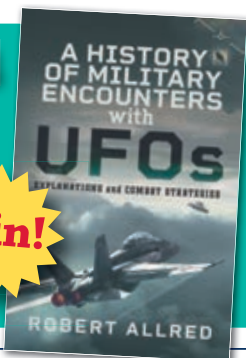


**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Unknown 'aircraft' and the military**

● See page 17



**Walking the Green Line in Cyprus**

● See page 19



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, November 29, 2024  
Edition No.1597 £1.20

# RAF NEWS

## Rewriting the Battle of Britain

See pages 14-15



● Win latest book on the conflict from renowned historian Dilip Sarkar



Win!

**Football UKAF win in N.Ireland**



● See page 23

**Rugby Union Cpl's Man of The Match**



● See p25

**Weightlifting Three in a row for RAF**



● See p28

# Quake heroes

**Brize lifesavers who flew into disaster zone net top honour**

**Simon Mander**

AIR FORCE medics have received the Firmin Sword of Peace after flying into the disaster zone when earthquakes ripped through Turkey and Syria, killing an estimated 45,000 people last year. An RAF A400M Atlas and two C-130J Hercules aircraft led the Nato response to the disaster, flying in aid and military medical teams. The award was presented by Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton at RAF Brize Norton, recognising their efforts to give lifesaving help to thousands under challenging conditions. ● *Continued on p3*





# BiteSize

“We recognise the commitment of Service families based abroad,”

Defence Secretary John Healey  
See page 9



“Film and TV trailers nowadays all give away the plot,”

Ghost Stories writer Andy Nyman  
See R'n'R pp4-5



“People didn't think we could pull it off,”

UKAFFC head coach Cpl Darryl White after his charges play Irish Defence Forces in Northern Ireland

See p23



## ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

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# Aid lift on 1000<sup>th</sup> day

THE UK pledged to boost support for Ukraine with funding to provide new drone capabilities on the 1,000th day of Putin's illegal full-scale invasion.

It follows confirmation that the number of Ukrainian armed forces recruits trained by the UK on British soil has passed 50,000.

The UK has pledged £3 billion a year to support Ukrainian forces, alongside £2.5 billion profits from frozen Russian assets and a further £7.5 million to fund attack and surveillance drones.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: “The UK has stood side by side with our Ukrainian allies since day one of Putin's illegal full-scale invasion – leading international support, training 50,000 recruits and supplying weapons, drones and other crucial military kit.

“A thousand days after Putin initiated his full-scale invasion, our commitment to Ukraine remains ironclad.

“President Zelenskyy and the



**PLEDGE:** More than 50,000 Ukrainian troops have received UK Forces training on British soil

Ukrainian people will have our fullest support for as long as it takes.

“As we look towards a winter of continued Russian attacks it is critical that international

partners and allies come together to back Ukraine and ensure that Putin does not succeed.”

## This Week In History



**1990**  
**Victors on Granby**

A FOUR-STRONG fleet of 55 Sqn Victor tankers deploy from Marham to Muharraq in Bahrain on Operation Granby.

**1944**  
**Oil raid**

MORE THAN 400 Lancasters and a dozen Mosquitos launch a major 500-mile bombing raid against synthetic oil production plants near Leipzig.



**1994**  
**Jo joins Dambusters**

THE RAF'S first female fast jet pilot, Flt Lt Jo Salter, is awarded combat-ready status with 617 Dambusters Sqn.

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





**LIFE-SAVERS:** Personnel of Tactical Medical Wing meet CAS, Sir Richard Knighton

# Quake medics honour



**DEVASTATION:** Aftermath of quake

Continued from front page

Speaking at the presentation ceremony at the Oxfordshire station Sir Richard said: "The commitment shown by our Regular and Reservist personnel represents the very spirit of service and excellence that the RAF stands for."

The unit delivers a global defence aeromedical evacuation service and includes the Brize Norton-based Tactical

Medical Wing, reservists from 612 Sqn RAuxAF and 4626 Sqn RAuxAF, who often work in the NHS, and HQ Air's Medical Operations team."

Personnel scrambled following the devastating tremors in Türkiye in February 2023 and set up a 10-bed ward and clinic to care for 6,394 patients over 15 days. They also airlifted 151 patients during the operation.

Tactical Medical Wing chiefs also sent aeromedical staff to support the evacuation of non-combatants in Sudan and treated 31 injured patients, completing 19 missions.

It has evacuated more than 1,500 personnel over the last 12 months, including the airlift of 119 Ukrainian Service personnel as part of Op Interflex, despite language, mental health and

physical health challenges.

Personnel from Tactical Medical Wing also initiated a co-responder team with the South Central Ambulance Service to support local communities in Oxfordshire.

Medical Force Commander Gp Capt Christopher Rowley said: "This award belongs to the entire Medical Force, and I couldn't be prouder of what we've achieved together."



## Akrotiri tribute is blooming marvellous

CHILDREN AND staff from RAF Akrotiri School joined forces for their own special tribute to the fallen. They donned red or black T-shirts in the warm Mediterranean sunshine and huddled together to form a giant poppy for Remembrance 2024, captured in this impressive aerial photograph.



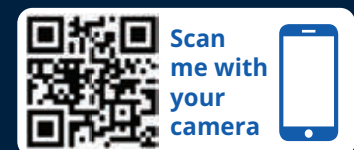
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RAF Family? Visit: [rafbf.org/meeting-the-needs](https://rafbf.org/meeting-the-needs)





# Teddy's a Little Trooper

**PLUCKY TEDDY Baker's courage despite his RAF dad's deployments overseas has been recognised by an award from children's charity Little Troopers.**

The six-year-old from Odiham suffers from Henoch-Schönlein purpura, causing him intense pain in his legs and night terrors requiring hospital tests and visits while the family await a diagnosis.

And having to cope with his Aircraft Technician father's absences abroad adds to his fears.

Now he has received a Little Trooper of the Month award and a £100 gift voucher.

Mum Rachel said: "We have a lot of unknowns about his seizures, and it is a lot to carry, especially with his dad due to deploy again, but Teddy is coping so well."

"He has also been helping at his after-school club, supporting other friends who are sad, hurt or upset.

"We are extremely proud of him, he is our special Little Trooper."

Teddy's family have been using Little Troopers' resources by creating a deployment wall with a countdown chart and using the charity's cards.

He was one of 2,500 children to get a Christmas box from the charity last year and visited Chelsea Pensioners at the Royal Hospital in London.

Founder Louise Fetigan said: "Teddy has shown resilience and bravery in the face of adversity and absolutely deserves our award."

Odiham organised for the medal to be presented by base support wing boss Wg Cdr Jo Field.

Little Troopers also runs a deployment club and schools programme.

● Go to: [littletroopers.net](http://littletroopers.net) for more details.



**AWARD:** Six-year-old Teddy is presented with his Little Trooper medal by Odiham base support wing chief Wg Cdr Jo Field

# Post with the most

## Vet Geoff receives very special delivery as he celebrates 100th

**Simon Mander**

**CENTENARIAN GEOFFREY Payne has been bombarded with gifts and well wishes from across the RAF after a nationwide appeal by his family.**

A survivor of 30 missions from joining up aged 18 as a Lancaster rear gunner, he had a one-in-two chance of making it back home.

And 6'2" tall Geoffrey faced an additional challenge – his parachute would not fit in the gunning pod and was stored in the fuselage.

On one sortie, his aircraft was hit by a Messerschmitt Bf110 fighter and despite bullets jamming his guns, disabling his intercom and freezing his oxygen mask, it managed to limp back to base, where a German bullet was found still burning in their ammunition.

After an appeal by his Scotland-based family, Geoffrey received signed prints, letters and birthday cards at his home in Cumbernauld.

Organiser Linda Payne said: "So many people have passed on their good wishes that it would be impossible to thank



**SURVIVOR:** Geoffrey was on 30 missions as a Lancaster rear gunner

each one personally. To say we were overwhelmed is an understatement."

As part of Bomber Command, Geoffrey took to the air on the first day he reported for duty as a rear gunner on a Lancaster bomber, aged just 17 in 1943.

After leaving the RAF, he

worked in a number of roles, using the skills he gained through his service, before moving to Scotland in the 1960s to help set up the Carron steel plant in Falkirk.

A keen athlete and sportsman, he was active in supporting local youth teams into his 70s.



**NORTHOLT FUNDRAISERS** conquered the annual Gherkin Challenge – climbing the stairs at the 600ft London landmark 147 times to net more than £2,000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

The four-strong team led by AS1 Connor Jones clocked up more than 16 miles, completing an estimated 30,000 steps each in the 12-hour challenge.

Connor (pictured left) said: "Running up 38 floors repeatedly is demanding mentally, but we're competitive people and love a challenge."





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# Regt cell targets fake news threat

**Simon Mander**

A NEW Regiment unit is working to outsmart Britain's enemies and enhance protection of RAF aircraft and personnel worldwide.

The newly established Combat Readiness Information Activities and Outreach Cell has already won awards on operations.

Operations officer Flt Lt Pharoah said: "What has been accomplished in a little over a year to deliver the RAF an operational capability is very impressive.

"Modern warfare, the internet and social media mean gathering and analysing open-source intelligence to create a more accurate picture of the operational environment is essential."

With potential enemies prepared to use propaganda and disinformation to gain a tactical advantage, the cell's ability to counter these narratives is vital, he added.

The cell has already deployed alongside RAF Regiment units and international allies on operations and exercises.

During Exercise Cobra Warrior the cell deployed with 15 Sqn RAF Regiment to hone their active defence capabilities and procedures in real-world scenarios.

The exercise netted cell operator ASI Roberts the Communicator of the Year award



**SOCIAL MEDIA WARRIORS:** Regt cell will be deployed to counter enemy propaganda and fake social media posts during operations

and the unit two Astra awards.

Cell commanding officer Sqn Ldr Cotton said: "The recognition the cell and its personnel have received is further acknowledgement of both the innovation of our people and the high regard in which the cell is

already held."

Personnel have undergone psychological operations training delivered by the Belgian Army, attended Nato and US Department of Defence courses, and have trained at the Defence School of Photography to enhance

the Regt's defence capability.

"Now at initial operating capacity, the cell's continued development will expand its expertise, ensuring that the RAF remains capable of meeting the challenges of modern warfare," added Sqn Ldr Cotton.

## In Brief



**FORCE PROTECTION:** 15 Sqn Gunners joined USAF and Norwegian forces for latest security training exercise

## Moody Blues

GUNNERS FROM the RAF's Combat Readiness Force launched live-fire and parachute training drills alongside US and Norwegian forces Stateside to hone frontline skills.

The two-week Global Eagle drill focused on airbase security and is designed to improve Allies' interoperability against peer adversaries.

Personnel from 15 Sqn joined the USAF's 820th Base Defence Sqn and Norwegian Air Force Protection Battalion for the training exercise at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia.

## Shell-ing out

DEFENCE GIANT BAE is building a new artillery production facility in Sheffield under a £25 million deal with UK Defence.

Work on the 94,000 sq ft factory is currently underway and the site is expected to start production in 2025, creating 50 high-skilled jobs.



**MERGER:** Care for Veterans boss David Williams, left, with Star and Garter's Tim Tyler

## Charities join forces

VETS WELFARE groups the Royal Star and Garter and Care for Veterans have joined forces to improve sheltered accommodation for ex-Forces fighters with dementia and terminal illnesses.

Under the proposed merger the charities will provide four care homes in Solihull, High Wycombe, Surbiton and Worthing.

# Honington hounds scent success

**Simon Mander**

MILITARY WORKING dogs from across the RAF gathered at Honington for a five-day masterclass in sniffing out success.

Hosted by an internationally renowned canine expert, the event at the Suffolk base's Training Capability Unit brought together 15 Police handlers and their dogs.

Known for his innovative approach to behaviour and performance training, Tobias Gustavsson of Gritty K9 shared his expertise in handling, tracking and detection.

"In 11 years of service this is one of the best weeks of training I have received," said Brize Norton's Cpl Rob Horsfall.

The training is designed to push both handlers and dogs out of their comfort zones, encouraging them to think critically about their approach.



Exercises included enhancing motivation, focus and stamina during searches and developing each dog through a series of short intense sessions.

Cpl Craig Roberts said: "This seminar was an amazing opportunity for handlers to train alongside one of the best detection trainers in the world."

Flt Lt Max Kadir added: "The skills developed here will translate into enhanced performance on operations, ensuring our teams remain mission ready."



**NOSE FOR TROUBLE:** One of the military working dogs sniffs out device during a training session at Honington



[baesystems.com/typhoon](https://baesystems.com/typhoon)

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**BAE SYSTEMS**



# SPEAR sharpens combat airpower



**CRUISE CONTROL:** SPEAR missile has been tested for the first time on an RAF Typhoon and will be fitted to UK F-35 fighters



## Simon Mander

**FIGHTER PILOTS** will benefit from a new mini cruise missile following the first guided firing trial of the SPEAR system.

The turbojet-powered weapon completed tests after being fired from a BAE-operated Typhoon at Vidsel range in Sweden – the first time it had been launched from an aircraft.

It can hit targets 100km away and is designed to be used against mobile, relocatable, defended or challenging targets.

Once in service it will be fitted to Britain's F-35B Lightning stealth fighter jets, allowing targets to be hit both from land and Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers.

Procurement Minister Marie Eagle said: "The successful trial of the pioneering SPEAR missile marks a significant leap forward in UK capabilities, ensuring our Royal Navy and RAF personnel are equipped with cutting-edge technology to protect our nation."

Lightnings will be able to carry up to eight missiles at a time capable of suppressing enemy air defences. The weapon autonomously navigates to the target using its advanced all-weather radar seeker to map the target area and radio-frequency imagery to successfully engage it.

The trial itself, which did not carry a live warhead, demonstrated the release, gather

and long-range free-flight control of the missile following a high-altitude and high-speed release.

Developed in the UK by MBDA, SPEAR is part of a £6.5 billion investment by the MOD over the next decade – which includes other missile programmes such as Brimstone, CAMM, Sea Viper, Sea Venom and Storm Shadow.

Defence Equipment & Support are managing the SPEAR programme. DE&S team leader Matthew Brown said: "SPEAR will provide a new capability to defeat the most complex air defence systems, enabling pilots to fly and fight wherever they're needed in defence of the UK and its allies."

## In Brief



**HOLIDAY FUN:** Museum chiefs are looking for recruits to take part in their Festive Elf hunt

## Elf drive

RAF MUSEUM chiefs have launched a recruitment drive for Santa's little helpers to get the Midlands venue ready for the festive period.

New recruits will enjoy an action-packed hour of festive fun, learning how to build and check the toys, load Santa's sleigh with precision, deliver the presents via a parachute drop, and discover how reindeers fly in formation.

A museum spokesman said: "Elf Cadet Training is a unique festive experience that brings the magic of Christmas and the marvel of aviation together under one roof."

"After completing training missions, new recruits can embark on the Elf Trail hangar hunt, tracking down hidden elves throughout the Museum."

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



# Forces Families net £3m childcare bonanza

## Simon Mander

**FORCES FAMILIES** deployed overseas will save thousands a year in childcare costs as the government increases support for Service personnel.

Hundreds of families will be able to claim up to 20 hours a week of funded childcare, saving around £3,400 a year in a move expected to cost £3 million over the next five years.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "We recognise the

commitment of Service families based abroad and that is why we are stepping up support, with the expansion of wraparound childcare set to save families thousands of pounds a year."

Tackling recruitment and retention challenges is also a key focus for the government, with red tape being slashed with 100



unnecessary medical policies removed and more than 700 applications reconsidered.

New recruits will also get a 35 per cent pay rise, ensuring all members of the Armed Forces receive at least the National Living Wage for the first time.

This support comes as legislation to establish the first-ever independent champion

for serving personnel and their families returns to the House of Commons for its Second Reading.

The Wraparound Childcare scheme already supports more than 7,000 UK Service children and from January will be available to personnel in most of Europe, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, and Brunei.

The cash supports Forces families with children aged four to 11, or four to 16 if receiving government disability allowances.





News



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# Abi posts letterbox record



**ISLAND CHALLENGE:** Sgt Harding ticks off another Ascension letterbox during her epic 80-mile trek. Below, cooling off after smashing the record

**Simon Mander**

AIR FORCE supercop Sgt Abigail Harding made Ascension Island history by completing a gruelling 80-mile fitness challenge and shattering the local record.

The legendary Letterbox Walk includes 42 locations scattered across the remote and rugged Atlantic island and can take tourists months to complete.

But the super-fit airwoman covered the 83-mile route, with climbs exceeding 850m, by travelling day and night – completing the course in just over 44 hours.

Her time smashed the previous record of 46 hours and 20 minutes and raised more than £1,000 for local charity SHAPE.

Abigail launched her fundraising challenge alongside a US military contractor and RAF colleague, who both



suffered injuries and were unable to complete the route.

As she neared the last letterbox she was joined by RAF and USAF personnel before crossing the finish line, where a crowd of supporters gathered to applaud her efforts.

## UK signs air policing pledge

AIR POLICING in Romania is set to continue following the signing of a new treaty promoting greater cooperation between the two countries' armed forces.

Earlier this year, a RAF fighter squadron of six Typhoons and around 200 personnel deployed to the European state to fly Nato air policing missions for four months.

Now Defence Secretary John Healey and his Romanian counterpart Angel Tîlvar have pledged to enhance bilateral

defence cooperation and develop information sharing.

Both countries support Ukraine and Romania has sent military personnel to the UK to help train more than 45,000 Ukrainian recruits as part of Operation Interflex.

Mr Healey said: "The UK's security starts in Ukraine and, together with Romania as our Nato allies, we will continue to support Ukraine against Putin's illegal invasion."





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# Atlas marks decade of delivery



**ANNIVERSARY:** Atlas team marks benchmark date at Brize. *Left, A400 flies through the Mach Loop in Wales*

**Simon Mander**

**ATLAS CREWS** are marking 10 years since their first aircraft was delivered to RAF Brize Norton.

Since the first of the 22-strong fleet was delivered to the Oxfordshire station in 2014 the A400M has undertaken military and humanitarian missions worldwide.

Most recently it delivered supplies by air drop in Gaza but has also taken part in Caribbean hurricane relief operations, the military's COVID response and evacuations from Afghanistan and Sudan.

Commander Air Wing, Gp Capt Andrew Mcintyre, said: "The Atlas has consistently demonstrated

superior strategic capabilities and versatility for the many challenging missions faced by the RAF."

Operated by four squadrons at Brize, an Atlas is also based in the Falkland Islands providing Maritime Reconnaissance, Search and Rescue, and medical evacuation cover.

With air-air refuelling it can airdrop supplies in Antarctica and last year carried out its longest-ever flight for 22 hours non-stop from its UK base to Guam in the Pacific.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton, added: "What the hugely advanced Atlas offers the RAF is truly remarkable, and notably

enables us to fill the first responder role that the UK government asks of us.

"The achievements of this remarkable aircraft over the past decade are extensive and would not have been possible without the whole force team of regular and reservist RAF personnel, civil servants and industry partners. I have every confidence the Atlas will continue to go from strength to strength."

To date some £1.36bn has been spent with UK suppliers by the A400 programme and the type's 150th set of wings were delivered this month.

Since its introduction, the A400M has logged more than 200,000 flight hours.

## Brize team ACE it on transport drill

**Simon Mander**

**TRANSPORT CREWS** have simulated a deployment to Northern Ireland in the latest test of their ability to operate from unfamiliar airfields.

It's the second time this year Brize Norton has brought together movers, emergency services, air despatchers and tactical air traffic controllers to test their agile combat employment skills on Exercise Venture Spirit, this time at Flying Station Aldergrove.

Detachment Commander, Sqn Ldr Al Spence, said: "We are taking crews on the frontline operational Atlas squadrons from a newly-qualified status to a place where they are putting their skills into practise.

"For this exercise we've based at Aldergrove but also used Brize Norton and Leuchars as well as flying on the east coast of Scotland to simulate operational environments."



During the training crews improved their knowledge of the A400M, flying tactical low-level sorties in the Scottish Highlands, dropping light stores to a drop zone in the Rannoch Moor area and practising flying skills within a threat zone.



**EXERCISE:** Medics chat to ground crew during Venture Spirit, which tests frontline capability

**In Brief**



### Chinook lift

A NEW fleet of UK Chinooks is to be equipped with avionics under a \$19 million contract between the American Department of Defense and Collins Aerospace.

The upgrade will result in RAF helicopters and their US counterparts each using the same advanced digital cockpit displays and applications.

As part of the deal Collins Aerospace will be responsible for data analysis and testing whilst working with the MOD to meet UK Military Airworthiness Authority requirements.

Earlier this year, Britain bought 14 extended-range Chinooks.

Work on the new contract will be conducted in Iowa and Alabama.



# The *real* Battle



**DIFFERENT APPROACH:** Sqn Ldr Douglas Bader's Big Wings theory of intercepting approaching Luftwaffe bombers with three to five fighter squadrons, as opposed to the conventional hit-and-run tactics usually employed by the RAF, was supported by Duxford's Station Commander Wg Cdr AB 'Woody' Woodhall (left) and his 12 Gp AOC AVM Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory (centre), leading to the creation of the controversial 12 Group, or Duxford Wing

**I**T'S A HUGE story and historian Dilip Sarkar has undertaken a massive task – to write an eight-part work about the Battle of Britain that tells the story of the aerial conflict from every possible angle.

He has described the work as 'an unprecedented narrative history of the Battle of Britain from as many perspectives as possible.'

It is a unique account that draws on the author's lifetime of research, with Sarkar having enjoyed a long relationship with survivors and the relatives of casualties.

With *Volume 4 Battle of Britain: Airfields Under Attack* (Air World, pen-and-sword.co.uk) published recently, he continues to examine the battle on a day-by-day, combat-by-combat basis from August 19 until September 6, 1940.

It is a period in which the Luftwaffe's bombing of the all-important 11 Group airfields intensified, culminating in August 18, 1940, dubbed 'The Hardest Day' which saw both sides lose more aircraft than on any other day throughout the whole Battle of Britain.

The tensions and problems between Fighter Command's 11 and 12 Groups also intensified. The situation eventually led to Sqn Ldr Douglas Bader criticising Fighter Command tactics, proposing the use of 'Big Wings', contrary to the System

Author's bid to do that have grown... important aerial



of Air Defence and strategy involved, gaining the support of his 12 Group commander AVM Trafford Leigh-Mallory.

Along with intensive research, Sarkar, who has written more than 60 books, has drawn on unique first-hand accounts from a wide range of combatants and eye witnesses, crucial officially primary sources and personal papers, to unravel many myths, often challenging the accepted narrative.

## Pilot shortage

He said: "The popular Battle of Britain narrative tells us that by September 6, 1940, 11 Group's airfields were battered by bombing and, if this continued, would soon be non-operational. Often though, the facts are at odds with the myth: certainly, the phase 19 August 1940-6 September 1940 was critical for Fighter Command and the defence of Britain – but not because the airfields were on their knees. The real reason this phase was critical for Fighter Command had nothing to do with airfields – but everything to do with a shortage of pilots.

"Some 300 RAF fighter pilots had been sacrificed on the altar of France, a battle lost before it even began, and by 1 August 1940 Fighter Command was short of over 200. By the end of that month the deficit was 181. The length of operational training was substantially reduced to alleviate the situation, but replacement pilots were not combat ready – and that was the problem, RAF pilots shot down over England of course, and who survived



**EARLY HIT:** Air Raid Precautions workers entering St Giles-without-Cripplegate Church, one of the first buildings in the City of London to be badly bomb-damaged during WWII, on August 24, 1940, before the official start of the Blitz (Historic Military Press)

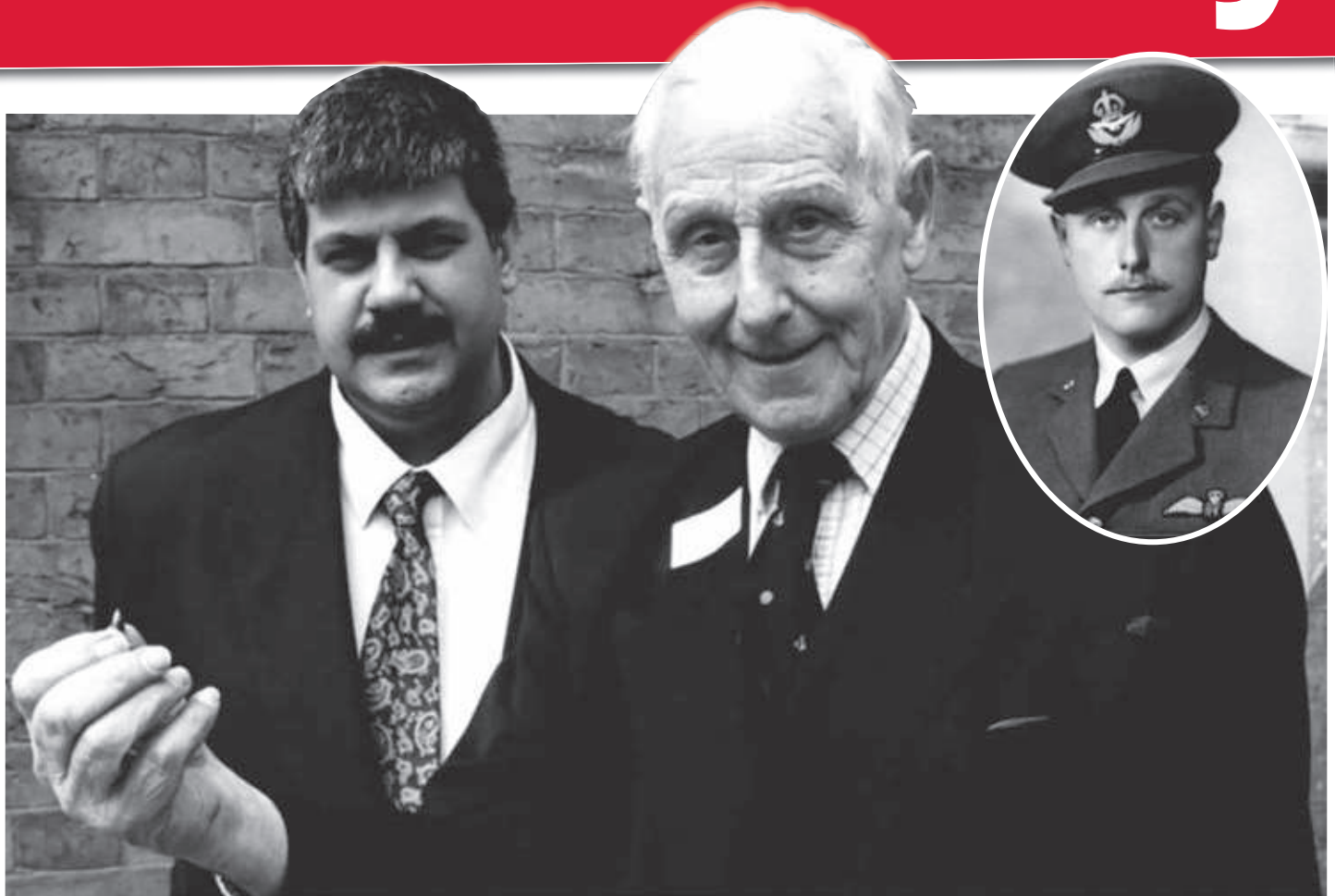


# of Britain story

dispel the myths around the most action of WWII



**ACE:** RAFVR Sgt Jack Stokoe was one of many NCO pilots who flew and fought in the Battle of Britain. His top button is undone – the sign of a fighter pilot



**SPITFIRE PILOT:** William Walker with author Dilip Sarkar in 2000. Walker holds the bullet extracted from his ankle after the RAFVR 616 'South Yorkshire' Sqn flyer was shot down by a Luftwaffe Me 109 on August 26, 1940. He baled out and was rescued from Goodwin Sands. *Inset*, Walker in uniform

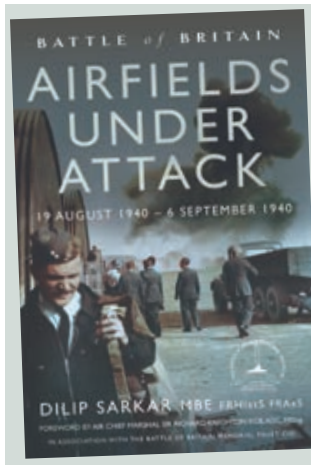
the experience, could be back in the air later the same day. Conversely, German pilots downed over England were captured. Were that scenario reversed, the shortage of RAF pilots would have been even more acute."

He explained: "The combat claims of both sides, however, were exaggerated – partially because of the confused and fast nature of air fighting, but also because both sides were comforted by believing great losses were being inflicted upon the enemy. Luftwaffe combat claims were consistently more accurate than Fighter Command's, and subject to rigorous scrutiny before a kill was awarded, but, nonetheless, the Luftwaffe still believed it was shooting down far more RAF fighters than was really the case. Indeed, Luftwaffe intelligence chiefs reported that by the beginning of September 1940 Fighter Command had no more than 300 fighters left."

"Throughout August 1940, Bomber Command had attacked, night after night, German oil refineries, airfields, factories and naval installations, and even sent Whitley bombers to Italian factories in Turin and Milan, and by day the Blenheims of 2 Group attacked airfields in north-west France and the Netherlands," said Sarkar.

**Luftwaffe**

"Like the Luftwaffe, however, Bomber Command was ill-equipped at this point to mount a successful strategic bombing campaign, the aircraft involved having limited bombloads. Nonetheless, these



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**LIMITATIONS:** Like the Spitfire and Hurricane, the Me 109 was designed and intended as a short-range interceptor, not as a long-range escort fighter. With just minutes of fuel to spare for combat over London, the German pilots were ever-mindful of their fuel states

raids were crucially important for multifarious reasons, not least to show the British public that the lion still had teeth. Neither side, however, had so far unleashed terror attacks on civilian populations. Indeed, Hitler had forbidden raids on London and was incensed by the accidental bombing of the British capital on the night of 24-25 August 1940."

He added: "To Churchill, however, this navigational error was a godsend: immediately ordering a reprisal raid on Berlin the following night, the Prime Minister correctly guessed that Hitler's penchant for revenge would divert the Luftwaffe from bombing airfields and instead attack London. That being so, the Germans would have longer flights

over England to reach their targets, providing more opportunities for interceptions, and the Me109s would be operating at the extremity of their limited range, meaning that heavier losses could be inflicted on the enemy bomber force. Hitler took the bait."

At the 1946 Nuremberg International Military Tribunal, Sarkar explained, Reichsmarschall Göring referred to 'the opportunity missed to exploit a unique chance.'

The author said: "Delays caused by Hitler's initial indecision and bad weather were also factors in why that 'unique chance' had passed by – but the main reason was that the RAF remained an efficient and effective fighting force in both defence and offence."



**SARKAR:** Historian

● Dilip Sarkar's *Battle of Britain* series of books is published in association with the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust which runs the National Memorial to the Few at Capel-le-Ferne in Kent. Go to: [battleofbritainmemorial.org](http://battleofbritainmemorial.org) for more information.



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# Air Force X-files

## Military sightings of UFOs

**S**TORIES OF sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects have always fascinated us. Clashes between UFOs and both Allied and German aircraft were reported in World War I and in WWII sightings of what became known as 'Foo Fighters' were commonplace.

After that war, UFO-related incidents increased, culminating in the wave of observations in 1947. That July, the US Air Force announced the capture of a 'flying disk', outside Roswell, New Mexico. The USAF quickly withdrew the announcement, but it was verified for decades by scores of witnesses – military and civilian.

In Robert Allred's *A History of Military Encounters with UFOs: Explanations and Combat Strategies* (Air World), the author explores the facts behind how the world's Armed Forces, particularly those in the USA and UK, view the subject of UFOs.

Five years ago, the US Navy released videos and other information relating to a series of encounters with Unidentified Flying Objects during a naval exercise off the west coast of Mexico in 2004. The unidentified objects, commonly known as 'Tic-Tacs' due to their smooth, oblong shape, were clearly recorded on the systems of both the aircraft sent to intercept them and the ships of the task force. These recordings show the mysterious craft acting in impossible ways, sharply changing direction, or diving or climbing tens of thousands of feet in seconds.

The releases led to other revelations, including one that the US Government (despite frequent denials in the past) had been studying these phenomena under the Advanced Aerospace Threat Identification Program (AATIP). These are just the latest episodes in well-documented sightings and UFO studies going back at least 80 years.

Make what you will of evidence, and whether you believe that these Unidentified Flying Objects are alien, human, or some bizarre natural phenomena, there is clearly something odd going on. If these and thousands of other sightings are hallucinations, misunderstandings, or simply fabrications, that's a phenomenon

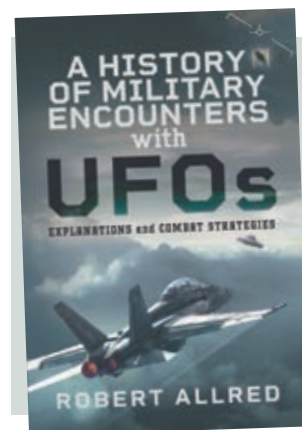
**'BATTLE OF LOS ANGELES':** Anti-aircraft searchlights, gunfire explosions, smoke, clouds and mist early morning February 25, 1942. The air raid alert was initially said to be because of an attack by Japan, but this was later withdrawn, leading to speculation in the media that it was in fact due to sightings of UFOs. PHOTO: Associated Press

still worthy of study in its own right. It is only natural that the military forces responsible for defending Earth's skies should, at times, also have strange encounters.

Allred takes the reader on what he describes as a 'mutual journey of discovery and exploration' through a history of military encounters with UFOs. His book starts in the early 20th century with strange sightings of cigar-shaped objects in the skies over the UK, before covering a couple of (more or less convincing) episodes during WWI, including an incredibly dubious event featuring Manfred von Richthofen.

However, the book really starts in the last years of WWII when British and American bombers and night-fighters began to report strange lights following them in the dark over both Europe and the Far East. They christened these 'Foo Fighters', and no satisfactory explanation for them has ever been found.

Post-war, Allred moves on to the rash, you could almost say



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

**Who publishes *A History of Military Encounters with UFOs*, by Robert Allred?**

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**Win!**

epidemic, of sightings across America and the rest of the world in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In Europe 'Ghost Rockets' began to appear over Scandinavia, and again have never been fully explained. In America there was the famous alleged UFO crash at Roswell in 1947 and the mass sightings over Washington DC in 1952.

Later encounters in Britain occurred in Lord Mountbatten's garden, and even Prince Philip appears in a couple of episodes. The 20 or so years after WWII are

covered in the most depth, but the book continues throughout the rest of the 20th century and into the 21st. Sightings from British and American aircrew and ground personnel, including US forces in the skies over the UK, are dealt with in more or less depth across the decades. Roswell gets a full chapter, but sadly the Rendlesham Forest incident, when US Air Force personnel at RAF Woodbridge and RAF Bentwaters in Suffolk witnessed odd occurrences across several nights in 1980, receives only a few pages.

The author is himself a believer that these encounters are alien in origin, although he is not a blind believer. He debunks several common stories, such as the 'Battle of Los Angeles' in 1942, although perhaps gives more credence to others than the evidence quite bears out. He has occasional, and relatively sceptical, forays into what he calls 'Woo-woo-land', looking at crop circles, alien abductions, cattle mutilations, and other sub-sets of ufology, or the ideas that UFOs are time travellers or from alternate dimensions. But generally, Allred stays with military-related sightings and encounters, on the ground or in the air.

If you already have set views either that UFOs are aliens or that they are all nonsense, this book is unlikely to change your mind. If you genuinely want to know more about the subject, then this is a good place to start. Whatever your views, and however malleable you may be to persuasion, it is an enjoyable read.

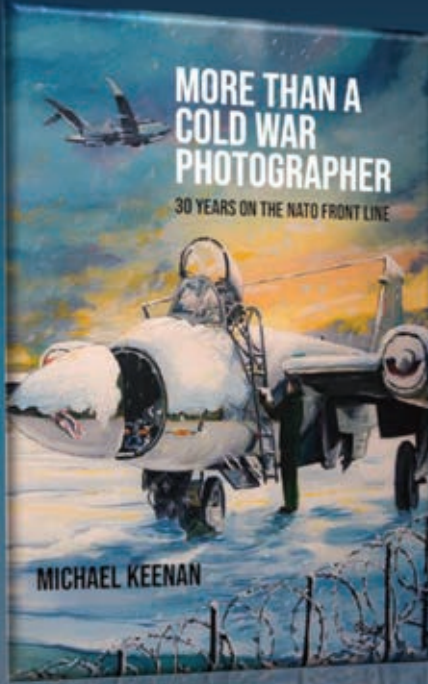
*Review by Stuart Hadaway*



**INTERCEPT MISSIONS:** US F-86 (above) like the one flown by Lieutenant Milton Torres when he reported that he was ordered by RAF controllers to shoot down a UFO above East Anglia on May 20, 1957. Left, de Havilland Venoms were sent to head off a UFO over RAF-USAF Lakenheath-Bentwaters on August 13-14, 1956



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# RAF Berengaria and beyond

## Forces child returns to Cyprus 50 years on to walk the Green Line

### Tracey Allen

**T**HE SON of a navigator on Vulcans, in the summer of 1970 eight-year-old Martin JW Clark arrived in Cyprus and lived there with his family for two years in officers' quarters at RAF Berengaria, near Limassol.

His father, Flt Lt JE Clark, was on IX Squadron Akrotiri from 1970-72 as a Nav Plotter on Vulcans.

Nearly 50 years later, Martin, who has worked as an engineer and toured the world as a guitarist, returned to the island to walk The Green Line – the UN-controlled buffer zone that divides Cyprus into the Greek Cypriot south and the Turkish Cypriot north.

Now he has written a book about his experience, *Long Shadow In Cyprus* (troubadour.co.uk) – the story of his trek across the island interspersed with his warm, evocative memories of life there as a child in the early Seventies.



**MJK CLARK:** 200km trek across Cyprus

He said: "It felt like a requirement to write this book. The village where I'd lived as a boy between 1970-72 was set for demolition. My sacred memories of RAF Berengaria were about to sink beneath the waves. For

Forces' families life in Cyprus was idyllic and people carry precious memories of their time on the island.

"I could catch chameleons in my garden. The cinemas were open-air...Unbeknown to me my wife was [then] a girl at the matinee... we were both Forces kids."

He added: "Like thousands of other British Forces personnel and their families I developed a love for Cyprus which has remained with me all my life. Yet despite two years living on the island, I knew very little about the hinterland of this 'jewel of the Mediterranean'.

"The book revolves around my desire to learn a little more about Cyprus by walking along the entire length of the Green Line."

Cyprus became a republic in August 1960 but was plagued with violence between the Greek and Turkish communities in the decades that followed. In 1974 a Greek military coup, which aimed to unite the island with mainland Greece, led to a Turkish invasion



### ISLAND LIFE **Win!**

FOR YOUR chance to win a copy of the book, tell us:

*In which year did MJW Clark arrive in Cyprus?*

Email your answer, marked Long Shadow In Cyprus 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 December 13.**

and the island was divided between Turkish Northern Cyprus and the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus. Cyprus is still divided today.

Martin explained: "In the summer of 2018, I fulfilled my plan to follow the Green Line and record the detail of my journey...I walked east to west, from the coast near Paralimni to Kato Pyrgos

via Nicosia – a total distance of around 200 kilometres. I slalomed my way across the island, crossing from one republic to the other as much as possible to compare the two countries.

"My book is a celebration of Cyprus which is non-partisan, neither Greek nor Turkish but, rather, the seeking out of Cypriots and the Cypriot mindset."



**ACTION STATIONS:** Pilots of No. 19 Sqn 'scramble' from the back of a lorry at RAF Fowlmere, September 1940 ©IWM



**IMPORTANT WORK:** WAAF telephone operators in the Sector 'G' Ops Room at RAF Duxford, September 1940 ©IWM



**ON DISPLAY:** Hawker Hurricane Mk I P2902, veteran of the Battle of France © IWM

**F**OLLOWING THE success of *Spitfire: Evolution of an Icon*, *Hurricane: Unsung Hero*, and *Spies in the Skies: Second World War Aerial Reconnaissance*, this year's winter spotlight exhibition at the Imperial War Museum

Duxford, *Scramble! The Summer of 1940*, will explore the history of two of World War II's major aerial campaigns – the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain – through the aircraft and aircrew who battled with the Luftwaffe

## The stars of WWII air battles

for control of the skies.

Open from December 27 until February 23, 2025, *Scramble! Summer of 1940* will allow visitors to get up close to an array of historic aircraft, each with its own story of courage and combat, said a spokesperson for IWM Duxford.

"This includes the Supermarine Spitfire Mk I N3200 which was shot down while supporting British forces retreating towards Dunkirk, leaving Sqn Ldr Geoffery Stephenson to be taken prisoner and his Spitfire to sink under French sands – only to be recovered in the 1980s and restored to flying condition," the spokesperson added.

"Alongside N3200 will be Spitfire Mk Ia X4650 which

featured in the film *Dunkirk*, as well as a Hawker Hurricane Mk I P2902 which provided air cover during the real-life evacuation before being shot down in May 1940 and the Hawker Hurricane Mk1 R4118.

"The exhibition will also feature a Curtiss Hawk-75, the only airworthy survivor of the French Air Force to fly in the Battle of France, a Bristol Blenheim Mk I, a Battle of Britain night fighter, and the Hispano Buchon, which made an appearance in the 1969 film *Battle of Britain*, as well as the MG TA vehicle which belonged to famous flying ace and RAF Duxford 'Big Wing' leader, Douglas Bader.

Liam Shaw, IWM Duxford's visitor experience and project manager, said: "We are thrilled to be back this winter with a new spotlight exhibition which

will give visitors a deeper understanding of two major Second World War campaigns with a close historic association to Duxford.

"Through this exhibition, we hope to show visitors how, behind each aircraft on display, there is a deeply human story of survival as the looming threat of being shot down, wounded or killed permeated throughout the summer of 1940."

There will be a number of associated events and activities taking place throughout January and February, including a *Duxford In A Different Light* photography session, *Scramble!* tours and *In the Cockpit: Spitfire N3200 and Spitfire N3200: The VIP Experience*.

● **Go to:** [iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk) for more details or call: 020 7416 5000 and see: [www.facebook.com/iwm.duxford](https://www.facebook.com/iwm.duxford)



**DUNKIRK VETERAN:** Supermarine Spitfire Mk I N3200, shot down and crash landed on a beach at Sangatte before being recovered in the 1980s and restored ©IWM





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Tim Morris

Nissan Juke 2024 (from £23,500 otr)

Motoring



LET'S PUT our cards on the table here, I've never really liked crossovers, especially the early ones. When the original Juke arrived back in 2010, I remember commenting that it had a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp. I wasn't wrong. Sure, it was loveable, in a 'Slimer' from *Ghostbusters* kind of way, but it was never going to win any beauty contests.

Neither was it going to win any awards for practicality. The driving position was off and rear seat passengers emerged hunched over after about 100 miles because of cramped conditions. There was no 4x4 option and the boot was tiny.

Moving on to present day and it's good to see that the 2024 facelift brings us something entirely new. The Juke is now a car that you notice for the right reasons.

Glistening in 'Iconic Yellow', with a black roof, our test car really looked the part. This version is the HEV143 TEKNA+ Hybrid 143 Automatic, sporting 19in Aero Wheels. If you're looking for a fashion statement, it certainly ticks that box.

#### Inside

The Juke's interior has improved massively since the original model launched. It feels genuinely plush, especially in our Tekna+ trim. Alcantara and Kevlar-style materials finish several surfaces, with neatly stitched edges. All-round, it feels well built. Turbine-style air vents click smartly when operated, standing out as a classy feature. Build quality is up there with the best in class.

Everything in the cabin is well laid out and easy to use, with a good seating position and plenty of seat/steering wheel adjustment. Physical controls for the air conditioning make climate control on the move a doddle



NISSAN  
JUKE: More swan than ugly duckling nowadays

# Juke boxes clever

and a hefty 12.3in digital driver's display makes the instruments clear at a glance.

Front visibility is good, with a loftier driving position than several rivals and slender windscreen pillars. Rear-view, not so much because of chunky rear pillars and a small rear screen, although you do get a

reversing camera as standard.

The touchscreen infotainment system is a vast improvement on previous versions, with sharper, modern graphics. There's also a great 10-speaker Bose sound system on the top-spec trims, with additional speakers built into the front headrests. Nice!

#### On The Road

The Juke is never going to wow the senses but our test car didn't disappoint either. Let's start with the stats. The three cylinder, 1.6 litre, engine produces 95 bhp, augmented by a battery that nudges power up to 143Kw. This takes the Juke from 0-62mph in 10.1 seconds and on to 103mph. Combined fuel economy is recorded as 58.8mpg.

The mid-rev range doesn't show much lag and it's eager to keep going to the line.

On the open road, the suspension is well controlled and you get some feel through

#### Pros

- Eye-catching looks
- Smart interior
- Well equipped
- Good reliability record

#### Cons

- Could be more economical
- Still slightly oppressive in the back
- Still not a usable 4x4

#### Verdict

The Nissan Juke has a fair bit going for it these days. The looks might still be a

#### Nissan Juke

bit polarising, but it's never bland and this car is a lot prettier than Jukes of old. A smart interior, plenty of standard kit and Nissan's outstanding reputation for reliability help to make it an interesting choice. Newer rivals may have emerged to take the limelight in this sector recently, but the 2024 facelift puts the Juke firmly back in the fight.



the steering. Surprising for a crossover. It feels nicely planted.

Around town, it's a sound companion. The hybrid always starts in e-mode, so it doesn't hang around and delivers silent, low-speed running. Even when the engine fires up, it's a quiet powertrain that doesn't

impersonate a slipping clutch, like many CVT hybrids do.

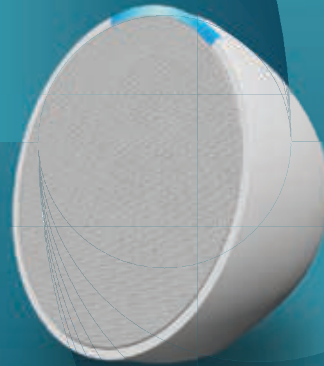
Motorway journeys are a comfortable experience, thanks to adaptive cruise, steering assist and a hushed cabin.

It's a sound blueprint that delivers enough capability to justify the Juke's radical looks.



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FOOTBALL

Spa day is no holiday for aviators



SCORER: Cpl Philippa Wilson

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| GB Police | 2 |
| RAF Women | 1 |

THERE WAS no pampering for the Service's female footballers as they battled out a tough 2-1 loss to GB Police at Champney Springs Spa & Hotel in Leicestershire.

With both teams preparing for the business end of their respective seasons the match-up was the perfect test.

The aviators started strongly from the first whistle, having the majority of possession and plenty of half chances. However, the Police gradually found their rhythm – setting up a fierce battle.

Having joy out wide the RAF couldn't halt a GB counter-attack up the middle of the park after 38 minutes, as a 20-yard looping shot dropped into the top corner.

Nevertheless, Police celebrations were short-lived as the RAF were awarded a free kick on the left wing following one of ASI Lucy Farrow's mazy runs.

A superb delivery from Cpl Erin Wilson set the stage for a powerful header by Cpl Philippa Wilson, levelling the score just before the break.

The second half was no different, with both teams striving for the crucial second and the RAF generating more clear-cut opportunities.

While the Police had more possession than they saw in the first half, neither side managed to trouble either keeper significantly.

A feisty but fair second half appeared set for a 1-1 draw, but the Police had other plans, launching a 35-yard shot into an empty net in the 92nd minute with the RAF keeper off her line.

The goal sparked a late RAF rally, but they could not find the equaliser.

Follow on Instagram @rafladiesfootball.

FOOTBALL

# Victory in Belfast for the UK Armed Forces footballers

## County Antrim games 'historic'

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| UKAF                 | 1 |
| Irish Defence Forces | 0 |

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS a perfect way to kick off preparations for the Kentish Cup defence as UKAF's footballers retained the Friendship Trophy, beating Irish Defence Forces 1-0.

Head coach Cpl Darryl White's charges fought out a tough match at the Bluebell Stadium, County Antrim, that saw the holders take the lead just after the hour mark through Royal Navy forward LPT Elliot Holmes.

His simple tap in at the far post came after great work by Army star Cpl Greg Peel.

White said: "An historic game for UK Armed Forces football, thank you to everyone who was able to turn my vision into reality. To be able to play the Irish Defence Forces in Northern Ireland was an unbelievable achievement by everyone.

"People didn't think we would be able to pull it off, however we achieved it with the Deputy Minister of Northern Ireland in attendance.

"The lads were outstanding, showed courage and battled throughout against a very strong Irish team, winning the game after being down to 10 men for the last 20 minutes.

"As always it's the greatest honour leading this group, now to look forward as we prepare to retain the Kentish Cup next month."



STAUENCH DEFENCE: Flt Lt Aaron Eyett

The action started early as Holmes saw a good chance from 18 yards miss at the near post.

Solid defence throughout from Cpl Brodie Gray and Flt Lt Aaron Eyett, superbly marshalled by team captain Royal Navy man Cpl Mark Drysdale, held out the hosts, who produced several counterattacks but just could not find the final touch or pass to alter the scoreboard.

Late drama saw RAF striker ASI Luke Preen given a straight red for an innocuous challenge with 20 minutes left. The forward, who was

back carrying out defensive duties, clumsily challenged with a boot raised and was sent off, reducing UKAF to 10 men.

White's team held out, despite the hosts creating chances in a nervous closing period.

UKAF now head to SHAPE, Belgium for a four-day training camp, before beginning their defence of the Kentish Cup on December 11.

All the Kentish Cup matches will be screened live on Forces.net.

Follow UKAFFC on Instagram @ukafffootball.



PROUD: Head coach Cpl Darryl White with team captain Cpl Mark Drysdale

## A goal-fest for UKAF Women

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| UKAF Women     | 7 |
| Irish DF Women | 0 |

THE WOMEN'S UKAF team stormed to a 7-0 win over the Irish Defence Forces to kick-start the evening of football at the Bluebell Stadium.

Leading 1-0 at the break through an Irish headed own goal, the floodgates opened with six scores in the second half – RAF star Fg Off Jeorgia Carr weighing in with a brace.

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





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**GRIDIRON**

## Losing Inters 'may be good for the sport'

RAF MUSTANGS American football team coach Sgt Paul Wakeford believes the recent Army Inter-Services victory could be the perfect fire to light up his side for 2025.

The Mustangs won the inaugural IS tournament in 2023 but lost out this year after losing to the Army Jackals, who also defeated the Navy.

Wakeford said: "Although this was not the outcome that we would have liked, having a new champion has done the sport of American football in the military a world of good."

The coach played quarterback for part of the Mustangs' final IS clash because of injuries.

He said: "The results have shown us where we are lacking depth in certain positions and that recruiting is just as important as ever. We need to focus on that but also on coaching existing players to give us extra resilience."

● Follow RAF American Football on Instagram @rafamericanfootball.

**SKATEBOARDING**



TRICKY CUSTOMERS: RAF aviators show their skills  
PHOTOS: CPL WILL DRUMMEE

## Skaters ready to Jam

ALL SERVICE skateboarding eyes are focused on Portsmouth as the Inter-Service championships gear up at Pitt Street Skatepark.

With the Royal Navy and Royal Marine Skateboarding Association hosting the event after their win last year, an expected field of 40 to 50 serving personnel and veterans from across all three Services are expected for the third annual event.

Jack Wallbridge, multiple UK Vert Series medallist, will be adding a bit of celebrity glamour to the occasion as he takes part in the judging, with Flt Lt Charlie Turnbull taking the captain's armband for the five-person aviator team.



Cpl Will Drummee, RAF Skateboarding media manager, said: "The event will feature a bit of everything, running under the name of Skate Jam, it will feature

two main parts to the day, with skaters of all levels – along with celebrity names on the judging panels – making for an exciting day."

The event will kick off with a shopping trolley full of prizes being moved around the park with skaters then being given the opportunity to show off tricks over various obstacles set up around the park, to empty the trolley of prizes.

Drummee said: "Prizes are awarded for skill, effort and creativity during the opening stages, before the knockout trick game – called SKATE – which sees all competitors perform tricks alternately with the last skater standing taking the crown."

Following the morning's action the main event of the day will be the Championship Skate Competition, where skaters will take on one-minute timed runs, showcasing their best moves for a panel of expert judges: Jack Wallbridge, editor of *Vertical Magazine*; local skate legend Greg Nowik; and Dan Judge, owner of Dangerous Joys.

The event is also being covered by BFBS Forces News.

● Follow RAF skateboarding @rafskateboarding.

# Cpl's Man of Match for UKAF

## But Germany take the honours

**RUGBY UNION**

**Daniel Abrahams**

UKAF'S RUGBY union stars suffered a frustrating evening of Remembrance rugby at Kingsholm stadium, Gloucester, losing 43-26 to Germany.

The evening also provided a chance to remember former UKAF Royal Navy star Steff Rees, who died during the International Defence Rugby Competition in France earlier this year.

UKAF captain Flt Lt Dave Manning said: "Firstly, it was a great occasion hosting the German national team at Kingsholm for the annual Remembrance match.

"It's always an honour playing in this fixture as we remember and pay our respects to the fallen, with this year being even more poignant given the more recent loss of one of our own in Steff Rees."

The visitors wasted no time in getting on the score sheet punishing a poor UKAF clearance – errors dogging the home side all night.

The converted try was followed quickly by a second after pressure on the UKAF try line.

|         |    |
|---------|----|
| UKAF    | 26 |
| Germany | 43 |

Having slowed the game down, the Brits held out until the 35th minute, when the visitors ran in a third try to make it 17-0.

UKAF replied in the final minute of the half following a maul and great run by ETME Will Riclesford for 17-5.

Manning took the start of the second half by the scruff of the neck as he broke through the German ranks to find ETME Riclesford for a converted score of 12-17.

The issue for the hosts was that with every great play they made, they followed it up with an error as a kick was charged down and Stein ran in for 12-22.



From a penalty, aviator Cpl Ryan Crowley broke the German lines and from the halfway line touched down between the posts for 19-22.

A UKAF box kick was then touched down by the Germans for 19-29 before Crowley produced another 'try of the night' collecting a kick to the corner by Army man Bdr Owain Davies, which Davies then converted for 26-29.

Having almost achieved parity UKAF then conceded two more tries for the final score of 43-26.

Manning, one of three RAF stars on show alongside Fg Off Alex Stanley and Man of the Match Crowley, added: "Germany fully deserved their victory as they capitalised on our errors and were clinical with their chances when they were presented.

"The guys were frustrated at the end as we felt we were unable to reach the levels we know we are capable of. Sometimes this happens, and we have to move on and focus on the next opportunity. This is where we want UKAF Rugby to be, playing international



AIRPOWER: Fg Off Alex Stanley takes clean lineout ball. Inset left, Man of the Match Cpl Ryan Crowley scored two wonder tries for UKAF  
PHOTOS: ALLIGIN

opponents such as Poland and Germany both at home and away, as we continue building the

brand of UKAF Rugby." ● Follow UKAF rugby union on Instagram @ukafrugby.



**Sport**

**VOLLEYBALL**

# Nato games cement relations with Allies



**Daniel Abrahams**

**RESULTS MAY** not have gone the way of the two RAF volleyball teams, but the AIRCOM Games in Amsterdam were the perfect warm-up for the upcoming Inter-Services.

The two teams, Hawks and Harriers, formed the second Service association to compete in this year's AIRCOM event, held every two years.

They played against fellow Nato countries Poland, USA, Belgium and Netherlands over four games.

AS1 Oliver Goode, Director of Development and Recruitment and player for the RAF Harriers, said: "We attended this event to strive for excellence. It will prepare us for the tough battles we will face at the Inter-Services. However, more than this, both teams played to consolidate the bonds of friendship with our Nato colleagues."

The Service's teams used the superb facilities at the Gymnasium of Sporthallen Zuid, Amsterdam, for a week-long training camp before the action began.

They played out four matches, with the men running the hosts close in a 2-1 loss.

Poland went on to win the men's competition, with the hosts



**NET GAIN:** AIRCOM games in Amsterdam help prepare for Inter-Services competition

taking the women's title.

Flt Lt Alex Clare, Chair of RAFVA, said: "AIRCOM was an exciting experience for all players and staff. It is always an honour to be able to put on an RAF shirt and compete abroad against other nations. All the players should be very proud, and I hope they took away many positive experiences from it"

He added: "Next month we are running a trials camp, which will bring new talent and

personalities into the RAFVA to help strengthen our teams so we can perform. The next two years is going to be very exciting for the association, with the inclusion of outdoor volleyball – beach and grass disciplines.

"We are also looking at other overseas opportunities and tours, providing more experiences for players at all levels."

● Follow RAF volleyball on Instagram @RAFVolleyballAssociation.

**SNOWSPORT**

# 24-hour ski challenge for para star Kelly



**NORDIC SKIER:** Former AS1 Lynsey Kelly

AS IF medalling and coaching in the Invictus Games wasn't enough, AS1 Lynsey Kelly (Ret'd) is kicking off an Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team (AFPST) challenge with a 24-hour skiathlon in Sweden.

In-Service Change manager Kelly took part in the 2023 Invictus Games in Dusseldorf, winning bronze medals in swimming and archery. Now she has taken up the '5 Series' fundraising challenge, an initiative taking place from December 2024 to September 2025, where AFPST athletes take part in five events across Europe.

The challenges include a 182km trek in Corsica, a 30km ski marathon in France, a trek from sea to summit in Spain and the NC500 cycle in Scotland within seven days, with the first trial being a 24-

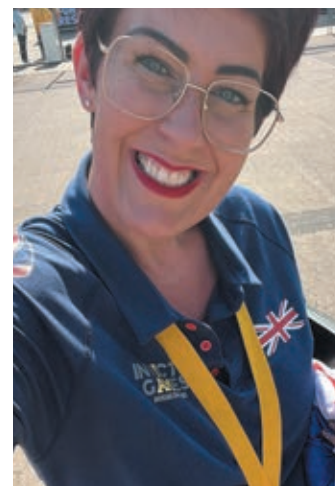
hour skiathlon in Idre Fjall, Sweden next month.

Kelly said: "In October 2023 I was introduced to AFPST and decided to push myself out of my comfort zone and tackle something that has always frightened me – snowsports. Now I specialise in Nordic skiing."

Kelly suffered leg injuries on ops in the Middle East in 2006 and was discharged from the RAF in 2010. She said: "As an independent Service charity AFPST exist to support the recovery of our wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans, like me.

"They aim to foster a sense of purpose, encourage success and rebuild self-confidence using the transformative power of para-snowsports.

"By motivating, engaging and inspiring athletes, they



**MEDALLIST:** Kelly at Invictus Games

can help restore physical and mental health. The aim is to break boundaries and show how courage and determination can achieve great things, and they do

this through an exhilarating and competitive snowsports programme.

"I've been lucky enough to be selected to represent the AFPST in their 24-hour Nordic skiathlon challenge. It will take determination and courage as myself and a small team of five other wounded, injured and sick athletes continuously ski for a full day in defiance of our chronic illnesses and disabilities to help showcase the transformative power of para-snowsports. There will always be two athletes skiing around the track and together we will hit our 24-hour target."

Kelly is also coach for the 2025 Invictus Games GB swim team.

Her JustGiving page can be found at: Lynsey Kelly – AFPST Sweden – 24 Hour Nordic Ski Challenge.



BOXING

# Axe aims to bounce back at York House

THE NEXT bout for Cpl Brad Axe is a capital one as he fights at the historic home of British boxing – York House, in London’s Bethnal Green.

The RAF fire instructor is looking to bounce back after his recent tough unanimous points defeat against Julian Delgado as part of the Transatlantic Boxing Clash in Brownsville, Texas.

He said: “It is massive for me to be boxing at York Hall, there is so much history there and although it is only a small venue it is huge in the sport, so really it does not come any bigger.

Speaking on his preparations for the December 6 bout, he added: “I feel great. I am into my training full-time, so it’s total focus, which I love. I am taking some leave to step up training before tapering off with a week to go.

“I am currently doing three sessions a day, which will remain in number, but they will be shorter and more intense.”

Axe produced a good display in the recent US event, which

could see him return on its card next year, when it is held in the UK.

He said: “I must stay professional, being one now. I always try to stay as fit as I can so if the phone rings I can say ‘yes’, as I did with America. The phone rang and I was ready to go.

“For now, I’ll be taking part in a few bouts to build up my career fights, but I did good things in the States and people, the right people, are talking about how I went about my business, which is all good.

“London promises to be another great night, although I don’t know my opponent yet.

“I’m hoping my supporters come along. I am feeling great and want to put on a show for everyone.”

Tickets for the Brawl at The Hall, promoted by TM14 and Neilson Boxing, are £60 standard and £100 ringside and are available from Axe himself. Contact him via his Instagram account: @brad\_axe.



**READY TO GO:**  
Brad Axe  
PHOTO:  
MYLES  
URIEL

BMX

# Bike pair compete at home of BMX

SERVICE BMX is hoping for a one-two knockout blow as they field a duo of riders for the first time at the USA Grand National event in Tulsa.

The RAF team of Sgt Matt Haywood and Cpl Chris Hughes will ride at the four-day event, which also includes the Race of Champions, with Haywood looking to better his last effort, when he crashed when placed for a finals berth. Taylor will be making his debut bow at the Tulsa Expo Centre in Oklahoma.

Haywood said: “This is the biggest race on the planet, it is bigger than the Worlds because there are that many people who

race BMX in the USA. The qualifying rounds start at 7am and end at midnight. It is indoors and the atmosphere is amazing.”

Haywood missed out on the Race of Champions finals by one spot in 2022.

He said: “It’s the home of BMX, America, so I am beyond excited to race there again and am desperate to make a real mark this year after going so close last time out.

“The event is the accumulation of the US BMX national series, where national champions are crowned. The ROC is decided qualifying wise, but as I am racing the open event, I am eligible. I’m

# U.S. too strong for weakened Air Force side

Gardiner has 12 players missing in action

|             |    |
|-------------|----|
| RAF         | 7  |
| US Military | 33 |

RUGBY UNION

## Daniel Abrahams

A HEAVILY depleted RAF men’s rugby union side fought out a heavy 33-7 defeat to close out the USA military team’s UK tour in a full-blooded game at Aldershot.

Head coach FS Tom Gardiner, who has seen real positives in being able to run his eye on several new players, had a tough task of fielding a competitive team.

He was without 12 of his first-choice players due to the U23s playing their Inter-Service opener against the Royal Navy and the RAF Spitfires Sevens competing in Singapore.

Gardiner said: “At one point I was on the team sheet, it had got that bad. We did struggle. We fielded three veteran players, but it has also given me the opportunity to run my eye over a lot of players.

“We have left no stone unturned. I am happy where we are. Players have been given the opportunity to show what they have. It was a proud night for all involved.”

In just their second warm-up match for next year’s IS



**NO SURRENDER:** AS1 Dylan Martin grabs a try for RAF in last 10 minutes of game  
PHOTO: AS1 JAMES BRAITHWAITE

championships, the RAF, who played as a President’s Select team, fought out a full-blooded tussle under the lights with their American counterparts.

The visitors ran in three tries in the opening 40 minutes and, after conceding two more, AS1 Dylan Martin touched down a converted try for the aviators.

Gardiner added: “We were all

proud to have competed in the RAF jersey and to have helped the US team complete their tour.

“We dug deep and kept competing, scoring a try in the last 10 minutes of the game. That resilience shows how committed we were to this game and making a match of it.”

● Follow RAF rugby union on Instagram @rafrugbyunion.



**HAYWOOD:**  
Tulsa return

The USA BMX Grand Nationals run from November 27 to December 1, with the racing screened on YouTube @

usabmxvideos.  
● Follow RAF BMX on Facebook @Royal Air Force BMX Race Team.



5

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



**UKAF beat Irish in Lisburn** See p23

WEIGHTLIFTING

# We're the military heavy-lift experts



## Three Inter-Services titles out of four for RAF 'Olympic' stars

### Daniel Abrahams

RAF OLYMPIC weightlifting wrote itself into Service sporting history after winning a third Inter-Service championship in a row and gaining Tier 2 sport status on the same day.

Cosford hosted the fourth IS tournament, with victory further solidifying the Royal Air Force's status as the dominant powerhouse of military lifting.

With three wins out of four competitions since Olympic weightlifting was officially recognised as a military sport, the RAF claimed nine of the 12 medals available at the championships.

RAF Olympic Weightlifting Association and UKAF chairman Sqn Ldr James Roden said: "The success of this competition not only highlighted the athletes' strength and dedication but also underscored the growing prominence of the sport within military circles.

"This significant move, of Tier 2 status, promises to bring more resources and support to the sport, fostering further growth and recognition within the military. British Weightlifting officials were present at the event, emphasising the increasing professionalism and recognition of military weightlifting.

With Olympic weightlifting's new Tier 2 status, the future of military weightlifting looks brighter than ever."

The battle, which would rage across four competitions, began with RAF lifters Cpl Ellie McManus and Flt Lt Kim Adams taking silver and bronze respectively in the lightweight female category, behind Army lifter SSgt Charlotte Spence.

Next up, the lightweight male category was dominated by the RAF, with AS1 Josh Hibbs claiming gold for an RAF one-two-three as Cpl Luke Thompson took silver,



SILVER MEDAL: Lightweight Cpl Ellie McManus

and Cpl Chris Craig bronze.

Aviator Cpl Rebecca Nesbit, returning from an 18-month injury hiatus, grabbed silver for the RAF in the heavyweight category, and newcomer Cpl Reine Grant earned a commendable bronze on her IS debut, as Army lifter Sgt Kirsty Allen took gold.

The heavyweight male category then saw Cpl Tom Eeles and Cpl Michael Cutler take silver and bronze, rounding out an impressive podium for the host team overall, with Royal Navy lifter S/Lt James Wales setting a new competition record with a total lift of 300kg, to claim gold.

● Follow RAF Olympic Weightlifting on Instagram @raf\_weight\_lifting.

HEAVYWEIGHT: RAF's Cpl Tom Eeles secured runners-up spot in his category





# R'n'R



**Win!**

**Win classic cop show Blu-ray boxset ● p3**

**Carly's Christmas celebration – win her new CD**

● See page 3

**Announcements:**  
p6-7  
**Puzzles:** p8





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

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



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

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH





**Music**

**Carly Paoli**  
The Christmas Collection

# Carly's Christmas cracker

**C**ARLY PAOLI loves Christmas – and the celebrated British/Italian soprano recently released her first Christmas album.

*Carly Paoli The Christmas Collection* features 15 festive tracks, a mix of seasonal classics and medleys including *Silent Night* and *Let It Snow*. Highlights include a duet with American singer David Phelps on *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* and with musical theatre star Rachel John on *My Christmas Dream*.

A star of the classical and crossover genres, Carly has earned international acclaim and shared the stage with top names including Andrea Bocelli, Elaine Paige, Aled Jones and Alfie Boe. And she's performed at the Rockefeller Center's iconic Rainbow Room in New York with Sir Rod Stewart in aid of The King's Foundation.

Wiltshire-based Carly (pictured) said: "I've always been captivated by the magic and warmth of the Christmas season. This album is a celebration of that magic and a tribute to the joy and togetherness that define this time of year. I hope it brings as much joy to my listeners as it has brought to me in creating it."

On December 21 she returns to her home county of Nottinghamshire for a special Christmas concert at Nottingham's Albert Hall. *Christmas With Carly Paoli and Friends* will feature performances from three local choirs: Direction Theatre Arts from Chesterfield, where Carly trained and taught; the Hardy Alexandra Dance



Company from Derby; and Razzamataz Theatre Schools.

She's delighted to be singing on the album's first two tracks with children from Direction Theatre Arts. She said: "It takes me back home, where I trained from 13 to 17, and they are still going strong. I went on to study in London and the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, and when I left the Northern I went back and taught at Direction Theatre Arts. They feel like family, it was special to be able to involve them with the Christmas album. And I'm so excited they will be joining me in Nottingham for the Christmas show."

Carly's mother's family hail from Puglia in southern Italy – the heel of the boot – and earlier this year she sang there with Rachel John, who starred in *Hamilton* in the West End.

She said: "We sang together at a concert in the summer, Rachel will also be singing with me in Nottingham on December 21. The gorgeous, original song we sing on the album, *My Christmas Dream*, was written specially for me by Romano Musumarra who has worked with greats like Pavarotti and Celine Dion."

When Carly sang with Sir Rod they performed *Manhattan* as a duet then a medley of songs by Judy Garland.

Carly said: "He was amazing, he's a very warm person and all his band you could tell just

absolutely adored him – he's just a pro. It was wonderful, we had a little dance break in the middle, we waltzed, it felt like that old school magic of the Great American Songbook."

She added: "I'm really excited about the Christmas concert, it's in a beautiful venue, it has the most glorious acoustics and I'll be on stage with about 70 kids, ranging in age from 7 to 13. They're fantastic, they give 250 per cent."

"Also with me will be The Gentlemen Songsters, a fantastic 30-piece male voice choir, and a lovely Italian singer called Michele Intona, who is an incredible guitarist as well."

"And I've got a sparkly microphone – the audience will need their sunglasses," she laughed.

Go to: [carlypaoli.com/events/](http://carlypaoli.com/events/) for more information.

## Win festive album

WE HAVE copies of Carly's Christmas CD to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

**Who is the musical theatre star Carly duets with on *My Christmas Dream*?**

**Email your answer, marked Carly Paoli CD competition, to:**

**tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 13.**



**Film Review**

**Elton John: Never Too Late (12A)**  
Out now

# Creating rock great Elton John

**E**LTON JOHN: *Never Too Late* explores the turbulent journey of one of rock's biggest legends, as he prepares for the final show of his farewell tour at LA's Dodger Stadium, where he famously performed at the height of his stardom.

Reflecting on his life, Elton addresses questions of legacy and family, desiring to spend his days with David Furnish and their two children. Born Reginald Dwight, his home life was marked by tension, but the honky-tonk sound of Winifred Atwell's piano ignited a passion for music that offered an escape and a way to express his personality. Adopting the stage name 'Elton John' allowed him to transform, shedding his past and embracing an extravagant new identity in rebellion against his restrictive upbringing.

The film delves into Elton's collaboration with Bernie Taupin, whose lyrics Elton brought to life instantly at times. A memorable scene shows Elton running through his writing process, pulling a scrap of crumpled paper out from a bunch that Bernie had written about his girlfriend, to which he starts playing, noting how the early use of the word 'ballerina' means that this should be a slower song: this is of course, *Tiny Dancer*. Many of these early, serendipitous creations from 1970-75 are captured with a gleeful nostalgia, highlighting the cultural impact that his music has achieved.

Elton's breakthrough at LA's Troubadour Club is a key moment, marking his American debut and setting off a wave of 'Beatlemania' for his



**LONG CAREER:** Elton has enjoyed more than 60 years at the top

music. Though the documentary touches lightly on Elton's struggles with his sexuality, his challenging relationship with his manager John Reid, and his drug use, these darker moments are ultimately overshadowed by his resilience and eventual happiness.

Despite glossing over some hardships, *Never Too Late* is a tightly focused documentary that celebrates Elton's accomplishments and impact. While at times sanitised, feeling like it wants to barrel through the bad times to get to its happy ending, the film's homage to Elton's legacy is undeniably moving.

**Four out of five rounds** ●●●●  
*Review by Sam Cooney*



**DVDs**

**Columbo: The Final Years 1989-2003**  
**The Complete Collection (12)**  
Out now on Blu-ray (Fabulous Films Ltd/Spirit Ents)

# Peter's the Falk of the town



**T**HE ORIGINAL run of the classic cop show *Columbo*, starring Peter Falk in his award-winning role as the trench coat-wearing, cigar-chomping legendary police lieutenant, ended in 1978 but the series triumphantly returned in 1989 with an older and wiser Columbo.

The Blu-ray boxset of *Columbo: The Final Years* includes the last 24 episodes of this enduring TV series that ran from 1989-2003.

The incredible wealth of guest stars features Little Richard, George Hamilton, Anthony Andrews, Ian McShane, Patrick McGeehan, Juliet Mills, Faye Dunaway, William Shatner, Rod Steiger, Billy Connolly and many more.

Falk had two Oscar nominations in his lifetime and starred in more than 50 films, but,

it's said, never stopped wanting to make more episodes of *Columbo*.

In 2015 Falk had a street renamed after him in his hometown of Ossining, New York. At the unveiling Falk revealed the sign by removing a trademark raincoat.

One lucky reader could win the Blu-ray boxset (rrp £119.99) – for your chance to own it, simply answer this question correctly:

**What was the name of Peter Falk's hometown?**

Email your answer, marked *Columbo* boxset 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 December 13.





**Theatre**  
**Ghost Stories**  
UK tour

# Childhood pals know secret to a scary story

**AFTER RECORD-BREAKING, sell-out productions and a hit film, Andy Nyman and Jeremy Dyson's supernatural sensation *Ghost Stories* starts a full UK tour early next year.**

The Olivier Award-nominated show opens at the Churchill Theatre, Bromley on January 17, 2025. It then goes on to visit various venues nationwide including Richmond, Bath, Sheffield, Milton Keynes, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Norwich, Nottingham, Birmingham, Leicester, Brighton, Malvern and Cardiff. Casting is to be announced.

When Professor Goodman, arch-sceptic out to debunk the paranormal, embarks on an investigation of three apparent hauntings – as recounted by a night-watchman, a teenage boy, and a businessman awaiting his first child – Goodman finds himself at the outer limits of rationality, and fast running out of explanations.

Dyson and Nyman said: “We are beyond excited that *Ghost Stories* will be scaring the hell out of audiences around the country in its first ever full national tour. It’s 15 years since we first brought screams, laughs, jumps and killer twists to the theatre and we can’t wait to do it again. Are you brave enough to book?”

Despite the play having



**WRITERS:**  
Andy Nyman  
and Jeremy  
Dyson

premiered 14 years ago and a film adaptation starring Martin Freeman and Paul Whitehouse being released in 2018, the secrets that make it such an unusual and successful show have remained elusive – well-guarded by both its creative team and audiences.

Actor, director and writer Nyman, who appeared in the film, explained: “Secrets are precious. If you give people a secret that they really enjoy and you ask them nicely to keep it, they do.”

If anyone should know about secrets, it’s Nyman. Before writing *Ghost Stories*, he was the man behind many of Derren Brown’s mystery-filled stage shows and early TV performances.

The secretiveness with *Ghost Stories*, Nyman said, was born out of frustration that these days

“everything is spoiled for you. Every single film and television trailer ruins plot points. Jeremy and I love the experience of telling people a really good story without them knowing anything about it in advance. You feel the buzz in the audience; it’s an exciting thing to sit and watch.”

He added: “*Ghost Stories* is a 90-minute scary, thrill-ride experience about a professor of parapsychology who investigates three inexplicable hauntings, a rattling hour-and-a-half that will make you roar with laughter, leap out of your seats and talk about it for a very long time.”

Nyman and co-writer Dyson, best known for his work with *The League of Gentlemen*, have a long history that reaches back far beyond the start of their *Ghost Stories* journey, but begins

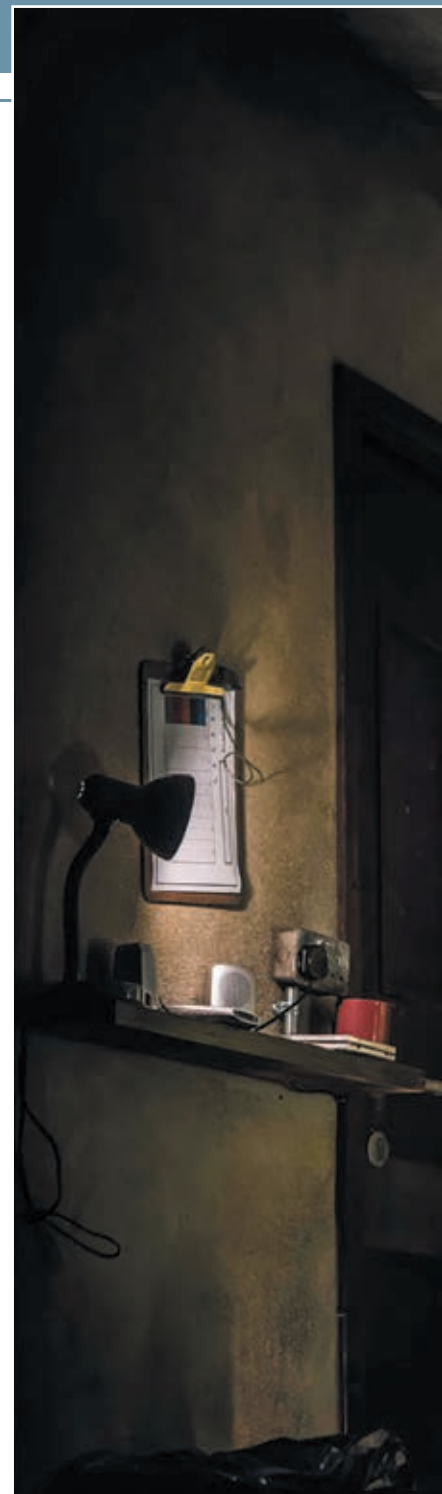
with horror and a shared love of the genre that saw them forge a teenage friendship.

“It probably started, for me, with *Scooby Doo*,” said Dyson of his infatuation with creepy tales. “There were a lot of scary things for kids around in the 70s, and lots I was enchanted by. *Doctor Who* would have been a part of that, which in the 70s had a real horror edge to it. So, the groundwork was done by the time I was seven or eight years old. People used to buy me collections of ghost stories for my birthdays. They were supposed to be for kids, but they were the most terrifying tales.”

Throw in horror double bills on BBC2, screened at a time when there were only a trio of channels available so “whoever was doing the programming just picked the best stuff,” and public safety films that were as terrifying as any big screen offering, and you have a culture that bred a shared sensibility, certainly between Nyman and Dyson, if not a much wider generation of horror fans.

“It’s a very English genre,” said Dyson. “Certainly when it comes to the supernatural side of things. The English sensibility defined a lot of that. It’s a very English tradition, and there’s no question that’s part of what we’re celebrating in *Ghost Stories*.”

“I think it’s hard to do well,” he added. “You have to have a love



both for theatre and for horror. It’s a bit like comedy. People talk about comedy writers having funny bones. I think you need scary bones to write horror.”

Nyman added: “If people are paying their hard-earned money to see a show you’re putting on, you have a massive



**Theatre**  
**Picture You Dead**  
UK tour

# Star cast make it seventh heaven for

**A STAR** cast has been announced for the world premiere of the new stage production *Picture You Dead*, adapted from the bestselling novel by top crime writer Peter James.

A UK tour of the show opens on February 6, 2025 at High Wycombe’s Swan Theatre then goes to another 21 venues, culminating at the Palace Theatre, Southend from July 22-26.

2024 National Television Award-winning actor Peter Ash will return to the stage, following his acclaimed role and exit from *Coronation Street* in September. Peter’s numerous credits include

*Footballers’ Wives* and the lead role in the National Theatre’s *War Horse*. Joining him is Fiona Wade who, following 11 years in *Emmerdale*, took to the stage earlier this year in the hit *2:22 A Ghost Story*. She will soon be seen in the highly anticipated Fox comedy series *Going Dutch*.

West End favourite Jodie Steele (*Wicked*, *Heathers*, *SIX*) also joins the cast and one of the nation’s favourite TV doctors, George Rainsford (*Casualty*, *Call the Midwife*) will return to reprise the role of James’s famous detective, DSI Roy Grace, which he played in the 2023 hit production of *Wish You Were Dead*.

George will also reunite with



**TV FAVOURITES:** (from left) Fiona Wade, Peter Ash and George Rainsford will be joined by West End star Jodie Steele, inset right

Fiona, who he starred with in *2:22 A Ghost Story*. From May 20, 2025, presenter and *Strictly Come Dancing* champion Ore Oduba

(*Pretty Woman* and *Rocky Horror Show*), will join the cast as Stuart Piper.

*Picture You Dead* is the

seventh James book to be adapted for the stage by award-winning writer Shaun McKenna.

James said: “It is truly incredible



Edited by Tracey Allen



**DARK:** Cast shot from previous *Ghost Stories* production

responsibility to give them more than they pay for. It's not fair to think 'that's good enough, it will be fine', you have to over-deliver. You've got to lose sleep over it.

"When the show is up and working and you keep tweaking it

to get it right, and you see people going away happy, you know the main reason you've got to that place is you've felt a responsibility and you've worked hard at it."

● Go to: [ghoststoriesplay.com](http://ghoststoriesplay.com) for venue and booking details.

## James adaptation

for me to see the seventh stage adaptation of my books coming to theatres in 2025. I am so grateful to the hundreds of thousands of people around the country who have come to their local theatre and enjoyed the plays over the last 10 years, and I am thrilled to tell you all that I think this new play is the best one so far.

"On top of that, I could not be more delighted by the fantastic cast that we have assembled – they are all brilliant actors and it's going to be a great and thrilling night at the theatre."

The story of *Picture You Dead* was inspired by Peter's meeting

with real-life art forger and now acclaimed copyist David Henty. Set in Brighton, DSI Grace investigates a cold case that leads him to the rarefied air of fine art, but beneath the respectable veneer lurks a dark underworld of greed, deception and murder.

When an unsuspecting couple unwittingly buy a potentially long-lost masterpiece in a car boot sale, they discover that their dream find is about to turn into their worst nightmare and only Grace can stop them from paying the ultimate price.

● Go to: [peterjames.com](http://peterjames.com) for more details.



### Exhibitions

#### The Great Mughals

V&A, London

# Fine pieces from the lavish Mughal court on show at the V&A

**A** LANDMARK exhibition about the monumental artistic achievements of the 'Golden Age' of the Mughal court is now on at London's Victoria & Albert Museum.

Running until May 5, 2025, *The Great Mughals: Art, Architecture and Opulence* celebrates the extraordinary creative output and internationalist culture of Mughal Hindustan during the age of its greatest emperors (c. 1560-1660).

The exhibition shines a light on one of the wealthiest courts in the world and tells the story of an immense early modern empire, largely untold within the UK.

Its curator, Susan Stronge, said: "This is the first exhibition to reveal the internationalist art and culture of the Mughal court. Hindustani artists, Iranian masters and even a few Europeans came together in the imperial workshops to create a new, hybrid art. We are pleased to display some of their greatest creations, many of which have never been exhibited before."

The Mughal dynasty was founded in 1526 by Babur, a Timurid prince and ruler from Central Asia. At its peak it was one of the wealthiest and most progressive empires in the world, and extended from Kabul in present-day Afghanistan, to the borders of the Deccan sultanates in the south of the subcontinent, and from Gujarat in the west to present-day Bangladesh in the east.

The exhibition will showcase more than 200 objects across three sections spanning the reigns of Emperors Akbar (r.1556-1605) Jahangir (r.1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658) and will celebrate the craftsmanship and creativity of their court workshops.

A V&A spokesperson said: "Rarely shown paintings and illustrated manuscripts not seen for a generation will be on display alongside delicate textiles, brilliantly coloured carpets and fine objects of mother of pearl, rock crystal, jade and precious metals.

"A particular focus is on examining the extraordinary hybrid art created in the imperial workshops by Iranian and Hindustani artists and craftsmen working in the Persian-speaking court and producing work of exceptional quality. It will explore the influence of European art brought to the court by Christian missionaries, foreign ambassadors, and merchants."

● Go to: [vam.ac.uk](http://vam.ac.uk) for further information.



**ABOVE:** Portrait of Shah Jahan holding an emerald by Muhammad 'Abed, borders by Harif, c. 1628. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



**LEFT:** Dagger. Probably Agra, c.1610-20. Nephrite jade hilt and scabbard set with rubies, emeralds and a pearl in kundani settings; watered steel blade with gold-overlaid decoration © The Al Thani Collection 2015. All rights reserved. Photograph taken by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd



**BELOW:** A zebra presented to the Mughal emperor Jahangir, by Mansur, 1621, Mughal court workshops. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper © Victoria and Albert Museum, London





## Your Announcements

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### Death

**D'IVRY GHI** It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of WO Ghi d'Ivry, aged 96, a distinguished Royal Air Force Warrant Officer who dedicated 37 years of his life to service in Communications. Ghi was a beloved father, grandfather, and great-grandfather whose unwavering love and wisdom touched the lives of all who knew him.

A life well-lived and a legacy of devotion, strength and kindness will remain forever in our hearts. Rest in peace, Ghi.



**WO Ghi d'IVRY**

### Reunions

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

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

**103RD Entry RAF Halton Apprentices Reunion** October 17, 2025 at the The Park House Hotel in Shifnal, TF11 9BA,

7pm. Contact Mick Woodhouse on: 07811 401040, email: [mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com](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

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

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

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

**SUAS** – have you been a member of Southampton University Air Squadron as a student or staff member? If so, please join our Facebook page, 'Southampton UAS Association' or email: [6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk](mailto:6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk) to join our association community so that we can welcome you back.

**IF** you trained as an RAF Administrative Apprentice (or are related to one) we would be delighted to welcome you to the RAFAA Association.

Please see: [rafadappasn.org](http://rafadappasn.org); or contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

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

**RAF Physical Training Instructors Association** holds an Annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend plus locally organised events. Please contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown on: [ptisec@outlook.com](mailto:ptisec@outlook.com) for membership enquiries. To become a member of the Association you will have had to have successfully passed the RAF Physical Training Instructors Basic Training Course. The Association was formed in 1996 to bring together serving and retired PTIs.

### RAF Music Services live

**THE** Band of the RAF Regiment are at the Winston Churchill Hall Theatre, Ruislip on December 6. Go to: [raf.mod.uk/display-teams-raf-music-services/live-dates/](http://raf.mod.uk/display-teams-raf-music-services/live-dates/) for ticket details.

### Concert for SSAFA

**EUROPEAN** Space Agency (ESA) astronaut and former Army officer Tim Peake will read a lesson at the annual carol concert for Armed Forces charity SSAFA on December 4 at The Guard's Chapel, Wellington Barracks, London, starting at 7pm. The concert will include performances from the soprano Sofia Kirwan-Baez, the Band of the Scots Guards and the Chapel Choir.



**COMMEMORATION:** St James' Church, Buttermere where the service was held. *Inset*, the memorial plaque

## Tribute to fallen crew

A REMEMBRANCE service was held recently at St James' Church, Buttermere in the Lake District to commemorate eight Royal Canadian Air Force airmen who tragically died 80 years ago when their Wellington bomber crashed on Red Pike in the Lake District.

The service concluded with the unveiling of a memorial plaque – crafted from local Honister green slate – which now stands in the church as a lasting tribute to the crew and their sacrifice during World War II.

The service was led by the Suffragan Bishop of Penrith, Rt Rev Rob Saner-Haigh, and included contributions from Rev Barbara Robinson (curate), who arranged and coordinated the event, Rev Charles Hope (rural dean), Rev Canon Jane Charman and Rev (Sqn Ldr) Paul Sweeting.

The Deputy Lieutenant of Cumbria, Dr Jim Cox, unveiled the plaque in front of a congregation of dignitaries, local residents and supporters who gathered to honour the memory of the fallen airmen.

The Wellington crashed on June 16, 1944 during a cross-country training flight in poor weather conditions, when the bomber went off course.

The airmen thought that they were descending to a safe landing at Crosby-on-Eden airfield, but their aircraft struck the ridge near Red Pike, killing all eight crew members instantly.

RAF Mountain Rescue teams, alongside local civilians, carried

out the challenging recovery mission in the days following the crash

The names of the crew – PO Albert Digby Cooper, Fg Off Frederick Allen Dixon, Flt Lt Emil Unterseher, Fg Off Daniel

**T i t l e m a n ,**  
Sgt George McCrimmon  
Anderson,  
Fg Off Roy Edward  
Simonson, WO  
George Richard Coathup and  
Sgt Campbell McRae Hodges – are now permanently inscribed on the plaque.

The idea for a permanent memorial

plaque was first proposed in 2019 by a group of local residents and a long-time visitor and supporter of Buttermere and its church. It was suggested the memorial should be placed in St James' Church – a location that has a clear line of sight to the crash site on Red Pike, said a spokesperson for the group.

"Honister Slate Mine was approached to support the endeavour, crafting the plaque from their renowned Westmorland Green Slate. Rev Robinson played a key role in securing the necessary permissions to ensure the plaque could be installed in the church," the spokesperson added.

Rob Jones, from Honister Slate Mine, said: "It's a privilege to have been part of this memorial, connecting the Lake District's natural heritage with a story of profound courage and sacrifice."

"We hope this plaque provides a space for reflection and remembrance."



### How to use our service

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**Your Announcements**

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# Nostalgic return to Wycombe

A CHANCE encounter led to an emotional return to RAF High Wycombe for Ian Mackinson recently – 60 years after he was stationed there as a teenager, writes *Laurence Parker*.

Family friend and former police officer Adam Seymour told a member of the RAF Police at Wycombe that Ian was celebrating his 80th birthday. Ian, his wife Jacqui and Adam were then invited to visit the station that held so many memories.

Ian's father served at RAF Geilenkirchen in Germany.

"Joining the RAF was the natural thing to do," said Ian, whose brother had already signed up. "Dad said to me that if you pass the induction exam you can follow your brother to RAF Cosford as a boy entrant."

In October 1960, aged 16, he started 18 months of training at Cosford. After qualifying as a Telegraphist II Ian was sent to RAF Bomber Command HQ at High Wycombe in April 1963.

He remembered: "It was very regimented there in those days. The discipline levels were probably similar to the 1940s and 50s. Between 1 and 3 sites you had to march.

"There was a mirror in the guardroom where you had to check your attire before leaving camp. If a 'Snowdrop' (military policeman) didn't like the look of you, you were sent back to be inspected again."

His role involved shift work in the radio shack or teleprinter rooms and working on anything from Morse Code to teleprinting. "There wasn't much here in those days – the guardroom, NAAFI, Fulton Block, Mess, WAAF's quarters and the Sergeants' Mess," he said.

He added: "It was a structured environment that was enclosed. There was a security about being amongst people you were happy to be with."

During the great snowfall of 1963 Ian helped to deliver food



**RETURN:** Ian and Jacqui back at RAF High Wycombe. *Inset*, Ian as young airman

parcels to outlying villages and fix wooden ploughs to Land Rovers to help keep the roads open.

After leaving the RAF in 1964 he worked for Rothschilds Bank and Air France and spent 10 years in China before retiring at 52. He met Jacqui in 1967 while she was working at Bradenham Manor.

# RAF badges help Fund

**EXCLUSIVE:**  
The new badges



THE RAF has launched metal Flying and Qualification badges for No2 and No7 Service Dress which can be bought on the RAF Benevolent Fund's website, for £15 plus p&p, with profits going to charity.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "The Fund has worked closely with the Aircrew Profession Advisor Team and Thales UK to make the badges. They are now available for sale to eligible Regular, Reserve and RAF Air Cadet personnel."

The seven exclusive RAF Flying Profession and Qualification badges in the collection, all approved by the Ministry of Defence, have been crafted from premium zinc alloy and showcase the iconic RAF wings, with intricate detailing highlighting key features such


as The King's Tudor Crown and the laurel wreath, as well as the unique details of each profession.


The Professions and Qualifications include Pilot, Mission Aircrew, Airborne Specialist, Parachute Jump Instructor, Reserve Pilot (Air Experience), Reserve Pilot (Glider), and Space Operator.

Neil Tomlin, the Fund's head of engagement, said: "We are delighted to have been asked to partner with the RAF and Thales UK in this project.

"The heritage designs and meticulous detail will complement RAF uniforms when worn and we are very proud to have been part of this unique opportunity."

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






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The official voice of the Royal Air Force



# R'n'R



## Prize Crossword No. 374

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the nine letters in yellow squares to find an RAF term

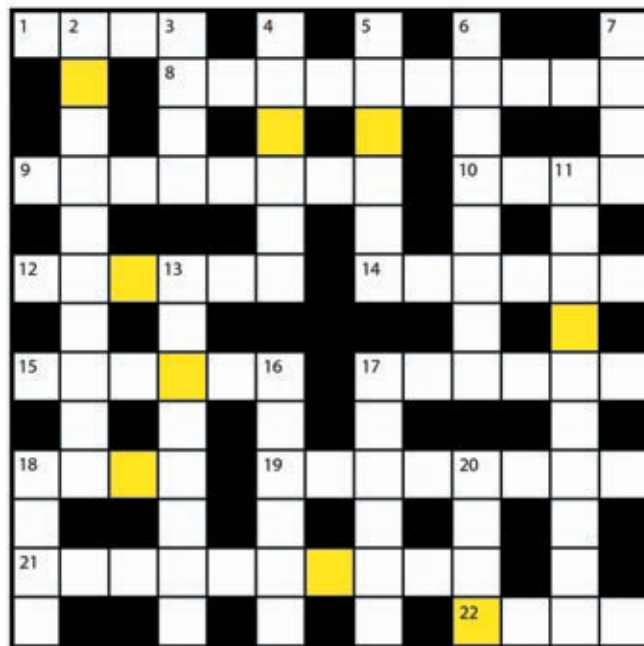
### Across

- 1. See 9 Across
- 8. Rising agent in the morning (5,5)
- 9. **And 1 Across.** Maybe manager lifts anti-ballistic missile drill (8,4)
- 10. Chilly fish has left (4)
- 12. **And 6 Down.** Bold linebacker created Cold War crisis (6,8)
- 14. Cheeky dog I give food (6)
- 15. For a long time I seem empty about form of discrimination (6)
- 17. Celtic grand to troubled Celia (6)
- 18. Little brother bought plant (4)
- 19. Are fired up by private (8)
- 21. They don't like being bowled over (10)
- 22. First sampled our yummy adzuki beans (4)

### Down

- 2. Lawyer who's flying high? (5,5)
- 3. Talk about first person omissions (4)
- 4. Underground explorer north of where The Beatles played (6)
- 5. Makes good after morning finishes (6)
- 6. See 12 Across
- 7. Slip and slide into seedy row (4)
- 11. Spied dolly, bedraggled and leaning to one side (10)
- 13. Cool! I'm embraced by boy in support (4-4)
- 16. **And 17 Down.** Granted maker awkward WWII operation (6,6)
- 17. See 16 Down
- 18. Cut bark (4)
- 20. Missing pot, nitpicker causes commotion (4)

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by December 13, 2024. Prize Crossword No. 373 winner is: L Morgan, Birmingham.



### Solution to Crossword No. 373

Across – 1. Edit 8. Wellington 9. Instruct 10. Stew 12. Engine 14. Reeled 15. Wonder 17. Pilots 18. Star 19. Shawbury 21. Evacuation 22. Drew  
Down – 2. Down And Out 3. Twit 4. Clause 5. Victor 6. Eggshell 7. Snow 11. Electorate 13. Indirect 16. Rascal 17. Placid 18. Shed 20. Band  
RAF term – Helicopter

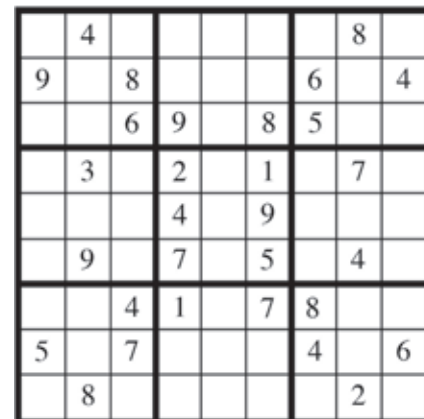
Name: .....  
Address: .....  
.....  
.....  
RAF term: ..... Crossword No. 374



## Prize Su Doku No. 384

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 13, 2024. The winner of Su Doku No: 382 is: Suzie Brewer, Farnham.



### Solution to Su Doku No. 383

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



## Film Review Nickel Boys (12A)

In cinemas now

# US reform school racism

**I**N *NICKEL Boys* we are immersed in the lives of two young men enduring brutal confinement at a reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida.

Elwood (Ethan Herisse) is a bright, idealistic black teenager caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, arrested as an unwitting passenger in a stolen car. Falsely accused, he is sent to The Nickel Academy, where young black men like him face cruel, relentless abuse, where so many lives are lost, brushed under society's carpet lest something truly fundamental should change.

At Nickel, Elwood meets Turner (Brandon Wilson), a hardened realist who sees Elwood's integrity as dangerously naive. Turner bluntly outlines the only ways out of Nickel: death, murder, ageing out, or escape, though he argues that running is futile when the world beyond Nickel is just the same – that Nickel is just a distillation of the prejudice, cruelty and hopelessness of society.

Based on Colson Whitehead's award-winning novel and inspired by real events, *Nickel*



**MOMENTS OF HOPE:** Brutalised Turner (Brandon Wilson) and Elwood (Ethan Herisse)

*Boys* makes a profound stylistic choice by showing the world through Elwood and Turner's eyes. Early on, we witness Elwood's childlike wonder at the world – a Christmas tree seen from his small height, his mother ironing, or his own reflection in a shop window as he watches, with others, Martin Luther King Jr. delivering an impassioned speech on television. This personal, observational lens offers an intimate view, capturing

his innocence in striking contrast to the horrors that lie ahead. The film's committed first-person perspective style is often poetic and powerful, though it takes a while to adjust. As Elwood's journey darkens, we feel his terror, resilience and brief glimpses of hope first-hand, in a story that unflinchingly explores the violence of systemic racism and its impact on individual lives. **3 roundels out of 5** Review by Sam Cooney



## DVDs

### Cuckoo (15)

On Blu-ray and DVD now, Dazzler Media



# Gretchen's a Cuckoo in the nest

**EUPHORIA** STAR Hunter Schafer plays 17-year-old Gretchen in writer-director Tilman Singer's (*Luz*) new horror *Cuckoo*.

Gretchen reluctantly leaves her American home to live with her father, who has just moved into a resort in the German Alps with his new family. Arriving at their future residence, something doesn't seem right in this tranquil vacation paradise.

The teenager is plagued by strange noises and bloody visions, until she discovers a shocking secret that also concerns her own family...

*Cuckoo* also stars Dan Stephens (*Abigail*, *Downton Abbey*) and Jessica Henwick (*The Royal Hotel*), and has been described as 'an



**TROUBLED:** Gretchen (Hunter Schafer)

unsettling cult gem for horror fans everywhere.'



We have copies of *Cuckoo* on DVD up for grabs. For your chance to own one, tell us:

### Who directed Cuckoo?

Email your answer, marked *Cuckoo* DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 13.