

The Forces' favourite paper



The builder who made a Spitfire in his garden
 ● See page 17



Football story of loyalty & hope
 ● See R'n'R page 3

ROYAL AIR FORCE
 Friday, October 17, 2025
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RAF News

The F-35 pilots bringing 5th-gen air power to the Indo-Pacific



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Kayaking Naturally brilliant



● See page 23

Motorsport Kenneth's a ROKit man



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Rugby Flt Lt's on top of world



● See page p27

Reaper Royal farewell



Simon Mander
 THE REAPER MQ-9 officially retired from service at Waddington after 18 years of targeting terror on the frontline.
 Marking the event HRH The Duke of Edinburgh (above) arrived at the station where RAF crews operated the aircraft on operations across the Middle East.
 Speaking at the retirement ceremony, AVM Mike Jackson said: "While we look back with pride on its legacy, we also look forward with confidence. The Protector will take its place, building on Reaper's achievements with greater endurance, precision and connectivity."
 ● See page 5 for full story

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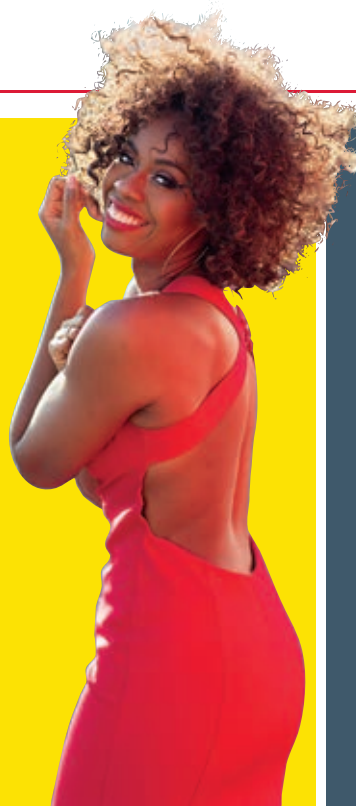
“This medal reflects MAF’s service over seven decades,”

Former RAF logistics manager Siobhain Cole is honoured for her work with global aviation charity
See page 13



“We all just want to see love win,”

Sidonie Smith stars in touring stage version of hit film *The Bodyguard*
See R’n’R pp4-5



“When I’m holding the sword, I know it’s going to be fun,”

Fencing’s AS1 Jay Kitchen
See page 24



Scand and deliver



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Simon Mander

TYPHOONS FILLED up beside Norwegian fjords during the latest demonstration of the west’s determination to defend the High North.

The Lossiemouth-based IX(B) Sqn jets conducted hotpit refuelling drills as part of Exercise Hillstream.

Taking place until the end of October, the training is part of a large-scale rehearsal of Joint Expeditionary Force response options dubbed Exercise Tarassis.

It shows how the JEF can simultaneously deploy forces to the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea Region to deter adversaries and protect peace, security, and prosperity.

The jets deployed to Evenes Air Station in Norway to provide close air support to 3 Commando Brigade, who are demonstrating amphibious assaults in the area.



This Week In History



1942 El Alamein strikes

WELLINGTON BOMBERS strike targets in the first phase of the El Alamein offensive paving the way for the total defeat of the Afrika Corps.

1971 Yemen reprise raid

RAF HUNTERS destroy a fort in Yemen after Egyptian Air Force MiG fighters bomb Nuqab in Aden.



1984 Ethiopia famine mission

HERCULES C130S begin famine relief flights to Ethiopia. More than 32,000 tons of supplies are delivered during 2,152 sorties.

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

'Given months to live but I'm still serving'

Battling pilot is beating the odds

Staff Reporter

A HIGH-FLYING combat-hardened helicopter pilot who was given just four months to live after being struck down by brain cancer is hoping to take his first steps as an ambassador for the RAF.

After earning his spurs in Northern Ireland in the wake of the Omagh bombing and anti-terror operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Gp Capt Pip Harding landed his dream post working alongside US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii in 2024.

Just 18 months into his role as an RAF representative in the States, the dad of five was facing the toughest fight of his life when he was diagnosed with stage four glioblastoma – an aggressive and usually fatal brain tumour.

He said: "I was at home and just felt some effect on my brain. There was no pain. Something just didn't feel right."

"I just ended up lying down and not talking for the evening. The following day I was fine so didn't really think anything of it."

The true extent of the hidden killer he was harbouring made itself known a few months later when he was in Washington DC with his wife Claire.

Pip said: "I had a more severe episode. Clearly something was very wrong. Claire insisted we get an MRI scan just to make sure I was okay."

He underwent a preliminary CT scan but medics called him back for a full MRI, which revealed two golf ball-sized tumours which if



FAMILY FIRST: Pip and wife Claire (centre) and their five children (from left) Johnny, Ellie, William, Bobbie, and Harry.

untreated would claim his life in a matter of months.

Pip added: "I was given three options. If I did nothing I would be dead within four to six months."

"I was offered either major brain surgery to cut back the tumours, which carries a lot of risks, or a course of intensive radio and chemotherapy in the hope of extending my life."

Pip and Claire broke the news to their five children – Ellie, 25, Johnny, 23, Bobbie, 20, Harry, 18, and William, 15 – and close friends and opted to have the surgery.

The operation was partially successful and was followed by ongoing chemotherapy, but his chances of recovery remained slim.

Back in the UK, Service pals organised a hangar party attended

by more than 400 people. "It was an amazing gesture, but in some ways it felt like a farewell party. It wasn't looking too good," said Pip.

Weeks later the family was thrown a lifeline. Pip's brother Jonathan and wife Claire suggested Dr Paul Mulholland, who had developed a pioneering oncothermia treatment which uses concentrated heat rays to kill the cancer cells, and RAF Benson's Dr Jessica Fletcher helped arrange a consultation.

Unlicensed for use on the NHS, the treatment costs £1,000 per session. But within weeks pals had raised more than £40,000 to cover the cost of a course of treatment.

Pip completed the last of 36 sessions this month and his tumours have shrunk to the



MIDDLE EAST: Gp Capt Harding at Al Udeid in 2017, where he was DACC

extent that they are barely visible.

While he is still receiving chemotherapy he now has hope for the future and has been given the all-clear to carry on serving by RAF medics.

"The damage could mean that I am not so useful to the RAF and I might be asked to move on but for now there is a lot I can contribute and hopefully I can inspire cadets, junior personnel and crews with public speaking engagements," he said.

The son of AVM Peter Harding, Pip was born in Akrotiri and joined the RAF after his degree at Exeter University, where he and Claire met, and was presented with his wings by his father in 1997.

After flying training at Linton-on-Ouse he was selected to fly helicopters and played a leading

role introducing the Merlin into service with the RAF.

He served in Northern Ireland, flying injured victims of the 1998 Omagh terrorist bombing to hospital. After a stint as an instructor at Shawbury he returned to frontline duty as Officer Commanding 78 Squadron.

Promoted to Group Captain, he was stationed at Al Udeid working as deputy to the Air Component Commander, Air Marshal Sir Johnny Stringer.

"I can't deeply enough express my gratitude to the RAF. The support I have been given by the Service and my friends in the RAF has been truly overwhelming," said Pip.

"The Air Force recognises the importance of family and encourages it. It's brilliant."

Farewell to Forces ally Dame Jilly



FRIEND OF RAF: Dame Jilly Cooper

RAF NEWS was deeply saddened to hear of the death of bestselling author Dame Jilly Cooper at the age of 88.

A stalwart Armed Forces supporter and a great friend to RAF News, she always sent a Christmas message for our readers and was interviewed by the newspaper several times.

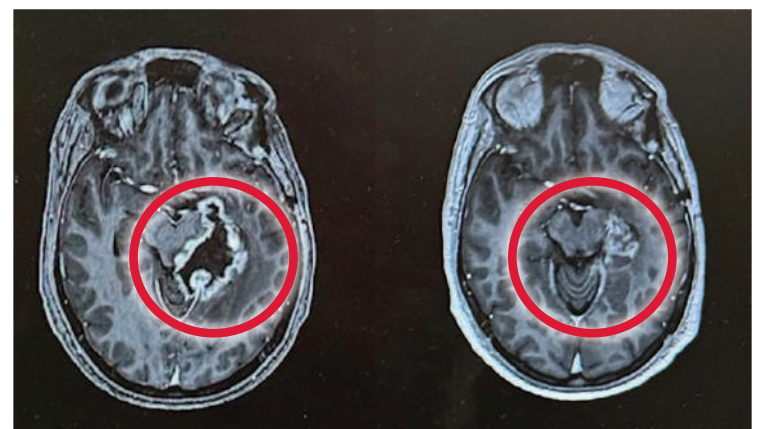
A well-known animal lover, Jilly was instrumental in founding the Animals In War memorial in Hyde Park. She also backed a campaign in 2016 to erect a national memorial commemorating military working dogs, which was inspired by RAF Police dog Buster who earned a row

of campaign medals. The memorial is located in the Pet Cemetery grounds in Holywell, Flintshire, North Wales.

The daughter of Brigadier William Sallitt, Jilly was married for more than 50 years to ex-Army officer Leo Cooper, who founded his own publishing company that became part of military publishers Pen & Sword.

Jilly was appointed OBE in 2004 for services to literature, made CBE in 2018 for services to literature and charity and became a Dame last year.

Leo died in 2013. Dame Jilly is survived by children Felix and Emily.



SCANS: Image of Pip's brain and shrinking tumour before (left) and after treatment



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Benevolent Fund**



The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109).



Staff Reporter RAF Coningsby

HRH THE Princess of Wales was on a roll during a recent visit to Coningsby – as she performed the aerobatic loop manoeuvre in the Typhoon simulator.

The 47-year-old Royal, who is an Honorary Air Commodore of the Lincs station, put her flying skills to the

test as she took a virtual flight across the county and over the North Sea.

Kate was given a briefing on the role of the frontline RAF fast jet station by Gp Capt Paul O'Grady before meeting Typhoon pilots on QRA duties and chatting to Air Force families.

Speaking to reporters, Station Commander Gp Capt O'Grady said: "She seems to be a natural pilot so we might have to get her qualified and get her flying a Typhoon, if she's up for it."



ROYAL ROLL: HRH The Princess of Wales chats to Coningsby Station Commander Paul O'Grady. Top left, Kate in the Typhoon simulator
PHOTOS: CPL KIM MEADE

Sun sets on Reaper

Simon Mander

THE REAPER has made its final flight after the equivalent of travelling to the moon and back more than 50 times on frontline duties.

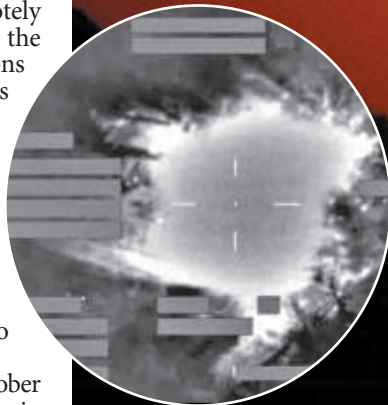
For almost 20 years the Waddington-based MQ9 has supported UK forces – most recently on coalition combat operations during Operation Shader countering Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

Chief of the Air Staff ACM Harv Smyth said: "Over the last 18 years, the Reaper Remotely Piloted Air System has been the backbone of RAF operations in the Middle East. Its capabilities have been critical in supporting UK and Coalition forces.

"Amassing an astonishing number of operational flying hours, I am incredibly proud of all of the RAF personnel who have been involved in its highly-skilled operation over so many years."

Entering RAF service in October 2007 to back up British forces in Afghanistan, Reapers have flown more than 173,000 flying hours.

Now after 18 years of service it has made its final operational flight, to be replaced by the MQ-9B Protector which offers greater range and endurance, improved weapon systems, and is certified to fly in UK airspace.



FRONTLINE FIREPOWER: The RAF's Reaper UAV has supported UK operations for 19 years. Inset left, preparing for a mission in Afghanistan and strike on enemy target

Most recently flown by crews from XIII Sqn, consisting of a Lincolnshire-based pilot, sensor operator and mission intelligence coordinator, the Reaper regularly operates in the Middle East.

Officer Commanding XIII Sqn, Gp Capt Stu McAdam, said: "It is with a heavy heart but immense pride to have flown our last mission and retire the MQ-9A Reaper from Service.

"With the introduction of the MQ-9B Protector, the future is certainly bright for XIII Sqn. I have full confidence we will continue to deliver operational excellence for the RAF ISTAR Force."



Bikers' salute

THOUSANDS OF bikers from across the world converged on the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Now in its 18th year, the Ride to the Wall event paid tribute to fallen UK military personnel whose names are engraved on the walls of the Armed Forces Memorial.

"Thousands come together for Ride to the Wall to ensure their courage and sacrifice are remembered for generations to come," said founder Martin Dickinson.

Departing from one of the 12 designated start locations around the country, most of the riders arrived in convoy.

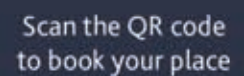
Since the first Ride to the Wall in 2008, participants have raised more than £1.83 million to support the Staffordshire memorial park.

The funds raised from last year's event were the highest to date, totalling £170,000.





Another **world awaits**



Open Days in October



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stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays

Top Gun crowned UK air race king



SPEED KING: Sqn Ldr Polwin (right) celebrates with wife and navigator Sophie after winning UK title in their home-built 200hp Vans RV-7 light aircraft. Main image: Paul Heasman



Normandy vet tribute

ONE OF Britain's last Normandy veterans has died, aged 101.

Ex-RAF Cpl Joe Randall was a member of the Airfield Construction Sqn that landed in Normandy three days after D-Day to build an airstrip near Caen to support the Army's advance.

Recalling his role he said: "We put the very first RAF B-19 runway down just outside Caen. It even made the papers back home! I joined up when I was 17. My mum said, 'you're not going,' but I did."

"Be proud of yourself and be proud of the RAF, 'cos believes it or not, we're the best."

Mr Randall trained in Scotland before crossing from Portsmouth at the end of June and landing on Juno beach.

He said: "It was not a big hero job but there were a few bullets flying around. We had to dig in every night to get out of sight."

Among the aircraft using the airfield were Hawker Typhoons adapted to carry bombs, which attacked gun batteries and German E-Boats and dislodged enemy troops who were digging in.

Mr Randall said: "They did some magnificent work those pilots. They were friendly."

"We would be there in the morning to see them off and they always gave us a wave."

Simon Mander

A FRONTLINE Typhoon pilot has been crowned UK air race king after storming to victory in one of the sport's most prestigious events in a light aircraft he built in his garage.

Coningsby-based Sqn Ldr Ben Polwin (pictured right) soared above the competition to take top honours in The King's Cup, clinching the 2025 British Air Racing Championship.

The win follows his debut in the legendary Schneider Trophy event last year, bringing the award home to the RAF after a drought of 37 years.

Ben, who is set to join the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight next year, said: "I thought I couldn't top winning the Schneider Trophy last year but The King's Cup does feel particularly special."

"I'm particularly proud to have built the aircraft myself and it's also

special to have direct links to the aircraft on BBMF which I will be privileged to fly from 2026."

The combat-hardened Typhoon pilot started building the 200hp Vans RV-7 aircraft at his Lincolnshire home in 2018.

After five years he started racing it with his wife Sophie, a British Airways pilot, and Royal Canadian Air Force veteran.

In 2024 they won the Schneider Trophy, came second in The King's Cup and were runners-up for the Championship, before winning the title.

"It's been challenging and hugely developmental as a pilot," said Sqn Ldr Polwin.

"The immense concentration for hyper accurate flying over 40 minutes or so to then see all

your rivals in the final corner where possible victory awaits is a feeling hard to describe."

Sqn Ldr Polwin joined the RAF in 2003 and flew the Tornado GR4 before becoming an instructor at Valley, operating the Hawk.

He flew F-18s with the US Navy during an exchange programme before transferring to Typhoon, completing frontline tours in Afghanistan and Libya, and QRA missions in the UK.

The King's Cup Air Race was established in 1922 by King George V and with the revived Schneider Trophy is one of the most sought-after prizes in the air racing season, hosted by the Royal Aero Club Records Racing and Rally Association.

In 1950, World War II RAF fighter pilot and equerry to King George VI Gp Capt Peter Townsend famously flew Hurricane PZ865 into second place at The King's Cup.

Gp Capt Alan Wheeler raced Spitfire AB910 in the 1953 King's Cup but the aircraft was damaged in a heavy landing during the event. Both aircraft are still flying with the BBMF.



Units take a break

Simon Mander

TWO OF Britain's oldest RAF units have lodged their standards at Cranwell.

Most recently flying Puma helicopters, 33 and 230 Sqn took the step after more than a century of service each.

The ceremony ensures safe keeping of the flags until they are stood up as operational units.

The last 33 Sqn Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr Nick Monahan, said: "Resting our standards together was a fitting end to 54 years operating Puma alongside each other."

"It was a day of mixed emotions but a special occasion

for all involved. We hope to be serving under them once again in future years."

The Gulf War units have contributed to combat and humanitarian missions across the globe.

Formed in 1916, 33 Sqn has defended the skies over Yorkshire, fought in the deserts of North Africa, the mountains of Greece, and above the Normandy beaches.

Meanwhile, 230 Sqn carried out maritime reconnaissance and attacks towards the end of World War I then protected British interests far and wide, from Aboukir, Seletar, Germany and Northern Ireland, to Brunei.



In Brief

Armourers honoured

A MEMORIAL to Service Armourers has been unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum following a fundraising campaign led by RAF veteran Mick Hogarth (pictured).

The appeal raised £29,000 and the new memorial was officially dedicated by Rev Sqn Ldr Mbayo following a ceremony led by Air Cdre Thompson.



Advertorial.



FROM SOLDIER TO CIVILIAN: THE UNSEEN TOLL OF MEDICAL DISCHARGE

For 15 years, Craig lived his dream as a Royal Engineer in the British Army, rising to the rank of Lance Corporal. From childhood, he had only ever imagined one future: a life in the military.

“As a child, I used to say to my mum and dad, ‘I don’t really need school – I’m going in the Army,’” he said. “It was all I ever wanted. So, it was a kick in the teeth to be told I couldn’t do it anymore.”

Craig’s military career was cut short by a wrist injury he sustained playing rugby for his regiment. The injury was initially missed. As Craig continued to work and exercise, it got worse until one day it completely gave way. Further tests revealed it had become a serious and complex break. After major reconstruction surgery, Craig was sent home to recover. Complications followed, and further operations were needed.

“For 14 to 15 months, I was completely isolated at home. I barely spoke to my unit. I was forgotten,” Craig said. “Before the injury, I was a ‘can-do-anything invincible soldier.’ Afterwards, I couldn’t even do basic household or garden tasks. I felt useless, a burden

to my wife. I was no longer invincible – I was broken.”

Despite his hope of returning to duty, Craig was sent to a medical board and discharged from service in November 2018.

“By the next morning, I wasn’t a soldier anymore. Just like that. When I handed back my kit, most people had moved on. Very few people in the squadron even knew who I was. I felt like I’d never existed,” he said. “The process made me feel isolated and unimportant after giving 15 good years to the Army.”

Craig’s experience is not unique. Every day, five people are medically discharged from the Armed Forces due to illness or injury*. Many, like Craig, struggle with the abrupt end of their military career and face the daunting task of adjusting to civilian life.

“I was given three months to prepare for discharge – most people leaving the military get 12 months. I was still receiving treatment, still in pain, and had no idea what came next,” Craig recalled. “It took months for my first Army pension payment to come through. Without my family, I don’t know what I would’ve done. I can see how so many veterans end up homeless.”

Help for Heroes has been a vital part of Craig’s recovery.

The charity provided him with occupational health support, pain management advice, and a specially designed wrist splint. He also receives therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder through their Hidden Wounds service, which offers counselling and psychological support tailored to veterans and their families.

Craig’s medical discharge was tough for his family too, especially his wife, Georgina. The couple have two young children together.

“Craig’s discharge has been an emotional rollercoaster,” she said. “He lost the only job he ever wanted and his sense of identity. There was huge pressure on me to support him through the pain and provide for our family. The system must change to support families during these vulnerable times.”

Craig has since retrained as an electrical engineer but worries about the long-term impact of his injury. Now, he’s encouraging others facing similar challenges to seek support.

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help,” he said. “Help for Heroes are always there when I need them, but it shouldn’t fall to charities to do what the military should be doing for its own.”

* MOD: Annual Medical Discharges in the UK Regular Armed Forces (2024)



Help for Heroes is there for anyone who’s worn the uniform, for as long as it takes. Find out more at helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help.

**HELP for
HEROES**

Combat call tests Mawgan medics

SECURITY ALERTS and combat casualty drills were simulated at St Mawgan as personnel at the Cornish station tested their operational skills.

Station personnel took part in the operationally-focused exercise which blended classroom instruction with first aid, weapon handling, fieldcraft survival and sentry duties.

Survival Equipment Section's Cpl Kirsten MacPhee said: "The exercise highlight for me was

the realism of the combat first aid, the initial shock allowed for confidence. The skills learnt have enhanced my confidence under pressure."

Amputee crisis actors were called in to test battlefield evacuation and lifesaving medical skills.

Station Commander Wg Cdr Helen Simpson said: "This high-intensity training is about staying razor-sharp, mission-ready and united."



LIFE-SAVING SKILLS: St Mawgan personnel deliver battlefield first aid during the latest combat training exercise

In Brief



Yes you Cran

CIVIC LEADERS and business bosses gathered at Cranwell as the Lincs station hosted its annual reception.

The event was an opportunity for personnel to showcase their work and ended with a flypast and sunset ceremony.

Bulletin



Covenant campaign

CAMPAIGNERS AT the Royal British Legion hope to halt unfair treatment in Britain's Armed Forces by calling for the government to strengthen its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

The charity is asking its 180,000 members and volunteers to sign an Open Letter to Sir Keir Starmer seeking the moves.

Its report, Keep the Covenant Promise, sets out the impact failings are having on many who fought in more recent conflicts like Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia.

RBL's Director of Campaigns, Policy and Research Angela Kitching said: "Every day, we see cases of veterans falling through the cracks of the systems meant to support them."

The legion is urging the government to extend the Covenant Duty to cover all policy areas that impact the Armed Forces and apply it across all levels of government, councils and devolved nations.

The statement also calls for sustainable funding, clear guidance and monitoring to ensure the Covenant delivers meaningful and lasting change.

New YouGov research by the RBL shows 67 per cent of civilians have never heard of, or know little about, the covenant, while a quarter of the Armed Forces community said the same.

Mudd for it

Father and son's endurance triumph



ON A HIGH: Teenage Army recruit Leon Shaw and dad James, a former RAF Weapons Instructor, celebrate after finishing the Tough Mudder challenge. Inset right, competitors take the plunge on 10k route

Tracey Allen

SUPER-FIT FORCES fundraiser James Shaw crossed the finish line in one of the world's toughest endurance events with his 16-year-old son at his side.

Former weapons instructor James has completed every Tough Mudder held in the UK this year, raising more than £2,900 for charity.

But he says finishing the final event in London with teenage Army recruit and Mudder

debutante Leon was one of his greatest achievements.

James, who has served in Afghanistan, said: "Crossing that final line with Leon was a proud moment I'll never forget."

"Sixteen years ago, I was a young Serviceman – now I've run shoulder to shoulder with my son as he begins his own military journey. It's been an incredible year."

"It isn't just about fitness. It's about showing my son and others what's possible and making sure

veterans and their families never get left behind."

The RAF veteran set himself the challenge of running all six UK Tough Mudders, covering more than 185km of gruelling courses and hundreds of obstacles, to help the Forces Employment Charity.

He also completed the World's Toughest Mudder at Belvoir Castle, battling through 24 hours of obstacles and more than 100km.

Leon, who starts training at the Army Foundation College in

Harrogate in 2026, said: "My first Tough Mudder was brutal but worth every second. Dad's shown me what the Forces can give you: discipline, community and opportunity. Running that course together is my first step towards following in those footsteps."

Forces Employment Charity's Alistair Halliday said: "Thanks to people like James and Leon we can continue delivering our life-changing support to help the Forces community live with purpose."

News



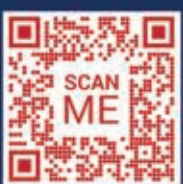
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HOME RUN: Defence chiefs pledge to prioritise veterans and serving personnel when allocating up to 100,000 new homes on MOD land

Vets jump the housing queue

Simon Mander

VETERANS AND military personnel will be given priority on up to 100,000 new homes created on surplus MOD land, the government has pledged.

On a visit to Cammell Laird shipyard, Defence Secretary John Healey said inadequate housing was a cause of the retention crisis.

He said: "I'm not content to see damp, mouldy, poorly-fitted homes for our Forces in the future."

The government has pledged to invest £1.5bn by 2029.

Mr Healey added: "Our Armed Forces housing was left in a shameful state, hammering morale and driving a recruitment and retention crisis in our Armed Forces."

"We will turbocharge building on defence land to deliver new homes for

both our Service personnel and for civilian families across Britain."

Latest figures from the MOD reveal that more UK regulars left the Armed Forces than joined up over a 12-month period.

In the year up to July, 14,020 left the regular forces, 500 more than those who joined up in the same period.

Homelessness charity Alabaré has welcomed the policy, saying it has seen a 122 per cent increase in the number of veterans applying for its supported housing programme in the south west of England and Wales.

Chief executive Andrew Lord said: "We're seeing a growing level of need for affordable, high-quality accommodation."

"Having housing on MOD land to help tackle the problem, while also improving military accommodation as a whole, is to be welcomed and we'd be keen to work with the government on the next steps."

Storm Shroud battle test



GUNNERS HAVE put the RAF's newest uncrewed aircraft system through its paces simulating combat scenarios based on the conflict in Ukraine.

The RAF Regiment's 1 Sqn deployed with the Storm Shadow device on Exercise Eclipse Tutor, operating alongside 216 Sqn and 20 Force Protection Wing.

The new uncrewed platform was launched during realistic battle drills involving sniper teams and armoured vehicles.

Storm Shroud is the first of a new generation of Autonomous Collaborative Platforms and will support RAF F-35B Lightning and Typhoon pilots by blinding enemy radars.

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You'll need to know about things like commutation, taxation, when's the best time to leave, pension top-ups, changing circumstances like divorce, and much more. Armed Forces pensions are complex and a Forces Pension Society membership includes access to our pension experts.

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As an independent not-for-profit organisation, any surplus revenue helps fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs plus our vigilance in challenging governments whenever we spot injustice or unfairness in the system. And importantly, we provide the whole military community with a voice that counts on the representative bodies for Armed Forces and Public Sector Pensions.

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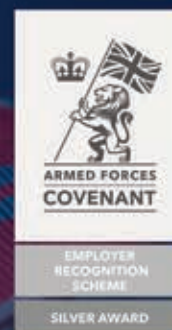
**'A pulse-pounding
adventure'**
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



**Action-packed fiction informed by Chris Hadfield's real-life experience
as an astronaut, pilot and Commander of the International Space Station**



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Snow go

APACHE HELICOPTERS landed and refuelled at Valley during day and night training sorties over Eryri Snowdonia National Park.

The AH-64E from 673 Sqn, the most modern version of the Boeing aircraft, is designed to find and destroy air defence units, tanks and armoured vehicles.



THE AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Anthony Albanese flew into Lossiemouth ahead of a meeting with HM King Charles at Balmoral. Mr Albanese, accompanied by his fiancée Jodie Haydon, landed

at the Moray station on a AAF KC-30A and was welcomed by Sqn Ldr Nathan Burton, Flt Lt Robyn Muscroft-Bloomfield, WO Joe Mulholland and the Station Piper, Barry Ashby.

Mercy mission nets Royal award

Jo Lamb

A FORMER RAF logistics manager has been honoured for her work in Papua New Guinea on behalf of the world's largest humanitarian air service.

British expat Siobhain Cole, originally from Gosport, received the award from The King on behalf of Mission Aviation Fellowship, which has operated a humanitarian flight service from the country since 1951.

The 50th Anniversary Medal marks the jubilee of its independence from Australia and recognises those who have made significant contributions to the country over the past five decades.

Air operations began when Australian RAF Coastal Command Captain Harry Hartwig set up a base in Madang.

After almost 300 hours of bush flying to provide air-access for isolated villages, Harry's Auster Autocar aircraft was reported overdue back from a Highland mission.

Almost two days later, his body and the aircraft were found 300 feet below the notorious 'Asaroka Gap' in the Eastern Highlands.

He died aged 35, leaving behind wife Margaret and their one-year-old daughter, Beth.

Margaret Baldock – now aged 97 – lives in Melbourne and is an ongoing MAF supporter.

She said: "I won't forget that day. It's still hard, but it happened. I've seen MAF expand and help so many people. That's a big benefit – how many have been saved because of MAF"

Siobhain said: "This medal reflects



PIONEERS: MAF founders Jack Hemmings (left) and Stuart King

MAF's aviation service over the past seven decades – we are just the ones who are here now."

MAF was set up by RAF pilots Jack Hemmings and Stuart King after the war and has grown to become the world's largest humanitarian airline, delivering life-saving aid to remote regions across the globe.

Jack, who died earlier this year aged 103, served in India between 1942 and 1946, flying Lockheed Hudson aircraft to protect the Bay of Bengal from the Japanese, and received the Air Force Cross for exemplary gallantry while flying.

He later received the RAF's Master Air Pilot award in 2017 and is believed to be the oldest British pilot to perform aerobatics, taking control of a two-seater Spitfire in 2024.

Stuart, who died in 2020, served with 247 Fighter Sqn and was awarded the Legion D'Honneur in 2016 in recognition of his role during the D-Day operations, where he flew Hawker Typhoons, providing close air support for ground forces during the Normandy landings.



HONOUR: Siobhain Cole was presented with the 50th anniversary medal by King Charles this month. Inset above, HM The King unveils MAF's new Cessna aircraft at Northolt earlier this year



LIGHTNING

F-35B pilots bring fifth-gen power to the Indo-Pacific

When the UK's F-35B Lightning jets launched on Operation Highmast in April, they carried more than weapons and fuel. They also carried a vision of how fifth-generation technology can change the way wars are fought.

Six months on, with the Carrier Strike Group, the aircraft have flown from the Mediterranean to the Middle East and deep into the Indo-Pacific, landing on Allied decks and regional runways along the way.

For the pilots at the controls, it has been a chance to prove what this aircraft can really do on operations far from home.

"In a legacy fighter you're constantly juggling separate sensors, datalinks and pods, you're piecing together a jigsaw in the cockpit," explains Lightning pilot 'Sqn Ldr Mike'.

"With the F-35, the jet does that fusion work. It gives me a clean, battle-ready picture in real time. That's not a small step forward; it's a completely different way of fighting."

Sensor fusion

The F-35's sensor fusion combines radar, infrared and electronic warfare inputs to highlight threats and opportunities. The result: faster decisions, sharper awareness and the ability to shape the fight rather than just react to it.

Simply put, today's operational environment is contested across every domain – air, sea, land, cyber and space. Adversaries are fielding advanced surface-to-air systems, long-range missiles and powerful electronic warfare tools. For UK pilots flying thousands of miles from home, survival isn't enough, they need to dominate.

Here the F-35 stands apart. It's not only stealthy and supersonic, it's networked. It connects Allies across the battlespace, enabling multi-domain operations where data is as decisive as firepower.

"The helmet sees it all – you just react. My helmet isn't just a visor, it's my window into the battlespace," said Mike.

The F-35's Helmet Mounted Display System projects a 360° picture around the pilot, pulling in imagery from sensors built into the jet's skin. It means they can literally 'see through the aircraft, tracking threats even while manoeuvring.

"Just as important, that data can be passed instantly to ships, ground units or other aircraft. It's not about me winning a fight in one jet, it's about making the whole force stronger," added Mike.



TOP GUN:
F-35 pilot



During Highmast, the UK's F-35Bs have flown alongside Typhoons, maritime patrol aircraft and Allied fast jets across the region.

"I can hand off a target to a Typhoon or cue a Poseidon to a contact at sea, all in near real time," Mike explained.

That interoperability has been tested during large-scale Indo-Pacific exercises such as Bersama Lima under the Five Power Defence Arrangements and through carrier

operations with the Strike Group.

The message is clear: the UK's Lightning Force can slot seamlessly into a coalition fight, thousands of miles from home.

One of the F-35B's most key strengths is its ability to land vertically.

"Vertical landing in a stealth jet isn't trivial," the pilot admitted. "It takes training and precision, but once mastered, it lets us go where others can't, onto short strips, smaller carriers, even damaged airfields. That flexibility is priceless."

by Staff Reporters

FORCE



STOVL: F-35B lands on HMS Prince of Wales during Op Highmast
PHOTO: AS1 AMBER MAYALL



INTER-SERVICES: Pilot lands F35-B Lightning and is greeted by personnel from 809 Naval Air Squadron and RAF's 617 Sqn onboard HMS Prince of Wales PHOTO: POPHOT ALEX CEOLIN



PUMPED UP: Pilots fist bump onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth during Exercise Phoenix Strike PHOTO: AS1 AMBER MAYALL

The Rolls-Royce LiftFan, part of the award-winning propulsion system, gives the F-35B unmatched short take-off and vertical landing capability.

Led by Lockheed Martin, the F-35 program is a global effort with partners including BAE Systems, Northrop Grumman and RTX. UK industry contributes around 15 per cent of each jet's value, supporting thousands of jobs and strengthening defence sovereignty through domestic manufacturing and long-term support.

Continuing until December, Operation

Highmast has more than 4,000 personnel deployed across the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and British Army, and the Carrier Strike Group has already completed over 70 engagements with regional partners. Highlights include UK F-35Bs touching down on the Japanese carrier JS Kaga, a striking symbol of UK-Japan cooperation, and joint exercises with Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.

STOVL

For the Lightning pilots, the deployment is about more than milestones. It's about

proving that fifth-generation air power is here now, and operational.

The F-35B brings stealth, sensor fusion, helmet technology, networking and STOVL flexibility together in a way no previous aircraft could.

But its greatest strength may be less about the jet itself and more about what it enables: coalition pilots fighting as one, across vast distances in one of the most strategically contested regions on earth.

Or as Mike put it: "Flying the F-35 isn't just about flying a jet, it's about commanding information. That's what gives us the edge."





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Builder's grand design

Dave's full-size Spitfire replica in his back garden

HOME-GROWN: David Price with his Spitfire
PHOTO: Rick Wylie



WWII: Spitfire at Malta ©AHB

Tracey Allen

AVIATION MUSEUM volunteer David Price has an unusual, eye-catching claim to fame – the author of *The Crew* and *Mosquito Men* built a replica of a Spitfire in his back garden.

Now he has written the story of the ups and downs of his ambitious project, marrying the tale with a narrative of the development of the much-loved aircraft, famously created by visionary engineer RJ Mitchell.

David's book, *How to Build a Spitfire, Adventures with the RAF's Legendary Second World War Fighter* (headofzeus.com), out on October 23, focuses in particular on the construction and production of the aircraft and its various component parts – including the Merlin engine – amplified by the testimonies of some of those who worked in the Supermarine factory in Southampton and in other Spitfire production facilities.

David, whose early interest in aviation was inspired by days exploring deserted RAF airfields in his native Cumbria, said: "What sort of person builds a Spitfire in his back garden? And why? These are the questions I see playing out in the minds of my visitors as they are greeted by the sight of a Second World War aircraft in a quiet corner of a Cumbrian hamlet."

He added: "Despite its title, the book will not instruct you on how to build a Spitfire. I have not set out to write a 'how to' manual, but to describe what it is like to

Copies of book up for grabs



YOU COULD win a copy of David's latest book – an entertaining and absorbing read. For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

When did David Price begin his Spitfire project? **Win!**

Email your answer, marked **How to Build a Spitfire** book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: **RAF News, Room 68 Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE** to arrive by October 31. Please include your full postal address.

undertake a project that tests the limits of one's skills, knowledge and mental strength.

"In recording how I built a version of the Spitfire in my back garden, I have also narrated in parallel the story of those who designed, built and flew this iconic British aircraft in the 1930s and 1940s. They are the heroes of this tale."

A former builder, David decided to start his Spitfire project back in April 2018. He explained: "Building a Spitfire has been the longest single project I have ever undertaken. Part of the reason for its lengthy duration is that I came to it knowing only a little about aircraft manufacture."

"I had the benefit of 30 years in aircraft preservation as a volunteer at Solway Aviation Museum based at Carlisle Airport, but there is

a massive difference between maintaining an aircraft designed and built in a factory and recreating it yourself. Nor did I have any skill at working with metal – a material I barely know in comparison to those I used in my previous trade as a building contractor.

"I did two years of metalwork at secondary school in the early 1970s and came away with an enjoyment for using a gas torch, but little else, so I chose to construct my Spitfire using the materials I knew best: plywood, fibreglass and screws rather than sheet metal and rivets."

He admitted: "Through all my years of fitting kitchens and bathrooms, I never imagined that I would one day try to build an aircraft."

And he revealed: "In the book I attempt to explain not only how but

why I built the Spitfire – though I'm not sure I can adequately answer either question. Many have asked me why I chose to build a full-sized replica rather than a smaller model. I have to confess I remain mystified."

The author added that the curiosity shown by the many onlookers who stopped and stared at the aircraft as it took shape in his garden proved that the Spitfire remains one of Britain's best-loved inventions.

He explained: "I had always known the Spitfire to be a popular aeroplane, but perhaps I had not released the extent to which its shape – and its history – are embedded in British consciousness. It generates a response in all who see it. It evokes memories, stirs an interest in history and inspires wonder at the bravery of the young men who flew this remarkable aircraft."

Compared with today's jet aircraft used for summer holiday travel, the Spitfire is very small, he said.

He added: "In its economy of scale, the Spitfire is nearly perfect. My quest to recreate one has tapped into a deep well of affection, not only in myself, but in the many visitors who have stopped to see it. Perhaps what my quixotic enterprise revealed most of all is that the Spitfire is as much an emotion as it is an aeroplane."



AVIATION FAN: Dave



REAL THING: Spitfires at Duxford in 2024 ©IWM
PHOTO: Phil Chaplin

Features

WALKING THE WALK: Champion dog handler Cpl Sam Bleach with an attentive Axel
PHOTOS: Cpl CONNOR PAYNE



CHAMPION: Cpl Sam Bleach on the winner's podium and being presented with his trophy by Provost Marshal Gp Capt Samantha Bunn, right



Cpl Bleach cleans up

Sam and Axel are top dogs



SECOND: Marham's Cpl Sargent and Sepp

Simon Mander

POOCHES GAVE paws for thought as they vied to be military top dog at Honington.

Under the Suffolk sun and the keen eye of judges, the final four RAF Police Dog handler teams fought hard for the accolade of champion.

And this year saw the first award of The Rebecca Hudson Trophy – in a tribute to an exceptional dog handler who died earlier this year.

RAF Police Corporal Sam Bleach and Military Working Dog Axel, from Akrotiri, won the individual event, awarded by Provost Marshal Gp Capt Samantha Bunn.

Runner-up was Marham's Cpl Sargent and Sepp, with third place going to Cpl Ledger and Ferat from Brize Norton.

Throughout the week, competitors were tested in core skills of agility and obedience,

threat perception during day and night patrols, and a dog's ability to detect and detain intruders through wind scent.

The inaugural Rebecca Hudson Trophy went to Coningsby's MWD Section.

Other award recipients were:

- RAF Benevolent Fund McConnell Cup for Best Obedience and Agility and Lady Kemball Trophy for the Best Drug Detection Team – Cpl Roberts and Dex from Northolt.

- Von Wolf Trophy for the Best Vehicle Search Team – Brize Norton's Cpl Greenfield and Eric.

- Drissell Trophy for the Best Police Dog Team – Cpl Robbins and Ast from Northolt.

- Lady Kemball Trophy for the Best Arms and Explosive Search Team – Cpl O and Tac.

- Prestige Trophy for outstanding Military Working Dog section – RAF Northolt.



THIRD: Brize Norton's Cpl Ledger and Ferat

2025 BALL:
Well-attended
at Brize Norton



WHO CARES WINS

Staff Reporter

HUNDREDS OF Forces personnel gathered for the fourth Healing Military Minds annual ball – pushing the mental health charity's fundraising total to more than £180,000.

The campaign group, founded by Brize Norton-based 622 Sqn's Cpl Hayley Court four years ago, has become a major force in welfare financing, supporting the work of Combat Stress which delivers help and support to veterans battling the horrors of PTSD and depression.

While this year's event helped swell the charity coffers, organisers appealed for supporters to pledge their time along with their cash.

The group has joined the US-based mental health crusade calling for friends and colleagues of those at risk to find time for an eight-minute chat to spot warning signs.

Speaking at the



Balls have raised £180k for Armed Forces charity

event, Cdre Ali Hofman said: "I have seen a number of my friends and colleagues suffer the effects of what they have had to experience on operations.

"We all recognise the importance of military charities, which help fill the gap in state provision. Some of these groups were founded following periods of war to care for those who had served.

"Charities like Combat Stress are part of the vital ecosystem delivering specialised services to our military veteran community today.

"The NHS 10-year plan recently announced this year recognises the importance of the third sector working in partnership and in support with medical services and highlights the need to transform

mental health services, to ensure vets receive the support they need.

"Charities can only survive with generous support and events and efforts such as this brilliant organisation – Healing Military Minds – are a vehicle to generate support and raise awareness of mental health across the Armed Forces community.

"HMM is run by a group of motivated individuals and their supporters. What Hayley and HMM is doing is making sure that the charities which are critical for Service leavers and veterans are there to support them."

Organiser Cpl Court added: "Being the founder of the Healing Military Minds Ball has been such a meaningful experience for me.

"To see so many people come together with kindness, generosity, and respect for our veterans' wellbeing is truly moving. I'm deeply grateful to everyone who supported the night and helped make it so special."



ORGANISER: Cpl Court



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RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force

Gp Capt Roger Beazley CBE, AFC

Obituary

GP CAPT Roger Beazley, who died on his 84th birthday, was one of the RAF's leading test pilots during the Cold War era when he flew a wide range of combat aircraft and evaluated weapon systems.

For many years he played a significant role in supervising and coordinating display flying in the UK and at international airshows.

In 1959, he was awarded an air cadet flying scholarship and went solo in a Tiger Moth. He then qualified as a gliding instructor within the air cadet organisation whilst employed as an electrical engineering draughtsman. In 1964, he left industry and joined the RAF to train as a pilot.

After completing his training, he was posted in 1967 to 19 Squadron, based at RAF Gutersloh in Germany and a few minutes flying time in his supersonic Lightning from the East German border.

Battle Flight

The squadron's role was to police the border area under radar control. Two aircraft were kept at five minutes alert for 24 hours a day. Many hours of sitting on "Battle Flight" were rewarded with the occasional scramble to intercept aircraft flying near the border. Beazley and his colleagues were brought to a more advanced state of readiness following the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He converted to the Phantom and joined 43 Squadron based at Leuchars in Scotland and where the squadron maintained a quick reaction alert posture (QRA) at 10 minutes readiness to scramble to intercept intruders into UK air space, not infrequently Soviet Air Force bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. During this period, he was the Phantom display pilot for two years.

In 1972, he was selected to attend the Empire Test Pilot's School (ETPS) based at Boscombe Down near Salisbury. He graduated a year later and joined B Squadron at Boscombe, where he flew bomber and transport aircraft including the Vulcan, Hercules and Nimrod.

Tornado

Later, he transferred to A Squadron which was responsible for the testing of the new generation of fast-jet aircraft. He became increasingly involved in the early days of the Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (by then named Tornado), and he flew the airborne chase aircraft when the UK's first Tornado made its maiden flight. Subsequently, in Manching, Germany, he flew the first tri-national assessment of the aircraft's navigation and attack system.

His other flight test work at Boscombe Down included development and certification flying on the Hawk, Phantom,

Buccaneer and Jaguar aircraft embracing handling, systems, weapon aiming and air to air refuelling work. After two years, he was appointed to be the squadron's senior pilot, a post he held for a further two years.

When he left Boscombe Down in 1978, he was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC) and then served in the UK MOD Operational Requirements Division working on the flight test, weapons and piloting issues of the Tornado's entry into RAF service.

In 1981 Beazley returned to the test flying arena when he was appointed Commander Flying at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Bedford responsible for the flying operations of research aircraft which focused on radar and flight systems, workload assessments, fog flying research and turbulence response measurements.

He found it a particular privilege to fly several sorties in

the World War I fighter the SE5a following its major servicing at Bedford. He later delivered it to its home in the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden.

Following the six-month Air Warfare Course at the RAF College Cranwell, three years were spent at the NATO Supreme Headquarters in Belgium addressing strategic policy, warfare studies and military command & control issues.

Staff work

Returning to the UK, he was appointed Head of Experimental Flying at the Royal Aircraft Establishment responsible for experimental and support flying and the military support at the Establishment's five airfields. Although besieged by the inevitable administration and staff work, he was able to conduct a range of test flights on a wide variety of aircraft.

Beazley's final military appointment was as Director of

Flying (Research & Development) in the MOD. His responsibilities included the supervision and regulation of all research, development and production flying both at the official establishments and in industry. He retained "hands on" contact by continuing to fly occasionally. During his flying career, he accumulated 7,000 hours flying time on 150 different aircraft types.

On retirement from the Service in December 1996 he was appointed CBE.

He became an adviser at the flight test centre at Boscombe Down and then as a consultant to ETPS. During that period, he travelled extensively on flight safety, flight test and flight test training interests worldwide.

When serving at Farnborough, his appointment included that of Display Director of the Farnborough International Airshow. This association extended for 12 years and

resulted in support to several other airshows both in the UK and overseas; an activity which continued for a period of more than 20 years and well into retirement. This included acting in advisory capacities both at the Dubai International Airshow and Asian Aerospace in Singapore.

Beazley's contribution to test flying was widely recognised worldwide and included honours from the Royal Aeronautical Society, the Society of Experimental Test Pilots [US] and the Flight Test Society of Australia. In 2003 he was awarded the Master's Commendation from the City of London Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators for his work in supervising the display flying at the Farnborough International Airshow and in 2006, the Guild awarded him a Master Air Pilot Certificate.

He died on September 15, his birthday and also Battle of Britain Day.



PILOT:
Roger
Beazley

Test pilot who flew 150 types of aircraft died on his birthday, Battle of Britain Day



IT'S RARE for me to get enthusiastic about a supermini, but today I am. This is the latest Swift from Suzuki and it is a cracking little car. It's not a dreary crossover, or an over-revving hybrid, it's a proper bit of kit, with an internal combustion engine and a slick manual gearbox.

If you're looking for a simple, small car that represents great value for money, this should be on your test-drive list. It's also the only small petrol hatch on sale in the UK that can be ordered with four-wheel drive.

Exterior

Suzuki wanted to make a statement with the design and it's certainly done that. I'm not sure that the words 'muscular' or 'sporting' would be instant associations, but the new headlights look good and it's a face that you could grow to love, over time, maybe (think ugly puppy that needs a home – now you're sold, right?)

You also get the option of eight different metallic colours and either a black, or grey contrast roof to sweeten the deal.

Interior

The cabin's a simple affair, but it has all the right ingredients. The driving position is pretty good, as it goes, in small car terms. The steering wheel adjusts for both height and reach, so most drivers will find it easy to get comfortable.

The seats are covered with hard-wearing cloth and are nicely bolstered at the sides. They're also pretty comfy on a long run.

You won't find swathes of plush, expensive-feeling



Fancy a Swift one?

materials inside the Swift, but the blend of colours and textures raise the tone nicely. Solid build quality adds to the appeal.

All models come with a 9.0 inch infotainment touchscreen, which is nicely positioned, high on the dashboard. It has plenty of tricks up its sleeve, including Android Auto and Apple CarPlay

smartphone mirroring. There's a bit of a delay when you prod the screen and the menus aren't the most intuitive to use, but it's on a par with most systems fitted to cars in this class.

Visibility is good, overall, and all models come with a reversing camera/rear parking sensors.

On The Road

The Swift is lighter than most of its rivals, so acceleration is pretty brisk, for such a small power unit. It comes with a 1.2-litre naturally aspirated three-cylinder that develops 81bhp.

The front-wheel-drive version can officially go from 0-62mph in 12.5 seconds, while the heavier four-wheel-drive (Allgrip) model takes 13.6 seconds. Power is delivered via either a five-speed manual gearbox or a CVT automatic. Trust me, stick to the manual.

The Swift's weight gives it a real edge when it comes to handling, because it's more agile than most cars in this class and is more fun to drive. The car's nose

responds quickly when you hurl it into a bend and body lean is well controlled. Steering is light, but allows enough feedback to your fingers to give you a sense of how well the car is gripping the tarmac.

There are faster small cars out there, but the Swift pulls hard and produces a tuneful sound, even when you give it a jolly good thrashing. It's economical too, delivering over 50mpg in the real world.

I know what you're thinking though... How can Suzuki still make a manual petrol in these eco-mad times? Well, they've found a work-around, badging the Swift as a hybrid. In reality, all that means is that they've added a 12-volt mild hybrid system, that pairs a very small lithium-ion battery with an integrated starter generator (ISG) and regenerative braking. The result is business as usual motoring that's legal to sell in the UK.

A petrol car with a manual gearbox, that handles well. That sounds like a winner to me.

Suzuki swift



Pros

- Nice handling
- Excellent fuel economy
- Bags of standard kit

Cons

- Some wind/road noise
- Rivals more practical
- 'Marmite' looks

Verdict

THERE ARE more comfortable small cars on the market, but the Suzuki Swift is fun to drive, frugal to run, well-equipped and, all-round, great value. Stick to the front-wheel-drive manual and you won't go far wrong.



Sport

DARTS



THE A-TEAM: (l-r) Cpl Adam Skinley, Cpl Luke Dunn, AS1 Aaron Tibbs, Cpl Robert Kemp, AS1 Benny Hill

Summer breeze for Brize guys

RAF BRIZE Norton were in full flight as they stormed to West Oxfordshire Darts League division two title glory at Carterton Social club.

The summer league saw two teams from Brize competing, with their B team, captained by Cpl George Marchant, finishing fifth in Division 4 and the A team, captained by Cpl Robert Kemp, winning Division 2 and remaining undefeated.

Along the way to victory there were 10 maximums thrown by the team and a highest checkout of 117 by team captain Kemp, with them also recording the most 140s and highest check-outs in the league.

The A team now begin their winter league campaign, in Division 1.

Ware's flight of fancy to help station

RAF DARTS got an overseas boost when top referee Huw Ware visited the new Mount Pleasant Complex in the Falklands.

The visit marked the opening of the station's newest sports club, to which Ware donated equipment including two Winmau dart boards and Polaris lighting, plus Winmau and Red Dragon darts, flights and stems.

He also made time to chat with personnel serving there.

Ware said: "The club is a brilliant example of how darts continues to grow across the Armed Forces, creating opportunities, building community and connecting generations."

Ram! Bam! Thank you ma'am

Flt Lt Smith runner-up in veteran category



AIR SCREW: AS1 Kiran Ram at Natural Games in France
PHOTO: R SMITH



BRITISH CHAMPS: Nottingham hosted the action
PHOTO: JACK LEDWITH



TRICKS: Flt Lt Chris Ripper

KAYAKING

A PODIUM finish for Flt Lt Becca Smith was the highlight from a thrilling two-part European Canoe Association European Cup at the Natural Games OV in Millau, France.

The overall results highlighted a strong performance from the aviator team, with Flt Lt Smith concluding the event in seventh place in the Ladies division, while Flt Lt Jamie Easton finished fourth in the K1 Men's event.

A spokesperson for the association said: "These accomplishments reflect the culmination of four years of dedication from Flt Lt Jake Southern, the discipline secretary, who has tirelessly worked to elevate RAF and UKAF freestyle kayaking to an international standard."

"The team's success at the Natural Games is a testament to their hard work, skill and passion for the sport."

Opening the event, the freestyle kayaking, which sees riders perform manoeuvres such as flips, spins and tricks in rapid waters, saw AS1 Fin Croome secure a commendable 23rd place in a highly competitive international field.

Smith then showcased her talent by earning second in the Masters female category in K1, while Flt Lt Chris Ripper and AS1 Kiran Ram produced huge air screws in the Big Air Ramp competition.

The second round, held concurrently with the British Championship at the National Water Sports Centre in Nottingham, saw Southern finish strongly in 15th, closely followed by Easton and Flt Lt Mat Settle, who placed 18th and 19th, respectively.

To see your sport featured in *RAF News*, send a short report (max. 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached hi-res jpegs) to: Sports@rafnews.co.uk

Sport

PADEL

Courting publicity

Hollywood and Amazon show interest in Flt Lt's quest to promote padel

Daniel Abrahams

TWO YEARS after taking up the sport of padel, Flt Lt Ben Hadley's rubbed shoulders with Hollywood stars and could feature in an Amazon Prime documentary.

He took up the sport while serving in Madrid for NATO Air Policing and is now OIC for UKAF padel – which this year achieved recognised status within the RAF.

Padel is a cross between tennis and squash, played on an enclosed court with players using solid, perforated rackets.

Hadley said: "I played the game to a competitive level, after that it really was just a thing to do to pass the time and then I began to see the use of it within military life. From there I just began to knock on doors to



help push things forward."

Hanley won a competition to train with former padel world number one Seba Nerone last year and has been front and centre with implementation of courts; two Army courts in Bicester, one at RAF Odiham and one in Ayios Nikolaos, Cyprus, along with the proposed staging of the first padel Inter-Services in Portsmouth next year on HMS Queen Elizabeth.

While working at the Hexagon Cup this year, he used the chance to network for the military game and ended up rubbing shoulders with *Desperate Housewives* star Eva Longoria (pictured left), international footballer Sergio Aguero and Formula One drivers, Pierre Gasly and Franco Colapinto.



BIG HITTERS: Flt Lt Ben Hadley with CDS ACM Sir Rich Knighton

Hadley said: "It is fair to say that my negotiation and networking skills have improved since I began all of this. It was great to mention padel to people like Eva Longoria, to raise the profile of the Service game. I have knocked on every door, until one of them opened."

Hadley, who also recently undertook a coaching course in the sport, added: "Inter-Service wise, former CAS, now Chief of the Defence Staff, ACM Sir Rich Knighton has shown support for the sport from an RAF perspective."

"While head of Army tennis Ret'd Lt Col Ian Haigs has been

amazing in getting Tri-Service involvement.

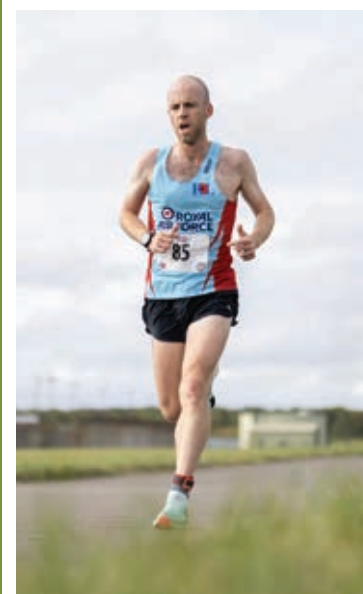
"There are plans to install courts at Odiham and we are creating a blueprint for DIO (Defence Infrastructure) for future padel club success across the country.

"It will not only be the sport but with projects like Padel and Prams we could see these as a hub, with cafés and family areas."

Amazon Prime has also contacted Hadley about the possibility of making a documentary about his padel crusade.

● Follow RAF Padel on Instagram @raf.padel.

ATHLETICS



RAF CHAMP: Flt Lt Mike Kallenberg

Kallen all the heroes

FLT LT Mike Kallenberg and Cpl Ellie Robinson stormed to victory at the annual Wittering 10km run, laying down a mark for the upcoming cross-country season.

The race, including the last round of the Lincs Services Running League, attracted one of the largest fields in recent years, with 100 entries from across the RAF.

Starting at the station's gymnasium, runners battled heavy conditions and a challenging headwind for the final 4km.

Despite this, Kallenberg set a great time of 31 minutes 19 seconds, earning the title of RAF 10km Champion. In the women's race, Cpl Robinson claimed the title with an impressive time of 39 mins 15 secs.

Kallenberg was followed home by Cpl Adam Baker in a time of 32 mins and 18 secs. The first runner home in the Men's Masters discipline was AS Drew Clark, in 32 mins and 31 secs.

In the women's race Robinson beat Cpl Grace Rowland into second (41:55) and Cpl Philippa Oreshko into third (42:2).



RAF CHAMP: Cpl Ellie Robinson

FENCING

Kitchen loves the heat of combat

AS1 JAY KITCHEN is hoping his stellar year in RAF Fencing will inspire others to take it up.

The 21-year-old discovered a love for the sport during Phase Two training at RAF Cosford and now runs the club at Coningsby and is the OIC and team captain.

He shone at the recent RAF championships, where he achieved top 10 positions in all three disciplines: foil, épée and sabre.

At the Inter-Service Championships he helped secure second place for the RAF sabre team in their match against the Army, whilst individually placing seventh in foil, eighth in sabre, and 12th in épée.

Kitchen said: "I love the demanding pace and precision of the sport. It's the speed – I love how fast-paced the game is. I'm always trying to be faster with my parry and riposte."

"When I'm holding the sword, I know it's going to be fun. As you progress, it becomes more sophisticated and skillful, and I really enjoy that feeling of developing both physical and mental dexterity."

He added: "It benefits the RAF very well too, because it requires fitness, focus and determination. It's a break from work that lets you



SWORDSMAN: AS1 Kitchen in kit (left) and action (above) Photos: Cpl Kimberley Waterson Meade

come back refreshed. With any sport, your mood lifts that little bit more, and I'm able to give more of myself back to the RAF."

Speaking on his IS bow, the engineer, who comes from a Service family, said: "It's always an eye-opener

when you fence people at a higher level.

"Precision and hand-eye coordination are probably the biggest challenges. I'm quite agile, but you still need stamina to maintain that energy throughout."

● Follow RAF Fencing on Instagram @raffencing.

MOTORSPORT

Kenny's Leod and proud

Lossie ROKiT man's victory



WINNING FEELING: Cpl Kenneth MacLeod sprays the Champagne from the podium at Donington after race win, left

KEN:
True Hero

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE SPEEDSTER Cpl Kenneth MacLeod sat atop the podium at the ROKiT OFF BMW F900R Cup at Donington Park riding for the True Heroes Racing team.

The Rokit race, run as a support series at British Superbike meetings, saw the RAF Lossiemouth rider win from 18th on the grid, having crashed out of the weekend's BSB round seven opener.

He said: "I went out and was straight on the pace in free practice and qualifying, where I ended the sessions 11th and 12th respectively. Starting from sixth on the grid I got a good launch and into a mega battle for the full eight laps, with plenty of great overtakes being made.

"Unfortunately, I got on the power a bit too keenly coming out of the last corner on the last lap and crashed out of fourth place. Due to not finishing, I lined up on the grid in 18th, but a great first lap

put me up 11 places by the end of lap one, before making my way to third a couple of laps later.

"I then closed the gap to the two in front and sat in behind them. With two laps to go I made my move to the front and got my head down, setting consecutive fastest laps of the race and taking home first place."

The aviator, who races for the UK's first and only motorcycle race team formed around wounded, injured and

sick UK Service personnel and veterans, entered the main race in 27th.

Having worked his way up to 11th place by lap seven he ended the race 12th after a red flag, due to excessive gravel on the track. He was later awarded Rider of the Day.

McLeod added: "Despite the disappointment of crashing from fourth this was definitely my best BSB weekend so far and one to now build on as we head into the final round at Brands Hatch."

Strong World Champs debut for RAF sidecar pairing



GAINING EXPERIENCE: RAF Sidecar team at Assen circuit in Netherlands

TWO TOP 15 finishes were the return as the RAF made its debut bow at the FIM World Sidecar Championship at TT Circuit Assen, Netherlands.

The aviator duo of Cpl Robert Atkinson and Sgt Mark Middleton joined the World Championship field in the track's 100th anniversary year.

Middleton said: "The opportunity to compete at Assen was an unmissable chance to test ourselves on the global stage."

The pair began to make inroads during the free practice sessions, working their way into the rear of the grid while showing they had the ability to mix things with more experienced world competitors on one of the fastest tracks in Europe.

The opening 10-lap event, held in challenging weather conditions, saw the team capitalise on an incident on the first turn to make up positions and finish 13th from 18 starters, scoring points on their World Championship debut.

Race two would be a 16-lap affair with 30 minutes of high-intensity racing ahead.

The start saw the field split into two groups, with the aviators running strongly at the head of a competitive chasing pack.

The safety car was deployed on lap seven for spilt oil, and the restart set up a six-lap sprint to the flag.

Despite consistent pressure and attempts to overtake, the team ultimately crossed the line



in 12th place, just outside the top 10 but firmly demonstrating they could compete against established World Championship regulars.

Middleton said: "The team completed 65 laps and 184 miles of racing at the historic Assen circuit, achieving two World Championship finishes, scoring points and a wealth of experience."

"We are delighted with that return and now our attention turns back to the British Sidecar Championship, with the season finale at Brands Hatch."

"Confidence is high following Assen, and the team will look to end the domestic season on a strong note."

Sport

EQUITATION

Cleansweep for RAF as riders win championship

Inters glory again



INDIVIDUAL CHAMP: WO Keeley Martin on Rachan Wind Dancer, and getting her prize, below

THERE WAS final leg Loriners Inter-Services glory for the RAF at the UKAF Equestrian Championships for the second year running.

Delighted team manager Flt Lt Mandy Meikle said: "To retain the trophy this season has been an incredible effort from all the riders that have taken part.

"A huge amount of training and preparation goes into these performances and I'm so proud of not only being involved with selecting and managing the teams but also having the opportunity to represent the RAF in one of the legs."

The aviators went into the final round at Bury Farm in Buckinghamshire in a strong position having won the dressage at the RAF Championships in April and the show jumping

leg at the Navy Championships in August.

The final leg was Combined Training, and the team of Wg Cdr Sarah Boon, Flt Lt Izzy Draper, WO Keeley Martin and Chf Tech Sarah Marshall managed to hold on to complete a cleansweep.

When the final scores were added up, less than half a percentage separated the RAF from the Army, with the aviators taking the Combined Training title and Martin winning the individual competition.

The event also included the final qualifier for the Services Show Jumping Championships, which resulted in another win for Martin, a fifth place for AS2 Sophie Richards, and seventh for Boon – sealing the final berths for the London International Horse Show in December.



CYCLING



AS1 SHEPPARD: Retained title

Sheppard is still Champ

IT WAS better late than never for AS1 Laura Sheppard and Cpl Dan Hedley as they stormed to victory at the delayed RAF Road Cycling Championships.

The race at Milton Keynes International Bowl saw Sheppard make it back-to-back wins, against a field of riders from across the country.

The women's race got underway first, with the damp conditions making for a cagey start. The event exploded on the half-hour mark, when 2024 champion Sheppard made the first big attack of the race, fracturing the peloton.

Only Flt Lt Georgina Maguire was able to follow and the pair worked together to stay away from the chasing pack.

Sheppard found her sprint legs on the last lap to leave Maguire in second and reservist AS1 Lottie Ashton third.

The sun came out for the Open race, drying up the circuit in a race that saw attacks from the start.

There was barely a lull throughout the hour-long race, with breakaways forming constantly and then being pulled back in.

Finally, with around 10 minutes remaining, the race-winning move was made as four riders went clear of the group.

This break was eventually whittled down to three, with everything looking even going into the last lap.

As the riders crested the final bend in a three-up sprint, it was Cpl Hedley who took the spoils just ahead of Sgt Rich Summerbell and Cpl Euan Campbell.

Sport short

£4k golf glove

A SIGNED Connor Benn boxing glove helped a sell-out RAF Lossiemouth Veterans Golf Day raise £4,000 for Service charities at Hopeman Golf Course in Scotland.

OIC Sgt Stu Law hopes to hold the event annually.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Army foil league back-to-back IS title bid

A RARE silence fell over Craven Park after the RAF'S 28-16 defeat at the hands of the Army, meaning the Navy won this year's rugby league IS championship.

Having won their opening match against the Royal Navy, the aviators entered the final clash looking to set up back-to-back trophy wins, but a brace of early tries from the Army's Fijian stars set a difficult tempo for the men

RAF	16
Army	28

in blue at the home of Hull Kingston Rovers.

RAF head coach Sgt James Hutchinson said: "It's a disappointing result. The winners this year being decided on points difference shows how much of a tight competition we've

got and that IS wins are a real achievement when you get them.

"We came into the game confident and were really motivated to get the result and retain the Inter-Services title. We didn't really get out of the traps at the start of the game and let the Army get a roll on and we found ourselves chasing the game quite early."

The aviators replied to make things 8-6 after AS1(T) Finn O'Brien touched down with AS1 Cam Lees converting.

Having clawed things back the RAF saw the Army go over again, before Sgt Chris Grainger led another RAF charge, putting Sgt Sam Roberts in for 14-12 after 43 minutes, but again the Army went over and further Fijian flair made it 22-12 then 28-12.

The RAF closed the gap after 82 minutes with Lees converting the score, before the final whistle.

Hutchinson added: "Hats off to the Army though, they turned up and put in a good performance and deserved the win.

"We've had a great year this year, winning the Tri Nations in July, unfortunately we just couldn't get over the final hurdle to round it off, but we'll be back for another crack next year."

BATTLING TO THE LAST: RAF's LCpl Juite Tupua smashes his way through a red defensive wall
PHOTOS: SBS



5 RAF Sport

pages of

RUGBY UNION



Lossie's Kenny a ROKit man

See page 25



MAID IN HEAVEN

Red Rose Flt Lt's England rule the World



ENGLAND
GREAT:
Mike Tindall

Star's praise for our Amy

FELLOW ENGLAND World Cup winner Mike Tindall heaped praise on Flt Lt Amy Cokayne after the final whistle at Twickenham.

Tindall, who won 75 England caps and the 2003 crown, said: "I was there, and it was an amazing win. What everyone expected came to pass. Going up against the might of the Red Roses saw a David and Goliath clash, and that class came through."

"Amy scored, and if you were a betting man she is always one to look to, she is a stalwart of that team and has been for a long time."

Tindall spoke to *RAF News Sport* as he prepares to launch a six-night mini-UK tour entitled *Lock-In Live* for his hit podcast *The Good, The Bad & The Rugby*, which he shares with fellow former England star James Haskell and presenter Alex Payne.

He added: "The women are great true professionals and, along with Service personnel like Amy, embrace the game and are amazing representatives of it."

Payne said: "The two big things we talk about are the Lions and the Rugby World Cup win in 2003."

"Our show is fair to the girls too, and Amy will be discussed at length for sure. For fans of the women's game, we also have a podcast: *The Good, The Skaz & The Rugby*, on which Amy has appeared a few times, and they will do a deep dive on the amazing six-week tournament and England's win."



TRY: Flt Lt Amy Cokayne goes over against Canada
PHOTOS: CAT GORYN

Daniel Abrahams

"I'VE BEEN a bridesmaid a few times, so to finally get the win was amazing," said Flt Lt Amy Cokayne after England Women's Rugby World Cup win.

The aviator, who played a key part in the Red Roses' success throughout the tournament, stepped up with a 19th minute try, her third in a row, as England beat Canada 33-13 at the Allianz Stadium in Twickenham in front of a capacity crowd of 82,000.

Speaking after the Red Roses' first World Cup win since 2014, Cokayne said: "The losses in Belfast (2017) and New Zealand (2022), still hurt, but this just feels a whole lot sweeter because of them."

"The crowd was insane. When

they told us three years ago, they were going to sell out the Allianz Stadium, we all laughed, so to have a world record 82,000 there, that's just incredible."

"Our forwards really stepped up. We told the team, 'we've got you girls, and we won't take a backward step'. We've got confidence in each other, we train very hard, we scrummage a lot, and we got the reward for that."

Having thrown in a 19th minute line-out ball, the aviator joined a rolling maul to drive England over the whitewash, before touching down herself in the four-try win.

Canada, who were also the team who conceded the World Cup victory to England in 2014, had no answer to the Red Roses' performance, managing two tries



WINNER: Cokayne (right) looks on as prop Hannah Botterman gets to grips with the World Cup after the final at Twickenham

in response.

Cokayne added: "We saw what happened with football when the Lionesses won the Euros, and hopefully that's our story now when we get back to our clubs

and the Premiership.

"It's amazing. I just want to say thank you to everyone who supported us, you were our 16th player, and we are so grateful."

"Being World Champions sounds amazing. It's a pinch-me moment; it has been 11 years in the making for me, and I'm so happy we could pull it off. We have been working so hard for this, and we did all the right things on the day."

"I didn't get here alone. The RAF have been behind me every step of the way. Their support, both professionally and personally, has been incredible. Competing in, and training for, elite sport isn't easy, but the RAF made it possible, they've helped me chase this dream and achieve it. I'm proud to wear both the Red Roses and the RAF jerseys."



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R'n'R



**A good man –
Adam Garcia in
The Bodyguard**

● See
pages
4-5



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Art

Roger Fry

Charleston in Firle, Nov 15 to Mar 15, 2026



Fry, Self Portrait, 1928 © The Courtauld

Fry's artistic delight

Famous critic was a talent in his own right

A MAJOR exhibition showcasing the work of Roger Fry, a key figure in 20th century British art, opens at Charleston in Firle in Sussex next month.

Best known for his work as an art critic, curator and writer, Fry described himself as an 'artist first' and this exhibition is the first to present him in this light, with a focus solely on his work as a painter, said a spokesperson for the show.

Fry was a frequent visitor to Charleston, the country home of artists Vanessa Bell (sister of Virginia Woolf) and Duncan Grant, and associated with the Bloomsbury group of early 20th century British writers, intellectuals, philosophers and artists.

Fry's ground-breaking exhibition



Roger Fry, *The Black Sea Coast*, 1911. Oil on canvas, Museum & Art Swindon

Manet and the Post-Impressionists, held at Grafton Galleries in London in 1910, was the first to prominently feature Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse and Vincent Van Gogh in the UK, and is credited

with introducing post-impressionist art to the British public.

The Fry exhibition, from November 15 to March 15, 2026, features his vibrant portraits, landscapes and interiors,

capturing his friendships, lovers, love of travel and the landscape.

Showcasing never-before-seen artworks from private collections alongside national treasures, it highlights his innovative use of colour and composition and the concept of 'formalism', which was key to his artistic philosophy – the idea that a work's impact comes from its form, the way lines, colours and shapes are arranged, rather than its subject or story.

The spokesperson added: "Works on show for the first time include an early *Still Life* (1919), a muted depiction of an Omega Workshops flower, pushing towards abstraction, as well as *The Ravine*, a landscape that Fry painted in France between 1932-33 at the end of his life.

"His body of work reflects an artist who was something of a chameleon, adopting from a plethora of modernist visual languages and styles. A boundary-pushing curator and central member of the

Bloomsbury group, he was inspired by the artists he maintained close friendships with and worked alongside for years. Also working as a designer, founding the Omega Workshops in Bloomsbury alongside Bell and Grant, Fry's understanding of art and form came from his place at the centre of a vibrant and forward-looking artistic community."

It is the first major exhibition of Fry's paintings to be held in the UK in more than 25 years.

Nathaniel Hepburn, director of Charleston, said: "Charleston is uniquely placed to present Roger Fry as an artist, the role he considered his most important. The exhibition highlights his creative vision through painting, one that was forward-looking and radiated outwards.

"The exhibition offers new insight into his central role and lasting influence on British modernism."

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



DVDs

Stand or Fall: The Remarkable Rise of Brighton and Hove Albion (PG)

On Blu-ray, DVD and digital now Dazzler Media

Win!

The story of Brighton's *other* indomitable Seagulls

STAND OR FALL documents the rollercoaster journey of Brighton & Hove Albion, a club defined as much by its supporters' resilience as by its achievements on the pitch. This exhaustive documentary charts the highs and lows of the Seagulls, from their 1983 FA Cup Final defeat to Manchester United to the despair of crashing down to Division Three and languishing there for years.

From the outset, the film makes clear that Albion's story is less about glory and more about community. Archive footage shows how the club's supporters endured extraordinary hardship: years without a permanent home ground, long round trips to Gillingham just to watch a 'home game', and hours spent standing exposed in torrential rain on temporary terraces. What shines through is their devotion – the sense that following Brighton was never about guaranteed success, but about identity and belonging.

Of course, the documentary is rich with talking heads. Former players, pundits, and celebrity fans such as Ralph Brown (*Withnail & I*) and Brighton native Fatboy Slim

(Norman Cook) provide some personal perspective. Along with period-appropriate needle drops of D:Ream and Chumbawumba, Cook's own music is used throughout, injecting an energy to goal-scoring montages as Bobby Zamora leads the pack through successive championships, from Division Three in 2000 to League One two years later.

But these successes on the pitch are haunted by issues in club management and ultimately not having a ground. This becomes a beacon for Brighton fans however, as they band together, to campaign and raise money to keep the team alive. The arrival of Tony Bloom as chairman in 2009 marks a turning point, securing a stadium and setting the foundations for Premier League success.

Ultimately, *Stand or Fall* is affecting not simply for its underdog story, but for the culture that sustained it: a celebration of survival, solidarity and the fans who refused to let their club die.

3 out of 5 roundels

Review by Sam Cooney



CELEBRITY FAN: Norman Cook, aka Fatboy Slim



WE HAVE copies of *Stand or Fall* on DVD up for grabs. For your chance to win one, answer this question correctly: name a celebrity fan of Brighton & Hove Albion who features in this film.

Email your answer, marked Stand or Fall DVD competition,

Copies up for grabs

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 October 31 and include your postal address.

R'n'R



Theatre
SCD Live Tour 2026
Dates confirmed



TV FAVES: Craig Revel Horwood, Shirley Ballas, Anton Du Beke and Janette Manrara

Strictly for ardent dance show fans

WHILE THE latest series of *Strictly Come Dancing* continues on television, the dates of the SCD Live Tour 2026 have been announced.

Strictly legends Shirley Ballas, Anton Du Beke and Craig Revel Horwood reunite on the live tour judging panel, with Janette Manrara returning as tour host for 30 sequin-studded shows across the country.

The tour runs from January 23 to February 15 and Janette will oversee proceedings as a line-up of celebrities and professional dancers from this year's BBC One series bring all the glitz, glamour and feel-good factor to banish the winter blues.

The 2026 arena spectacular kicks off once again in Birmingham at the Utilita Arena for the first of five shows. The tour will then foxtrot around the country visiting Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool, Glasgow and Nottingham, before culminating at The O2 in London.

Directed by Revel Horwood, the tour is two hours of glittering entertainment with show-stopping routines, group numbers and live music from the

Strictly band and singers.

Ballas said: "The *Strictly* Live Tour is always the best way to start the new year. So I can't wait for 2026 to be back on the road with Anton and Craig and to bring the magic of *Strictly* to fans across the country. Roll on January!"

Du Beke added: "I'm back for my fourth *Strictly* tour and it honestly just keeps getting better and better.

"Sitting behind the judges' desk and watching the excitement from the audience night after night is just magical and as I've said before, we love it just as much as they do. I'm very excited to see what Craig has planned for next year!"

Revel Horwood said: "If you love the BBC series, then you will love the *Strictly* live tour. We bring all the glitz, glamour and gorgeousness to an arena near you, so fans can enjoy the spectacle of the TV show and their favourite celebrities and dancers up close and personal. It's a FAB-U-LOUS night out for the whole family to enjoy."

● **Go to the website:** Strictlycomedancinglive.com for more tour information.



Theatre
The Bodyguard
UK tour

Sidonie's looking for love

BASED ON the 1992 Oscar-nominated movie starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, *The Bodyguard* is on a nationwide tour again, this time running until August 29, 2026.

The cast is led by Sidonie Smith (*Disney's Tarzan*, *West Side Story*) as Rachel Marron, Olivier Award nominee Adam Garcia (*Saturday Night Fever*, *Wicked*) as Frank Farmer, Sasha Monique (*Hairspray*, *The Book of Mormon*) as Nicki Marron and Matt Milburn (*Coronation Street*, *Hollyoaks*) as Sy Spector. At certain performances, Rachel will be played by Mireia Mambo (*A Chorus Line*, *Sunset Boulevard*).

Former Secret Service agent turned bodyguard Farmer is hired to protect superstar Rachel from an unknown stalker. Each expects to be in charge; what they don't expect is to fall in love. A romantic thriller, *The Bodyguard* features a host of irresistible classics including *Queen of the Night*, *So Emotional*, *One Moment in Time*, *Saving All My Love*, *Run to You*, *I Have Nothing*, *I Wanna Dance with Somebody* and one of the biggest hit songs of all time – *I Will Always Love You*.

The musical is at Milton Keynes Theatre from October 21-15, then goes to Stoke-On-Trent, Zurich, Munich, Southend, Manchester, Truro and Sheffield before playing at another 23 venues.

Lyrics

Sidonie said: "This show is pure joy. If you love this music, it's going to be just the most incredible night you've had in a theatre in a long, long time. For me, it's about getting to delve into the lyrics and the beautiful chord changes. Witnessing it going from screen to stage in such a fantastic show is an amazing experience for audiences, as is getting to perform in it. On top of all that fantastic music is the drama and the love story. It's funny, it's edgy, it's dramatic and it's heart-breaking."

The musical has played to more than 3.9 million people in 15 countries and 45 US cities. Sidonie previously played Rachel in the German production of the show.

"What I love about Rachel is the range of her emotions in the show," she explained. "She is a diva, but she's so much more than that. She's a mum, a sister, someone who is vulnerable and falls in love, and she's not just the star that you see on television."

Sidonie revealed that her favourite number from the show is *One Moment in Time*.

"Every night I sing it I get goosebumps," she said: "I think it's because of the stillness of the moment. Those who have already seen the show will know that there are a lot of highs and lows and action in the musical, then during *One Moment in Time* everything kind of comes to a halt and there's nothing but me and the music."

Why does she think *The Bodyguard* is such a compelling story?

She said: "I think that we all just want to see love win and when we see two people give it a try we're automatically on their side. That's what speaks to so many of us about Frank and Rachel's story. It's also a glimpse into another world. It's a look behind the curtain. The glamour is still there in abundance, but it's wonderful to get the chance to peel it all back and see the real people behind all of the glitz."

Australian actor, singer and dancer Garcia describes his character, Frank Farmer, as "resolute, loyal and honourable."

He added: "He's kind of quiet and speaks when he needs to. He's efficient, well-trained and possibly slightly jaded, but he's a good man. Am I anything like him? Not at all! I was speaking to my wife about this and she was like 'Now, if you could just be like Frank...' The same thing happened when I did a show called *If/Then* and she said 'The guy you played was really lovely...' so maybe it'll wash off!"

What made Adam say yes to *The Bodyguard*?

"I remember seeing opening night when it



Edited by Tracey Allen



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BROUGHT TOGETHER:
Rachel (Smith) and Frank (Garcia)



first played the Adelphi in London and I loved it," he explained. "I was intrigued because I enjoyed the film so much because it's about relationships, plus of course it's got that legendary soundtrack. Then what really drew me in about the musical is that it really works and I think it surprises people. The choreography is amazing, as is the way it's staged and structured. To transpose that from film to stage is not easy because the film is grand gestures and small gestures at the same time. The show is really successful at conveying all of that."

Does he think he'd make a good bodyguard for real?

Illusion

He said: "Yes and no. Many years ago, I went to a club in London that was really hard to get into. There was a table that I really wanted to sit at so I pretended to be a bodyguard for some other people there. It was all about the attitude of being unflinching and scanning the room, and I did manage to get a good couple of feet in front of me where no one would come into the same space. They assumed the people I was pretending to be guarding were important. I don't actually think that they were, but it was about creating an illusion or a presence of power and authority. So after that I can say that I've had a taste of it!"

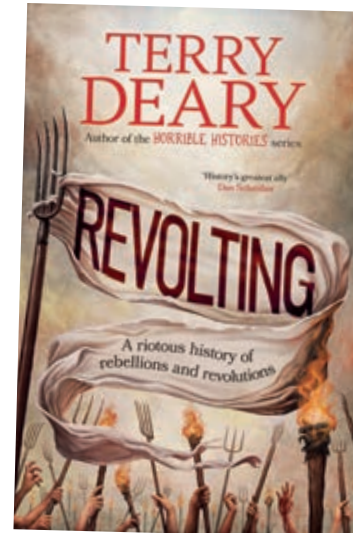
● **Go to: thebodyguardmusical.com for full tour dates and ticket details.**

"HOW REVOLTING are you? It's something you ought to ask yourself."

That's what highly popular author Terry Deary writes in the introduction to his fascinating new book, *Revolting, A riotous history of rebellions and revolutions* (published by Bantam, penguin.co.uk).

The author of the acclaimed *Horrible Histories* series – which made him the bestselling children's non-fiction writer since records began – his new history book for adults celebrates the resilience and determination of those who dared to challenge the status quo.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the rich and powerful always look after their own and the working people are always revolting. But now and again a new group manages to seize power, and it changes history.



Few enjoy the success of Iyaylo, the Bulgarian swineherd who fought off the Mongols, slayed the Tsar and married his widow, all within a year. Then some rebels have more modest aims: Spartacus mainly wanted to go

home to see his mum. Either way, Deary says we have much to learn from the tactics of revolutionaries gone by, like the two suffragists who posted themselves by Royal Mail to see the Prime Minister – though Downing Street declined the parcel.

You could win a copy of this very entertaining and educational book. For your chance to own it, answer this question correctly:

What is the name of Terry Deary's bestselling series of books for children?

Email your answer, marked Revolting book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by October 31.

Please add your full postal address.



Comedy
Son of a Carpenter
UK tour

Comic's a chip off the old block

ACCLAIMED COMEDIAN, actor and writer Jim Jefferies is continuing the UK leg of his new stand-up tour, *Son of a Carpenter*.

The show is at Manchester's O2 Apollo on November 2 then tours to various venues including Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham and Cardiff, finishing at the Cliffs Pavilion Southend on November 30.

Described as one of the most influential and provocative voices in global comedy, Jefferies was born in Australia, but forged in the UK's vibrant comedy scene.

He has released 10 stand-up specials, including five Netflix hits. His latest, *High & Dry* (2023), finds him reflecting on newly married life, the laziness of koala bears, the injustices of male pattern baldness and the reason why he'll never drink again.

Legit

He has also starred in the FX series *Legit*, which he co-created and produced, and hosted Comedy Central's *The Jim Jefferies Show* (2017–2019), known for its bold takes on politics and culture. In 2019 he was named Stand-Up Comedian of the Year at the Just for Laughs Festival.

Currently Jefferies can be seen hosting FOX's reality show, *The Snake*, where contestants must use their training, charm and powers of persuasion as they face fear-inducing challenges designed to showcase their true colours.

His latest Netflix special *Jim Jefferies: Town Limb Policy* premiered worldwide on August 12.



GLOBAL APPEAL: Comedian Jim Jefferies

He also stars in Jordan Peele's newest production, *Him*, alongside Tyriq Withers, Marlon Wayans, and Julia Fox, released last month.

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



Your Announcements

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

Seeking

SEEKING Flt Lt Bev Webb who was the station MO (Medical Officer) at RAF Wyton in the 70s, 1972-74. Any information will be gladly received. I was on Tactical Supply and we spent many weekends flying at Panshangar in the two Auster aircraft they had. Please call Maurine Boakes on: 0116 2849332 or contact me on Facebook.

SEEKING memorabilia relating to the Victor Bomber, in particular hanging china/porcelain wall plates. If you can help please contact Dick Squire on: dick.squire4@gmail.com.

Reunions

309 Entry RAF Hereford C Flt 4 Sqn Cooks, April 1967 to May 1968. If anyone knows anybody from that Entry and wants to get in touch, with a view to meeting for a 60th anniversary celebration in 2027, please call Ian Dell on: 01202 722058

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 this year. Please email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com

CALLING all former TG11 comms personnel, T/phonists, TPOs, Tels, Wop Spec, TCOs, TCCs, TRCs and any comms titles that may have superseded the aforementioned. All are welcome to attend the Trade Group 11 Association reunion to be held on Friday, March 20 to Sunday, March 22, 2026. The venue will be The Marriott Delta Hotels, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham Belfry, Nottingham NG8 6PY. Further details if required can be found on the TG11 Association website at tg11association.com.

If not a member, details can be found on how to join.

Associations

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

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

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

RAF Armourers past and present: RAF Association's 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 email the committee: 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.

Two charities help blind vet

AN RAF veteran who lost his sight aged 25 has praised a care home for the support it is giving him.

Former RAF policeman Jeremy Sellwood became a resident of the Royal Star & Garter Home in Surbiton last year.

Staff there asked Blind Veterans UK to give them support and advice and, according to Jed, as he is known, and his family, it has helped him to settle in and enjoy life at the Home.

The praise for Royal Star & Garter came on World Sight Day, October 9, and during World Blindness Awareness Month, running throughout October.

Jed went blind after sustaining a serious head injury in 1987 while based at JHQ (Joint Headquarters) Rheindahlen in West Germany, and he was off-duty at the time.

With the support of Blind Veterans UK, he was able to live independently for more than 20 years. But a series of falls resulted in Jed, now 63, moving to Royal Star & Garter in 2024.

The Home's Wellbeing Coordinator Lesley O'Driscoll said: "The team haven't had to support someone who is totally blind and we wanted advice and to know what we can do to help Jed's wellbeing."

Blind Veterans UK provided a box of activities and advised on the set-up of Jed's room. A case



SUPPORT: Jed with RS&G's Wellbeing Coordinator Lesley O'Driscoll. Inset, during his RAF service; below, passing out as an RAF Police Officer



worker meets him each month.

Lesley added: "We've definitely been able to improve the support and wellbeing we provide for Jed since contacting Blind Veterans UK."

He said: "I think it's excellent that Royal Star & Garter got in contact with Blind Veterans UK. It's refreshing to see two organisations working together this way. Staff here always go the extra mile for every single resident."

Jed's sister Kim said: "Blind Veterans UK has been supporting Jed for a long time, so I was thrilled when Royal Star & Garter reached out to them

to help with the support they can provide."

Mark Wheeler, from Blind Veterans UK, said: "It was fantastic to work with Royal Star & Garter to share our expertise and support them to provide the best care possible. It's great to see two veterans' charities working together for Jed's benefit and we're grateful that staff at the Home reached out to us. It's good to know that Jed is now receiving such wonderful care and that he is happy."

Speaking about Royal Star & Garter, Jed added: "This place feels like home, it's absolutely fantastic. Everybody's friendly and helpful, and I feel lucky to be here."

Royal Star & Garter supports veterans and their families, living with disability or dementia, through its homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. Blind Veterans UK supports anyone who has served in the Armed Forces and is now living with significant sight loss.

● Go to: starandgarter.org and blindveterans.org.uk for more information.



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Free Friends concert

THE CENTRAL Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in The Strand, London, is holding its annual Friends Concert on Thursday, November 27, starting at 6.30pm.

The concert features the Central Band of the RAF and the Choir of St Clement Danes (professional opera singers in their 'spare' time), and will include exciting new and well-loved musical favourites. Refreshments are available after the performance.

More than 150 people have already requested tickets for this free concert (donations to support the work of the Friends are welcome), said concert coordinator Simon Denny.

He added: "The concert combines outstanding musicianship with the chance to connect with the RAF family, it is a wonderful opening to the build up to Christmas."

● *RAF News* readers can request tickets by emailing: concert@fscd.org.uk



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Nat does Black Buck challenge

AIR AND Space Operations Specialist AS1 Nathaniel Torres-Roberts (*above*) is currently on a 390-mile running challenge in the Falkland Islands in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Nathaniel, 21, from RAF Boulmer, is on a four-month tour to the Islands and started the run last month.

His Operation Black Buck themed challenge represents the journey the Vulcans took as part

of the bombing runs during the Falklands War in 1982, which was roughly 3,900 miles each way. For a solo runner, the challenge is reduced to 390 miles.

He said: "I'm taking on this challenge alone but with motivational support from those who are part of my unit."

● Go to: rafbf.enthuse.com/pf/black-buck-run to donate.

Pledge for retired RAF dogs

THE NATIONAL Foundation for Retired Service Animals (NFRSA) has jointly announced a new partnership with the RAF, pledging lifelong care and financial support for retired RAF Police dogs.

Effective immediately, the NFRSA will adopt and support these exceptional animals in their post-Service years, ensuring they receive the medical, welfare, and emotional care they deserve after a lifetime of service, said an NFRSA spokesperson.

The announcement was made jointly by Provost Marshal (RAF) Gp Capt Samantha Bunn and The Countess Bathurst, Founder and Chair of the NFRSA, before assembled guests, handlers and dignitaries at RAF Honington, on the final day of the RAF Police Military Working Dogs Trials.

Gp Capt Bunn said: "Our Military Working Dogs are frontline defenders, trusted by handlers and essential to the security of RAF operations. It is wholly right and fitting that, when their service ends, we ensure they are not forgotten."



READY TO SERVE:
Police dog and handler at the recent RAF Police Military Working Dogs Trials

The partnership with NFRSA means these brave animals will receive the care and honour they've earned, long after their working days conclude."

The Countess Bathurst said: "When I founded the NFRSA, it was with the full intention to embrace more services as we grew, and we were deeply honoured to be approached by the RAF team to ask us to consider welcoming the RAF Police Military Working Dogs into our family."

"These exceptional animals have served their country with unwavering loyalty. In return, they deserve our commitment and our support at every stage, especially when illness or age slows them down."

"Our new partnership with the RAF is not just symbolic of the way we have developed as a charity; it is a practical promise of guardianship and respect to all our Service animals in whatever role they have fulfilled."



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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 395

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 8 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF system.

- Across
- 7. Less than seven I censure in tourist city (6)
 - 8. Rob brings up argument to help yourself (6)
 - 10. At Natal, change for Olympic city (7)
 - 11. Desperate character at Church of England disco (5)
 - 12. At first, Oliver is noticing kids grunting (4)
 - 13. By the sound of it, watched some of the play (5)
 - 17. Parasite there for employment (5)
 - 18. Either way, it's Karenina (4)
 - 22. Wordly RAF plane? (5)
 - 23. Be filled with love for our mean confusion (7)
 - 24. Male sheep returns meat to station (6)
 - 25. Future king will eat, consuming egg first (6)

- Down
- 1. Tee-totallers surround six for right pilot (7)
 - 2. Headless, severely damaging sport (7)
 - 3. Inadequate Socialist leader simply cannot (5)
 - 4. Battle of Britain legend damaged wing! Odd! (7)
 - 5. RAF aircraft will doctor sole (5)
 - 6. In street, small Scottish candy (5)
 - 9. Bomber from English royal house? (9)
 - 14. Endlessly nag Noah's son at station (7)
 - 15. Where a king or queen are placed when flying (2,5)
 - 16. Persistent RAF plane? (7)
 - 19. Georgia gives Frenchman's mother Greek letter (5)
 - 20. Acclamation for old American flag (5)
 - 21. Bounder alien to RAF trainee (5)

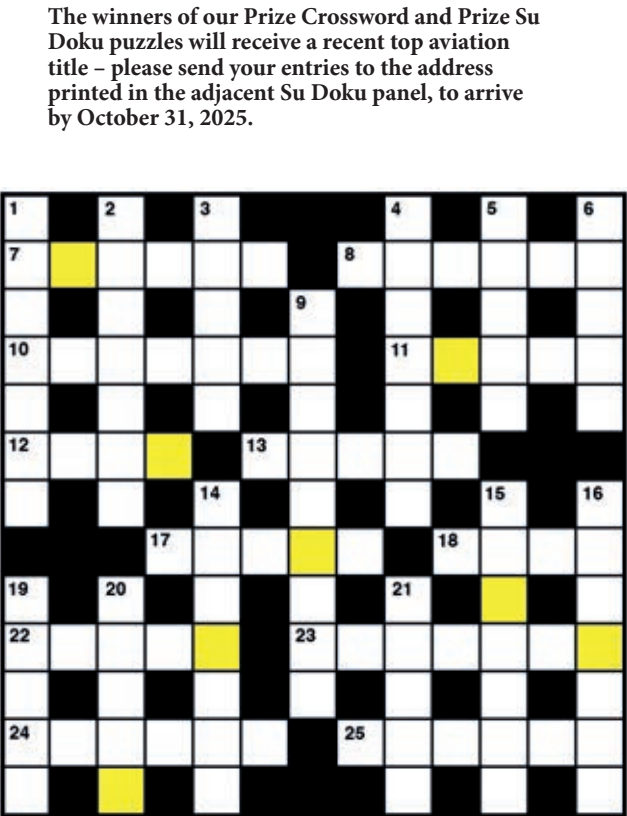
Name:

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RAF system:Crossword No. 395



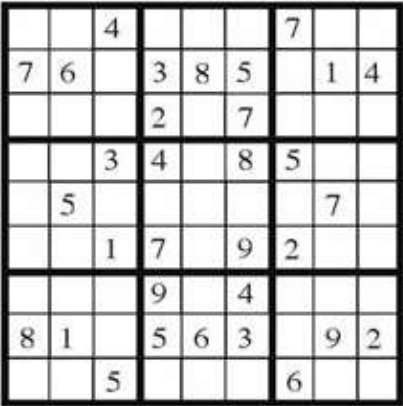
Prize Crossword No. 394 winner's name will be published in our next edition.

Solution to Crossword No. 394
Across – 6. Torpedo 7. Stone 9. Sharp 10. Meander 12. RAF Leuchars
14. Unobtrusive 18. Climber 19. Album 21. Usher 22. Pegasus
Down – 1. Mocha 2. Sparta 3. Ado 4. Stench 5. In Tears 8. Request 11. Blarney 13. Endless 15. Bomber 16. Vulcan 17. Queue 20. Dec
RAF station – Boulmer



Prize Su Doku No. 405

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 October 31, 2025. The name of the winner of Su Doku No: 404 will be published in our next edition.

Solution to Su Doku No. 404

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



Film Review Mr. Blake at Your Service! (PG) In cinemas now

A French farce fail

A SUCCESSFUL English businessman (John Malkovich) returns to the French castle where he met his late wife, only to find himself with a job as a butler in this sentimental French comedy. Arriving unannounced, Mr. Blake is unaware that the guest rooms are closed, and through some far-fetched misunderstanding, ends up on the staff. It turns out that the castle is in disrepair ever since the death of the owner, leaving weary widow Madame Beauvillier (Fanny Ardant) struggling to keep the place open. Keen to stay any way that he can, Mr. Blake agrees to play the part, leading to inevitable high jinx as the wealthy businessman slums it with the other workers. There's Odile (Émilie Dequenne), the uptight chief maid, who has a knack for fancy cooking – even if it is only for her cat Mephisto; Manon (Eugénie Anselin) the younger maid, who is hiding troubles of her own; and Philippe (Philippe Bas), the strange and trigger-happy gardener. Mr. Blake, it transpires, will fix everyone's problems and find purpose for himself along the way.



PAMPERED PET: Mr. Blake with Mephisto

Not just as a butler mind, he will become matchmaker, motivator and even a stand-in date, dolled up for Phillipe to practise his supertime flirtations. Malkovich is playing English (strange enough) but performs the part entirely in French. Though fluent, his trademark presence feels unusually muted, resulting in a confident yet curiously flat performance. Despite its eccentric premise, the film unfolds in familiar, even predictable fashion. It does take the occasional big swing for comedy, throwing in some huge tone shifts toward the end that don't quite hang together. There are moments of charm, but the overriding impression: c'est bizarre. Two roundels out of five Review by Sam Cooney



Film Review The Shadow's Edge (15) In cinemas now

Chan's still got the Edge

A NOTORIOUS fugitive, known only as The Shadow, is tied to a huge scale heist in Macau, and so the police will have to bring in a legend of their own, in Larry Yang's frenetic spy action thriller. Unable to keep pace with a new generation of criminals, targeting cryptocurrency and hacking digital security systems, the police seek help from former surveillance expert Wong Tak-chung (Jackie Chan). Semi-retired, save for a dog-walking job, Wong quickly proves that his instincts are still sharp, and so is recruited to the cause. Wong soon learns that the police's once-formidable covert unit has been replaced by security cameras – now useless against hackers who understand the technology better than anyone on the force. Tasked with building his own team, he trains a group of young officers, including his niece He Qiuguo (Zhang Zifeng), following in the footsteps of her late father. The action set pieces are high-octane: packed with base jumping, lightning-fast disguises



ACTION-PACKED: Wong (Chan, right) goes head to head with The Shadow (Ka Fai Leung)

and tightly choreographed hand to hand combat. The gang of thieves, who look like a boyband, prove to be very formidable and talented martial artists, though the rapid cutting style might make it hard to follow at points. It turns out that these boys are all orphans grown up, adopted under the tutelage of their lethal Fagin: The Shadow (Tony Ka Fai Leung), a legend in the criminal underworld who has a personal history with Wong. At nearly two-and-a-half

hours, The Shadow's Edge does well to keep up the pace, propelled by an up-tempo score, punchy editing, and inventive stunt work. Combining old-school action spectacle with VFX, there is an echo of the film's focus on the changing face of crime and policing. With Jackie Chan front and centre in his 70s, it proves that experience still counts for something. 4 out of 5 roundels Review by Sam Cooney