

**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Vasque Now trainers worth £120 must be won**

● See page 16



**Win!**

**Polish airman escaped gulag**

● See page 16

**Win!**



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, September 20, 2024  
Edition No. 1592 £1.20

# RAF News



**Vets PTSD treatment blow as Forces charity chiefs face cash crisis**

See pages 14-15



**Boxing**  
**Fighting for Elite Status**



● See page 23

**Football**  
**Big Mac is one of elite**

● See p27



**Tennis**  
**Inters aces' Nato clash**

● See p28



# Northern flights



THE RED Arrows lit up the skies on their latest tour as they helped the Royal Canadian Air Force celebrate its centenary.

The Lincolnshire-based Hawk jets trailed their

signature red, white, and blue smoke across the skies of Greenwood, Toronto, Ottawa, and Ontario as part of Exercise Maple Hawk to mark their 60th display season. ● See p3

# BiteSize

“The RAF is constantly working with other air forces on operations,”

Flt Lt Jordan Capehorn, one of the first to complete fast jet training on joint UK-Qatar 11 Squadron  
See p5



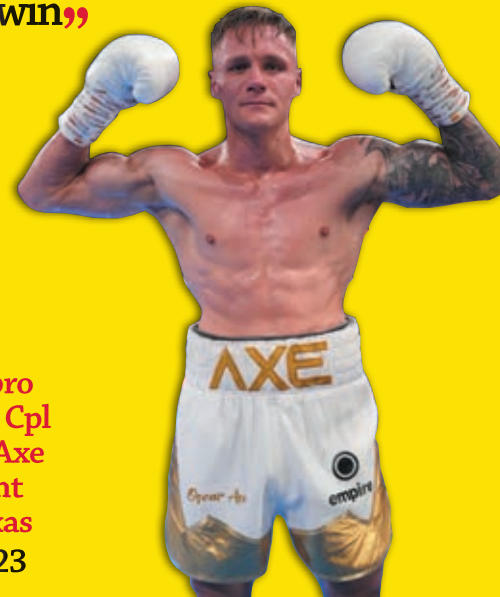
“It’s about bringing Lagos to life on stage in a way that hasn’t been done before,”

Choreographer Qudus Onikeku on touring UK with Nigeria’s QDance troupe  
See R’n’R pages 4-5



“I know I can go to the US and win,”

RAF pro boxer Cpl Brad Axe to fight in Texas  
See p23



## ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

### RAF News

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# Ukraine training lift

**Staff Reporter**  
Ramstein Air Force Base

THE UK will train further cohorts of Ukrainian men and women to become soldiers on British soil, as part of the Government’s commitment to Ukraine.

The training operation was due to come to an end this year but will now continue until at least the end of 2025, the MOD has confirmed.

Trainees will join the more than 45,000 Ukrainian personnel who have been trained under Operation Interflex since Russia’s illegal invasion in 2022.

Defence Secretary John Healey announced the extension at a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group at the US Air Force base in Ramstein, Germany, attended by President Zelensky and more than 50 other nations.

Mr Healey said: “Operation Interflex has provided the brave



men and women of Ukraine with the vital skills they need to defend their nation in the face of Putin’s illegal invasion.

“The extension of this training, which is vital for Ukraine’s defence, is another example of the UK’s ironclad commitment to Ukraine.

“The UK will continue to step up our support. We will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.”

## This Week In History



### 1969 Harrier lands

1 SQN becomes the first operational fixed wing VTOL squadron in the world, operating the Harrier from RAF Wittering.

### 1944 Arnhem mission

SIX DAKOTAS from 575 Sqn fly the final supply mission to Arnhem. The RAF launch more than 1,300 sorties during Operation Market Garden with the loss of 57 aircraft.



### 1997 Tornado speed king

TORNADO F3 pilot Sqn Ldr Andy Green sets a new world land speed record of 714mph in the Phantom engine powered Thrust II supersonic car in Nevada.

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



**FALLS GUYS:** Arrows fly over the Niagara Falls during performances in North America, marking the Royal Canadian Air Force's centenary. Below, mixing with the crowds at an air show  
PHOTOS: CPL PHIL DYE



**BRIZE NORTON SWO**  
Tug Wilson took the plunge in the dunk tank at the Oxfordshire station's annual two-day Brizefest event. Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton was on hand to pull the lever and raise funds for charity. ● See p7

# Reds salute RCAF 100<sup>th</sup>

● *continued from front*  
The journey from Britain was planned over two years and as the 50-year-old Hawk T1s cannot refuel when airborne the 12 jets took it in stages to get from Waddington to Scotland, Iceland, Greenland and Goose Bay in Canada.

RAFAT Officer Commanding Wg Cdr Adam Collins said: "Being here for our Diamond season makes this tour special for us. The airshows have been filled with impressive flying demonstrations which have included our counterparts the Snowbirds."

The Canadian display team, also known as 431 Air Demonstration Sqn, flies Tutor jet trainers from its home at Moose Jaw Air Base in Saskatchewan.

More than 120 RAF personnel

were sent as part of the five-week exercise for several flypasts and four airshows.

But it was a visit to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario to hand out gifts that most impressed the British visitors.

"Seeing young people in hospital, being able to talk to them about why we are here, bringing books to read and paper airplanes to make is really special," said Wg Cdr Collins.

Other highlights included flypasts with the Snowbirds over the British High Commission in Ottawa to celebrate its official opening and over Niagara

Falls, where the Reds were accompanied by a historic Lancaster from the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum.

The bomber is dedicated to the memory of VC winner PO Andrew Mynarski who was shot down in flames by a German night fighter but managed to free the tail gunner trapped in his rear turret, who miraculously survived. Mynarski later died from severe burns.

The Reds will return to the UK to finish their 2024 season with a performance at Duxford, next month.



## Carrier return for Dambusters

**DAMBUSTERS JETS** are looking forward to their more familiar role on board the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers after completing their first land-based foreign mission.

The F-35Bs of 617 Sqn are set to embark on HMS Prince of Wales later this month after three and a half weeks performing Quick Reaction Alert missions in Iceland. It is the second time the RAF

have deployed to the northern Nato outpost following in the slipstreams of 1 (F) Sqn Typhoons in 2019.

RN 617 Squadron F-35B pilot Lt Goldman said: "It's been a positive experience operating out of Keflavik Airport, over mountainous and glacial terrain.

"We have been able to practise diversions to mountainous airfields, dogfighting, and short landings and

take-offs from the air base.

"This is well within the capability of the F-35B as it is uniquely designed to take off using only 350ft of runway on the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers."

The detachment was supported by more than nine different professions from engineers to cyberspace experts from both the RAF and the Royal Navy.





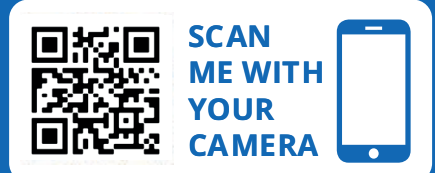
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The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109).

# Flash on the pan



A VAMPIRE jet flashed into Aldergrove Flying Station ahead of its appearance at the Northern Ireland International Airshow. The distinctive 'flash' nose art was painted on the aircraft to mark this year's 100th anniversary of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and 502 (Ulster) Sqn's centenary in 2025. Piloted by Royal Norwegian Air Force Brigadier-General Martin 'Tin Tin' Tesli and owned by the RNAS Historical Sqn, it dropped in to remind reservists of what it was like to see the County Antrim station's 12 fighters overfly the Province's Lough

Neagh in the 1950s. Wg Cdr Steven McCleery said: "It is special to see our squadron markings proudly displayed on an historic aircraft in the skies over our home station once again." 502 (Ulster) Sqn was the first Reserve unit of the RAF and formed in 1925.



## In Brief



**SPIT AND POLISH:** Triumph at the Capel-le-Ferne memorial in Kent

## Capel classics

THE AIRMAN statue at the heart of the National Memorial to The Few at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent had a Spitfire of the Triumph variety in its eyeline when a classic car convoy landed at the cliff top tribute. Members of the Ramsgate Old Motor and Motorcycle Club showcased more than 130 cars – displayed in glorious weather to the delight of crowds of visitors. The annual event helps bring in much-needed revenue for the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, a charity which receives no government funding.

# Leeming duo fast-jet first

## Staff Reporter

AIR FORCE rookies Flt Lts Matt Smith and Jordan Capehorn have made history as the first in service to graduate from Leeming's joint UK and Qatari fast-jet training squadron.

They are the first of their cohort to complete training on the Hawk in the unique 11 Sqn QEAF environment.

Formed in 2021, 11 Sqn Qatar Emiri Air Force is one of two joint UK-Qatar squadrons delivering advanced and high-speed jet training to Qatar Emiri Air Force and RAF pilots.

Squadron commander Wg Cdr Mark Lawson said: "They are trained and assessed to the highest standard."

"I have no doubt that the instructors here are the best instructional team in the RAF – I genuinely believe that."

"It's about the ethos and mentality of being a fighter pilot, being disciplined on the ground and making sure that you know your stuff before you get into the jet and fly. The UK system is one of the best in the world for that."

The duo will now move onto the Typhoon Operational Conversion Unit before joining



**HISTORY BOYS:** Flt Lt Jordan Capehorn, left, and Flt Lt Matt Smith are the first to graduate from the joint UK and Qatari training squadron

frontline fighter squadrons.

Matt said: "It's been great to get involved with the visits of high-ranking Qatari officials and senior officers."

"The Qataris have been very welcoming and have taught us about their culture."

Jordan added: "The RAF is constantly working with other

air forces on operations. Having the opportunity to learn about bridging differences and making a cohesive unit will be a massive benefit going forward."

"I was six years old when I decided to be a fast jet pilot. There was a visit of primary school children as I was going out on my own for the first time."

"When I taxied out, they were at the end of the line waving like lunatics. You could almost have planned it – I was looking at myself 20 years earlier."

Matt added: "We are ready to start learning in the next place. It's just that constant journey of picking up the next thing and trying to be as good as you can."



## Salute to The Few

A SOLITARY Spitfire has flown over the latest monument to Battle of Britain heroes.

The memorial at the former RAF Doncaster is in honour of northern aircrew killed in the conflict.

Unveiled by 93-year-old Air Vice Marshal Alan Johnson it was the brainchild of the late Bill Bond, who died before its completion and inspired a similar monument on London's Embankment.

The flypast marked the completion of a wall representing a WWII revetment which forms a backdrop to panels listing the Battle of Britain Roll of Honour.

A plot of land has been set aside next to the Museum where it's hoped a replica Spitfire or Hurricane can be located.

AVM Johnson was joined by AVM Richard Hill to review a march-past, and a service was led by 1053 Sqn RAF Cadets Padre Rev Tom Brown.



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# Simply the Fest

**Staff Reporter**  
Brize Norton

THOUSANDS FLOCKED to this year's Brizefest – the Oxford station's annual weekend of blockbuster entertainment for Forces families.

It is the last time the station will host the event that was launched in 2008, organisers have revealed.

The swan song featured a proms night headlined by Welsh singer and TV presenter Aled Jones, ahead of a host of Air Force musical talent.

Crowds did a double take as Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran and Freddie Mercury tribute bands hit the stage over the two-day Forces festival.

Away from the main stage organisers laid on traditional

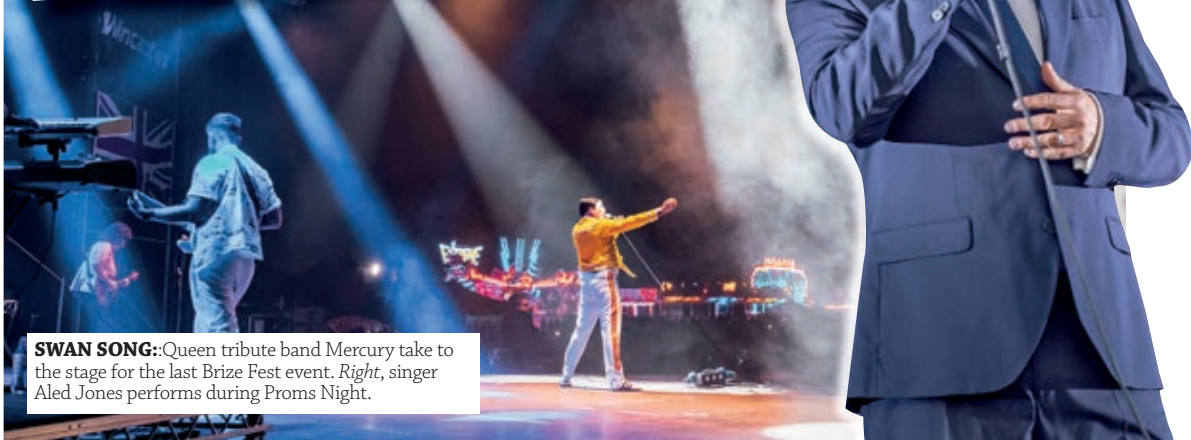
families day entertainment and fairground attractions.

Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton said: "Brizefest has always been a highlight in the station's calendar, bringing together our personnel and their families, in a celebration of food, activities and music.

"As we celebrate this final Brizefest in its current format, we look forward to reimagining how we continue this tradition in new and exciting ways in the future."

A station spokesman added: "Brize Norton remains committed celebrating its personnel and families.

"Plans are already underway to introduce a fresh approach to future events that will continue to strengthen the bonds within the Royal Air Force family."



**SWAN SONG:** Queen tribute band Mercury take to the stage for the last Brize Fest event. Right, singer Aled Jones performs during Proms Night.

# UK and US ACE it on combat Ex



**Staff Reporter**

THE RAF has concluded a major exercise with United States Air Force partners based in the UK to test joint readiness to fly and fight using Agile Combat Employment tactics.

UK and USAF aircraft and ground crews dispersed from their main operating bases to unfamiliar locations with reduced levels of support.

USAF F35A fighter jets from 48th Fighter Wing at Lakenheath in Suffolk deployed to Marham as Typhoons left their operating bases at Coningsby and Lossiemouth for Cranwell and Leuchars Airfield.

ACE tactics were first used by the RAF

in WWII and developed by Scandinavian Air Forces during the Cold War to survive Soviet attacks by enabling fighter crews to strike from remote locations.

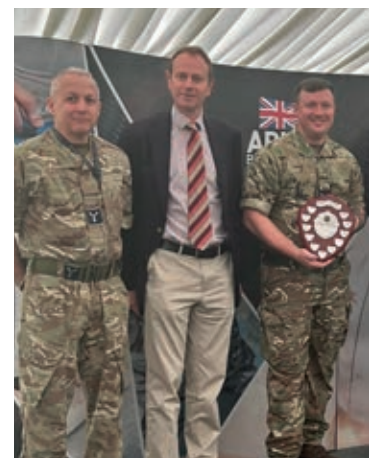
A Lossiemouth-based P-8A Poseidon relocated to Newquay Airport while Army 34 Field Sqn engineers specialising in runway repairs flew in on an Atlas A400M to Prestwick Airport support fighter crews.

Previous ACE training has seen 41 Sqn Typhoons launch from remote public roads in Finland alongside Norwegian F-35s while Nato's biggest air combat exercise, the US-based Red Flag, raised the stakes earlier this year by dispersing fighter crews across



Nevada and California during large-scale combat training.

## Bulletin



**COOK OFF:** Wittering caterers

## Gold plated

WITTERING CHEFS struck gold serving hungry service personnel as if they were on operations.

A team of two regulars and a reservist from the Cambridgeshire station took top slot setting up a field kitchen to feed 20 people and had to plan a menu against the clock without knowing what rations they would be given.

The contest was part of the annual international Tri-Service Exercise Army Sustainer at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham.

The station team also won individual gold medals for best-in-class poultry, vegan and novelty cake entries.

Officer Commanding Catering Flight 504 Sqn RAuxAF Warrant Officer Robert Oberhoffer said: "All competitors worked collaboratively and the skills, techniques and teamwork they displayed stood out and saw them hard to beat."



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In Brief



## CAS makes a house call

CHIEF OF the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton, officially opened new rooms at Rothbury House, one of the RAF Association's retirement homes, in Northumbria.

During his visit, Air Chief Marshal Knighton spoke to residents and staff and was given a tour of the facilities, designed to help residents retain their independence while living among people who share an RAF connection

# Bean there... done that

### Simon Mander

**FOOTBALL FAN** Dennis Barton was sent off in style from a Lincolnshire airbase where he has been a familiar face for 47 years - trading the traditional retirement bowler for his trademark beanie hat.

The Liverpool FC enthusiast was presented with a signed team photo of his heroes before he was marched off to applause by workmates at RAF Waddington.

Their longest serving employee, Mr Barton joined the Civil Service in 1977 and was part of the station's labour force until the day he left.

Working for the Station Warrant Office his duties included litter picking, office relocation and supporting ceremonial events and inspections.

Base spokesman Flt Lt Jordan Meleady said: "Mr Barton was



**FINAL WHISTLE:** Dennis receives signed footie photo from Gp Capt Dutch Holland

a familiar face to anyone who had served or visited RAF Waddington in the last 47 years

and was particularly renown for wearing his beloved Liverpool FC beanie hat and hi-vis jacket."



## WWII greats Park and Dowding join club



**HONOUR:** Portraits of Sir Keith Park, left, and Lord Dowding flank Winston Churchill at the RAF Club. Inset below left, artist Hazel Morgan and, below, Lord Piers Dowding  
PHOTOS: JEMIMA LYWOOD/RAF CLUB

### Malcolm Triggs RAF Club, Piccadilly

**WARTIME PRIME Minister Sir Winston Churchill is now flanked by the two men who did so much to ensure the Royal Air Force won the Battle of Britain following the unveiling of two new paintings at the RAF Club in Piccadilly.**

Portraits of Air Chief Marshals Lord Dowding and Sir Keith Park, both painted by Hazel Morgan, were unveiled in the Churchill Bar in the presence of a number of distinguished guests.



The paintings were unveiled by Lord Piers Dowding, who was close to tears as he revealed the portrait of his grandfather, architect of the 'Dowding System' which did so much to give the RAF superiority over the Luftwaffe during and after the 1940 conflict.

"I make no apology for feeling so emotional," he told those present.

Lord Dowding was joined by Sarah Mossman, a relative of Sir Keith, as he unveiled the second

portrait, while New Zealand High Commissioner His Excellency Phil Goff was also among the guests at the event.

Earlier, Air Cdre Rick Peacock-Edwards, MC for the event, had invited Honorary Gp Capt Paul Beaver, author and historian, to outline the vital part Dowding and Park had played in the RAF's success.



**ECO TEST:** Electric vehicles at Leeming

## Hyd de hi

**TRIALS USING hydrogen to power electric vehicles have finished at two RAF stations.**

Generating power for roughly 120,000 miles of travel, the pilot scheme showed the fuel could be used on operations to provide mobility in off-grid and compromised locations.

Launched last year, the trial was initially planned for Leeming in North Yorkshire and later extended to include Northolt.

AVM Rich Pratley said: "This trial has demonstrated the potential of hydrogen in our transition to zero-emissions energy, while also addressing the current challenges posed by our expanding electric vehicle fleet."

The tests used hydrogen power units to generate electricity, which was then used to charge electric vehicles.

This work was a joint endeavour between Defence and industry experts GeoPura.

Defence is now expanding the trials across other sites.

News



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# United in grief



**REMEMBERED:** Relatives of the lost airmen, Nick Hayward and Lucille Baker, at RAF Digby

**Simon Mander**

RELATIVES OF two pilots killed when their biplane crashed near a Lincolnshire airfield have met for the first time 100 years after the disaster.

And photographs of the two Avro 504 pilots who died in fields on Metheringham Heath will hang in a museum dedicated to the history of nearby RAF Digby.

Instructor Flying Officer George Hayward and his trainee Pilot Officer Charles Brealey died together on August 15, 1924 but until the centenary of the tragedy the two families had never met before.

Lucille Baker, a descendant of Charles Brealey, said: "It was special for us as a family to be able to pay tribute to our relative who died so tragically and so young. We had no idea that Charles was not alone in

the aircraft, and we then discovered the double tragedy."

Framed photographs of the two airmen will eventually hang in the RAF Digby Ops Room Museum, which is currently undergoing a major refurbishment programme, scheduled for completion in May 2025.

Nick Hayward said: "This was an extraordinary coming together of two families commemorating a shared tragic event 100 years earlier. It was a truly memorable occasion for everyone and a fitting tribute to two brave airmen."

The meeting at Digby was attended by 45 members of both families and the pictures were received by RAF Digby Deputy Station Commander Sqn Ldr Tracey Roberts.

The Museum is housed in the Operations Block constructed in 1937-38, when Digby was a fighter station.



GEORGE HAYWARD



CHARLES BREALEY

## Scampton asylum plans axed

**Simon Mander**

ASYLUM SEEKERS will not now be housed at RAF Scampton after an assessment ruled the site was not value for money.

The Home Office made the decision to end plans for the former Ministry of Defence site in Lincolnshire after learning it would have cost a total of £122 million by the end of 2027.

A total of £60 million has already been

spent on the former Red Arrows base and work will now begin to sell the land.

Minister for Border Security and Asylum, Dame Angela Eagle, said: "Faster asylum processing, increased returns and tighter enforcement of immigration rules will reduce demand for accommodation like Scampton and save millions for the taxpayer."

"We have also listened to community feedback and concerns about using this site for asylum accommodation."

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Royal Air Force

# In Concert

**CAST, Doncaster**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Thursday 19 September

**Palace Theatre, Newark**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Friday 20 September

**Playhouse, Weston Super Mare**

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

Friday 27 September

**West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge**

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

Friday 4 October

**Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln**

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

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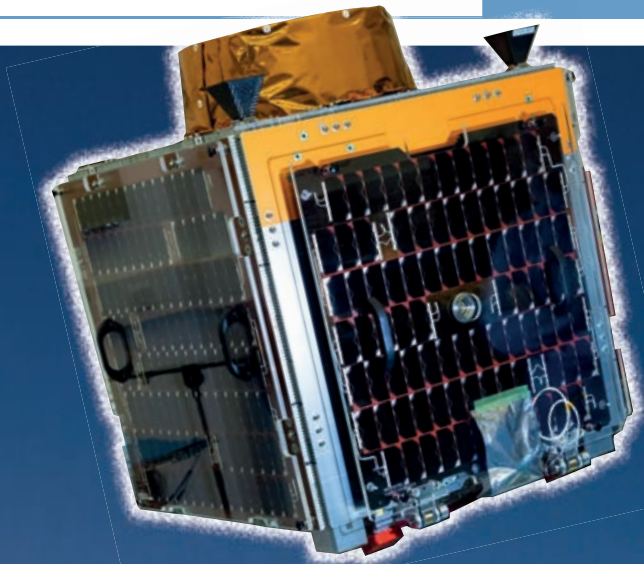
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# £22m UK Defence satellite blasts off

## SpaceX-launched Tyche sat tracks enemy forces

**WE HAVE LIFT-OFF:** SpaceX's Falcon rocket blasts off from Space Launch Complex 4E at Vandenberg Space Force Base in California



### Staff Reporter

THE UK'S first earth mapping satellite capable of tracking troops and equipment on the battlefield from orbit 500km above the planet has blasted off on board SpaceX's Falcon.

Operated by UK Space Command and developed by Surrey-based engineers at SSTL, the washing machine-sized space vehicle is already capturing high resolution images and real time video.

The launch is part of the MOD's space programme to deliver a constellation of satellites to support military operations and monitor climate change worldwide.

Tyche will circle the globe at an altitude of roughly 500km and is expected to operate for at least five years, the MOD said.

It will deliver Britain's first sovereign space-based planet mapping ISR capability, operating alongside Nato space systems.

## Chute-ing stars drop in at Brize

YOUNGSTERS WITH hearing difficulty took the plunge as they tried out the parachute simulator at Brize Norton during a trip to their local RAF station.

The group from the Oxfordshire Deaf Children's Society took part in a range of science-based tasks before braving the Parachute Training School's rig.

Instructor Sgt Chris West said: "It was fantastic to host the group. They all went above and beyond that by trying out our Parachute Exit Trainer.

"I have seen some soldiers be massively intimidated by it but they all took it in their stride. I really hope this visit has helped inspire them to explore their interests further, perhaps even in parachuting."



**JUMP TO IT:** Sgt Chris West supervises youngsters on the Parachute Exit trainer at Brize Norton

## Britain backs £1bn Ukraine aid pledge

### Simon Mander

EIGHT COUNTRIES have joined the UK to provide more than £1 billion to the International Fund for Ukraine.

Denmark, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Norway have pledged to pay for more drones to help on the frontline and air defences to protect people from Russian bombardment.

The agreement comes as the Fund said its largest support package will start delivering this year.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the £300 million deal to supply 152mm artillery shells for Ukraine's Soviet-era guns has now been signed and is expected

to deliver within months.

He said: "The ongoing defensive operation in Kursk underlines the crucial importance of continued support. And today's milestone for the International Fund for Ukraine shows the value of working with Allies to deliver that support."

The artillery ammunition contract, placed by Defence Equipment and Support – the MOD's procurement arm – will deliver 120,000 newly-manufactured shells over the next 18 months.

The IFU was first launched by Denmark and the UK in 2022 and Britain has donated £500m to date.

Other contributors include Australia, Iceland, New Zealand and Sweden.



# Cash blow to

## Cash-strapped veterans charities struggling to cope with demand for mental health support

**WELFARE CHIEFS** are facing a funding crisis as demand for mental health specialist help for military veterans hits record levels.

According to leading vets mental health charity Combat Stress, referrals went up by 15 per cent last year and in the last three years by 44 per cent.

The charity has warned that if new referrals rise by another 15 per cent this year it will need £2.5 million more in funding to meet the increased demand.

The findings were revealed following a study by King's College London's King's Centre for Military Health Research that was commissioned by the Office for Veterans' Affairs.

Chloe Mackay (pictured inset below), CEO of Combat Stress, said: "We need more funding to keep pace with rising demand. We are gravely concerned about our ability to treat those veterans with military-related trauma who so desperately need us.

"Increased funding of our services is not only urgent, it's essential. Ours is a service thousands rely on, and we rely on funding to deliver it.

"The findings of the study show an increase in the rate of probable PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], including C-PTSD [complex PTSD], confirming what we are seeing with an increase in new referrals to Combat Stress."

### Afghanistan

The study revealed the increased rate was 11 per cent – up from seven per cent.

Among veterans deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan in combat roles, the rate jumped even higher to almost one in five (18 per cent), of which three-quarters – 13.9 per cent – met the criteria for C-PTSD. In comparison, the rate of PTSD among the general

public is four per cent, said the charity.

RAF veteran Liz McConaghy fought in Iraq and Afghanistan and in 2022 published *Chinook Crew 'Chick'* – a candid, bestselling account of her battle with PTSD. Advocate of the Year 2023 for Combat Stress, Liz served in the RAF for 17 years including two deployments to Iraq and 10 to Helmand in support of Operation Herrick.

She said her biggest honour was serving on the Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) recovering wounded Service personnel from the battlefield – often under fire – and witnessing them both die and come back to life at her feet in the cabin of a helicopter.

Medically discharged from the Service in 2019, aged 37, with a neck injury, she went on to develop PTSD and at her lowest point considered suicide.

She said: "There are a lot of people leaving the Armed Forces currently who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns and have PTSD. That's only coming to the surface now – thousands went in and out of those campaigns repeatedly. This has led to a huge number of veterans in which PTSD has just



**CHINOOK CHICK:** Liz McConaghy during her time as aircrew



manifested. "That is putting a lot of pressure on mental health services and in turn I think that leads to what you might call 'general vets' having a lack of support because a lot of the existing resources are just keeping those new cases of PTSD afloat."

### Trauma

She added: "Three-quarters of those cases are C-PTSD, individuals who have been repeatedly exposed to trauma, veterans like myself who did multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The problem is only getting worse sadly – it's snowballing."

Liz now works as a motivational speaker around the UK and in Europe. She was diagnosed with

# 10 PTSD vets

**TRIGGER:** Multiple operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, *main picture*, have resulted in PTSD for some service personnel, including ex-RAF Chinook aircrew Liz McConaghy, pictured left during one such deployment. She found support from Combat Stress, which she now champions (below left)



**SUPPORT:** Veteran talks with a consultant clinical psychologist working with Combat Stress



**AWARD:** Liz was named as last year's Inspirational Woman in Defence

C-PTSD earlier this year.

She said: "Combat Stress have been fantastic with me. When you've been in the Forces you're part of the Forces family and when you leave you really struggle to find that common bond."

"When I had a meltdown in 2020 I contacted Combat Stress and they put their arms around me straightaway, they have made me feel like I'm part of a different family now – their family. And that's really important, that you feel you belong again and you feel seen and heard."

It was Liz's intention to stay in the RAF for life, so when she was medically discharged she felt bereft.

"I felt a lack of identity, purpose and passion. Many of us joined

because we wanted to make a difference and that doesn't go away. As you emerge into the wider world it can be hard to back fill that purpose. People talk about Service personnel having a mental health 'bucket' and a lot of us leave the military with this bucket three-quarters full of concrete. It doesn't leave much spare capacity at the top – it's easy for that to overflow quite quickly."

**Service**

She added: "You don't necessarily have to have been in frontline combat to get help from Combat Stress, it helps any veteran from any of the Armed Forces who are suffering with

mental health issues from their time in service."

The charity also has a separate helpline for personnel who are still serving.

Liz said she received no specific mental health training during her Service career and, although she acknowledges that's improved, she feels more help is needed.

She explained: "The most of a nod we got towards dealing with mental health issues really was decompression coming back from Afghanistan in the latter years of that campaign. But for a lot of people the damage had been done."

"There were things put in

place at the time that felt like box ticking, not an effective way of helping people. These days there are online course but the feedback I've had from station visits is that's simply not enough and things such as face to face training are more valuable."

**Training**

"If we gave our troops some very basic information about mental health and training, when you start to unravel as I did there are lots of signs to spot and if you have the knowledge already you understand what's happening rather than thinking you are the problem. Knowledge is really key – it's important all

the way up from basic training to senior management level."

She added: "The military aren't doing enough while people are still in uniform, the emphasis needs to be on the Services to put resources in to help people before they are medically discharged – to do something before serving PTSD sufferers become veterans, because that is just absolutely swamping veterans' charities."

● **Combat Stress offers help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Go to: [combatstress.org.uk](http://combatstress.org.uk); email: [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk); free helpline: 0800 1381619; text: 07537 173683.**

**Competitions**

# Now's the chance to treat your feet with fab Vasque trainers

## Win high-tech walking shoes worth £120

RAF NEWS has joined forces with US hiking boot and shoemakers Vasque to offer one lucky reader a pair of super lightweight Now walking shoes.

Founded in 1964, Vasque have built with purpose and intention to craft dependable, high-quality performance hike footwear for those who love being outside. Their craftsmanship and experience mean that customers can rely on footwear designed with innovative materials and built to handle every adventure.

The Vasque Now truly is a shoe that reminds you to go outside, designed for comfort and stability with a wider heel and forefoot design and internal fit sleeve for optimal midfoot support.

The Now is made with lightweight, breathable ripstop outer mesh and plush foams for that ultimate cushioned feel, internal half-bootie construction and extended heel fit collar system,

which will change your perspective on how a shoe should fit; the Now is built on an anatomical last, which wraps around the foot to provide a fit that allows you to move.

The Vasque Now retails at £120 and is available in three colours – Moonless Night (left), Blanc de Blanc (below right) or Vaporious Grey in men's size 7-14 and women's 6-11.

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following question:

**How old is Vasque this year?**

Please state your shoe size and preferred colour – either Moonless Night or Blanc de Blanc.

Send your entry, marked Vasque Now competition, to our usual postal address (see p2) or email it to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk) to arrive by October 4.

● Go to: [vasque.com](http://vasque.com) to find out more about Vasque's latest products.



# Surviving the horrors of Stalin and Hitler

FEW PEOPLE have survived fighting two of the greatest monsters of the 20th century, Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler, and lived to tell the tale.

But *Gulag to Spitfire: A Polish Serviceman's Fight to Survive in the Second World War* by Andrew Hubert von Staufer ([thehistorypress.co.uk](http://thehistorypress.co.uk)) is about one man who did just that.

And while the Polish contribution during World War II is legendary – the exploits of 303 Sqn as the highest-scoring unit during the Battle of Britain have long been immortalised in film – this story shows the personal price many paid to fight for the Allies.

Not many, apart from those who have escaped the reality of war, can understand what it was like being sent to Stalin's Siberia, to escape, only to be thrown into the flak of northern Europe in early 1945.

But this was what Kazimierz Tomasz 'Tomek' Hubert faced.

The son of the military governor of Lwow (modern day Lviv) he was arrested after Russia

## Author's father escaped his Siberian gulag hell and flew Spitfires against Luftwaffe

invaded Poland in September 1939 and banished as a political prisoner to the harsh Vorkuta Gulag in the Arctic Circle.

He survived rape, the constant threat of summary execution and starvation to escape and walk 6,000km to freedom.

Reaching the relative safety of Tehran in Iraq he then crossed Europe to join 317 Sqn before flying Spitfires against the Luftwaffe in Belgium, Holland and North Germany.

As the author recounts: "The Poles, having proved their worth, were now part of a massive war machine that would result in better-trained aircrew flying superior equipment against a German Air Force that was already losing its best pilots to attrition, faster than they could be replaced."

But the Luftwaffe was still no pushover as Tomek's account of his dogfight with Fw190s over Sint-Denijs-Westrem, near Ghent, shows.

And at the end of the war his suspicions, like those of his comrades, were confirmed as his home city was given to the Soviet Union in the Yalta Agreement and, like most Polish Servicemen, he was ignored by the authorities whose country he had helped.

Bizarrely, his British-born wife Angela Oakeshott, in a shocking example of wartime bureaucratic paranoia, was also forced to take up Polish citizenship despite working for the Bletchley Park code breaking centre.

The writer's deviations into the realpolitik that was taking place behind the scenes at the time, despite Churchill's reservations, are necessary and useful to explain events which must have been inexplicable to Tomek at the time.

For example, even before winning his wings as an RAF pilot, the Tehran conference in



**CARNAGE:** Sint-Denijs-Westrem, January 1, 1945, when Tomek (inset left) downed one Fw190 and damaged another (Polish Institute & Sikorski Museum)



### Win the book

YOU COULD win a copy of the book. To enter, simply answer the following question:

Who publishes *Gulag to Spitfire*?

Email your answer, marked Gulag to Spitfire book competition, to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto: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 4.



1943 had left Lwow, Tomek's home, beyond Poland's borders and under Stalin's control.

As von Staufer says: "His future war would be entirely against the Germans with no recompense for what he had suffered in Siberia. Effectively, Tomek had lost his war before he began fighting."

But the comparisons he makes with Putin's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, are, I would say, gratuitous and don't really add to what is a good narrative.

This is an amazing tale of endurance told by his son, a former air traffic controller, who traces his father's footsteps and takes full advantage of his photographic memories.

Review by Simon Mander



**THE FUTURE'S ORANGE:** XI (F) Sqn Typhoons prepare to fly their first sortie as part of Exercise Pitch Black in Darwin, Australia  
PHOTO: AS1 JASON RUSSELL



# Allies all Pitch in

RAF TYPHOONS joined more than 100 other fighter aircraft and more than 4,000 personnel from 17 nations in Australia for Exercise Pitch Black this summer, one of the biggest combat air drills in the Allies' calendar.

XI Sqn jets from RAF Akrotiri made the 8,600-nautical mile journey with overnight stops in the United Arab Emirates, India and Singapore, supported by Voyager tankers and an Atlas transport aircraft.

They were joined at RAAF bases Darwin and Tindal in the Northern Territory by teams of caterers, Force Protection specialists, engineers and movers for the three-week exercise.

Air Force photographers were also on hand to capture the action during the big ticket multi-national showdown.

A Royal Air Force spokesman said: "The UK's long-standing participation in the exercise is an indicator of the importance the UK places on developing long-standing relationships in the region and also creating new ones.

"It also reinforces the value that the UK places on regional security and fostering closer defence ties throughout the Indo-Pacific region.



**INTEROPERABILITY:** Working with RAAF engineers, *above*, and Typhoon pilot ready to depart, *below* PHOTOS: AS1 Eoin Kirwan-Taylor



**JOB DONE:** RAF Voyager departs, *above*, and RAF cook at work, *below* PHOTOS: AS1 Eoin Kirwan-Taylor & AS1 Jason Russell



# SERVICE CHILD

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# Air chief awarded DFC for Aden role

Sir David was a top fighter pilot, much admired by his colleagues and those he led

**AIR CHIEF** Marshal Sir David Harcourt-Smith, who has died aged 92, was a dynamic fighter leader who saw action during the Suez campaign and in Aden, when he was awarded the DFC, later becoming a Commander-in-Chief and serving on the Air Force Board.

The son of Air Vice-Marshal Gilbert Harcourt-Smith CB, CBE, MVO, David was born on October 14, 1931, in Singapore. He graduated from the RAF College Cranwell in July 1952 as a pilot officer.

He trained as a fighter pilot before joining 11 Squadron, based at Wunstorf in Germany, to fly the Venom fighter bomber. During this time, he flew in the Coronation Review mass flypast. After two years, he left for Aden where he continued to fly the Venom in the ground attack role with 8 Sqn.

## Suez

Following Egypt's nationalisation of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, tensions in the area rose, and in the weeks that followed RAF reinforcements, including 8 Sqn, flew into Cyprus.

Negotiations for a peaceful resolution failed and operations began on the night of October 31/November 1. Harcourt-Smith flew his first mission at dawn on November 1. He led a section of Venom ground-attack aircraft to strafe Egyptian aircraft on the ground at Abu Sueir and Fayid airfields when seven aircraft were destroyed and two others damaged. He later led an attack on Kabrit airfield when two more aircraft were destroyed.

## Venoms

Over the next two days he led more attacks against Egyptian airfields. On November 3 he flew an anti-flak mission in support of an attack by RAF Canberra bombers. In preparation for an airborne assault, he flew armed reconnaissance missions when he attacked military vehicles with rockets. He led the squadron on November 6 when eight Venoms were tasked to attack the Mole

at Port Said but a ceasefire was declared and he fired his rockets into the sea. He commented: "A silent protest and release of tension! In the event it was my last and somewhat useless act in this brief, unusual and not very successful piece of British history."

After returning from Cyprus, the squadron was soon back in action against rebel strongholds in the Aden Protectorate. In the aftermath of Suez, trouble in central Oman flared up in July 1957. No 8 was ordered to Sharjah in the Persian Gulf, and within days Harcourt-Smith was leading strikes against rebel positions in the Jebel Akhdar region. Operating in support of land forces, the Venoms attacked fortifications with rockets. At the end of 1957, his sustained aggression and skill was recognised with the award of the DFC, "In recognition of gallantry and devotion to duty in air operations in the Middle East."

In August 1963 he assumed command of 54 Sqn, which operated the Hunter in the fighter ground attack role. Based at West Raynham in Norfolk, it was assigned to Nato's quick reaction mobile force primarily intended for deployment to Nato's northern and southern flanks. The highly experienced Harcourt-Smith was a forceful and inspiring leader greatly admired by his pilots. One of his pilots remembered 54 Sqn as "a happy squadron with him as the boss".

In December 1968 he returned to the fighter world to take command of the RAF's first Phantom squadron, No 6, at Coningsby in Lincolnshire. The squadron's primary role was ground attack with a variety of weapons, together with self-defence air-to-air missiles. One of the squadron pilots described Harcourt-Smith as, "an action man, occasionally with a short fuse, but very popular and admired for his professionalism."

After a period at the RAF's trials and tactics organisation,



**PEOPLE PERSON:** Air Chief Marshal Sir David Harcourt-Smith

Harcourt-Smith assumed command of RAF Bruggen in German, the home of three Phantom strike attack squadrons. Each squadron had to maintain an aircraft on quick reaction alert (QRA) armed with a nuclear weapon and able to take off in 15 minutes after the alert sounded.

## Phantom

He flew regularly with each squadron and soon re-established his reputation as an excellent ground attack pilot.

He claimed that the Phantom was "one of the finest weapon systems in the world". He and his wife Mary were popular and very sociable and on his departure in July 1974 he paid tribute to those who had developed the many important family and social benefits to create a fine

community spirit on the large base.

for the Tornado. His staff were also pursuing an airborne early warning version of the Nimrod aircraft, a programme fraught with difficulties and subsequently cancelled.

Occupying much of his time was the multi-national project to develop the next generation fighter as a replacement for the Tornado. Initially, in partnership with the Germans and the French, a European Collaborative Fighter project was launched, when each country submitted its options to meet the requirement. In April 1982, Italy joined the programme but differing national positions led to the withdrawal of the French resulting in the Munich-based Eurofighter GmbH being established to manage the development of the European Fighter Aircraft (EFA). Shortly afterwards, Spain joined the programme and EFA was developed to become the Typhoon, currently in service with the RAF and the air forces of its partners. With his wide experience as a fighter pilot, Harcourt-Smith was able to represent, and protect, RAF interests. During the protracted negotiations his straightforward, persuasive personality proved invaluable.

## Travelling

In February 1984 he became Commander-in-Chief of RAF Support Command. Here he was responsible for all RAF air and ground training and for the Service's extensive and diverse support organisation, a wide remit that involved much travelling to see his units.

His final appointment before retiring in May 1989 was as Controller Aircraft with a seat on the Air Force Board. As Controller he provided the interface between the British military and industry as new equipments to meet the operational requirements of each Service were introduced.

Harcourt-Smith was appointed GBE (1989) and KCB (1984). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society in December 1986.

Sir David led from the front. With piercing blue eyes and a penetrating voice, it was wise to remain on his side, but he was very much a people person. Modest and a master of the understatement, he was kind, with a mischievous sense of fun. He was greatly admired.



**NORTHERN FRANCE'S Saint-Omer is an insanely scenic part of the country. Quaint historic buildings, a vibrant night-life and sun-kissed marshes are all right here. You can even see Notre Dame Cathedral and the Louvre, without having to travel to Paris! More on those later. This is a hidden gem that shouldn't be missed.**

**Location**

Saint-Omer is a captivating little town in the Pas-de-Calais region. Covering just 6.3 square miles, it's a quiet and charming place to spend a few days off the grid. It's easily accessible, just a 40-minute drive inland from Calais, so it's also the perfect place to stop off if you're heading further south.

Bathed in iridescent light and an ever-changing palette of hues, a vast wetland, known as Marais Audomarois, surrounds the ancient town. This extraordinary area covers more than 3,700 hectares and is made up of watercourses, lakes and market gardens. It's a Unesco Biosphere Reserve and you'll find rare plants and animals, including more than 230 species of bird.

In the old town you'll find that magnificent 7th Century cathedral called Notre Dame. Unlike its Parisian namesake, it's located on a quiet cobblestoned street and you won't get bothered by hordes of tourists.

If you're an architecture buff then Saint-Omer has many other gems too, from old disused buildings, to modern bustling streets, the town is a colourful tapestry of old and new. There's a wide variety of shops and cafes to keep you entertained during the day, while colourful bars and restaurants beckon in the evening.

**Relax**

Take a short walk to Maison du Marais and enjoy a stroll around the wetlands exhibition, before exploring the waterways by bacôve, a traditional wooden boat. Tours are run in French and English, with experienced guides who bring things to life with passion.

Our guide, Hippolyte, told us that Saint-Omer has the last postal service in France to deliver mail by boat. That makes sense.

Stop off to enjoy birdwatching at the Romelaere nature reserve and take your time. No hurry.

If you're heading south from Saint-Omer, or you fancy a drive in the stunning French scenery, Louvre-Lens is about an hour away.

Like the famous Louvre in Paris, this is a world-class museum that houses some of the rarest art in the world. The Louvre museums share the collection, so visitors can expect to see, at times, renowned pieces travelling between the sites.

During our visit we had the pleasure of taking a journey to the centre of the Earth with Jules Verne – a modern spin on a classic adventure that draws you in to the world beneath our feet. Cemeteries, underground railways and the more fantastical beasts associated with the works of Verne were all on display.

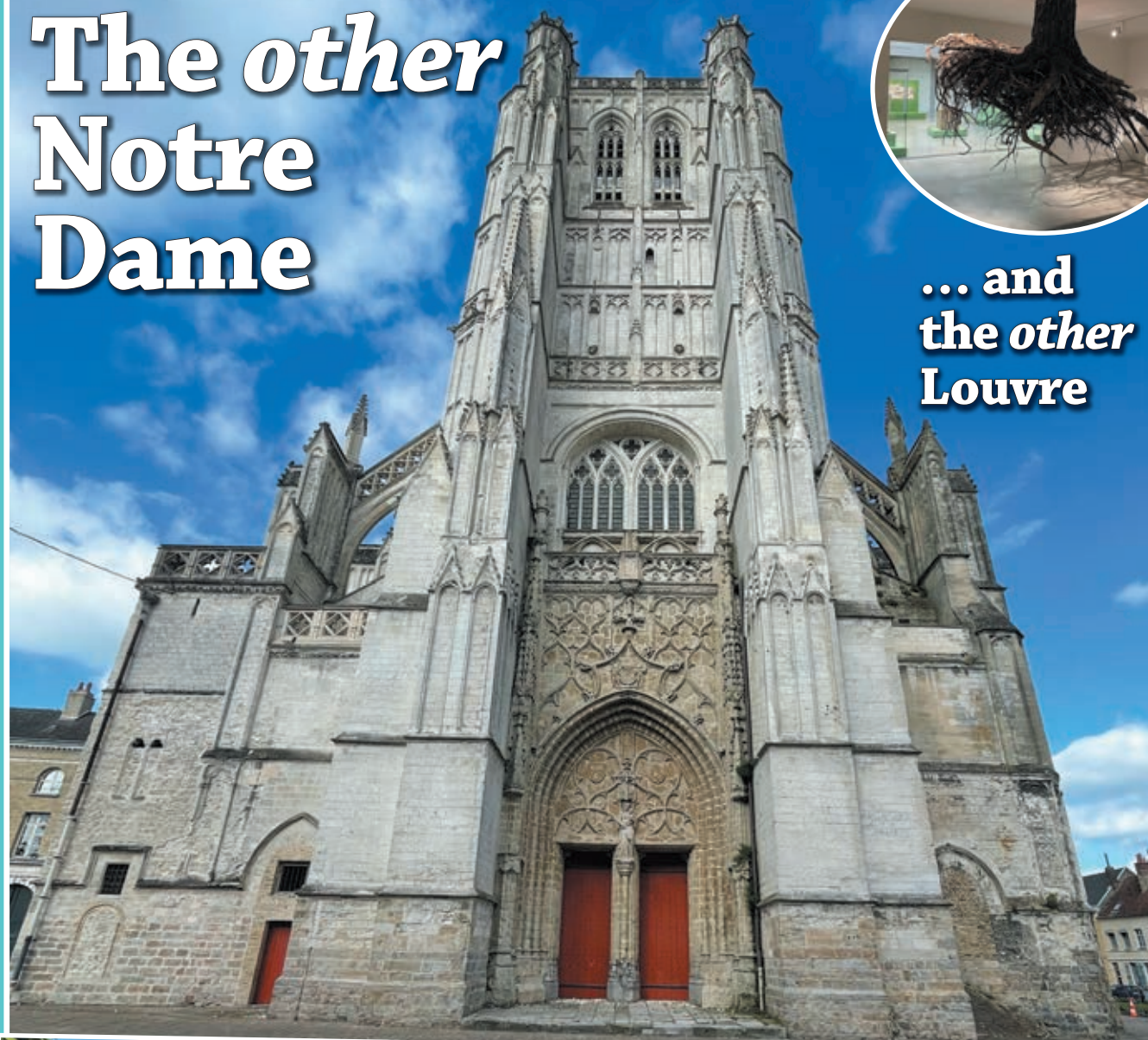
**Adventure**

Located less than 15 minutes away from Saint-Omer, by car, La Coupole is one of the most impressive reminders of occupied France during World War II.

It was initially designed to be the first German base for launching V2 rockets towards Britain but never became fully operational. Today it stands as a Centre for History and Remembrance, with a Research Centre and 3D Planetarium attached.

This enormous underground bunker

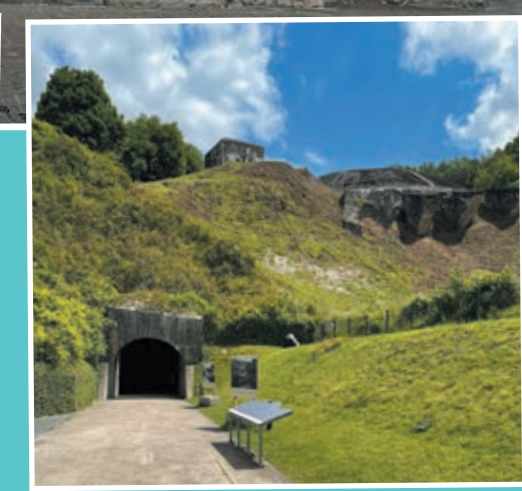
# The other Notre Dame



**... and the other Louvre**



**TRANQUIL:** The Unesco wetlands surrounding Saint-Omer are home to many birds



**LA COUPOLE:** Site was earmarked to launch V2 rockets

contains hundreds of metres of tunnels and is covered by a dome concealing the launch preparation chamber. The dome is 5.5 metres thick, weighs 55,000 tonnes and is made of concrete.

The old launching base is now converted into La Coupole's Planetarium. Powered by 10K-3D laser technology, it takes visitors into space with an immersive experience and audio headsets that provide commentary in several languages.

**Stay**

We stayed at the Ibis Styles – Saint-Omer. This lively, budget hotel certainly gets the basics right and over delivers in many ways. Set just a few steps from Notre Dame Cathedral, it offers reasonable

prices, a good night's sleep and plentiful breakfasts. The bar/restaurant is the central hub of the place and has a vibrant atmosphere.

Beds are comfortable and everything is clean. En suite bathrooms are functional rather than luxurious.

As with all budget hotels, staffing is minimal and the person serving at the bar doubles as your receptionist. During our stay, the young woman covering this role was polite and helpful, with a wonderful grasp of English.

**Eat & Drink**

There are many excellent restaurants in Saint-Omer, where you

can enjoy specialities like carbonnade (Flemish stew), along with artisan beers from a wealth of local brewers.

If you prefer to indulge in a little cooking, delicious fresh produce can be sourced from local market gardens. Mouth-watering cheeses are in plentiful supply, including the deliciously earthy Maroilles and Mimolette. For the finest cheeses in town, head to À la ferme audomaroise, on Rue Louis Martel.

Our chosen place to eat was Charlie's Corner, the restaurant at our hotel. The avocado toast and the steak were excellent, washed down, of course, with a Saint-Omer beer. Desserts were also delicious. Crème brûlée? Don't mind if I do.





Tim Morris

Kia Stonic 2024 (from £21,625 otr)

**Motoring**


# Super-Stonic

The hatchback that thinks it's an SUV



## Kia Stonic

**I LOVED** Kia's Rio – a brilliant little car that did what it said on the tin, until it was axed last year. The closest thing that the marque produces today is the Stonic, another avidly likeable car that takes the Rio's legacy and adapts it to pander to the ever-growing crossover set.

The Stonic is smart and unassuming on the outside, with a decent interior. In a rather packed sector full of dull competitors, the Stonic is a bit of an underdog, perhaps. Yet, being less common may just give it the edge.

### Interior

The Stonic's cabin is solidly made and all the switchgear feels nicely damped. Some of the low-down surfaces are made from scratchy hard plastics, but the more visible areas are finished with posher, more tactile stuff. The upper door trims seem to be the only exception here, still clad in plastic straight from its 1999 ancestor.

The driving position is bang on for me though. You sit low down, with your legs stretched out, as you would in a nimble hatchback. This might

disappoint SUV fans, who prefer to be higher up, but there are other Kias on the market to scratch that itch.

There's plenty of seat and steering wheel adjustment, to suit drivers of most sizes, and the seats themselves are comfortable on a run. A sliding front centre armrest complements the experience. All the buttons and switches on the dashboard are well placed and you get a fair amount of standard kit, including rear parking sensors. If you go for GT-Line trim, or above, you'll also get a rear-view camera, while top-spec GT-Line S adds front parking sensors.

The 8.0-inch infotainment screen comes with Apple and Android connectivity. All but the entry car also get access to Kia's connected services, which offer TomTom-based satnav and the ability to find where you've parked your car on your phone. Our test car came with all the whistles and bells, including heated seats, climate control and a heated steering wheel.

### On The Road

Make no mistake, the Stonic is a car with an SUV spin, not an SUV trying

to be a car. Yes, it has a raised ride height, but the stiffer ride means that it's actually one of the most agile crossovers on the market.

No crossover is really what you'd call 'fun' on the road, but it responds well to enthusiastic steering and holds the road well. On undulating surfaces it remains impressively composed and controlled too, so it's a good effort from Kia here.

The Stonic feels true to its hatchback heritage. The squat front end makes it easy to thread through the bends and park, with overall good front visibility. The rear isn't quite so rosy on the visibility front, but the standard rear parking sensors keep you out of trouble. The rear camera on GT-Line spec cars and above also helps greatly.

Performance is a bit 'meh', as you'd expect, but if you're buying in this segment that should come as no surprise. There's not much to choose between the 99bhp and 118bhp versions of the 1.0-litre engine, on paper. All versions manage the 0–62mph sprint in around 10 seconds and reach a top end of 115mph. Economy is officially 50mpg (low-to mid-40s in the real world, we expect).

### Pros

- Handles well
- Well-equipped for the cash
- Eager little engines

### Cons

- Not masses of rear space
- Rear folding seats could be more versatile
- Still a bit too much plastic on show

### Verdict

I still miss the Rio but, if you have to drive a crossover, the Stonic handles well, is nicely equipped and does what it says on the tin. It comes with a great warranty and has a reputation for reliable, no fuss service. The entry-level '2' spec car starts at a very reasonable £21,625, rising to £25,810 for the top spec GT-Line S. Many rival crossovers offer more space in the rear seats and a bigger boot, but I'd take the car-like driving position any day.

[baesystems.com/defence-resilience](https://baesystems.com/defence-resilience)

# Proven capability in an uncertain world



**BAE SYSTEMS**

# Axeman is all fired up

## Pro fighter's Transatlantic Clash

### BOXING

#### Daniel Abrahams

JUST SIX months after winning his pro-boxing debut Cpl Brad Axe will represent the UK against a Roy Jones Jnr select American team in Brownsville, Texas.

The aviator will face Julian Delgado as part of a five-man UK team in the Transatlantic Clash on October 5.

Axe was recently promoted to the role of Defence Instructor at the Fire Service College in Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, and is currently overseeing his first Trainee Fire Fighter course.

He said: "It's all positive. I feel like it goes hand in hand. I am buzzing so much with my job and I am buzzing with the training and the upcoming fight."

"Roy Jones Jnr is the US captain and Oliver Spencer is our UK captain, so it's big.



BRAD AXE: Elite Athlete aspirations

"I was talking with a promoter and he said there was a retirement from the UK team for the October event because of an eye injury, so

I was asked about taking on the fight."

Axe, who trains for 10 hours a week on top of his work commitments, added: "I was asked what I thought about fighting someone at the same stage of their career as me."

"Normally a fighter in my position would face a few more journeymen first to build up their profile then, next year, I would have had my first 50/50 fight with a boxer who was at the same standard."

"But if I am on the US v UK card and win, it could shoot me up the rankings. It could open lots of doors for me."

Axe won his opening pro bout by a unanimous points decision over Latvian Edgar Kemsley at the Brentwood Centre in Essex.

The fireman must currently take leave to fight, but is gunning for Elite Athlete status within the RAF.

He said: "It would make such a difference. Nobody has ever been a professional boxer for the



INSTRUCTOR: Cpl Axe trains Defence recruits at Fire Service College in Gloucestershire

RAF with elite status – this is new ground.

"I enjoy my job and love my career, especially the new training role. Having the time to focus on the fights solely, which elite status would give me, would be amazing."

"I always represent the Service;

I have a logo on my boxing jacket and carry the flag to show my pride in the RAF. So for now I need to keep knocking on the door and showing what I can do."

"I know I can win in the US, so I am going to take this on and go from there."

### KARTING

# Endurance test for Armed Forces kart drivers

SERVICE KARTERS tested their mettle after battling it out at a British 24-hour race and the penultimate round of the Armed Forces Championship.

Teesside Aerodrome was the venue for the RAF Spitfires and RAF Vulcans – two teams of regulars and veterans from Leeming, Waddington, Brize Norton and High Wycombe – in a field of 89 outfits from some of the country's best karting talent, where they completed more than 2,000 laps.

AS1 Benjamin Scott, who controlled race strategy and management, said: "This was a massive step up for our drivers as it was the first time most had raced at night and against this level of driver."

The teams had support staff from RAF Benson, Marham and Coningsby as Spitfires

suffered mechanic issues from a collision with a rival kart. Vulcans had a clean race overall.

The Service outfits completed a combined 2,042 laps of the 2.1km circuit.

Later in the month the drivers turned their collective attentions to the Armed Forces Karting Championship at Bayford Meadows in Kent, where the new track meant a learning curve for the RAF team.

The championship-leading Royal Navy team once again remained the strongest, with Waddington's kart 50, driven by Cpl Will Wright and AS1(T) Tom Lucas, not far behind; finishing second in race one and third in race two.

Brize Norton kart 73, the RAF's top team, suffered mechanical issues in race one but beat the gremlins in race



BAYFORD MEADOWS: Waddington's AS1(T) Tom Lucas (kart 50)

two to finish fourth.

Karts from Marham and Lossiemouth returned after

having their teams deployed on operations.

The final round of the year

is at Rowrah Kart Circuit in Cumbria at the end of the month.

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



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# UKAF rugby sunk by Gorilla warfare

## RUGBY SEVENS

### Daniel Abrahams

A MISSED conversion saw UKAF's rugby union stars come just points short of taking the prestigious Rugbytown Sevens silverware in Colorado, losing 10-12 to Gorilla Rugby.

The military men – trailing by 12 points at the break in the tournament final – staged a titanic second-half fightback with two tries. But failing to land the conversion from the second score in the closing seconds of the game meant the chance to level things was gone.

Director of UKAF Rugby 7s Wg Cdr Nick Monahan said: "The squad's attitude and effort has been exceptional, we just didn't get the result we deserved."

"I'm immensely proud of all the players, coaches, management and medical staff.

"The guys absolutely emptied themselves in their attempt to win and are desperately disappointed

not to have got the result."

Having lost their opening RT7s pool games – 26-19 to Gorilla Rugby and 21-12 to the Tsunami Warriors – the Services side picked up back-to-back wins – 43-5 against Misfits, followed by a close 14-12 victory over the Ramblin Jesters, to progress.

A comprehensive 40-7 defeat to Social Griffin meant they needed a bounce back win to secure a final berth in the Shield Final at Infinity Park in Glendale, USA.

They did it in style with a thumping 50-0 win over the US Navy's All Navy Rugby side.

The thumping victory saw Cpl Will Lamont score his sixth and final try, making him the leading UKAF tournament try scorer.

Monahan added: "The standard of the tournament this year was higher than ever, with the UKAF team competing strongly against numerous Olympians and other international and professional players.

"Rugbytown is a gruelling



GOING CLOSE: UKAF came up just short in US PHOTOS: NEIL KENNEDY/ALLIGIN

tournament given the altitude and temperatures in Colorado but they have risen to the mental and physical challenge of this three-

day tournament magnificently."

The UKAF women's squad will be led by former RAF and Wales international Cpl Sian

Williams when they head to the Dubai Sevens in November.

● Follow UKAF rugby on X @UKAFRugby.

## Shared honours with Japanese

## RUGBY SEVENS

IT WAS sevens heaven as RAF Northolt and King's Colour Squadron teams hosted the Japanese Defence Force for a day of touch rugby action.

Four matches showcased the fast-growing Service sport on the station's 3g training pitches, with the visiting naval team from the Japanese training ship Kashima – docked in London alongside HMS Belfast.

The spoils were shared with JDF beating Northolt 1-0 in their opening clash and KCS winning 3-2 in theirs. The second fixtures saw Northolt win 5-2, while JDF took a try-packed final game 7-5 against KCS.

England Touch Rugby's general manager Sammie Phillips oversaw the day.

JDF team captain ENS Motoki Kubota said: "We have enjoyed playing here and found the whole experience memorable with a great atmosphere all round.

"Playwise we found it a mix, as some of us have played rugby in university or high school so could settle in quickly, but many had no rugby experience at all. That made it difficult but fun trying to work it out.

"It was a first time for us all to play against the RAF, and when we arrived, we thought how much bigger than us the RAF players were, so it was lucky for us it was touch rugby."

Sqn Ldr Martin Walker said: "It's a rapid paced game, so thankfully there were rolling subs. People see touch rugby as a rugby union-based game, but



PHOTO: AS2 Dominic Graves, RAF Northolt

it is modelled on rugby league and is a fantastic sport for all. It is especially good for those in rehabilitation. I broke my elbow last year so contact sports are very difficult, yet this is great.

"The sport is getting more traction within the Service, for example UAS (University Air Squadron) had a big competition a few months back with lots of teams competing, so from a grass roots level it is growing.

"We lost our opening game 1-0 sadly, but we held it as long as we could, the Japanese are very fast with plenty of sevens skills, so to have kept it to one try was pretty decent.

"Overall, the draw is a fantastic result because this was more about us getting together than any result, this is the grassroots of defence engagement and sport provides that platform perfectly. It is great to see our Allies here, plus there was lots of laughing throughout."

## League players ready for the Inter-Services

## RUGBY LEAGUE

ALL THINGS rugby league Inter-Services kick off in Portsmouth as RAF News goes to press and RAF head coach Sgt James Hutchinson is 'ready to go.'

The Aviators first play the Royal Navy at HMS Temeraire on September 13, then host the Army at the Be Well Support Stadium in Wakefield on September 27.

Hutchinson said: "It soon comes round, doesn't it? Things are pretty settled, it's great to win all of your warm-up matches [against Heworth, King Cross Park, GB Teachers and Oulton Raiders], but it's really just the next two that matter, and we are all aware of that and focused on it."

Working with his assistant Sgt Tom White, Hutchinson has been able to make small adjustments.

He said: "I have brought a few of my own ideas to the players and put my stamp on that way.

"Sgt Liam Bradley is still our captain, he's leading the charge and has been doing so for five years.

"I am aware of not spoiling the



GAME PLAN: Sgt James Hutchinson

surprise of what we will bring to the games, suffice to say, we are not focused on the other teams, we are focused on ourselves, we know we are a good side, and we are ready."

● Follow RAF rugby league on Instagram @rafrugbyleague. All IS matches will be shown live on Forces TV.

Sport

# Lift-off for drone racers

DRONE RACING

Daniel Abrahams

THREE RAF drone flyers will form part of the UKAF contingent looking for lift-off at the Military International Drone Racing Tournament (MIDRT) 24 later this month.

Sgt Simon Fassler, Cpl Brendan Bolger (current RAF champion) and Cpl Marc Booth will be taking to the air at the Honourable Artillery Company hosted event in London against a field of top pilots in a bid to snatch the title they last competed for two years ago.

Fassler said: "I am hoping the momentum and attention gained from MIDRT24 will help the sport grow within the RAF and the other services.

"My role going forward will be more as a mentor and team engineer as more of the younger generation get involved.

"I am not as fast as some of the younger ones coming through, I go with the consistency."

The forces currently attending will include competitors from the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Jordan, Singapore



and Indonesia – with organisers also hoping for pilots from Poland and Germany among others.

Fassler debuted in the sport for the military as part of the UK team that came fourth in Australia in 2022, having raced for 11 years in total.

He said: "FPV [first person view] drones are increasingly prevalent in modern war, with racing being the underpinning method of training for the skill set required.

"As well as our military drone



racing, the MIDRT24, there is an industry competition featuring ex World Champion drone racers and the British civilian team and a domestic JDA competition.

"Since MIDRT23 I have been heavily involved as the RAF

Model Aircraft Association (RAFMAA) Drone Racing representative.

"I have trained personnel from II Sqn RAF Regiment in flying racing drones as part of an ASTRA project and I held the

first ever Novice Drone Racing Champs at RAF Waddington in May and facilitated the RAFMAA Drone Racing Championships at Honington last month."

The RAFMAA champ was Cpl Brendan Bolger.

ULTRA RUNNING

## Ton up for hardy Ken

WHEN SGT Ken Ivory hopefully crosses the finish line at The Guardians race in Coalport, Shropshire, at the end of the month he will join the illustrious marathon 100 Club after taking up the sport 20 years ago.

He started with a New Forest run in 2005 and now finds himself in touching distance of the landmark 26.2-miler.

He said: "You don't have to be rich or famous to join the 100 Club, but you will need grit, determination and a will to succeed. When I first started, it was all about trying to break three hours, now I am doing it just to finish."

So what next, once he hits the ton? "My wife is keen to run 100 half-marathons. I'll help her do that," he said. "I am tempted to do the 100th Comrades Marathon in South Africa in 2027 or the Two Oceans, also in South Africa, where competitors go round Cape Town. I would also love to run a marathon in a rhino suit."

Through his endeavours Ivory has raised thousands for Forces charity SSAFA, of which he has been Honorary Treasurer for more than 30 years.



MAD FER IT: Haywood, left, and Watson, above, at Nationals in Manchester  
PHOTOS: BILLY WRIGHT

## Tulsa beckons for BMX captain

ALL EYES are on America for BMXer Sgt Matt Haywood as he aims for a season-ending high at the Race of Champions and Grand National finals.

The USA rides come after a jam-packed season for the association, which saw Off Cdt Pete Watson do most of the heavy lifting.

Speaking to RAF News Sport, team captain Haywood said: "The American races – in November in Tulsa – will see us face the best

from across the USA. They will be a perfect close to the season."

A mixed opening in Rounds 1 and 2 of the National Series at the National Cycling Centre in Manchester saw Haywood crash out in the Vets Cruiser final, while Watson could not secure a finals spot.

With the team missing the next rounds, Watson then lost out on a podium finish with fourth and fifth in the 17-29 Cruiser class

in Cumbernauld, Glasgow, before crashing out in rounds seven and eight at Platt Fields, Manchester.

Third team member Cpl Pete Taylor missed out on a season end podium, with fifth in the British Championships Grand Vets class at Alvaston Park, Derby.

Haywood said: "We're always looking for new riders, race or freestyle. Message us on our Instagram – @RAFCABMXRacing – for details."

# Ice queen Burger gets ready to fry the opposition

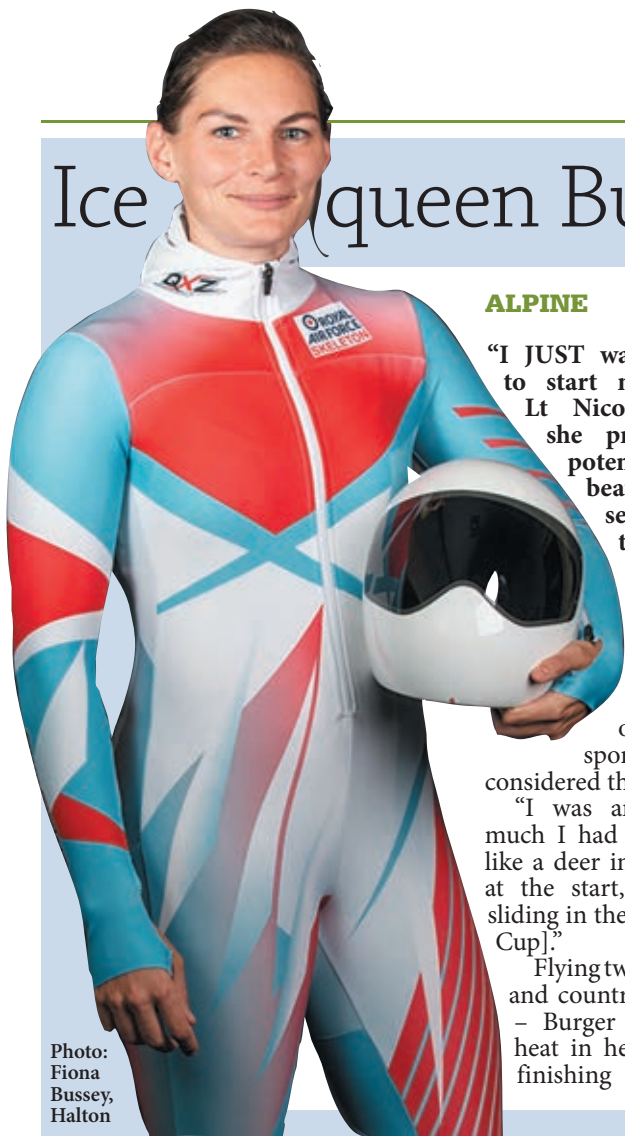


Photo: Fiona Bussey, Halton

## ALPINE

**“I JUST want the season to start now,”** said Flt Lt Nicole Burger as she prepares for a potential world-beating 24/25 season in the sport of skeleton.

She added: “It is an odd feeling for me, I feel like a novice after one year in the sport, but I am not considered that now.

“I was amazed at how much I had taken in. I felt like a deer in the headlights at the start, this year I’m sliding in the Worlds [World Cup].”

Flying two flags – Service and country, South Africa – Burger turned up the heat in her debut season finishing 51st to qualify

for World Cup races, with the possibility of testing herself in the World Championships at Lake Placid next March.

Not only did she achieve her success as a novice slider with only hours of ice time under her belt, she did it without a coach and missing out on six of the season’s races because of work commitments and lack of funding.

She said: “I am excited to get going. I have a coach now, so that will be different. I will be even busier than last year, with potentially up to 15 races.

“As with last year I will be missing four or five races, so, I will be chasing my tail, but now I know so much more.

“I ended the season dismantling my sled and rebuilding it on my own, I had no idea what I was doing at the start.

“At the Inters I was being asked advice from novice

sliders, it was such a great moment, what I knew was transferring back to the Service that helped get me started.”

Burger’s new coach is ex-Army slider and former GB trainer Mark Wood. Wood can boast Olympic gold success under his coaching belt and the duo have already worked together of a fashion, producing Burger’s highest Europe Cup race finish (10th) at Winterberg.

She will be also buddy up with Irish slider Eire Rowland for the season, with the pair sharing driving and travel costs – along with track and race feedback. Burger said: “As the only sliders from our respective countries, it’s great for both of us. For me the race experiences ahead are another exciting challenge.”

● See [nicoleburger.skeleton and Raf\\_skeleton\\_team for more about Nicole and the sport.](https://nicoleburger.skeletonandraf.skeletonteamfor.com)



BURGER: Progressing quickly in the sport

## FOOTBALL

# Wolves wonder Big Mac's joining the Elite with new status

## Dan's the man, thanks to RAF scheme

### Daniel Abrahams

**CORPORAL DAN McNamara is hoping his Wolves Women's football side will have extra bite this season after he was awarded Elite Athlete Status (EAS).**

McNamara, whose team narrowly missed out on a Women's FA Cup quarter-final berth, told *RAF News* he was expecting another tough season ahead, but felt his EAS will help him focus on pushing the team to greater success.

He said: “It is getting tough within tier three, big injections of money for some clubs makes it harder and harder each year.

“We managed to keep a lot of our players despite a lot of interest over the summer, which is good. It shows the



players have committed to Wolves and what we are doing here.

“We want to be competitive. The aim is to break into the Women's Championship, be that this year or next.

“The finances of other clubs means we have to do things differently as we do not have the fortunes some in the league have, but we want to compete in all four of the competitions available to us and I can promise it will be an exciting season full of ups and downs.”

He added: “The elite status award is a massive opportunity for me. I am grateful to the Air Force for awarding it to me.

“It will allow me to focus on what has been a

dream of mine for all of my life, to work full-time in football.”

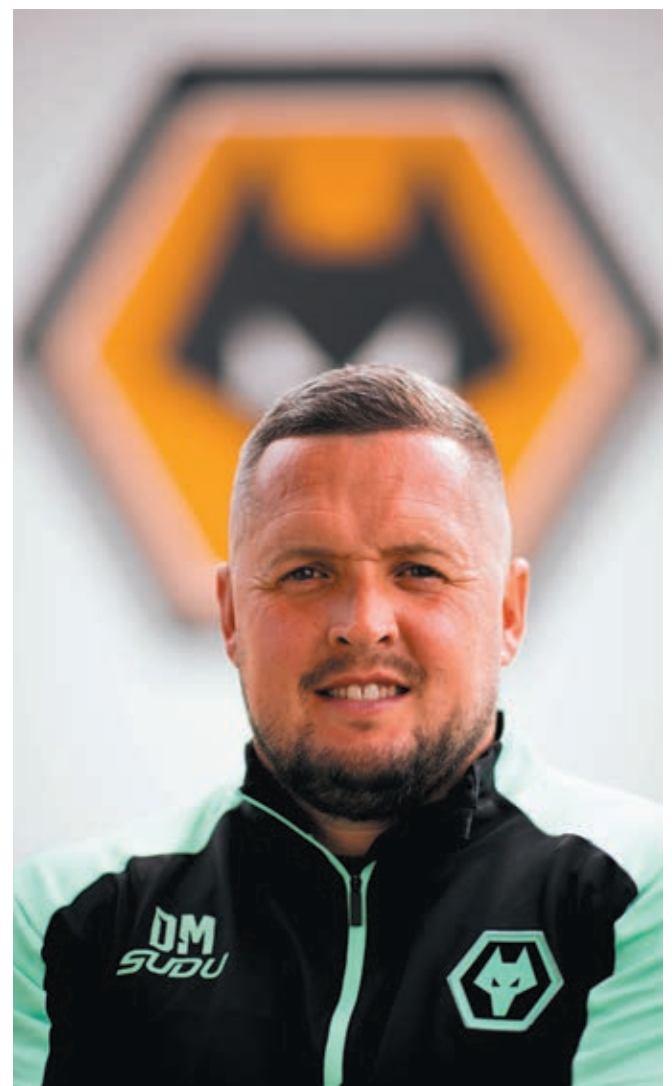
McNamara, who also works with the SRT team, has managed the women's tier three team for six years and guided them to promotion in 2020, before winning the Northern Premier Division in the 2021/22 season. There have also been two Birmingham Challenge Cups in successive campaigns.

He missed out on a place in the Championship after defeat in the play-off final to Southampton in May 2022.

He said: “I will always give back to the Service in everything I do and I will continue working with the SRT to support RAF football and bring back what I am learning on the outside.

“Personally, this is going to be a really exciting few years and I am looking forward to seeing where it takes me.”

● Follow Wolves Women on Instagram @wolveswomenfc.



BIG MAC: Cpl McNamara's relishing the challenge of new season ahead

# 5 pages of the best of RAF Sports action



See p27

## Ice queen Burger set to take on the world

# Inters tennis big-hitters gunning for Nato glory

## AIRCOM Games await

### TENNIS

#### Daniel Abrahams

RAF TENNIS captain Flt Lt Tom Elwick is looking to end the season on a high as he leads his team out for the Nato AIRCOM Games championship.

He wants to maintain the winning momentum after triumphing in the recent Inter-Services.

The team heads to Poznan, Poland to play against the hosts, Holland, Belgium and USAF in the AIRCOM event.

Speaking to *RAF News Sport*, Elwick said: "After a strong 2024 season seeing the team win the Inter-Service Development championships at RAF Halton and the Inter-Service as at Wimbledon, the aim is to continue with the positive momentum."

"With our squad consisting of 13 players from



both the ladies and mens squad, the aim is to finish the season on a high.

"The opportunity to represent not only the Royal Air Force but the United Kingdom against other members of Nato is a great honour and something that each of the players has worked extremely hard to be selected for."

The RAF have not won the trophy since 2018, when they hosted the event at Halton.

The last Games, in 2022, saw the RAFLTA team finish second to a strong Polish Air Force outfit featuring a player who is now on the professional circuit.

The four-day event – which sees approximately 20 personnel attend from each nation, including representatives from the sports association, physios and coaches – kicks off the 2024 tournament, which also features volleyball, in October, in the Netherlands



**ROARSOME:** RAF players celebrate at Wimbledon and, inset left, Flt Lt Tom Elwick is presented with the Inter-Services trophy

and then cross country, in November, in Belgium.

Wg Cdr Liz Price, RAF Tennis chair, said: "The AIRCOM events are a unique and special opportunity for athletes to come together to celebrate our close

international relationships, both on and off the court.

"RAF Tennis sees this biennial event as a highlight of the sporting programme, competing at the highest level with like-minded people who share a passion for tennis

and sport in the Armed Forces.

"The opportunity to travel to Poland to compete in these games and meet friends, new and old, makes a very important and valuable professional contribution."

# Pollard guides Ellis to gold but it's heartbreak for Robbo

### PARALYMPICS

THERE WAS Parisian paralympic joy and pain as the medal dreams of veterans AS1 Luke Pollard and Cpl Stu Robinson were made and lost just minutes apart.

Pollard, guide to para-triathlete world champion Dave Ellis, roared with delight as the pair crossed the Pont Alexandre III finish line in first place, while Robinson's GB wheelchair rugby team lost the

bronze medal game against Australia in the nearby Champs-de-Mars Arena.

The game ended in agony for the former RAF gunner, who narrowly missed out on equalising in the final minute as the ball slipped through his fingers on the goal line, with the score poised at 46-48.

He then made the final GB score as world number one Australia won 50-48.

Robinson, who led from the front all the way through the tournament scoring multiple tries as GB stormed through its group, said: "The games for me were a mixed bag. We had high hopes after three wins from



**WINNERS:** Pollard, left, and Ellis  
PHOTO: VSP Images/British Triathlon

three in the pool stages.

"We came up a little short in the semis (losing 43-50 to America) and bronze medal match, but I'm proud to be on

this journey with this team and excited to see where the future will take us."

The pairing of Ellis and Pollard began the PTVI (visually impaired) triathlon classification with a two minute 41 second handicap. That was quickly swallowed up, with them taking the lead 15 minutes into the race to pass Antoine Perel.

From there the pair took control as they transitioned from bike to run, finally ending the race in a time of 58 minutes and 41 seconds, ahead of Thibaut Rigaudeau, with Perel third.

Pollard, who saw the pairs'

chance of gold at the last Olympics in Tokyo vanish when their bike chain broke, said:

"Seeing Dave get the gold he so richly deserves was the best feeling of my life.

"I know how much sacrifice and dedication he puts into this sport. It's something to behold and it makes me want to be a better athlete and person.

"It was the toughest race we've done, with the hard river swim and cobbles battered the legs come the run.

"Along with the amazing atmosphere and emotions, I was definitely feeling it the next day."



**STU ROBINSON**

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# R'n'R

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## **Afrodance – QDance company on tour**

● See  
pages  
4-5



**Win Tiger Moth  
adventure story ● p5**

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**Exhibitions**  
Collecting Modernism  
Charleston in Lewes

# Home is where the art is

**A** NEW exhibition featuring works by Picasso, Graham Sutherland and key Bloomsbury figures including Roger Fry, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant opens at Charleston in Lewes, Sussex, on September 25.

*Collecting Modernism: Pablo Picasso to Winifred Nicholson* runs until March 2, 2025 at the famous modernist home and studio in the Sussex countryside of Bell and Grant.

Charleston was a gathering point for some of the twentieth century's most radical artists, writers and thinkers, known collectively as the Bloomsbury group.

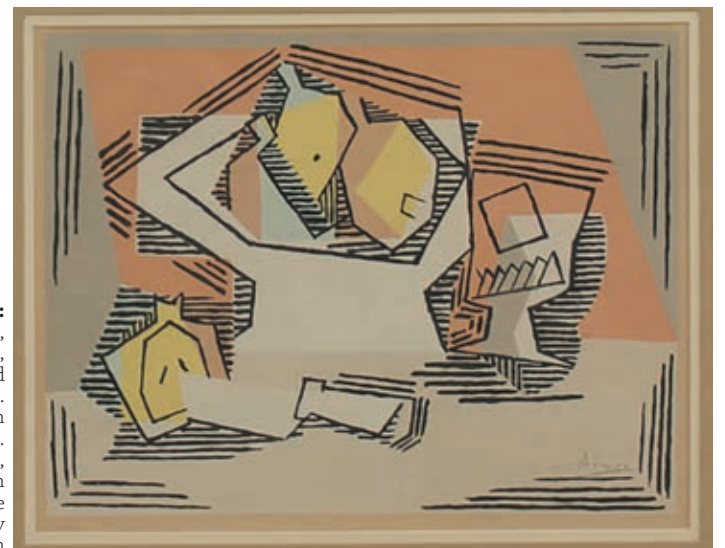
The exhibition tells the extraordinary story of how a modern art collection came into being through more than 80 paintings passed on between three homes: those of Eddy Sackville-West, Eardley Knollys and Mattei Radev.

A spokesperson for the new Charleston in Lewes exhibition space explained: "Known as 'The Radev Collection', it is one of the biggest and most significant private collections of modern art in the UK, offering an intimate perspective on the development of modernism across Europe.

"It offers a rare chance to get



**LEFT:** Winifred Nicholson, *Boat on the Far River*, oil on canvas, Bridgeman Images, The Radev Collection



**RIGHT:** Pablo Picasso, untitled, coloured lithograph. © Succession Picasso. DACS, London 2024, The Radev Collection

up close with work by some of the most influential artists of the 20th century, including Picasso, Winifred Nicholson, Modigliani, Sutherland Fry, Bell and Duncan Grant.

"The show also tells the story of the extraordinary lives of the collectors and custodians who grew and cherished this collection over many years. Each work was lived with, loved and passed down in an unusual lineage of love and friendship."

Nathaniel Hepburn,

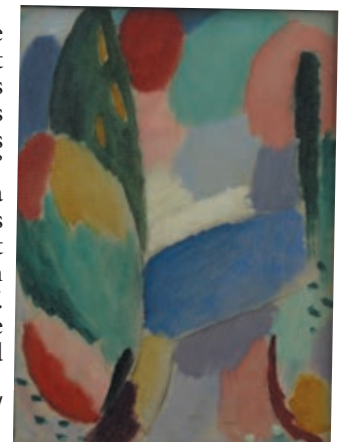
Director of Charleston, said: "We are thrilled to bring such a renowned collection to our new cultural centre, Charleston in Lewes. Generously loaned from The Radev Collection, visitors will be able to see rare works from icons of modernism.

"The 20th century saw the home become more than just a functional living space, it was a private haven to enjoy creative freedom and be one's authentic self, as well as a reflection of the inhabitants' identity and

life experiences. Nowhere is this more relevant than at Charleston, and in the homes where what we now know as 'The Radev Collection' was begun, expanded and enjoyed."

Running alongside will be a showcase of multimedia works by renowned British artist Grayson Perry, in 'Grayson Perry: A Temple for Everyone'. Both exhibitions explore the intersection between home and art added the spokesperson.

● **Go to:** [charleston.org.uk/whats-on](http://charleston.org.uk/whats-on) for further details.



**ABSTRACT:** Alexei Jawlensky, *Blue Street*, 1916, oil on canvas. The Radev Collection



**Music**  
Last Leaf on the Tree  
Willie Nelson



## Willie Nelson's new album at age of 91

**L**EGENDARY SINGER-songwriter Willie Nelson's new studio album *Last Leaf On The Tree* will be released on November 1.

It is the country music veteran's 76th studio album, his 153rd album overall, and is the first time the 91-year-old (*inset*) has worked with his son Micah in the producer's chair, though the two frequently perform together onstage.

Micah, 34, has also been part of family-oriented albums such as 2017's *Willie and the Boys* (along with Micah's older brother Lukas Nelson) and 2021's *The Willie Nelson Family*.

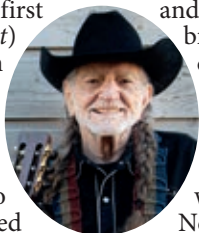
Micah said he took a 'sculptor's approach' to producing the album. "It's an approach that I really love and have used a lot over the years - just throwing the clay down and stepping back, then maybe adding a little more, and

then maybe shaving down here, and kind of building the tracks that way," he explained.

He handled most of the instrumental work himself, playing more than two dozen instruments, from guitars and pianos to "sticks and branches, logs and dead leaves." He also illustrated the album cover and helped create animation for the *Last Leaf* video alongside his wife, Alexandra Dascalu Nelson.

Micah also helped identify tracks by younger generations of songwriters that suited his father's voice and personality. Among them are *Do You Realize?* - one of psychedelic indie band Flaming Lips' best-known songs - and *Lost Cause*, a standout from Beck's landmark 2002 album *Sea Change*.

● **Go to:** [willienelson.com](http://willienelson.com) for more information.



**Film Review**  
Firebrand (15)  
In cinemas now

# The King's word is Law

**D**ON'T WORRY if you have forgotten the rhyme that recounts the fate of King Henry VIII's wives, *Firebrand* tells the story of Catherine Parr, Henry's sixth and final wife, but told crucially from her perspective.

Based on Elizabeth Fremantle's novel *The Queen's Gambit*, the film opens with a disclaimer noting that liberties were taken to fill historical gaps - this will become more pronounced as the narrative unfolds.

When we join the story, Catherine (Alicia Vikander) is acting Regent while Henry (Jude Law) is in France. She is portrayed as headstrong, intelligent and respected by her council. A maternal figure with no children of her own, she cares for Henry's offspring, including narrator Elizabeth (Junia Rees), and heir to the throne Edward (Patrick Buckley). She also appears to harbour a fondness for Thomas Seymour (Sam Riley), the boy's uncle.

Catherine juggles these relationships along with her more clandestine friendship with Protestant revolutionary Anne Askew (Erin Doherty). Their secret meetings reveal her sympathy for the cause, advocating for the Christian faith to be taught in English instead of Latin. This rebellious act borders on heresy - a threat to both the Church and the King.

When Henry - played by Jude Law with some serious efforts to ugly him up and make him convincingly hefty and grotesque - returns home he becomes increasingly paranoid. His festering leg



**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Catherine (Vikander) & King (Law)

wound serves as a ticking time bomb as he seeks to root out heretics and uncover his wife's potential deceit.

Whilst Vikander plays the part well, powerful but subdued, the film comes to life when Law is onscreen, monstrous and frenzied, his large performance dominates the screen.

As the tension mounts and the historical revisionism deepens, *Firebrand* embraces its bold, radical spirit.

**Three out of five roundels** ●●●  
*Review by Sam Cooney*

# R'n'R



## Books

### Cheltenham Literary Festival

October 4-13

**SHAKE-ING THINGS UP:** Dame Judi Dench will discuss her new book *Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays The Rent* with actor and director Brenda O'Hea



# Cheltenham Literature Festival celebrates 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary with more than 100 free events

**T**HE WORLD'S longest-running literature festival celebrates its 75th anniversary this year with a star-studded line-up.

The Times and Sunday Times Cheltenham Literature Festival runs from October 4 to 13 and features a packed programme of more than 400 events including new voices in fiction and poetry alongside literary greats, political debates fresh from the party conference season, a family and schools programme and performances scattered across the vibrant spa town.

There is also a commitment to widening accessibility to the arts.

A spokesperson said: "At least 25 per cent of the programme is free, including drop-in family events."

The festival was established in 1949 and is considered one of the most prestigious worldwide. The spokesperson added: "The festival looks to celebrate its 75th anniversary by exploring some of the most famous works of literature published since 1949, examining how societal and technological advances have evolved and changed, and asking



**CELIA IMRIE:** Novel about WWII women

what discoveries have been made – and what the next 75 years might look like.

In the current affairs strand 75 years of Nato are examined and a special anniversary event, Future 75, will bring together thought leaders and creatives for an evening of short talks on a range of topics, as speakers set

out their vision for the future."

This year's fiction programme includes leading names *Demon Copperhead* author Barbara Kingsolver, Paula Hawkins, author of *The Girl On The Train*, on her new novel *The Blue Hour* and bestseller Jodi Picoult on her latest title *By Any Other Name*.

In the current affairs programme political scientist Sten Rynning and journalist Peter Apps discuss the history of Nato and look ahead to what might be the most dangerous feature it has ever faced.

Dame Judi Dench discusses her book *Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays The Rent* with actor and director Brendan O'Hea, and Celia Imrie (star of the forthcoming film *The Thursday Murder Club*) talks about her new novel *Meet Me at Rainbow Corner* – inspired by the resilience and camaraderie of women during World War II.

And bestselling author Ben Macintyre tells the extraordinary story of the 1980 siege on the Iranian Embassy in London, the subject of his new book *The Siege*.

● **Go to:** [cheltenhamfestivals.org](http://cheltenhamfestivals.org) to view the full programme.



## Theatre

### Re: Incarnation

UK tour

# The life and z



**N**IGERIA'S GROUND-BREAKING The QDance Company, led by choreographer Qudus Onikeku, makes its UK debut this autumn with *Re: Incarnation*, an explosive mix of dance, colour, sound, visuals and energy.

The show opened earlier this month at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall before embarking on a UK tour, visiting venues including Milton Keynes Theatre (September 21), Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury (September 24-25), Brighton Dome (October 1-2), Nottingham Playhouse (October 5), The Lowry, Salford Quays (October 8-9), Theatre Royal Newcastle (October 15-16) and Edinburgh's Festival Theatre (October 18-19).

Onikeku (pictured right) created *Re:Incarnation* in 2021 as an ode to the riches of Nigerian culture. His dance, music, fashion and visual art fusion mixes ancient Yoruba philosophy with the rhythm and spirit of the country's hyper-vibrant youth culture – and puts the city of Lagos on stage in a way that's never been done before.

The show is the



result of six years of continuous movement research around body memory with young dancers in Nigeria. Its 10 dancers are strikingly individual, each brings their own personal journey to the stage and together they embody Yoruba's ever-turning cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

Onikeku said: "I am excited to introduce The QDance Company to audiences across the UK. The key thing for me is to show what dance can be in contemporary Africa, it feels like we are starting something. This is Afrodance, young Africans talking. *Re: Incarnation* is about bringing Lagos on stage in a way that's never been seen before – its groove, its history and what the city means to so many people."

The show also features two live musicians on drums and electric guitar, often joined by trance-like vocals from the dancers.

The score is a vibrant blend of hip-hop, contemporary music and Afrobeats, itself a fusion of genres including juju music, jazz, soul and highlife.

Nigeria has the





largest youth population in the world – with around 70 per cent under 30 and 42 per cent under 15. It's been predicted that by 2099 Lagos will be the biggest city on earth.

"Lagos is very much captured in the show," said Qudus, whose work has been showcased across the globe. "The energy of Lagos, the vibrancy, the youthfulness, the craziness, the madness, the beauty, the ugliness – are what I was really inspired by."

The show features vivid masks and costumes and colour-soaked lighting that combine with the music and dance to create an unforgettable spectacle. For Qudus, all these elements are fundamental.

"I try as much as I can to involve the artists, whether it's the costumier, the lighting designer, the sound artist, the dancers or the scenographer, in a collective creative process where we also highlight the authenticity and originality of each individual," he added.

In *Re:Incarnation* Qudus explores how young people fuse life today with influences from the past. He is connecting that spirit of youth with the ancient philosophy of the Yoruba people, who have

lived in Nigeria for centuries.

"The notion of dying and rebirth, and dying and rebirth again, in a continuous circle of reincarnation, is more or less what I wanted to capture in the show. The young dancers, despite their seeming disconnection with ancient philosophies, are in fact reproducing the codes and forms of the past without being conscious of it," he explained.

"The Yoruba don't believe in life after death, they believe in different cycles of life, different types of incarnations. An experience doesn't need to be in one lifetime, it could be in cycles of lifetimes. We try to remember that when we do a performance."

He trained in France but returned to Lagos in 2014, establishing the social enterprise The QDance Center and building a reputation for new and exciting work. *Re:Incarnation* was premiered in France in 2021 and has toured extensively since then.

"One amazing thing about this show is that whether we are in Europe or America or Africa, people connect to it in a very interesting way," he said.

● **Go to individual venues' websites for ticket details.**

*Interview by Diane Parkes*



**Books**

**Solo2Darwin**  
grubstreet.co.uk

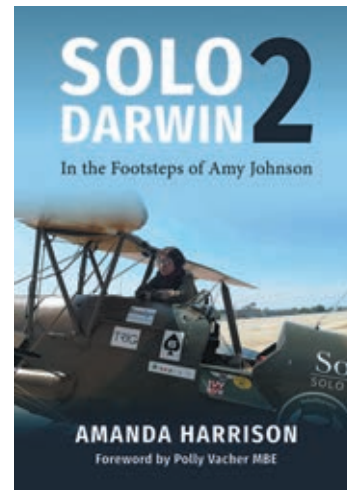
# Solo to Darwin in Tiger Moth

**W**HILE SHE was learning to fly, commercial pilot Amanda Harrison discovered a beautiful vintage Tiger Moth. After researching the pioneers who flew this fragile aircraft, a spark was ignited and Amanda dreamed of emulating their adventures.

On May 11, 2019, she made that dream a reality, taking off from Biggin Hill with the aim of flying to Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory, in 20 days – just as her idol Amy Johnson had done in 1930.

Eschewing the convenience of modern aero technology, Amanda chose to experience the authentic adventure and flew solo in a Tiger Moth.

Her book *Solo2Darwin* (grubstreet.co.uk) documents one woman's exhilarating journey across the world.



engine failures, Amanda's route had plenty of highs, lows and drama. She also experienced the difficulties of solo-flying a biplane and having to navigate dangerous regions across the world. What makes Amanda's expedition even more remarkable is that this was all undertaken while she was recovering from cancer.

We have copies of this inspiring book to win. For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

**In which year did Amy Johnson fly to Darwin?**

Email your answer, marked Solo2Darwin 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 4.

Faced with adversity, navigating through tortuous mountain ranges covered in cloud, across seas, dodging thunderstorms and surviving



**Theatre Chicago**  
UK tour

## Killer tunes & moves in Chicago



**S**TAGE and soap star Faye Brookes (*Coronation Street's* Kate Connor) returns to the role of Roxie Hart in the latest UK tour of multi-award-winning musical *Chicago*.

Opening at Milton Keynes Theatre with performances from October 12-19, the 35-date tour culminates at Glasgow's Kings Theatre on August 23, 2025.

The cast also features TV personality Brenda Edwards as prison warden Mama Morton and *Strictly Come Dancing* favourite Kevin Clifton as lawyer Billy Flynn.

Set amidst the razzle-dazzle decadence of the 1920s, *Chicago* is the story of Roxie Hart (famously played by Renee Zellweger in the 2002 film version),

a housewife and nightclub dancer who murders her on-the-side lover after he threatens to walk out on her.

Desperate to avoid conviction, she dupes the public, the media and her rival cellmate, Velma Kelly, by hiring Chicago's slickest criminal lawyer to transform her malicious crime into a barrage of sensational headlines.

Created by John Kander, Fred Ebb and legendary choreographer Bob Fosse, *Chicago's* score includes the show-stopping songs *Razzle Dazzle*, *Cell Block Tango*, and *All That Jazz*. Since it opened in New York in 1996, *Chicago* has played in 38 countries worldwide

● **Go to: [chicagothemusical.com](http://chicagothemusical.com) for a full list of tour dates.**



## Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk)

### Death

**HARVEY** Sylvia SAC (W), Supply Squadron, RAF Leconfield, 1962-64. Married to Sqn Ldr (Ted) Stickley (Eng. Ret'd) and mother of twins Helen and Lorraine and son Philip. Passed away peacefully August 9, North Devon Hospital, Barnstaple, after a period of poor health, aged 81 years.

### In Memoriam

**PATTON** Michael Charles (Mick/Mike). Sergeant Air Loadmaster with 7 Squadron (S.F Flight) at Odiham. Died September 22, 1996, aged 29, near Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire – during a night tasking.

“His laughter was better than birds in the morning, His smile turned the edge of the wind...” In loving memory of a very dear and much-missed son, brother, husband and father.



Sgt Michael Patton

### Seeking

**MY** father-in-law, Cecil Goodier, was a flight engineer serving with 61 Sqn Bomber Command in 1944/45. Cecil's pilot was Ray Lushey, who sadly passed away a few years ago. The crew's usual aircraft was Lancaster III-QR-E, serial number RF160. The crew flew over 30 sorties in this aircraft. I am seeking to make contact with any relatives of this crew,

who may have photographs or interesting information. Other crew member names were: Harry Parsons, W/op; Len Brewin, Bomb aimer; John Brewster, Navigator; Robert Humphries, Air gunner; Bill Fox, Rear gunner. Cecil was attached to 1654 Heavy Conversion Unit earlier in 1944, flying Stirlings. Any information at all on this unit would be gratefully received, especially photos. I am keen to establish the serial numbers of Stirlings in service with this unit during January to August 1944 and in which Cecil may have flown. Please email: [mikeyb03@gmail.com](mailto:mikeyb03@gmail.com), or phone: 07593 034028.

### Reunions

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

**THE** RAF Masirah and RAF Salalah Veterans Association Reunion Gala Dinner is to be held on Saturday, October 12 at the Hatton Court Hotel, Upton St Leonards, Gloucester GL4 8DE. All members are welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the dinner, please contact Alan Teasdale on: [joalteas@btinternet.com](mailto:joalteas@btinternet.com). If you would like to join the Association as a member, please visit our website: [omanrafveterans.org](http://omanrafveterans.org) for further information.

**ANNUAL** Reunion: The Association of RAF Women Officers Annual (ARAFWO) Reunion Lunch will take place on Saturday, October 12 at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, from 11am. Our speaker will be Dorit Oliver-Wolff. Dorit survived the Holocaust, is an accomplished public speaker and is dedicated to educating others about the consequences of the Holocaust. For tickets to attend this inspiring reunion, please contact Fiona Morgan Frise by email:

[ffrise713@gmail.com](mailto:ffrise713@gmail.com). For further information about ARAFWO, please visit [arafwo.co.uk](http://arafwo.co.uk).

**124** Entry Apprentices – RAF Cosford, 1974-77. 50th anniversary reunion. Members will be meeting at The Limes Country Lodge Hotel, Earlswood, Solihull on Saturday, October 12 with an informal buffet luncheon to follow on in the evening of Sunday, October 13. For further information please email: [nigelcooper1@live.co.uk](mailto:nigelcooper1@live.co.uk) or call/WhatsApp on: 07986 200137. We have currently managed to locate and contact more than 30 of our 49 original members so a great time is assured.

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

### Memorial service

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

### Associations

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

**30** Sqn RAF Association. Visit the Sqn October 5. Contact Phil Jones at: [30sqnassnsec@gmail.com](mailto:30sqnassnsec@gmail.com).

### How to use our service

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

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**PERFORMANCE:** The Band of the RAF College



## RAFA concert at cathedral

THE MAGNIFICENT Chester Cathedral is the stunning venue for a charity concert on September 27 featuring music inspired by the Battle of Britain performed by the Band of the Royal Air Force College.

*Music In the Air*, in support of the RAF Association, will see the Band perform military marches, film scores and music to pay tribute to those who took part in the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940, both in the air and on the ground.

Under the direction of the RAF's Principal Director of Music, Wg Cdr Richard Murray, and special guest Grammy-nominated conductor and RAFA ambassador Anthony Inglis, guests will enjoy music composed to depict the feats of bravery that

took place during the Battle, where the RAF defended the skies above the UK against the German Luftwaffe.

Wg Cdr Murray said: “It is an absolute honour to pay our respects through musical tributes to the bravery and sacrifice of the thousands of men and women, in the air and on the ground, who gave their lives for this country in the noble pursuit of freedom.”

Anthony, a RAFA ambassador since 2022, said: “For the first time, I shall be conducting one of the RAF's great bands. Nine of my ancestors marched and listened to these bands, so in a very small way I am following them and filling a gap, absent with my generation.”

● Go to: [rafa.org.uk](http://rafa.org.uk) to book tickets.

## Quirky Christmas gift

IT'S NEVER too early to start shopping for that ideal gift for the aviator, sailor, soldier – but not commando – in your life.

And Armed Forces charity SSFA's new Christmas catalogue could have just what you're looking for – camouflage boxer shorts, *pictured*.

The catalogue includes mugs, T-shirts and other goodies, plus the charity's ever-popular 'military robins' cards starring the festive favourite in the peaked caps of the three Services.

The charming trio also appears on a mug, tea towel and a placemat. And robins feature on a range of T-shirts for all three Services, available in men's, ladies' and children's sizes.

There's a range of 2025 calendars to choose from including one exclusive to

SSAFA by renowned artist Sherin Aminossehe, of historic castles and stately homes of Britain. Appropriately for the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, May features a pen and ink sketch of Buckingham Palace on VE Day, May 8, 1945.

● Go to: [ssafastore.org.uk/categories/Christmas](http://ssafastore.org.uk/categories/Christmas) to see the full range of gifts.





**Your Announcements**

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# Battle of Britain vet is 105

A WAAF veteran believed to be one of the last remaining women to have served during the Battle of Britain has celebrated her 105th birthday.

Kay Thomas was a plotter in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, where she played a part in the key battle which foiled Hitler's British invasion plans.

She is now a resident at the Royal Star & Garter veterans care home in High Wycombe, where she was joined by her family for her special birthday party last month.

Kay is living with dementia, but still has memories of her wartime service, working as a plotter, 60 feet below ground in 'The Bunker' at RAF Uxbridge. The plotter's role was a vital one, tracking enemy planes as they made their way to Britain on bombing raids. Receiving information from radar stations and the Royal Observer Corps, they used a pusher on the end of a long rod to display the positions of the aircraft on a map drawn



**BIRTHDAY GIRL:** Kay with family on her special day; inset, as a young WAAF, near left

on a huge table. Senior officers would observe from the gallery above.

Kay's daughter Sue said: "Mum remembers on several occasions Winston Churchill looking down on them, his face wreathed in cigar smoke."

Born in Southsea on August 30, 1919, less than a year after World War One ended, Kay met husband Bill shortly after WWII, and they soon married.

The couple lived in Ickenham,

Hillingdon, and went on to have three children. Kay is now a great-grandmother.

Sue added: "Mum is almost certainly one of the last remaining survivors of those Servicemen and women who fought for our country in WWII, and one of the last remaining women to have served during the Battle of Britain. She had a wonderful party and enjoyed celebrating her birthday with her family and with other residents."

# Leeming visit's sweet for Queen



**ROYAL TOUR:** The Queen viewed battlefield kit during her trip

QUEEN CAMILLA was presented with a pot of RAF honey produced by a colony of bees at RAF Leeming, during her trip to the North Yorkshire station.

The Royal Honorary Air Commodore was given a briefing on some of the station's frontline kit before visiting the station allotments, home to a rare breed of chickens and the station's hives.

Her Majesty was introduced to members of 11 Squadron QEAF, who train RAF and

Qatari pilots on Hawk jets, before meeting personnel with 90 Signals Unit, specialists in communications and cyber defence, and CUAS, who deliver training on Counter Uncrewed Air Systems.

She toured a wellness centre set up by station families where they are growing their own produce. Her Majesty also chatted with children from the Station's RAFA Kidz nursery and Leeming RAF Community Primary School, who live on the base.

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# R'n'R



## Prize Crossword No. 369

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

### Across

- 1. Mark second vehicle (4)
- 8. Loathsome snowman (10)
- 9. Churchill's favourite RAF plane? (8)
- 10. Manner in which beginner will scream (4)
- 12. Green light placed in grass entirely (6)
- 14. Up in the air Winnie almost sinister (6)
- 15. **And 13 Down.** RAF worker badly frightening eel (6,8)
- 17. Tree bear swallows first person (6)
- 18. Song for that man, by the sound of it (4)
- 19. Backlash against Royal Engineers' behaviour (8)
- 21. Maybe Rives rests with RAF personnel (10)
- 22. Princess of Wales upset in wood (4)

### Down

- 2. Straightforward game of hopscotch? (6,4)
- 3. Sprinted round first person in shower (4)
- 4. Importance Maureen intended, we hear (6)
- 5. Gadgets destroyed Australian MiGs (6)
- 6. Training area in Wales where Scotsman ends each circle (4,4)
- 7. Give William the news (4)
- 11. Chinook locates pan outside Kampuchea, pan outside Kampala (5,5)
- 13. **See 15 Across**
- 16. Do well without completing the river (6)
- 17. Peterhead to foster worship (6)
- 18. During the romance, great warrior appears (4)
- 20. Exam taken by some pilots (4)

Name: .....

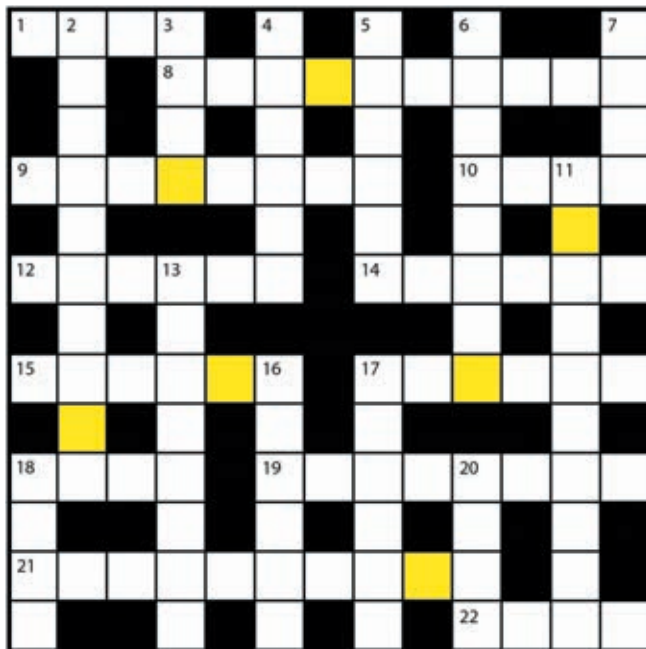
Address: .....

.....

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RAF aircraft: ..... Crossword No. 369

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by October 4, 2024. Prize Crossword No. 367 winner is: Dave Allison, Lincoln.



### Solution to Crossword No. 368

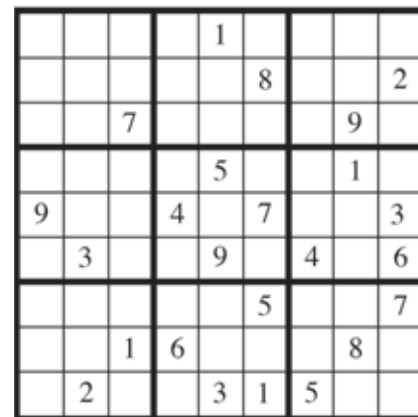
**Across** – 1. Scar 8. Abominable 9. Blenheim 10. Howl 12. Assent 14. Spooky 15. Flight 17. Poplar 18. Hymn 19. Reaction 21. Reservists 22. Teak  
**Down** – 2. Child's Play 3. Rain 4. Moment 5. Gizmos 6. Mach Loop 7. Tell 11. Wokka Wokka 13. Engineer 16. Thrive 17. Praise 18. Hero 20. Test  
 RAF aircraft – *Phantom*



## Prize Su Doku No. 379

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 4, 2024. The winner of Su Doku No: 377 is: Edward Dillon, Wirral.



### Solution to Su Doku No. 378

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



**DVDs**  
**A Greyhound of a Girl (U)**  
 On Blu-ray, DVD and download now: Dazzler Media



# Animation based on book by Roddy Doyle of *The Commitments*

**S**TARRING THE voice talents of BAFTA winner Sharon Horgan (*Bad Sisters*, *Catastrophe*), Oscar nominee Brendan Gleeson (*Paddington 2*, *The Banshees of Inisherin*), Charlene McKenna (*Vienna Blood*, *Bloodlands*) and Rosaleen Linehan (*The Personal History of David Copperfield*, *The Matchmaker*), this heartwarming new animated film is based on the acclaimed book by award-winning author Roddy Doyle (*The Commitments*).



Four generations of women take a life-affirming journey together. When unexpected news leads them to embark on a trip, they gain the opportunity to reconnect and learn more about each other. Eleven-year-old Mary has a passion for cooking and dreams

of becoming a great chef. Her grandmother, Emer, with whom she has a very special bond, encourages her to make this dream come true. But every path has its obstacles, and facing them turns into quite an adventure.

You could win a copy of the film on DVD. For your chance to own one, all you have to do is answer this question correctly:

**Who wrote the book on which the film *A Greyhound of a Girl* is based?**

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



**Film Review**  
**Black Dog (12A)**  
 In cinemas now (Trinity CineAsia)

# The Gobi dog-catcher

**T**AKING PLACE in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics 2008, ex-convict Lang returns to his bleak hometown bordering the Gobi Desert and bags himself a job catching stray dogs.

Achieving local fame before getting locked up, Lang (Eddie Peng), a musician charged with manslaughter, finds that the victim's gangster uncle and his cronies are out for vengeance.

His alcoholic father spends most of his time working at the zoo: a desolate gravel patch in the mountains with a few animals in featureless cages: a Manchurian tiger and grey wolf amongst them, as well as a bungee jump, which is as crude as you can imagine.

The town itself is bare and barren, overrun by wild dogs. A clean-up team are assembled to combat the problem and help local businesses before the Olympic Games, and so Lang finds himself reluctantly roped in.

Lang barely says anything for the duration of the film. He is a lone wanderer, and perhaps this



**LANG:** Dog's life in barren town

is why he feels sympathy for the titular black dog, the governing bodies' prime concern on account of being rabid. Chased around and locked up, the affinity only grows stronger, as Lang and the dog form an odd sort of kinship.

*Black Dog* has a slow pace that is occasionally shaken up by some bizarre occurrence or moment of violence. A travelling circus will provide some distraction along the way, perhaps another symbol

of detachment and isolation. But the heart of the story lies in the relationship between our taciturn drifter and his canine companion.

The film's slow pace and stark visuals may not suit everyone, but *Black Dog* offers a blackly comic and strangely endearing look at loneliness and unexpected connections.

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