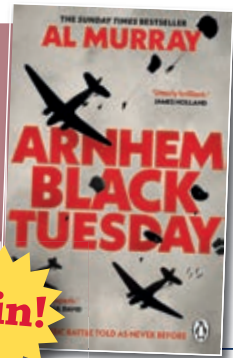


**The Forces' favourite paper**

**The man behind Richard Burton**  
● See R'n'R page 3



**A fresh look at Arnhem**  
● See R'n'R page 5

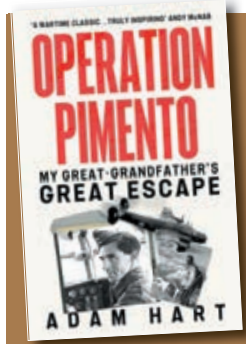


**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, June 27, 2025  
Edition No. 1611

**Only 99p**

# RAF News



**My great-grandfather's Great Escape – French WWII mission miracle**



See pages 14-15

**Volleyball**  
**Mixed team Crown win**



● See page 23

**Hockey**  
**Rebekah's award joy**

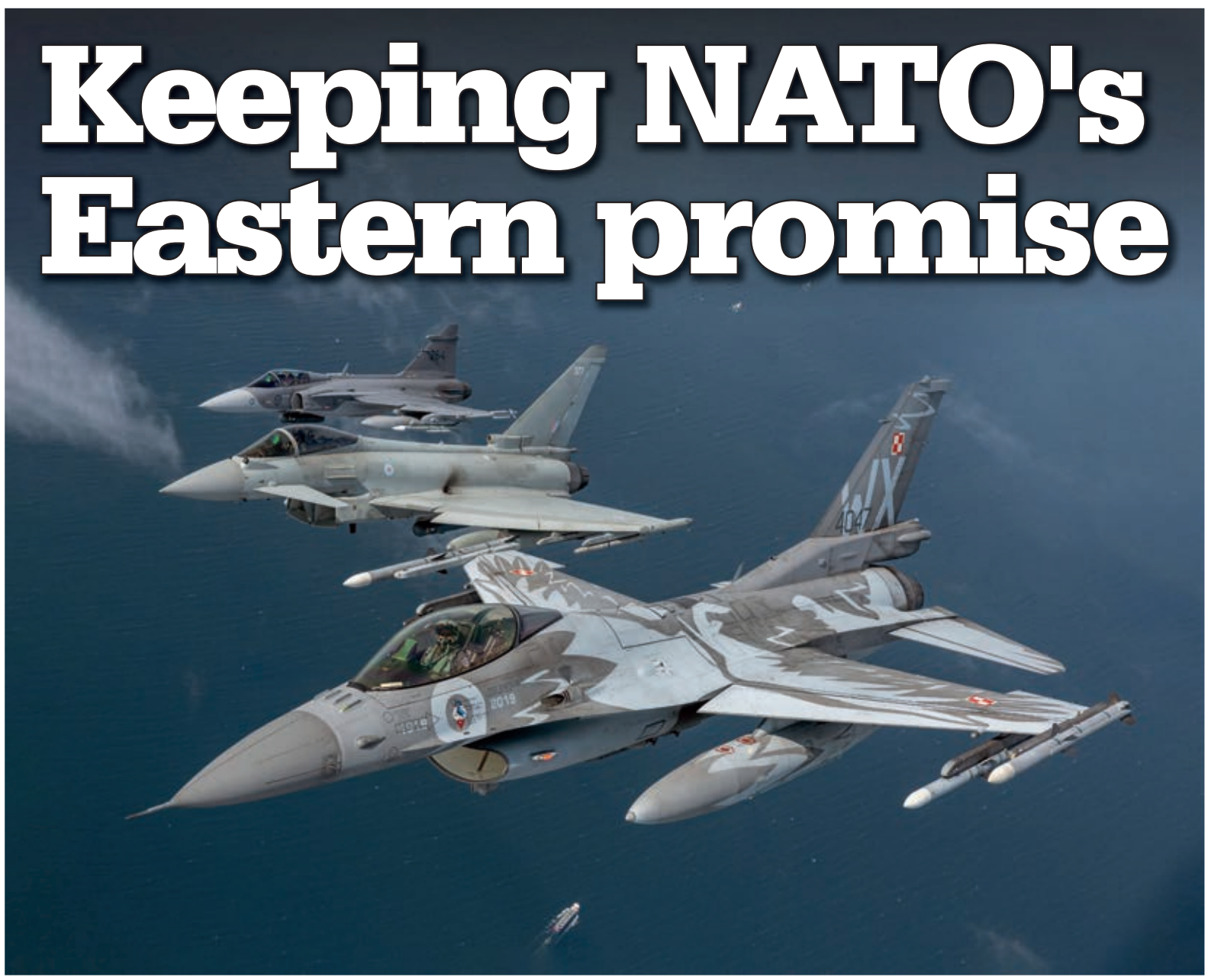


● See page p25

**Ice Hockey**  
**Twice as nice at I.S.**



● See page p28



## Keeping NATO's Eastern promise

### Staff Reporter

UK TYPHOONS took to the skies over Eastern Europe alongside Polish F-16s and Swedish Gripens as Russia continues to test

Nato defences across the region.

The frontline fighter jets launched combat drills from the 22 Tactical Airbase in Malbork, where the Royal Air Force is guarding Baltic

airspace as part of Nato's enhanced air policing mission to secure its borders and counter the growing threat from Putin.

● See page 3



# BiteSize

“WO Flora is truly inspirational,”

Gp Capt's verdict on Balbir Singh as he bows out of RAF service after 45 years  
See p5



“It seems like yesterday I was launching to space,”

British astronaut Tim Peake  
See R'n'R page 8



“I played in New Zealand and it was a Service highlight,”

Rugby league Captain Cpl Nathan Barker  
See p26



## NATO eyes Protector

### Staff Reporter

DEFENCE LEADERS got a glimpse of the future of warfare during a visit to a Lincolnshire airbase.

Nato Secretary General Mark Rutte was greeted by a flypast by two of Coningsby's 3 Sqn Typhoon jets when he arrived at Waddington.

The Nato chief was there to see the new Protector RPAS – the first certified to fly in UK airspace – which has just entered service.

He met ISTAR personnel who operate the aircraft, which can fly at heights up to 40,000 feet and for 30 hours.

Mr Rutte, who spoke about the system's future strategic role in the Alliance and in protecting the UK, was accompanied by Defence Secretary John Healey.

There are currently four of the aircraft in the UK with six being used for test and evaluation in the USA. All deliveries will be completed this year.



**FRONTLINE CAPABILITY:**  
NATO chief Mark Rutte with Waddington team during visit

### This Week In History



#### 1969 V-Force retires

THE V-FORCE Quick Reaction Alert is terminated as Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent passes to Royal Navy Polaris submarines.



#### 1940 Malta fighters

THE FIRST Hurricanes arrive in Malta to reinforce the island's Fighter Flight after transiting through France and Tunisia.



#### 1991 Hercules record

A 70 Sqn Hercules flying from Ascension sets an endurance record of 28 hours and 4 minutes during a supply drop to a Rapier battery near Port Stanley.

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



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**  
**RAF News**

#### RAF News

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

**Editor:** Simon Williams

**Email:** editor@rafnews.co.uk

**Features Editor:** Tracey Allen

**Email:** tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

**News Editor:** Simon Mander

**Sport:** sports@rafnews.co.uk

#### All advertising:

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

#### Subscriptions and distribution:

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



## Simon Mander

UK TYPHOONS have scrambled SIX times from their Polish base in as many days to intercept a total of 15 Russian aircraft.

The jets were first launched in response to an An-30 Soviet-era aerial photography platform – known by its Nato code name Clank – leaving Kaliningrad.

The Eurofighters then shadowed an Ilyushin Il-20M spy plane Coot-A during the same sortie.

An EAW pilot said: “This marked my first operational scramble, and while the adrenaline was high, training took over the moment we launched. Every decision, every movement was second nature thanks to the preparation we’ve undergone.”

“Intercepting two aircraft in one mission was an intense and eye-opening experience; it reinforced the reality of our role and gave me a new level of respect for the demands of QRA.”

Two armed Sukhoi Su-24M Fencer-D supersonic, all-weather tactical bombers were then identified by Typhoons.

Tasked to escort each aircraft, one of the Russian aircraft then made low passes over the United States Navy Ship William McLean.

Typhoons then shadowed an Il-20M Coot-A and An-30 Clank for the second time in 48 hours before taking off again in response to another Coot leaving Kaliningrad.

The British jets then met a Luftwaffe A400M Atlas air-to-air refuelling tanker and intercepted another An-30 Clank.

Re-tasked to escort a Russian subhunter Tupolev Tu-142 or Bear-F, along with a pair of armed Sukhoi Su-27s, the would-be interlopers were followed and handed over to another pair of Nato aircraft.

An EAW pilot said: “This was an extremely busy scramble.

# 6 QRA scrambles in just 6 days



## 15 Russian aircraft are intercepted

**ESCORTED AWAY:** RAF Typhoon from Malbork Air Base meets prowling Russian AN-30 Clank

PHOTO: CPL JAKE HOBBS (RAF)

Over the past few weeks, we have become accustomed to intercepting one aircraft and then retasked to intercept a second. But intercepting a third aircraft

in the same sortie is a first for me.”

Nato then scrambled Typhoons to shadow an An-30 Clank transiting Allied air space.

Then jets took off for the sixth time in six days in response to a pair of Su-24 Fencer aircraft and an Il-20 Coot-A.

RAF personnel are currently

deployed at Malbork Air Base on Operation Chessman and are under the command of 140 EAW alongside Nato’s newest member, Sweden.

## Surf's up



AIR FORCE families in the South West beat the heat by taking to the water during Newquay Adventure Day.

More than 30 personnel and their relatives based at St Mawgan took the plunge for the tradition, now in its eighth year.

Delivered free as part of

the centre’s long-standing partnership with the Cornish airbase, it offered a break from busy service life.

RAF St Mawgan’s Community Information Officer Justin Churchill said: “It is important as it brings families together in an increasingly digital world.”

## Strike Group personnel pulling together

**FORCES TEAMS** onboard HMS Prince of Wales were roped into a fitness challenge as the Carrier Strike Group heads to the Pacific on Operation Highmast.

The UK’s largest maritime operation for decades involves more than 4,500 personnel, including 600 RAF air crew and technicians, and involves high-level air combat exercises alongside Allies in the Mediterranean and Middle East en route to the western Pacific rim.

Two Lightning squadrons are preparing to take part in an Australian-led multinational exercise involving the US as the Carrier Strike Group begins operations in the Indo-Pacific.







# READY FOR CIVVY STREET?

**You've grafted.  
You've pushed yourself.  
You've got the job done.**

**But stepping  
into civvy life?  
Not everyone's  
got a plan for it.**

**HELP for  
HEROES**

**Help for Heroes is here for  
anyone who's worn the uniform**  
and your family, whatever challenges you might face.

**[helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help](https://helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help)**



 **SCAN ME**



# 1st Class delivery

## Simon Mander

INTREPID BIKERS are to emulate a wartime despatch rider journey across Britain to raise £10,000 for the RAF Association.

The 14-strong team will depart from Bletchley Park and ride 580 miles to RAF Lossiemouth in a trip dubbed Op Mercury after the Roman God of messages and travellers.

Taking centre stage is a genuine WWII Matchless G3L War Department Despatch Rider bike delivered to Allied Forces Middle East in 1941 and still going today.

Organiser Flt Lt Terry Jones said: "To make things just a little more challenging, the team are limiting themselves to roads that existed in 1941 – in other words, terrible ones – and will take three days for the journey."

"Bletchley Park was chosen because it was there that intercepted radio messages were decrypted before the resulting intelligence was carried by despatch riders to headquarters around the country."

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, is entrusting the team with a sealed message to the station commander at RAF Lossiemouth.

The joint military and civilian group of riders are backed by two medics in a

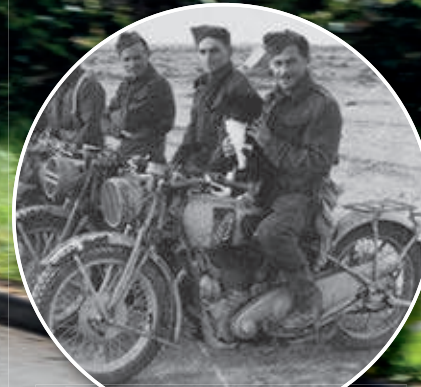
support van. Flt Lt Jones said: "Some of the riders are a long way north of 50 years old, so that might be a good bit of planning!"

The Bletchley Park Trust has granted permission for the team to depart through the wartime gate which is normally closed

to the public, making it possible for them to follow an authentic route.

And the Earl and Countess of Mansfield have agreed to host the riders just before they tackle what may be their biggest challenge, the Old Military Road through the Cairngorms.

## 580-mile WWII despatch mission to present CAS's charity message



**DESERT EXPRESS:** Matchless G3L motorcycles were designed to tackle extreme desert conditions and used by Allied forces in North Africa in 1941

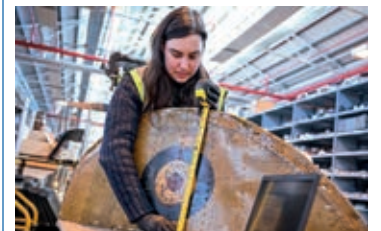
## Bulletin



## Wheel deal

WYTON PERSONNEL are hitting the road in a new nine-seat minibus after scooping community support funds from Forces charities.

The station's Community Support team netted a grant from the Nuffield Trust and Army's Lived Experience Fund to buy the vehicle.



## Museum moves on

THE RAF Museum is to display more than 50,000 historic artefacts for the first time at a new purpose-built facility in the Midlands.

Curators estimate that less than just one per cent of the collection is currently exhibited, while the rest is held in storage at MOD Stafford.

Thousands of items including aircraft, ejector seats, uniforms, medals and memorabilia will be shipped to the new collections hub at the Museum's Midlands site, which will be opened to the public.

Museum chiefs have launched a fundraising campaign to help cover the cost of the move, dubbed the Crate Escape.

● Go to [rafmuseum.org](http://rafmuseum.org)



WG CDR Dave Savage has taken over command of Cranwell's Flying Camels, delivering aircrew frontline training on the Phenom multi-engine aircraft.

45 Sqn earned its moniker operating the Sopwith Camel biplane in 1916 over the

Western front and later across the Middle East during World War I and World War II.

Speaking after taking over from outgoing chief Wg Cdr Stu Lockyer, he said: "The squadron is in great shape thanks to the tireless drive and determination of our people."

# Balbir bows out after 45 years

## Simon Mander

A RECRUITER has become the first Sikh in the RAF to receive a third bar to his Long Service Good Conduct medal.

WO Balbir Singh Flora, born in Nairobi, Kenya and relocating to the United Kingdom in 1972, leaves after 45 years' service.

Enlisting in 1977, Mr Flora was posted to Gutersloh in Germany to supply the Harrier Force and helicopters.

He helped set up a system to keep the newly-introduced Tornado in spares before being posted as Corporal to Rheindahlen.

Mr Flora completed a Falklands tour at 751 Signals

Unit, Mt Alice, in 1989.

He deployed to Italian Air Force Base Gioia Del Colle in 1997 during the Kosovo crisis before his posting as a Sergeant to Coningsby.

Mr Flora volunteered to become a member of the Ethnic Minority Recruiting Team and was awarded an MBE in 2005 and promoted to Flight Sergeant.

During Operation Telic he was based at Royal Oman Air Force Base Seeb and was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal in 2008.

He retired from

regular service in July 2014, and was head hunted for the Specialist Engagement Team in 2017 when he re-enlisted as a full-time reserve Warrant Officer.

Married to Balbinder for 43 years, he has two children, two granddaughters and a newly-adopted grandson.

Cranwell Recruiter Gp Capt Gareth Taylor said "Warrant Officer Flora is truly inspirational, with his Service career defined by dedication, professionalism and trailblazing achievements."



**RETIREMENT:** WO Singh Flora






# Do you need some headspace?


We offer **FREE** memberships to the online mindfulness app Headspace, for RAF serving personnel and their partners.

- ✓ Improved mood, relaxation and sleep quality
- ✓ Focus on specific areas such as sport, health or happiness

Sign up today: [rafbf.org/headspace](https://rafbf.org/headspace)  
Or call: **0300 222 5703**



Scan  
me with  
your  
camera







## Radar is 'world beater'

**TYPHOONS ARE to be equipped with world-beating radar after the release of more than £204 million in government funding.**

The ECRS Mk2 system allows the jets to simultaneously detect, identify and track multiple targets in the air and on the ground.

The news comes after flight trials in February and ahead of a contract for full production later in 2025, with the radar due to go into service by the end of the decade.

It follows the Strategic Defence Review, which highlighted the importance of Typhoon upgrades.

ECRS Mk2 is being developed and manufactured by Leonardo in Edinburgh and Luton and integrated onto the aircraft by BAE Systems in Lancashire.

Leonardo director Mark Hamilton said: "UK industry is the first in Europe to offer a radar with embedded wideband Suppression of Enemy Air Defence electronic warfare capabilities. Development is running several years ahead of other international efforts."

The UK is planning to fit ECRS Mk2 to the Tranche 3 Typhoon and in service the radar will be the most advanced in the world.

# Typhoon tees up TT



**TYPHOON DISPLAY** star Flt Lt Nathan Shawyer is set to take to the Manx skies to launch this year's Classic TT motorbike showdown.

He will be showcasing the capability UK frontline combat jet in August as riders take to the legendary island circuit for the vintage section of the annual Manx Grand Prix – one of the motorcycle world's most iconic events.

It's the first time the event has been staged since being suspended following the outbreak of the Covid pandemic in 2019.

Organisers said: "The display will demonstrate the speed, power and agility of the RAF's frontline multi-role combat aircraft, the Eurofighter Typhoon FGR4."

# Some like it hot

## Italian pit stop tests 29 Sqn ground crew

**Simon Mander**

**TYPHOONS SHARED rapid refuelling tips with Italian allies during a recent Nato combat drill.**

Known as 'hot pitting', RAF Coningsby engineers showed Nato partners how to save seconds by refuelling a jet with the engines running.

Senior Engineering Officer Sqn Ldr John Mercer said: "The ability to hot refuel is one of the features of Typhoon that gives it a real operational edge."

"Like our version of an F1 pit stop, you keep the engines running, get the fuel in quickly and get the aircraft back in the skies on its next mission. It saves time and keeps all systems powered up."

It's a new capability for the Italian Air Force, which Coningsby's 3 (F) Sqn and 29 Sqn have helped them to adopt at Istrana and Grosseto air bases.

Aircraft Mechanical Technician AS1 Josh Dodsworth said: "The Italians got it right first time, they are great engineers. I'd have no problem with them looking after our aircraft."



**NATO PARTNERS:** Italy operates the Eurofighter alongside the UK, Germany and Spain

The air forces of Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom all use the Eurofighter but regulations mean engineers and technicians rarely work on one another's aircraft.

Sqn Ldr Dan Harrison-Jones said: "Ultimately, German, Italian, Spanish and UK colleagues will maintain and service Typhoons to the same standard, regardless of which Nato partner they belong to."



**FUELLING THE FIGHT:** Italian Air Force teams refuel a UK Typhoon during Nato 'hot pitting' training



**FAR EASTERN FRONT:** Aircrew supply troops over Burma in 1945

## VJ call-up

**THE NUMBER** of Forces veterans who served in WWII is set to fall from an estimated 8,000 to just 300 in the next decade, according to research by the Royal British Legion.

The charity released the figures as it calls for survivors of the Far East campaign to join national events to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Japan in August and the final end of the conflict.

RBL research draws on data from the 2021 England and Wales Census on veterans who had previously served in the Forces and would have been aged 18 or over in 1945, and ONS population estimates of those aged over 90.

RBL director Mark Atkinson said: "The 80th anniversary of VJ Day is likely to be one of the last opportunities as a nation to thank those veterans still with us today for their service and sacrifice."





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



## WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

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

Visit Our Website:  
[www.worcmedals.com](http://www.worcmedals.com)

+44(0)1527 835375  
[sales@worcmedals.com](mailto:sales@worcmedals.com)

124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ





# Protector joins frontline

## RPAS cleared to fly in UK skies boosts combat capability

**Simon Mander**

PROTECTOR HAS entered RAF service becoming the first Remotely Piloted Air System authorised to fly in UK airspace after flying from its Waddington base to Marham.

Further testing will be completed over the summer before the aircraft replaces Reaper later this year.

Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Rich Knighton, said: "I welcome our newest aircraft into service. I am delighted that the Protector has reached this significant and historic milestone on its journey to conducting operations."

When operational, the RPAS can be deployed globally

with minimal on-site support, making it highly versatile for various missions.

Flown from Waddington, it can operate at heights up to 40,000 feet and has an endurance of more than 30 hours.

The first ground control stations and simulators have been installed and the first Air Vehicle was delivered in 2023.

There are currently four of the aircraft in the UK with a further six being used for test and evaluation in the USA. All deliveries will be completed this year.

Protector will deliver a unique and long-endurance capability to UK Defence, specialising in intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance



as well as strike operations.

A spokesman added: "The Protector programme will deliver

a cutting-edge RPAS for the UK, replacing the current Reaper capability, and will be the first

remotely piloted aircraft of this type capable of flying in the UK in all classes of airspace.



## Coastal tribute

CREWS WHO protected Allied convoys have been remembered 80 years after their last patrol.

Coastal Command aircrew, who also escorted surrendering Nazi U-boats, were commemorated by a flypast from a Lossiemouth-based Poseidon (pictured) over Northern Ireland.

The route followed that taken by a Sunderland aircraft of 201 (Guernsey's Own) Sqn in June 1945, from the former RAF Castle Archdale, to mark the end of a campaign which cost thousands of Allied lives but was vital to keep Britain fighting.

Coastal Command crews flew more than one million hours, sinking 212 enemy U-boats

Air Force personnel visited the graveyard at Irvinestown, County Fermanagh, to honour the 82 airmen buried there – a fraction of the total number who failed to return or fell prey to Nazi U-boat guns.



**UP BEFORE THE BEAK:** Base support crew meet some of the Cotswold Wildlife Park's residents

## Brize team walk on the wild side

**Simon Mander**

BRIZE NORTON personnel got up to some monkey business during a recent outreach day at Cotswold Wildlife Park.

The Oxfordshire station's base support wing brought some military muscle to fixing up the vulture aviary and squirrel monkey enclosure, before pressure-washing the penguin pool and planting saplings in the arboretum.

The zoo's Natalie Horner said: "Development days like this are always a huge help for us. As a thank-you, the team then met some of our larger residents – the rhino and giraffe."

The popular Cotswold attraction has a long association with the military and helped nurse injured soldiers in WWII, when estate land was also considered for conversion to an airfield.

RAF visits date back to 2017 and now take place every three months. Sqn Ldr Danielle Burgess added: "Clearing out the zebra enclosure and creating a beached area for the South African birds aviary gave me a real sense of achievement."





## News



### FORMER SERVING?

#### DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN STILL PLAY THE SPORTS LOTTERY?

Only open to serving and former serving, the exclusive nature of our RAF charity lottery gives players a great chance of winning a cash prize. So why not show your support for as little as £1 a week and you could be a £10,000 jackpot winner!

Join today or increase your tickets at:

[www.rafcf.org.uk](http://www.rafcf.org.uk)



RAFCentralFund

BeGambleAware.org

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

Registered office: Hurricane Building | HQ Air Command | RAF High Wycombe | Bucks | HP14 4UE  
Principal office: RAF Central Fund Danesfield | New Lock Lane | Henley Road | Medmenham | SL7 2EY

# Falcons jump start summer



### Simon Mander

PARACHUTISTS FROM the RAF Falcons display team thrilled crowds with a spectacular jump into the main ring at the Royal Cornwall Show.

St Mawgan personnel attended the Wadebridge Showground event and won second prize for best non-agricultural trade stand.

Station commander Wg Cdr Helen Simpson said: "The Royal Cornwall Show



is a fantastic opportunity for personnel to connect with the local community in which they live and serve – whether that is engaging with schoolchildren, veterans or the general public.

"It is an opportunity to share what we do, why we do it and why our role for Defence matters."

The St Mawgan tent featured engineers, medics, survival equipment fitters and RAF Regiment gunners.

# Hebrides honours for lost Shackleton crew

### Simon Mander

MOURNERS VISITED a remote Scottish island to remember 10 Shackleton crew members who died in a crash 35 years ago.

The 8 Sqn aircraft, affectionately known as 'Dylan', with call sign Gambia 08, was part of a fleet nicknamed the 'Growlers' due to their distinctive engine noise. It came down on a hillside following a training exercise west of the Outer Hebrides on April 30, 1990.

The commemoration featured a flypast by the Airtask Group which included a veteran on the squadron at the time, a former coastguard rescuer and a member of the South Harris Community Council.

Organiser 8 Sqn Association secretary Lee Shearer said: "That so many people came to mark the occasion after 35 years underscores the enduring legacy and camaraderie that binds past and present members of the squadron to the local community."



A memorial service was held in the Free Church of Scotland in Leverburgh before wreaths were laid at the Seallam monument in the shadow of the crash site at Maodal hill.

The ceremony was attended by family members and serving personnel of 8 Sqn, from Lossiemouth.

After the wreaths had been laid, many people climbed the Maodal to lay a cross on the monument at the crash site on the top of the hill.



# Your pension is for life. Don't neglect it. Join us. Job done.

Your Armed Forces pension is one of the best in the public sector. But to make the most of it, you need to make the best choices at key points in your career. Your personal circumstances may change, influencing those choices, and you need to appreciate various ways in which you can influence the amount you receive when you leave. It's not surprising that the Forces Pensions Consultants at the Forces Pension Society dealt with almost 30,000 enquiries last year. The guidance our experts provide is personalised and access to the team is included in your membership fee.

Your pension is worth a great deal and it would be neglectful to ignore it. Joining the Forces Pension Society will also keep you in touch with changes to tax regimes, ensure you're fully informed about issues with potential retrospective impact (such as McCloud), and also deliver a range of valuable membership benefits at discounted prices.

## Independent, not-for-profit

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

## Visit: [forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/](https://forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/)

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just **£47**. When you join us, you will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual e-newsletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.

**IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF YOUR PENSION**

## Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL.  
T: 020 7820 9988 E: [memsec@forpen.co.uk](mailto:memsec@forpen.co.uk) [www.forcespensionsociety.org](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org)



IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND  
YOUR PENSION



# ROYAL AIR FORCE

## RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

# RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force



# Royal Air Force In Concert

**Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 11 July 2025

**Palace Theatre, Newark**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 19 September 2025

**Cast, Doncaster**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

3pm Sunday 21 September 2025

**Epsom Playhouse**

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

**Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln**

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7.30pm Friday 17 October 2025

 **ROYAL Music**  
**AIR FORCE** Charitable Trust

[www.rafmct.uk/concerts](http://www.rafmct.uk/concerts)





# Flypast salute for King



## Simon Mander

**AEROBATICS ACES from the Red Arrows chose the King's Birthday flypast to stage the first display using green biofuel anywhere in the world.**

And the world-famous event watched by a global audience saw the last flight by a Chinook – veteran of 40 years RAF service.

“Working with the smoke generation system is the most unique part of the job,” said RAFAT Senior Engineering Officer Sqn Ldr Andrew King.

“The vibrant vapour that we generate is what sets the team apart and so to be the first team in the world to move to a fully sustainable option is really exciting.”

A total of 29 aircraft from nine different air stations took to the skies over The Mall and Buckingham Palace to celebrate The King's Official Birthday as the royal family watched on the balcony.

The formation was led by four Chinooks from Odiham's 18 and 27 Sqns and included many aircraft which flew in the VE80 celebrations in May.

And it was one of the last

flights for MAcr Robert Ruffles after 9,000 hours with helicopters.

He said: “Being part of The King's Birthday Flypast after 40 years of service, especially on the 80th anniversary of VE Day, is an honour I'll carry with me for many years to come.”

A Lancaster from Coningsby's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight followed with Phenom trainers, A400M refuellers, C-17 transports, Typhoon and F-35 Lightning combat jets.

Mission Commander Typhoon pilot OC 12 Sqn, Wg Cdr Andrew Watson, said: “The planning for the whole event has been meticulous over many months.”

“The culmination is the spectacle that was seen by millions of people worldwide.”

The flypast is also thought to be the first time anywhere in the world that a national aerobatic squadron has switched to a Sustainable Aviation Fuel blend for propulsion.

And the Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil used has a chemical structure almost identical to the regular diesel which produces vapour trails.

**ROYAL THANKS:** HM King Charles and Queen Camilla are joined by the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children George, Charlotte and Louis on the Buckingham Palace balcony





Feature

In the footsteps of heroes

A maverick RAF pilot's wartime great escape across Europe has been retraced by his great-grandson Adam Hart in a new book just released. Here, the author (*pictured*) gives a taster of his airman relative's WWII story



**O**N 14 AUGUST 1943, a Halifax bomber roared down the runway of RAF Tempsford, the top-secret SOE airbase in rural Bedfordshire. Its mission – codenamed Operation Pimento – was to drop supplies to Resistance fighters deep in Occupied France. But, after flying perilously low over the drop zone, the aircraft's port engines died and moments later it slammed into a French village.

Six of seven of the crew were killed instantly and five civilians perished in the ensuing inferno.

"I remember it as if it was yesterday," an eyewitness recalled in the 1980s, "the terrible fire, the mangled wreck of the Halifax, the charred airmen on the ground. The air reeked of burning flesh for days."

One man survived the terrible crash, the pilot, Sqn Ldr Frank Griffiths. His survival is why you are reading this. I am his great-grandson.

#### Telephone wires

Frank survived because as the aircraft broke up, he was catapulted from his cockpit still attached to his seat into the night sky where, after travelling some distance, he collided with telephone wires which broke his fall and saved his life.

Growing up, I always knew of Frank's crash and the miracle which saved his life. I also knew a little of what happened next. I knew how, as he staggered away from the wreckage – semi-conscious and bleeding heavily – a 14-year-old French boy called Rene Fontaine approached him on a bike, folded him over his handlebars and pushed him to his mother's house.

I knew that after a few days on the run in France, he and

a 22-year-old woman called Collette pretended to be lovers, strolled to the Swiss border, and wriggled underneath the wire into neutral Switzerland.

Later, after Frank had re-entered France and travelled south to Toulouse, I knew he had hiked over the Pyrenees at night, dodging German patrols while under the influence of methamphetamines courtesy of RAF-issue 'fatigue tablets' he'd taken from his escape kit.

But what I didn't know was that in France to this day exists a whole list of people deeply wedded to my great-grandfather's escape story, because it was their ancestors who saved him and helped get him back to his family in Britain.

I discovered this in 2022 when, after winning a travel journalism bursary at university, I was lucky enough to retrace Frank's odyssey, all 1,200 miles of it from the crash site in the northern Alps to the Rock of Gibraltar.

At the crash site, near Annecy, I was able to meet Marie-Annick and Samuel Fontaine, the niece and great nephew of the 14-year-old boy on the bike. Despite being a total stranger and not speaking French, we talked for three hours and barely drew breath, let alone broke eye contact. I noticed that Samuel, a barrel-chested mechanic of about 30, often held his hand to his heart when he spoke of our ancestors and the events of August 14, 1943.

Later, I visited the local cemetery where Frank's crew were buried with loving care by the locals on August 17, 1943. I learned the village Frank had crashed into, despite losing five civilians and being half burned down by the ensuing fire, have held a commemoration service every August for Frank's crew.

# Op Pimento horror crash my great-g Frank hotfo of Occupie



FLYING HIGH:  
Frank in cockpit

The ceremony continues to this day and even now their sacrifice is remembered – celebrated even – for this ordinary French village believes they died trying to help them.

A few days into my journey, I met an 80-year-old woman called Josette. She'd been a baby when

her mother Mimi hid Frank in her house for three days in August 1943. When I walked into her flat and we first met, Josette clapped her hands to her face in a gasp, tears sliding down her cheeks. She told me Frank had held her in his arms when he visited and thought

of his own baby at home.

When I got home from retracing Frank's footsteps, it was these extraordinary encounters that made me write down my journey in full. They also inspired me to find out more about my great-grandfather – not just his escape,

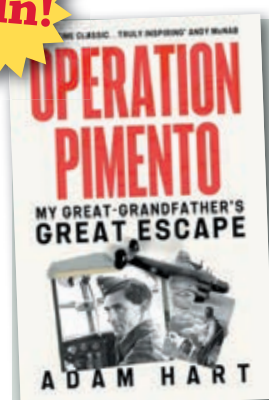


# to Halifax sh and how grandfather ooted it out ed France



**RUINS:** The smoking remains of Frank's Halifax when it crashed killing six crew and five villagers

in!



## Copies up for grabs

WE HAVE copies of *Operation Pimento* to give away. To be in with a chance of winning one, answer the following question:

**What was Frank Griffiths' wartime RAF rank?**

Email your answer, marked Op Pimento 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 July 13. Please include your FULL postal address.



**AIRMAN:** Frank before the war

Frank breezed through training (his instructors consistently ranked him 'above average' before noting 'prone to overconfidence' below) and joined 62 Sqn flying Blenheims. But in September 1939, the squadron was sent to Malaya, a blow to Frank and his friends who wanted to fight.

### Test pilot

After just six months, an old back injury of Frank's flared up and he was sent home to Britain for treatment. It worked. Frank was redeployed by the RAF as a test pilot. For two-and-a-half years he helped test experimental technology like airborne radar, driving the RAF forwards at the cutting-edge of aviation.

During this time Frank's true nature often shone through. Flying

over the Irish Sea, he would swoop underneath the Menai Bridge connecting Wales and Anglesey. Once, while flying a Swordfish with two WRENS onboard, Frank took them to see an Atlantic convoy steaming into Liverpool but was alarmed when a Junkers 88 tore past and flak started coming up.

Cocking the Swordfish's ancient gun, Frank fired a few rounds to see if it worked but was even more alarmed when it caught fire. He put the biplane into a screaming dive towards

Rhyl beach and thankfully extinguished the flames.

Later, while testing depth charges in a Walrus flying boat in tandem with a submarine, Frank was invited below deck for a boozy lunch on the sub. Emerging after a few hours, he was disturbed to find a strong wind had blown up and the previously flat sea was now a rolling swell.

### Bash the seas flat

Rather than be towed, Frank asked the submarine commander to steam his submarine into the wind and "bash the seas flat." He would then chase behind and use its slick to get airborne.

"I throttled after the sub," Frank remembered, "but could see only water cascading over the top of the fuselage and hissing through all the slits of the cockpit hatch. We roared over the crest of the first swell, where I could see the submarine unpleasantly close. At the bottom of the next swell the sub vanished, but at the top of the following one we were airborne!"

Even when Frank eventually arrived at RAF Tempsford as an operational pilot in 138 Sqn, similar tales ensued. One involved flying a Halifax to Snowdonia where, at the end of an isolated, steep-sided valley, Frank's aunt lived.



**RECORD:** Frank's logbook tells of tragedy

Onboard the Halifax was a mangle – a heavy Victorian contraption for squeezing water out of clothes – which the crew managed to parachute into auntie's garden before Frank tore over the lip of the valley. "Great!" said Frank to his crew shortly after, "now when we get home, enter this in your logbooks as an air test."

A few weeks later, Frank's Halifax was brought down over France, kickstarting his epic escape and, 80 years later, my quest to find out more about him. I may never have met my great-grandfather, but I'm incredibly proud to be his great-grandson.

● **Operation Pimento: My Great-Grandfather's Great Escape** is published in hardback by Hodder and Stoughton, priced £22. It is available from Waterstones, Amazon and all good bookshops, and is also available as an audiobook.

but also the rest of his war, RAF career and life. It didn't disappoint.

I learned Frank, born on the Wirral in May 1912, had lived an extraordinary life by the time he was shot down in France aged 31. After spending his childhood wandering the lanes of north Wales barefoot, and his schooldays sailing and adventuring, Frank had become a labourer in Liverpool, chiefly maintaining pubs. He lived on his boat in the Liverpool Docks, became pro-trade union, atheist and teetotal. This, despite spending four years at the elite Oxfordshire public school Radley. In the summers, he sailed around north Wales, sleeping rough on beaches and living off the land.

In 1936, after six years 'adrift', he joined the RAF. A natural pilot,





# STONYHURST

AGES 3-18

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



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



Scan the QR code  
to book your place



*Open Days* **in March & May**



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



[stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays](https://stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays)



# Boxer Judy's animal VC Punches above its weight

## Dickin Medal for saving lives of officers fetches £22k at auction

**S**INCE IT was introduced in 1943 by Maria Dickin, the founder of the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, the Dickin Medal – known as the 'animal VC' – has been awarded 75 times.

A medal awarded to heroic boxer dog Judy for thwarting a night-time terrorist attack on British officers in Palestine in 1946, and also for saving the life of her severely-wounded brother Punch, recently sold at auction for £22,000 – £8,000 above its expected price.

Christopher Mellor-Hill, Head of Client Liaison at Noonans, the auction house that handled the sale, said: "The sale of a Dickin

Medal is always hugely emotive and this story is no different, reflecting bravery and courage as well as emphasising the great British tradition of the almost human-like relationship that dogs have for us and others."

He added: "There is always strong interest in Dickin medals and the sale saw two bidders on the telephone battle it out. It was eventually purchased by a collector of fine gallantry medals in the US.

"Judy and Punch belonged to Lieutenant-Colonel A. H. K. Campbell, the Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Jerusalem Military Court, and Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. G.

Niven, the Adjutant General, who shared a house in a Jerusalem suburb.

"On the evening of August 5, 1946, at about 10.30pm, the two officers were relaxing at home with their two dogs. The front door was open. All was quiet and they had no suspicion that any danger was threatening them.

"Suddenly the dogs became aware of intruders within the compound. Racing into the darkness and barking furiously, they were met with a burst of sub-machine gun fire from one or possibly two terrorists within the barbed wire protected perimeter. Apparently, the intruders were stealthily creeping towards the house with the intent to kill the officers.

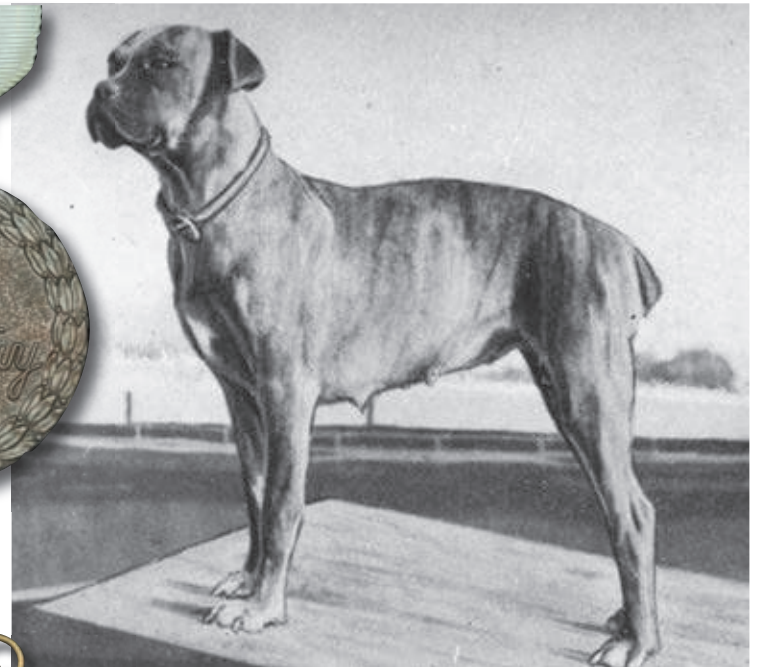
### Barking

"The barking and gunfire alerted the officers, thwarted the attack and thus saved their lives. Police and military parties arrived and, following a trail of blood, found the seriously wounded Punch. He had been hit four times and lay in a pool of blood, apparently dying. His sister, Judy, also covered in blood, stood protectively over him."

The Superintendent of the PDSA in Jerusalem was summoned; he made the dangerous journey travelling at night after curfew, with sentries ready to open fire at the slightest alarm.

Punch had two serious wounds to his throat, as well as further wounds to his skull and groin; he had lost about three-quarters of a pint of blood and had been laid on a blanket and made comfortable to die in peace, as he did not appear to have a chance of recovery.

The Superintendent treated Punch's wounds and gave him injections. To his joy, the dog responded to the treatment.



AWARD: Judy and her Dickin Medal (above) and dog tag PHOTOS: NOONANS

He then attended to Judy. She was covered in blood, but after cleaning her, the Superintendent discovered that she was unwounded except for a long bullet graze to her back. It was obvious that she must have covered Punch protectively with her body when he fell and, having stemmed the flow, was smothered with his blood.

The following morning nine expended rounds were found in the garden. Both dogs made a full recovery, and for their great gallantry in protecting their masters were both awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal.

Returning to the UK and, after quarantine, Punch and Judy were presented with their medals during the Royal Tournament at Olympia on June 14, 1947.

The Dickin Medal has been awarded to 32 pigeons, 38 dogs, four horses and one cat. Most (and all those awarded to pigeons) were granted for acts of bravery in WWII. More recently a number of awards have been made to Arms and Explosives Search Dogs of the Royal Army Veterinary Corps for their gallantry in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Military dog Kuno was awarded the animal VC in 2020 for charging through a hail of enemy bullets to take down a heavily-armed terrorist during a Special Forces raid in Afghanistan.

The four-year-old Belgian Malinois suffered serious injuries when he launched a lone wolf attack allowing SBS and Afghan Special Forces under machine gun fire to take the position during the daring UK-led operation in 2019.

He was given life-saving treatment by his handler and Forces medics on board a RAF Chinook as the team was airlifted to safety from the battlefield.

### Hertz

Other recipients of the animal award include RAF air dog Hertz (below), dubbed the 'Hero hound of Helmand', for saving countless UK and Allied lives at the heart of the conflict in Afghanistan, and RAF bomb detection dog Buster, who served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia.

Noonans set a new auction record of £140,000 for a Dickin Medal in October 2022, awarded to War Dog Rob, known as

'The Parachuting Dog' for his gallantry and outstanding service in WWII.



BUSTER: RAF bomb dog was awarded a Dickin Medal for his work in Iraq in 2003





# There when you need her



You're always  
ready but is your  
safety net?

In the armed forces you plan for every possibility. But what happens if illness or injury means you or your family need unexpected care?

Lady Grover is there when you need her, helping to cover care costs, so you can stay prepared whatever life throws your way. From just £60 per year.

Join today: [ladygrover.org.uk](https://ladygrover.org.uk)



**Lady Grover**

Armed Forces' Health Support



# Bellows fellows

## How generous ex-pats in South America helped to keep the RAF flying during Second World War

**A**N UNASSUMING item held by the Air Historical Branch (AHB) is a tiny relic of an incredible international phenomena which once raised more than £600,000 (in 1945 money) to buy aircraft during World War II.

The object is a set of bellows; a common household item found near every hearth in the country during the 1940s. Its only remarkable feature is an inscription reading '193 Sq 16-10-43'. Trace back through the unit records, and you will find that on October 16, 1943, at a rain-drenched ceremony at RAF Harrowbeer in Devon, 193 Sqn became the third RAF squadron to be officially linked to the Fellowship of the Bellows.

### Buenos Aires

The Bellows was the type of organisation that sounds almost too implausible to be true. It started in Buenos Aires in October 1940, among Argentina's British expatriate population. The idea was simple. It was a club where members raised money to help the RAF buy aircraft, similar in intent to 'Spitfire Funds' (as the RAF's most glamorous aircraft, Spitfires became the 'poster aircraft' for such movements) springing up across Britain and the free world. Where the Bellows differed was the way they operated. After a small joining fee, members pledged a certain monetary value per German aircraft shot down by the RAF, to

In the first of an occasional series, an Air Historical Branch expert highlights the fascinating story behind one of the intriguing objects in its collection



**GRATEFULLY RECEIVED:** An engine cover decorated with the Brazilian flag covers the nose of one of nine Hawker Typhoon IBs presented to the RAF by the Brazilian Fellowship of the Bellows and officially handed over to 193 Sqn by the Brazilian Ambassador, Dr JJ Moriz de Aragao, at Harrowbeer, Devon, on October 16, 1943

be paid at the end of each month. Members started as 'Whiffs', but on paying for their 1,000th aircraft shot down were promoted to 'Puffs'. At 2,500 they became 'Gusts', and then 'Hurricanes', and eventually received the full 'Order of the Bellows' at 10,000 aircraft. By allowing the member to pick

their own sum, the organisation was surprisingly egalitarian; the clerk paying a cent per aircraft rose through the ranks at the same rate as the magnate paying ten pesos. Later, more ranks had to be added, from 'Hedge Hopper' up to 'Knight Bomber'. The Fellowship was chaired by an elected official called 'The High Wind', while the Treasurer was 'The Receiver of Windfalls'. Female members were represented on the committee by 'The Windlass'.

As well as monthly payments, members held social and sporting events to raise funds and sold merchandise. Different ranks received enamelled badges, and members were to greet each other with the 'Bellows Salute', which involved spinning one finger upwards (which, it was said, was also an effective tactic against enemy parachutists).

Pamphlets gave guidance to each rank on how they should behave and contribute, and it's fair to say that they never met a pun or word-play that they did not enthusiastically embrace.

The scheme was tremendously successful. Fellowships sprang up all across South America, and then the Dominions. Each was independent with its own distinctive rules and structures, but followed the same basic pattern. Millions of pesos were raised, allowing numerous individual aircraft to be presented, as well as enough to allow 263 Sqn (appropriately flying Westland Whirlwinds, and then later Hawker Hurricanes and Typhoons) to become the first full 'Fellowship of the Bellows' squadron in April 1941. 137 Sqn, equipped with the same aircraft, followed in November 1942, and then 193 Sqn with Typhoons in October 1943. The last was 692 Sqn in November 1944, disappointingly breaking with the theme as they were equipped with de Havilland Mosquitos.



**A FAIR WIND:** The 193 Sqn bellows held by the Air Historical Branch



**FELLOWSHIP LITERATURE:** Pamphlets like the two above gave advice about how to progress up the group's pecking order by making more donations

For 193 Sqn, the news arrived on October 11, 1943 that their identity would be changing to reflect that nine of their new Hawker Typhoons would be nominally paid for by the Bellows. The Fellowship would be represented by the Brazilian Ambassador at a ceremony on October 16, while the unit diary recorded that the Ambassador would be "the Squadron's Godmother as from that date. Good show."

Unfortunately, when the day arrived, ironically high winds and torrential rain put a damper on the ceremony, with the proposed flypast becoming a taxi-past, and the speeches ending in everyone being "soaked through, underwear and all." Gifts were exchanged – cigarettes and cigars from the Brazilian Ambassador, while he received a squadron photo and model Typhoon in return. Sadly, the squadron diary does not mention AHB's unassuming set of bellows.

### Pesos

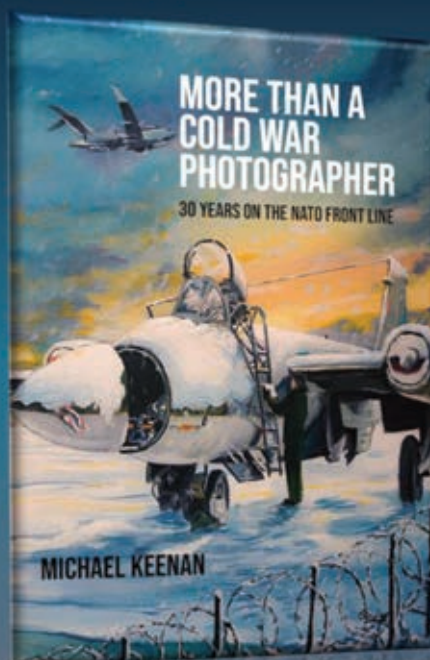
The silly humour and flippancy of the Fellowship (and the banality of AHB's bellows) belies a massive contribution to the RAF during, and after, the war. The global Bellows raised over 9.5m pesos – more than £33m in modern money – for the RAF, while half of the money raised in Brazil went to establishing their own air force. A small amount, about £1,000 in 1945 terms, was used to fund Argentine scholars studying aeronautical subjects in the UK, and around £50,000 (over £2.75m today) was donated to the RAF Benevolent Fund.



**VIP GUEST:** Brazilian Ambassador Dr JJ Moriz de Aragao inspecting members of 193 Sqn during the ceremony at Harrowbeer on October 16, 1943



## MORE THAN A COLD WAR PHOTOGRAPHER



NEW RELEASE BY  
VETERAN AUTHOR  
MICHAEL KEENAN

The story of a RAF trainee photographer looking for travel and something different in the way of work. Follow his 30-year career through aviation technology and radar and how he got from 5 Squadron Lightning fighters to 5 Sqn Sentinel Radar Reconnaissance.

Available to buy on Kindle  
and in Paperback at



ROYAL  
AIR FORCE



## RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

**RAF News**  
The official voice of the Royal Air Force



COMPETE IN THE FIRST EVER ESPORTS LEAGUE FOR THE  
UK ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY.

**£15,000+ IN PRIZES UP FOR GRABS**

**SIGN-UP DEADLINE: 22/07/2025**

FEATURING  
**ROCKET  
LEAGUE**

The BFBS Pro League is open to all members of the UK Armed Forces community. This includes Serving UK Armed Forces personnel, Reservists, Cadets, Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel, Veterans, MOD Civil Servants, direct family members of serving personnel and members of the bereaved community. All competitors must be 13 years or older.



**SIGN UP NOW**  
<https://bfbsesports.com>





# Perfect for the urban jungle



**JEEP IS THE American off-road brand, famed for the rugged capabilities it has bestowed on its vehicles since World War I. The Avenger is therefore a bit of a wild card because not only has Jeep built a city car here, it's built a damn good one.**

The Avenger is a brilliant piece of irony. An off-road icon, performing just as well in the city. Jungle, to jungle.

## Exterior

The Avenger is instantly recognisable as part of the Jeep family, with design cues taken from siblings, past and present. The tough plastic armour sits proud, defending the most exposed surfaces, with the paintwork safely recessed. The smart light clusters and signature grille give the nose real character, while the profile is exactly what you'd expect a Jeep to look like. Tell a five-year-old to draw a Jeep, this is what you'll get. That's not a bad thing, far from it. It has character, it has rugged style and it catches the eye.

## Interior

The Avenger has a solidly-built cabin and the word 'robust' springs to mind. Everything is in keeping with that utility Jeep narrative. It's not plush, or flash, it's just simple and hard-wearing. Granted, there is plenty of scratchy plastic on display, but muddy boots, or soggy dogs won't bother it too much.

The front seats are spacious and comfortable, finished in hard-wearing

upholstery. There's plenty of adjustment on the drivers seat and steering wheel, so getting comfortable is easy.

As with most Jeep vehicles, the wall of the footwell does impinge on your left leg's space a bit, but that's just a Jeep thing. Headroom is more than adequate for six-footers and rear legroom is good, for the class. You'll only get a child in the middle rear seat, but this is the baby of the Jeep family.

The infotainment system is driven by



a 10.25-inch colour touchscreen that is snappy to operate. It comes with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto as standard, but the inbuilt navigation is pretty effective too. The menu is relatively intuitive and you can set up shortcuts for most of the common functions.

There are physical climate control

buttons below. Bonus! We love simple controls.

All-in-all, it's a comfortable little wagon to get you around.

## On The Road

The Avenger is a nimble little soft-roader that bottles that rugged American 4x4 DNA and decants it down into a stylish city car package. Its small size and long-travel suspension make it the perfect companion around town, with dimensions that make it easy to judge the corners in tight spaces.

On long-distance runs, the Avenger is quite tolerable. The cruising manners are fine, with wind and road noise fairly well contained at speed. It's even fairly chuckable through the bends, thanks to well-tuned damping that limits body roll. It's not a particularly fun drive, but few SUVs are. It is, however, stable and neutral when you're threading it through fast bends, feeling more settled than its taller-bodied Jeep Renegade cousin.

Most Avengers are set up to be front-wheel-drive, on-road cars, with no intention of straying beyond a damp patch of grass, but all Avengers do come with Hill Descent Control, which uses the brakes to manage downhill speeds without the driver having to touch the pedals. Short overhangs and decent ground clearance also make it a versatile bit of kit – great for tackling speed bumps.

If you want to venture off-road, the 4xe is the most capable variant, with 10mm of

## Jeep Avenger

### Pros

- Jeep styling
- Good driving position
- Nimble and easy to place
- Competitively priced

### Cons

- Scratchy interior plastics
- Transmission tunnel encroaches on leg room
- The 2WD will tempt you to take it off-road (don't do it!)

### Verdict

THE AVENGER is a well-packaged, small SUV. There are more practical SUVs around, but the Avenger's cool styling, sensible price tag and smart interior give it a real edge. The e-Hybrid is a well-rounded option but if you plan on taking it properly off-road, the 4xe is your weapon of choice.

extra ground clearance. Water fording is 230mm, which is a good paddle, by most standards.

The fastest, smoothest, Avenger comes in the form of the 154bhp electric SUV version, which could be worth a nosey, if you get my drift.





ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT

EMPLOYER  
RECOGNITION  
SCHEME

GOLD AWARD

★ Trustpilot



4.7

Reviews 5,624

# WiFi for the RAF

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

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



Connect to **Wifinity PAYG**  
or visit [wifinity.co.uk/get-online](https://wifinity.co.uk/get-online)

**wifinity**



## GLIDING

# Challenge is par for cours

## Aviators hitting new heights in the Alps

**LOOSE FORMATION:** Gliders navigating the 'Parcours' mountain range in the Alps  
PHOTO: FLT LT LUKE DALE



### Staff Reporter

THE LATEST round of Exercise Parcours Combattants pushed the limits of three Service gliders during the two-week expedition at Aéroclub International, Sisteron, in the French Alps.

Calling it 'the most life-changing adventurous training activities I've ever done while in the RAF', was how AS1(T) Marco De Carvalho, described the experience, which saw gliders flying just 50 metres from mountainsides, among many other tests of skill and endurance.

The team of three junior RAF Coningsby gliders – Cpl Dave Todd, De Carvalho (Typhoon Maintenance Flight) and AS1 Alex Tilling (12 Sqn) – formed part of a 20-strong contingent who all started their gliding journeys through the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association's 'Go Solo' Scholarship.

Over 11 days, participants enjoyed gliding in the RAFGSA's fleet of high-performance



**BACK IN UK:** AS1 Alex Tilling

gliders, flying alongside jagged ridges, deep valleys, and snow-capped peaks at altitudes over 12,000ft and at speeds of more than 100mph.

For the Coningsby trio, the experience was as intense as it was rewarding.

"The views were just incredible. Some flights we'd be airborne for many hours.

"It was a test of mental

stamina to remain focused when flying close to the mountains," said Tilling.

The armourer added: "It's given me a greater appreciation for what our own fast jet pilots experience on a regular basis and it's definitely improved my own airmanship."

Todd, who aims to become a gliding instructor, said: "This trip wasn't just about flying, it was about teamwork, resilience, and building confidence in one of the most challenging flying environments you can imagine."

The RAFGSA runs the annual expedition to develop early-stage pilots and grow the future of gliding within the RAF. To participate, individuals must be solo-qualified – with clubs including Cranwell helping facilitate.

The Go Solo scholarship provides instruction, mentorship and £700 in grant support to help young Service personnel go solo.

● If you're a junior rank visit [rafgsa.org/solo](http://rafgsa.org/solo) to learn more about the scheme.

## VOLLEYBALL

## Trophy win Crowns it for volleyball assoc.

A FIRST mixed team Crown Trophy title in 51 years and a runners-up place in the men's Crown Services saw RAF volleyball end a hugely successful and historic season.

Association spokesperson Flt Lt Kira Down said: "With the Inter-Service and Crown Services campaigns behind us, the RAFVA is looking to build on this momentum."

"The skill, determination, and unity displayed across all RAF teams this season have laid a strong foundation for future success and inspired a new chapter in the history of RAF volleyball."

The run of glory kicked off at Aldershot Garrison where the RAF men's, women's and mixed teams each delivered determined performances to secure hard-fought second-place finishes across all categories at the annual Inter-Service championships.

Though the Army ultimately clinched the top spots, the RAF men's team took the game to the final quarter before succumbing 3-1, and the mixed team lost 3-0.

Following a training camp at RAF Cranwell and RAF Digby, the RAFVA travelled to Glasgow for the Crown



**WINNERS:** RAF mixed team

Services Tournament.

The men kicked things off with a win over the Royal Navy, before losing to the eventual winners, the Army, only to rally again with a victory over the Prison Service, before losing to the Police.

The battling display was highlighted with Flt Lt Alex Clare being awarded Most Valuable Player for his leadership and exceptional play.

Closing out the season, the Spitfires mixed team cut a swathe through Navy, Army, Police, and Prison Service, and then defeated the Army once again in straight sets in the final.

Down said: "This landmark performance is a real moment of historic pride for RAF volleyball."

## BOXING

## Ex-Navy man helping Axe

THE AXE will fall again in London later this month as Cpl Brad Axe returns to the ring for his fourth professional fight.

Axe, who will face Sam Kirk at York Hall, Bethnal Green, on June 28, returns to the capital after a six-month lay-off after suffering a facial injury in a build-up fight, following two wins and a defeat in his first three pro bouts.

He said: "It will be great to be back in there, under the lights."

"I have stayed on it training-wise since my injury, with a decent camp and decent sparring."

"I have been sparring with ex-Royal Navy boxer George Crotty."

He added: "The chin injury was a knockback, but everything happens for a reason."

"I will be looking for a knockout in this fight – I have not had that since I signed pro, so I will be setting things



**SPARRING:** Axe (left) and Crotty

up differently to look for the KO. I like that side of things, adjusting tactics to get a result."

"My fights are now six rounds, and that gives me time to work on things, to think about what I am doing."

"My aim is to get three fights in before the end of the year and be as active as I can; I feel brilliant, to be honest."

● Tickets for the Rise To Glory evening at York Hall, Bethnal Green are £60 standard and £100 ringside and are available from Axe. Contact him via his Instagram account: @brad\_axe\_

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





# **RAF News**

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

**RAF News**

The official voice of the Royal Air Force



## HOCKEY



**JET-PROPELLED:**  
Benson's Cpl  
James Havlin with  
Reds overhead

## Daniel Abrahams

A RED ARROWS-inspired 4-1 win saw RAF Benson come away as champions over Coningsby to end the largest Inter-Stations Hockey Tournament ever.

The two days boasted derby clashes and scores galore, but nobody was able to stop Benson storming to glory in the final as the world-famous display team flew overhead on a training flight.

Having seen his team fight back from 1-0 down at the break, Benson captain AS1 Sam Pedrick said: "It was like a switch flipped. We looked up, we saw the Red Arrows fly over and we remembered who we are. From that moment, we were flying too."

Cosford hosted the tournament with a bespoke blue-painted turf especially for the event, which involved more than 100 players in 14 teams.

Day one saw a tightly-contested 1-0 win for

## Arrows fuel tournament win

Halton over Cranwell, then an Oxfordshire derby between Brize Norton and Benson, which saw Flt Lt Andy Siemann and Sgt Ryan O'Loughlin deliver a tactical masterclass to see Benson home 2-0.

Last year's finalists Coningsby burst into the tournament, dismantling Wyton 6-1, while the big scores kept coming as Lossiemouth were thumped 9-0 by Benson.

Day two saw semi-finals between Halton and the formidable Benson, while reigning champions Brize Norton prepared to take on perennial finalists Coningsby.

Benson set the benchmark beating Halton 4-1 in a high-octane semi-final showdown, which saw Halton lead 1-0 before two goals in two second-half minutes set Benson up to

take the clash.

In the second semi-final, Coningsby secured their final berth with a dominant 3-0 victory over a strong Brize side. With the game sat at 2-0 to Coningsby, Brize pushed to level and were sunk by a clinical AS1 Joe Baker third.

AS1 Ryan Garton opened the scoring in the final for Coningsby, before Cpl James Holt levelled and Cpl David Brogden set the wheels in motion.

Holt completed his brace and Seimann's goal from a well-worked penalty corner sealed Benson's first title in nearly two decades.

● For more information on RAF Hockey follow the Instagram and X accounts @rafhockey.



**TROPHY:** Sgt Paul Hood with CAS

## CAS honour for awards

THE CREAM of RAF Hockey were at Cosford as the association held its annual end of season awards dinner.

RAF Hockey deputy chairman Wg Cdr Dave Oatley said: "The RAF Hockey community gathered for a memorable evening to celebrate a season marked by commitment, teamwork and sporting achievement."

Association President, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, presented the main awards.

The women's senior player of the season was AS1 Rebekah Douglas, with the men's senior title going to AS1 Sam Dew.

Masters player winners were Sgt Laura Hughes and Flt Lt Paul Dowers.

AS1 Luke Baker became the men's U25 player of the season, with Sgt Paul Hood winning the President's Trophy.

The evening also saw the presentation of eight U25 debut caps and seven senior debut caps.



**WOMEN'S TITLE:** AS1 Rebekah Douglas takes a shot against the Royal Navy during the 2025 Inter-Services

## MOTORSPORT

## Ling clings on to pole position

RAF KARTERS produced a series of top-five finishes in the second round of the Armed Forces Karting Championship at Clay Pigeon Raceway near Yeovil.

In the Premier Class, Flt Lt Jamie Ling came second after a tough battle with George Moret from the Royal Signals, while AS1(T) Joshua Milne was fourth, taking the Best Novice trophy to boot.

The result means Ling still leads the championship, on 85 points – 5 ahead of the chasing Moret – with Milne in fourth on 67.

In the endurance race, RAF Lossiemouth came second with Waddington in third after an heroic drive from AS1 Elliot Greenwood, who managed to climb up the field after a lap-one incident put them at the back of the pack.



**WADD A HERO:** AS1 Elliot Greenwood shone in endurance race

## An open invitation

SERVICE MOTORSPORT is gearing up for its second annual Open Day at Blyton Park Racetrack.

The day at Old Blyton Airfield, Gainsborough will include passenger experiences and engagement with the different RAF motorsports disciplines: motor racing, motorcycle road racing, rallying, enduro/moto-X, trials and karting – as well as marshals and officials representation as the association aims to increase membership.

Sqn Ldr Fraser Gillan said: "This is the second open day to date held at Blyton Park, where we previously engaged with hundreds of RAF personnel; showing them the benefits they can access through motorsport as part of Service life."

The open day will be from 9am to 5pm on August 14 at Blyton Park Racetrack, Old Blyton Airfield, Kirton Road, Gainsborough DN21 3PE.

● Follow RAF motorsport on Instagram @raf\_motorsport.



## Sport

### RUGBY LEAGUE

# League of nations

## RAF to host Kiwis and Australians in rugby spectacular

### Daniel Abrahams

"NOT EVERY sport gets this sort of opportunity, we do, so it's great," said RAF Rugby League head coach Sgt James Hutchinson speaking ahead of next month's Tri-Nation's tournament.

The biennial competition, in its second year, will see the RAF face their Australian and New Zealand counterparts, with game one kicking off in London between RAAF and RNZAF on July 13 at Wests Warriors RLFC in Acton, before moving on to Stanningley ARLFC in Leeds on July 19, where the RAF will face the runner-up of the opening clash, before the hosts face the winner of game one at Cranwell on July 24.

Entering the tournament as IS champions, Hutchinson (inset right) is aiming to win the competition and defend the IS title for an amazing hat-trick.

He said: "We have set that as a target, which would be great to complete. The lads are really

looking forward to it. From a coaching perspective, I know nothing about them so it's great to face new challenges.

"We are a footballing side, we have some exciting players, but we still have to set a good platform. These guys are the best of the best, so it'll be a great challenge.

"In the professional game the three big hitters are England, Australia and New Zealand, so any League fans who grew up watching these matches will surely have their interest piqued by our fixtures. The buzz around the build-up is great."

Having played in the tournament's opening event two years ago, RAFRL captain Cpl Nathan Barker said: "I played in the NZ tournament and it was probably the best three weeks of my time in the Service sport wise.



HAKA: New Zealand get pumped up for action in 2023 Tri-Nations

"To be announced as the Tri-Nations captain is extra special against these guys.

"We prepare for September, but this coming round feels like two IS championships in one year, this feels like a combination of representing your country as well as your Service. We are buzzing."

The opening tournament, hosted in New Zealand, saw the RAF lose 14-38 to

the RAAF, before drawing 32-32 with the hosts, who lost the final game 24-22 to the RAAF.

RNZAF head coach HC Matt Cole said: "There's a lot of excitement now we are getting close to travelling.

"I think this tournament is especially important for the development of the game in the RNZAF, but also provides a unique opportunity for the players to experience international sport and to represent our families and also New Zealand.

"It's been wet and cold in New Zealand the past few weeks, so we are looking forward to the British summer."

Cole, who hails from Wales and became involved with RNZAF rugby in 2003, played in two World Cups for the New Zealand Defence Forces. He said starting the series in London was a huge bonus for the travelling sides, adding that they've had great interest from former RNZAF personnel in the UK, including former players.

"In addition, the chiefs of the RNZAF and RAAF will be in attendance, making it a very special occasion – and one we are looking forward to," he said.

Australian head coach Cpl David Morgan said: "I was coaching the team two years ago and our goal this year is to retain the



RAAF: Aussie coach Cpl David Morgan

trophy, but also to improve on 2023 by winning all our matches.

"We have seen a big jump in player registrations since news of the tour has spread. All our staff are excited about ensuring we have a successful tour.

"It's massively important to us as there is a great rugby league rivalry between the nations, with bragging rights up for grabs.

"We've never had a regular international Air Force competition, so this is a rare opportunity for all involved and we are doing our best to ensure it continues for years to come and for our allied countries to come together and demonstrate shared characteristics such as courage, discipline and mateship, through the game of rugby league."

● All the matches will be screened live on Forces.net, plus keep up to date with all the Tri-Nations 2025 build-up and action at RAF Rugby League on Facebook and @rafrugbyleague on Instagram.

**BALL SKILLS:** RAF Captain Cpl Nathan Barker also played in the first tournament



THRILLER: RAF drew 32-32 with hosts New Zealand during the inaugural event in the Southern Hemisphere



## BMX

# Cruise missiles

## Haywood and Watson on target

### Daniel Abrahams

A THIRD and eighth-placed Cruiser final finish was the return for RAF BMX at rounds five and six of the British Cycling, Lloyds Bank BMX National Series.

Plat Fields, Manchester was the destination for the aviators, who are having a great start to the season.

Off Cdt Pete Watson secured a hard-fought fourth in the Cruiser B final at the end of round five action, going on to pick up a quality third in the round six B final.

The two-rider team also

saw Sgt Matt Haywood in action in the 50-54 Grand Vets Cruiser, with Watson in the 17-29 Cruiser and 19-20 Men's Open.

Haywood kicked things off with a solid third in moto 1, following it up with fifth in moto 2 and another third in moto 3 to progress into the semi-final.

Needing a good start, he hit the top of the gate and was last down the hill, ending up seventh with a place in the B final, where another clipped gate saw him finish fifth.

Round 6 saw Haywood seventh and sixth in moto 1 and 2, before a third in moto



RACE ACES: Sgt Matt Haywood, above, and Off Cdt Pete Watson, inset left

PHOTOS: BILLY WRIGHT & JACK WATSON

3. Needing third to make the semi-final, he crashed out in the quarters.

Watson started round five with a sixth in moto 1, bouncing back with a third in moto 2 and a second in 3, securing third in the quarter-finals before a third in the semi-final. Missing out on the A final, he then secured third in the B.

On his 20" in round 5 in a very competitive class, a 3rd, 6th and 4th in his motos set him up for a semi-final berth, where he finished seventh before an eighth in the B final. He failed to make the semis in round six.

Round 6 started better for Watson on his Cruiser, posting fourth in moto 1, second in moto 2 and moto 3 and securing a

semi-final berth and gunning for the A final. Unfortunately, he got blocked going into turn one and finished in fifth, one spot short of the A final. He bounced back to battle for third in the B final.

The team head to Gosport for round 7 and 8 of the National Series.

Follow RAF BMX on Instagram @RAFCABMX.

## MOUNTAIN BIKING

# It's fir to middling at Redwood Park

THE SERVICE'S mountain bikers took on a new venue for round two of the Pearce Race Series – Redwood Park, Bucknell – with two top-10 finishes.

The Shropshire track provided a challenge for the aviators, with fast lines and a loose course testing the ability of all the riders.

The level of difficulty was highlighted when Flt Lt Andy Macmillan performed a tuck and roll, crashing during practice. Unscathed, he ended up finishing eighth in the Masters class.

Kicking off the weekend, the Senior race started off smoothly, until rain hit the track, with riders

looking to get their first runs finished before the going became too difficult.

AS1(T) James Woods produced the second top-10 finish, coming seventh, while Cpl Liam Johns was 23rd and AS1 Harry Barker 24th.

Chf Tech Matt Redman came 55th in the Male 40-49 class.

MTB Gravity secretary Flt Lt Stu McCarthy said: "The team registered some great results. There was some incredibly tight racing, let's hope this carries on into the second half of the season after the summer break."



REDWOOD PARK: New challenge for mountain bike riders

## JUDO



GRIPPING STUFF: Training at Cosford

## Throw yourself into judo

THE RAF'S judo players are celebrating another successful training camp at Cosford as the association aims to increase participation in the sport.

The week-long camp featured coached sessions coupled with technical challenges and competitive intensity; simulating fatigue, stress and pressurised exercises to replicate competition situations.

Spokesperson AS1 Gabriella Smith said: "The camp was attended by personnel ranging from new judokas to seasoned athletes.

We hope to continue increasing engagement throughout the RAF and are hoping to see some new faces in the future.

"The coaches are delivering brilliant and inclusive training, which highlights constant commitment and dedication towards the RAF Judo team and their performances.

"There is always a strong sense of camaraderie within our association, and we encourage anyone, no matter what level of experience, to get involved with our sport and find out what the mat has to offer."





# 5 RAF Sport

pages of



**Crown trophy victory first in 51 yrs**

See page 23



**Aussies and Kiwis to take up challenge**

See page 26

## ICE HOCKEY



**TW-ICE AND N-ICE:** Victory tastes even sweeter as both RAF teams celebrate their achievement in Sheffield

PHOTOS: TRISH THOMPSON PHOTOGRAPHY

# Still the champs

**Daniel Abrahams**

A TOURNAMENT for the ages saw Royal Air Force ice hockey celebrate back-to-back Inter-Service men's and women's titles in the championship's 20th year.

"We had to win by three clear goals in regulation time, so to win 4-0 was amazing," said WO Matt Cryer, standing in for Aces coach Flt Lt Adam Rosbottom.

He was speaking to *RAF News* after the men's successful defence of their IS title at Sheffield Ice Arena.

Women's team head coach Cpl Andy Rourke, who saw his Pumas beat the Army, said: "I couldn't have been any prouder of my team. We had achieved exactly what we set out to do, against the odds. We have already started the process to defend the title again in 2026."

The Pumas were simply too hot for their Army Fury counterparts as they stormed to a 3-1 win thanks to a Cpl Teresa Lewis hat-trick. She put the RAF two goals up before coolly taking her third to quell the Army fightback in the second period.

Rourke added: "Retaining the title this year has been testament to the efforts of the players, knowing full well they were up against it with an Army squad fielding nearly double the numbers we had."

"Heart, determination, pride and trust in each other is what

## Men and women retain ice hockey Inter-Service crowns

ultimately won us the game. The players left everything on the ice and it was clear to see what it meant to every player, coach and the fans watching in the stands."

Having lost to the Royal Navy 4-3 in the opening clash, the male aviators could have been forgiven for letting nerves get to them as they struggled to defend the IS title.

With the Navy losing against the Army, it was all to play for in the final game, with the RAF stepping up as champions.

Cryer said: "This win was built from last year, but now we were the underdogs defending the title."

"We told them this was their time, champions win when it's all against them."

"We knew the girls had done it and we got a huge lift from them winning back-to-back; this is an association, not separate teams."

And Cryer had an ominous warning for next year's



**PUCKY:** Men (above) and women (left)

tournament, saying: "We have not set the standard, we are the standard."



## Benson station hockey win

See page 25 to find out how Red Arrows inspired tournament victory for Oxfordshire air base



# R'n'R



Win box office hit  
on DVD ● p3

## Rocky Horror – the definitive story

● See  
page 3





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

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



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

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH





## Film Review

### Tornado (15)

In cinemas now

# Tornado's ferocious

**WESTERN MEETS the Samurai genre in Jack Maclean's lean revenge mash-up, taking place entirely by a small lake in 18th century rural Scotland.**

The film starts in a sprint, and we are left to catch up. A ragtag bunch of cut-throats and thieves with delightful names (such as Squid Lips and Kitten) are in pursuit of a young Japanese girl, the titular Tornado (Kōki/Mitsuki Kimura), destroying anything and anyone who gets in their path. They are led by Sugarman, played by Tim Roth (*Tin Star*) with an aloofness that signals his status – cruel to his son Little Sugar (Jack Lowden, *Slow Horses, The Gold*) and unbothered by killing his own crew, one can only imagine how he treats his enemies.

Joining the story in a chase, just when it feels like it's running out of steam, the film takes on a new

shape – jumping around in time to fill in the details of the story.

Tornado is the daughter of Fujin (Takehiro Hira), a showman with a travelling circus, where together they perform Samurai tales with marionette puppets. One of these shows draws in some of the bandits, fresh off their last big job, taking their attention away from their bounty, which is swiped from under their nose. From the stage, Tornado sees everything and so finds herself caught between the gang and their gold.

#### Far-fetched

There are a lot of characters, but not a great deal of characterisation, which becomes notable when things slow down.

Add to this the bending of genres, which introduces more far-fetched story elements



**CUT-THROATS:** Ruthless outlaw Sugarman (Tim Roth, centre) and son Little Sugar with Tornado, inset left

that can be written off as a stylistic flourish.

A small but ferocious film, fuelled by momentum and flair, Tornado is at its best

when it doesn't stop to explain itself.

**Four out of five roundels** **Review by Sam Cooney**



## DVDs

### Mr. Burton (12)

On digital platforms now and on Blu-ray & DVD from June 30 (Icon Film Distribution)

**Win!**

# The making of Richard Burton

**RELEASED TO celebrate what would have been Richard Burton's 100th birthday, Mr. Burton stars Harry Lawtey (*Industry, Joker: Folie à Deux*) as young Richard Jenkins, who becomes one of the world's greatest actors.**

It's a remarkable true story – how the poor son of a Welsh miner, with help from an unlikely mentor, rises to dizzying heights, achieving spectacular fame and fortune.

In Port Talbot in 1942, Jenkins is a wayward schoolboy, caught between the pressures of his struggling family, a devastating war, and his own ambitions. A new opportunity arises when Richard's natural talent for drama catches the attention of his teacher, Philip Burton (Toby Jones, *Mr Bates vs. The Post Office*).

Taking Richard under his wing, the young man thrives thanks to Philip's strict tutelage and the guidance of kindly landlady Ma Smith (Lesley Manville, *The Crown* – inset right). But as the acting world comes within Richard's reach, the burden of his past risks holding him back forever.

Directed by Marc Evans



**PROTÉGÉ:** Richard Jenkins (*Harry Lawtey*) with mentor Philip Burton (*Toby Jones*)

(*Manhunt*), the film tells a poignant story about identity, class and defying expectations, which still resonates today.

The DVD and Blu-ray releases include an exclusive behind-the-scenes special feature with interviews from cast and crew including Evans, Jones, Lawtey, Manville and Richard Burton's daughter, Kate Burton.

## Win it on DVD

**WE HAVE copies on DVD up for grabs. To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us: Who directed Mr. Burton?**

Email your answer, marked **Mr. Burton DVD 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 July 13. Please include your FULL postal address.**



## Film

**Strange Journey: The Story of Rocky Horror**  
Certificate TBC. In cinemas October 3

# From Rocky beginnings

**A NEW documentary hailed as the definitive story of Rocky Horror, featuring Richard O'Brien, Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon, Trixie Mattel and Jack Black, has just celebrated its UK premiere at Sheffield DocFest.**

*Strange Journey: The Story of Rocky Horror* is now set to be released in cinemas across the UK and Ireland from October 3.

The cult phenomenon of *Rocky Horror* – from its humble origins as a London fringe theatre play to becoming the biggest cult film of all time – is explored in depth in the documentary, directed by Linus O'Brien, the son of Richard O'Brien, *Rocky Horror*'s legendary creator (pictured inset below).

Linus said: "I knew this story needed to be told – and that it had never been explored in depth as a documentary feature."

"Speaking with fans and people whose lives were deeply affected by the film was both eye-opening and humbling. *Rocky Horror* is unique in the way it created communities and



**STAR:** Tim Curry as Dr Frank-N-Furter © Mick Rock

spaces for people to express themselves without judgment – to feel liberated in every way they choose and to find a home among others like them.

"This documentary is as much a celebration of them as it is of *Rocky Horror* itself. The fans have taken this piece of art and made it their own, giving it a life beyond what my dad or any of its original creators could have imagined."

The documentary features revelatory interviews from the film's original cast including Curry, Sarandon, Barry Bostwick, Patricia Quinn and Nell Campbell.

Celebrity fans such as Jack Black (*School of Rock*) and RuPaul's Drag Race winner Trixie Mattel also appear, sharing deeply personal reflections on *Rocky Horror*'s cultural impact.







**Theatre**  
**Long Way Chat**  
Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham (August 30)



**BIKE BUDDIES:**  
Charley and Ewan

# It's a long road to Nottingham for McGregor and Boorman

**T**O CELEBRATE 20 years on the road and the release of the fourth series of *Long Way Home* on Apple TV+, Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman will be presenting *Long Way Chat* at Nottingham's Motorpoint Arena on August 30.

The series saw the pair riding motorbikes through 17 European countries and the immersive live show brings fans face-to-face with the stories behind the cameras, offering a blend of storytelling, film footage and behind-the-scenes insights from the road.

Ewan and Charley, along with their long-time collaborators David Alexanian and Russ Malkin, take the stage to relive the highs and lows of their global expeditions – battling harsh

climates, embracing local cultures and forging unforgettable bonds. The event includes previously unseen footage and personal anecdotes that highlight the duo's friendship and resilience.

Boorman said: "We can't wait to bring *Long Way Chat* to Nottingham. Ewan and I will be talking about our friendship, how it all started, how we got together, and maybe some stuff you haven't seen before..."

Audience members will have the opportunity to engage with the stars of the series – they will be asked to send in questions before the event and, if chosen, will get a chance to participate in a Q&A with McGregor and Boorman.

● [Motorpointarenanottingham.com](http://Motorpointarenanottingham.com) for tickets.



**Exhibitions**  
**Edward Burra**  
Tate Britain, until Oct 19

# Burra exhibit music to the

## Artist's favourite jazz complements display

**A** NEW exhibition dedicated to the work of enigmatic painter Edward Burra – described as one of the most distinctive British artists of the 20th century – has just opened at Tate Britain.

Organised chronologically, Edward Burra, runs until October 19 and covers his 50-year practice, from early works painted soon after graduating from the Royal College of Art to his stage and costume designs and less exhibited later landscapes.

A Tate Britain spokesperson said: "From his immersion in cultural life during the Roaring Twenties to his personal experience of major conflicts, the exhibition presents an in-depth view of Burra's radical career across more than 80 paintings and previously unseen material from Tate's archive."

"Best known for his vivid and surreal scenes of cafés, clubs and cabarets, imbued with a satirical humour, his unique works captured a rapidly changing society, sharing the experiences of those on the margins and offering a window into their world."

The spokesperson added: "Possessing a keenly observant eye, Burra is noted for his unusual compositions, crafted with a distinct visual language that set him apart from his contemporaries. Depicting everyday life from the perspective of an observer, the exhibition explores how he combined first-hand experiences and memories with a rich tapestry of visual references absorbed from newspapers, literature, art history, music and cinema."

Burra (1905-1967) lived for most of his life at the family home near Rye in East Sussex. Diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis as a child, he also had a blood condition which caused anaemia.

His parents encouraged him



**THE ARTIST:** *Photograph of Edward Burra, Barbara Ker-Seymer © reserved, Photo © Tate Photography (Sonal Bakrania)*

to pursue his interest in art and he referred to painting as 'a kind of drug', that helped to relieve the pain.

After studying at Chelsea Polytechnic and the Royal College of Art, he travelled to France with a fellow student, visiting museums, galleries and cafés in Paris and enjoying the city's nightlife.

A lifelong music lover and gramophone record collector, Burra went to America for the first time in 1933 to hear jazz live in its birthplace, staying in New York City and visiting music halls in Harlem. The Tate Britain show features music playing from the artist's own record collection and includes tracks by Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald.

The exhibition looks at Burra's personal experience of conflicts in Europe, which marked a turning point in his work, the spokesperson said.

"Fleeing his beloved Spain at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he followed



**MINUIT CHANSON:** 1931 Private Collection © T

the conflict from England, collecting newspaper cuttings, which feature in the exhibition. Grappling with these horrors, his paintings became social commentaries on the wars.

"Conflict followed Burra to England, as the outbreak of the Second World War saw England's South Coast heavily bombed.

"His outlook was radically altered by war, yet Burra's stage and costume designs remained fun and sardonic throughout his career.

*Edward Burra* explores his lifelong affinity with ballet, opera and theatre through the designs he produced for choreographers Frederick Ashton and Ninette de Valois and productions for the Royal Opera House and Sadler's Wells."

The final section focuses on Burra's post-war life. The spokesperson added: "Due to his declining health, his travel was limited to Britain and Ireland, but he explored rural locations in



Edited by Tracey Allen

# Exhibition's in the ears



The estate of Edward Burra, courtesy Lefevre Fine Art, London/Bridgeman Images

search of sublime natural beauty. No longer interested in capturing real people in busy metropolises, Burra turned to otherworldly landscape paintings, suffused with environmental anxiety caused by the post-war industrial revolution.”

● TATE BRITAIN is also running a major exhibition until October 19 featuring the work of Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988), described as an important, but often overlooked figure in British Surrealism and considered one of the most radical artists of her generation.

The landmark show is the largest of Colquhoun's work ever staged, including more than 170 artworks and pieces of archival material including painting, drawing and writing – many never publicly exhibited before.

● Go to: [tate.org.uk](https://tate.org.uk) for further information.



ITHELL COLQUHOUN, SELF-PORTRAIT, 1929: The Ruth Borchard Collection, courtesy of Piano Nobile, London © Spire Healthcare, © Noise Abatement Society, © Samaritans



## Books

### Arnhem Black Tuesday

[penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)

Win!

## A new slant on Arnhem story

HE MAY be best known as a comedian for his ebullient character The Pub Landlord, but Al Murray has also made a name for himself as a respected military author.

Writing is in the family – Murray's great-great-great-grandfather was the Victorian novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, most famous as the author of the classic *Vanity Fair*.

With fellow bestselling military writer James Holland, Murray co-hosts the popular World War II history podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk*.

His latest title, *Arnhem Black Tuesday* ([penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)) is now out in paperback – and you could win a copy.

The book focuses on the most catastrophic 24 hours the British military faced in WWII, which led to disastrous consequences for the Allied Forces.

The Battle of Arnhem is one



of the best-known stories in British military history; a daring but doomed attempt to secure a vital bridgehead across the Rhine

in order to end the war before Christmas 1944.

By focusing on the events of one day as they happened through the eyes of the participants and without bringing any knowledge of what would happen tomorrow to bear, Murray offers a very different perspective on a familiar narrative.

For your chance to own a copy of the book, a *Sunday Times* bestseller, tell us:

**Who co-hosts the *We Have Ways of Making You Talk* podcast with Al Murray?**

Email your answer, marked Arnhem Black Tuesday 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 July 13. Remember to include your FULL postal address.



## Theatre

### Starter For Ten

Birmingham and Bristol

## A Mel of a show



STARTER FOR TEN: Cast features Mel Giedroyc (back row, second right)

AFTER A record-breaking run at Bristol Old Vic last spring, the critically-acclaimed new musical *Starter For Ten* is at Birmingham Rep this autumn.

The show returns to Bristol Old Vic from September 10 to October 11 before transferring to The Rep from October 22 to November 1.

Adapted from David Mitchell's bestselling novel and the hit 2006 film (that starred James McAvoy, Benedict Cumberbatch and Alice Eve), the coming-of-age musical is set in 1985 and its protagonist is 18-year-old Brian Jackson, whose lifelong dream is to compete on legendary TV quiz show *University Challenge*.

Leaving Southend to begin his first year at Bristol

Uni, Brian (Adam Bregman) soon finds out that falling in love and growing up take a lot more than general knowledge...

Mel Giedroyc reprises her roles as Brian's mum, Irene, and quiz master Bamber Gascoigne's sidekick Julia Bland.

The show features what's been described as 'an irresistible original soundtrack inspired by the riotous student scene of the 80s' and was nominated for Best Musical Production at the UK Theatre Awards 2024.

● Go to: [bristololdvic.org.uk](https://bristololdvic.org.uk) and [Birmingham-rep.co.uk](https://Birmingham-rep.co.uk) for more information.





## Your Announcements

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

### Death



**Olga Hughes**

**HUGHES** Olga (née Thomson), February 16, 1935-May 29, 2025. 2821988 SACW Olga Hughes joined the WRAF in 1952 and was trained as a storeswoman. Her initial posting was to RAF Dishforth and, as she frequently reminded her family, she loved every minute of her RAF service. This included lining The Queen's coronation route in 1953. Sadly, due to her mother contracting TB, Olga had to leave in 1954 to look after her five younger siblings. Much to her regret, she didn't return to the RAF but did join the RAFAux in Edinburgh, dragging her best friend along. She recalled practising nuclear war plotting deep inside a bunker in Corstorphine Hill until she left to have a family in the early 60s. Indeed, she met her husband Archie (an ex-RAF National Serviceman) in the Reserves. Her son joined the Army and she was finally impressed when he explained he was a Gp Capt equivalent, given the Station Commander was "god" at Dishforth. The RAF March Past was played at her funeral. If anyone served with Olga her son would love to hear from them. Please email: [Allan.Thomson@Aspiredefence.co.uk](mailto:Allan.Thomson@Aspiredefence.co.uk)

### Seeking

**SEEKING** old friend Cpl Mick Lerigo who worked in the avionics bay at RAF Laarbruch between 1973 to 1976. I was SAC Chris Joyce working as an airframe mechanic on 15 Squadron Buccaneers. We often went to the Ardennes in Belgium on organised walks, and nights out to a jazz club in Venlo, Holland. I would love to meet up if he is still around. I am 75 now. Please email: [c.joyce70@outlook.com](mailto:c.joyce70@outlook.com)

**CALLING** ex members of 230 OCU RAF Finningley who served there during the 1960s. I am seeking 230 OCU's Squadron Crest to make a wall shield. Email: [rogerparker1944@icloud.com](mailto:rogerparker1944@icloud.com) maybe for a get-together some time in the future.

### Reunions

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

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

**12** ex 72nd Entry Aircraft Apprentices (RAF Locking) will meet on the weekend of July 25-27 to celebrate 70 years since passing out. We think that it is a great effort to meet up after all that time. Part of our weekend celebration will be a visit to the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. Please contact Dave Gunby via email: [davegunby@btinternet.com](mailto:davegunby@btinternet.com)

com for more information.

**217** Craft Apprentices RAF Halton, 55 years Reunion, September 30 and October 1 at the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa, LN10 6QG. BBMF & IBCC trips planned for during the day with a formal dinner on the evening of October 1. Please contact Gerry Evans on: 01793 764236 or email: [gerry.e.54@btinternet.com](mailto:gerry.e.54@btinternet.com)

**THE** RAF Masirah and RAF Salalah Veterans Association AGM and Reunion Gala Dinner is to be held on Saturday, October 4 at The Park Royal Hotel, Stretton, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 4NS. All Members are welcome to attend.

If you are interested in attending the reunion, 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.

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

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

### Associations

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

## Charity cycle challenge

**THE** RAF Benevolent Fund is to hold its new Heritage Ride in Lincolnshire on September 27.

The event is a 40 or 100-mile cycle challenge taking place both virtually and physically through some of Lincolnshire's most iconic RAF heritage sites, starting and finishing at RAF Digby.

The sites will include Wickenby Aerodrome, Scampton Church and

the International Bomber Command Centre, as well as passing Woodhall Spa and RAF Waddington.

The theme for this year's ride is 'Your Heritage, Your Ride', encouraging participants to share their personal links to the RAF and inspiration behind their decision to support the RAF Family.

● Go to: [rafbf.org](http://rafbf.org) for more.

## SSAFA launches BoB range

**ARMED** FORCES charity SSAFA has launched a range of limited-edition items, including mugs, T-shirts and tea towels, to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

The charity said each purchase will support SSAFA's work helping serving personnel and veterans and their families, including, of course, veterans of World War II.

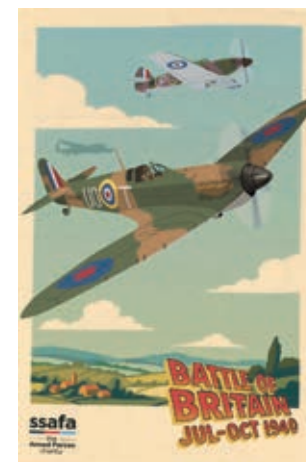
The range also features tea tins, prints, notebooks and notch charms.

A SSAFA spokesperson said: "We have produced the exclusive range to honour the 85th anniversary of the Battle of

Britain, and the men of not only the United Kingdom, but also Poland, New Zealand, Barbados, Northern Rhodesia, Czechoslovakia, Canada, Belgium, Australia, Free France, the Republic of Ireland, the US, Southern Rhodesia, Jamaica, and Newfoundland. These items are strictly limited and are sure to sell fast.

"Poland, after the UK, contributed the largest contingent of pilots to the Battle of Britain, around 145 men who served in the legendary No. 303 Squadron RAF and others."

● Go to [ssafastore.org.uk/categories/battle-of-britain](http://ssafastore.org.uk/categories/battle-of-britain) for more details.



## BoB memorial service

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

The RAF Ceremonial Office is seeking to improve its knowledge of this unique demographic and to offer places at the formal Battle of Britain Thanksgiving and Rededication Service.

This year's service is planned for Sunday, September 21, and in subsequent years.

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

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

Additionally, for the purpose of allocating tickets, please also send your full name, home address, date and place of birth, and passport or driving licence number (at any time and without notice or justification the RAF reserves the right to void tickets and refuse entry to Westminster Abbey before or on the day).

This information is also required for any additional guests who wish to attend the Service with you – thank you.

### 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.**

### Important Notice

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





## Your Announcements

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



**TEAMWORK:**  
Triumphant at  
the finish line

## Runners rise to the challenge

A FOUR-STRONG team of runners have raised more than £5,000 for charity Combat Stress after taking part in the D-Day 44 challenge earlier this month.

Team Per Ardua – FS Adam Freeman, FS Wayne Corbett, CT Kevin Saunby and Sgt Jason Wright – marked the 81st anniversary of D-Day by completing a 44-mile run along the Normandy coast.

The route took the team to Omaha beach, Gold beach, Juno and Sword beaches, then onto Ouistreham, where the course

headed south towards the finish line at the iconic Pegasus Bridge.

Sgt Wright, based at RAF Wittering, said: "The majority of the route was packed with veterans, families and members of the public honouring those who made the ultimate sacrifice 81 years ago.

"A 12-hour time limit in which the event had to be completed was comfortably met by the whole team."

● Go to: [events.combatstress.org.uk/fundraisers/PerArdua](https://events.combatstress.org.uk/fundraisers/PerArdua) to donate.

## Tribute to Supply Squadron

A NEW permanent exhibition telling the story of the vital contribution of Logistics (or Supply as it was called previously) opened recently at RAF Laarbruch Museum in Germany.

The exhibition was officially opened by former OC Supply and Movements Sqn, Air Cdre (Ret'd) Les O'Dea. He was joined by more than 30 former squadron members and their partners, who had helped to display all the exhibition's archive photos, documents and other memorabilia to create a unique record and legacy.

A spokesperson for the Museum said: "Many made this dream a reality through their donated items and in particular the vision and passion of Stuart Dukes, who assembled the exhibition, Mark Moodie of the Museum and Kevin White, who put together an accompanying 84-page book and instigated the squadron reunions in Germany.

"The intention is to expand and refresh the exhibition over the coming years."



**UNIQUE:** RAF  
Laarbruch Museum

From 1953 until it closed in October 1999 Laarbruch was a frontline operational station. Its museum was established in 2007 as a permanent reminder of the station's history.

The museum has expanded since it was first established, bringing in new exhibits including a Canberra and Hunter aircraft along with a Buccaneer cockpit and many other artefacts such as an RAF Regiment and RAF Police exhibits.

The spokesperson added: "We

would be happy and grateful to receive any donations or loans that would enhance the Supply Squadron exhibit, or anything that would advance the existing museum, nothing is too small or insignificant."

Please contact Heinz Willi Knechten on: +49 178 1356324 or email: [info@laarbruch-museum.de](mailto:info@laarbruch-museum.de) if you are interested in loaning or donating items.

● Go to: [laarbruch-museum.net/en/](https://laarbruch-museum.net/en/) for more information.



**ROYAL  
AIR FORCE**

## RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

**RAF News**  
The official voice of the Royal Air Force





Crossword

No. 388

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 8 letters in yellow squares to find an aviation term

This edition's Crossword and Su Doku puzzles are just for fun for you to do at home, no need to send your entries in.

Across

- 1. Sounds like chain language (4)
- 8. Reactions to wedding events (10)
- 9. Maurice's given up over nothing on RAF plane (8)
- 10. Ebb and flow of a botched edit (4)
- 12. The crème de la crème of the RAF? (3,3)
- 14. Mark at work? That's correct! (4,2)
- 15. And 17 Across. Solution none devised at RAF station (6-2-4)
- 17. See 15 Across
- 18. I led across to little shop (4)
- 19. What's served in fine café, perhaps? (8)
- 21. Planes used by Royal Houses (10)
- 22. The first question in Job (4)

Down

- 2. Will moose neigh in distress and join together? (10)
- 3. In their aquarium in country (4)
- 4. Handwriting actors read? (6)
- 5. Southern river on southern golf clubs (6)
- 6. Virus too damaging for wunderkind (8)
- 7. Originally Eve surprised matriarch expecting girl (4)
- 11. Lethargy is word about Untouchable (10)
- 13. Place object in corner (3,5)
- 16. French city street is most beautiful (6)
- 17. Not working because Turner is out of tune (3-3)
- 18. Comic has no right to beauty (4)
- 20. Monster loses head moving in this direction (4)

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Aviation term: ..... Crossword No. 388



Solution to Crossword No. 387

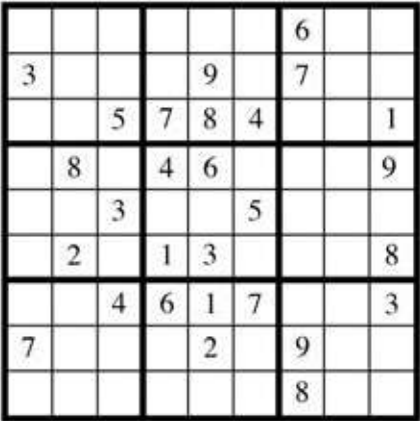
Across – 6. Paveway 7. Inter 9. Zebra 10. Several 12. StormShroud 14. Globemaster 18. Falcons 19. VE Day 21. Simon 22. Scuttle  
Down – 1. Bader 2. Regret 3. RAF 4. In Gear 5. Pegasus 8. Persist 11. Framing 13. Albania 15. Beckon 16. Ejects 17. Rally 20. ACP  
RAF station – Brize Norton



Su Doku

No. 398

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.



Solution to Su Doku No. 397

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



Film Review

Jane Austen Wrecked My Life (15)

In cinemas now

The French Bridget Jones

A hapless romantic and struggling author leaves her bookshop in Paris for a writers retreat at the estate of Jane Austen, only to find more distractions.

Parisian Agathe (Camille Rutherford) lives with her sister and nephew, and yet it's her sex life that is a struggle. Working as a bookseller at renowned Shakespeare And Company with her Casanova best friend Félix (Pablo Pauly), she refuses to use dating apps and pines for traditional romance.

Set in this world of bookish types, constant literary comparisons are thrown around. But no matter the malady, Agathe can always prescribe some Jane Austen for the occasion, idolising, among other things, her revolutionary and messy depiction of women.

It is perhaps for this reason that Félix submits her one and only chapter to the Jane Austen Society over the Channel. When she is accepted for a two-week getaway, ending in a period-dress ball no less, Félix drops her off at the ferry, sharing a



BOOKWORM: Literature fan Agathe is invited to England by the Jane Austen Society

kiss that arouses some exciting but confusing feelings – a harsh contrast to when she arrives on the coast of leafy England, met by foppish distant relative of Austen herself Oliver (Charlie Anderson), who never really bought the hype of his great-great-aunt.

The instant clash between Agathe and Oliver cements the direction of this story, and it plays much like a French Bridget Jones (Brigitte Jones if you will), with more highfalutin aspirations but the same level of kooky comedy.

Terribly predictable and a touch derivative, but ultimately



HAVING A BALL: Agathe with pal Félix

Jane Austen Wrecked My Life is a gentle and harmless romantic comedy that is a little light on both romance, and comedy.

Two roundels out of five Review by Sam Cooney

Peake's on a quest

BRITISH ASTRONAUT Tim Peake's latest tour blasts off across the country from September 1.

The 31-date tour kicks off in Inverness and travels to venues including Cheltenham Town Hall, Buxton Opera House, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Oxford New Theatre, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre and the Swan High Wycombe and culminates at Llandudno Venue Cymru on October 14.

Astronauts: The Quest To Explore Space sees the former Apache pilot sharing extraordinary archive footage bringing to life the adventures of astronauts in a celebration of space exploration.

"It seems like yesterday I was launching to space, and I still hold the very deep honour and excitement of that day very close," said Peake (pictured below).

"Being able to tour the country, with a special show like The Quest To Explore Space, where I can share just a small taste of what I experienced as an astronaut, reliving my own journey and sharing stories from those ground-breaking moments in space exploration, is absolutely fantastic.

"I hope the stories I share will

give people a special insight into the magic of space and continue to inspire generations of future space explorers."

Astronauts: The Quest To Explore Space follows the huge success of Peake's sold-out debut tour My Journey To Space, which ran from 2021 to 2023.

Peake joined the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2009, after an 18-year career in the Army – making history in December 2015 as the first British astronaut to visit the International Space Station.

He retired from the ESA in 2023 but has continued to work with them and the UK Space Agency as an ambassador for space to inspire young people to follow careers in science, technology, engineering and maths.

On stage he'll reveal what spaceflight is really like: from the wondrous view of Earth, living in weightlessness, the unique dangers and unexpected moments of humour, to the years of training and gruelling psychological and physical pressures an astronaut must endure.

Go to: [nothrid.co.uk/live-shows/tim-peake-for-full-tour-details](https://nothrid.co.uk/live-shows/tim-peake-for-full-tour-details)

