

The Forces' favourite paper

Spitfire pilot of IWM's N3200

● See page 17

Win!



Clean up with the Wombles collection

● See R'n'R page 4-5

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

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RAF NEWS



Season's greetings from stars

See page 7



Skeleton World Cup exposure for Burger



● See page 23

Football Honouring 'Mr Football'



● See page 25

Powerlifting Gold medal for Sqn Ldr



● See p27

Battle ready



PUMA CREWS completed their final festive flight ferrying Father Christmas around 43 schools in Oxfordshire. The HC2, due to be replaced next year, landed for the last time at Oxford Children's Hospital to hand out presents provided by their local station at Benson.

Rivet Joint eyes 'enemy' forces during invasion drill

Simon Mander

SURVEILLANCE CREWS from RAF Waddington simulated fighting in a newly-occupied country subjected to a naval blockade as part of the latest readiness training held in the US. Exercise Resolute Warrior saw nearly 100 personnel from the Lincolnshire station deploy to the Naval Aviation Warfare Development Centre in Fallon, Nevada, for the campaign with forces from other nations of the 'Five Eyes' intelligence network. "The focus of Resolute Hunter is to deliver near real-time analysis, so that weapons specialists can generate specific intelligence on enemy targets," said ISTAR Force Commander Air Cdre Nick Paton. "What makes this exercise so compelling to attend is that it focuses on intelligence and target development in a rolling campaign," he added.

● Continues on page 3

BiteSize

“We fly to Nairobi quite often. When the task appeared I thought it would be the perfect opportunity,”

Flt Lt Mark Scott on Voyager’s special African mission
See p9



“The audience were captivated by his recounting of missions,”

Air Cdre (Ret’d) Jonny Burr
DFC guests at Cranwell SERE
See page 13



“It’s a great honour to get the call-up for the UKAF team,”

Cpl George Mosey is one of 12 RAF players in combined Services Rugby League squad for 2025
See page 26



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MoD investment drive

UK-BASED DEFENCE firms will be prioritised for government investment under a new defence industrial strategy to boost economic growth, employment and national security.

Defence Secretary John Healey launched the Government’s Defence Industrial Strategy this month, inviting investors, innovators, industry and trade unions to give their views on how to create a more integrated, more innovative and more resilient defence sector, the MoD said.

Mr Healey added: “Our defence sector should be an engine for jobs and growth, strengthening our security and economy.

“That requires a defence industry that is better and more integrated – one that can keep our Armed Forces equipped, innovating at a wartime pace, and ahead of our adversaries.

“We will develop this new Defence Industrial Strategy with industry, with innovators and



DEFENCE GROWTH: Mr Healey says investment in the sector will boost employment and national security

with workers. National security is the foundation for national stability and growth.

“We are sending a signal to the market and to our adversaries: with a strong UK

defence sector we will make Britain secure at home and strong abroad.

This Week In History



1980
Cyprus split

THE RAF Regt’s 3 Wing establishes the Green Line in Nicosia in Cyprus, separating Greek and Turkish communities.

1939
North Sea attack

FIVE 99 Sqn Wellington bombers are shot down by Messerschmitt 109s during an RAF attack on German Navy cruisers Nurnberg and Leipzig in the North Sea.



1990
Victor joins Gulf fight

MARHAM-BASED 55 Sqn deploys four Victor K2 tankers to Bahrain to support Operation Granby. The fleet is increased to eight in January.

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

Flt Lt fights back after plane crash

Reservist pilot returns to flying after ordeal

Tracey Allen

RAF RESERVIST Flt Lt Iain Bright says he's lucky to be alive after surviving a devastating air crash that left him so severely injured he spent three years recovering.

Iain, 58, had only seconds to react when the small aircraft he was flying at Easterton, near Elgin, plummeted to the ground from a height of around 100 feet after its engine failed.

The RAF Lossiemouth-based Mission Systems Officer managed to steer the stricken aircraft, a Druine Turbulent, to the left to avoid a grassy mound – if he had hit it he's sure the crash would have been fatal.

He was able to drag himself from the wreckage but his injuries included nine broken bones: two broken ankles, four

broken ribs, a partially-collapsed lung and internal bleeding. And his back was broken in two places.

Iain, known as 'Brighty' said: "I didn't have time to be scared, it happened so quickly – it was five seconds from the engine stopping to being on the ground.

"Because it was an open cockpit aeroplane I was wearing a helmet, which probably saved me. I was knocked unconscious then came to.

"I was struggling to undo my chin strap, then realised a large shard of windscreen was embedded in my chin. Once I pulled that out I managed to crawl free of the wreckage.

"I phoned my friend, who was still on the airfield. Luckily he's a doctor, he could see how badly hurt I was and called the emergency services"

Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance were



LUCKY TO SURVIVE: Flt Lt Iain Bright recovering in hospital after horror crash, above

quickly on the scene and airlifted Iain to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

He said: "By road it would have taken at least an hour and a half to get me to the hospital – the Air Ambulance made it in 20 minutes."

Iain paid tribute to the air rescue crews who helped save his life and has raised more than £1,000 for the charity with a 250-mile walking and cycling challenge in October.

He added: "It's three years and four months since the crash but I will never fully recover. I was in a wheelchair for quite a long time, then on crutches and had several operations on my ankles. I had a total ankle replacement on my left ankle in April and it's been brilliant because I can go for walks on the beach and ride my pushbike. My right ankle will need replacing at some stage, it's never-ending."

Before his accident Iain, a former

regular who notched up 25 years' full-time service before leaving in 2012 and returning as a reservist in 2015, was sporty, going walking, rock-climbing, running, skiing and playing squash.

He said: "Suddenly I was deprived of a working body and it was really tough. I just wanted to get back outside and be active."

The accident hasn't stopped him flying however and he's now a staff pilot with East of Scotland Universities Air Squadron at Leuchars and helps out with the Moray Flying Club in a liaison capacity.



TWO TYPHOON jets intercepted the Qatari Amir's aircraft as it entered UK airspace to deliver a welcome radio message in Arabic.

The Lincolnshire-based 12 Sqn fighters from the RAF's first joint unit since WWII was on a mission to help strengthen the defence partnership between the Gulf state and the UK.

Defence agreements were signed during a visit to Royal Military Academy

Amir's RAF welcome

Sandhurst, where the Amir met squadron members and witnessed a fly-past.

His Majesty The King and His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani inspected a Guard of Honour formed of 1st Battalion Welsh Guards on Horse Guards Parade, also attended by HRH Prince William and the Princess of Wales (pictured right).



EXERCISE: Rivet Joint and other crews

All eyes are on Nevada

● From front page

Using USN military ships and coast guard boats as adversary and Allied vessels, more than 500 RAF, USAF, Australian and Canadian air personnel spent three weeks practising fighting as a combined and joint force.

"It was great to see the way in which forces quickly gelled together in the Joint Intelligence Operations Centre in order to deliver world-class effects against the adversary," said Exercise Joint Task Force Commander, Wg Cdr Keith Bissett.

Aircraft involved included U-2S, A-10, P-8A, E-3G, MH-60s, and for only the second time a 51 Sqn RC-135 Rivet Joint flown with the help of American aircrew and engineers.

This year also saw a total of 19 students being put through their paces by 54 Sqn in the final part of their weapons instructors course.

"This Resolute Hunter has been an excellent exercise for the UK's force elements as they collaborated seamlessly with the Allied force," said Wg Cdr Bissett.

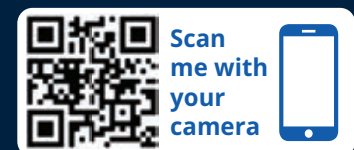
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Action stars muscle in on Joyce's 103rd

Simon Mander

A WWII veteran enlisted a trio of Hollywood heartthrobs to help her celebrate her 103rd birthday.

Former WAAF Joyce Ensell first featured in *RAF News* three years ago when she revealed she had had a surprise video message from actor Jason Statham.

But now she's added to her collection of Hollywood party guests, with life-



size cardboard cut-outs of *John Wick* and *Matrix* actor Keanu Reeves and Gerard Butler, star of the Greek epic romp *300*.

Film fan Joyce regularly watches high-octane movies from her room at the Royal Star and Garter home in Solihull.

This year she chose to share her birthday fish and chips supper with her favourite action heroes and other residents.

Born into a mining family in Westerhope, Newcastle upon

Tyne, Joyce was in the WAAF from 1941 to 1944, reaching the rank of Leading Aircraftwoman, and met her husband Leslie, an RAF electrician.

The couple married in 1943 and later settled in Birmingham.

STARS AND GARTER: Hollywood heroes join Joyce for her 103rd birthday. Inset right, with her card from Jason Statham in 2021



BRONZE AGE WONDER: The 6ft statue of WWII pilot Ken Collier took 15 years to produce and is now in place in foundry owner Mark Beresford's garden in Friston, East Sussex

Rocket man flies again

A BRONZE statue of a Spitfire hero famed for downing Hitler's V1 rockets has been completed 80 years after the World War II pilot's death

Fg Off Ken Collier pioneered the technique of 'wing-tipping' the early cruise missiles as they headed towards London, causing them to spiral out of control.

And now his image takes off again in a quarter-of-a-ton sculpture with a six-and-a-half-foot wingspan.

Creator Stephen Allen said: "I am very pleased that it has been

completed in time to mark the 80th anniversary of Ken Collier's death.

"He was an extraordinary pilot who was the first person to wing-tip a V1 bomb – an astonishing thing to do."

The depiction of the Mk 14c aircraft is so accurate Collier is shown in his wrinkled leather flying jacket, well-worn gloves, flying helmet and aviator's goggles.

The 22-year-old was killed in 1944 on a mission over Germany and is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery.



Vampire packs them in at storage centre

Staff Reporter

STORAGE CHIEFS are hoping to pack in the punters – by displaying a vintage RAF Vampire T11 at their latest branch.

The Cold War era advanced training aircraft joins a growing list of iconic artefacts on display at other Vanguard Self Storage sites, including a Spitfire, English Electric Lightning, *Doctor Who* Tardis and Great War Mark IV tank.

Vanguard chief executive Will McCullagh said: "Restoring and displaying these iconic pieces of history is a personal passion for us.

"Our business roots were in industrial moving and engineering services, which led us to acquire numerous items over 60 years. We are delighted to share some of these treasures with local communities and welcome visitors to our stores.

"The iconic Vampire on display at Bath follows on from the installation of the English Electric Lightning at our Bristol location and the Hawker Hunter displayed at Staples Corner, in London."

Vampire WZ450, formerly based at Pembrey, was acquired by the company last year and restored before being transported



ICONS: Engineers install Vampire at Vanguard's Bath site. The firm also has displays of *Doctor Who*'s Tardis (inset), Spitfire and WWI Mark IV tank at its other premises

to the firm's Bath site in eight sections.

A specialist team reassembled the aircraft over five days,

followed by three days of intricate work to suspend it securely from the roof of the 45,000ft storage site.



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Celebrities wish the RAF Family a Merry Christmas

ONCE AGAIN, I would like to wish all the personnel in the RAF a very Merry Christmas.

To the pilots who take to the skies or the ground crews at the many bases, along with all the administrative staff, we all pay respect to your skills and commitment, especially in these troubled times.

I hope you get chance to put your feet up, treat yourself and take time out from your busy schedules. Lovely Jubbly!

Sir David Jason OBE, actor



THERE ARE such wonders in the skies: stars and moons and meteors and the great sun itself... but nothing makes a grateful heart beat faster than the sight of an RAF plane gleaming and speeding its way around the heavens in our defence.

To all flyers and their families, and to all RAF ground support, a thousand thanks: and have the happiest Christmas imaginable.

With love and admiration,
Joanna Lumley DBE, actor

(Photograph by Gemma Levine)



SENDING MY very best wishes to the entire Royal Air Force family; here's to a safe, peaceful and happy Christmas.

To those on duty, especially serving away from your families, I offer my greatest respect and gratitude. You are all the backbone of our great nation's defence – your service, dedication and sacrifice are truly appreciated. Thank you all.

John Nichol, author



DARLING EVERYONE of the RAF,

Forgive repetition, but I meant every word I said last year – thank you, Guardian Angels of the Skies, for protecting us and making us feel safe in a rather frightening world.

In fact, RAF should also stand for 'Really Amazing Friends'.

Please have a Merry and not too cold Christmas and I wish you all the Happiest New Year possible.

And I want to reiterate how lucky we are to have RAF News to record all your heroic achievements.

Dame Jilly Cooper DBE, author

(Photograph: Thousand Word Media Ltd)



'ALLO 'ALLO to all you amazing people serving in the RAF.

It's always a privilege at this time of year to say thank you for all the wonderful work you do in keeping us and our country safe.

Your bravery, dedication and commitment know no bounds.

I'm extremely proud of our Armed Forces and wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and Safe New Year. Cheers!

**Lots of love,
Vicki Michelle MBE, actor**



FOR THOSE of you on duty over Christmas, please stay safe and whether you're at home with loved ones, or on duty with colleagues, I hope you enjoy plenty of fantastic festive food and drink.

Wishing the whole of the RAF family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Cheers!

Matt Tebbutt, presenter



TO OUR wonderful RAF personnel, both currently serving and veterans alike, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

Whether you are at home or deployed overseas, please stay safe, and thank you for all you do. I'll see you in 2025. X

Antony Cotton, actor



SENDING VERY best wishes to all RAF personnel and their families. Here's to a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Mark Moraghan, actor
(Currently in *The Further Adventures of Peter Pan* at Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury)



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Great Escaper's Lossie return

Simon Mander

MEDALS WON by the last Great Escaper to be executed by the Gestapo have been returned to their RAF home.

Honours won by Flt Lt James 'Cookie' Long when he was shot down in a IX(B) Sqn Wellington have joined his flying helmet, goggles and other memorabilia in the unit's history room at Lossiemouth.

The decorations were due to be sold in May in London with a guide price of between £3,000-£5,000.

The Sqn Association ran a crowdfunding campaign to raise £5,500 in under 48 hours to submit a last-minute offer, but the seller withdrew the medals.

The owner later agreed to a private sale after a visit to the squadron at Lossiemouth.

Association chairman Gp Capt James Heeps negotiated the acquisition of Long's 1939-45 Star, Air Crew Europe Star, War Medal 1939-45 and Mention in Despatches.

Gp Capt Heeps said: "We have always been proud of our squadron's heritage but even so I was surprised by the speed and generosity of Association members' responses to the fundraising campaign."

"The seller, Russell Lellman, later agreed to sell the decorations for less than his personal valuation,

and has been made an honorary member of the Association in recognition of his generosity."

During The Great Escape from Stalag Luft III near Zagan in Poland, 76 prisoners escaped through a tunnel codenamed 'Harry', before it was discovered.

Only three prisoners made it home. Of the 73 recaptured, 50 were executed at Hitler's personal order, ending with Long.

The medals were received by Wg Cdr Chris Pearson, the nephew of Flt Lt Alec Wright, another prisoner of war photographed with Long at the camp.

Alec was too tall to use the tunnels but helped spread spoil around the camp.

Wg Cdr Pearson said: "I'd always known that my uncle Alec had helped with the Great Escape, but it never crossed my mind that he and Cookie would have known each other."

"We found a photograph of the two men together. I turned white and the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end."

Joining the group was Association member Ian Shore, son of Flt Lt John Shore, the captain to whom Long was co-pilot when they crashed.

He said: "Cookie nearly escaped with my father and was the only one of his crew not to make it home."

Flt Lt Shore escaped from Stalag



BIDDING BATTLE: Flt Lt Long's medals were finally snapped up by IX(B) Sqn Association after crowdfunding appeal. PHOTO, inset: Noonans

Luft I in Barth on the Baltic coast using a tunnel which Long helped to dig, discovered by German guards before he could follow.

Shore later completed a 'home run' back to the UK via Sweden in just 10 days and was awarded the Military Cross.

IX (Bomber) Sqn flew Wellington bombers from

Honington in Suffolk, from where Shore and Long set off on their fateful mission.

Later, based at Bardney in Lincolnshire, where a stained-glass memorial window was recently dedicated, it became one of only two Lancaster squadrons trained in using Barnes Wallis's 12,000lb Tallboy bomb.

In Brief



UPGRADE: Gp Capt Boyd checks out one of the new blocks at Marham

Makeover at Marham

HUNDREDS OF junior personnel at Marham are to be rehoused as work begins on the second of four Single Living Accommodation blocks on the station.

Each one will provide 94 single en suite bed spaces, kitchenettes and laundries under a deal with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation.

Assembled in East Yorkshire and transported to Norfolk, the first building, designed with heat pumps and solar panels, is nearing completion.

DIO project manager Marcus Blair said: "These new accommodation blocks will ensure that Junior Ranks stationed here get the quality of accommodation they deserve."

Temporary units are also nearing completion, intended to be a short-term solution to shortages which can be transported from site to site as required.

Marham Station Commander Gp Capt Leonie Boyd said: "I look forward to seeing the first Junior Ranks using the new blocks as they come online next year."



WORLDWIDE UPGRADE: NAAFI funding will support 93 projects across the globe

Forces cash in on NAAFI

THE NAAFI fund has pledged £500,000 to improve facilities in the UK and 15 other countries across the world.

The latest funding package will support 93 projects including providing E-Sports gaming at Akrotiri, a beach bar in Diego Garcia, a sports club at Brize and mess refurbishment onboard HMS Scott.

Voyager's game for a 'raffe

Simon Mander

AIR-TO-AIR REFUELLERS took 50 giraffes to Africa to raise thousands of pounds for sick youngsters.

A Brize-based 10 Sqn Voyager flew to Nairobi in Kenya with the cuddly toys onboard to help raise money for Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

It was the third Flight of the Giraffes as the UK aircraft brought infantry home after Exercise Haraka Storm with the Kenyan Defence Force.

Pilot Flt Lt Mark Scott said: "Following two air-to-air refuelling missions in the UK, I thought it would be nice to see if we could somehow go further afield."

"We fly to Nairobi quite often. When the task appeared on my schedule, I thought it was the perfect opportunity."

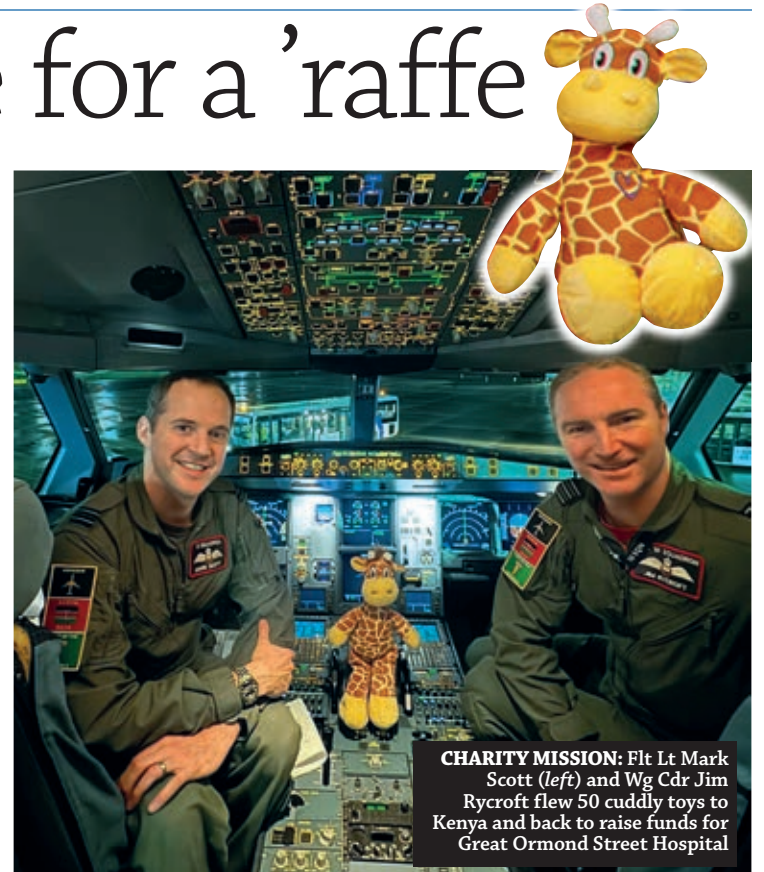
"The giraffes were sold online before the flight and will be sent to their new owners with a patch and a boarding card."

Previous flights have seen up to 500 giraffes loaded onto the aircraft, but with the logistics of long-haul flying only 50 would join the eight crew and 10 Sqn OC Wg Cdr Jim Rycroft for the mission.

They were joined by Giraffes on Tour director Ian Conway, whose daughter Louise and her giraffe Geoffrey stayed at Great Ormond Street.

He said: "Since she passed away RAF pilots and crews have taken Geoffrey into their hearts and flown him all over the world. Louise would have absolutely loved watching all the fun being had in her memory."

In total, the three 'Flights of the Giraffes' have raised more than £22,000 for the charity.



CHARITY MISSION: Flt Lt Mark Scott (left) and Wg Cdr Jim Rycroft flew 50 cuddly toys to Kenya and back to raise funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital

News



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Eagle-eyed Gunners' US war games



FRONTLINE FIGHT: RAF Gunners joined USAF's 820th Base Defense Group during Exercise Global Eagle. PHOTOS: SSG JESSI ROTH

Simon Mander

GUNNERS DEPLOYED to Florida to practise their combat skills with allies.

Personnel from the RAF Regiment's II and XV Sqns joined American and Norwegian Forces being put through their paces on Exercise Global Eagle.

The field exercise simulated a full-scale battle for participants to exchange tactics and techniques while preparing for real-world challenges.

"The deployed phase of Exercise Global Eagle provided an opportunity for II Sqn RAF Regiment to conduct an airborne insertion with US partners in order to access a vital airfield within the scenario," said Flt Lt Jack Privett.

"The exchange of tactics and operational planning has strengthened relationships and enhanced our interoperability," he added.

The sprawling expanse of Avon Park Air Force Range became a proving ground for the RAF Regiment, the USAF 820th Base Defense Group, and the Royal Norwegian Air

Force's Force Protection Battalion.

During the deployed phase, coalition forces faced counter-improvised explosive device procedures, tactical combat casualty care, surveillance and reconnaissance and airborne operations.

Royal Norwegian Air Force 1st Lt Christian Robbins said: "By training with multinational and mixed teams, we gather essential learning points which we plan to bring back to Norway and implement."

The US Army, based at Hunter Airfield, deployed a HH-60M Black Hawk medical evacuation helicopter and two UH-60L Black Hawks for the scenarios.

During the exercise the team completed four raid missions, three aerial movements and four simulated medical evacuation missions, transporting more than 60 troops and flying more than 16 hours.

"We benefitted immensely from rapid planning with a joint and multinational ground force and sharpened our aviation skills during the night, strengthening our capabilities in a complex operational environment," said US Army Capt Fran Hannon.





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'A cheeky individual driven to do his best'

Tributes to airman, 21, found dead at Lossiemouth

Simon Mander

TRIBUTES HAVE poured in for a 21-year-old Air Force engineer found dead at Lossiemouth.

AS1 David Enbom, known as Davey, was on his first posting after initial training to the Moray station's Engineering and Logistics Wing.

A local boy, he attended St Gerardine's Primary School and Lossiemouth High School, where he excelled at sports, until he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, joining the RAF in 2023.

David completed the first stage of his training at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire, before training to become a logistics supplier at MOD Worthy Down in Hampshire.

Lossiemouth colleague AS1 Jordan Roberts said: "Having only met David in May, we quickly became close friends, as if we'd known each other a lifetime.

"A fun individual who never failed to make anyone laugh, whether it be in the office or out on a social. A record of 10 wins

in a row at pool, he'd hustle his way, fuelled with several cans of Monster and Scotmid's steak pies."

Supply Control and Accounting Flight SNCO Sgt Garry Russell said: "Highly popular with a cheeky personality, he was always at the centre of any banter within the office, where he made everyone around him feel valued and included.

"Driven to do his best in any task given to him, he was always quick to keep his managers on their toes if they were late with their responsibilities."

David's Commanding Officer, Sqn Ldr Jack Savage, said: "During his 15 months with us he could usually be found at the centre of the squadron's social activities. He put his hand up for everything - guard duties over Christmas, Poppy Appeal collections, organising our Christmas Draw."

He leaves behind his mother Donna, father Steven, and sister Chelsie, who are being supported by the station's Chaplaincy and welfare staff.



Tech aces net £30k to stay on

THOUSANDS OF military personnel are set to receive retention bonuses to tackle the long-term decline in numbers staying on.

Under the move, eligible Tri-Service aircraft engineers will be given £30,000 when they sign up for an additional three years' service.

From April 2025 the deal is expected to include around 5,000 personnel in total, Defence Secretary John Healey said in a statement in the House of Commons.

Veterans Minister Alistair Carns added: "We are taking decisive action to stop the long-term decline in Armed Forces numbers, having inherited a recruitment and retention crisis - with targets missed every year for the past 14 years."

Also, this week, the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill passed its Second Reading in the House of Commons. It aims to set up an ombudsman for Service personnel and their families.

Kosovo Special Forces hero hits the Wonder Wall

Staff Reporter

Cranwell

A PILOT who crashed a helicopter during training but later won the DFC during the Kosovo campaign has signed on at Cranwell's Wall of Honour.

Air Cdre (Ret'd) Jonathan 'Jonny' Burr was welcomed at the base's Aircrew SERE Training Centre.

Known as 'JB' to his friends, he spoke to trainees, including students from Germany and Qatar, about his career as a pilot and boss of 7 Sqn's Special Forces Flight since joining the RAF in 1986.

Instructor and former fellow crew member Mark Fairhead said: "The audience were captivated by his recounting of missions, given their survival training and his recollections of crashing a helicopter whilst training for operations in the desert.

"Almost 25 years to the day since that crash, he described the event, the activities of the crew on the night, and the impact on personnel."

Experienced in

flying in jungles, the Arctic, at sea and in deserts, JB emphasised that trusting your crew is crucial to success and surviving.

"He spoke of the challenges of operating at night and of the need to be prepared to do so with little rest and often at high tempo for protracted periods," said Mr Fairhead.

"Jonny highlighted the importance of always being prepared for the worst, being ready for things going wrong, establishing contingency plans, expecting the unexpected, knowing what to do and of making sure you talk through 'what ifs,' as a crew ahead of any sortie."

He shared some of his own pre-flight preparation routines, including how to develop the



SURVIVOR: Air Cdre Jonny Burr signs his name at the Wall of Honour. Inset above, Chinooks in action during the Kosovo campaign



necessary muscle memory to escape a stricken aircraft.

"JB was an inspiring guest,

humble, candid and straight talking, he held the attention of some very tired students and

motivated all present to be better at what they do in the future," Mr Fairhead added.

Feature

Healing Military Minds gala evening

It's ball for a



TOP GUNS: AK47 with Quo star John Coghlan, centre



ELEGANT: Classic little black dresses are always in fashion



CHEERS: Raise a glass to Healing Military Minds



DRESSED TO THE NINES: Guests all looked fantastic



SUPPORT: Friends enjoy the evening



WE HAD A SCREAM: Letting loose on the dance floor

HUNDREDS OF guests joined military top brass and some of the UK's best-loved celebrities at the glitzy Healing Military Minds fundraising ball – netting more than £35,000 to help fight PTSD and support thousands of veterans and serving personnel battling mental health problems. Since the campaign was launched three years ago by aviator Cpl Hayley Court, HMM has hit the charity jackpot raising more than £150,000 to fund services provided by leading forces

welfare group Combat Stress. From humble beginnings Hayley's crusade has become one of the most successful military charity start-ups of recent times, winning the Brize Norton-based Reservist a string of awards and backing from heavyweight politicians and some of the UK's best loved TV and music industry celebrities. Now in its third year, the HMM ball is one of the big ticket Air Force events of the calendar. Brize house band AK-47 kicked off the night belting out rock classics *Whatever You Want* and *Rockin' All Over The World*, backed by Status Quo drummer

and Brize Norton neighbour John Coghlan, before *Britain's Got Talent* stars Soldiers of Swing hit the stage. As the business of raising tons of cash got underway, BBC's *Flog It!* star Paul Martin picked up the auctioneer's gavel to start the bidding for donations from local businesses and Forces supporters. Topping the auction list was a collection of Iron Maiden memorabilia which was sold for £2,500 and was donated by the British rock band's manager Dave Shackleton, who joined revellers for the event. Forces supporter and *Coronation Street* star Antony Cotton returned for his second

a good cause



TALENTED: TV's Soldiers of Swing get everyone in the mood



HEAR YE, HEAR YE: Town crier gets proceedings underway



WHAT'S YOUR POINT? Revellers lark around for a photo

JOINING FORCES: Hayley, third from right, with officers



SPECIAL GUEST: Presenter Nicki Chapman, centre, with charity boss Hayley Court, left

guest appearance at the event, along with RAF Veteran and self-styled 'Chinook Chick' Liz McConaghy, whose memoir of her time as a loadmaster on the iconic frontline helicopter in Afghanistan and Iraq made her a publishing sensation. Hayley said: "I am incredibly grateful to the committee, a group of dedicated volunteers with big hearts. The night was truly magical and the feedback has been amazing. We're already gearing up for our first meeting to plan the next ball in 2025."

Paul Martin added: "A highlight of the night were the incredible performances, which included *Britain's Got Talent* stars Soldiers of Swing, and Status Quo's original drummer, John Coghlan, who joined the Service band AK-47." Since launching HMM, Hayley, who has served for more than 30 years, recruited former veterans minister Johnny Mercer, comedian Rhod Gilbert and Iron Maiden frontman Bruce Dickinson to the cause and has been named as Oxfordshire Reservist of the Year

and earned the Combat Stress fundraiser title. ● For more details about the charity, go to: healingmilitaryminds.com

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IN 1928, 18-year-old Geoffrey Stephenson joined the RAF alongside Douglas Bader – years later he was held as a prisoner of war with Bader in Colditz.

Stephenson rose through the ranks to command the famous 19 Sqn, based at Duxford, and the first to be equipped with the Spitfire.

Covering Operation Dynamo, he was shot down on May 26, 1940. His aircraft, Mk1 N3200, was eventually recovered, rebuilt and returned to flying condition – it's now one of the key exhibits at IWM Duxford.

After the war, he remained in the RAF and was aide-de-camp to two monarchs. He was killed in the USA during the Cold War, while test flying a F-100 Super Sabre. He was just 44.

Former RAF officer John Shields tells Stephenson's remarkable story in the biography *Spitfire Pilot, Air Commodore Geoffrey Stephenson* (Air World, Pen & Sword Books, £25, pen-and-sword.co.uk).

Air Cdre Stephenson CBE was buried far from home, one of 80 RAF airmen interred at the Oakwood Cemetery Annex in Montgomery, Alabama. However, as Shields outlines in this fascinating biography, Stephenson was not an unfortunate trainee pilot killed during wartime training in the southern state, but a renowned RAF officer with a rich back story, intertwined with a legendary aircraft.

Cranwell

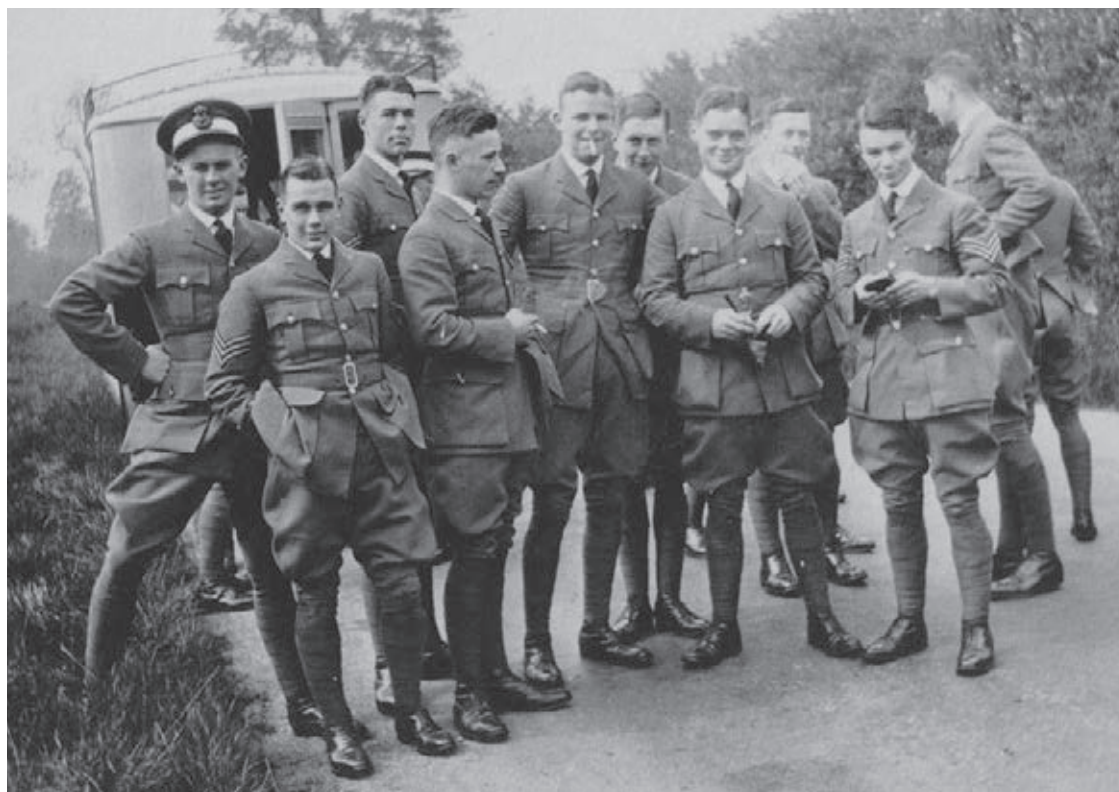
His skills as a pilot were evident at Cranwell, where he led his cadet course by a wide margin in practical flying. Later, at the Central Flying School, he was top student in the 44th Flying Instructors Course of 1934-35.

Throughout the book, the author underlines the dangers involved in flying. By the end of 1932, less than 18 months after their Cranwell graduation, five – almost a quarter of Stephenson's graduating class – were dead. Four perished in flying accidents. Military flying in the peacetime 1930s was indeed a 'brutal affair'. Stephenson's fellow Cranwell graduate Bader, later his best man, suffered his horrendous accident in 1931.

Stephenson commanded 19 Sqn at Duxford from January 1940, with Bader under his



FORCED LANDING: Spitfire N3200 was scavenged by German troops and eventually sank into the sand, re-emerging in 1986



FINAL TERM: Cranwell Flight Cadets, with Cdt Sgt Stephenson, front right, with Under Officer Bader to his right, pipe in hand (Image from Stephenson family archive)

command from April. He experienced only one operational sortie in N3200. On May 26, 1940, in the maelstrom over Dunkirk, Stephenson claimed a Stuka but was hit, probably by a Messerschmitt Me 109.

He expertly executed a forced landing on the beach at Sangatte. Spitfire N3200 was subsequently scavenged, eventually sinking into the sand. The uninjured pilot vividly described a week of evading the Wehrmacht in the chaos of northern France and Belgium. While his entry into German captivity in Brussels was remarkably civilised, the novelty wore off quickly.

Colditz

Much of the book focuses on his near five years in three German POW camps, most notoriously Colditz where he spent almost four years. His diaries and letters recorded his conflicting emotions and impressions. These are augmented by Red Cross reporting, camp histories

and accounts written by fellow prisoners.

Stephenson was resourceful, keen to share his knowledge of flying. He enjoyed learning, notably reading, and languages. Nevertheless, his frustration was often evident, with escape attempts and clashes with his captors. Fear of hunger and obtaining Red Cross parcels to supplement meagre German rations were regular diary topics.

Following his return to Britain in April 1945, his RAF career flourished. He was on an upward trajectory, assuming ever more important postings. His two-and-a-half years (1950-53) at RAF Ismailia in the Suez Canal zone were often tense with Egyptian threats leading to the evacuation of many military



ROYAL DUTIES: With Queen Elizabeth II at RAF Odiham in 1953, escorting her around the 300 aircraft comprising the static display of the RAF Coronation Review. Stephenson is front right, with Her Majesty (Image: Stephenson family archive)

families, including his own.

Back in Britain, he helped organise the Coronation Review at Odiham in July 1953. Stephenson, aide-de-camp to the late King and the young Queen, escorted Her Majesty, reviewing the static display before they enjoyed the impressive flypast. The pinnacle of his RAF career came with his appointment as Commandant of the Central Fighter Establishment at West Raynham that same month.

Super Sabre

His flying career spanned fabric-covered wooden biplanes to sleek supersonic jet fighters. The risks remained, even for this acclaimed and hitherto lucky pilot. This would tragically be borne out in November 1954. The book builds up to his final flight, testing an American F-100 Super Sabre before the aircraft plunged into a Florida forest.

This is an engagingly written book, the product of extensive research on both sides of the Atlantic. Those who served with Stephenson or mentored him are described in detail. Alongside the book's excellent notes, bibliography and index, it is enhanced by family photographs and helpful figures and tables.

The author draws solace from the fact that, after Stephenson's death, the Super Sabre's design faults were mitigated, saving numerous future pilots. Another positive was the salvaging from the sand, painstaking restoration and return to the air of N3200, such a prominent exhibit on its return to Duxford, now under Imperial War Museum auspices. N3200 came home and is a fitting legacy to the life of Geoffrey Stephenson.

Review by Alastair Noble



YOU COULD win a copy of this excellent biography of Air Cdre Geoffrey Stephenson. To enter, tell us: In which year did Stephenson join the RAF?

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Renowned air historian and author

Shores was the writer behind definitive World War II aerial 'kills' book *Aces High*

CHRISTOPHER SHORES, who has died aged 87, was one of the country's finest aviation historians who established a world-wide reputation as a prolific and much acclaimed writer.

He was a member of the Air Training Corps and served in Germany as a Corporal during his National Service with the RAF. His colour blindness prevented him from training as a pilot.

Shores (*pictured*) had a passion for aviation, and particularly the courageous exploits of fighter pilots. In collaboration with Clive Williams, he published his first book, *Aces High*, in 1966. Subsequently updated, the book has become the authoritative volume recording the pilots of the British and Commonwealth Air Forces who achieved five or more 'victories' during World War II. Each entry includes a brief biography – some with photographs – and details of all the combats that made the pilot an Ace. In 2004, he followed this with *Those Other Eagles*, which records in the same detail, those pilots who achieved two or more successes in the air.

In the intervening years, often in collaboration with other air historians, he authored numerous books that outline the daily events in the air wars over Malta, Greece, Singapore, Burma and Tunisia. Many have become the acknowledged reference for the air campaigns in those areas. Together with Brian Cull and the Japanese historian Yasuho Izawa, his two-volume *Bloody Shambles* (1992) was the first comprehensive account of air operations over South-East Asia in the months following the Japanese invasion of Singapore. These volumes remain the most detailed accounts of this often-neglected air campaign.

Shores had a particular interest in the exploits of fighter pilots during both World Wars. He co-authored *Above the Trenches* (1990), a complete record of the fighter aces and units of the British Empire Air Forces. In addition to *Aces High*, he wrote *Fighters over the Desert* (1969)

and then a biography of the legendary ace Billy Drake, *Fighter Leader* (2002).

Having previously written about the RAF's Second Tactical Air Force, he got together with Chris Thomas to write a four-volume history, *2nd Tactical Air Force*

(2004), a much-expanded version that provided a daily account of the activities and operations, including details of all the successful air combats of both sides, together with many unique photographs and illustrations.

In recent years he had headed a team of internationally renowned air historians to produce a detailed history of the Mediterranean Air War. At the time of his death, he was finalising Volume Six of the seven-part production. Copiously illustrated, each volume deals chronologically with the air situation and activity and includes details of all the aerial combats.

A fellow air historian has commented: "This magnus opus is a fitting tribute to a man renowned for his meticulous research. Few have recorded air warfare in such detail, so accurately and with authority as Chris Shores and he deserves to be remembered as one of our foremost air historians."

At the time of his death, Shores had authored, and collaborated as leader of teams, to publish more than 30 titles, the last 23 with the publisher Grub Street.

He also embraced other activities including assisting as a Friend of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and arranging the British Legion Poppy Day for 15 years in his local area. He was also the chairman for three years of the Arts Society, the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts.

Despite his international standing, Shores was a modest man always prepared to help others and offer advice. His contribution to the chronicling of RAF history is unlikely to be surpassed.





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Tim Morris

Lexus ES (from £43,595 otr)

Motoring



BACK IN 1989, there were some seriously memorable executive cars on the market. The Jaaggg XJ6, the Vauxhall Senator, the BMW 5 Series and, of course, the Lexus ES... "But, wait a minute", I hear you say, "the ES was only introduced as a replacement for the GS in 2018".

True, but only here in Blighty and in Europe. For the US and other markets, the ES has been around since Prince sang *Batdance*. The ES is therefore a legend and Lexus is, quite rightly, very proud of it.

Exterior

The words of the day here are 'sharp' and 'angular'. The lines of the ES are neatly contoured, to draw the eye. A revised grille and slimmer headlights dominate the nose, while carefully sculpted side detailing reflects the light to create an interesting profile.

Look closer and you'll appreciate the attention to detail. The 'three-eye' LED headlamps provide outstanding illumination at night and the rear lights slope neatly down beneath the boot spoiler. The chrome effect trim around the windows and swirling alloy wheels are also nice touches. The wheels are also incredibly clever, featuring drone-absorbing hollow rims to cut down road noise.

Interior

Lexus has clearly put a considerable amount of time and effort into creating the interior of the ES. It's plush and comfortable, with clever sound-deadening tech thrown in to fool the senses. The seats are supportive, but supple enough for a relaxing long drive. The front seats have a brilliant massage function too, good enough to rival Jag or Merc. The driving position is bang on.

There's plenty of space for passengers in the back and you can spread out in style. Limo-style rear window blinds and a fat rear armrest give the ES a truly luxury feel. As a package, it works well.

The 12.3-inch infotainment touchscreen is rapid to respond, or you can opt to operate the system via the central trackpad. The graphics are sharp and it's easy enough to use, once you get used to it. The premium Mark Levinson audio system is really worth a punt. It's LOUD and super clear. The real talking point, though, is the £1,600 optional 'digital door mirrors'. These rival the Audi e-Tron for



ES still a legend, but CVT box lets it down

Pros

- Stand-out styling
- Plush interior
- Efficient hybrid engine
- Excellent reliability

Cons

- CVT gearbox saps promising performance
- Rapid acceleration is noisy for the same reason

Verdict

The Lexus ES is everything you'd expect an executive car to be. It looks expensive and you get an immense

Lexus ES

amount of cutting-edge kit for a competitive price tag. Its running costs are minimal too, good enough to make it more frugal than most of its rivals. Where it falls down is its CVT gearbox, which leaves it trailing behind rivals in terms of performance and driver appeal. That's a real pity because, in almost every other respect, I'd rather have an ES over a BMW 5 Series any day.

definition and sheer gadget cool.

On The Road

The ES is precise on steering and fairly flat through the bends. It has the potential to be pretty good fun. The chassis is well balanced and the latest suspension set-up is brilliant

work. Unfortunately, the current eco obsession that grips most manufacturers has put paid to any hope of a fast, fun exec however.

The drivetrain combines a 2.5-litre Atkinson cycle, four-cylinder petrol engine with a self-charging electric motor.



LEXUS ES: Bags of style

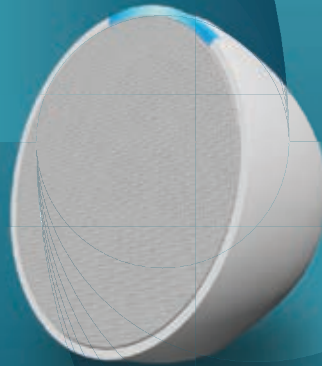
It's clever, but a CVT gearbox will never lend itself well to refined power output and the engine/transmission package is clearly set up to be frugal. On the upside, there's a surprising amount of electric running to be had around town and you can expect combined fuel economy

of around 55mpg.

For the fun factor, you may think 'no problem, go for the manual and the F Sport' model, but that's a 'no-go', I'm afraid. Hybrid only here. We're not going to get the much anticipated ES350 in the UK either, which I think is a missed opportunity.

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SKIING

Skeleton 'novice' raises her profile

Nicole is poster girl of World Cup on Instagram

Daniel Abrahams

NOT SETTling for top 40 finishes in her debut World Cup skeleton bow, Fg Off Nicole Burger became the ISBF social media poster girl to boot in PyeongChang, South Korea.

In just her second year in the sport, Burger not only held her own on the track, but a photograph of her preparing to slide was used to promote the event on the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federations Instagram page.

The aviator finished 29th after heat one, her first-ever World Cup slides, with an overall time of 56.38 seconds, before coming 33rd in the second day's action with a combined time of 56.49 secs.

"I am super happy with the finishes. It is fair to say I am learning a lot competing against the best in the world," she said.

"I am very happy with my first few performances, considering my sliding experience.

"I still have lots to learn but am ecstatic to be achieving my sliding goals on race day and working on my sliding.

"All my hard work and training over the summer in the gym has been paying off as I've been up there with the best on my push start. I am feeling fast and strong."

She added: "The feeling and atmosphere at a World Cup event



STRONG STARTER: Burger on the track and on IBSF Insta page, top left

are amazing. The support from athletes and the crowd is a one-of-a-kind feeling when you're at the start line and at the finish."

Next stop for the aviator is the Europe Cup races in Winterberg,

Germany, Lillehammer in Norway and then Bludenz, Austria.

Burger added: "It's a full-on programme with only four days in the UK for Christmas before

I go straight into back-to-back World Cup races in Germany and Switzerland."

● Follow RAF skeleton on Instagram @raf_skeleton_team.

BOXING

Brad opens his own gym



RAF FIGHT pro Cpl Brad Axe has started his own gymnasium to spread the boxing gospel.

He joined forces with his coach, Carl Ellis, to open Buckingham Boxing Club, which has become integral to his training.

Axe (above) said: "We have it all here. It's open to all, it's a working gymnasium. We have fitness classes as well as boxing, which is open to everyone from beginners up.

"There is also one other pro boxer, so I get good sparring as well."

The gym has a sauna, ice baths, cardio room, two rings and a weights room.

Axe added: "There is a good vibe about the place as well, which is much needed when you are getting a gym going.

"I always wanted to do this and would look to set up my own gym full on, so this is a great step for me.

"I am doing a bit of coaching, but not currently as I am in camp, but I will now use the gym as my main point for preparing for my professional fights."

BOULDERING



RAF problem-solvers take titles

IT WAS a men's and women's double for the RAF at the UK Armed Forces Bouldering trials at the Project Climbing Centre in Poole.

Flt Lt Bex Capewell and AS1(T) Rhys Hall took the women's and men's titles respectively at the event, which is seen as a stepping stone to the 2025 Inter-Service championships.

The finals were contested by six competitors who had qualified in preliminary rounds earlier in the day.

The objective was to complete four 'problems' within four minutes.

Capewell (pictured left) said: "It was really good; it was a really cool set, and we had fun.

"The hardest [problem] was the one that I didn't top - the yellow one. The easiest was the second

one, that really suited me."

The men's final saw a close battle between RAF climbers Cpl Brandon Phipps and AS1(T) Hall.

Phipps successfully completed the first three problems on his first try and looked set to win the men's title but was beaten by the fourth set.

This opened the door for Hall, who completed all four problems with relative ease.

He said: "The whole thing came down to the last boulder and, yes, I'm surprised that I came out on top. Brandon was very strong all the way through."

The Inter-Services Bouldering championships take place early next year.

● Follow RAF bouldering on Instagram @rafmountaineer.

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FOOTBALL

Match honours the memory of RAF's Mr Football

SERVICE FOOTBALL'S Over-55 team paid its respects to former RAF and England star David Salkeld with a clash against England Veterans Over-60s.

Sqn Ldr Martin Wilkinson said: "David was not just a player; he was the cornerstone of Royal Air Force football, a mentor, a leader and an embodiment of sportsmanship.

"Throughout his illustrious career, he played a pivotal role in the RAF, managing and coaching at every level of Service Football.

"His strategic mind, coupled with a deep understanding of the game, made him an invaluable asset to every team he was involved with.

"Whether as a player, coach, or manager, David embodied excellence and



TOP TEAM: 'Geordie', left, with former RAF Vets boss Matt Beattie, centre, and Sqn Ldr Martin Wilkinson

dedication. Many of those he mentored have gone on to carry forward the values he instilled in them, continuing to inspire

the next generation of players."

The former WO, who died earlier this year aged 73, began his RAF footballing career in 1971, before donning the Three Lions of England in 1982 representing the England FA XI, before playing for England Over-65s later in his career.

Former RAF Veterans manager FS (Ret'd) Matt Beattie said: "Geordie gave so much to so many in the world of RAF football. Wherever we were playing he seemed to either be there playing, supporting or just offering sage advice. He is a great loss to everyone who knew him and the game in the Services in general and today's game showed how much we will and do miss him."

The match, at Kirby Muxloe Football Club, began with a minute's silence. The opening exchanges saw the aviators

dominate early possession, going close early on and forcing a good save from John Walker in the England goal.

England made four changes on the half-hour mark and started to win more possession in midfield, going on to score in the 41st minute through Nigel Parker.

The RAF threatened throughout the remainder of the game, going close on several occasions, but could not find a way past the England keeper and it ended 1-0.

Wilkinson added: "RAF FA Veterans will be celebrating the life of David 'Geordie' Salkeld and others at our RAF FA Veterans Annual Remembrance Event on May 3 next year at Royal Wootton Bassett Town Football Club."

● Follow RAF Veterans football on Instagram @raffootballassociation.

INVICTUS GAMES

Up for Invictus challenge

Sqn Ldr Samantha May

"I WAS a doctor, an athlete and captain of the women's athletics team. I lost all of that in five seconds, so I lost my identity to a point. Invictus has given me part of that back," said Sqn Ldr Samantha May.

The 31-year-old sustained a serious knee injury competing at the Inter-Service athletics in July 2023.

"I went from setting an IS record the attempt before my accident, to nothing."

Having harboured a dream of competing at an Olympic Games as a youngster, the Sqn Ldr feels her selection and being around fellow Service personnel has seen her life change from endless rehab to fitness that could help her remain in Service.

"I hope it will get me back into work rather than a medical discharge, which is where I was heading, so it's all pretty game-changing," she added.

Based at RCDM in Birmingham, May will be competing in sitting volleyball, swimming and skiing at the Games.

"Our coaches are excellent, I am relearning how to swim properly, and I had never been involved with wheelchair volleyball.

"Having camaraderie and feeling like an athlete has been important. I feel I am achieving again.

"Rehab is about what you cannot do, Invictus is about what you can do.

"I wasn't in a good place, and I still have bad days, but I don't focus on the bad things as much."

May has plans to create a RAF wheelchair basketball club after the Games.

She said: "It would be great to get more people into recovery and adaptive sport."



PHOTOS:
Ben Lawrence, RAFA

● From back page

opportunity, but a reminder that we need to redouble our efforts to support each other too, serving and veterans, for the common good.

"I wish the team hugely well in the

Games and beyond."

The games will be held February 8-16. Follow Invictus 2025 on Instagram @invictusgames25.

RAF News Sport's Daniel Abrahams spoke with four members of the team.

Cpl Chris Platts (Ret'd)

CPL CHRIS Platts (Ret'd) will be competing in sitting volleyball, skiing and rowing.

He suffered a spinal injury following to fall in 2018 and was medically discharged in 2024. He said: "I was very low, my family life suffered. I have two young children, seven and four, I could not do anything with them. Bad days were my norm.

"I'd been injured so long and was continually being told, 'you can't do this, you can't do that.' I was in a dark place. The doctor told me there was no plan B.

"In my role at People Operations I was helping others, but I had given up on myself. My colleague FS Michelle Dodds wouldn't let me give up, she pushed me, thank God she did, because Invictus has changed everything."

Chris attended the Battle Back centre multi-activity camp in October last year, where he tried wheelchair basketball and adaptive cycling.

During the camp he was told about the trials for the Invictus games.

He said: "Battle Back showed me there was a plan C, D, E and F. I'm now doing sitting volleyball and play for the Help for Heroes team in Kettering. I will be competing at the British Rowing Indoor Champs later next year.

"The competitive edge I have found again at the Invictus training camps is great. It's like I have never left the Service. The banter, the competition, it's all there. It's so great to be back around it."



AS1 Stacey Mitchell (Ret'd)

"I CANNOT wait for the Games to start", said AS1 Stacey Mitchell (Ret'd).

The 31-year-old MT driver suffered a nerve injury during RAF Netball trials in 2014, before further complications in 2018 led to below the knee amputation and above the knee amputation in 2023.

She feels the Games is an end to a bleak decade of rehab and surgery.

The former county level footballer was also a keen hockey player. She will be competing in rowing, wheelchair rugby (where she is vice-captain), skiing and skeleton.

"I started skiing in 2021 following trips with Blesma and the Armed Forces Para-Snow Sport's team (sit-skiing)," she said. "So I was particularly interested that the Games will include winter sports.

"I found sit-ski difficult to start with, but I love it now. I find it liberating being on the slopes and mountains, and on a sports court."

Mitchell began playing wheelchair rugby for Leicester Tigers last season, going on to win a triple of titles – Nationals, Premiership and the Polish Cup.

She said: "The Games has been incredible so far, things got taken away from me very quickly and it has taken nearly 10 years to get back to this point.

"I was left midfield on a football pitch and I have found I have found the organisation of things on the court is a return to what I know best.

"I also love speed and Invictus is about pushing yourself, so I cannot wait to get out there."



Cpl Matt Wickens

'EMPOWERING' IS how Cpl Matt Wickens describes his involvement with Team UK and the Invictus Games.

"I can see a future now, thanks to Invictus. I remember at one point of my rehab thinking there was no path left to walk," he said.

"My mental health took a massive dip. I feel now someone has taken my hand and I am walking another path.

"Without Invictus I would not be here. I can say that with 100 per cent conviction."

Following a sledding accident in 2023 while serving at RAF Akrotiri, Matt suffered seven broken ribs, internal bleeding and a punctured lung. He is now using the games as an opportunity to face his fears following the crash.

"As I was injured badly during the sledding accident, I am taking part in the skeleton plus swimming and biathlon. It will be back on the horse for me, to face that ultimate fear again.

"During my recovery I would not have dreamed of going on the ice again, but now I have jumped at the chance."

Matt was told about the Games by a colleague who competed in a previous Invictus. He said: "I did not know the Games included people like me. If one person who has been where I have been in that dark place hears about what is available, this has all been worth it."

The RAF Lossiemouth-based aircraft engineer added: "Mountain biking was my real passion before. I'd go to the woods and clear my head. I found swimming has replaced that. The water helps reduce my pain levels and it helps my mental health.

"I am apprehensive about the Games as I don't know what to expect, but I know it is about my personal gold medal moments rather than getting an actual gold."



Sport

SKATEBOARDING



TRICKY CUSTOMER:
RAF skateboarder
PHOTO: SARAH SAVAGE

Boarders want Jam on it

THE RAF's skateboarders produced three top-eight finishes at the recent Tri-Service Skate Jam event in Pitt Street Skatepark, Portsmouth.

Out of the five-person aviator team, Cpl Dom Brown finished highest, coming third overall and second in the finale knockout – a last man standing trick event.

Brown said: "This was my third Tri-Service event, a different skatepark from previous ones, showcasing challenging obstacles orientated around street skateboarding.

"The performances were jaw-dropping, it's amazing to see the talent out there.

"I can't wait for the next event." Jam debutant AS1 Joseph Well said: "It was my first-ever skate event. Such an incredible experience, great people, amazing talent. So glad to be a part of it."

Chf Tech Ian Savage said: "This is my third time attending the Jam. Brilliant atmosphere, as usual, but the level of skating has really moved up a notch. Lots more high-quality boarders, not just the guys on the podium. Saying that, it's not just the elite skating, all standards were welcome and everyone attending enjoyed and had a great session."

● Follow RAF skateboarding on Instagram @rafskateboarding.

RUGBY UNION

U23s go close

Injuries end Inters hopes

Daniel Abrahams

THINGS STARTED brightly for the RAF at Burnaby Road, Portsmouth in the opening game of the IS championship with the visiting aviators taking the lead early on through AS1 Tom Quainton, with AS1 Tom Jenkins kicking the extras.

The early blow was bolstered with a Royal Navy yellow card – the score quickly becoming 12-0 in favour of the RAF.

But the loss of AR Jack Twells through a shoulder injury and a yellow for Jenkins allowed the hosts back in for 12-7 at the break.

The scores bounced back and forth from 12-12 to 17-17, but in the dying seconds with the hosts looking at victory, the battling airmen touched down with Jenkins kicking the conversion for 24-24.

Hosting IS holders the Army for the second of the three-clash series, the RAF stormed into a 3-0 lead through the boot of AS1 Jenkins, before conceding a try for 3-5.

The aviators made it 10-5 soon afterwards, through AS1 Ronnie Fulford – Jenkins again kicking the extras, all inside the opening 15 minutes.

The freezing conditions did nothing to halt the action as the scores saw the visitors lead 13-18 at the break.

A fabulous RAF fightback started with a superb try which, after a series of passes, saw AS1 Kieron Prescott find 9, who then fed AS1 E Makinson out wide for



HONOURS EVEN: Open saw RAF draw 24-24 with the Royal Navy

Royal Navy U23s	24	RAF U23s	23
RAF U23s	24	Army U23s	28

a stunner for 20-18, with Jenkins scoring the extras and then kicking a penalty for 23-18.

The depleted aviators dug deep but could not maintain the lead, eventually being overtaken for 23-28.

Disappointed head coach Flt Lt James Henriot said: "We deserved more out of the games, we deserved to win both of them.

"In the first game we played into the Navy's hands. They had a simple game plan around their maul and as we committed penalties they could kick through their 10 to set up things in the corner.

"The Army game? It's very rare you see six front row injuries in a row. We lost AS1 Tom Breen in the first 10 minutes,

before AS1 Josh Peacock, in his final U23s game, suffered a shoulder injury. His replacement, brother AR Harry Peacock, then went off injured minutes after coming on. AS1(T) Joe Bowdell then ran out of steam and AS1 George Levers left the field after five minutes with an arm injury.

"To play with 13 players in the last 12 minutes and still have them under the cosh shows what this team is about, we also had a penalty decision go against us, which was harsh.

"The lads know they will learn from playing at a higher level. We capped 14 new players this year and with the seniors looking to introduce more U23s, the lads will learn and improve."

● Follow RAF U23s rugby on Instagram @rafrugbyunion

OH BROTHER:
Josh and Harry Peacock were both injured



RAF rugby players in a league of their own



RUGBY LEAGUE

THE NEW-LOOK UKAF rugby league squad featuring 12 RAF stars has been announced for the 2025 season.

The team, now led by CPO Darren Bamford, will kick off its season next April, with game one of the President's Cup on May 14 versus English Teachers at Orrell St James in Hull, before facing the English Students in London on June 11.

Fresh from his efforts Down Under for the England Community Lions, AS1 Kieron Prescott heads up the RAF contingent of players, which includes Cpl Adam Potter, AS1 Cam Lees, AS1 Ewan Makinson, AS1 Finn O'Brien, Cpl George Mosey, Cpl James Peach, L/Cpl James Tupua, Cpl Nathan Barker, Cpl Sam

Roberts, AS1 Tyler Richardson and RAF Inter-Services winning captain Sgt Liam Bradley.

Mosey told RAF News Sport: "It's a big honour to get the call-up for the UKAF team and I'm really excited to represent the Armed Forces against the other teams.

"I aim to bring the same energy and impact as I always try to bring to the field, with the same go-forward style as in my ervece games."

Academy star O'Brien was shocked to hear he had been selected. He said: "The call-up was a pleasant surprise to be honest, I ended last season in the academy team and expected to be there this year too, so it's fair to say it was a bit of a shock, but what a privilege.

"I base my game around effort and being reliable, I'm not the fastest or biggest but I'll always put my hand up to help in the hard yards, which I think helps the big guys in the middle reset."

● THE 2025 Betfred Rugby League Challenge Cup first round draw produced a Service's clash to whet the appetite as the RAF were picked to face the Army.

The draw, which also featured the second round, saw all three Services in the hat – with matches played the weekend of January 11-12 and 25-26.

The aviators will be hosted by the Army in Aldershot, with the winner playing either Eastern Rhinos or Wests Warriors away.

Head coach Cpl James Hutchinson said: "We're really excited by being drawn against the Army. We had the Royal Navy in round one last year and that was a great game, so hopefully this year will be just as good.

"We're coming off the back of an Inter-Service win against the Army in September so will come into this game with a lot of confidence, but we won't be taking anything for granted."

Follow RAF rugby league on Instagram @rafrugbyleague.

POWERLIFTING



DEDICATION: AS1 Megan Davenport

POWERLIFTING

Strong showing from Radcliffe

Deadlift gold for Sqn Ldr Vicky at Commonwealth Championships

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS a gold medal in the deadlift and bronze overall for Sqn Ldr Vicky Radcliffe as she represented England at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships in South Africa.

The RAF High Performance athlete, an Air Ops Officer, built on her recent age and weight class (M1-84kg) victory at the All England Championships in the summer.

She told *RAF News Sport*: “I had a good 12-week prep leading up to the competition. A big concern was managing to stay injury free as I’ve had a few problems over the years.

“Prior to warming up, I told my coach I wanted a podium place for overall total plus first place in the deadlift and a shot at the deadlift record of 205kg.”

Competing against a field of seven other lifters, Radcliffe didn’t take any chances with squats and bench, attempting lifts that she knew were within range.

On her third attempt of 202.5kg in the deadlift she won that discipline and secured bronze overall, failing on a red-light as she went for a 207.5kg lift.

She said: “I’m very happy with how the day went. I was initially disappointed not to get that



NUMBER 1: Vicky on the podium and with medals, left

final deadlift or a higher total, but it all came down to tactics on the day.

“Getting to lift on the same platform with the International Masters athletes was amazing and I am looking forward to competing at the National Masters next June, where I’d like to compete in the -76kg class and break the deadlift record, which is currently 198.5kg.”

Meg moves mountains

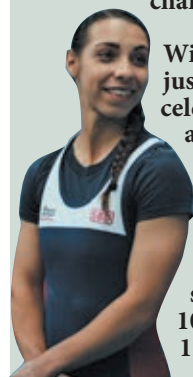
AS1 MEGAN Davenport blasted a double win at U52kg in the Bench-only Commonwealth Championships and Full Power Commonwealth Championships in South Africa.

The RAF Brize Norton Mover became female champion in both tournaments.

She said: “All the hard work paid off. Winning the Commonwealths wasn’t just a testament to my strength, but a celebration of my dedication, resilience and unwavering discipline.”

Not happy with just taking gold in the bench-only, Davenport won the ‘Best Lifter’ trophy after benching 72.5kg at a bodyweight of 48.4kg.

In the Full Power Championships she took gold again, with lifts of: 102.5kg squats, 72.5kg bench and 127.5kg deadlift for a total of 302.5kg.



FOOTBALL

Inters-winning footballer wants to show cancer the red card



TEAM EFFORT: Rachael, centre, fundraising with football pals at Shawbury, and running intervals, below



SERVICE FOOTBALL stalwart Cpl Rachael Howes has a new target to aim for – cancer charity fundraising – after she was diagnosed with the disease earlier this year.

Howes, who undergoes blood tests every six weeks since completing chemotherapy in August for the rare incurable blood cancer lymphoplasmacytic lymphoma, completed a 24-hour gymnasium challenge at RAF Shawbury with footballing teammates in a bid to raise £2,000 for Blood Cancer UK.

Speaking after the challenge, which saw entrants complete a workout hourly for 24 hours, Howes said: “When I was diagnosed my mates would take me to appointments and support me.

“So, for all their amazing love and help, I co-opted them into this 24-hour challenge!

“When I suggested it, they all said, ‘let’s see how you are when you finish chemo’, well, here we are and here I am.”

Survival equipment technician Howes, who made a return to Air Force football with 90 minutes in October, along with playing Tier 4 football for Lincoln United, added: “Before this I got three of them involved in the Three Peaks Challenge in Yorkshire, three weeks after my chemo.”

Howes who had raised more than £4,500 before the Shawbury event, will now focus on training for next April’s London Marathon, which she hopes to complete in less than five hours.

She said: “I have normally had a base level of fitness, which I do not have now because of the treatment – so I may be a bit behind but hey, I have acquired this carefree attitude towards things.

“I’ve raised money for charities that have meant something to me, this time it’s something for me in a way, as these charities could, in the end, help me or find a cure to my cancer.”

● Visit: [justgiving.com/page/rachaelhowes](https://www.justgiving.com/page/rachaelhowes) to donate.



WINNER: Rachael lifts Inter-Services trophy aloft in March this year

5 pages of the best of RAF Sports action



See p23

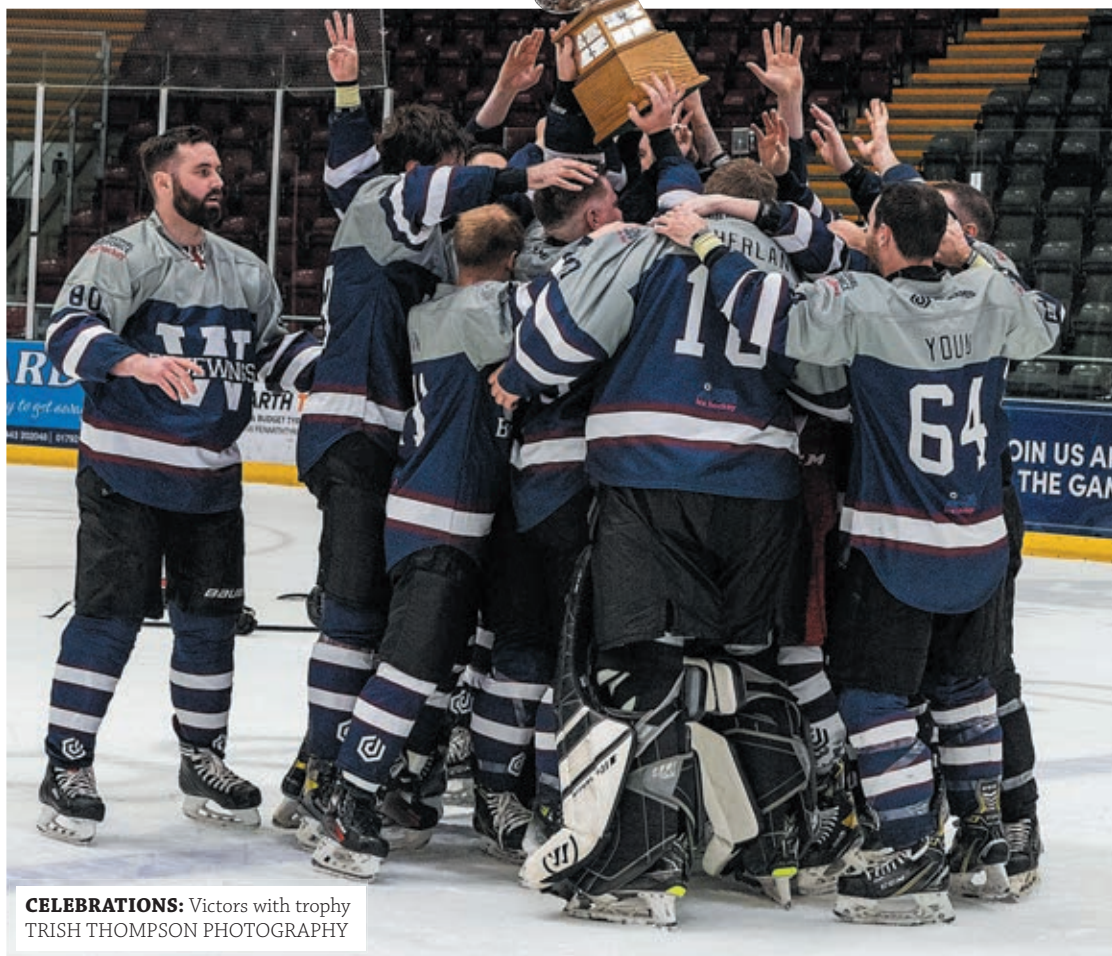
Bould move from Flt Lt

ICE HOCKEY

Bluewings hat-trick



FINALS ACTION: Bluewings on attack during decider against Vulcans



CELEBRATIONS: Victors with trophy
TRISH THOMPSON PHOTOGRAPHY

5-goal final period fightback makes it three in a row for titleholders

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS an ice hockey championship for the ages as RAF Bluewings made it a hat-trick of wins, beating Vulcans 7-4 in Cardiff after a week of action.

The competition at the Ice Arena featured 14 games, a separate trades contest and coaching camps by Robert Horsfall (RAF Aces) and Andy Rourke (RAF Pumas) of the representative teams.

An NHL Skills exhibition was held before the battle to decide the title, after RAF Stars beat Lossie Jets 10-0 in the game for third place.

Bluewings captain A/Cpl Jake Brough, who took the armband at the beginning of the season, said: "I knew I had some big shoes to fill and, having won the previous two championships, we knew teams would be out to dethrone us.

"We didn't stray from our game

plan, we had a goal after last year to get the triple, and we didn't want to settle for anything less."

The championship started with Air winning in the Trade Tournament mini-league.

Two matches graced the ice on the opening day's championship action, with Bluewings showing their intent beating Blackhawks 11-0 and Vulcans beating Lossie Jets 7-0.

Day two saw five clashes, with Blackhawks losing 11-1 to Stars, while Bluewings beat Lossie Jets 4-0 and Vulcans scraped past Stars 1-0. The final clash saw its first iteration as Bluewings beat Vulcans 3-0 and the Jets won 5-1 over the Blackhawks.

A further five matches filled the card for day three with the Bluewings putting three past Stars and the Vulcans finding form again to win 5-0 against Blackhawks. Lossie Jets broke the Bluewings' clean sheet record, losing 10-1 to the eventual winners while, having beaten Lossie 2-0, RAF Stars lost 1-0 to Vulcans.

It was a final that delivered in all aspects with the Bluewings taking a

2-1 lead in the first period, which was then pegged back and exceeded as the Vulcans stormed into a 4-2 lead in the second.

The pace calmed in the third period with the Bluewings striking, netting a brace to level things at 4 apiece. Having opened the scoring it seemed apt that Bluewings captain A/Cpl Brough pushed his side's nose in front for 5-4 after a penalty from the Vulcans.

With the remainder of the game now going into power play the Bluewings netted twice more for a five-goal period and a winning score of 7-4.

Brace added: "The level of buy-in from all the players was incredible to see. With the guidance from our coaching and captaincy team we managed to come back with a massive 5-goal period and win the trophy for the 3rd consecutive year.

"Lifting the trophy over to the team for my first time is something I will always cherish. We look forward to going again next year and trying to retain the title of RAF champions."

● Follow RAF Ice Hockey on Instagram @raficehockey.

It's Game on for Invictus

RAF High Wycombe's Officers' Mess hosted members of Invictus Team UK who will compete in the first-ever hybrid games in February in Vancouver and Whistler, Canada.

The media launch saw 12 of the 28 RAF personnel – who make up nearly half of the 60 personnel-strong team (with four reserves) heading to Canada – on hand to raise awareness of the Games, which will feature both winter and summer sports.

The aviator theme runs throughout, with vice-captain Sqn Ldr Neil Thomas leading the team on the day and Sgt Steve Hooper (RAF Ret'd) and

vet Gemma Barnes taking charge at the Games.

RAF personnel have also been integral at the training camps.

RAF Air Cdre Richard Fogden said: "It is brilliant to see how sport and Invictus is helping our people recover from the variety of daunting challenges they have all faced, and are facing. It is both humbling and inspiring.

"Invictus is a great ● Turn to page 25



LAUNCH: Invictus team at RAF High Wycombe



R'n'R

Win!



Win ● classic kids' TV series box set p4-5

Joy To The World – Doctor Who at Christmas

● See pages 4-5

Announcements:
p6-7
Puzzles: p8



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

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



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

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Film Review
Conclave (12A)
In cinemas now

(white) Smoke & mirrors

WHEN THE Pope dies unexpectedly, the election of his successor becomes a high-stakes political drama in Edward Berger's gripping thriller *Conclave*.

Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci) requests to keep the late Pope's chessboard – a fitting metaphor for the conclave proceedings. The gathering of cardinals in Rome, sequestered from the world until a new Pope is elected, mirrors a strategic game with immense consequences. Bishops may only move diagonally in chess, but these hungry cardinals will manoeuvre in every possible direction to secure power.

Ralph Fiennes delivers a commanding performance as Cardinal Lawrence, the reluctant Dean tasked with overseeing the conclave. Juggling the grand rituals, managing fragile egos and investigating corruption, he embodies both efficiency and inner turmoil. Fiennes balances authority and vulnerability as he tries to uphold the late Pope's wishes while uncovering hidden agendas.

Tucci shines as the wry Bellini, a liberal voice in stark opposition to Cardinal Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto). Castellitto excels as the traditionalist, advocating for a return to Latin and unity through a single language, even as he schemes for influence.



POISON CHALICE: Cardinal Lawrence (Ralph Fiennes) reluctantly oversees the process of selecting the new Pope

Among the power-hungry men are the nuns who maintain order, with Isabella Rossellini delivering a quietly memorable turn as the enigmatic Sister Agnes.

The screenplay blends the intrigue of a political thriller with

moments of explosive revelation, particularly the late introduction of Cardinal Benitez (Carlos Diez), whose secret existence shocks the conclave. Berger's direction elevates the tension, using painterly cinematography

to contrast the grandeur of the church with the isolation of its players. Close-ups scrutinise each face, revealing cracks in their facades as the vote narrows, and intentions come to light.

A tautly constructed and

claustrophobic drama with stellar performances, *Conclave* explores the fraught intersection of faith, politics and ambition in the Vatican's hallowed halls.

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



Film
Night & Day
In production

Bennett set to star in Woolf classic comedy

PRODUCTION IS underway in Newcastle on the film of Virginia Woolf's *Night & Day*, with Jack Whitehall (*Decline & Fall*, *Good Omens*), Jennifer Saunders (*Death on the Nile*, *Allelujah*), and Sally Phillips (*Love at First Sight*, *Bridget Jones Diary*) in the ensemble cast.

Haley Bennett (*Widow Clicquot*, *Cyrano*, *Girl on a Train*) will play the lead, with Timothy Spall (*The Sixth Commandment*, *The King's Speech*), singer Lily Allen (*How to Build a Girl*) and German superstar Elyas M'Barek (*Fack ju Göhste*, *This Crazy Heart*, *The Collini Case*).

Set in an era when glass ceilings were made of concrete, Bennett will play Katharine Hilbery – one woman who insisted on reaching for the stars. Based on what has been called Woolf's funniest novel, *Night and Day* is described as an "unromantic comedy" about



BIG-NAME CAST: Film features, left to right, Saunders, Bennett, Whitehall and Spall

a passionate astronomer who does everything she can to avoid romantic love and marriage.

Contemporary in tone, the story of Katharine's bold challenge to the Edwardian patriarchy is set against the backdrop of the suffragette movement and advances in science and technology, at the turn of the 20th century.

Woolf is considered one

of the most important 20th century modernist authors. Her novels have been translated into over 50 languages. *Night and Day*, one of her early novels, examines the relationships between love, marriage, happiness and success.

It is adapted for the screen by Justine Waddell and directed by Tina Gharavi (*I Am Nasrine*, *Queen Cleopatra*).



DVDs

Hellboy: The Crooked Man (15)

Out now on 4K ultra HD 'Special Collector's edition', Blu-ray, DVD and digital (Icon Film Distribution)



The return of Hellboy

WRITTEN BY series creator Mike Mignola, *Hellboy* makes a blazing return to the screen in a new instalment of the global hit franchise that blends blood-soaked action with chilling horror.

In 1959, Hellboy is enlisted to aid rookie paranormal researcher Bobbie Jo Song in the transportation of a deadly creature. However, their mission soon goes awry when an accident leaves them stranded in the forests of rural Appalachia where a small community resides, haunted by demonic forces.

With all clues pointing towards witchcraft, Hellboy and his allies must hunt down the source of this evil – the 'Crooked Man' who has been sent to Earth to harvest souls for the Devil.

From director Brian Taylor

(*Crank*, *Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance*), the producers of *The Hitman's Bodyguard* and *The Expendables*, and starring Jack Kesy (*12 Strong*, *Deadpool 2*) in the title role, *Hellboy: The Crooked Man* has

been described as a bold and fresh entry, taking the iconic character back to the roots of his much-loved source material.

We have copies of *Hellboy: The Crooked Man* on DVD up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

Who stars in this film's title role?



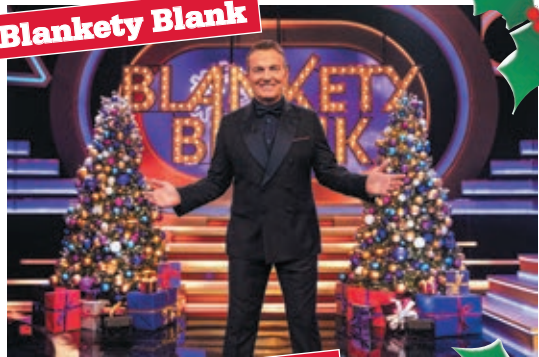
Email your answer, marked Hellboy DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 27.

TV
Christmas viewing
On the box



Festive favourites in welcome return

Blankety Blank



For the Love of Dogs



Doctor Who



THE BBC'S Christmas TV line-up features the return of a host of favourite characters with the last-ever episode of *Gavin & Stacey*, plus a reunion with the *Outnumbered* family and a new feature-length film starring *Wallace & Gromit*.

And festive specials of popular shows include *Doctor Who*, *Call The Midwife*, *Strictly Come Dancing* and, on ITV, *The Masked Singer*.

Charlotte Moore, the BBC's chief content officer, said: "I'm incredibly excited to be showcasing the finest British creativity and welcoming back some of the nation's favourite characters, alongside a magical mix of new festive shows from the world of comedy, drama, entertainment and factual across the holiday season that viewers can rejoice in. Join us live or on iPlayer - there really is something for everyone."

Vengeance Most Fowl is *Wallace & Gromit*'s first new film since 2008's *A Matter of Loaf and Death* from Aardman. After a recent crime wave of stolen garden goods from across the region, Wallace and his pre-programmed smart gnome, Norbot, are the main suspects. While Wallace proclaims his innocence, it's up to Gromit once again to battle sinister forces, or Wallace will never invent again...

It's been five years since viewers last saw Nessa down on one knee declaring her love for Smithy and asking him to marry her. A lot has happened in that time - what will *Gavin & Stacey The Finale* bring? Ruth Jones and James Corden have reunited the cast for the event and there's also a special documentary telling the story of one of Britain's best-loved sitcoms as it ends after 17 years.

The Brockmans are back - the *Outnumbered Christmas Special* follows

the chaos in the downsized home of Pete and Sue Brockman as they grapple with the challenges of parenting kids who are now adults, with their own lives to lead.

And *Doctor Who* returns this Christmas with *Joy To The World*, a time-hopping trip through the history of Earth written by Steven Moffat and starring Ncuti Gatwa as the Doctor and Nicola Coughlan (*Bridgerton*) as Joy.

For the first time ever, this year *Call The Midwife* will deliver not one but two Christmas specials - complete with a cliffhanger. Steven Knight's hit *SAS Rogue Heroes*, based on the book by Ben Macintyre, returns for a second series, the shocking truth about Cindy is revealed in spectacular fashion in *EastEnders* on Christmas Day and there's a new *Casualty Christmas Special*.

There's a celebrity special of *Gladiators* and four famous faces will be competing in *The Great Christmas Sewing Bee*. And festive quiz specials include *University Challenge*, *The Weakest Link*, *Would I Lie To You*, *Blankety Blank*, *Only Connect*, *Richard Osman's Festive House of Games* and *Celebrity Mastermind*, plus Jason Manford hosts a one-off special *Have I Got Sport for You?* that looks back at a spectacular year of sport.

On ITV Graham Norton hosts a *Wheel of Fortune Christmas Special*, Lee Mack presents *The 1% Club Christmas Special* and a *For The Love of Dogs Christmas Special* is presented by Alison Hammond.

Look out for AMC: *An Accidental Studio, the story of HandMade Films*, on ITVX, featuring previously unreleased footage and archive interviews with its founder George Harrison, and new interviews with Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam, Richard E. Grant and Bruce Robinson.

Call the Midwife



Wallace & Gromit



Outnumbered



DVDs

The Wombles: The Complete Collection (U)

Out now on Blu-ray and DVD (Fabulous Films Ltd/Spirit Entertainment)



The original recyclers of Wimbledon

FOR THE first time, every episode of the classic children's TV series *The Wombles* is now available fully restored from hi-definition masters.

The 60-episode boxset has just been released and contains nearly five hours of outstanding Wombles action to enjoy, narrated by the much-missed Bernard Cribbins.

Based on the books by Elisabeth Beresford, the eco-conscious lovable creatures first appeared on British TV in the mid 1970s and

have since become cherished icons of British pop culture.

The characters were based around Beresford's family and named after places they had links with - Great Uncle Bulgaria was inspired by Beresford's father-in-law, who used to wear "a three-piece suit, gumboots and a trilby" and Madame Cholet on Beresford's mother, a great cook, and named after the city in France where the author's daughter Kate went on a French exchange.



Ivor Wood (*Paddington*, *Postman Pat*) directed and animated the series. The original books described wombles as "a bit like teddy bears to look at but they have real claws and live beneath Wimbledon Common".

You could win a copy of *The Complete Collection* on Blu-ray (rrp £59.99) or DVD (rrp £49.99). To be in with a chance of

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Edited by Tracey Allen



Exhibitions
Tirzah Garwood: Beyond Ravilious
 Dulwich Picture Gallery, until May 26, 2025

Garwood: a great artist in her own right

TIRZAH GARWOOD, the wife of artist Eric Ravilious – who never returned from an RAF reconnaissance flight in Iceland while serving as an official war artist in World War II – was a highly accomplished artist in her own right.

Now Dulwich Picture Gallery in London has launched the first major exhibition devoted to her work – *Tirzah Garwood: Beyond Ravilious* runs until May 26, 2025.

A DPG spokesperson said: “The exhibition is the first time the full extent of her output will be shown, giving the artist’s captivating works the critical examination and public showcase they deserve as gems of the mid-20th century. The retrospective offers a rare opportunity to view more than 80 of Garwood’s works, including most of her existing oil paintings, almost exclusively from private collections.”

Also featured are 10 watercolours by Ravilious (1903-1942) whose work is in public collections around the UK, including the Imperial War

Museum. As a war artist, he was invited to RAF Kaladaranes in Iceland. He went missing on a reconnaissance flight in September 1942. His body was never recovered.

From their first meeting in 1926, when Garwood began studying wood engraving with Ravilious at Eastbourne School of Art, their creative and personal lives were intertwined.

The couple had three children but in 1942 Tirzah, who had been diagnosed with breast cancer, had to undergo an operation. While recovering, she received a telegram from the Admiralty with news of her husband’s disappearance.

She married BBC producer Henry Swanzy in 1946. Sadly, the cancer returned and she died, aged 42, in March 1951.

The exhibition’s final room features work created during the last year of her life, which, perhaps surprisingly, she described as the ‘happiest year’. They include a series of small, jewel-like paintings taking



CREATIVES: Tirzah and Eric paint a mural at the Midland Hotel at Morecambe Bay. Inset, Tirzah Garwood, *Hornet and Wild Rose*, 1950, oil on canvas. Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne (Image courtesy of Fleece Press/Simon Lawrence).

inspiration from the countryside she loved and the flowers and insects that fascinated her.

Curator James Russell said: “Tirzah Garwood found her subjects in the everyday world around her, from members of her family to pets, insects, toys and buildings. Whatever her clear gaze rested on, her playful imagination and skill in technique and composition transformed into something strange, magical

and utterly captivating.” A programme of talks, workshops, tours and special events about Garwood’s work is running to May 2025 and the audio guide available via the Gallery’s Bloomberg app features commentary by actress Tamsin Greig, who voiced Garwood in the 2022 film *Eric Ravilious: Drawn to War*.

● Go to: dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk for further information.



Exhibitions
Electric Dreams
 Tate Modern, London, until June 1, 2025

Tate Modern shines a light on digital age

A NEW EXHIBITION at Tate Modern in London celebrates the early innovators of optical, kinetic, programmed and digital art.

Electric Dreams brings together an international network of more than 70 artists working between the 1950s and the dawn of the internet age, who took inspiration from science to create art that expands and tests the senses, said a Tate Modern spokesperson.

“These groundbreaking figures from across Asia, Europe and the Americas responded to the growing presence of technology in our lives by finding new ways to work with

machines – often reclaiming them from the military and corporate interests that drove their evolution.

“Featuring over 150 works, many of which are shown in the UK for the first time, this ambitious exhibition will be a rare opportunity to experience incredible vintage tech art in action – from mesmerising psychedelic installations to early experiments made with home computers and video synthesisers.”

Many of the artists in *Electric Dreams* were among the very first to adopt new digital technologies in their radical experiments. US artist



Installation view of Samia Halaby, *Tottenham Court Road 2024* at Outernet London, 14 November 2024 – 2 February 2025

Rebecca Allen developed cutting-edge motion-capture and 3D modelling techniques in the 1980s, while Brazilian artist Eduardo Kac produced colourful text poems using Minitel machines, a form of networked computing that anticipated the widespread adoption of the internet.

Art made on early home computers includes Palestinian

artist Samia Halaby’s trailblazing kinetic paintings created after teaching herself how to code on an Amiga 1000, and British artist Suzanne Treister’s series of prescient Fictional Videogame Stills from the early 1990s.

Electric Dreams runs until June 1, 2025.

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



Common

Winning this great prize, tell us: Who narrated the TV series *The Wombles*? Email your answer, marked Wombles competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co. Or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Easter Building, HQ Air Command, Highcombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 15. Please mark on your entry whether you want to win the collection on Blu-ray or DVD and include your full postal address.



Your Announcements

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

Death

WARD, LESLIE. Squadron Leader Les Ward passed away peacefully on November 19 aged 92. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who lived a long and full life and will be fondly remembered by all those who knew him. He first joined the RAF in 1950 for his National Service and served two years as an Air Traffic Controller in what was then Rhodesia. He was later commissioned into the Education Branch in 1959 and served in the UK and Europe until he finally retired in 1992. He was also a longstanding Secretary of the RAF Boxing Association. The funeral service will take place at the West Suffolk Crematorium at 11.30am on Tuesday, December 17. No flowers please but donations can be made to Alzheimer's Research UK via: www.funeralhelp.co.uk.



Sqn Ldr Leslie Ward

Reunions

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

CALLING all former TG11 T/phonist, TPOs, Tels, Wop

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

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

103RD Entry RAF Halton Apprentices Reunion October 17, 2025 at the The Park House Hotel in Shifnal, TF11 9BA, 7pm. Contact Mick Woodhouse on: 07811 401040, email: mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com or through: 103rd-entry.org.uk.

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

Associations

TO all members and supporters of the RAF Association, Beccles and Southwold Area RMG; wherever you might be, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year with your families and friends. The New Year will bring challenges for us all, so please remember your less agile colleagues who would appreciate a voice on the telephone now and again. President Brian and the RAFA Committee, RAF Association, Beccles and Southwold Area RMG.

WHAT do you know about the 2 Halifax RAF Sqns 346 and 347 which flew from RAF Elvington near York in World War II? Why not join the Sud-Ouest France Branch of RAFA to find out more? You will be welcomed with open arms or un Accueil

Chaleureux! For further details please contact Terry Dennett at Admin@Rafsudouest.fr or call: 0033546953889

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

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

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

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

RAF Physical Training Instructors Association – please contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown via email on: ptisec@outlook.com for membership enquiries.



SHOW STOPPERS: The Red Arrows are always a popular air show attraction

Air show tickets on sale

WHILE MOST of us are making plans for Christmas and New Year celebrations, RAF Cosford is already looking ahead to next summer.

Tickets for the RAF Cosford Air Show 2025 are now on sale, and a crowd of more than 50,000 is expected to visit the annual event, taking place on Sunday, June 8.

The theme for the 2025 show is 'Commemorate, Celebrate, Innovate.' Event organiser Wg Cdr Angelina Littlefield said: "In line with our theme, we look to commemorate our history, celebrate the RAF and our partners and inspire the next generation as we showcase how

we innovate together."

Organisers have kept ticket prices for 2025 the same as 2024, with a general admission ticket on sale at £40. Children under 16 accompanied by a paying adult will still be able to enter for free.

Marilyn Summers, the air show's chief commercial officer, said: "We know that special days out can feel far more expensive than they used to. By keeping ticket prices the same as last year, we wanted to make sure that families can still enjoy a fantastic and affordable day out at Cosford Air Show."

● Go to: CosfordAirShow.co.uk for further information and tickets.

See Noor's George Cross



TOP GUESTS: From left, ACM Hillier, Mr Mamood, Shrabani Basu and AVM Marshall with the Museum's CEO Maggie Appleton

VIPS ATTENDED a special unveiling at the RAF Museum London recently of the George Cross posthumously-awarded to World War II heroine Noor Inayat Khan and loaned by her family.

Museum visitors can also view a new display that shares the story of the brave Special Operations Executive member.

Born to an Indian father and an American mother, Noor

served under cover in Paris during the war and ultimately gave her life for the Allied cause.

The VIPS included former CAS ACM Sir Stephen Hillier, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff AVM Suraya Marshall, Noor's cousin Shaikh Mamood, journalist and historian Shrabani Basu who wrote Noor's biography *Spy Princess* and actor Mehwish Hayat.

● Go to: rafmuseum.org.uk

How to use our service

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

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

Important Notice

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Your Announcements

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These cadets mean business

BUDDING YOUNG entrepreneurs from the Cadet Forces were honoured at a graduation ceremony recently in the iconic setting of the London Stock Exchange on Paternoster Square.

Members of the Army Cadet Force and RAF Cadets had participated in the Cadets in Enterprise programme, delivered by X-Forces Enterprise (XFE), a main provider of business support to the UK Armed Forces community.

The cadets took part in hands-on group learning followed by a *Dragons' Den*-style pitch event, where the cadets presented their business ideas to a panel of corporate partners from London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG), NatWest, Cisco, Pets at Home, and Reed in Partnership.

The graduation event was attended by senior leaders from Defence, education and business, providing the Cadets with access to role models who inspired them, said a spokesperson for XFE.

Ren Kapur, XFE's founder, said: "I am deeply passionate about introducing entrepreneurship



GRADUATES: The enterprising cadets

and enterprise skills to young people.

"Since its inception, XFE has led the way in providing enterprise training and support to the UK Armed Forces community – including Service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families.

"Extending this mission to cadets in a bespoke format is essential to us, with this being the fourth successful Cadets in Enterprise programme and our

second graduation at LSEG.

"We are immensely proud to witness these young people not just succeed, but thrive, and we are deeply grateful for the ongoing commitment of our partners across Government, Business, and academia in supporting Cadets in Enterprise and shaping the success of our future leaders."

James Eaton, LSEG's Veterans Network lead, said: "We are delighted to host a reception for these amazing young people."



INSPIRATION: Debbie now gets around by accessible cycling

Debbie finds freedom

AN RAF veteran who regained her independence through accessible cycling is hoping to inspire others.

Debbie Cooper Jones started riding a recumbent trike – which places the rider in a laid-back, reclined position – five years ago after health conditions Ehlers-Danlos syndrome and dyspraxia meant she was no longer able to ride a bicycle.

Advised by her GP to work on strengthening her legs, Debbie joined accessible rides with a local charity and now uses the National Cycle Network to get around her

home town of Gloucester.

The former dentist, who worked in the RAF and NHS before medically retiring in 2014, said: "Once I discovered accessible cycling, I realised how much fun it was.

"And just the sheer joy and freedom of not being restricted. Suddenly I could get out in nature in a way I'd been struggling with before.

"I'm managing quite complex health issues, and the fact I get out and get fresh air and keep my body moving allows me to recover more quickly."

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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 375

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

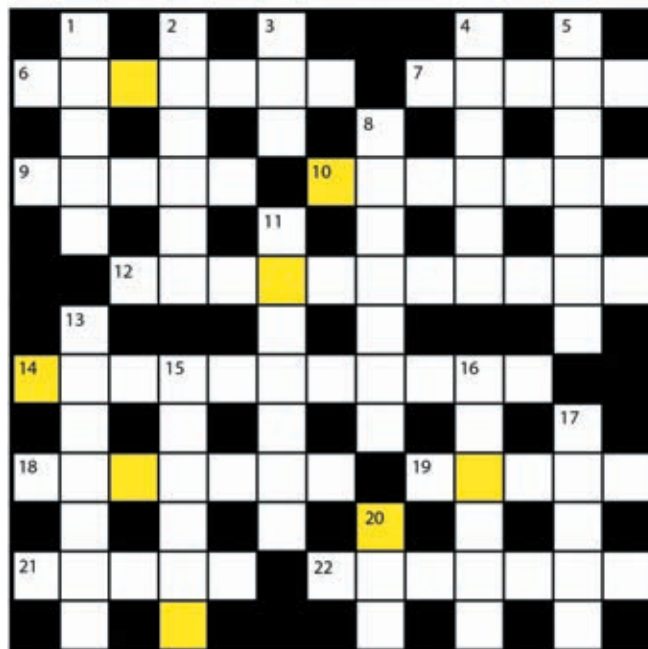
Across

- 6. RAF base for commuters? (7)
- 7. Best Arizona stone (5)
- 9. **And 5 Down.** Basil gobbling about Tolkien creation (5,7)
- 10. Motor north for a while to find massacre (7)
- 12. Worried to begin with for jazz duke's planes (11)
- 14. Some loutish alteration to RAF station (11)
- 18. Discover United Nations planet (7)
- 19. Flabby military group swallowed food at first (5)
- 21. In time, London offers fruit (5)
- 22. RAF bomb hits furniture (7)

Down

- 1. Spoke about the first grave (5)
- 2. Andrew or Peter, say, gifted and well-balanced (6)
- 3. Last letter before ducks reach Whipsnade (3)
- 4. Fighter smashed throne (6)
- 5. **See 9 Across**
- 8. After wet weather observe colourful arch (7)
- 11. Queen's consort reaches a part of Canada (7)
- 13. 18 holes the Spanish RAF mark (7)
- 15. George Bernard has party for RAF intelligence-gatherer (6)
- 16. Lock horns with Chinese dynasty before the French (6)
- 17. **See 20 Down**
- 20. **And 17 Down.** High-flier produces Los Angeles profit (3)

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 January 6, 2025. Prize Crossword No. 374 winner is: S Barnes, Lincs.



Solution to Crossword No. 374

Across – 1. Flag 8. Alarm Clock 9. Ramstein 10. Cold 12. Berlin 14. Scampi 15. Ageism 17. Gaelic 18. Herb 19. Rarefied 21. Cricketers 22. Soya

Down – 2. Legal Eagle 3. Gaps 4. Cavern 5. Amends 6. Blockade 7. Skid 11. Lopsidedly 13. Laid-back 16. Market 17. Garden 18. Hack 20. Fuss

RAF term – Reservist

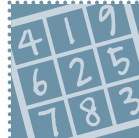
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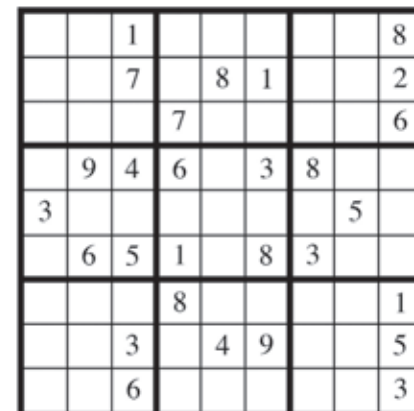
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RAF station: Crossword No. 375



Prize Su Doku No. 385

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 January 6, 2025. The winner of Su Doku No: 383 is: M High, Southampton.

Solution to Su Doku No. 384

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



DVDs Strange Darling (18)

On Blu-ray and DVD now, Icon Film Distribution



THE DEMON: Kyle Gallner

Horror 'masterpiece'

A NEW horror-thriller from the producers of *Late Night with the Devil* and *Barbarian*, *Strange Darling* has been hailed as a fresh take on the cat-and-mouse genre. *The Guardian* called it a "grisly but audacious serial-killer horror outside the comfort zone" and was described by legendary horror writer Stephen King as "a clever masterpiece."

It stars Willa Fitzgerald (*Reacher*, *Scream* series), Kyle Gallner (*Smile*, *Scream*), Ed Begley Jr. (*Better Call Saul*, *A Mighty Wind*) and Barbara Hershey (*Black Swan*, *Insidious*,

The Last Temptation of Christ) and is written and directed by JT Moller.

We have copies on DVD up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, answer this question correctly:

Who wrote and directed *Strange Darling*?

Email your answer, marked *Strange Darling* 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 January 6, 2025.



Film Review Joy (12A)

In cinemas now

The difficult birth of IVF

LAB ASSISTANT Jean Purdy joins a radical research team looking to develop IVF treatment in the late 1960s-70s and cure childlessness. Their groundbreaking work faces intense scrutiny, from moral condemnation by the church to media demonisation.

Jean (Thomasin Mackenzie) is a headstrong and compassionate assistant, working alongside biologist Robert Edwards (James Norton) and obstetrician Patrick Steptoe (the irrefutably charming Bill Nighy). Together, they set up a makeshift research lab in a rundown Oldham hospital, where they offer hope to women struggling to conceive. Despite their determination, they face challenges both scientific and societal, as questions of morality and fears of abnormalities loom large over their efforts.

The film balances the optimism of its subject, as hinted at in the title, with the stark realities of their work. Hopeful needle drops of upbeat soul reflect moments of progress, while the relentless backlash highlights the obstacles faced by pioneers of reproductive science. Religious critics accuse the



PIONEERS: Patrick Steptoe (Nighy), Jean Purdy (Mackenzie) and Robert Edwards (Norton)

team of 'playing God' while the sensationalist media fuels public outrage, paying for leaks and even sending undercover journalists to infiltrate hospitals. Though IVF is now widely accepted, the film draws parallels to ongoing debates about reproductive rights, illustrating the enduring stigma surrounding women's healthcare choices.

At its core, *Joy* is a human story. Jean's strained relationship with her devout Christian mother and her own struggles with fertility add emotional depth. However, it's the

women in the self-dubbed 'Ovum Club' who truly bring the story to life. These participants endure heartbreak and sacrifice, knowing they may not benefit personally but are paving the way for future generations. Their resilience underscores the profound emotional stakes of the research.

Joy thrives when exploring its human elements: it's a poignant reminder of the sacrifices behind medical breakthroughs and the hope they inspire.

3 out of 5 roundels Review by Sam Cooney