



Sheer hell in the fight for Monte Cassino

● See R'n'R page 5

Win!



Bomber Girls and yuletide romance

● See R'n'R page 5

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

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RAF NEWS

How Tallboy bombers tamed the Nazis' Beast

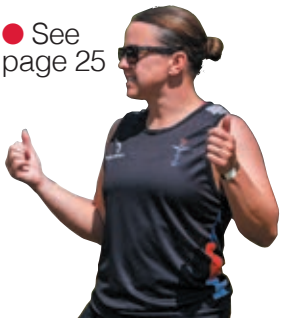
● Historian Dr Rob Owen on the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the Tirpitz

See pages 14-15



Rugby 7s
Sian's Dubai tour of duty

● See page 25



Boxing
Texas blow for Cpl Axe

● See p27



Rugby Union
Cokayne's WXV glory



● See page 28

Ukraine's pilots readied for F-16



SERVICE SNAPPER Andrew Wheeler has been crowned RAF Photographer of the Year for his portfolio of work capturing stunning images of personnel on operations, including this shot of a Regt gunner.
● See p6-7 for the best entries



THE LATEST Ukrainian pilots to graduate from RAF training have invading Russian forces in their sights as they prepare to take to the skies in Nato F-16 fighters.

A group of eight Ukrainian pilots graduated from Elementary Flying Training with UK instructors, preparing them for advanced fast jet training and conversion to F-16 with partner nations.

The RAF course included low-level navigation, advanced formation flying and high G-Force training to prepare them for frontline combat defending their country.

The newly-qualified pilots took part in a graduation ceremony at Cranwell, attended by Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard and the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK, Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

BiteSize

“Seeing the first UK Wedgetail painted is an exciting moment,”



VIII Sqn CO
Wg Cdr Sarah McDonnell
See p13

“I have always been a big fan of Only Fools and Horses,”



Vinnie Jones plays gangster Danny Driscoll in musical version of hit TV comedy show
See R'n'R pp4-5

“I have grabbed this opportunity with both hands,”



New UKAF Women's Rugby Union head coach Cpl Sian Williams
See p25



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RAF News

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German agreement

Staff Reporter
London

A LANDMARK agreement was signed by Defence Secretary John Healey and German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius in London which will see German aircraft operate from the UK to boost European security.

Under the accord signed this month German P-8 subhunters will fly periodic surveillance sorties from Lossiemouth as part of a Nato mission to protect the North Atlantic, the MoD confirmed.

The signing of the Trinity House Agreement marks a fundamental shift in Britain's relations with Germany and will also promote economic growth with the opening of a new German gun barrel factory in the UK, Defence chiefs say.

Mr Healey added: "This is a milestone moment which

secures unprecedented levels of new cooperation with the German Armed Forces and industry, bringing benefits to our shared security and prosperity, protecting our shared values and boosting our defence industrial bases."

Europe's two biggest defence spenders will also develop new long-range strike weapons, drone technology and a range of cyber and space projects.

Mr Pistorius said: "With projects across the air, land, sea and cyber domains, we will jointly increase our defence capabilities, thereby strengthening the European pillar within Nato."

"We must not take security in Europe for granted. Russia is waging war against Ukraine, it is increasing its weapons production immensely and has repeatedly launched hybrid attacks on our partners in Eastern Europe."



LANDMARK: UK Defence Secretary John Healey (right) with German counterpart Boris Pistorius at Trinity House

This Week In History



1944
Tirpitz blitz

A STRIKE force of 30 Lancasters from IX and 617 Sqns operating from Northern Scotland sink the German battleship Tirpitz in Tromso Fjord using 12,000lb Tallboy bombs.



1976
BAE Hawk lands at Valley

THE BAE Hawk enters service with the Central Flying School at RAF Valley, replacing the Hawker Siddeley Gnat.

1935
Hurricane debut

THE FIRST flight of the prototype Hawker Hurricane K5083 takes place. More than 14,000 of the fighters were built.



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

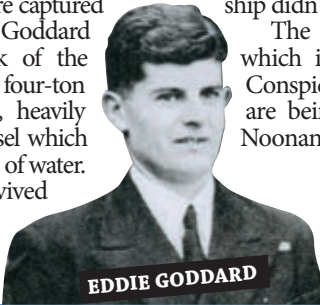
Tirpitz medals on offer

MEDALS AWARDED to one of the crewmen who launched an audacious midget-sub attack on the Nazi flagship Tirpitz in WWII are expected to fetch up to £50,000 when they go under the hammer this month.

Two 50ft subs managed to breach German defences and plant charges underneath the hull of the warship, dubbed the Beast by Churchill, while it was moored in a Norwegian fjord, in September 1943.

Both crews were captured and Eddie Goddard was on the deck of the Tirpitz when the four-ton charges exploded, heavily damaging the vessel which took on 1,400 tons of water.

Tirpitz survived the attack but was finally destroyed two



EDDIE GODDARD

months later by the RAF's IX and 617 Lancaster crews using 12,000lb deep penetration Tall Boy bombs.

Speaking after the war, Eddie recalled: "We were taken on board Tirpitz's quarter-deck. Eventually the charges did go off, which shook us a bit.

"All the lights went off, and a foam extinguisher started to pour forth on my German guard, who didn't like it very much. He grabbed me by the neck, and we went up on deck, but I was very disturbed the ship didn't appear to be sinking."

The medals collection, which includes Mr Goddard's Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, are being sold by auctioneers Noonans.

● See Tirpitz feature p14-15



CHINOOKS FROM 18 Sqn at Odiham deployed to the US Naval Air Facility El Centro on Exercise Vortex Warrior to hone their high-merit flying skills in California's desert and mountain environment.
PHOTO: ASI PALMER

A Reds letter day for Pride winner Jacob

Staff Reporter

RED ARROWS super-fan Jacob Newson has netted a Pride of Britain Award for raising more than £150,000 for RAF charities.

The crusading 10-year-old was invited to watch the Air Force aerobatic aces at Waddington where Red 1, Sqn Ldr John Bond, climbed out of the cockpit to hand him a golden envelope from the show judges notifying him that he had scooped the Young Fundraiser of the Year award.

Jacob said: "When Red 1 came down the steps with an envelope I was confused, but when I opened it I realised I had a Pride of Britain Award, and I felt so special.

"My motto is 'never back down, never give up,' so every time I'm doing a challenge, I always say that to myself and it always keeps me going through all the tough times.

"I must be the Red Arrows' biggest fan, so if I had to give today a mark out of 10, I'd say 100."

The young fundraiser was just seven when his mum Andrea passed

away, and since then has tackled a series of fundraising challenges to raise money for St Gemma's Hospice, where his mum was treated, and the RAF

Benevolent Fund.

With a love of planes and flying since he was a young child, Jacob has completed challenges including climbing Pen-y-Ghent and the Three Peaks in Yorkshire; walking 30 miles in two days from RAF Manston in Ramsgate to the Battle of Britain Memorial in Folkestone; and trekking Ben Nevis. In 2021, he won the 'Above and Beyond' award at the prestigious RAFBF Annual Awards Ceremony.

The Benevolent Fund's Ben Alonso said: "Jacob has been fundraising for us since 2019, raising thousands of pounds to support members of the RAF Family during their time of need.

"It's heartwarming to see that his passion for all things RAF remains sky-high – all of us at the Fund are incredibly grateful for Jacob's support and congratulate him on his well-deserved win."



WINNER: Jacob received Pride of Britain award after raising more than £150,000 for RAF charities



TROPHY TRIUMPH: Gp Capt Louise Henton is presented with the George Stainforth Trophy by AVM Jason Appleton

Brize prize night

BRIZE NORTON has been named as the station that has done the most to enhance the reputation of the RAF.

The Oxfordshire base scooped the George Stainforth Trophy, presented by 2 Group chief, AVM Jason Appleton, as it hosted its annual BRAVOS Awards evening celebrating the successes and achievements of personnel.

Serving personnel, civil servants and contractors were nominated across 10 categories, highlighting the roles of the RAF's largest base.

The evening inside one of its aircraft hangars featured the backdrop of an Atlas A400M transporter.

The Carterton Family Centre scooped the Best Business award, while Flt Lt Jack Tippet and the A400M team behind the UK Forces D-Day parachute tribute picked up the Commander's Air Wing award.

Flt Sgt Rachael Dalziel received the Flt Lt Lord Memorial Award, while the Gp Capt Robinson Trophy went to Sqn Ldr Chris Bowen.

Sgt Scott Whitehead received the Operational Safety Award; Cpl Michael Cutler won the Sporting Achievement Trophy and the Station Commander's Award was presented to WO Sim Rezazadeh-Wilson.

Other winners included 1312 Flight, which picked up the Top Team Award; Brize Ambulance co-responders, who won the Valiant Volunteers Award; and Sgt Lloyd Reade, who was presented with the Astra Award.

Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton said: "Our people are at the heart of this station, and the quality of this year's submissions highlight the exceptional talent and dedication across Brize Norton."



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Rivet record run

A BRITISH aircraft has become the first to fly a surveillance sortie from Nato's most southerly point in the Mediterranean to the Barents Sea in the high north.

The 51 Sqn Rivet Joint completed the journey from Souda Bay, in Greece, through airspace including that of the Alliance's newest member, Finland, on its way home to RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

RAF Air and Space Commander AM Allan Marshall said: "This is a landmark moment and demonstrates the UK's unwavering commitment to Nato."

The Rivet Joint routinely conducts transits along the borders of individual Nato countries, but completing it in one mission demonstrates the ability of UK airpower alongside the US in the Alliance's 75th year.



NATO debut

NATO'S NEW Secretary General Mark Rutte (pictured) made his first official trip since taking up the post to meet PM Keir Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in London.

He said: "In an uncertain world, it is vital that we test our defences, and that we strengthen our defence so our adversaries know that Nato is ready and is able to respond to any threat."



Beam us up

Atlas and Shadow to test latest UK laser weapons to defeat enemy missile threats



ON TARGET: Laser-powered weapons are being designed for RAF aircraft following development of ground and maritime high-energy systems such as the ground-breaking Dragonfire, tested in the Hebrides, pictured inset PHOTOS: MOD

Simon Mander

RAF PILOTS are one step closer to being equipped with a cutting edge laser air defence following live-fire trials.

The direct high-energy system is being designed for aircraft, including the intelligence-gathering Shadow R2 and A400M transporter, to shoot down and disable threats, the MoD has confirmed.

During recent trials at the Vidsele Test Range in Sweden the high-energy weapon defeated

100 per cent of the infrared heat-seeking missiles fired simultaneously at airborne targets.

The system has been developed by the Team Pellonia partnership between Leonardo UK, Thales UK, and the MoD's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "We're equipping our Armed Forces with the very latest technology to keep them safe and give them the advantage on operations."

The system uses algorithms to filter out background clutter so that only valid threats are tracked, classified and declared.

An alert is sent to the Leonardo's Miysis directed infrared counter-measure which moves to track the incoming missile and fires a jamming laser.

High-energy beams are designed to disrupt missile guidance systems and steer rockets away from their targets.

With an 'unlimited' magazine, firing the new generation of laser weapons for 10 seconds costs less

than running an electric bar fire for 10 minutes, the MoD said.

The live tests were witnessed by senior Nato military officers. Dstl's Chief for Air Survivability, Mark Elson, said: "The design of the system has the agility to protect platforms now and into the future, providing long-term operational advantage to the UK and our Allies."

Leonardo's Senior Vice-President of Radar and Advanced Targeting, Mark Stead, added: "Miysis DIRCM has again proven itself as a reliable, effective

protection system and is flying operationally on many platforms today."

The programme to arm RAF aircraft with laser defences follows the success of ground-based Dragonfire system during live tests at the MoD firing range in the Hebrides, where it was able to strike and disable enemy drones up to 1km away with pinpoint accuracy.

UK Defence has also trialled laser systems fitted to the Army's Wolfhound armoured vehicle and Type 45 destroyers.

The RAF Photography

Winner



POISED AND READY: Andrew Wheeler

Amateur



SKY VIKING: Flt Lt Andrews

Tech & Eng



SILENT DISCO: Cpl Dye

Video



PAVEWAY: Cpl Mayfield



CALL IN A CAB: AS1 Barnard

Staff Reporter

WINNERS IN this year's RAF Photography Competition have been announced. Top industry judges have sifted through their favourites

Sport



GOLDEN: AS1 Gorman

RAF Feature



READY TO BOARD: AS1 Dale

Competition winners

Ops & Exercises



Photo section – RAF Lossiemouth



LAND OF THE SETTING SUN: AS1 Stephens

RAF Equipment



COASTAL CADENCE: Cpl Dye

Mallett Student Trophy



STARBURST: AS2 Lisa Coulston

to select winners in categories depicting all aspects of Service life from sport to operations, exercises to station life and using top tech in protecting Britain's airspace.

And there's still time for readers to select their hot shot with the winner of the People's Choice category set to be announced once the poll closes.

Crowned Photographer of the Year by the panel was Andrew Wheeler followed by AS1 Tom Barnard in second place with Sgt Lee

Matthews taking third spot.

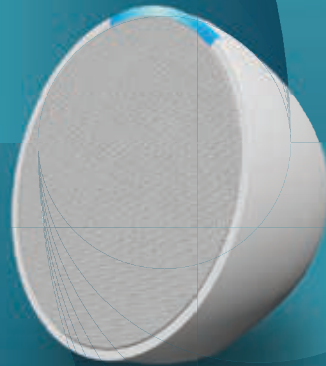
Highly commended by experts including Fleet Street picture desks from the Times, Sunday Times and top agency Getty were AS1 Amber Mayall and AS1 Leah Jones.

And it was not just those selected to go overseas with detachments who were recognised with stations, video sections, and newcomers to the trade also credited for their professional excellence.

See next edition of **RAF News** for the **People's Choice Award** selected by the UK public

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The goggles of war

Frontline military dogs net £3.1 million kit upgrade

Simon Mander

DOGS PROTECTING Air Force personnel will soon hit the frontline with new combat vests and goggles as part of a £3.1million kit upgrade.

Hundreds of combat canines will be given protective gear including fleece-lined, rubber-soled safety boots to protect their paws from extreme heat, broken glass and shrapnel.

Ear defenders will be fitted in elastic 'snoods' to deaden the sound of gunfire and grenade explosions as they sniff out explosives and boobytraps.

And cooling vests soaked in water will be included to stop them overheating in arid battlefields like the Middle East.

More than 500 dogs, including German shepherds, springer spaniels, Labradors and other breeds, are employed across the RAF, Army and Royal Military Police.

Military working dogs carry out crucial roles, from sniffing out hidden bombs to conducting patrols.

The new equipment is part of



COMBAT CANINES: Military working dogs will be issued with specially-designed goggles, safety boots and ear defenders

a five-year MoD deal with the Surrey-based Von Wolf K9 animal kit firm. It includes harnesses with buckles and D-rings to strap dogs to soldiers parachuting on to targets or fast-roping from a helicopter.

Defence, Equipment and Support operations manager Liam Brown said: "Von Wolf will ensure we deliver the highest level of training and protection for all MoD working dogs day-to-day, and during specialist operations and directed tasks."



STATION FIRST: ACM Sir Michael Graydon presents BAE's Tracy Robinson with the Industry Award

Station stars take a bow

Staff Reporter

HUNDREDS OF guests gathered at Coningsby for the first station awards night, which was launched with a flypast by one of the base's Typhoons.

Station chiefs honoured the achievements of personnel and units in 12 categories, sponsored by the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Among the winners were the Work Services Flight, which netted the Collaborative

Working award, while the station HIVE was voted Team of the Year. The RAFBF's Airplay team was honoured for their support for Services families with children aged between five and 16.

The star of the night was BAE Systems's Tracy Robinson, who was presented with the Industry Award by former CAS Sir Michael Graydon for her role setting up Coningsby's first work experience programme.

NATO's Starlift drone network lifts Protector

Simon Mander

BRITAIN IS to take part in a Nato project to develop unmanned air systems and allow allies to use its space bases.

The deal comes as the UK continues to play a key role in sending thousands of drones to Ukraine to fight back against Putin's forces.

The move will help integrate the RAF Waddington-based MQ-9B Protector uncrewed aircraft into Nato's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force and defence of the High North and Arctic region.

Attending his first alliance ministers meeting, Defence Secretary John Healey signed up to a range of multinational long-term projects, from boosting ease of access to space and virtual training to developing cutting edge drones.

Known as the Starlift programme, it will see the UK create a network of launch capabilities.



NATO DEFENCE: Protector will be integrated into the multinational Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force defending the High North and the Arctic region

Mr Healey said: "By developing these cutting edge technologies, we are setting up our Armed Forces for the battlefields of the future."

The UK has also pledged to share virtual simulator training across Nato and create a single test network for different munition types on artillery systems.

News

Trust reviews *The Few*

Malcolm Triggs

PAINSTAKING RESEARCH is continuing to provide more information about Churchill's 'Few' who helped prevent a Nazi invasion in 1940 by defeating the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain.

Leading that research is historian Geoff Simpson, consulting editor of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust's Database of the Few, the most comprehensive digital record of those who saved the nation.

The foundation stone for the Database was Kenneth G Wynn's *Men of the Battle of Britain*, first published in 1989 and long considered the standard work of reference on the Allied aircrew who flew in the Battle.

In 2010 an anonymous benefactor donated the rights to the book to the Memorial Trust, and after substantial updating and additions to the work, the Trust published a third edition, in association with Frontline Books, in 2015. As new information continued to be discovered, a supplement to the third edition was published in 2020.



WONDER WALL: Visitors to the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust in Kent view the names of the pilots who took part in the fight to drive back the Luftwaffe in 1940

AM SIR KEITH PARK

Ken Wynn died in 2020, and in 2022, the Wynn collection of mini-biographies became the Memorial Trust's Database of the Few, a continually expanding work of reference that is seeking to add social context to what is known about the fewer-than

3,000 men who flew in the summer and autumn of 1940.

As consulting editor, Geoff has now updated 1,000 of the mini biographies, providing new detail, amending some material and providing information that will prove useful to academics,

authors and researchers studying the history of the fight for Britain's skies.

Working closely with the RAF's Air Historical Branch, Geoff has added four new names to the ranks of the Few, including Sir Keith Park, now shown to

have completed two operational flights in a fighter aircraft within the defined period of the Battle.

More recently, the discovery of his logbook allowed the name of Ronald Thomson, a sergeant serving with 616 Squadron, to be added to the ranks of those entitled to wear the Battle of Britain Clasp on the 1939-45 Star.

The Trust team also brought in genealogist Gladys Armstrong.

Geoff added: "It is always good to hear from relatives of the Few and researchers who can offer further information and/or photographs. This is an ongoing project and there is clearly much more information out there that could be added to our knowledge of those who served."

Geoff was a trustee of the Memorial Trust between 2000 and 2015. His election as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 2022 recognised his 40 years of research into the lives of the Few.

Access to the database can be obtained by visiting the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne or by emailing the Trust at: Enquiries@battleofbritainmemorial.org



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In Brief



OPEN FOR BUSINESS: Sqn Ldr Phil Bishop and Wg Cdr Nick Startup open the new cargo hangar at Coningsby

Coningsby kitted out

Staff Reporter

MISSION-CRITICAL KIT for the Typhoon Force at Coningsby can be prepared for operations faster than ever following the opening of a new cargo handling hangar.

The solar-powered complex is designed to meet rigorous international customs standards which guarantee supplies are safe and legal for overseas movement and is large enough to operate 16-tonne forklifts and hold enough freight to fill a C-17 Globemaster.

Logistics Squadron Commander Sqn Ldr Phil Bishop said: "The handling of military freight is a detailed business, especially when it's going overseas.

"We must conform to our own customs standards, but also to the standards of the nation we're deploying to. To do that safely and securely, and not get under anyone else's feet, a dedicated building is essential."



Intel aces make their mark with Wedgetail debut



MAKEOVER: Wedgetail E-7A sporting RAF colours takes off from Southend Airport. Inset above, tail art features Arabian dagger design in salute to squadron's wartime roles

Simon Mander

BRITAIN'S FIRST Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft has broken cover at Southend to showcase its new RAF paint scheme.

Proudly displaying roundels and the VIII Sqn badge, a sheathed Jambiya Arabian dagger adopted in recognition of the unit's long association with the Gulf region, WT001 rolled out of the hangar at Southend Airport.

The new aircraft also sports the emblem of Nato's Airborne Early Warning and Control Force, marking its adoption by the Alliance as their next AEW/C aircraft.

"Seeing the first UK Wedgetail painted is an exciting moment in the journey towards operational capability for the squadron," said VIII Sqn Commanding Officer Wg Cdr Sarah McDonnell (pictured right).

She became the first boss to qualify from a Royal Australian Air Force and Boeing-run course of simulator and live flying

training which culminated with the E-7A exercising with an F-35 Lightning.

With its long-range surveillance radar the E-7A can cover more than four million square kilometres on a standard mission and in-flight refuelling gives it unlimited long-range deployment.

The Wedgetail enhances the capability of friendly combat aircraft and warships and increases their ability to survive hostile environments, Defence chiefs say.

The UK's fleet of three aircraft will serve at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland, alongside the nine-strong flight of Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, both of which are based upon the Boeing 737 airframe.

Formed in 1915, VIII Sqn

is one of the oldest RAF units, carrying out bombing and tactical reconnaissance missions in the Great War.

It flew from Aden and India during WWII, carrying out operations over Burma and South East Asia and was disbanded in 1967.

Reformed at Kinloss in 1972, the unit made its airborne early warning debut flying the Shackleton AEW2 before moving to Lossiemouth a year later and operated the Sentry platform from 1991, from Waddington.

Following painting, the first of the UK's Wedgetails has returned to STS Aviation Services in Birmingham for further modification.

The aircraft, currently in service with the Australian Air Force, replaces the E-3D Sentry AWACs force which retired from service in 2023.



Gulf chief in

GP CAPT Martin Higgins has taken over command of RAF operations against Daesh in Iraq and eastern Syria after becoming 83 Expeditionary Air Group's latest Deputy Air Component Commander.

He replaces former Operation Shader head Gp Capt Guy Lefroy, who has now come to the end of his tour.

The handover of authority was marked by a parade at which the Commander's Pennant was swapped to mark the responsibilities UK Armed Forces have in the region.



ANTI-TERROR TOUR: Gp Capt Higgins, right, takes over at 83 EAG from Gp Capt Lefroy



Vets' house call

MORE HOMES will be delivered for Forces vets under government plans to fund 14 housing providers across the UK.

The new plans will benefit hundreds of veterans across the UK from new or refurbished homes – following a pledge by Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

DESPATCHING T

80th anniversary of the sinking of the formidable German Battleship Tirpitz on 12 November, 1944

BY THE autumn of 1944 despite repeated courageous attempts by the RAF, Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm to sink her, the German battleship Tirpitz, sister ship of the Bismarck, remained a potential threat. Referred to by Winston Churchill as “the Beast”, her presence forced the Royal Navy to maintain a force at Scapa Flow lest she break out from her anchorage in northern Norway to harry Allied shipping in Northern waters.

The task of despatching her had passed to Bomber Command, and Nos. IX and 617 Squadrons, led by Wg Cdr James Bazin DFC and Wg Cdr James “Willie” Tait DSO, DFC respectively. Both were equipped with Lancasters carrying the 12,000lb Tallboy deep penetration bomb – the only weapon capable of inflicting mortal damage on this heavily armoured vessel. Even so, three attempts would have to be made before the task was completed.

Because of the distances involved, the first attack in September 1944, made by 27 aircraft while Tirpitz was moored in Alten Fjord, had to be mounted from an advanced base at Yagodnik, Russia. Although an approach from the east caught the Tirpitz’s defences by surprise, the ship was soon concealed by a smoke screen. First to attack was Flt Lt Melrose from IX Squadron, who is credited with a direct hit.

Still afloat

Although still afloat, Tirpitz was no longer seaworthy. The Germans towed her south to Tromso intending to moor her in shallow waters as a floating defence battery. With the full extent of her damage not apparent to photographic reconnaissance, a further attack was mounted on October 29.

The battleship’s move south meant that she was now just within range of Lancasters operating from the Scottish airfields of Lossiemouth, Milltown and Kinloss after the fitment of additional fuel tanks and removal of mid upper turrets. On October 29, 20 aircraft of IX Squadron and 19 from 617 Squadron – accompanied by a film unit aircraft – took off to arrive over the target in the early hours of daylight. The skies were clear and Tirpitz could easily be seen. As the Lancasters turned to run in, the wind changed,



IX SQN: Wg Cdr James Bazin

Dr Rob Owen
Official historian
617 Squadron



bringing with it a belt of cloud obscuring their target a mere 30 seconds before release. Although 33 Tallboys were released, no direct hits were scored. Heavy flak was encountered and Fg Off Carey’s 617 Squadron aircraft was badly damaged. With two engines put out of action, hydraulics wrecked and fuel tanks holed, he headed for neutral Sweden where he force-landed and the crew were interned.

With the days growing shorter, the Lancasters made a final attempt to complete their task. On November 12 the Lancasters again flew to their advanced bases in Scotland and were briefed to take off early the next morning. Overnight frost and ice meant that seven of IX Squadron’s aircraft were unable to take off, so 31 Lancasters with the film unit aircraft headed out individually low across the North Sea. Following the previous route which crossed the Norwegian coast at a gap in the radar cover, the aircraft climbed to clear the mountains and then, after crossing into Sweden, headed north.

Displaying remarkable navigation and timing the aircraft rendezvoused over Lake Tornetrask and formed up into their loose bombing formation, 617 Squadron leading, with IX Squadron to the rear. Over Tromso the weather was again clear, there was no cloud nor smokescreen and no sign of enemy fighters, which given the bombers’ depleted armament and extra fuel tanks might have caused heavy casualties. It later transpired that a series of administrative, communications and operational errors had conspired to prevent enemy fighters from Bardufoss intercepting the force.

Despite an intense barrage put up by the battleship, including her heavy main armament, the aircraft continued to track towards their target. Equipped with the precision Stabilised Automatic Bomb Sight, and with Tirpitz in clear view, 617 Squadron released their Tallboys. The first four bombs



LOADING TALLBOYS: 12,000lb deep penetration bombs were used



INFERNO: I

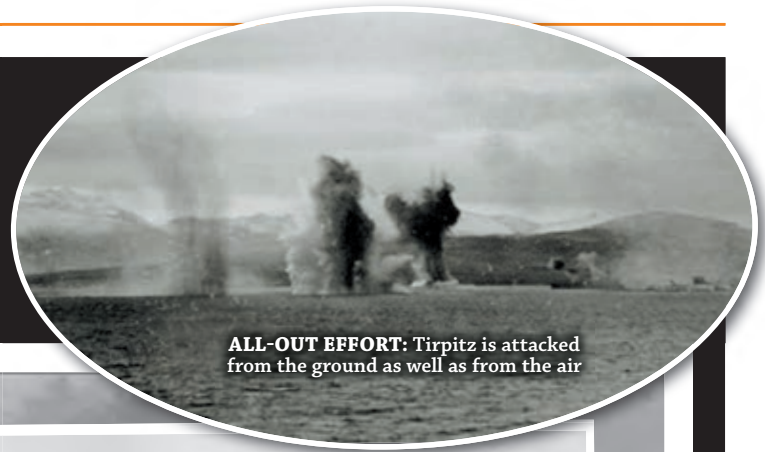


scored two direct hits and a near miss, tearing through the ship’s armour and starting an internal fire. Tirpitz began to list to port. IX Squadron commenced their attack.

A few minutes later and several crews saw Tirpitz clearly and scored a further direct hit. Smoke and spray then began to shroud the vessel, making aiming and damage assessment increasingly difficult. Equipped with the Mark

XIV bomb sight, most were unable to see a p released their Tallboys smoke and spray. Result but a number of near scouring out the shall ship. Flak damaged Fg IX Squadron and he to temporary internment.

THE BEAST



ALL-OUT EFFORT: Tirpitz is attacked from the ground as well as from the air



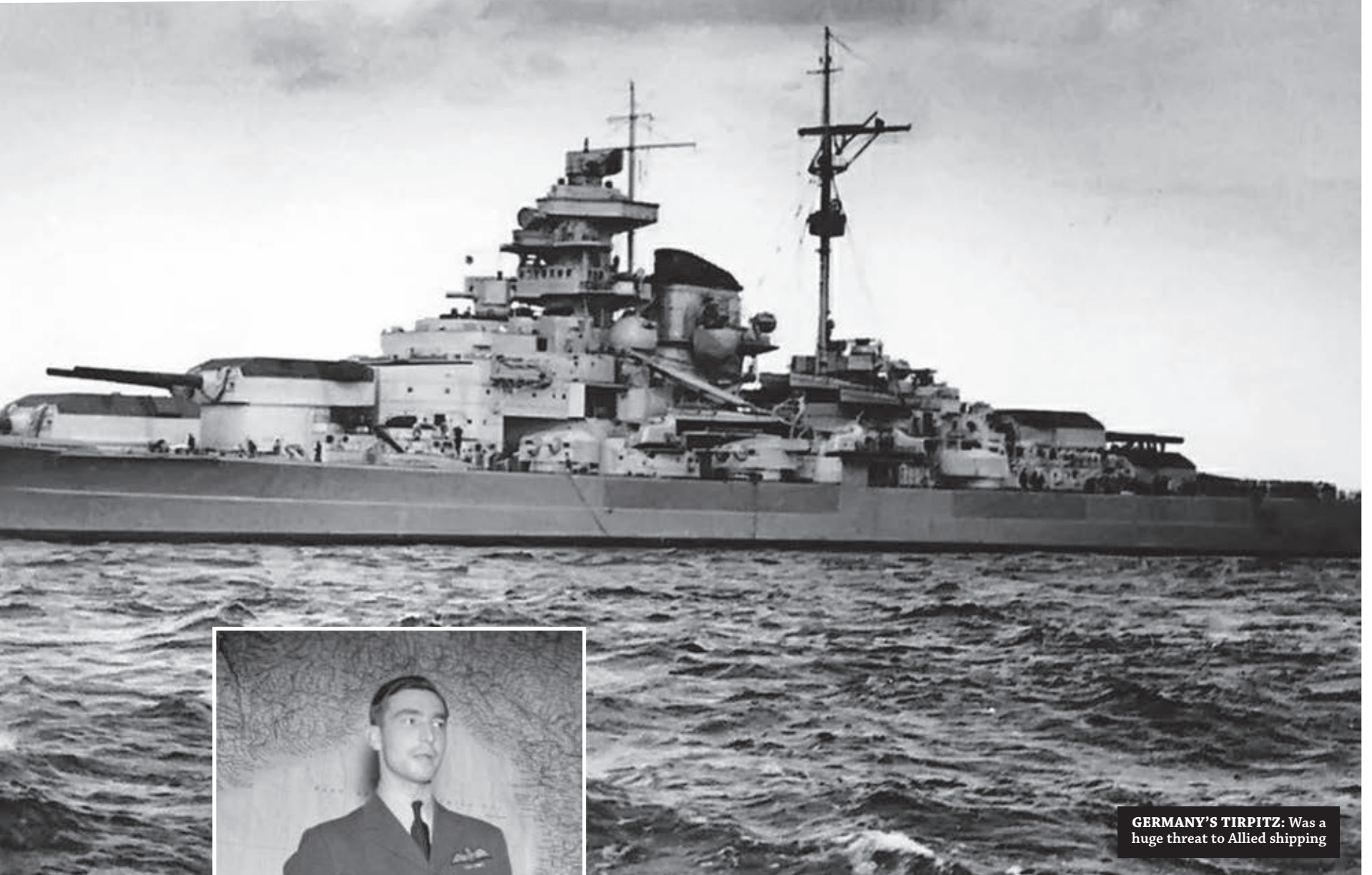
Direct hits on the Tirpitz



AFTERMATH: The battleship lies floundering on its side in shallow waters, like a beached whale



GIGANTIC: The stern of the wreck rises from the seabed, 1945



GERMANY'S TIRPITZ: Was a huge threat to Allied shipping



617 SQN: Wg Cdr James 'Willie' Tait at briefing

of the IX Squadron crews precise aiming point and into the rising pall of its were difficult to assess, or misses were reported, low seabed beneath the Off Coster's Lancaster of o headed for Sweden and

Towards the end of the attack an explosion was seen, later attributed to the internal fire reaching a magazine. So great was the detonation that one of the ship's main turrets was lifted from its mount and hurled over the side. The ship broke its moorings, the list increased, Tirpitz capsizing until its superstructure struck the seabed, where she rested, "her upturned hull like a stranded whale." Of Tirpitz's company only 82 were rescued from

the wreck and it is estimated that 971 died. The attacks against Tirpitz were carried out at extreme range, involving field servicing and modifications to aircraft, operating from advanced bases, often with the minimum of servicing equipment. They illustrate yet again the skill, professionalism and resourcefulness so frequently demonstrated which are still as relevant today as 80 years ago.

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Letters

Point of order



F16 was Polish

ON P7 of RAF News 1593 the photograph for the story headlined 'Cobra nations strike' has a description eluding to the Canadian pilot in an F16. It is clearly an F16A but the Canadians were flying FA18 Hornets. The photo clearly shows a marking of the 302 (Polish) Squadron.

This is an unfortunate error as we all have a duty to appreciate, and highlight, the great contribution of the Polish Air Force within the RAF during the Battle of Britain.

Some say that they made the difference between defeat and victory. David N Blades Hale, Cheshire

Editor's Note: Our thanks to Mr Blades for pointing out the error.

Memories of Blackman

I FIRST met Tony Blackman (see *RAF News* 1593, obituary p19) whilst I was in the RAF as ground crew on Vulcans at Finningley in 1965.

He had landed the orange prototype Delta wing one day out of the blue, unannounced. Some years later I met him again at our XM655 Mk2 at Wellesbourne Mountford in Warwick.

We used to do fast-taxis and he nearly always came to see us and be a 'passenger' during the fast-taxi.

When he came out of the cockpit, he once said: "You're very lucky, we almost took off!".

He will be very much missed. XM655 is now 60 years old and still going strong - you can see a new video of it at: XM655.com, the website of the XM655 Maintenance & Preservation Society.

I am now 80 and still get a great thrill every time the engines are started.

Roger Parker
Worcs

RAF's links with Qataris 'go back to at least 1973'

LEEMING duo fast-jet first



FLASHBACK: RAF News story on 11 Sqn

I READ with interest the recent article in *RAF News* 1592 on the Leeming joint UK/Qatari training.

Maybe the start was in 1973 when Plt Off Al Thani (Prince!) was on the course at No.1 FTS at Linton-on-Ouse.

I was the Squadron Commander and flew seven training sorties with him whilst he was on the course.

I believe that he was then going back to start a Hunter Squadron in Qatar, but I lost touch with him. **Angus Ross, Sqn Ldr (Ret'd)**



TOP MAN: Tony Blackman (left) with fellow Avro test pilot Jimmy Harrison and Vulcan

RAF News man's DFC at RAF Museum

THE FAMILY of a Bomber Command navigator who was awarded the DFC - and went on to be one of the three men who founded *RAF News* in 1961 - have donated his medal and flying log book to the RAF Museum in north London.

The items, along with some photographs from the early days of the Forces' favourite newspaper, and some letters thanking Flt Lt Frederick Hendry for his service, are now part of the Museum's permanent collection.

Hendry served two tours as a navigator - firstly with RAF Volunteer Reserve 467 Squadron in 1943 and then with Pathfinder Unit 97 Sqn from 1944-1945. The war ended before he completed his second tour.

The citation for his DFC, dated July 17, 1945, states: "Flt Lt Hendry has completed many operational sorties against such heavily defended targets on Berlin, Munich, Hanover and Leipzig. In October 1943, after an attack on Leipzig, the aircraft in which he was flying became severely iced and the engines stopped. Height was lost before the engines could be restarted. Unable to regain height the aircraft was flown back at low level. This officer's accurate navigation materially contributed to its safe return. His outstanding coolness and determination have always been an asset to his crew."

Among the donations to the museum was a clipping from *RAF News* dated February 19, 1999, informing readers that Flt Lt Hendry had died, aged 84.

The story said the retired Flt Lt was 'responsible for accounts and circulation



NEWS MAN: Hendry, left, in civvies in early days of *RAF News* and his medals, inset

of the newspaper when the first edition was printed on April 1, 1961.

It went on: "He was part of a three-man team based at the Air Ministry in Whitehall. Peter Breen was the editor and Derek Gomer, the deputy editor.

"The first edition, which cost threepence (1½p), included a message of welcome from the then Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Thomas Pike."

The story added that Flt Lt Hendry

served as a Lancaster navigator on the Pathfinder force.

Also among the donations is a 1979 letter from Air Cdre Paddy Hine, then Senior Air Staff Officer at HQ RAF Germany. Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine went on to become joint commander of all British Forces during the first Gulf War.

His letter to Flt Lt Hendry says: "You have been a tower of strength over very many years and it will be extremely difficult



NAVIGATOR: Hendry (circled) with wartime crew and with *RAF News* colleagues, below



to replace you. May I take this opportunity of thanking you for all that you did for *RAF News* during my time as DPR (RAF) [Director of Public Relations]."

The Hendry items will be available to view as part of the Museum's collection online: collections.rafmuseum.org.uk or an appointment can be made to view them in the Museum's reading room.

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Johnnie flew 70 ops and was awarded DFC & Bar

FLT LT Johnnie Trotman, who has died aged 102, flew 70 bomber operations in Wellingtons and Mosquitos, the latter with the Pathfinder Force, and was twice awarded the DFC.

He was called up by the RAF in August 1940 and started his training to be a pilot, which he undertook at flying schools in England. Assessed as 'above average' when he gained his pilot's wings, he trained to be a flying instructor on twin-engine Oxford aircraft.

In early 1942 he started converting to bombers. Towards the end of his course, the C-in-C of Bomber Command (Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris), decided to launch 1,000 bombers against a target in Germany. To make up the numbers, he had to use some aircraft from the bomber training units flown by students nearing the end of their course. Trotman and his Wellington crew were detailed on May 30, 1942 to join the force attacking Cologne, the first 'One Thousand Bomber Raid'. Two nights later they were sent to Essen on the second such raid.

Deemed operational after two raids, Trotman and his crew were posted to 460 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force – three of Trotman's five-man crew were Australians. The squadron flew Wellingtons from RAF Brighton, just north of the River Humber. Within days, the squadron commanding officer met the crew and announced, "I don't have Poms on my squadron," and Trotman and his rear gunner were sent to 150 Squadron, at nearby RAF Snaith.

After three visits to Bremen, Trotman and his crew dropped mines in the sea approaches to the U-Boat base at St Nazaire. Flying at low level, they came under intense attack from anti-aircraft fire but escaped unscathed.

During the so-called Battle of the Ruhr, Trotman flew four consecutive trips to Duisburg during July 1942. The pace of raids did not ease up until mid-August, by which time Trotman had completed 17 operations against the industrial targets in the Ruhr. Over Bremen, his Wellington was hit by flak, injuring one of his crew and holing a fuel tank. With the fuel tanks almost dry, Trotman coaxed the damaged bomber over the Yorkshire coast and crash landed in a field. His rear gunner, and long-time friend, was killed.

After a period of 'survivor's leave', Trotman and his crew returned to operations at the end of August and over the next four weeks they flew 13 more operations. On September 23, they returned to St Nazaire to drop more sea mines and their tour of 30 operations was completed.

Trotman spent almost two years instructing at a bomber training unit before he volunteered to join Bomber Command's Pathfinder Force and, in the summer of 1944, he converted to the twin-engine Mosquito before joining 692 Squadron at

the beginning of October 1944.

The squadron operated from Gravelly, near Huntingdon, and was part of the force of fast, high-flying night raiders – the Light Night Striking Force (LNSF) – of No 8 (Pathfinder) Group. The Force made a name for itself with its regular journeys to Berlin, hitting the German capital again and again with 4,000lb 'cookie' bombs.

The Mosquitos flew nuisance raids to numerous targets as the main bomber force attacked a single target in force. They dropped bombs on various cities to divert the German night fighter force and to keep the citizens, particularly the factory workers, short of sleep.

Trotman's first operation on October 29 was to Cologne and two nights later he went to Hamburg. Returning from Ludwigshafen on December 5, an engine failed and the second began to lose power.

His emergency radio calls went unanswered – he ordered his navigator to bale out and he landed in the American sector. As Trotman prepared to abandon the aircraft, he received a radio call and was able to land on an emergency forward airfield in Belgium with the undercarriage retracted and his fuel exhausted. Trotman was awarded an immediate DFC for 'displaying commendable gallantry and outstanding skill.'

On February 5, Trotman and his navigator attacked Berlin. Over the next two months, they returned to the 'Big City' 16 more times. They also went to Munich, Kassel and Bremen. After bombing

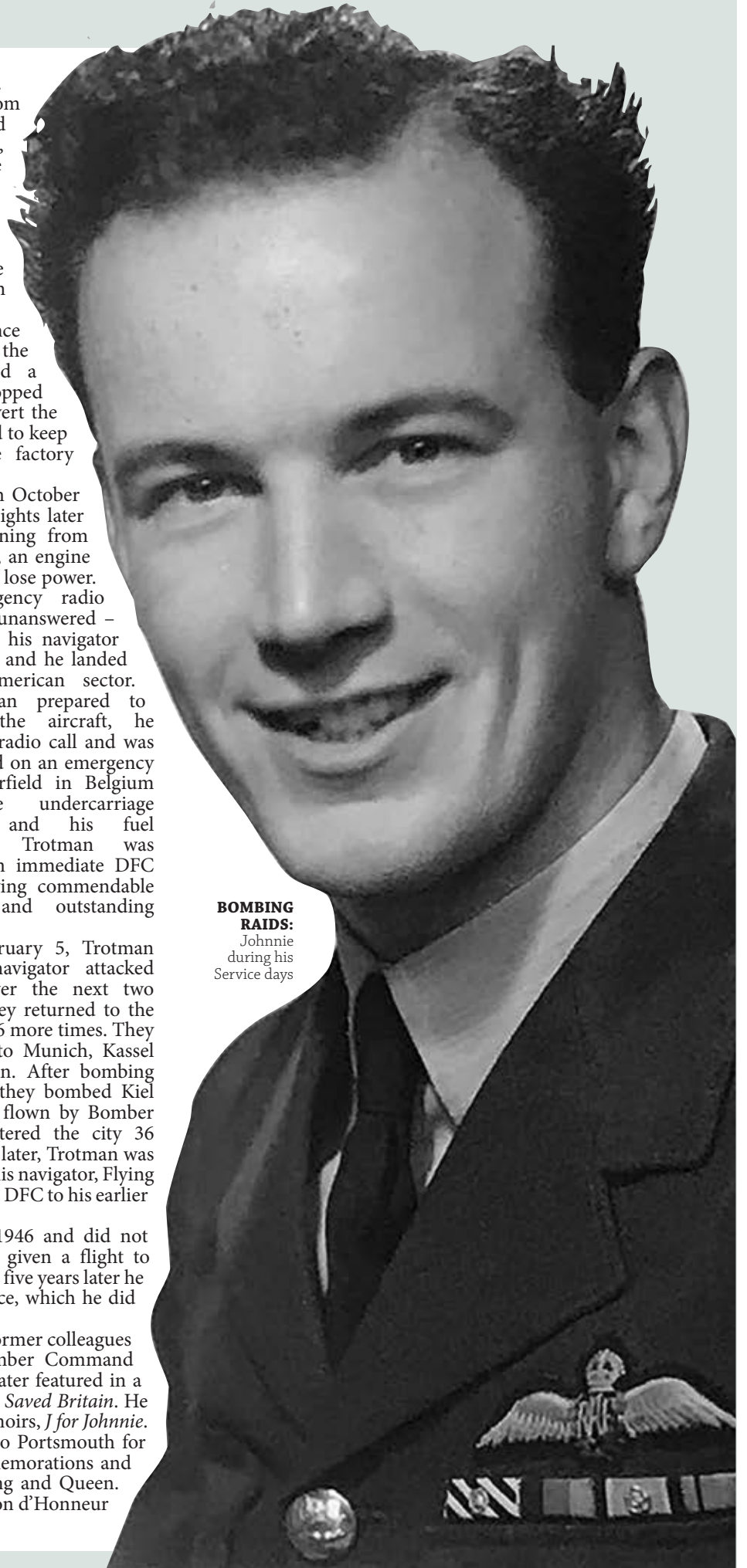
Husum airfield on April 26, they bombed Kiel on May 2, the last operation flown by Bomber Command. Allied troops entered the city 36 hours afterwards. A few weeks later, Trotman was awarded a Bar to his DFC and his navigator, Flying Officer Bernard Tubbs, added a DFC to his earlier DFM.

Trotman left the RAF in 1946 and did not return to flying until he was given a flight to celebrate his 80th birthday, and five years later he gained his civilian pilot's licence, which he did not surrender until he was 100.

In June 2012 he joined his former colleagues at the dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park. He later featured in a Channel 4 film, *The Plane that Saved Britain*. He had recently published his memoirs, *J for Johnnie*. Earlier this year, he travelled to Portsmouth for the official D-Day 80th commemorations and was delighted to meet the King and Queen. He had been awarded the Légion d'Honneur by the French Government.



LANDMARK BIRTHDAY: Johnnie aged 100



BOMBING RAIDS: Johnnie during his Service days

Travel

Northern France: Calais

Tim Morris



FROM THE white cliffs of Dover, you can see our nearest European neighbour on a clear day. It's an appealing view and close enough to enjoy as easily as booking a weekend in Eastbourne. The difference is that once you're in Calais, the door is open to everything that Continental Europe has to offer. You're limited only by the number of hours you want to spend on the road.

The Pas de Calais region itself has so much to offer that you won't have to travel far to feel fully immersed in French culture. It's a beguiling place, bustling and cosmopolitan in places, calm and serene in others. Pristine beaches, classic architecture, adrenaline-pumping sports and fine dining are all right there.

Getting There

There are two ways to get to France by car from England. The first is faster, the second is more enjoyable. If you're on a tight deadline then the 35-minute Eurotunnel crossing makes sense, but a more civilised way to while away 90 minutes is to make the crossing by ferry. In our case, we sailed with Irish Ferries and spent the trip relaxing in opulent leather seats, with complimentary drinks and snacks, in the Club Class Lounge.

I know what you're thinking, Club Class is going to cost a kidney... but Irish Ferries is offering a Club Class upgrade for just £18.

Location

Calais is a city that's fronted by one of northern France's best sandy beaches. The pale sand is adorned with hundreds of quaint beach huts that date back to the 1940s, the sea shimmering a deep blue in the background. It's a pretty view and the seafront has recently been renovated to give it a pristine, modern twist too.

A few streets inland you'll find Phare de Calais, a lighthouse that has stood guard over the city and sailors in the Channel since 1848. Climbing its 271 stone steps leads to the best view in Calais.

The Courgain Maritime quarter is a delightful walk, heading across to Pont Henri Hénou and the 14th-century Fort Risban. The city is a history buff's paradise, with nods to the ancient, two World Wars and Calais' industrial past. Lace and fashion have always been a big deal here.

Calais-Nord is a part of the city that's almost an island in itself. Rue Royale, the main thoroughfare that runs through the centre, is home to a great number of bars and shops. You can pick up big name brands and freshly baked bread within a few feet of each other, then stop off for a glass of locally produced beer, without having to leave the strip.

Relax

On a warm day, lazing on the beach is always a pleasure. Head a little further out and you'll discover miles of perfect sand along the surrounding Côte d'Opale. If you prefer to stay in the city, you can enjoy a serene cruise along Calais' canal, or take in one of the city's brilliant museums.

The Centre for Lace and Fashion gives a nostalgic look at the industry that once dominated the city, with 100 factories packed with looms that ran around the clock.

The World War II Museum is also an obvious place to visit, where one can remember the fallen and reflect on the importance of the region during those dark days. A very short drive out into the surrounding countryside puts you in the serene fields where events unfolded, golden with crops and bright red with poppies (see musee-memoire-calais.com).

Adventure

You can go for a ride on a giant fire-breathing dragon... yes, really. The engineering masterpiece takes a crew of at least three to operate and is a truly brilliant attraction that's wonderfully unique (see compagniedudragon.com).

Stay

We stayed in the heart of the action, on Rue Royale, at the Ibis Styles Calais Centre. Billed as a 'design economy hotel, that's open to creative minds', it's a simple 92-room hotel that very much caters for business clients. The decor is simple and clean, with nice design touches here and there, inspired by the flora of the Opal Coast.

If you're looking to spend your nights in the busy bars of Calais, then you're in the perfect spot. Everything is right on your doorstep here. You're spoilt for choice,

when it comes to restaurants too, so you won't spend much time in the hotel.

The lounge and the bar are open around the clock, however. Breakfast is included in all the room rates and parking is available for a daily fee, but when we arrived they didn't have any spaces left. Book early if you need it. A standard double room is around £90 per night.

Eat and Drink

The Dragon Shed, next to where the beast itself lives, is a good spot for snacks and light bites. It's right on the seafront (compagniedudragon.com/en/infos-pratiques/restaurant-bar-calais).

There are plenty of great restaurants in the city. Le Grand Bleu has a reputation for serving high quality food (legrandbleu-calais.com). L'Histoire Ancienne specialises in classic French cuisine (histoire-ancienne.com).

Finally, Restaurant du Channel, et bistrot du Channel are well worth a visit (lechannel.fr/fr/restaurant-et-bistrot).

Downsides

Calais is a city that has the same issues you'll find in most metropolitan areas. The notorious 'Jungle' camp may have gone, but the city still has a migrant problem and vagrancy remains visible around the port area. As a result, you may feel intimidated wandering alone in certain areas, especially at night. Rue Royale can also get rowdy at the weekend. If you're not out on the town until late, you may struggle to sleep in the hotel too, due to the noise from the many bars. If you're after a city break, none of this will trouble you. If you prefer the quiet life, spend the day and stay a little further out (see hautsdefrancetourism.com and all.accor.com).



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Tim Morris

Honda ZR-V (from £39,505 otr)

Motoring



Honda's Mr Angry

BACK IN the day, Honda made truly great cars. Cars that had the world's best manual gearboxes and engines that revved so high they could tear holes in the fabric of time. I'm talking about cars like the S2000 and the pre-2007 Civic Type R. There was even a V6 version of the Accord that could top 150mph, without breaking a sweat.

Granted, some of the body kits that were about at the time were questionable, but cars used to be fun.

Now the modern market demands an endless supply of economical, low emission crossovers. The problem is that they're all very similar. Honda has tackled this problem in an inventive way. To make the new ZR-V stand out, the designers have given it a face that looks like it's in the middle of an argument. It's the most offended car in Britain. It's uncanny, isn't it? And now you can't un-see it!

Fortunately it has a nice profile,

cracking 18 inch alloy wheels and a good-looking backside to make up for it.

Interior

The ZR-V's cabin has a familiar feel. That's because you get the same horizontal dashboard design that you'll find in the Civic. The clocks are a busy display that can be difficult to read in bright sunlight but they're effective enough in most circumstances.

The curvy centre console is a feature that, again, makes the ZR-V stand out. Gamer-style buttons are mounted in the centre for gear selection and USB ports are easily accessible on either side. There are plenty of soft-touch plastics on the dashboard, centre console and doors, so everything feels suitably plush.

In fact, the build quality is generally outstanding. The knobs and buttons feel reassuringly expensive and there's a stylish honeycomb air vent that stretches across the whole dashboard. Slick, Honda has done a good job here. Our test car was the Advance 2.0 i-MMD.



But 'snarling' ZR-V offers family-friendly motoring

The 9 inch touchscreen in the centre of the dash is responsive and simple to operate, with Apple CarPlay/Android Auto connectivity as standard. Honda's climate control is brilliantly simple and there are physical buttons on the steering wheel for controlling the media and cruise control. The audio system is cracking, delivered via 12 Bose speakers.

The leather seats are nicely stitched, firm enough to give a good amount of support and well bolstered, to hold you in place through the bends. All trim levels get heated front seats and our Advance test car came with a heated leather steering wheel too.

Despite being a crossover, the seating position is decidedly hatchback in feel, based on its Civic sibling. It's not as good, of course, but for a crossover, it's better than most. There's plenty of space up front and rear seat passengers won't feel cramped either. It feels light and airy throughout the cabin thanks to the optional panoramic roof.

The boot is practical for the family but it's not best in class, at just 370 litres.

To give you a benchmark, something like Vauxhall's Grandland has around 500 litres.

On The Road

Honda has obviously pondered the problem of bland crossovers and ensured that the Civic's DNA hasn't been completely wiped out.

The ZR-V's ride doesn't isolate you from the road, in the same way that many rivals do, and it's more agile through the bends, thanks to limited body roll and well-weighted steering. It's not perfect, but there's enough Honda precision there to keep long journeys engaging. Around town, it's quiet and refined, running on electric for much of the time.

There's only one power combo available. The eHEV combines a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine, paired with a small 1.05kWh+ lithium-ion battery to deliver 181bhp. 0-62mph is achieved in 8.0 seconds and you get a top end of 108mph, yet it feels more responsive than most in the mid-range. The reason for this is that, unlike many rivals, the engine can still drive the wheels. Honda has even simulated gear-changes so that the engine note sounds familiar.

Fuel economy, combined, is what you may be more interested in here though. Honda quotes 48.7mpg and we managed around 44mpg which, considering how I drive, is pretty good. The ZR-V is, therefore, an eco-friendly model, designed for practicality rather than performance, but Honda has ensured that it isn't completely bland. An engaging crossover, as they go.

Honda ZR-V

Pros

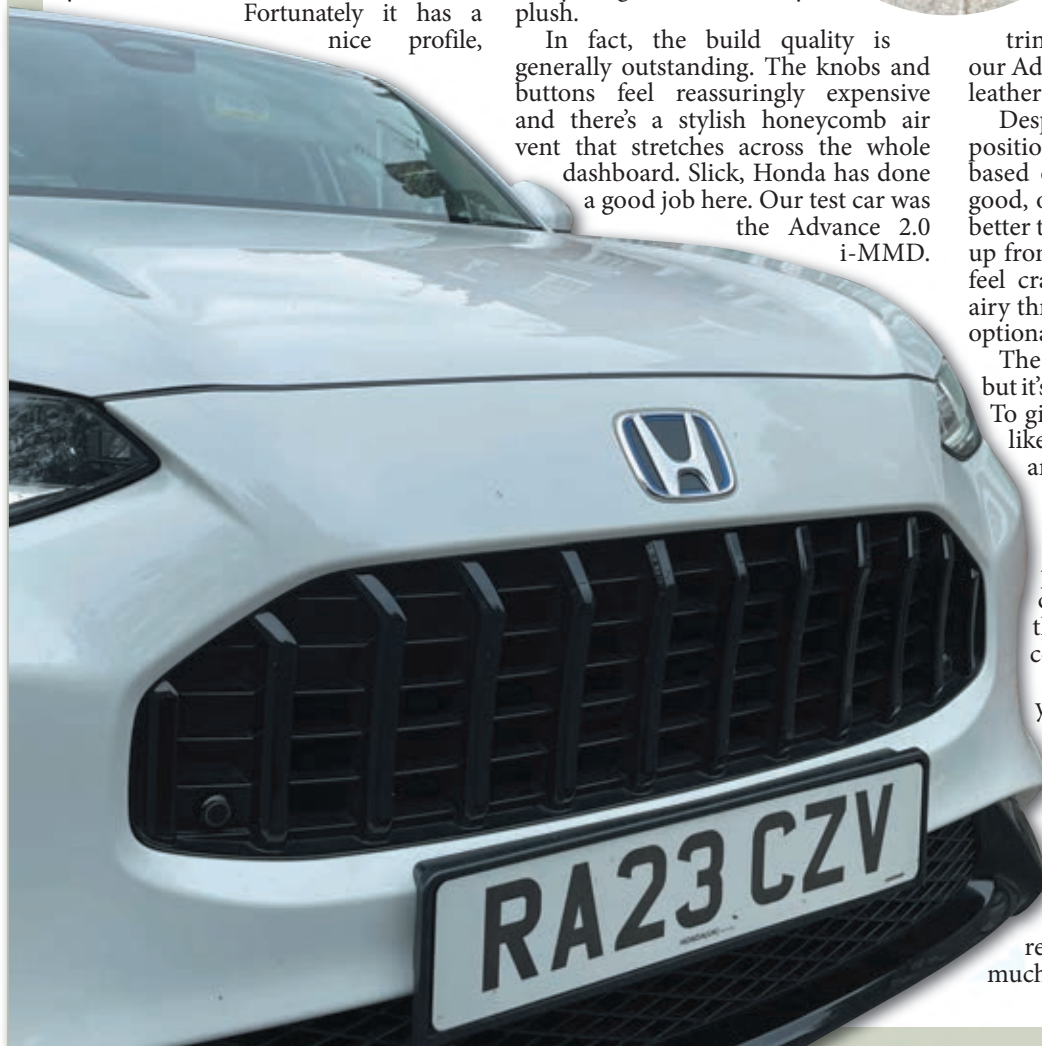
- Nimble for the segment
- Nice interior quality
- Strong fuel economy

Cons

- Some wind/road noise
- Boot could be bigger

Verdict

The ZR-V is a strong model, with a lot of positives. There's plenty of space for the family inside and the cabin is generally a comfortable place to sit as the world glides by. The eHEV powertrain is a winner for those seeking green economy and it handles well for a car in this class. It is pricier than many rivals. Our 'Advance' test car weighed in at a hefty £45k, with the fold away tow bar and a few other toys. That said, you are investing in Honda's legendary reputation for reliability. Your call.

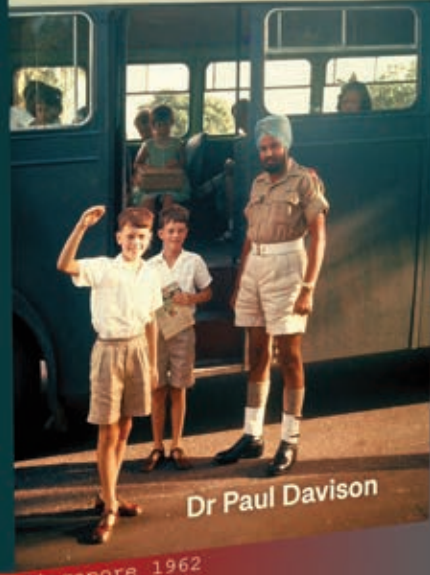


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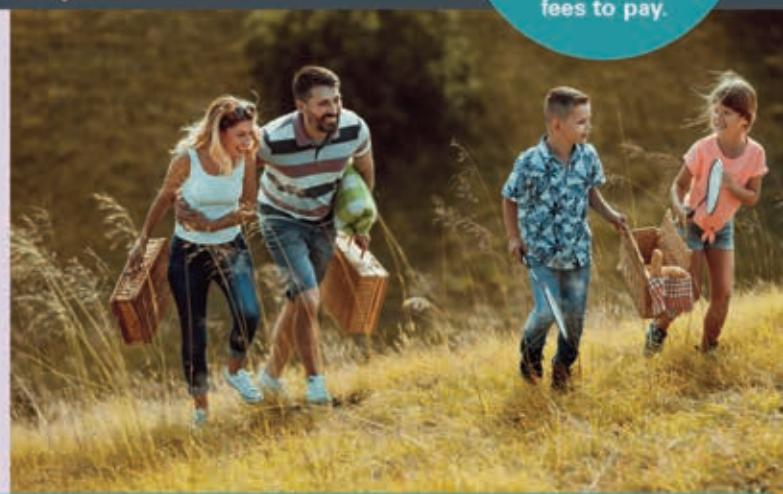
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MOUNTAIN BIKING

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HARD-FOUGHT:
RAF Championship

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE MOUNTAIN bike and downhill followed up an Inter-Service double win with podium finishes in the British Enduro series in Innerleithen and a bumper RAF championships event.

The spectacular end of the year – dubbed ‘epic’ by Flt Lt Stu McCarthy – saw MTB stalwart Sgt Andy Lochhead seal third in Vets and third overall in the BNES in Scotland, while winning the enduro title at the champs.

Number one AS1(T) Robert Nijhuis won the men’s downhill, with AS1 Helen Wordsworth taking the enduro and downhill double at Tweed Valley.

McCarthy said: “Now the mud has settled and we are all dried off, it’s great to announce that the RAF Gravity Team are Inter-Service Champions in both the downhill and enduro.

“All riders faced some

challenging conditions courtesy of the Welsh weather and some testing trails at the hands of the amazing Revs Bike park.

“Massive thanks to Royal Navy Cycling, MTB and BMX for organising and putting together such a good event at an epic venue.

“Serious amounts of hard work was put in by the RAF riders this year, while congratulations go to the Army for taking fastest times on race days, with their riders taking home some silverware and setting blisteringly fast time. It’s always good to get all the Services together doing a sport we all love.

“Let’s hope the RAF can keep hold of the title for a few more years. We look forward to hosting and organising the next Inter-Services.”



ON A HIGH:
RAF Cycling spokesman Flt Lt Stu McCarthy reflects on a sterling season for enduro and mountain biking

■ **THE WEEKEND** also saw the RAF Gravity MTB Team take on the last round of the BNES, with Sgt Andy Lochhead the dominant RAF rider on show.

The British National Enduro Series Round 6 – Innerleithen – which would also be the very last Tweed Love event, saw the team put down some great results, with Lochhead taking third place in Vets and third overall in the BNES series. Flt Lt Stu McCarthy said: “It’s

important to remember that at this level of racing, the real battles are ones fought between rivals and not necessarily the ones for the podium. With lots of internal team rivalries, the pressure was on.

“All the team’s riders pushed themselves and smashed it. Let’s do it all again next year.”

● Anyone interested in racing should email: RAF-GravityMTB@outlook.com

Wordsworth takes the double at Inter-Station climax

THE CREAM of RAF mountain biking rose to the top at the final round of the RAF Gravity Inter-Station season at Innerleithen in the Tweed Valley.

The decisive race for the Service’s enduro and downhill champs saw the men’s enduro go to Sgt Andrew Lochhead, with AS1(T) Robert Nijhuis second and Conrad Clarke third, while AS1 Helen Wordsworth took the women’s crown. Wordsworth would repeat the win in the downhill.

The men’s downhill event went to Nijhuis, with Cpl Tom Abel second and Cpl Jack Welson third.

The enduro event kicked things off. Held on three stages that mixed long technical stages and shorter flow trails, the riders were tested on their all-round riding abilities.

Battling some severe Scottish weather, the event was testing; with infamous sections Repeat Offender, Lower Wardell Way and Community Service providing all the smiles for riders.

Next up the downhill event held at Adrenaline Uplift in Innerleithen, where the weather held, and riders were treated to an amazing track under good conditions.

The track provided a mixture of steep technical sections, roots, more steep technical sections, roots, flow and speed. With the weather improving throughout the day, the morning grease dried off seeing riders push themselves faster and harder for a fantastic end to the day’s action.

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



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Head coach aiming high as Dubai 7s approaches

RUGBY 7S

Daniel Abrahams

“WE’RE GOING there to win,” said UKAF women’s rugby head coach Cpl Sian Williams as she prepares to take the team to the Dubai Sevens at the end of the month.

The bullish former Wales international, who classes the Middle East tournament as her favourite, had a winning start to her time in the role taking the Wimbledon Sevens event earlier this year.

Speaking to *RAF News Sport*, the Aviator (pictured inset, right) said: “Winning at Wimbledon was a fillip, and we are going to Dubai to win. The players will have fun and enjoy it all. You learn from all aspects, winning or losing, and keeping our skills high, but we are going to win.”

On Dubai, Williams, the first-ever professional women’s rugby player harking from the Services, said: “I’ve been a few times, way back when, it is one of my

Former international Williams is in it to win

favourite tournaments.

“It’s just a huge rugby buzz out in the desert away from the main throng. There is just a different feel to it and to be going as a coach will be different again for me.

“I am excited about being head coach. I love rugby and I love being around the team. I was keen to do this, to make the transition from player to coach.

I am coaching players I played with a short while ago, they are friends, so it is a change, but it also shows where we are and have come from to be involved in such a huge tournament as this as

UKAF – there are some exciting players on show.”

Williams, 33, will help guide the team through a clash with the French Defence Forces in Portsmouth on November 22 before jetting off to Dubai for the Sevens tournament from November 29 to December 1.

Williams added: “We carried out our Dubai selection from Wimbledon. We are all set now. I coached the team as an assistant in the Defence World Cup a few years back, but I am now the head coach and I’m trying to instil everything I’ve learned.



WINNING WAYS: UKAF were victorious in Wimbledon 7s PHOTOS: CINNABAR STUDIOS

“Be it from playing abroad, knowing how to deal with time differences, dealing with the heat, knowing what the jet lag protocols are, these are all things I am well versed in.

“So the girls are in the best place they can be to play and I

am confident that my knowledge of that will help a lot.

“I have grabbed this opportunity with both hands – and players have hit the ground running with me. They are an amazing group who are all willing to learn.”

ESPORTS

II Sqn RAF Regt a force to be reckoned with



FOCUSED: Competitors at the 1st UK Division Drone Racing Competition at Colchester

NIMBLE-FINGERED II Squadron Gunners are taking drone racing by storm.

The RAF Regiment team were the best performing overall at the recent Military International Drone Racing Tournament and went on to win the 1st UK Division Drone Racing Competition.

The inaugural event, held at Merville Barracks in Colchester, was designed to showcase the skills of troops learning to fly First Person View (FPV) Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS).

II Sqn emerged as the winners from the five teams in the military competition, with Australia taking the international fixture.

II Squadron RAF Regiment test themselves as part of their wide-ranging work to integrate new technologies and capabilities into their existing arsenal.

Project Artemis sees II Sqn developing the use of nano-drones (under 250g in weight) for light, quick and agile intelligence gathering at the section level. They have already conducted experimentation at RAF Akrotiri and UK Trg areas and drone racing hones those skills.

Artemis Project Lead FS Dan Best said: “It is a real honour and privilege to represent the RAF Regiment in the inaugural Drone Academy competition. II Squadron RAF Regiment have been working with FPV UAS for the last two years, so it is great to showcase our competency at the competition.”

FPV drones provide a precision strike capability on the battlefield and are being used to great effect by the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Flown using a virtual reality headset and carrying small explosive charges, the manoeuvrability of FPV UAS means they can punch above their weight, such as flying through an open hatch to destroy an armoured vehicle by exploding inside it.

The RAF has established its own drone racing team under the RAF Model Aircraft Association. It currently consists of four members. Last year, two personnel participated in the Military International Drone Racing Tournament in Australia.

II Sqn racers will be eligible to join the team once they demonstrate proficiency in flying 5-inch drones, capable of reaching speeds of up to 70mph.

Sport

HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS: Mustangs (in blue) gave their all against scavenging Army Jackals
PHOTOS: SJSDAINTY



RAF rooting for the Royal Navy as IS reaches its conclusion

Title on a knife-edge going into final game

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Daniel Abrahams

THE SERVICE'S American football stars the RAF Mustangs face a nervous wait for the outcome of this year's IS championship, after losing 18-6 to the Army Jackals.

Having triumphed in the inaugural tournament last year, the Mustangs are now hoping the Royal Navy can score at least 19 points against the Jackals in the final clash of the championship, as *RAF News* went to print. If they do, the trophy will go to the Mustangs on points difference, after they beat the Navy 27-6 in the tournament's opener.

Mustangs coach Sgt Paul Wakeford (pictured right) said: "We feel if the Navy come out like they did against

us, sustaining that amount of pressure, they can potentially win it.

"We need them to score 19 points, the championship will be decided on points against, but their offence is now depleted from what it was against us.

"So, without some of their best point scorers, it will be a close contest."

Mustangs started their defence of the IS title at Tilsbury Park, Oxford and facing a tougher Navy side than the previous year they managed to score four touchdowns through – AS1(T) Dylan Walsh, AS1 Dylan Pope (2) and AS1 Iain Eastham, to the Navy's one touchdowns.

Wakeford was himself on the score board in the defeat to the

Jackals under the lights at Tilsley Park, Abingdon

"Both games were tougher than last year, but we were without some of our star players notably quarterback Sqn Ldr Cameron Stewart, with me having to take his place after the first quarter for the second clash.

"We felt good after a battling win over the Navy, but the Army also came out ready to turn the tables from last year, and they held out to deny us a vital touchdown in the third quarter, which we felt would have changed things around, and they took the win."

Wakeford added: "We are now looking to find some new talent to build for the future. We need new blood to build again and build stronger.

"We have already started looking at ways of insuring we win back the trophy if we do not retain it this time."

● Follow RAF Mustangs on Instagram @rafamericanfootball.



CYCLING

Commando site trial for Aviators



NICK MUNRO: Aptly-named Sgt is hills expert

A FANTASTIC four IS podium spots was the muddy reward for the RAF Gravel team, with first places for Cpl Sarah Toms and Sgt Nick Munro.

Toms, who battled mechanical issues to take the top spot, said: "The Royal Navy organised the debut of the Gravel Inter-Service Race and it went with a bang from our perspective, especially at Woodbury Common in Devon amidst their Commando Training Ground.

"The race consisted of five laps of a 7.5-mile undulating course that crossed four brooks, descended rocky paths, ascended draggy climbs, through muddy farm tracks, across loose pebbles and through woodland. It had it all, a fantastic and challenging course.

"The torrential rain the day before the race made all competitors question if the course was more suited to a mountain bike, with some taking that option."

Sgt Nick Munro, the RAF's star hill climber, was battling the Army for pole position and on lap five dug deep to create a gap. Despite many offs due to his choice of tyres, this secured the win. Sgt Rich Summerbell, on a mountain bike, fought successfully for third position.

On the female front Cpl Sarah Toms took a lead on the climb section and took the win, while Cpl Laura Sheppard fought hard with Maj Ang Laycock of the Army to take second place.

Despite taking four of the six podium positions on offer, the Aviators didn't have enough finishers to compete for the overall team prize.



BANG ON TARGET: Cpl Sarah Toms

ARCHERY



ON TARGET: Sgt Spinks & Chf Tech Inglis

County first for hotshots

RAF ARCHERY hotshots recently made the podium at the national county championships for the first time ever.

Sgt Ellie Spinks and Chf Tech David Inglis won bronze in the barebow shooting mixed teams category at the event at Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre.

“I’ve never had this much fun at a competition,” said Inglis.

The pair were among nine Service personnel representing the RAF at the prestigious event.

For Flt Lt Ryan Elkes and ASI Dan Bennett it was their first time shooting at a major competition.

“As a less accomplished archer, the County Champs was a great opportunity to gain experience in competition shooting,” said Elkes.

“It was also great to learn from other more proficient archers.”

● Contact archery.sec@rafsport.org.uk for more information about RAF Archery.

It was so knee-ly a pro debut U.S. win for Cpl Axe



AXE: Keen to get back to winning ways

BOXING

Daniel Abrahams

IT MAY have ended in defeat, but Cpl Brad Axe’s US adventure has won the Service’s only professional boxer the chance of a knockout future.

Despite losing by a unanimous decision to Texan Julian Delgado as part of the Transatlantic Boxing Clash in Brownsville, Texas, Axe produced a solid display which could have been so different but for a missed referee’s decision in the bout’s second round.

“It was a great experience. I think I boxed well and am gutted to have lost,” said Axe.

“America was a massive experience. I felt good in the first few rounds, which I felt I won, but I took the knee on the body shot in the third and that really cost me.

“I was two rounds down as soon as my knee touched, so it was a tough ask from there.

“I knocked him down in the second, where his knee touched the canvas, but it was not judged, and I think that would have put me in a totally different frame of mind, let alone how the score sheets would have been affected.

“Overall, it was a win-win for me. I got my name out there, got some great exposure, met some great people. It shows promoters

what I am about. I am not here to box journey men.”

The commentary team noted the knee incident as the fight was screened live on Fight Zone’s YouTube page – youtube.com/@FightZone-uk.

Axe was part of a six-man team led by Spencer Oliver against a host team led by Roy Jones Jr.

The Aviator will be fighting again as part of the UK set-up in the second series of the clash, which will be held in the UK.

“Looking back, it is a bit surreal, at the time I was in the zone, but now I look back it is a cool experience. I saw us on a billboard and made the lads pull over so we could watch it scroll round again to show it,” said Axe.

“The press conference was amazing, the build-up was brilliant, I was taken aside after the fight by Roy Jones Jr and complimented on how I boxed and carried myself.

“The fight didn’t go the way I wanted, but I will be taking bits from it to build towards the future, which starts again on December 6.”

Axe will be fighting at York Hall in London’s Bethnal Green, opponent TBC.

● Follow Axe on Instagram @brad_axe.

FOOTBALL

UKAF get ready to take on the Irish in Belfast

IT WAS tale of two games, one loss and one storming 6-1 win, as UKAF’s football stars prepped for the year’s first big challenge against Irish Defence Forces.

A 3-2 defeat at the hands of National League North side Oxford City was followed by a super six-goal thumping of the International Development Football Academy side in Aldershot.

Looking to the Irish clash for the Perpetual Friendship Trophy on November 13, followed by the Kentish Cup defence in December,



| | |
|-------------|---|
| Oxford City | 3 |
| UKAF | 2 |

| | |
|------|---|
| UKAF | 6 |
| IDFA | 1 |

head coach Cpl Darryl White (pictured) and his coaching team organised their last training camp to emulate the demands ahead.

Darryl said: “We designed the last camp like the Kentish Cup, where we would play two games in three days. The first game was against a very strong Oxford City side away. We lost, but it was by far our best performance since I’ve been in charge.”

“We gave the ball away three times and were punished, showing the ruthlessness at the level they are at.”

UKAF were not outclassed though, with two goals in three minutes from Cpl Greg Peel and LPT Elliot Holmes.

Another tough opponent saw the Service men take on IDFA at the Military Stadium in Aldershot.

White said: “This game was about managing the players who had played against Oxford City.

We dominated from minute one and only gave them opportunities when we gave them the ball.”

ASI Luke Preen opened the scoring on 20 minutes, after a great through ball by Cpl Greg Peel. Immediately UKAF added a second through LPT Elliot Holmes.

On being passed the ball by the visitor’s keeper on 27 minutes, team captain CPOPT Danny Kerr chipped in from 35 yards.

On 35 minutes UKAF went 4-0 up through a goal from Cpl Peel, before an own goal on the stroke of half-time made it 5-0.

A solid second half of game

management saw ALET Jake Walker slotting in after 55 minutes, before the Service side conceded late on.

White added: “The only disappointment was we conceded in the last couple of minutes with the score ending 6-1.

“For me this has been our best camp in terms of taking the next step with the level of detail we have given the players and the execution of things on the pitch.

“We now turn our attention to the Irish Defence Forces in Belfast in a historic game for the Friendship Trophy.”

● Follow UKAFFC on Instagram @ukaffootball

5

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



Axe goes close in America fight woe

See p27

Impressive England in back-to-back tournament victories

Cokayne's Red Roses gear up for World Cup with WXV title



CHAMPIONS AGAIN: RAF's Amy Cokayne against New Zealand on way to WXV1 final

RUGBY UNION

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS joy and pain for Service rugby union stars Flt Lts Amy Cokayne and Sarah Bonar as they tasted victory and defeat at the second women's international WXV tournament.

England's Cokayne and Scotland's Bonar both entered the event as defending champions with their respective countries in the three-tier competition.

The Red Roses made it back-to-back wins in WXV1, beating Canada 21-12 in Vancouver.

Bonar and her Scotland teammates tasted late WXV2 defeat at the hands of Australia's Wallaroos,



HOOKER: Flt Lt Amy Cokayne

31-22 in Cape Town, South Africa.

The route to victory saw England thrash USA 61-21 in BC Place Stadium, Vancouver before beating New Zealand 49-31 at the Langley Event Centre, British Columbia.

Cokayne said: "The WXV is a great tournament to give international teams

meaningful games against challenging opposition. Playing three games and winning all three was great for our momentum going into the Six Nations.

"It wasn't always perfect, and Canada really put us under pressure; but we found a way to win. This is an important trait that again will help us going into a World Cup year.

"Personally, it was a relief to put my injuries behind me through WXV and the two warm-up games. I can now look forward to joining back up with Leicester Tigers and starting the Premiership Women's Rugby season."

Scotland beat Italy 19-0 and Japan 19-13 at the DHL Stadium, Cape Town, on their way to final defeat to Australia at Cape Town's Athlone Stadium.

Bonar said: "Our warm-up games and the event itself has seen us make great strides,

especially going into a World Cup year. We have a lot more to give and the game against Australia summed that up. We let them get ahead in the opening 20 minutes. Yes, we came back to take the lead in the second half, but going

down to 13 players it became really tricky and we succumbed to a last-minute try.

"There are lots of things to take forward and we can learn from these mistakes and the pressure going into the World Cup."



LESSONS LEARNED: RAF's Sarah Bonar and Scotland team fell just short in WXV2 PHOTO: NEIL KENNEDY, ALLIGIN PHOTOGRAPHY

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R'n'R

Win!



**Win boxset
of TV classic**
● p3

**Lovely jubbly
– tough guy
Vinnie in Only
Fools on stage**

● See
pages
4-5

Announcements:
p6-7
Puzzles: p8



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Film Review

Twiggy (13+)
In cinemas now

Face of '66 Twiggy still in Vogue now

SADIE FROST'S documentary examines Twiggy's meteoric rise from a girl next door to an icon who defined an era. A working-class girl from North West London, Lesley Hornby first gained attention for her self-applied make-up inspired by her childhood rag doll, featuring painted triangle lashes under her eyes. At just 16, she was discovered while loitering at the trendy Biba shop, a haven for youthful fashion that embodied the spirit of the swinging 60s, brought to life in the film with vibrant archival footage.



TWIGGY: No thought of retirement

cementing her as a fashion phenomenon.

The film's richness comes from an abundance of photographs and home videos capturing every stage of Twiggy's career. Paired with interviews, including with Twiggy herself and a cavalcade of stars, it's clear how grounded and authentic she remains. Joanna Lumley insightfully describes the challenging landscape for young models then, noting how Twiggy broke the mould of upper class,

finishing school models with her Cockney accent and relatable earthiness. Deemed too short and skinny by some, Twiggy's androgynous beauty connected with the world instantly, sparking 'Twiggymania' and her rapid ascent in America.

Despite the pressures of early fame, the documentary follows Twiggy through her ventures across arts and media, from acting and singing to hosting her own TV show, performing on Broadway and succeeding in business. Through it all, her humility shines, with the film revealing her deep commitment to family life and its influence on her.

Defying retirement, Twiggy remains active today, embodying the journey from relatable supermodel to a cultural icon and Dame – always, resolutely, herself.

4 out of 5 roundels
Review by Sam Cooney



STAR QUALITY: Twiggy with director Sadie Frost



DVDs

The Hardacres (12)

On Blu-ray, DVD and download-to-own from November 18



REYT RICH: Ma (Julie Graham) and Mary Hardacre (Claire Cooper)

Yorkshire period drama

CLAIRE COOPER (*Hollyoaks*), Liam McMahon (*Hunger*) and Julie Graham (*Ridley*) headline a talented ensemble cast in *The Hardacres*, a sweeping family saga from the makers of the hit Channel 5 series *All Creatures Great and Small*.



A sprawling, rags-to-riches tale, that first aired on Channel 5, *The Hardacres* is set in Yorkshire in the 1890s and follows the lives, loves and fortunes of the eponymous family as they move from a grimy fish dock to a vast country estate.

We have copies of this lavish period drama on DVD to win. For your chance to own one, simply answer this question correctly:

In which decade is *The Hardacres* set?

Email your answer, marked *The Hardacres* DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 18. Please include your full postal address.



DVDs

Paddington Bear (U)

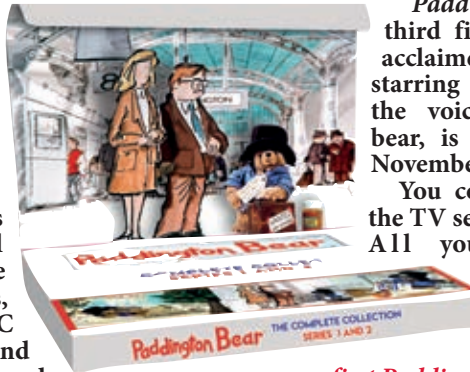
On Blu-ray and DVD now (Fabulous Films/Spirit Ents)



From darkest Peru, to you

A TIMELESS masterpiece based on the internationally acclaimed books by Michael Bond, *Paddington Bear*, directed by Ivor Wood (*The Herbs*, *The Wombles*) and memorably narrated by Michael Hordern, remains one of the most successful children's programmes ever produced in the UK.

Now fans have the chance to own newly-released boxsets which include all 56 episodes of the charming series, first shown on BBC One between 1976 and 1980, now restored and remastered in hi-definition for the first time.



for marmalade sandwiches originally "travelled from darkest Africa," however Bond's agent advised him that there were no bears in Africa, and so it was amended to Peru, home to the spectacled bear.

Paddington in Peru, the third film in the critically acclaimed franchise, starring Ben Whishaw as the voice of the loveable bear, is due for release on November 8.

You could win a copy of the TV series boxset on DVD. All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is tell us:

When was the first *Paddington* book published?

Email your answer, marked *Paddington* DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 18.

One lucky winner will win a copy of the special limited edition version of the boxset and the runner-up will receive series 1 and 2 on DVD.

Also released is a special limited edition version including a slipcase with 3D pop-up *Paddington* scene artwork.

The first *Paddington* book by Michael Bond was published in 1958 and was titled *A Bear called Paddington*. The *Paddington* books have been translated into 40 different languages.

The friendly bear with a pendant



Theatre

It's a V-Force Christmas with Vernon and Vinnie



HOST WITH THE MOST: Radio 2's Vernon Kay (PHOTO: BBC), and as Aladdin, inset right

IT MAY only be but November Christmas is just around the corner... and there's plenty of seasonal entertainment lined up for theatre-goers.

BBC Radio 2 favourite Vernon Kay returns to panto at the Swan Theatre, High Wycombe; Hollywood hardman Vinnie Jones makes his stage acting debut in a festive run of *Only Fools and Horses The Musical* in London; and international ballet superstar Carlos Acosta's *Nutcracker In Havana* – a colourful Cuban taken on the Christmas classic – visits Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre on tour.

The Waterside's panto is *The Further Adventures of Peter Pan: The Return of Captain Hook*, featuring Bradley Riches (Netflix's *Heartstopper*, *Celebrity Big Brother 2024*), Andy Collins (BBC Three Counties Radio) and Mark Moraghan (*Coronation Street*, *Holby City*, *Brookside*).

And *Strictly Come Dancing's* Craig Revel Horwood leads the cast of Milton Keynes Theatre's panto *Peter Pan*.

If you can't wait for panto season to start, *Elf The Musical*

comes to Milton Keynes Theatre from November 6-10 before touring to other venues across the country.

Vernon, who presents a weekday morning show on Radio 2 and, with AJ Odudu, hosts the ITV show *M&S: Dress The Nation*, takes the lead role in *Aladdin*. He won the title of Best Newcomer at the UK Pantomime Awards for his performance as Dandini in *Cinderella* at the Swan in 2022.

Talking about his first experience of panto, he said: "It was amazing. Doing panto for the very first time at Wycombe Swan, as a local theatre to us, meant there were lots of friends and family in the audience, which felt like a lot of pressure. It was a bit of a high stakes move! I love panto and I was hoping it would be as much fun as everyone had told me it would be. And... it was everything I had hoped for and more."

"It was great fun, there was great camaraderie, and the audience (thankfully!) loved it. We were really well-received. The whole thing was a totally positive experience."

He added: "When I was asked to do panto again there was a small part of me that wondered if that could be replicated but I'm already feeling that team spirit and when

you're working with esteemed professionals who do this year in year out and day to day you know you're in for a great time. So, to come back this year is a real treat for me and I'm really looking forward to it."

Vernon and his wife, *Strictly's* Tess Daly, live in leafy Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, with their two daughters.

He's relishing his comedy role in the panto. He said: "The master of the Dad joke is back! In pantomime there are no real limits aside from making sure it's not too rude for the kids. The parents like a bit of cheeky, and my co-star La Voix has a lot of experience in that area."

"Panto is all about great songs and dance, lots of audience interaction and amazing slapstick and we have a brilliant production team and scriptwriters who get that balance absolutely right so I think we will have a lot of fun with it."

This year he'll be performing in a freshly-written *Aladdin*, with a never-seen-before digital set.

"It's a fantastic story and everyone knows it. Lad finds lamp, makes a wish, falls in love, baddie steals the lamp, lad gets lamp back, marries girl! An absolute classic."



CAPTAIN HOOK: Craig Revel Horwood

"There are some great characters which are really iconic and it's going to be interesting to see it rewritten into our contemporary world but, ultimately, it's a story about young love. What could be better?", he added.

Aladdin is at the Wycombe Swan from December 13 to January 5, 2025.

Former professional footballer Vinnie Jones is swapping Tinsel Town for Peckham this Christmas as he takes on the role of local crime lord Danny Driscoll in *Only Fools... at the Hammersmith Eventim Apollo* in a strictly limited run from December 17 to January 5.

Danny is one half of the notorious Driscoll Brothers – who puts the frighteners on the locals and commands respect

wherever he

Vinnie is a tough guy a hit movies in *Stock and T Barrels*, *Mea The Big Ugh* recently in the series *The Ge*

He said: "I've been a fan of *Fools and H* when my friend [p] and promote McIntyre me up and was interested me playing of Danny I told him to me in. The C. Jay Ran her creative great and I'm contribute to of the show?"

Based Sullivan's rec television sho has a script score by Joh Sullivan and Paul White also stars as G

Only Fools only for information atgtickets.co details of the Keynes The Waterside Aylesbury's

Exhibitions

Islamic Art

William Morris Gallery

Islamic design and its usage in m



MORRIS: Portrait by Charles Fairfax Murray

A PRINCIPAL founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris (1834-1896) was one of Britain's most important 19th century designers and thinkers.

He was responsible for producing hundreds of patterns for wallpapers, furnishing fabrics, carpets and embroideries, helping to introduce a new aesthetic into British interiors.

Now the William Morris Gallery in London stages the first exhibition on the influence of art from the Islamic world on Morris.

William Morris & Art from the Islamic World opens at

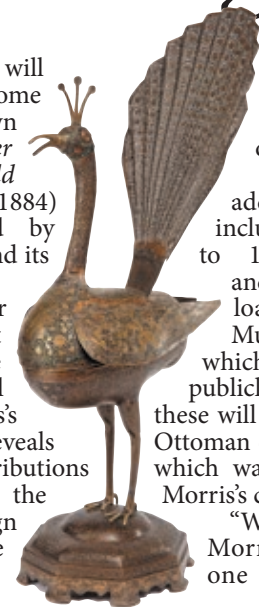
the gallery in Walthamstow on November 9 and runs until March 9, 2025.

A spokesperson said: "Alongside his own iconic designs, outstanding examples of Islamic textiles, ceramics, metalwork and manuscripts from Morris's personal collection – now belonging to major UK institutions including the British Library, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge – will be brought together for the first time to reveal the wider impacts of these objects, their designs and impressions on Morris's creative output."

Featuring more than 60

works, the exhibition will demonstrate how some of Morris's best-known designs such as *Flower Garden* (1870), *Wild Tulip* and *Granada* (1884) were directly inspired by Islamic surface design and its technical application.

Ranging from popular 19th century tourist merchandise to rare artefacts of historical significance, Morris's collection of Islamic art reveals the importance of contributions of various cultures to the evolution of his design and craftsmanship. The exhibition will mark



the first time many of these works have been exhibited since his death.

The spokesperson added: "Highlights will include a group of 17th to 19th century Turkish and Iranian textiles on loan from Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, which have not been shown publicly until now. Among these will be a large 17th century Ottoman catma or velvet hanging which was used as the pall for Morris's coffin."

"Within his lifetime, Morris was known as one of the leading British

Edited by Tracey Allen

Christmas Vinnie

TOUGH GUY ROLES:
Footballer turned actor Vinnie Jones as Danny Driscoll in *Only Fools and Horses the Musical*



goes.
known for his
acting roles in
including *Lock*,
*Two Smoking
an Machine*,
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I've always
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shows.

many British homes

experts on Islamic textiles. This exhibition will show how he helped to bring art from Turkey, Syria and Iran to a British public by lecturing widely on the subject and advising the Victoria & Albert Museum on the building of its collection as an 'Art Referee', including the purchase of the famous V&A 'Ardabil carpet' – the world's oldest dated carpet and one of the largest and most historically important.”

As well as textiles, the exhibition will showcase works from Morris's collection including a brass incense burner shaped in the form of a peacock (*inset left*).

● Go to: wmgallery.co.uk for more information.



ICONIC: Wild Tulip design (1884), on wallpaper



Books

Christmas for the Bomber Girls

canelo.co

New festive Bomber Girls book

FANS OF historical novelist Vicki Beeby's heroines – WAAF Pearl, her sister Thea and their friend Jenny – have a treat in store.

The new title in Vicki's popular Bomber Girls series, *Christmas for the Bomber Girls* (canelo.co) is out now and you could win a copy with *RAF News*.

This heartwarming World War II saga, from the Romantic Novelists' Association's award-winning author, finds the girls flinging themselves into making their Bomber Command station, RAF Fenthorpe in Lincolnshire, as festive as it can be, hoping they will be able to celebrate the end of C-Charlie's tour.

Disaster strikes when the squadron has to make a forced landing behind enemy lines and all the crewmen are reported missing.

Pearl and Thea's grandmother, Edith, immediately travels to Lincoln to support her granddaughters. But Edith



WWII SAGA: New book by Beeby, below

has history at Fenthorpe – can the girls uncover her secrets to help their grandmother find new romance? And can C-Charlie evade capture and survive in enemy-occupied Holland to make it home for Christmas?



Books

Cassino '44

penguin.co.uk

The bloody WWII battle for Rome

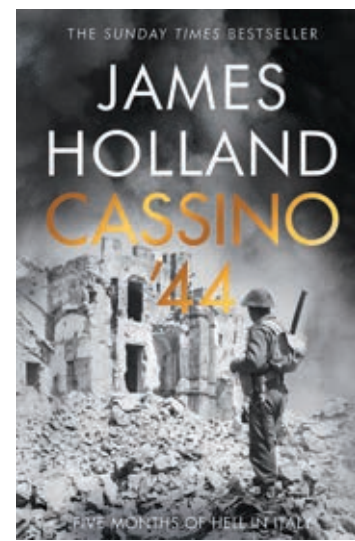
IN HIS latest book, *Cassino '44* (penguin.co.uk) *Sunday Times* bestselling author James Holland tells the astonishing story of one of the most brutal and hardest-fought battles of World War II in Italy – the four ferocious Allied assaults on Monte Cassino, which involved troops from six continents and lasted five months.

After triumph in Tunisia, the sweeping success of the Sicilian invasion and the Italian surrender, the Allies were confident they would be in Rome before Christmas 1943.

But it didn't happen. Hitler ordered his forces to dig in and fight for every yard, setting the stage for one of the most attritional campaigns of WWII.

By the start of 1944, the Allies found themselves coming up against the Gustav Line; a formidable barrier of wire, minefields, bunkers and booby traps, woven into a giant chain of mountain and river valleys that stretched the width of Italy where, at its strongest point, the Abbey of Monte Cassino was perched.

It took five long bitter winter months and the onset of summer before the Allies could



'DEFINITIVE': Holland's *Cassino '44*

finally bludgeon their way north and capture Rome. By then, more than 75,000 troops and civilians had been killed and the historic abbey and entire towns and villages had been laid waste.

Following a rich cast of characters from both sides – from frontline infantry to aircrew, clerks to

battlefield commanders, and from politicians and civilians caught up in the middle of the maelstrom – internationally acclaimed award-winning historian Holland has drawn widely on diaries, letters and contemporary sources to write the definitive account of this brutal battle.

Holland (*inset below*) is the co-founder of the annual Chalke Valley History Festival, now in its 12th year and, with Al Murray, presents the popular WWII podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk*.

We have copies of the book up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us:

What is the name of the history festival James Holland co-founded?

Email your answer, marked Cassino '44 book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by November 15.





Your Announcements

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

Memorial service

MEMORIAL Service for Sqn Ldr PA Goodwin, RAF, Wednesday, November 27 at 1100, The RAF Church, St Clement Danes, The Strand, London, WC2. All colleagues/former colleagues welcome. Dress code: civilian attire, smart casual.

Reunions

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

CALLING all former TG11 T/phonist, TPOs, Tels, Wop Spec, TCO, TCC, TRC, all are welcome to attend the TG11 Association reunion to be held Friday, March 21 to Sunday March 23, 2025, at the Marriott Delta Hotels Nottingham Belfry, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham NG8 6PY. See website: tg11association.com.

Associations

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

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

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

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.

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

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. So why not come along and join us? For more information send an email to: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

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

THE public has the chance to see RAF musicians perform live this autumn with various dates around the country. They include the Central Band of the RAF at the Winston Churchill Hall Theatre, Ruislip on November 15, the Band of the RAF College at Newark Palace Theatre on November 21 and the Band of the RAF Regiment at the Winston Churchill Hall Theatre, Ruislip on December 6. Go to: raf.mod.uk/display-teams-raf-music-services/live-dates/ for ticket details.

Concert at RAF Church

The Central Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in The Strand, London (below), is holding its annual Friends concert on November 28, starting at 7pm. Tickets for the concert are free (a donation to the Friends is suggested) and can either be booked in advance by emailing Simon Denny at: dennysj12@gmail.com or will be available on the door. The Central Band of the RAF and the choir of St Clement Danes will be performing seasonal musical favourites, as well as new works. Refreshments will be provided after the concert.



Royal thanks sent to BP Association



MEMORIAL: Tony Parrini with the commemorative Chusan palm tree and plaque. Inset, letter from King Charles

AFTER 28 years the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association (RAF BPA), founded in August 1996 in Penang, has decided to disband as membership numbers decline.

The withdrawal from the Far East took place in 1971, 53 years ago.

After a final reunion and AGM last month, the occasion was marked with a letter from King Charles and the planting of a Chusan palm tree and unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the Mickleover Hotel near Derby by retired Sqn Ldr Tony Parrini,

the RAF BPA's founder and chairman.

He said: "It is an honour to receive a letter from King Charles; equally important has been the many times when we have brought together former RAF personnel who served in the Far East and never thought they would meet their old mates again."

"With our colleagues of other associations of ex-RAF veterans of the Far East Air Force (FEAF), we have created the FEAF Grove and Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, which has been the centrepiece of a number of anniversary events."

Peake performance at concert

ASTRONAUT and former Army officer Tim Peake (right) will read one of the lessons at the annual carol concert in aid of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, on December 4, taking place at The Guard's Chapel, Wellington Barracks in London, starting at 7pm.

● Go to: ssafa.org.uk for more details and ticket information.



How to use our service

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

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Your Announcements

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tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

New acquisition for museum



SPECIAL DELIVERY:
 The Tucano arrives at the Museum

THANKS TO a legacy from the estate of RAF Winthorpe veteran and former Newark Air Museum member John Dove, the museum has acquired another training aircraft.

Joining its collection is Short Tucano T1, ZF372, purchased from Everett Aero of Sroughton, Suffolk, and delivered to the museum's site in eastern Nottinghamshire last month.

Museum trustee Dave Hibbert said: "By acquiring Short Tucano T1, ZF372 for its collection the museum has fulfilled the desire to add the type to its display."

"Its addition is in line with one part of the museum's stated Collecting Policy, of acquiring aircraft used in a training role."

Museum staff and volunteers will complete the airframe's reassembly and start the

long process of sourcing instrumentation to complete the cockpits, a spokesman said. In Hangar 2 it will be displayed with several other training airframes, including the Jetstream, Dominie, Bulldog, Gnat and Jet Provost.

Tucano T1, ZF372, one of several airframes that had been in deep storage at RAF Shawbury, is expected to retain its current training scheme markings.

Testing time for trekkers

A TEAM of serving RAF personnel have completed a challenging 80-mile trek to the Base Camp of Mount Everest to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The team consisted of AS1 Rowan Martin, from RAF Brize Norton Air Movements Squadron, and AS1 Jack Gooderham and Cpl Jimmy Nutton, from Brize Norton UK Mobile Air Movements Squadron.

The challenge involved 12 days of hiking rough terrain, ascending to altitudes of 5,364 metres. As *RAF News* went to press the trio had raised £2,568 towards their target.

Rowan started organising the event in April 2023, recruiting a team to join him on the challenge. He said: "I was interested in taking on the trek to Mount Everest Base Camp for a few years and I wanted to take part to raise money for a worthy cause."

"The trek has been one of the hardest but most memorable challenges we have ever attempted. Trekking miles every day, from low to high altitudes




CHALLENGE:
 The trio have raised thousands for the RAFBF

and temperatures, it's certainly been a test of both physical and mental strength.

"From the start of planning in early 2023, we have finally achieved our goal of being the first to fly the RAF Benevolent Fund flag at Mt Everest Base Camp (5,364m). We take great pride in knowing the money we have raised will be put to good use, helping those during difficult times."

● Go to: justgiving.com/tea/rafbfeb2024 to donate.




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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 372

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 7 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft

- 7. Information about knock-out plane (6)
- 8. Representative to publicise restoration (6)
- 10. French cat drinks French water in French house (7)
- 11. Scramble EC jet to escape (5)
- 12. Pep's dynasty (4)
- 13. Second unit of currency is the mark (5)
- 17. Park object where subs sit (5)
- 18. See 20 Down
- 22. Best 100-500 sheets of paper (5)
- 23. Slight negative upsets Celt (7)
- 24. When news traditionally aired, 500 would pay attention (6)
- 25. Originally, Roundheads endured terribly unpopular royal Restoration (6)

Down

- 1. At deuce, broke up school (7)
- 2. United Kingdom weather like eastern country (7)
- 3. Little Celeste educates horse (5)
- 4. See 5 Down
- 5. And 4 Down. Missing pilot, file ace propellant away in Battle of Britain memorial (5-2-5)
- 6. Maybe rebut monster (5)
- 9. RAF plane endures force 12 on the Beaufort scale? (9)
- 14. Station kung fu actor in 'Dynasty' (7)
- 15. BAE full, in tatters and menacing (7)
- 16. Doing this on thin ice is ill-advised (7)
- 19. Go away with Scottish sheep! (5)
- 20. And 18 Across. RAF legend in pert khaki, surprisingly (5,4)
- 21. Bird, for example, to soak in water (5)

Name:

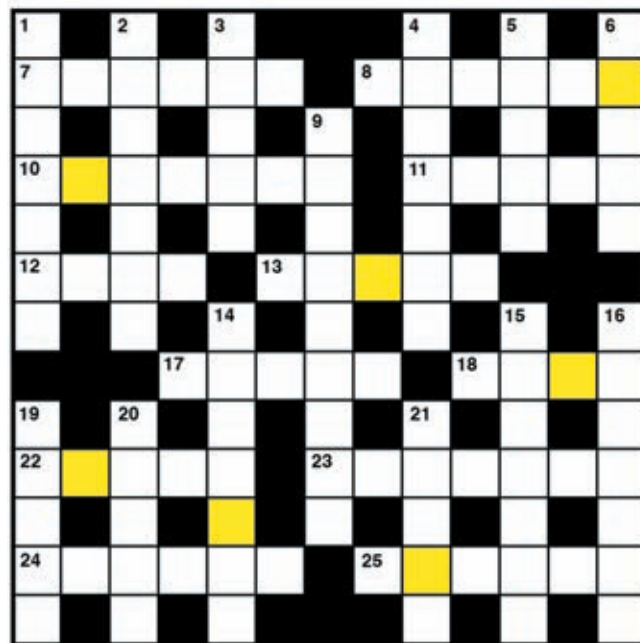
Address:

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RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 372

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by November 15, 2024. Prize Crossword No. 371 winner is: E James, Oxon.



Solution to Crossword No. 371
Across – 1. X-ray 8. Accordions 9. Lockheed 10. Pair 12. Hudson 14. Tartan 15. Timber 17. Tusker 18. Gnat 19. Feng Shui 21. Dragonfire 22. Deep
Down – 2. Revolution 3. Yank 4. Screen 5. Credit 6. Airports 7. USSR 11. Inadequate 13. Sabotage 16. Refine 17. Tennis 18. Gods 20. Shed
RAF aircraft: Buccaneer



Prize Su Doku No. 382

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 November 15, 2024.

The winner of Su Doku No: 380 is: Emily Russell, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Solution to Su Doku No. 381

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



Film Review

Portraits of Dangerous Women (15)

In cinemas now

Accident unites women

THREE WOMEN are brought together from an unlikely incident that has a ripple effect on each of their lives, in this extremely airy, light-hearted drama.

The film begins at full pelt with Steph (Jeany Spark) channelling her frantic energy into her driving. Distracted by her father Jon (Mark Lewis Jones) she applies more speed, an unwise decision on such winding countryside roads. Spotting another car last second, she swerves, avoiding a collision but sadly hitting a dog.

The strange encounter that follows between Steph, the other driver Tina (Tara Fitzgerald) and Ashley (Yasmin Monet Prince) the apparent owner of the leash-less canine, is fraught but presented with a light comic tone. What begins as an awkward confrontation grows unexpectedly heartwarming as they exchange details, destined to cross paths again in the future.

Others are drawn into this evolving web: Jon, a local gallerist, sees potential in Ashley as something of a protégé, while his policewoman sister



UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER: Tina (Tara Fitzgerald) and Steph (Jeany Spark)

(Abigail Cruttenden) pops up here and there. Some interesting world building comes through peripheral characters who have something going on in their brief bit of screen time: an argument between a couple working for Tina, or an anecdote from an artist (Joseph Marcell) looking for representation.

Despite various plot points – a party, a break-up and a broken arm – the film feels strangely weightless. It is as though some

key scenes have been omitted that tie everything together, or make you care about what will happen, but more likely this is just the gentle meandering style.

Despite its rapid and rambunctious opening, *Portraits of Dangerous Women* is an inoffensive film, that feels like an aimless sunny stroll around the Home Counties, albeit with some quirky but distant companions.

3 roundels out of 5 ●●●○
Review by Sam Cooney



Exhibition On Screen

Van Gogh: Poets & Lovers

In cinemas from November 6



MASTERPIECE: *Starry Night Over The Rhone*, 1889 by Vincent Van Gogh

Van Gogh on big screen

TO MARK its 200th anniversary, the National Gallery is staging a major exhibition of artist Vincent Van Gogh's paintings, until January 2025. And Exhibition On Screen brings the Gallery's blockbuster show *Van Gogh: Poets & Lovers* to cinemas nationwide on November 6.

An Exhibition on Screen spokesperson said: "The exhibition and film are a celebration of Van Gogh's life and work, exploring his engagement with poetry and love, his diligent research, his groundbreaking use of colour and his revolutionary style. The film also explores Vincent's years in the south of France where he revolutionised his style and changed art forever."

● Check your local cinema for details and go to: nationalgallery.org.uk. See also: exhibitiononscreen.com