

One of Seb's achievements has been the development of an outstanding team around him. With that in mind, the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust congratulates Dr Seb Ritchie on his appointment as Head of AHB.

Richard Hunting CBE, Chairman, Battle of Britain Memorial Trust



Books

Arab war on Al-Qaeda and Houthis in Yemen

MICHAEL KNIGHTS writes raw and atmospheric contemporary military history. He focuses on one of the world's most inhospitable and dangerous environments, the multi-faceted, enduring conflict in Yemen.

The Race to Mukalla (Profile editions, £25, profileeditions.com) adheres to his winning formula. It complements his earlier *25 Days to Aden*, culminating in the struggle for the Yemeni port city of Mukalla on the Gulf of Aden in 2016. It features a rogue's gallery of the early 21st century Persian Gulf, notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Iranian-backed Houthi militia.

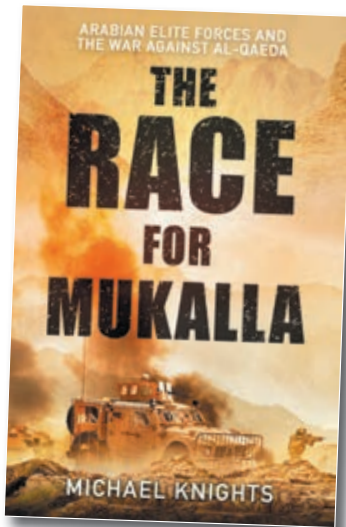
Knights, a British-born, American-based specialist of the region, tells the story from the standpoint of the armed forces of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They gave him access to their personnel. Their accounts of the fighting are his major primary source. He chronicles their planning, setbacks and successes with skill. It is a little-known story well worth telling. The book benefits from excellent maps throughout and 57 colour images

It highlights the expansion of AQAP and Houthi power in Yemen during the 2011-15 period and details the UAE's role in Saudi-led Arab coalition efforts in 2015-16 to support Yemen's internationally-recognised government. This comprised the campaigns of Aden, Marib and Mukalla, the first covered in *25 Days to Aden*.

Arab forces were at the forefront. The Americans would not refuel UAE aircraft or let their Apache helicopters land on US Navy ships. Foes knew that Emirati jets could operate for just 10 minutes over the battlefield.

Much of this book focuses on the 2015 campaign to repulse the Houthis and their local allies from the key central Yemeni town of Marib. The Houthis aimed to seize Yemen's largest oil and gas fields.

During the operation, the UAE experienced its first mass casualty event. In September 2015, a Houthi Tochka missile hit the base of Safer, killing 67 Gulf personnel, 52 from the UAE. Some 209 were wounded, 162 from the UAE, two of the latter later died. Putting this into



perspective, based on the UAE's 1.4 million inhabitants, per head of the population this equates to 2,392 deaths in the UK.

Nevertheless, the UAE and its Arab allies were not done and pressed on with air support provided by Apache helicopters, Hellfire guided missiles and high explosive rockets.

Knights points to the heavy losses suffered by the Houthis and by Yemenis fighting on both sides

during the mountain battle for Marib. These are little known. The world's focus was on the struggle against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Throughout the book there are fascinating insights into the complex relationships with Yemeni tribes, the feuds, the vendettas and the partiality for war prizes. Knights underlines the importance the UAE placed on engaging with the tribes and training and arming their men. He admires the people of Yemen and describes their fondness for qat (khat), which found its way to every battlefield, being chewed daily like tobacco. AQAP frowned on the practice.

Following the Marib campaign, the liberation of Mukalla after a brutal year of rule by AQAP and their associates was achieved in April 2016. Although the UAE controlled the operation, they wanted the Yemenis to liberate their city.

Satellite, drone, aircraft reconnaissance and human intelligence was exploited by the UAE's planners of the land and amphibious operations. They attempted to minimise collateral damage, adopting a lighter touch

approach than witnessed in the devastating struggles with ISIS for Raqqa, Mosul and Ramadi. The priority was to liberate the city, not level it. There were no civilian deaths from Coalition air strikes. No UAE special forces personnel were killed in the liberation.

Indeed, certain western media outlets suggested a truce was concluded with AQAP to let its leaders escape. Knights rejects this. Some AQAP leaders left before the assault and others were captured later. A column of vehicles left the city but with positive identity impossible the Emiratis decided not to target them. A risky signature-type drone strike was not the Emirati way. However, it was not bloodless. Yemeni losses were considerable, and AQAP later mounted further deadly suicide attacks in the city.

This is close quarter all-action contemporary military history, further enhanced by plenty of valuable perspective. It is an impressive account of one brutal period in Yemen's neglected and often turbulent history.

Review by Alastair Noble

Graduations



HOT SHOT: AS2 Abbott with SAC Luders Trophy



RECRUITS' RECRUIT: AS2 Hinchcliffe



KNOWS THE DRILL: AS2 Hall



TOP JNCO: Cpl King with Cpl Bradfield Trophy

WORTH SHOUTING ABOUT: New Gunners on the parade ground
PHOTOS: AS1 HARRIS WILLIAMS



BEST RECRUIT: AS2 Abbott



WO RAMSEY CUP: AS2 Chugg

Gunners have eyes on prize

Staff Reporter

THE NEWEST members of the RAF Regiment have graduated from Trainee Gunner Course 3-24, Meiktila Flight at RAF Honington.

The new graduates were accompanied with The King's Colour for the RAF Regiment on parade. Chaplain Rev (Sqn Ldr) Cook delivered the blessings and loved ones watched with pride from the sidelines of the Parade Square.

Representatives from all the receiving RAF Regiment Units met the new arrivals and their families after the event.

Head of Strategic Workforce Planning and Recruitment Air Cdre David Crook was the Reviewing Officer and he congratulated the new Gunners on their future roles within the Regiment.

On graduating the Gunners



are posted to either No. 1 Sqn RAF Regt at Honington, No. II Sqn RAF Regt (Brize Norton), No. 15 Sqn RAF Regt (Marham), No. 34 Sqn RAF Regt (Leeming), No. 51 Sqn RAF Regt (Lossiemouth) or No. 63 Sqn RAF Regt (Northolt).

The course prize winners were:

● Frank Silvester

Trophy for best all-round Trainee Gunner – **AS2 Abbott.**

● The RAF Regt Association Trophy for Drill and Department – **AS2 Hall.**

● WO Ramsey Physical Development Cup – **AS2 Chugg.**

● LAC Beard Recruits' Trophy – **AS2 Hinchcliffe.**

● SAC Luders Champion Shot Trophy – **AS2 Abbott.**

● Cpl Bradfield Trophy for JNCOs – **Cpl King.**

Sqn Ldr Stanley Booker MBE

Obituary

SQUADRON LEADER Stanley Booker, who has died at 102, was a Bomber Command veteran and one of the last survivors of the 168 Allied airmen captured and interned in Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

He joined the RAF as an apprentice clerk on April 26, 1939, and spent the early years of the war as a clerk before volunteering for aircrew duties. He trained as a navigator and joined 10 Squadron at Melbourne, near York.

On the night of June 3, 1944, he was the navigator of a Halifax bomber tasked to attack the marshalling yards at Trappes, near Paris. Enemy night fighters had congregated and attacked. Twelve per cent of the bomber force was lost, including Booker's aircraft. His pilot was killed in the attack and the crew baled out.

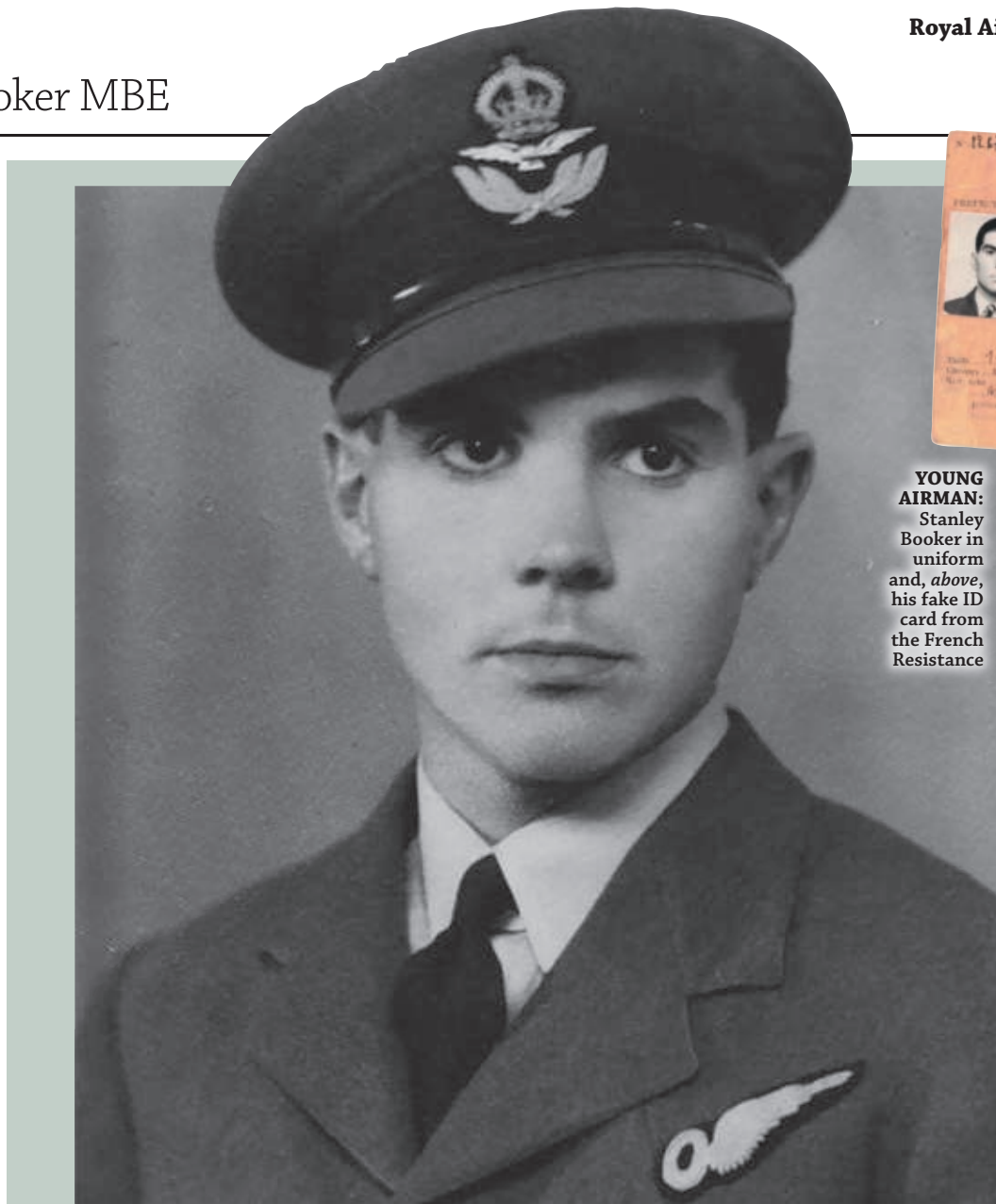
After landing safely, he was assisted by the French Resistance but was betrayed to the Gestapo and captured. He was taken to the large Fresnes Prison south of Paris, where he was severely beaten and tortured.

On August 15, 1944, five days before Paris was liberated, he was taken with a group of 167 other airmen in grossly overcrowded cattle trucks to Buchenwald, a journey that took five days with little water, food or sanitation. The senior member of the party was a New Zealand pilot, Sqn Ldr Phil Lamason, who insisted on military discipline and bearing to show their captors that they should be treated as military captives and in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

The men were harshly treated on a near starvation diet, and they witnessed many horrors, not least the execution of some Special Operations Executive (SOE) officers.

In early October, the airmen learned that the Gestapo had ordered their execution and efforts to contact the Luftwaffe, who always insisted that airmen POWs were their responsibility, were increased. Lamason told a trustworthy Dutch contact who worked in the camp administrative area of his efforts and on October 19, Luftwaffe officers arrived at Buchenwald and demanded the release of the airmen. They were transferred to Stalag Luft III, the scene of the Great Escape, where the appearance of the shaven-headed and emaciated men shocked the POWs at Sagan.

At the end of January, the camp was evacuated as the Soviet Army advanced from the east. The prisoners were force-marched westwards in the worst winter weather experienced for many years. During The Long March Booker and his colleagues suffered badly as they trudged westwards. He was eventually liberated at the end of hostilities, having been held back with hundreds of other prisoners by the Russians as a bargaining chip with the West.



YOUNG AIRMAN: Stanley Booker in uniform and, above, his fake ID card from the French Resistance



Survivor of Buchenwald Concentration Camp and champion of PoW causes

After recuperating from his ordeal as a POW, he returned to flying with Transport Command. He flew in Dakotas with 77 and 62 Sqns before joining 206 Sqn at Lyneham, which was equipped with the four-engine Avro York. Following the closure of the overland and air routes to the

Allied controlled city of Berlin, the western powers established Operation Plainfare, to deliver and resupply vital goods to the citizens in the western zone of Berlin. Between November 1948 and August 1949, Booker flew an incredible 227 sorties as part of the now famous Berlin Airlift

from the RAF controlled airfield at Wunstorf in West Germany into Gatow, the RAF terminal in Berlin, at a time when one aircraft was said to be landing in the beleaguered city every three minutes.

He was recruited into the Intelligence services, and served

first in Hamburg before being promoted, in his words, "to the first team" in Berlin.

He was responsible for monitoring the activities at Gross Doelln, a large airfield then under construction north of Berlin in 1954. The length of the runways (more than 3,000m) convinced the intelligence community that they were being prepared for use by Russia's long-range bombing force of Bear and Bison aircraft, which could reach the eastern coast of the US. Shortly after, shorter-range Ilyushin Beagle bombers arrived, not the long-range aircraft that had been predicted.

After a return to the UK and to 206 Sqn, now as a navigator on the RAF's long-range maritime reconnaissance force, Booker returned to Berlin for a second tour in intelligence. He told his biographer, Sean Feast, "Berlin was John le Carré at its best, a murky world of intrigue and dirty goings on in which I felt completely at home."

His return coincided with the unmasking of George Blake, who shared a neighbouring office, after which, Booker recounted "all hell broke loose." Blake had betrayed the presence of a secret tunnel into East Berlin that the Allies had been using to listen in to Russian military communications. He also feared, but never knew for certain, that he had betrayed what they knew of Gross Doelln.

Booker retired from the RAF in June 1973 having been appointed MBE.

In later life, he was a fierce campaigner for the compensation due to Allied prisoners which he was in part denied because there was no evidence that he had ever been in a concentration camp. He risked going back into East Germany, despite being a known former intelligence officer, in the early 1980s, and not only found the evidence he needed, but also ensured that the British were part of future commemorations. He prepared an official report on the presence of the British military at Buchenwald on the instructions of the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

He continued campaigning about the historic injustices suffered by surviving prisoners until well into his 90s.

In 1999 he wrote about his experiences and published *Jump into Hell*. In 2021 the French Government appointed him as a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur.

ROYAL AIR FORCE RED ARROWS™



Our ultimate tribute to the Red Arrows, in their 60th Year.

Friendly Skies has been supplying unique artwork to the aviation sector for nearly a quarter of a century.

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.

The inner frame is trimmed with RAF Red and Blue, mounted on white core card to provide the white colour of the RAF. The area around the frame can be adorned with anything on a plaque that you require; in addition we have secured the use of MOD insignia to complete the frame officially.

Cost delivered anywhere in the UK is £2995.00 and a 50% deposit is required to place the order.

There are premiums of numbers 1 to 10, so secure your number now!

www.friendlyskies.co.uk/redarrows

Tel : 01252 675678

models@friendlyskies.co.uk



NB: ALL RAF INSIGNIA SUBJECT TO CROWN COPYRIGHT

PERSONAL PLAQUES TOGETHER WITH ANY, OR ALL, OF THE ABOVE RAF INSIGNIA MAY BE BUILT INTO YOUR FRAME





Tim Morris

Volkswagen ID.7 (from £51,580 otr)

Motoring



Son of Passat

VOLKSWAGEN'S NEW ID.7 is a stylish bit of kit. It is the brand's latest flagship executive saloon, taking the place of the trusted Passat (now only available in estate guise). Advertised with a potential range of 436 miles per charge, the ID.7 pushes large EVs into relatively uncharted territory. It's big, it's sleek and it's powerful. Exactly what an executive saloon should be.

Outside

The true size of the ID.7 doesn't hit you until you see it in the metal. It's epic. At over 16 feet long, it's larger than a Merc EQE! VW's designers have pulled out all the stops to give it flowing lines, a streamlined nose and 'fastback'-style tail. Sleek lights, signature sports alloys and a colour-contrasted roof all help to make it look like a powerful machine.

Inside

The ID.7's interior quality is significantly better than other EVs in the range. The materials on show range from vegan leather seats to suede door

Pros

- Big and comfortable
- Impressive range for an EV
- Solid and safe

Cons

- Lacks organic feel of Passat
- Tricky menu controls
- Pricier than some rivals

Verdict

The VW ID.7 delivers a more comfortable ride for passengers than many of its rivals and it's not a

VW ID.7

bad drive either. Cost is a consideration, because it's pricey, but it does come with bags of kit to justify the outlay. It offers long-range capability, loads of interior space and plenty of luxury features, including those massage seats. VW is very proud of its new flagship EV and you have to agree that it's impressive.

inserts. Glossy black trim and soft-touch plastics complete the look elsewhere. The 15-inch infotainment screen dominates the dashboard, giving the cabin a bright, futuristic ambiance.

It looks just as good at night, with adaptable ambient lighting, and nicely-illuminated controls. The touchscreen's responses are quick and its epic proportions make it easy to read at a glance.

It's really easy to get comfortable behind the wheel and the driving position is well-

judged. The pedals and wheel line up nicely and there's plenty of electric adjustment on the seats. These are supple, but supportive, with memory functions and massage features.

It's a very clever car, all round, with lots of high-tech features. Some are brilliant, some are a little overcomplicated, in my book. Take the air vent controls. These are operated through the climate control menu, with no manual switches on the vents. You can set custom settings that



waft air and hit just the right spot, but you may end up in a hedge doing it. Clever, but too clever.

Back seat passengers can really spread out with limo-like leg room and plenty of shoulder space. Wherever you sit, long journeys are a relaxing affair in an ID.7.

On The Road

The ID.7 is a supremely comfortable exec for wafting along the motorway. Tyre and wind noise are impressively subdued.

It's not particularly tuned for snapping around hairpin bends but the standard suspension does a good job of reducing body lean. Adaptive suspension,

called Dynamic Chassis Control (DCC), is available as an option on Pro and Pro S versions (standard on the GTX) to iron out rough road surfaces and give a more sophisticated ride, should you want more comfort.

Steering is accurate and the car grips well. It feels agile on a rapid run. It soon tells you when it's being pushed too hard though, losing its composure and allowing its heft to show. On the upside, you can feel that it's rear-wheel-drive. You're not going to be getting the back out, but it cancels understeer nicely and gives a satisfying thud in the rear under acceleration. All-in-all, it's a relaxed, refined and quiet big car for cruising.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

EMPLOYER
RECOGNITION
SCHEME

GOLD AWARD

★ Trustpilot



Reviews 5,624

WiFi for the RAF

Private internet access to browse, stream and game
at your air base and 150 MOD sites

- ✓ Flexible subscriptions – pause up to twice a year
- ✓ Unlimited data
- ✓ Unfiltered content



Connect to **Wifinity PAYG**
or visit wifinity.co.uk/get-online

wifinity

RUGBY UNION

Debutant Howcroft's try in the nick of time

Women warm up for IS

Staff Reporter

A LAST gasp 30-29 victory against a formidable British Police side saw the RAF women's rugby union juggernaut continue its impressive IS warm-up match series.

Debutant Fg Off Fleur Howcroft stole the show for the aviators, scoring the decisive try as the Service side racked up a total of 95 points in two warm-up games.

In only her second match in charge, head coach Sgt Sian Williams said: "I was proud of the entire squad today. They faced a really strong Police side who asked us lots of questions, but the players kept going and were justly rewarded."

Following a 65-10 win over Ruislip in their previous match, the women's team produced another pulsating encounter at Oxford Harlequins' Horspath Sports ground, clinching a nerve-wracking one-point victory.

The co-captained team,



RAF Women 30

British Police Women 29

with Flt Lts Lucy Nye and Sarah Graham at the helm, showcased remarkable resilience and determination throughout, which bodes well going into the upcoming Inter-Service championships.

AS1 Kim Grundy opened the scoring, while Cpls Annie Forbes and Kat Robinson produced continual turnover with some heavy tackles throughout the opening half.

Tries from Cpl Daisey Fahey, and AS1 Freya Gracie helped the RAF establish a 15-5 lead at the break.

AS1 Shannon Pasotti provided defensive solidity while also making crucial line breaks then touched down as the Service side looked to put clear water between themselves and their opponents.

A second half Forbes try



CITIZENS' ARREST: Police player is detained by Sgt Annie Forbes and Flt Lt Sarah Graham-Jenkins (above) and, inset left, Forbes celebrates with Flt Lt Yasmin Suer

extended the RAF's lead, but with the game looking safe, the Police fought back to retake the lead 29-

25 with time running out, only for one last dramatic twist from Howcroft.

● Follow RAF women's rugby union on Instagram @rafrugbyunion.

Team on cloud nine after try fest against GB Police

"WE ARE in a good place," proclaimed RAFRU head coach FS Tom Gardner after his team's 47-13 trouncing of GB Police at Sixways Stadium, Worcester.

Speaking to RAF News Sport following the penultimate IS warm-up game, Gardner added: "We probably left another 40 points out there. In the analysis I showed the boys after there were four tries in the first half and three in the second that went begging."

"I do not expect all of them to be completed, but if we succeed with 50 per cent, that's another 20 points to add to the score."

The aviators will now face Luctonians at the end of the

RAF Men 47

GB Police 13

month after strength and conditioning camps, before facing the Royal Navy in the championship opener on April 19 at Northampton Saints, Cinch Stadium, Franklin Gardens.

The clash at Sixways saw a hat-trick of tries from team captain Cpl Mark Williams, a brace for AS1(T) Kieron Prescott and singles for AS1 Kieran Jenkins, Cpl Harry Challenor, Fg Off Alex Stanley and Cpl Chris Williams.

The result saw the aviators up their try count in each of their

last three matches: from four three games ago against Cardiff Met in January, to six against Oxford Harlequins and now nine against GB Police. The increased try count comes as the side are reducing points conceded: from 29 against Cardiff, 19 against Quins and 14 against GB Police.

Gardner said: "We had nine changes, but the performance was still there. Consistency in performance with squad rotation means we are a dangerous team."

"I want to win, so we needed to change a lot and drop players who I did not think were good enough. Our coaches, management, medical team and



RAF MEN: Hitting form

players all are working their behinds off.

"With the Police, we wanted an arm wrestle in the first half, so we set for that then changed things in the second half and ran in 47 unanswered points. I wanted the lads to learn how to solve problems on the pitch and exposing them is the only way.

"Following the Luctonians game I have to cut the squad from 36 to 29, those lucky players selected can then get on with executing an IS-winning championship."

● For tickets to the IS opening clash visit: eticketing.co.uk/northamptonsts/EDP/Event/Index/357.

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



RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

Reaching an audience of more than 50,000 readers every fortnight, **RAF News** is the Forces' favourite newspaper delivering exclusive news, features and sports action from across UK Defence.

To discuss your advertising in **RAF News** please call or email:
T: +44 (0)7482 571535
E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk

RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force

INVICTUS GAMES

Team GB runners up at first hybrid Games



CAPTAIN MARVEL: Cpl Hooper, centre, with rugby team



SILVER LINING: Sqn Ldr Thomas, left, won curling silver



FAN FAVOURITE: Wheelchair rugby, and, inset, the biathlon on the slopes PHOTOS: ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Daniel Abrahams

TEAM GB produced an incredible second place in the final standings with a medal haul of 38 from the first-ever summer/winter Invictus Games in Vancouver Whistler.

There were a series of successes in the new winter sports arenas as well as team plaudits, but it was in the tried and tested sports of rowing and swimming that saw Team UK produce the most podium finishes.

Team GB vice-captain Sqn Ldr Neil Thomas: "It is amazing to see the medal haul but, for us, the

spirit of the Games was not about the medals – we did not know we were second in the medal table until we saw all the other teams saying where they had finished.

"We were looking much more to recovery and the personal journeys of our team, but to have such amazing finishes alongside some incredible personal bests is something special."

Thomas was part of a three-person RAF captaincy team headed by Cpl Stephen Hooper (Ret'd) and fellow vice-captain Flt Lt Gemma Barnes.

Thomas added: "Some of us had nothing to compare it to, but

if you'd written down beforehand what did happen you would have been blown away. It was a dream reality."

Thomas was part of the Wheelchair Curling team who helped kick things off with a silver after losing to Korea.

A further fabulous 18 medals were won by aviators serving and retired, who made up 38 of the 64 team members at the 10-day Games.

Thomas added: "For me the wheelchair curling was so emotionally draining and taxing, as well as exciting. It really set me up to enjoy the rest of the Games.

"How we were looked after from the moment we arrived to the closing ceremony was unbelievable. There were 40,000 people cheering us at the opening event and that great atmosphere remained at every single session.

"To be around the crowds helped some athletes in their personal development, particularly those with anxiety issues. The team were fantastic and supported each other amazingly throughout."

The team will now have one final event together, a families day at Chester Zoo at the end of the month.

SKELETON

No flagging for Burger



BURGER: World Cup 2026 place

AFTER A season of personal bests and top-12 finishes, aviator Flt Lt Nicole Burger secured qualification for the ISBF skeleton World Cup in 2026.

She said: "I'm very happy with my results this season. I feel I have raised the profile of not only my Service and my country but also the continent on the winter sports stage."

The RAF and South African ice sports star is now heading to the Inter-Services championships in Lillehammer as women's captain.

Having closed out the final part of her seasons with a 27th World Cup place finish in Winterberg, Germany, a 30th in St. Moritz, a 29th at Lillehammer and 12th at the same track in the Europe Cup, Burger secured a 53rd place overall finish to qualify for the 2026 season.

She said: "The experience of competing in a World Cup event and representing South Africa has been phenomenal. Though with the country being so new to the sport, its flag would be hung upside down at many tracks.

"The racing field has been much more competitive as it's the pre-Olympic year, so to have three 12th-place finishes is great."

On the domestic front, she added: "I'm looking forward to the Inter-Services, where I can help the new sliders on a new track and share some of my knowledge gained over the last two seasons.

"After IS it's time for some R&R and then training starts again full-time in April to prepare for next year's season."

The aviator, who has had to miss out on the upcoming World Championships in Lake Placid, New York, despite qualifying, because of lack of funds, added: "The season had been a mix of emotions, having highs and lows throughout, but it has been an incredible experience which I have learned so much from.

"My sliding has improved a huge amount and so has my sprint start – getting PBs at every track for both sliding and the push start."

DARTS

Arrows aces hit a double with Zara's help

RAF DARTS struck a double top after OIC Cpl Zara Warhurst was named Ambassador of the Year at the 'club Oscars' and the association achieved recognised status from the UKAF Sports Board.

Warhurst, who has driven all things RAF Darts over the past 18 months, said: "I don't even play darts, but I'll admit I sobbed as I took the call about us receiving recognised status.

"The Club Mirror magazine award was completely out of the blue, but it's so lovely to be recognised in that way."

The association has had numerous milestones in the last 18 months, including RAF Brize Norton's darts team winning the West Oxfordshire Winter league

in 2024, alongside 30 teams across all three Services.

The association has also raised £49,000 for various military charities, including SSAFA, from matches, while its Facebook page now boasts 1,000 members.

Warhurst said: "We have players who are very good at darts, but they were stuck really and could not play at the levels they deserved.

"We needed to get the word out

there to show what we could do – Op Bullseye did that.

"The venue that hosted Bullseye are involved with the Club Awards and they put us forward, so it was great to win and have a night out to show what we are all about."

Warhurst, who works in the Wholeforce Establishment Change team, was presented with the Ambassador of the Year award by former BBC sports presenter John Inverdale at the Club Mirror annual ceremony in Leicester at the turn of the year, alongside Army darts OIC WO2 Lee Fox.

She added: "Things are even busier now than before. We have to find a president, chairperson, secretary, treasurer and several managers to make sure RAF and Service darts continues to thrive."

● Follow Service darts on Facebook: Defence Darts Community.



AMBASSADORS: Cpl Zara Warhurst with Army darts OIC WO2 Lee Fox at presentation event

Sport

FOOTBALL

Bartley bows out after IS campaign

Army are too good in the end for battling Under 23s

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Army U23s | 3 |
| RAF U23s | 1 |

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS the end of an era for RAF Under-23s football as Sgt Danny Bartley oversaw his last game with a 3-1 defeat to the Inter-Services winning Army.

Following an opening 2-1 defeat at the hands of the Royal Navy, Bartley's men played more than their part in the clash at the SB Stadium, Aldershot, which the Army had to win by two clear goals to take the IS championship.

Bartley (pictured inset, right) said: "It's been an absolute pleasure managing the RAF U23s for four seasons.

"Credit to the Army and congratulations to them. We did ourselves proud and our performance was exceptionally good in the first half. Although we found ourselves 1-0 down at the break, we then dug deep to get back from 2-0 to make it 2-1.

"There were some outstanding performances, notably from Cpl George Bishop, but it wasn't



LAST GAME: Bartley's U23s against the Army
PHOTOS: GRAEME MAIN

meant to be for us.

"I thank the RAFFA for the opportunity to manage and develop some outstanding people over the years and my staff for their hard work and sacrifices, but most of all I thank the players for their efforts and the memories they have given me."

The aviators fought valiantly in the final clash, with AS1 Dean Higham netting in the second half with the hosts 2-0

ahead. The goal, which had been coming, set the cat amongst the championship pigeons as the hosts began searching for the vital third goal.

They found the net with eight minutes to go, when a cross from Takyi deflected in off the far post.

The aviators fielded a weakened side in their championship opener to the Navy at the Honeycroft Stadium,

home of Uxbridge FC.

Despite the tough line-up choices for Bartley, the RAF were unlucky not to draw the match, producing several good chances with AS1 Tom O'Hanlon finding the net in superb style to cancel out the Navy's early opener.

The end-to-end clash saw the Navy retake the lead only for late drama as Bishop was tripped on the edge of the Navy penalty area and his last minute free kick somehow drifted wide of the net when seemingly goal bound.

FOOTBALL

Aviator's side find Man Utd different class



McNAMARA: End of Cup run

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Wolverhampton Wanderers | 0 |
| Manchester United | 6 |

FA Cup Fifth Round

IT MAY have ended in fifth round FA Cup defeat for Wolves women, but Sgt Dan McNamara's side still have it all to play for in 2025.

For a second season in a row, the aviator's team fell at the same stage to Super League opponents, this time a bumper crowd at SEAH Stadium Telford saw Manchester United triumph 6-0.

Speaking to RAF News after the clash McNamara, who has managed the Women's National League Northern Premier team for the last seven seasons, said: "To host one of the top teams in world football was unbelievable.

"We learned a lot as a group from the game. We knew it was going to be tough and it highlighted the gap between tier one and tier three.

"I am very proud of the girls and the effort they put in, we defended for our lives at times. I think the six goals was a bit harsh, four would have been a fairer result.

"To look out and see such famous names as United have on the pitch in front of a great crowd was amazing."

Wolves currently sit second in the Northern Premier Division, three points behind Nottingham Forest, following a 1-1 draw between the sides.

● Follow Wolverhampton Wanderers women on Instagram @wolveswomenfc.

CYCLING

Cyclocross riders in the medals at Worcester



THIRD: Sgt Rich Summerbell

SERVICE CYCLOCROSS stars bagged three podium finishes at the IS championships in Worcester.

Sgt Rich Summerbell was third in the men's event, while Cpl Sarah Toms was second and Sgt Lucy Kershaw third in the women's race.

Despite their best efforts the aviators were beaten into second place overall by a strong Army team.

Toms said: "We fielded a reduced team of seven and a one-man pit crew, but we battled the other two Services all the way.

"There were some great performances at the end of a tough season."



MUDLARKS: Cpl Sarah Toms (above) and Sgt Lucy Kershaw (right)



ALPINE

Continued from back page team victory by one point.

Men's ski team captain ASI(T) Ricky Santamaria said: "This year's Inters is the highlight of my involvement with RAF Ski.

"Taking home four individual gold medals and the overall trophy is an excellent display."

Women's snowboard captain Cpl Nat Fields said: "We smashed it out of the park. I couldn't be prouder of the teams we took to compete.

"Beating last year's single silver medal was my aim, but to be bringing home not one but seven medals and to have RAF athletes on nearly every single podium, winning multiple team events and overall competitions, was a dream come true."

With no podiums on the first day of action in the telemark, a podium one-two in the men's downhill saw Fg Off Jed McNab (1st) and Fg Off Ollie Weeks (2nd) record the first ski wins.

Podium domination continued in the snowboarding slopestyle with FS Josh Rathbone (3rd) and Cpl Fields (2nd) and Natalie Feeney (3rd). The team went on to win the PGS on day four, with Fields first and Cpl Darrell Manning third in the SBX.

Day three saw Weeks (1st) and Jed McNab (2nd) seal the Super G title for the aviators with ASI Davis (2nd) and Sqn Ldr Claire Nixon (3rd) for the women, which they would repeat in the Super Combined, with Weeks again first.

Day four - Team Thursday - saw all three disciplines on show, beginning with the Classic Telemark event, which this year returned no podiums for the battling RAF team.

The Slalom ski then saw another Weeks/McNab one-two, with Davis and Nixon second and third again. Under the lights, the PGS snowboard was all light blue, with Fields top of the pile for her hat-trick of podium finishes. The action closed with double ski gold for Davis and Weeks in the GS.

"I'm incredibly proud to have represented my Service alongside such a talented group. Each one represented the RAF with the utmost excellence," said women's ski captain Cpl Mel Gaffey.

"Additionally, Davis earned the ladies' overall gold medal, while Nixon secured the silver. These remarkable results were a direct reflection of the dedication and hard work from our committed team of athletes and coaches."

The men's boarders finished one point short of victory, team captain Chf Tech Martin Boon said: "We entered the IS with a new-look team, so to come away one point shy, I am absolutely chuffed. With the team we had, this is a monumental achievement and shows where we are set for the future."

Follow RAF Alpine sports on Instagram @rafwsaa.

Gold rush



**HAVING A (SNOW)
BALL:** Ski champ Fg Off Ollie Weeks on the podium (centre)

ALL ACTION: Ski slalom PHOTO: CPL JACK WELSON



Aviators selected for UKAF



SEVEN RAF alpine stars will be competing in British Championship events later this month after winning UKAF selection after this year's Inter-Services.

Three ski team aviators will don the famous UKAF colours in the GB Alpine Championships, from March 22 to April 7 in Santa Caterina, Italy.

ASI(T) Ricky Santamaria, ASI Georgina Davis (pictured

left) and Fg Off Ollie Weeks will be representing the Air Force at the prestigious end-of-season event.

Santamaria said: "It's a great privilege and honour to have been selected to represent the UK Armed Forces Ski Team."

Chf Tech Martin Boon, Cpl Nat Fields, Cpl Hayley Phillips and ASI James Mitchell will be hitting the slopes for the British Snowboard and Freeski Championships in Mayrhofen, Zillertal, Austria from March 30 - April 5.

Follow UKAF Alpine sports on Instagram @ukafwintersports.

5 RAF Sport

pages of



Gold rush

19 individual wins at Meribel and team victories in skiing and snowboarding

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS an alpine gold rush at this year's Inter-Services in Meribel with 19 RAF individual wins and team victories in men's ski and women's snowboarding.

The haul also saw three individual champions as Fg Off Ollie Weeks added to his four first place golds in Super G, Combined, Giant Slalom (GS) and Slalom, while ASI Georgina Davis took the women's ski title and GS gold. Women's snowboard captain Cpl Natalie Fields also took top spot along with Parallel Giant Slalom (PGS) and BoarderX (SBX) golds.

While the men's snowboarders agonisingly missed out on an overall
● Continued on page 27



SKI CHAMP: Fg Off Ollie Weeks with AOC 11 Gp AVM Tom Burke



U23s football boss bows out: p26

Ella enchants - Henderson parties in the Park

● See
page 5

R'n'R



Win US crime
drama ● p3





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

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



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

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

CINEMA

Film review

On Falling

In cinemas now

Warehouse position is a poor gig for Aurora

A PORTUGUESE migrant finds herself far from home, working as a warehouse picker in Scotland, struggling to make ends meet and battling with an interminable isolation – both in the job and in what little life she is afforded outside.

Aurora (Joana Santos) is one of many warehouse pickers for this Amazon-like company, where her days are spent walking around the huge space to collect trinkets that people have ordered online, guided by her handheld scanner, which beeps if she starts to fall behind. Her only interactions are with

other pickers in the canteen during her break, with management checking up on her if her rate falls below the usual, or, if she's lucky, rewarding her with a chocolate bar for outstanding efficiency.

On Falling is an incredibly naturalistic film that feels completely authentic, which makes it all the more harrowing in its bleakness. It's an impressive filmmaking debut from Laura Carreira, and produced by Ken Loach's production company Sixteen Films, which makes perfect sense given the subject and tone. There is no artificial lighting, fancy camera moves,



AURORA:
Slave to a scanner

or non-diegetic music. The film simply observes Aurora through her days, where the biggest drama will be when someone starts speaking to her on the warehouse floor, causing her rate to dip, or when she drops her phone. This may seem small fry, but the stakes couldn't be higher: a quick repair will mean she has no money for food or electricity.

Presenting this first-person

view of the gig economy is powerfully effective. Aurora is timid and well-meaning, highlighting the impersonal ruthlessness of the system. You want so desperately for her luck to change, for any small kindness. At a company conference, the higher-ups speak about their corporate values, which lands like a sick joke, knowing the struggle that many of these people are

facing. Unable to escape due to the high demand and lack of opportunity, suicidal thoughts manifest.

On Falling is not a very showy film, and far from uplifting, but it is a powerful and political work that sheds light on those struggling to make it on the breadline.

Review by Sam Cooney

4 roundels out of 5

CINEMA

Film review

Sister Midnight (15)

In cinemas March 14

Mumbai madness

NEWLYWED UMA (Radhika Apte) finds married life maddening. She is trapped in a cramped room on a busy street in Mumbai, expected to stay home and cook, but her biggest challenge is resisting a dark urge she has long kept suppressed – until now.

Sister Midnight is a madcap, slapstick comedy that only grows stranger as it unfolds. Uma and her husband Gopal (Ashok Pathak) are an odd couple whose union is explained by an onlooker: he was rejected by everyone else, and she is insane. Seeing the world through Uma's eyes, we will witness her increasingly unorthodox behaviour. But then, wouldn't anyone feel unhinged if they were married to a stranger, taken far from home, and left alone to pass the time until their husband staggered home drunk?

Uma's first night after the wedding is a literal rude



MANIC:
Unhappy
Uma

awakening. The relentless noise from the street, and the sounds of amorous neighbours constantly intrude, a reminder of the intimacy missing from their own marriage. The daily chaos outside feels more confining than the walls, almost as if the world is pressing in, threatening to burst through.

Much of the comedy is driven by a mix of sharp sound design, stylised camerawork and kinetic editing, but full credit should be given to Apte's physical performance. Each day of Uma's marriage plays out like a vignette, punctuated by abrupt blackouts and sudden bursts of energy as she frantically enters or pratfalls out of frame. The film's tone hinges on her ability to balance

humour with hysteria, making her descent into madness all the more compelling.

Desperate to escape her monotonous days, Uma takes a cleaning job far from home. At night, she wanders the streets with a mop in hand – though her nocturnal activities soon take a darker turn.

Sister Midnight starts off wacky and only gets more unhinged, beginning in a heightened reality before launching into full-blown absurdity. It's a film that thrives on its own peculiar logic. A delightfully offbeat experience for those willing to embrace the strange, though it may test your limits.

Review by Sam Cooney

3 roundels out of 5



DVDs

The Equalizer: Season 4 (15)

Out now (Fabulous Films/Spirit Entertainment)

Win!

Equalizer McCall is back to defend downtrodden

QUEEN LATIFAH is Robyn McCall, an enigmatic woman with a mysterious background who uses her extensive skills as a former CIA operative to help those with nowhere else to turn.

Latifah stars and executive-produces *The Equalizer*, which follows a gender-flipped version of agent Robert McCall, originally played by Edward Woodward in 1985 and later by Denzel Washington in the film franchise.

McCall presents to most as an average single mum who is quietly raising her teenage daughter. But, to a trusted few, she is *The Equalizer* – an anonymous guardian angel and defender of the downtrodden, who's also dogged in her pursuit of personal redemption.

This newly-released, two-disc DVD collection includes every episode of Season Four plus exclusive special features, and you could win a copy (rrp £39.99).

For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:



Who played Robert McCall in the 1985 version of *The Equalizer*?

Email your answer, marked Equalizer Season 4 competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 21. Please include your full postal address with your entry.



Exhibitions
Anselm Kiefer:
 Early Works

German artist's work questions Third Reich



MASTER OF MANY MEDIUMS: Artist Anselm Kiefer PHOTO: BARBARA KLEMM

A LANDMARK exhibition of work by the German artist Anselm Kiefer is now on at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Anselm Kiefer: Early Works features 45 exhibits created between 1969-82 including paintings, watercolours, artist's books, photographs and woodcuts rarely displayed in the UK before.

Also included are three new paintings from Kiefer's own collection, chosen by the artist especially for the Ashmolean show to complement the early works.

He was born in 1945, just before the end of World War II in a hospital in southern Germany, on the same day that the family home was destroyed in a bombing raid.

Kiefer, *inset*, now 80, was among the first generation of Germans to directly confront the country's national identity in the wake of the Third Reich, WWII and the Holocaust. His first serious work was highly controversial: the Occupations series, which challenged attempts to hide from the past, said a Museum spokesperson.

The series, that he created in 1969, aged 24, shows the artist wearing his father's Wehrmacht overcoat while performing the banned 'Sieg Heil' salute, ridiculing Hitler.

The exhibition's curator, Dr Lena Fritsch, said: "These works were extremely provocative at the time but also really serious. He is thinking about what his father's generation did and asking uncomfortable questions – what

would you have done? – which at the time people were trying not to ask themselves. If we think about what is currently going on in the world, we find these works shockingly relevant."

She added: "The works also feature references to Romanticism and Expressionism, ancient Nordic mythology, and wider European philosophy, science, spirituality and culture. In presenting this exhibition, the Ashmolean has felt a strong sense of responsibility to translate and explain the relevant German contexts and cultural memories that make Kiefer's early works so multi-layered, strong, and poignant."

The spokesperson added: "The exhibition also explores Kiefer's work in the distinctly German tradition of woodcuts. Through this medium Kiefer explores German figures, themes and myths which had been used by the Nazis to underpin the ideology of the Third Reich. He often adds acrylic, oil and shellac paint to the hand-printed woodcuts to create unique compositions, typically with multi-layered symbolism that addresses how an artist can create work in the tradition of German culture after Auschwitz."

The three recent paintings featured reference the poems *Autumn* and *Autumn Day* by Rainer Maria Rilke and use a variety of unconventional materials, including lead, gold, string, concrete and dried flowers.

The show runs until June 15.
 ● **Go to: ashmmolean.org for more details.**



Theatre
War Horse
 UK tour

Straight from the horse's mouth

Michael Morpurgo on his powerful WWI epic

THE NATIONAL Theatre's hit production of *War Horse*, based on Michael Morpurgo's novel, is currently on tour until November.

It visits venues including Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre (March 11-22), Milton Keynes Theatre (April 22-May 3), Bristol Hippodrome (June 3-21), Newcastle Theatre Royal (September 10-20), Wales Millennium Centre Cardiff (October 15-25) and Norwich's Theatre Royal (October 28-November 8).

War Horse has become the most successful play in the National Theatre's history. It tells the remarkable story of a young boy called Albert and his horse Joey, set against the backdrop of World War I. The production features ground-breaking puppetry work by South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company, which brings breathing, galloping, charging, horses to life on stage.

At the outbreak of WWI, Joey is sold to the Cavalry and shipped to France. He's soon caught up in enemy fire, and fate takes him on an extraordinary journey, serving on both sides before finding himself alone in no man's land. Albert, who remained on his parents' Devon farm, cannot forget Joey. Though still not old enough to enlist, he embarks on a treacherous mission to find him and bring him home.

Morpurgo's novel has sold

more than 35 million copies worldwide and was made into a major film, directed by Steven Spielberg.

The author (*inset below*) said: "I was born in 1943 in London, so I was aware, very early on, what war did to flesh. A gentleman called Eric Pearce used to come to tea with us. He was a lovely man and I knew that he was a war hero. He had been a Fleet Air Arm pilot. He was very smart, but he had terrible burns on his face, an ear and fingers missing and only one eye. Mother always told me not to stare, but I couldn't help it."

"Well, Eric lived to be almost 100 and I kept up with him. On my last visit to him I apologised for staring at him as a child. And he said something rather wonderful: 'I remember very well indeed. And I liked it. What I never liked was when people looked the other way.'"

Motivated by an interest in military history, Michael went into the Army. It gave him a real understanding of the power of camaraderie. After leaving he became a teacher and, a decade later, in 1976, he and his wife Clare relocated to Devon.

Setting up Farms for City Children, a charity enabling youngsters from disadvantaged communities to experience the adventure of working together on farms in the countryside, they settled into rural life.

In the local pub, he met



Wilf Ellis, an octogenarian who had served in WWI when he was 17. One day Ellis opened up to Michael. "And Wilf said something that day that was to become life changing for me. He said 'I was there with horses.' He then spoke about his experiences, including how he had been at the bottom of a mud-filled trench when a German soldier carrying a bayonet approached and yet, for some reason, couldn't follow through.

"He also told me this: 'All we had was fear. We each dealt with it however we could; some went silent, some screamed and some went mad. What we couldn't do was talk to each other about it.' But Wilf told his horse things that he couldn't tell anyone else. The horse was his best friend. And then he said to me something I couldn't quite believe. He said: 'And





POIGNANT:
War Horse
PHOTO:
BRINKHOFF
MÖGENBURG



Music

Party in the Paddock
Newbury Racecourse

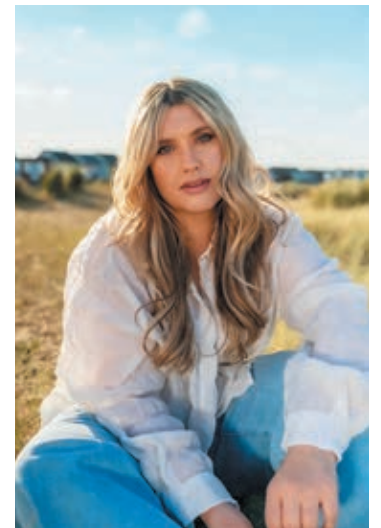
Ellis-Bextor and Ella the mane attractions

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR and Ella Henderson will top the bill at Party in the Paddock at Newbury Racecourse this summer.

The BRIT award-nominated stars will co-headline Weatherbys Super Sprint Day on July 19, performing full sets after an afternoon of racing.

With an impressive musical career that spans more than 25 years, Ellis-Bextor has amassed five top 10 albums and eight top 10 singles, with hits including *Murder on the Dancefloor*.

Marking her arrival on the UK charts with a Number 1 debut single, *Ghost*, and album, *Chapter One*, 11 years ago, Henderson has become a multi-platinum selling, billion stream artist. To date, she has achieved six UK Top 10s as a lead artist, the most recent being *React* with Switch Disco, which received a Song of the Year nomination at



BEST OF BRIT-ISH: Award-winners Sophie Ellis-Bextor (left) and Ella Henderson

the 2024 BRITs.

In addition to Ellis-Bextor and Henderson's co-headline, Björn Again and Clean Bandit will play a weekend of race day

concerts on August 15 and 16, respectively.

● Go to: newburyracecourse.co.uk or call: 01635 40015 for more details.



Theatre

Inspector Morse: House of Ghosts
UK tour

Morse's Chambers of horrors

TOM CHAMBERS (*Father Brown, Strictly Come Dancing*) is to star as the beloved Inspector Morse in a new stage production, *Inspector Morse: House of Ghosts*.

The play is the first major stage adaptation about the detective and is a specially-written story.

Chambers said: "I am absolutely thrilled to be bringing to the stage the nationally loved character of Inspector Morse. Played by John Thaw in the TV series, it is an iconic role which audiences clearly loved alongside the *Morse* murder mysteries. This brand new production is a tantalising tale, rich in story and character and even unpicks some of Morse's closely-guarded personal life."

The chilling mystery begins when a young actress suddenly dies on stage during a performance, and Detective Chief Inspector Morse embarks on a gripping investigation. What begins as a suspicious death inquiry takes a darker turn when the legendary inspector, together with DS Lewis, uncovers a connection to sinister events in his own past 25 years earlier.



NEW ENDEAVOUR: Tom Chambers as DCI Morse in *House of Ghosts*

Based on the novels by Colin Dexter, ITV's long-running hit series *Inspector Morse* starred Thaw in his best-known role as the erudite inspector, famed for his love of opera, crosswords and real ale. Alongside his trusted Sergeant, DS Lewis, played by Kevin Whately, the pair captivated audiences for 13 years and a total of 33 episodes with the programme's trademark gripping mysteries, intelligent plots and memorable characters. The series became a classic of

British television and inspired two popular spin-offs, *Lewis* and *Endeavour*.

The new stage show is a co-production between Simon Friend Entertainment and Birmingham Repertory Theatre and opens at the Rep on August 28, before going on a major tour, running until April 2026.

House of Ghosts is written by Alma Cullen, who has scripted several episodes of the TV series. ● Go to: ents24.com for full tour details.

He started to write *War Horse*. It encompasses themes including family and community, courage, loss, hope and reconciliation.

Published in 1982, the book received critical acclaim but didn't sell in any notable numbers. Then, 23 years later, Tom Morris at the National Theatre approached Michael. Morris wanted to stage a play with an animal puppet at its heart. His mother, having heard Michael talking about the book on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs, believed that *War Horse* could be the perfect story.

The stage production of *War Horse* has now won more than 25 major awards.

● Go to: warhorseonstage.com for more information.

Interview by Vicky Edwards

that horse, he listened."

Discovering that as many horses as men were killed during WWI, an idea came to Michael: "What if the horse, as a neutral observer, told the tale about the universal suffering of war?"

Aware that this had been done in stories like *Black Beauty*, but still not entirely convinced, he dithered. Then, one rainy evening on the farm, he spotted a young boy in the yard. A visitor with the Farms for City Children programme, the child, who was non-verbal, was standing by a stable door. About to send him inside, Michael realised that the boy was talking to the horse.

"A fellow sentient creature that he trusted, he talked to the horse as a friend. And the horse was listening. It wasn't sentimental; there was a relationship."



Your Announcements

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

Reunions

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

THE Southend Group of the National Service (Royal Air Force) Association holds its next social lunch on Wednesday, March 26 at 1pm at the Castle Hadleigh. All RAF veterans and guests are invited. For details and bookings contact Ron Spack 01268 779697.

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

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

45TH Entry RAF Hereford Suppliers. 63rd Reunion June 27-28 at Barns Hotel, Cannock. Contact Dave Bell, Hull: 01482 377625.

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

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

Associations

CALLING all those associated with the mighty 39 Squadron! The 39 Sqn Winged Bomb association is now in its second year and continues to expand. Bringing together Canberra and Reaper era friends and families, serving and retired with an informal gathering on 5th April 2025 at the King's Head pub in Navenby followed by a formal event at the RAF Club, Mayfair in November. For further information or adding to the quarterly newsletter, email thewingedbomb@gmail.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

Lost

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

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535. We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or by post to: **Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.**

Important Notice

The publishers of *RAF News* cannot accept responsibility for the quality, safe delivery or operation of any products advertised or mentioned in this publication. Reasonable precautions are taken before advertisements are accepted but such acceptance does not imply any form of approval or recommendation. Advertisements (or other inserted material) are accepted subject to the approval of the publishers and their current terms and conditions. The publishers will accept an advertisement or other inserted material only on the condition that the advertiser warrants that such advertisement does not in any way contravene the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act. All copy is subject to the approval of the publishers, who reserve the right to refuse, amend, withdraw or otherwise deal with advertisements submitted to them at their absolute discretion and without explanation. All advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Mail order advertisers are required to state in advertisements their true surname or full company name, together with an address from which the business is managed.

100-year-old vet is prize-winning flyer



TRIUMPHANT TRIO: From left, Ian Brierley, John Whitlock and Cheryl Prax

A 100-YEAR-OLD RAF veteran is among a team of three who have won third prize for their entry in the Polley's Dawn to Dusk flying competition.

Former air gunner Sgt John Whitlock, with photographer Cheryl Prax and pilot Ian Brierley, were awarded the Tiger Club Trophy for their video and journal entry chronicling their trip to the 75th Berlin Airlift commemorations in the German capital, in a four-seat Cessna 172 from North Weald.

A veteran of 356 Berlin Airlift missions, John joined the RAF aged 16 in 1941 as an apprentice and trained as a wireless mechanic.

In 1943 he was assigned to assist New Zealand's 490 Sqn

operating Sunderland flying boats in The Gambia.

He flew anti-submarine patrols over the Atlantic off the West Coast of Africa, totalling 414 hours by the end of the war.

He was then sent to Lyneham to join 99 Sqn to retrain with Transport Command on Avro York aircraft.

Two days after the start of the Berlin blockade John was posted to Wunsdorf and flew supply missions to Gatow, often two round trips a day.

He then returned to Transport Command duties and left the RAF in 1950, going on to work in local government.

John gained his Private Pilot's Licence in 1985 and flew until he was 85 years old.

BoB memorial service

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

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

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

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

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



Your Announcements

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

Charity funds time away

A FLT LT facing a four-month deployment to remote Ascension Island was able to take a holiday with his wife and two daughters for some much-needed family time before leaving for the tiny island – thanks to help from the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Flt Lt Duncan Walkey, based at RAF Wittering, and his wife and daughters aged 11 and 8, enjoyed a paid-for break with Fund collaborators Parkdean Resorts at Parkdean's Sandy Bay resort in Northumberland.

Duncan said: "The holiday gave us the time together as a family. It was nice to get away from normal life and really connect with each other.

"It was a typical beach holiday. We brought our dog with us and stayed in a caravan. It was great to explore the local area and walk on the nearby sand dunes.

"Our favourite activity was going to Beamish Heritage Site, an open air museum, telling the story of life in North East England from the 1820s to the 1950s – it



QUALITY HOLIDAY:
 Duncan and his daughters on their seaside break

was so interesting."

Duncan was deployed for four months with limited WiFi, so communicating with his family was difficult. "Because it was so hard to access the internet and speak regularly to my wife and children while I was away, the time we did spend together on our break a few weeks prior was even more important," he added.

He has previously received support from the Fund, having

used the charity's Listening and Counselling Service twice, to deal with anxiety and a bereavement.

He said: "Knowing the Fund is there whenever you may need them is very reassuring. There's always someone to talk to and point you in the right direction.

"A big thank-you to the Fund and Parkdean for supporting my family and I."

● Go to: rafbf.org for more information about the breaks.

Family fun at museum



DRESSED TO IMPRESS:
 Kids don costumes for World War II Week
 PHOTO: © RAF Museum

WORLD WAR II Week is one of the highlights of the RAF Museum Midlands' calendar of events for 2025.

"The line-up of events will deliver something for everyone, with immersive activities, historical commemorations and plenty of family fun," said a museum spokesperson.

From April 12-17 youngsters can take part in pilot training, tackling a series of exciting missions, honing essential skills

and teamwork needed to take to the skies.

WWII Week (May 24-June 1) is packed with hands-on activities and historical fun, the spokesperson added. Participants can visit the Airfix station to build their own WWII aircraft model, have a go at crafting a mini Anderson shelter, learn the art of Morse code and take part in a wartime trail.

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

ROYAL AIR FORCE

RAF News
 The Forces Favourite Read

Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

Reaching an audience of more than 50,000 readers every fortnight, **RAF News** is the Forces' favourite newspaper delivering exclusive news, features and sports action from across UK Defence.

To discuss your advertising in **RAF News** please call or email:
 T: +44 (0)7482 571535
 E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk

The official voice of the Royal Air Force

R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 380

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

Across

- 7. Recently changed foetal position (2,4)
- 8. Aged relative comes by RAF Operation (6)
- 10. Small bomb cut short on a Caribbean island (7)
- 11. High-flier is there in hole (5)
- 12. See 6 Down
- 13. In the morning partially bleach potter (5)
- 17. Food dog finds on railway (5)
- 18. Flight round Oslo (4)
- 22. Originally, Queenslanders used artistic, fancy flagons to drink heartily (5)
- 23. Al leaves Oz for here (7)
- 24. Wonder Ray is upset and tired (6)
- 25. It's the pontiff, you old sailor (6)

Down

- 1. Stares open-mouthed at what pilot wears (7)
- 2. Listening as Capone's embracing Shakespearean king (3,4)
- 3. What unfaithful dogs are prone to do? (5)
- 4. Wrestle King George for tempting fruit (7)
- 5. Bell rung for Charles II's mistress, we hear (5)
- 6. And 12 Across. Gunslinger turns on watery tap (5,4)
- 9. Maybe harm a farm station (3,6)
- 14. Top student: cross and base (7)
- 15. He stays at school or stays afloat (7)
- 16. Best plane for a long journey? (7)
- 19. Soldiers assembled in this quadrangle (5)
- 20. Rotter alien to aspiring pilot (5)
- 21. Andy Murray, say, at racecourse (5)

Name:

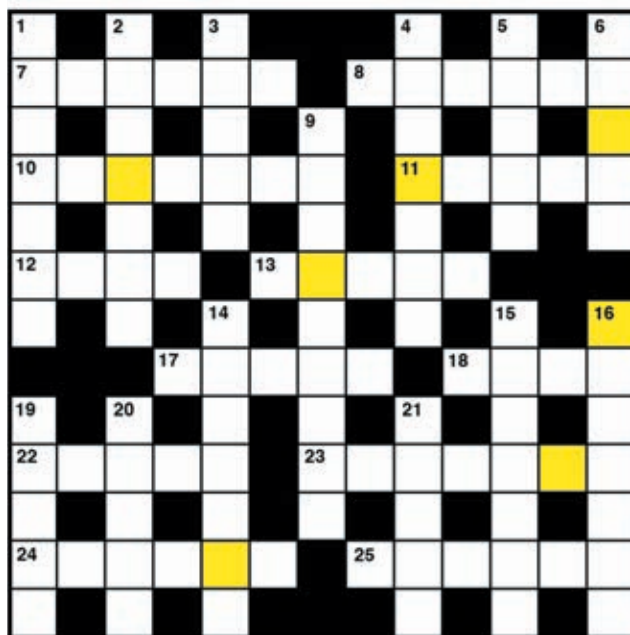
Address:

.....

.....

RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 380

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top military title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by March 21, 2025. Prize Crossword No.379 winner is: M J Wade, Swansea.



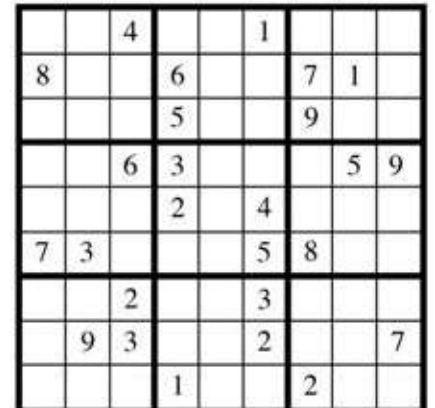
Solution to Crossword No. 379
Across – 1. Shoe 8. Pea-soupers 9. Circular 10. Tuba 12. Cotton 14. Spiral
Down – 2. Helicopter 3. Epic 4. Fallon 5. Boards 6. Spitfire 7. Asia 11. Black Hawks 13. Teenager 16. Deja Vu 17. Corpse 18. Airy 20. Mash
 RAF aircraft: *Wellington*



Prize Su Doku No. 390

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

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by March 21, 2025. The winner of Su Doku No: 388 is: Mrs J Pratt, Henlow.



Solution to Su Doku No. 389

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



Film review Day of the Fight (15)

In cinemas now and on Icon Film Channel

Mike fights for his life

ONCE notorious boxer from New Jersey returns to the ring after 10 years, putting everything on the line in an effort to make peace with his past transgressions.

Irishman Mike Flannigan (Michael C. Pitt) has a lot of weight on his shoulders. He lives alone, separated from his wife (Nicolette Robinson) and unable to see his daughter. Tonight, he will fight for the first time in a decade, against the undisputed middleweight champion, on the undercard at Madison Square Gardens. This, despite a doctor's warning that one serious blow to the head could be fatal.

The film follows Mike through his day as he meets with various people in his life. Presented in black and white and with melancholy needle drops out the gate, it doesn't make you feel good about his chances, and makes every interaction feel that much more charged. When he stops by the gym and his old coach (Ron Perlman) sees him smoking, Mike reassures that "today's my last day" – you get the feeling he's not



MIKE FLANNIGAN: Wants one last bout

talking about cigarettes.

The set-up for *Day of the Fight* is simple but played perfectly by the heavy-hitting cast including Steve Buscemi as an old family friend, and Joe Pesci as Mike's senile father. Combined with a visual poem style that shows us colour-tinged memories, the film shows the pain Mike has endured, but also that he has caused others.

It has an effective score, but crucially knows when to be silent, enhancing the emotion of every

exchange, whether it be with an old friend turned priest (John Magaro) or a bookie (Anatol Yusef) to place everything he owns on himself to win the impossible fight. At this stage, Mike has nothing else to lose.

Marking an extraordinary film debut by writer/director Jack Huston, *Day of the Fight* is a showcase of one-on-one acting, powerful in its simplicity.

Review by Sam Cooney
 4 roundels out of 5



Theatre Dragons UK tour

Year of the Dragons for dance icon

SOUTH KOREAN culture is riding a huge wave of popularity with both K-pop and Korean film being embraced worldwide. Now South Korean dance icon Eun-Me Ahn has brought her latest work, *Dragons*, to the UK for a tour, continuing until March 26.

In Asia, dragons represent resilience, joy and optimism. They are the inspiration for this multi-media spectacular, a vibrant swirling hallucinatory mix of dance, music, holograms and stylish costumes.

Dragons features a cast of seven dancers live on stage who interface with six guest performers who appear as holograms. These six young dancers come from Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea and five of them were born around the year 2000, a Year of the Dragon.

The idea of combining holograms and stage



performance was first sparked by having to use technology to communicate during Covid-19 lockdowns.

"I needed to develop a way that people could communicate with each other and the only solution was online technology," recalled Eun-Me. "And so *Dragons* became a piece about the condition of the world, the young generation who are in the world and how they had to fight."

Go to: danceconsortium.com for tour details.