

The Forces' favourite paper

Belgian's attack on HQ of the Gestapo
● See page 17



WRAF service inspires a novel
● R'n'R page 5



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, April 4, 2025
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Win!

Win!

RAF NEWS

Farewell to Paddy, last of The Few

See pages 14, 15 and 19 for tributes to Group Captain John Hemingway DFC



Rugby
Ft Lts in Six Nations

● See p23



Netball
IS triumph for Masters



● See page p27

Football
Inters hope fizzles out



● See page p28

End of the Puma era



PUMA CREWS launched an emotional farewell tour of the UK as the frontline helicopter bows out from RAF service after more than 50 years of operational duty. The drawdown will see Puma replaced by six new H145 aircraft in Cyprus and Brunei next year as Defence chiefs develop plans for a new battlefield helicopter. ● See page 3

BiteSize

“Working with our Allied partners strengthens our ability to provide global security,”

Sqn Ldr Tim Richards of 51 Sqn
See p9



“It’s a love story and an adventure – a rock’n’roll rollercoaster,”

Katie Tonkinson co-stars as Raven in *Bat Out of Hell the Musical*
See R’n’R p4-5



“We didn’t manage to get a foothold in the game,”

Sgt Chris Hamilton after men’s SRT footballers beaten 3-0 by Navy in the Inter-Services
See p28



Coalition peace bid

Staff Reporter

UK AND French military chiefs held talks to spearhead European efforts to secure lasting peace in Ukraine.

It’s the third Anglo-French defence meeting and continues the acceleration of top-level defence engagement to bolster the Coalition of the Willing initiative led by the UK and France to build Ukraine security guarantees.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, Chief of the Defence Staff, said: “At this pivotal time for European security the third meeting of the British and French Chiefs of Staff should be seen as a sign of reassurance and commitment.”

“Europe’s two leading nuclear powers are stepping up to forge a stronger and deeper partnership that has a vital foundational role to play in the security of the continent.”

The discussions come ahead of a UK-France Summit later this year.



SECURITY TALKS: CDS Admiral Sir Tony Radakin (right) greets his French counterpart Général d’armée General Thierry in Whitehall



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RAF News

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This Week In History



1937 Jet breakthrough

FLT LT Frank Whittle ground tests his first gas turbine jet engine featuring a single-stage centrifugal compressor and turbine at Cambridge University.

1948 Vampire debut

WUNSTORF-BASED 3 Sqn becomes the first unit to be re-equipped with jets as Vampire F1s start to replace Tempests.



1991 Kurdish aid mission

HERCULES TRANSPORTERS operated by 47 and 70 Sqn begin aid drops to Kurdish refugees fleeing from Iraqi troops loyal to Saddam Hussein.

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

Puma farewell

Simon Mander

ONLOOKERS AT Benson waved off Puma helicopters for the last time as they embarked on their farewell flight around the UK.

The aircraft has been the workhorse of the RAF for more than five decades since it entered service in 1971.

Deployed on combat operations and humanitarian missions, it has seen action in Kenya 2009 to 2011, Afghanistan from 2015 to 2021 and supported the Caribbean relief effort after Hurricane Irma in 2017.

It flew during the Covid pandemic and since March has carried out a range of rescue, transport and fire fighting roles in Cyprus and Brunei.

"This flight route is via locations of significance," said Officer Commanding 33 Sqn and Puma Force Commander Wg Cdr Nick Monahan.

"Each place reflects the contributions that the Puma has made during its time in service. We want to celebrate it supporting our people around the world over the past 54 years."

The Farewell Tour took in its home base Benson; Northern Ireland, where it operated during the Troubles; Kensington Palace, to honour Prince Michael of Kent's connection with the Puma fleet; training areas at Cranwell, Halton, Honington and Shawbury; and maintenance depots Boscombe Down and Airbus Kidlington.

"We recognise and celebrate the dedication of everyone who has served on or supported Puma operations over the last five decades," said Benson Station Commander Wg Cdr Alice Tierney.

The drawdown will see Puma replaced by six new H145 helicopters, known as Jupiter HC2, in Cyprus and Brunei from 2026.

To help with the transition two Chinooks will deploy to Cyprus to support the firefighting there. A new battlefield helicopter will be designed and the contract for this is being negotiated.

As of March 31, Benson will be home to one Operational Conversion Unit which flies Chinooks and the Operational Evaluation Unit of Joint Helicopter Command.

Joint Helicopter Support Squadron, 606 Sqn RAF Reserves, 6 Flying Training Sqn, the National Police Air Service and Thames Valley Air Ambulance also call the Oxfordshire station home.



PHOTO: AS1 JAKE HOBBS



LAST FLIGHT: Puma Force Captains prepare for final sortie in the aircraft
PHOTO: SGT LEE GODDARD

Puma's key deployments

- Northern Ireland: The Puma's first mission.
- The Balkans: Supporting Nato operations.
- Afghanistan: Where it flew 12,800 hours, transported 126,000 passengers and moved 660,000kg of freight.
- Cyprus: Since April 2023 and flown by 84 Sqn, Pumas can carry bambi buckets of water which can be dropped over fire-affected areas.
- Brunei: 230 Sqn have been operating the Puma since 2022, when it replaced the Army Air Corps Bell 212.



HRH: Duke of Edinburgh, 1972



FIREFIGHTING: 84 Sqn in Cyprus

- Puma is equipped as a battlefield aircraft able to land specialist infantry in tight confined areas with a small noise footprint.
- It can reliably deliver a car-sized object 100 nautical miles in an hour.
- It can be fitted with up to six stretchers for medical evacuations.
- With a rescue hoist it can perform search and rescue. Primarily focused on the recovery of fast jet

Aircraft facts

ejectees, it has rescued dozens of civilians.

- Puma uniquely can be flown inside a C-17 Globemaster. Two helicopters can be flown to Brize, stripped and loaded in four hours. The C-17 can then fly anywhere on Earth and deploy the two Pumas, which can be rebuilt and airborne four hours after touchdown.



HANDOVER: AVM Mark Jackson (right) takes on top job from AVM Mark Flewin

Jackson's in at No 1

FORMER PJHQ boss AVM Mark Jackson has taken over as Air Officer Commanding Number 1 Group.

His new role is to understand and exploit the battlespace to deliver decisive air power at a time of unprecedented global activity.

He said: "I have been fortunate to meet with a small cross section of the group during my handover week, but I am keen to visit the rest over the coming months to better understand their challenges and how I can support them."

His predecessor, AVM Mark Flewin, was in post from early 2023 and leaves to take up the role of Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff at the Military Strategic Headquarters.

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CONINGSBY-BASED DOG lover Flt Lt Aaron Eyett is hitting the training circuit with his canine companion Stanley ahead of the Regt officer's bid to raise funds for an animal charity by completing the London marathon.

Aaron will be pounding the route to support Spaniel Aid UK, which specialises in finding homes for the breed.

He said: "We got our first spaniel through someone we knew, and they're beautiful dogs. Our spaniels just had an energy level which matched our family; they're always on the go and they are very affectionate and loyal and obsessed with making friends and being sociable."

● Go to: [justgiving.com/page/aaron-eyett-1](https://www.justgiving.com/page/aaron-eyett-1)

Lossie launches Baltic mission

Staff Reporter

UK TYPHOONS are poised to police the Baltic skies from Poland as part of a Nato operation to secure air space in Eastern Europe.

The Lossiemouth-based II Army Cooperation Sqn fast jets landed at the 22nd Air Base in Malbork, where they will carry out round-the-clock enhanced air policing duties, intercepting rogue aircraft encroaching on Nato airspace.

140 Expeditionary Air Wing chief Wg Cdr Christopher Jacob said: "The arrival of our Typhoon aircraft here at Malbork marks a proud moment for our team as

we prepare to take on this vital Nato mission.

"It is a privilege to be in Poland, a country with which the UK shares a long and storied history of friendship and cooperation.



"This enduring bond, forged through shared values and mutual respect, reinforces the importance of Nato's collective purpose and strengthens the foundation of our partnership.

"We are here to defend and deter, standing ready to protect against any threat, whilst reassuring our allies of the UK's commitment to Nato and the region."

Bulletin



CORDON BLUE: Air Force super-chef Cpl Rosetta Norbert

Winner's dinners

Staff Reporter

TOP COOKS are looking forward to competing against Service rivals after winning Air Force titles.

Cpl Rosetta Norbert from Worthy Down Camp enters the Armed Forces Caterer of the Year contest after serving up the winning dish to clinch the Air Force title, closely followed by her colleague Cpl Aaron Herath who won the Penny Lowe Trophy.

Six finalists were chosen including Brize Voyager Force's AS1 Tammi Clarke, WO Chris Beavis from Benson, and Honington duo Cpl Rebecca Wheeler and FS Justin Collings.

'Cat eyes Gulf drug runners

Simon Mander

DRUGS AND arms smugglers in the Middle East face continued pressure after an RAF transporter delivered a Wildcat helicopter to HMS Lancaster.

The Type 23 frigate, which recently seized £5.4 million worth of heroin and methamphetamine, patrols in the region.

A Brize Norton-based 99 Sqn C-17 delivered the AW159 from 815 Naval Air Sqn to the region flying directly from the UK.

902 EAW's Sqn Ldr Becca McNeillie said: "Delivering a new helicopter to the region was a great example of a successful joint operation between the RAF and Royal Navy."

815 NAS Flight Commander Lt Cdr Rob Guest added: "The support provided by the RAF has enabled continued aviation operations from HMS Lancaster."

On return to the UK the Wildcat helicopter will be transferred to Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in Somerset for maintenance before its next deployment.



SPECIAL DELIVERY: C-17 crew load up the Navy Wildcat, used in drug smuggling patrols in the Gulf region

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Bidding war for Berlin bomber pilot's medals



Simon Mander

RARE MEDALS awarded to a Lancaster pilot are expected to fetch up to £28,000 when they are auctioned next month.

The collection of Flt Lt Edward Sydney Ellis is thought to be one of only seven known combinations of the Distinguished Flying Cross and Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying).

Noonans medal specialist Mark Quayle said: "Flt Lt Ellis risked life and limb repeatedly with his Lancaster crew during the Second World War – no better illustrated than by flying nine bombing raids to the 'Big City' and back during the Battle of Berlin."

His Conspicuous Gallantry Medal was awarded after a raid on the German capital with a new crew during which his rear gunner was hit by anti-aircraft



fire and his mid upper gunner was wounded after his Lancaster was raked 'from stem to stern' by an enemy fighter.

"Ellis showed his press-on regardless attitude that he continued his bombing run and then flew his wrecked aircraft home to effect a successful crash landing, after having been hit again by flak just before crossing

the Dutch coast!" said Mr Quayle.

Edward Sydney Ellis attested for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in October 1940 and carried out initial training in the UK prior to pilot training in the USA.

He was posted for operational flying to 12 Sqn at Wickenby in September 1943 and flew in at least nine sorties including Hanover, Mannheim, Bochum, Hagen, Munich, Frankfurt and Stuttgart.

Ellis, promoted to Warrant Officer, was posted to the newly-formed 625 Sqn at Kelstern in October 1943 and flew in at least 19 missions, including nine during the Battle of Berlin.

The medals will be sold with a diverse collection of contemporary and related items and documents including a 9ct gold RAF Sweetheart Brooch.



UNDER THE HAMMER: Lancaster pilot Flt Lt Ellis's medal collection, including a rare DFC and Conspicuous Gallantry Medal combination, are to be auctioned by Noonans

Tributes to RAF 'Mountain King'

Staff Reporter

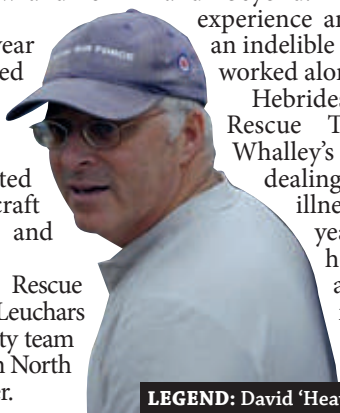
TRIBUTES HAVE been paid to Air Force Mountain Rescue veteran David 'Heavy' Whalley, who was one of the first on the scene of the Lockerbie disaster.

Mr Whalley – who served almost four decades in the service – died aged 72 after losing his year-long battle with liver cancer.

He was a senior team leader in the aftermath of the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie in 1988 and also took part in the search effort after the Chinook crash on the Mull of Kintyre in 1994 that claimed the lives of four crew and 25 passengers.

During his 40-year career he is estimated to have taken part in more than 1,000 mountain rescue call-outs and supported more than 80 aircraft incidents in remote and mountainous areas.

He was Mountain Rescue team leader at RAF Leuchars and Kinloss and deputy team leader at RAF Valley in North Wales during his career.



LEGEND: David 'Heavy' Whalley

Despite standing at just 5ft 4in and weighing in at seven stones, he was dubbed 'Heavy' because of his 'indomitable' nature.

Tributes have poured in from across the Service and Mountain Rescue community. Speaking in the Scottish press, a spokesman for Scottish Mountain Rescue said: "Heavy dedicated his life to helping others in the mountains, giving countless years of service with unwavering commitment, skill and compassion.

"He was a leader, a mentor and a friend to so many in the mountain rescue community and beyond. His knowledge, experience and kindness left an indelible mark on all who worked alongside him."

Hebrides Mountain Rescue Team said Mr Whalley's courage in dealing with his final illness over the last year "showed he wasn't just a king in the mountains, but an incredible man."



Remembering the Long March

Simon Mander

PERSONNEL WALKED in the footsteps of RAF predecessors forced to take part in the infamous Long March as part of the Nazi evacuation of thousands of PoWs from camps along the Eastern front.

And they conducted an Act of Remembrance to honour the 50 executed by the Gestapo following the 'Great Escape', on the site where Stalag Luft III once stood, attended by a Polish Army

Guard of Honour.

Across three days personnel experienced conditions like those in 1945 as they marched from Zagan to Lipna Barns, over the German border to Bad Muskau, before the final stretch to Spremberg, where a wreath laying was held.

They also remembered Lancaster bomber aimer and one of the few survivors of the camp, the late Air Cdre Charles Clarke.

A group of 52 regular and reserve members travelled to

Poland as part of Exercise Per Ardua Eagle – the Long March 80th Anniversary.

The week concluded with dinner at Kliczkow Castle, once occupied by Nazi leaders, listening to family members read excerpts from the diaries of Stalag Luft III POWs.

The week was supported by two Royal Air Force caterers, two medics and five drivers who travelled with three support vehicles from RAF Digby to Zagan, in Poland.



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us the quality time
we needed as a
family.” Al Dyer**



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Bulletin



DAREDEVIL: 90-year-old veteran John Dyer is taking the plunge for charity

Chute-ing star

A FORMER RAF technician will celebrate his 90th birthday by doing a tandem skydive to raise money for charity.

John Dyer, from Eaglescliffe near Stockton-on-Tees, will freefall from around 13,000 feet, reaching speeds of 120mph before the parachute is deployed.

John, who joined the RAF as a boy entrant in 1951 and served for 18 years, said: "I never had the opportunity to do a parachute jump but I've always wanted to do one since I was a boy."

"I turned 90 in January and decided what better way to celebrate my birthday than to finally get to jump out of a plane?"

John hopes to jump at Shotton Airfield as part of the scheme that sees thrillseekers skydive while fundraising for the RAF Association.

"I have seen for myself the great work the Association does to support veterans. It is a great cause and hugely deserving of my fundraising efforts," said John.

His daughter Clare Sullivan, who will be there on the day, said: "We are all proud of Dad for taking on this challenge. We will all be there on the day, but I will be keeping my feet firmly on the ground."

Association fundraiser Pete Brocklehurst added: "John is living proof that it's never too late to challenge yourself – a wonderful example for us all to aspire to."

● Go to: justgiving.com/page/john-dyer-1



NEW CHIEF: AM Steve Shell

Charity post

CHINOOK COMBAT veteran Air Marshal Steve Shell has been appointed as Forces charity SSAFA's new chief executive.

He takes on the post after serving for 37 years, completing tours in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, the evacuation of Lebanon and earthquake relief in Pakistan.

Pedigree chums

Kaylee Ginger
Birmingham

FORCES POOCHES showcased their military pedigree as they stepped centre stage at the world famous Crufts dog show.

Air Force Police teams put their military working dogs through their paces at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre in a series of displays to demonstrate their frontline defence skills in front of a packed international crowd.

Cpl Alys Webb said: "Having the chance to engage with the public and explain what we do has been invaluable."

"We had lots of enquiries for our rehoming and fostering programme and just as much interest in how to become an Air Force Police dog handler."

SHOW AND TELL: Cpl Webb with one of the stars at Crufts



Norse code

Gunners braving -15°C Arctic freeze on NATO's cold front



LICENSED TO CHILL: High North combat drill tests Allied forces as NATO deploys artillery and fast jet air cover in Norway

SQN LDR RICHARDS

Simon Mander

RAF REGIMENT personnel battled temperatures of -15°C to build shelters and start fires using only scavenged materials and went through ice-breaking drills to hone their cold weather rescue and survival skills.

The Corps' 51 Sqn spent five weeks working with the Royal Norwegian Air Force on Exercises Nordic Cheetah and Joint Viking at Elvegårdsmoen in Norway, demonstrating its ability to operate anywhere in the world.

Around 10,000 troops from seven nations took part from Norway, Canada, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Britain and America.

Under the watchful eyes of Norwegian cold weather instructors, Gunners deployed to austere Operating Bases supporting air operations along with two counter-drone force experts.

Sqn Ldr Timothy Richards of 51 Sqn said: "Collaborating with international partners strengthens the RAF's ability to deliver global security, protecting UK nationals both at home and abroad."

"This is a strategic partnership, built on shared values, beliefs and reinforced by a mutual history of ideals, friendship, partnership and military cooperation."

The RAF Regiment is the UK's only air-minded ground fighting resource and its Combat Readiness Force is responsible

for airfield defence, including countering uncrewed enemy aerial systems.

A team from RAF Honington provided Arctic medical training and Arctic survival techniques.

After three weeks surviving and operating in the Arctic conditions, 51 Sqn deployed to Royal Norwegian Air Force.



News



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Broom with a view



Simon Mander

A SPECIALIST team of dustbusters has hit new heights for the RAF Museum Midland's annual spring clean.

Suspended from the hangar roof and operating up to 100ft in the air, the crew spruced up the venue's star attractions of the Cold War exhibition including the Lightning, Vulcan, Canberra, Meteor, Sabre, Hunter, Dakota and Javelin.

Cleaning experts abseil down to access the aircraft and carry out their task using large, soft, fibre mops.

In addition they also conduct safety inspections of the suspension cables supporting the aircraft in their flying display positions.

Cosford curator Tom Hopkins said: "Preserving aircraft involves regular inspections and cleaning by our skilled technicians and volunteers.

"It requires a specialist team equipped with the necessary skills and equipment.



"It's fascinating to watch the team in action, and their work ensures our aircraft remain in top condition, looking their best for visitors to enjoy."

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Lincoln Cathedral Choir

Compere Melvyn Prior

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Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 11 July 2025

Palace Theatre, Newark

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 19 September 2025

Cast, Doncaster

Band of the Royal Air Force College

3pm Sunday 21 September 2025

Epsom Playhouse

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7pm Friday 17 October 2025



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Standard issue

RECONNAISSANCE CREWS who patrol Europe's eastern flank to gather intelligence on military movements have been honoured with a new flag.

Rivet Joint personnel from Waddington's 51 Sqn were presented with the banner at their base by the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward.

AVM Mark Flewin said: "The 300 or so personnel of 51 Sqn do an exceptional job. Flying the UK Rivet Joint, they 'hoover up' and analyse vast quantities of signals intelligence information and turn it into intelligence for the UK, our allies and Nato."

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has seen an increase in missions over the past four years.

The new standard, emblazoned with eight operational honours, replaces one to be laid up in Lincoln Cathedral in the coming months.

The retiring Standard represented 25 years of 51 Sqn's service from 1995, through operations in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, the stand down of the Nimrod R1, and the delivery of the first Rivet Joint in 2013.

Station Commander Gp Capt 'Dutch' Holland said: "The UK Rivet Joint is often airborne before most people start work and lands after they finish. It is fitting that the retiring Standard will be laid up in Lincoln Cathedral during the 30th anniversary of 51 Sqn operating from RAF Waddington."



Flypast honours Britain's heroines

Simon Mander

BRITAIN'S WAR heroines have been remembered by an all-female flypast over Lincolnshire's International Bomber Command Centre.

A 57 Sqn Prefect, 206 Sqn Atlas 400M and an XI(F) Sqn Typhoon soared above the site to mark the opening of the new Women in War display.

The exhibition features 10 steel silhouettes representing pioneering women including physicist Joan Curran, World War II pilot Lettice Curtis, and Special Operations Executive agent Madeleine Damerment.

Atlas pilot Sqn Ldr Lauren Stewart, who also flew an all-female crew over Wembley for the Lionesses' Euro Final in 2022, said: "One of the statues that was unveiled was Joan Curran who invented what we know as aircraft countermeasures.

"Being a test pilot, to commemorate and celebrate the pioneering work of women in defence that came before was important to me. It was a fantastic atmosphere on the flight deck and everyone onboard was proud to put on a good show."

Among those honoured are Engineer Dorothy Robson, responsible for developing tools for precision targeting; Lettice Curtis the first woman to fly a Lancaster bomber; SOE agent Madeleine Damerment, captured by the Gestapo and executed at Dachau concentration camp; and Fighter Command plotter Margaret Hourigan.



FAMILY PRIDE: Elizabeth and David Hourigan celebrate their mother Margaret's wartime role as a plotter at the Women in War display at the IBCC

Former WAAF Hourigan, who died last year aged 101, was represented by her son and daughter who travelled from Australia and Italy to attend the event.

David Hourigan said: "She was a woman of great courage and dedication, dutiful and loyal, empathetic and decisive.

"The statue is a reminder of such a unique generation of women who served their country in WWII."

The event also welcomed 'Modern Giants,' a group of distinguished women military leaders thought to have made significant contributions in their field, including RAF Benevolent

Fund Controller AVM Chris Elliott and AVM Suraya Marshall. IBCC Chief Executive Nicky van der Drift said: "We are proud to honour the women who played such a vital role in protecting the freedoms we enjoy today."

After the ceremony, the crews of the A400M and Prefect landed at Waddington to meet the guests.



TASKFORCE: People and Veterans Minister Al Carns will head new unit

Taskforce crackdown

Simon Mander

SEXUAL HARASSMENT and bullying are to be dealt with by a new unit to tackle unacceptable behaviours in the military.

Changes including a new specialist tri-Service team will take on the most serious complaints outside the chain of command.

The MOD has created a Violence Against Women and Girls Taskforce as the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill continues through Parliament.

Led by Veterans Minister Al Carns, it is supported by a network of regional champions and a panel of Service personnel and civil servants.

He said: "Women in the Armed Forces play a vital role in keeping our nation safe. This is not just a matter of basic justice and equality; it is essential to military effectiveness."

The Taskforce will include regional support from healthcare providers, social workers and HR advisors.

The Armed Forces Commissioner Bill is now in the Lords committee stage, with the first post-holder expected to be appointed by the end of 2025 with powers to visit Defence sites unannounced and commission reports.

Paddy's passing signals end of a great generation



POSTER BOY: A photograph of the young pilot widely used in America to highlight the British war effort



CHURCHILL'S FEW, the airmen who halted the Luftwaffe during the epic fight for UK skies, passed into history with the death of the last Battle of Britain pilot, John 'Paddy' Hemingway, at the age of 105.

At 21, he was one of some 3,000 pilots and crew who drove back Hitler's massed ranks of bombers in the summer of 1940, and who collectively became a by-word for bravery and sacrifice in the face of impossible odds.

HRH Prince William led the tributes to the last known member of The Few. In a message on social media, the Prince of Wales said: "We owe so much to Paddy and his generation for our freedoms today. Their bravery and sacrifice will always be remembered. We shall never forget them."

The Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, added: "This was a generation who understood the importance of service and comradeship. A generation who believed that with hard work, clarity of purpose and a determination to succeed, they would not lose."

"Their efforts and the efforts of all our personnel past and present are the bedrock on which the Royal Air Force maintains the security of the UK at home and abroad."

Born in Dublin in 1919, Paddy joined the RAF on a short Service

commission in 1938, aged 18, because, he said, "My father made me."

In the months before the Battle of Britain, Paddy earned his spurs with 85 Sqn protecting Allied troops as they retreated to the beaches of Dunkirk.

Flying a Hurricane, he destroyed a He-111, the following day he downed a Do-17 but was hit by anti-aircraft fire and made a forced landing.

As the Luftwaffe began daily bombing raids ahead of a planned invasion, 85 Sqn joined 11 Group (Fighter Command) under the new command of Sqn Ldr Peter Townsend.

Paddy's logbook records that in August 1940 he bailed out twice, landing once in the sea off the Essex coast and later in marshland.

Almost half of those who took part in the four-month battle were lost and Paddy was particularly troubled by the death of his friend 'Dickie' Lee DSO, DFC.

Recognising that he was feeling the strain, Sqn Ldr Townsend moved him to lighter squadron duties. But Paddy's war was far from done.

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and in September that year, he was Mentioned in Dispatches. His journey to London to receive his DFC from The King began with him escaping from a wrecked

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RAF LEGEND: Paddy celebrating his 105th birthday and, left, circled, with 85 Sqn pilots including Sqn Ldr Peter Townsend (with walking stick)

heim aircraft which crashed on
-off.
n 1941 Paddy had to bail out at
feet due to instrument failure in
weather, breaking his hand on
tail section. His parachute failed
open properly and he was saved
mer injury as the chute caught on
branches of a tree. In Italy in 1945
ailed out for the fourth time,
n his Spitfire was hit by anti-
craft fire.
rue to his modest nature he
d a low-profile life after leaving
RAF in 1969 and spent his last
ths spearheading the Battle of
ain Memorial Trust's Blade of
our campaign to remember The
y – those who played a wider
in the conflict.
peaking in 2024, Paddy said:
were always confident that the
raft we were flying had been well
ed after. They produced it and
used it. We couldn't have done
t we did without support from a
f other people.
Nothing scared me, but
anything scared me. I was as
d as I could be, because my own
ival depended on it. Some were
ally just good pilots while others
to be trained. I was naturally a
y pilot.
I survived because I have had
e staggering luck and fought
gside great pilots in magnificent
raft with skilled ground crew in
est air force in the world at that
.”
See Gp Capt John ‘Paddy’
Hemingway’s obituary on p19.

Tributes to last of The Few Gp Capt Hemingway DFC



NICK BUNTING
Secretary General of
RAF Association
“WE JOIN the nation and the
RAF community in mourning
the passing of Gp Capt John
Hemingway, a decorated
veteran of the Second World
War and the last surviving
pilot of the Battle of Britain.
“The pilots who flew in the
Battle of Britain embodied
the courage and strength
of character of our Second
World War generation and are
an inspiration to us all.
“We are immensely grateful
for Gp Capt Hemingway’s
service to our country. Our
sincerest condolences are with
his family at this sad time.”

AVM CHRIS ELLIOT
Chief Executive of the
RAF Benevolent Fund
“OUR HEARTFELT
condolences go to Paddy’s
family during this difficult
time. Paddy’s courage and
sacrifice were vital to securing
victory during the Battle of
Britain.
“His passing signifies the
end of an era, he was part of
a generation of Servicemen
and women who answered
their country’s call without
hesitation.
“We owe an immense
debt of gratitude to each
one of them, and it is our
duty to ensure their legacy
is honoured. We, at the
Fund, pay tribute to their
memory by upholding our
commitment to support the
RAF Family members who
need us.”



**ACM SIR RICHARD
KNIGHTON**
Chief of the Air Staff
“PADDY WAS an amazing
character whose life story
embodies all that was and
remains great about the Royal
Air Force.
“This was a generation who
understood the importance
of service and comradeship.
Their efforts and the efforts
of all our personnel past and
present are the bedrock on
which the Royal Air Force
maintains the security of the
UK at home and abroad.
“Their sense of duty and
willingness to put others
before themselves should
inspire those who will build
the next generation Air
Force.”

RICHARD HUNTING
Chairman, Battle of
Britain Memorial Trust
“SERVING WITH distinction
in 85 Squadron in the battles
against the Luftwaffe in France
in May 1940, John Allman
Hemingway then had a very
active time during the Battle of
Britain itself.
“Later, in 1941, he flew
Turbinlite Havocs,
an American-
designed night
fighter fitted with
an immensely
powerful
searchlight
designed to
illuminate enemy
aircraft and was awarded the
DFC in July of that year.
“He was a modest, charming
and capable man who lived
an extraordinarily long life,
becoming a symbol of the
highly-significant achievements
of Churchill’s ‘Few’ during the
Battle of Britain.
“Those men are remembered
on the Christopher Foxley-
Norris Memorial Wall, one of
a number of tributes to those
brave aircrew at the Battle of
Britain Memorial, Capel-le-
Ferme, near Folkestone in Kent.”





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Attack on Gestapo HQ that delighted Belgians



MASCOT: Jean with 609 Sqn dog Spit



GESTAPO HQ: 453 Avenue Louise in Brussels was strafed by de Selys' Typhoon

BARON JEAN DE SELYS LONGCHAMPS was one of many distinguished Belgian pilots who served in the wartime RAF.

Daring and patriotic, he was determined to evict the Germans from his homeland. He thought the best way to do this was to join the RAF, the first opponent to defeat the Nazi military machine in 1940.

When he got his chance to strike at the hated enemy, de Selys attacked the Gestapo's Brussels headquarters.

In this lavishly illustrated English translation of the Belgian writer Marc Audrit's biography, *The Belgian RAF Pilot Who Defied the Gestapo* (Air World, Pen & Sword Books, £29.99, pen-and-sword.co.uk), de Selys' action-packed life is celebrated.

Audrit consulted Belgian, British and German archives, obtaining unique access to the de

Selys Longchamps family albums, archives and Jean's diaries.

The reader is introduced to an established Belgian family with a history of service, notably in the cavalry. De Selys' exploits in the devastating May 1940 campaign are well conveyed.

Even after evacuation from Dunkirk, he aimed to rejoin the fight. After a few days in Wales, he returned to France, where Belgian forces failed to regroup. His subsequent travels in France, Gibraltar and North Africa are described before he reached the UK in December 1940.

The following month he joined the RAF. Then the action really started.

Jean de Selys was happiest flying an aircraft. He prioritised securing his Wings.

At 28, too old for Fighter Command's regular pilot pipeline, Jean embraced Odiham's French and Belgian Training School. He



Copies up for grabs

WE HAVE copies of this compelling book to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

How old was Jean when he received his Wings?

Email your answer, marked Belgian RAF Pilot book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22.



subsequently viewed Tern Hill, No. 5 Service Flying Training School and rural Shropshire as tedious, preferring the proximity of London where he fitted in well.

Tern Hill offered an intense flying and 'ground school' regime. By July 1941, Jean was flying Hurricanes solo. On August 1, he received his Wings, aged 29. Some thought that because he was a born horseman, alongside his motivation and determination, it allowed him to become a pilot at this later stage.

He soon moved to the happier surroundings of Heston and No. 61 Operational Training Unit, flying Spitfires.

He continued to fly Spitfires when he joined No. 609 (West Riding) Squadron at Biggin Hill in September 1941. It was a home from home. Some 12 of the White Rose squadron pilots were Belgians. Jean was soon flying operations, fighter sweeps, occasionally over his homeland.

By the early summer of 1942, the squadron was flying the challenging and often flawed Hawker Typhoon. On May 29, he became the first pilot to bail out



TRAGIC END: Wreckage of Typhoon in which de Selys Longchamps lost his life

of a Typhoon in flight when his engine caught fire.

However, although Jean was a skilled pilot he was a less able flight commander, being eased out of that role. He preferred flying – a hunter rather than a teacher or mentor.

Whilst serving with No. 609 and flying Typhoons, Jean mounted his spectacular strike.

Awareness had grown of the brutal German occupation, including the shooting of hostages and deportations. De Selys wanted to hit the enemy's heart, attacking the Gestapo's headquarters, the site of so much suffering. This was No. 453 Avenue Louise, a distinctive modern 12-storey building.

It was Jean's personal 'Rhubarb'. He planned to shoot up the building and drop miniature flags and leaflets. On January 20, 1943, he did it.

He headed directly to No. 453, in his first flight over his capital, likely guided by its landmarks.

It was a brief, low and noisy Wednesday morning attack. Sweeping down, his shooting was precise. No other building was hit. No anti-aircraft battery fired at the Typhoon.

Jean flew twice more that day. Only the first flight went down in history, being greeted with joy by Belgians. Five Germans were killed in the pock-marked building, including Albert Thomas, a notorious SS officer.

Accolades were forthcoming, including a DFC and Croix de Guerre. In March 1943, he joined No. 3 Squadron, flying Typhoons on fighter-bomber operations. Alongside downing Focke-Wulf 190s, Jean wreaked havoc with German locomotives and shipping.

Sadly, there was no heroic post-war reconciliation in Belgium. In August 1943, part of the fuselage fell from Jean's Typhoon with catastrophic results. The aircraft plunged into Manston's runway. Like many Typhoons it succumbed to technical and structural problems.

The book describes a fine pilot and a brave man, loyal to his King, country and Catholic faith. He used his aircraft to directly boost fellow Belgians in their darkest hour.

Among his many exploits, this stirring deed means Jean de Selys Longchamps' name is revered to this day.

Review by Alastair Noble



COUNTRYMEN: Six Belgian RAF pilots of 609 Sqn (Jean de Selys is second from left)



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AGES 3-18

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GROUP CAPTAIN John 'Paddy' Hemingway, who has died aged 105, was the last surviving pilot of The Few, the men of Fighter Command who fought in the Battle of Britain. During his wartime career as a fighter pilot he was shot down four times, twice in a period of a few days during the Battle.

He was born and educated in Dublin before joining the RAF on a short service commission in April 1938. Later that year he joined 85 Squadron flying Hurricanes and went with the squadron to France on the outbreak of war. Based near Lille, the squadron flew sector reconnaissance flights and exercises with the French Air Force during what became known as 'The Phoney War'.

When the Germans advanced into the Low Countries and France on May 10, 1940, Hemingway was in action immediately and shot down a Henkel III over Hesdin. The following day he shared in the destruction of a Dornier bomber, but on the 12th his aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire as he pursued a German fighter at low level. He was wounded in the leg and had to make a forced landing. He joined a column of refugees as they headed westwards and reached his squadron a few days later, when he was sent back to Britain to recover.

When the squadron returned to England after nine days of fighting, only half the pilots remained available for action. The new commanding officer, Sqn Ldr Peter Townsend, turned to Hemingway and six others who had returned from France to provide the fund of experience to lead the new pilots.

Based at Debden in Essex, the squadron provided protection for the east coast convoys. July and August were hectic months with action against the Luftwaffe increasing from the middle of August as the raids south of the River Thames intensified.

Late in the afternoon of August 18, the squadron was ordered to patrol over Canterbury. The 13 Hurricanes intercepted a large raid and individual dog fights soon developed. Hemingway broke away to attack a Junkers 88 bomber. His Hurricane's engine was hit by return fire, the cockpit filled with oil and glycol and the aircraft went into a spin. He recovered at 7,000 feet and headed for base, but his engine stopped. He recalled: "I had to bale out knowing survival rates in the North Sea were not good. After two-and-a-half hours, a rowing boat from a nearby lightship bumped into me."

He was 12 miles east of Clacton and was landed at Felixstowe. He returned to the squadron the following day.

On August 26, he was climbing to engage some Messerschmitt



LUCK OF THE IRISH: 'Paddy'

Last of 'The Few' Paddy dies age 105

Bf 109s when his Hurricane was attacked. The engine was hit and for the second time in eight days he was forced to bale out, this time landing on Pitsea Marshes in Essex.

Flying from Croydon, the squadron was in constant action. On August 31, he attacked a Bf 109 and saw white smoke pour from the aircraft but he had to break away. By the end of September, the exhausted squadron withdrew to the north to rebuild and convert into a night-fighter squadron under the command of Townsend.

After the Battle of Britain, No 85 continued to fly the single-seat Hurricane but in the spring of 1941 it began to re-equip with the US-built Havoc aircraft. This was equipped with an air intercept radar operated by a specialist operator.

During patrols on consecutive nights in May Hemingway intercepted and damaged two Heinkel III bombers. In July he was awarded the DFC and shortly afterwards was mentioned in despatches.

He served on experimental night fighter units and as a fighter controller during the Allied invasion of Normandy. He returned to operations in early 1945 in command of No 43 Squadron in Italy.

On April 23, having destroyed a truck with his bomb, he returned to strafe other vehicles when his Spitfire was hit by ground fire and the engine began to fail. He climbed to 2,000 feet and baled out for the third time. On landing he was chased by German soldiers but eventually lost them and reached a farmhouse where he was cared

for by the partisans.

He was disguised in peasant clothing, a little girl from the locality took his hand and guided him past German positions to the safety of the Allied lines, where he met up with an armoured car and returned to the squadron.

Hemingway recalled some 70 years later that he was more frightened for the life of that small child than for his own safety and he never forgot her.

Ground attack sorties continued to be flown until the 30th when the war in Italy came to an end. During May the squadron moved to Austria where Hemingway remained in command until the end of 1945, when he moved to Greece as a member of the RAF Delegation.

He remained in the RAF and in May 1953 assumed command of No 32 Squadron

in Egypt, flying Vampire jet fighters. He later served in NATO appointments in Paris and at the Air Ministry. He was the station commander at RAF Leconfield, a fighter airfield in East Yorkshire, and at the beginning of 1966 he oversaw the transition of the base into a maintenance unit. His last two years of service were with the combined planning staffs, and he retired as a Gp Capt in September 1969.

He was a modest man who lived a quiet life in his later years. Once he became aware that he was the last of The Few he admitted that it was an unwanted honour bestowed upon him and one that had drawn him closer to the ghosts of his fallen comrades. He commented: "During the war, all my closest friends were killed and my memories and thoughts about them I have always regarded as a private affair."

He added: "But being the last of the Battle of Britain veterans has made me think of those times 80 years ago."

At a reception at the British Embassy in Dublin to celebrate his 105th birthday, he commented: "I am here because I had the staggering luck to fight alongside great pilots, flying magnificent aircraft, with the best ground crew, in the best air force in the world."

His son Brian said: "He was not particularly interested in the past. Like so many of his generation, he doesn't feel as though he did anything special. But he liked the idea that he was last Irishman to have fought in the Battle."



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Tim Morris

Audi A6 (from £60,585 otr)

Motoring



Stylish A6 saloon is sure to get you noticed

THE AUDI A6 has been around for a while, since 1994, in fact. It was launched to replace the epically capable executive saloon the Audi 100 and it's now in its fifth generation. Audi has always marketed its cars with simple German efficiency. Back in the day, you drove an Audi 80 if you were an executive on the up, you moved to an Audi 100 when you were promoted to a senior position, and so on. The world of executive motoring made sense.

These days, the waters are muddied with all manner of crossover and performance options, but the exec premise survives. Putting it simply, you look more important in the company car park with an A6, than an A4, and nobody parks in the A8's spot. That's reserved for the MD or CEO. It's a status thing.

So the A6 is for important people and that means it has to be brilliant, not just good. Let's start with the exterior. Sleek, powerful and understated, it has presence on the road. The attention to detail is superb, with well-placed contours that draw the eye. It looks like a powerful machine.

Inside

The latest A6 is physically bigger than the car it replaces and that gives more real estate inside. The 12mm longer wheelbase gives 21mm more legroom, which means rear seat passengers will be jolly comfy when you're cruising at 140mph on the autobahn. At 530 litres, the boot is up there with the best in class too.

Build quality is excellent, as you would expect from Audi, and the layout of the cabin is almost identical to the A8. Yes, the A6 is cheaper to buy but, for the most part, the materials feel just as solid as the MD's limo. The 'MMI Touch' interface is also ruddy posh. It should be, you'll find exactly the same unit in the Lamborghini Urus. You also get the tried-and-tested 12.3 inch 'Virtual Cockpit' instrument cluster.

The seats are excellent and the driving position is bang on for an exec. The overall interior package is impressive and it feels



Exec cruiser shows you're going places

Pros

- Supreme high-speed cruising
- Spacious interior
- Excellent build quality

Cons

- Hesitant automatic gearboxes
- Infotainment complicated to use on the move
- PHEV engine sounds a little gruff

Audi A6 saloon

Verdict

The A6 is the textbook executive car. It's quiet, spacious and comfortable, especially on the motorway. The latest version is, genuinely, a more subtle version of the A8, and all it stands for. Quiet, refined and rapid on a long run.

reassuringly German in quality. There's not much to fault in here.

On The Road

Let's face it, German cars are brilliantly designed for high-speed cruising. They have to be. After all, what self-respecting executive wouldn't want to floor it on the autobahn?

That's one of the things that

impresses you most about the A6, just how quiet it is. Whatever speed you're doing, whatever surface you're driving over, you need never speak to your passengers in anything more than a whisper.

It's great on a run and it's not too bad through the bends either. We're not talking Jag XF levels of fun, but the A6 feels lighter

and more agile than most of its rivals. Audi is very proud of this and claims its new model is "noticeably more agile" than the car it replaces. It certainly has buckets of grip, especially in Quattro form, and a dependable chassis that lets you drive it hard. Body roll is kept well under control through corners. The steering is sensibly weighted and responds smoothly to inputs.

It's pacey enough to keep you engaged too. Our test car was the plug-in-hybrid, 50 TFSI e, Quattro. It married a 2.0-litre petrol engine with a 14.1kWh battery and small e-motor to deliver 295bhp. The PHEV also allows you to run up to 41 miles on electric only power, although I managed closer to 28. Then again, I do have a heavy right foot.

The other stats for the PHEV are: 0-62mph in 6.2 seconds and a limited top end of 155mph.

The fuel consumption figure, on a combined cycle, is a stonking 201.8mpg. Again, I didn't get anywhere near that, but the A6 is an exec that won't cost a packet to run. Two slight grumbles... firstly, the engine on the PHEV could sound more refined. You notice its gruffness all the more for the, otherwise, silent running. Secondly, the brakes are oddly unpredictable, possibly due to the energy recycling system. On the road, our test car would have set you back £68,660.

There are other versions of the A6 available, with varying power output and costs. All engines get mild-hybrid technology, which uses a lithium-ion battery and belt alternator starter to give engine-off coasting between 34 and 99mph and super-smooth start/stop that kicks in when you drop below 14mph, and restarts when it senses the car ahead has moved off.

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SOLID DISPLAY: RAF's Cpl Brandon Dzaro (No. 11)

BASKETBALL

UKAF stars SHAPE up for Belgium

UKAF'S BASKETBALL stars lost 74-71 to the UK Police during their recent SHAPE championship warm-up clash at Hindlip Hall in Worcester.

The match was in preparation for the UKAF team's appearance at the NATO International Basketball Tournament held in Belgium over the last week of November.

The courts at HQ for West Mercia Police proved a tough testing ground for the Tri-Service team, led by head coach Wg Cdr Chris McIntyre.

RAF star Sgt Ashley Hands scored 10

points during the encounter, producing solid defence throughout for a standout display. He was one of three aviators in the team, alongside AS1 Charlie Fotherington and Cpl Brandon Dzaro, who both played well.

UKAF trailed in the first two quarters 17-21 and 32-36, finishing the third quarter on level terms 53-53 to set up a thrilling ride for the final quarter, but it just wasn't to be with the military men losing out by three points.

● Follow UKAF basketball on Instagram @basketballukaf.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Riders on the storm

Cyclists meet the challenge head-on as deluges hit Spain

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS cycling gold in the foothills of Sierra Nevada for the RAF's Gravity mountain bikers as extreme weather provided the perfect rehearsal for the season.

The week-long training camp at Lanjarón saw an intense period of cycling with Ride Southern Spain after what was meant to be a week of sun-drenched trails turned into a true test of resilience as the team faced some of the severest conditions the region has seen in years.

Team spokesperson Flt Lt Tom Chambers said: "Over the course of five riding days, our 14-strong team tackled world-class trails in relentless rain, hail and even snow.

"The locals were stunned, calling it the worst week of weather in recent memory. However, true to RAF spirit, we embraced the challenge head-on, using the unpredictable conditions as an opportunity to sharpen our technical skills and mental fortitude.

"The experience proved to be invaluable preparation for the 2025 mountain bike race season."

Working with the Ride Southern Spain guide team the aviators rode routes with a thrilling mix of fast-flowing descents, technical rock gardens and steep shoots, ensuring that every rider was pushed to their limits.

Chambers added: "Even in the face of relentless mud and slippery terrain, spirits remained high and morale never wavered. Training in extreme conditions has reinforced our confidence and adaptability – qualities that are essential for high-performance racing."

The team did experience one day of sunshine, which Chambers described as "a well-earned reward, offering a brief but glorious chance to fully appreciate the breathtaking landscapes that make this region a mecca for mountain bikers."

● Follow RAF Gravity MTB team on Instagram @rafgravitymtb.



BREAK IN WEATHER: Riders take advantage of a dry spell, with snow lingering

RUGBY UNION

W6N tries for RAF pair

RAF RUGBY star Flt Lt Amy Cokayne got England's Women's Six Nations defence off to a great start with a poacher's try in a 38-5 bonus point victory over Italy in York.

The result extends the Red Roses' winning run to 21 games.

Hooker Cokayne told RAF News: "I'm absolutely buzzing to be back playing in the Women's Six Nations after several months out with injury. It was a very special moment to pull on the white jersey again, and to mark my return with a cheeky try made it even more memorable. Our win over Italy was a great way to start the tournament, and I'm very proud of the team's performance.

"As with any first run-out, there were some execution errors, which is to be expected, but we know where we can improve.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the support I receive from the RAF, which allows me to compete at this level. Their backing makes a huge difference, and I'm really proud to represent the whole Air Force family on the international stage."

Also in action on the opening weekend of the tournament was Cokayne's RAF counterpart Flt Lt Sarah Bonar, representing Scotland.

They overcame Wales 24-21 in a tight contest at The Hive Stadium in Edinburgh, with lock Bonar also scoring a try.

The two RAF stars compete against each other when England and Scotland face off at Mattioli Woods Welford Road Stadium, home of Leicester Tigers, on April 19.

● Go to sixnationsrugby.com to follow the tournament.

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



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FENCING



ON TARGET: RAF fencers

Novices sharpen their skills in Cup



COMEBACK KING: Gp Capt Andrew Johnson (right) returned to fencing a few years ago

Sisters doing it for themselves

Tips from top coach at women-only event

SERVICE FEMALE fencers got to rub shoulders with World, European and Commonwealth gold medallist Beth Cranston-Selby as part of the inaugural En Garde, Sister event.

The session was designed to welcome Whole Force personnel and families into fencing and the wider RAF Sport community, inspiring the next generation of female fencers to take on the Army and Royal Navy at Inter-Services.

Former England Fencing team manager Cranston-Selby provided coaching in all three weapons – foil, epee and sabre.

She said: “As a coach, the opportunity to work alongside our UK Armed Forces with a group of females who were engaging and felt empowered in a non-judgemental and enriching environment was so rewarding. Being able to talk about female-specific safety kit and the challenges faced daily by women in a safe, comfortable setting was a positive step towards equitable growth.”

RAF Fencing Union training manager Flt Lt Matt Butcher said: “It’s been a privilege to see the success of the En Garde event and the impact that inspiring coaching from one of the UK’s top international coaches has had on our personnel.

“It has opened opportunities for more women to join this fantastic sport. I look forward to seeing



ELITE COACHING: RAF fencers with Cranston-Selby (right)

the team continue its journey and to see them representing the Service soon.”

Fencing debutant Flt Lt Aileen O’Leary added: “It was a fabulous event and a wonderful opportunity. I fenced as a youngster and haven’t touched the sport in two decades, so it was amazing being able to return to the sport without pressure, expectation or judgement in a relaxed, open, and friendly environment.”

● Follow RAF Fencing on Instagram @raffencing, Royal Air Force Fencing on Facebook or by contacting air-raffencingunion@mod.gov.uk.

SERVICE FENCING kicked off the season with the RAF Novice Cup, with Gp Capt Andrew Johnson and Cpl Emma Lindsey winning their respective Novice Champion at Arms titles.

Having never fenced competitively before, Lindsey said: “The event was fantastic. Although I had minimal exposure to fencing before, I was delighted to win all three events and have the inspiration to continue and improve.”

Johnson said: “I was delighted to take part in the Novice Cup, having returned to fencing a few years ago. It makes the build-up to the RAF Championships much less daunting.”

RAF fencing Director of Combat Cpl Dan McKay added: “The Cup combines training for new and developing fencers, culminating in a competition for them to showcase their skills.

“This was also a great opportunity for our senior team to fence against new teams in preparation for the upcoming senior championships and looking ahead to Inter-Services.”



ROOKIE: Cpl Emma Lindsay

Johnson (High Wycombe) beat OC Anson Law, University of Birmingham Air Squadron, to the Novice Epee title, while Cpl Lindsey (Wyton) won the women’s event with AB Helen Regan (Defence Medical Academy) second.

The men’s foil ended in the same one two, while Lindsey again took the women’s event.

The sabre saw Johnson third behind OC Tomasz Losinski, Birmingham University Royal Navy Unit and Law, while Lindsey again topped out the women’s event.

The senior fencing team won its exhibition match over Birmingham University in all three disciplines, before losing in Epee to Shrewsbury.

POWERLIFTING



GOLDEN GIRL: AS1 Georgia Callaway (left) is presented with her gold powerlifting trophy

It's Lift-Off for Georgia

AS1 GEORGIA CALLAWAY stormed to first place in the recent Ladies Lift-Off event at RAF Cosford.

The two-day camp gave women lifters an opportunity to discuss female specific training and performance, and saw AS1 Kester Broadhurst come second in the competition, with Cpl Chloe Foster third.

The first day of the event saw athletes attend tutorials on a variety of subjects including: menstrual cycle, nutrition, training pre and post-natal, and the effects of menopause on the body and how they affect training.

The tutorials were followed by technical briefings and demonstrations on each lift – squat, bench, and deadlift – from RAF powerlifting coaches.

The second day saw competitions with athletes

demonstrating their strength and newly-learnt techniques on the platform.

Association spokesperson Fg Off Du Ruofei said: “Each competitor was given three attempts at each lift, striving to achieve their maximum weight while adhering to strict form and judging criteria.

“The total of the best successful lifts determined the final score, with winners crowned based on weight and overall performance.

“This event highlights the incredible power and resilience of women in powerlifting, breaking stereotypes and setting new Personal Bests with every lift. Congratulations to our top three competitors.”

● Follow RAF Powerlifting on Instagram @rafpowerlifting.

Sport

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Mustangs turn on the horsepower to thrash Royal Navy



HEAD COACH: Warren Smart and match action, right ©The70sDJPhotography

Royal Navy	6
RAF Mustangs	64

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS a match to remember as the RAF Mustangs stormed to a 64-6 win over the Royal Navy to kick off the 2025 Inter-Services championship in style.

Having moved the clash to March from the previous year's autumn fixture, the aviators took to the field at Bournemouth University's, Chapel Gate sports centre with 10 rookies in their ranks.

Fears over how the new players would react were allayed after a pass interception led to a 7-0 scoreline through ASI(T) Dylan Walsh within the first few minutes of the Navy-hosted game.

Assistant coach Sgt Paul Wakeford said: "Our opponents were tough and played fully to the final whistle, as we knew they would. We just clicked on the day

in all areas and proved difficult to stop.

"The win was by a larger margin than we expected, because everything seemed to go well – it was such a smooth day.

"The build-up was a lot better than we had last year, the rookies who came in shone, they really stepped up and affected the outcomes in the field.

"Our coaching showed its

true worth, bringing the 10 new players we had on board. They listened and took it all in and our coaches are so good they could bridge any gaps.

"We are very lucky with our coaching set-up, they have been around the game for a long time."

The Mustangs led 38-6 at half-time, pushing on to finish the game 64-6. The RAF team now turns its attention to the next

training camp, in June, at RAF Northolt.

Wakeford added: "After our third score we didn't stop really, we could adjust and bring on players who were dealing with niggles and so on after half-time. It was a nice place to be in the heat of battle.

"We will now move on to our next camp in June at RAF Northolt, where we will be

bringing the rookies back in to hone the things they have learned, plus some new invitations will be sent out. We have had good numbers so far and are expecting the same again for June."

The Mustangs must now wait until the end of October for the IS Army game.

● Follow RAF Mustangs on Instagram @rafamericanfootball.

BOXING

Farewell to Scotland's only Olympic gold boxer

RAF BOXING bade farewell to one of its most famous sons after the passing of former corporal Dick McTaggart aged 89.

The legend of Air Force boxing retired with a record of 610 wins from 634 bouts.

He carried out his National Service in the 1950s, beginning his long love affair with the sport, in which he won five RAF titles and four UKAF championships.

The Scot hailed from a military boxing family, with his brothers having success for

the sister Services. His achievements were not only with the Armed Forces, he also won Olympic gold in Australia in 1956, Commonwealth Games gold in Cardiff in 1958 and bronze at the 1960 Olympics in Rome.

The aviator became the first British boxer to appear at three Olympic Games after a quarter-final bow at the Tokyo games in 1964. He remains the only Scottish boxer to have won an Olympic gold medal.

McTaggart won a further European gold and four national amateur championships.

After hanging up the gloves he was awarded an MBE for his services to boxing in the 1985 Queen's Birthday Honours and was involved in Team Scotland's Commonwealth preparations for the 1986 and 1990 games.

He was inducted into the Boxing International Hall of Fame in 2000, and two years later the Scottish Sports Hall of Fame.



TOP AMATEUR: Dick McTaggart

MOTORSPORT

Pupils get up to speed with STEM

DARTFORD CAREERS Week students had a high-speed run-in with RAF sidecar speed kings Sgt Mark Middleton, Cpl Rob Atkinson and Sgt Paul Orford.

The aviators took their F2 racer to Leigh Academy to raise awareness of the roles available within engineering; both in the civil and military sectors.

Middleton said: "It was a great opportunity, working with our sponsor Artic Building Services, to showcase the vast opportunities within STEM [Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] that are available."

This is the second year the British F1 Sidecar

Championship duo of Middleton and Atkinson have attended the careers week, along with sponsors Artic and Mecsia Group.

Middleton added: "Last year's events went down so well, Mecsia's asked us to involve them in future events, so we are now visiting colleges in south London taking part in national events."

"The children are so engaged and can't believe what goes into such a niche motorsport or the fact the RAF supports such a variety of weird and wonderful sports."

Atkinson added: "We get plenty of questions about the engineering of the bike and careers within the RAF."



CAREERS WEEK: Leigh Academy students with RAF team PHOTO: KAITLYN MANNIX

NETBALL

Masterly showing by RAF at Inter-Services

Daniel Abrahams

RAF NETBALL is celebrating its first Masters victory since 2018 after a tough Inter-Services championship at the Ravelin Sports Centre in Portsmouth.

The squad won the Masters Tournament after beating the Royal Navy 59-23 and overcoming a strong Army team by 33-32 in a nail-biting match.

Coupled with the win, FS Becky Hill (Brize Norton) won the Player of the Masters Tournament, while Sgt Charlotte Mortimer (Odiham) won the Player of the Development Tournament at the University of Portsmouth court.

Captain of the winning Masters, FS Jo Woodcock, said: "Captaining the RAF Masters team to victory was an absolute honour."

"It was a true squad effort"

"Securing this year's title by just one goal highlighted the intensity and competitiveness of the match."

"It was a true squad effort, with every player working relentlessly for each other until the final whistle in both fixtures."

"This hard-fought win was the perfect way to cap off an outstanding week of performances, reflecting the dedication and commitment of every player and our incredible coaching team. Now, all eyes are on IS 2026."

The Masters success came on the tournament's second day after a first day of action saw the RAF



RISING HIGH: Player of the Development Tournament Sgt Charlotte Mortimer (GK) PHOTO: CJ PRODUCTIONS

RN Masters	23	RAF Masters	33
RAF Masters	59	Army Masters	32

Final results

- Masters – 1st
- Development – 2nd
- Men – 2nd
- Open – 3rd

Development team lose 23-44 to the Army, the defeat was followed by the first Masters win, before an Open 17-57 defeat to the Army with the RAF men losing 22-31 to the Army to end the day.

A second Masters win kickstarted day two in style but a 23-59 Open loss to the Army closed out the day.

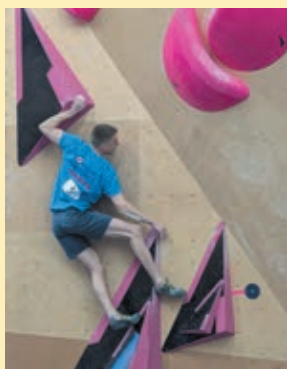
A solo win in the tournament's last match saw the RAF development team triumph 59-23 over the Navy.



NAIL-BITER: Action from the RAF v Army match PHOTOS: ALLIGIN - ARMY SPORT/@MARK DELLER

5 RAF Sport

pages of



Climbers are bould over

A WIN for the men's team and an overall individual second for Cpl Brandon Phipps in the Inter-Service Bouldering Championships was the just reward for the RAF's climbing stars in Exeter.

The fabulous return from the Royal Navy-hosted event at Boulder Exe saw each Service

send their 10 best climbers to compete with AS1(T) Rhys Hall, Phipps and Flt Lt Holly Smith reaching their respective finals.

It is the last event of the Bouldering season, with the next action being the RAF Lead Championships later this month to close out the climbing calendar for the year.

Back to the drawing board for Hamilton

Inters woe after draw and defeat

Daniel Abrahams

"OVERALL, WE got what we deserved," was the honest view of SRT coach Sgt Chris Hamilton after his team slid out of IS contention following a draw and defeat.

The comment came as the senior men's team lost 3-0 to the Royal Navy at Fratton Park after drawing 1-1 with the Army in the championship's opening clash at Croud Meadow Shrewsbury.

On the Navy defeat, Hamilton (*inset below*) added: "It was a really disappointing night overall, the Navy looked like a team playing with confidence from winning the Inters last year.

"We didn't manage to get a foothold in the game. We allowed them to get on the ball, and that's not like us."

Things did start brightly for the aviators in Portsmouth, who having seen a game they could and should have won against the Army slip away, went one down after having early pressure and the first big chance of the match.

Once again it fell to team captain FS Michael Campbell, who had netted the first goal of the championship versus the Army. The poacher smelt blood, unleashing an effort that was somehow deflected wide by the boot of Navy keeper Loz McCormick.

McCormick, like his Army counterpart Luke Cairney, produced some great saves to deny the aviators a way through.

The opening Navy goal



LOST OPPORTUNITY: RAF battled against Army, but should have won game

RAF	1	Army	1
RAF	1	Navy	3
RAF	0	RAF	0

came after that early RAF pressure, but it took the hosts until the final 10 minutes to extend their lead, before adding a third minutes after to the seal the win.

On the Army match, Hamilton said: "I felt we controlled the game for 75 per

cent of the game. We missed chances to put the game to bed and because of that, the Army managed to get a draw.

"We lost a poor goal in first half injury time and that changed the game. If we go in 1-0 up at half time, I think it's a different game second half. It was a very frustrating night."



Mustangs turn on the style: p26

R'n'R



Win WRAF novel
● See page 5

Death of a Salesman – David Hayman

● See
page 5



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



Galleries

Andy Warhol: Portrait of America
MK Gallery, until June 29

Holy cow! It's Andy Warhol

TO CELEBRATE its 25th anniversary, MK Gallery in Milton Keynes is staging an exhibition of work by artist Andy Warhol. Entitled *Andy Warhol: Portrait of America*, it's on now until June 29 and features more than 130 of

his most iconic artworks, including the renowned Marilyn series, and two paintings of British art duo Gilbert & George, who were the focus of MK Gallery's inaugural exhibition in 1999.

Warhol (1928-1987) was a leading figure in American Pop Art. The exhibition of works from the 1950s-1980s displays rarely seen early drawings and illustrations, including the Ads and Illustrations series, never exhibited in his lifetime; and lesser-known 'stitched photographs,' which were the focus of the last exhibition before his death.

The show also has painted screenprints and photographic series featuring Warhol's collaborations with artists, friends, filmmakers and celebrities.

Images of Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor and Warhol himself feature alongside icons of American consumerism as well as symbols of the artist's fascination with mortality: guns, skulls and war.

A spokesperson for the gallery said: "Warhol's fascination with celebrity and commercial culture produced some of the most recognisable images in 20th century art. Finding success living and working in 1950s New York as an illustrator for magazines, Warhol developed styles and techniques which propelled him to the centre of America's cultural scene."

The exhibition is an Artists



Andy Warhol Cow 1976, ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York and DACS, London 2024. Photo © Tate



Andy Warhol Skulls 1976, ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York and DACS, London 2024. Photo © Tate

Andy Warhol Self-Portrait in Interview T-shirt 1977-8, ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York and DACS, London 2024. Photo © Tate



Room partnership with Tate and National Galleries of Scotland.

Visitors to MK Gallery can join volunteer guides on Tuesdays and Saturdays at 2pm while the exhibition is running for a tour discussing the show. The tours are free with an exhibition ticket, no booking required.

● Go to: mkgallery.org for more information.



Film review

Mr. Burton (12A)
In cinemas now

How Mr. Burton made Richard Burton

IN THE year marking what would have been the centenary of Welsh screen and stage legend Richard Burton comes a film exploring his humble beginnings in 1942, where he is still known as Richie Jenkins.

The titular Mr. Burton refers instead to Philip H. Burton (Toby Jones): actor, playwright, and teacher – the latter becoming his most prominent role, as the community's focus has shifted toward the war effort.

He lives a life of comfortable routine with landlady Ma Smith (Lesley Manville), but as a tutor, he commands respect from his students, letting his passion for theatre show with a flair for the dramatic. Among his class is young Richie (Harry Lawtey),

one of many children of a miner, a cocksure yet charming teenager. When he receives the punishment of learning the prologue from Shakespeare's *Henry V* – a telling verse about the grand transformational power of performance – he quite enjoys the exercise.

But just before proper tutelage can begin, Richie is forced to drop out of school to work and pay his way. His newly-ignited passion for acting will then become extra-curricular, as he proves his dedication by both working a

job and joining P.H. Burton's small theatre group.

The film hinges on Lawtey's ability to capture Richie's transformation into the distinct presence of Richard Burton, and this is achieved with remarkable subtlety and sleight of hand. Under the patient tuition of Mr. Burton, Richie will learn the crucial difference between volume and projection, learning to enunciate while retaining his Welshness. Where *Rocky* had the Philadelphia Museum steps, young Richie will have a field overlooking

the coastal factories of Port Talbot, shouting to find his diaphragm. When that particular Burton timbre surfaces, it is unmistakable.

Mr. Burton is a compelling and exquisitely performed exploration of Richard Burton's formative years, with strong performances and an evocative sense of place. Toby Jones brings warmth and quiet authority to the role of P.H. Burton, while Harry Lawtey channels the magnetic presence of the legendary actor.

Mr. Burton is not just a tribute but an ode to the transformative power of mentorship and art.

Review by Sam Cooney
Five roundels out of five ●●●●●



BURTON & RICHIE

R'n'R



Exhibitions Turner 250 Nationwide

Year of celebration for Turner's 250th

A YEAR-LONG festival of exhibitions and events is taking place throughout 2025 to celebrate 250 years since the birth of painter JMW Turner.

Born on April 23, 1775, he is widely considered to be the greatest and most influential British artist of all time.

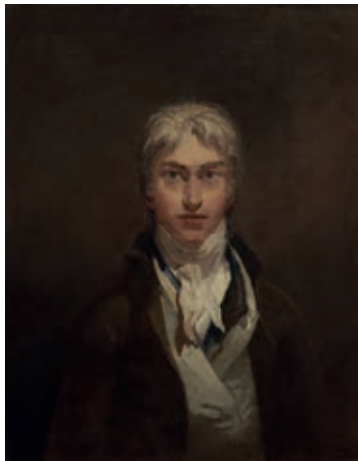
More than 30 projects will be held this year, organised by venues large and small as well as by national organisations including Tate, the BBC and Art UK.

Turner exhibitions will be held in London, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Norwich, Bath and Sussex, highlighting key themes in his life and work, and exploring his connections to other renowned historic figures such as Jane Austen and John Constable.

Turner's legacy in modern and contemporary art will be celebrated with displays, commissions and events in London and Margate, while the Turner Prize will be staged in Bradford as a highlight of the UK City of Culture programme.

Books, films and digital content will be released through the year, including a complete catalogue of Turner's 37,500 sketches and watercolours on Tate's website, a major new BBC documentary bringing the man and his art to life, and a screening of Mike Leigh's award-winning film *Mr. Turner* at BFI Southbank.

Arts Minister Sir Chris Bryant said: "Turner was one of this country's greatest artists. An innovator who created some of our best-known canvasses, he reshaped British art. A talent of Turner's stature requires a year of celebration, from the prize in his



SELF-PORTRAIT: JMW Turner c.1799
Image courtesy of Tate

name to the back of the £20 note, his immense legacy continues to permeate through the arts and public life in Britain.

"The 250th anniversary of his birth will be an opportunity for the public to immerse themselves in our outstanding artistic heritage. I encourage everyone to take the time to find an event from the upcoming year to enjoy some of Britain's finest artists from the past and present."

Maria Balshaw, Director of Tate, said: "Turner is a standout figure in the story of British creativity. It is Tate's privilege to care for the world's biggest collection of his art and showcase it to the widest possible public. Over the course of this year, I'm delighted that we will be showing more than 150 of his stunning works at Tate Britain as well as lending over 100 more to venues right across this country and beyond."

● **Go to:** tate.org.uk/turner-250 for more information.



THE FIGHTING TEMERAIRE: JMW Turner 1838
Image courtesy of The National Gallery, London



Theatre Bat Out of Hell UK tour



AS THE reimaged production of *Bat Out of Hell - The Musical* continues its UK tour, leading man Glenn Adamson said: "Audiences are in for an absolute rock and roll party. It's larger than life and an absolute riot."

The show features the music of Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf. "And it's everything you'd expect from their fantastic songs," Glenn added, "but in a story that's set in a futuristic, post-apocalyptic world. It's a fantastic night out."

The musical is set in the dystopian city of Obsidian, ruled over by tyrannical leader Falco. Their DNA frozen so that they are destined to remain 18 forever, the Lost boys and girls are living in the tunnels beneath the city. Then the fearless leader of the Lost, the immortal Strat, locks eyes with Falco's daughter Raven and the immensity of their love-at-first-sight obsessions threatens to destroy both of their worlds.

Strat is played by Adamson,

who said: "He is sort of like Iggy Pop meets Peter Pan, stuck at 18 for eternity. He falls in love with Raven, but she'll continue to age while he can never grow older. It's a dilemma, to say the least."

The actor is reprising a role he previously played in the West End and on tour in Australia and New Zealand. He added: "It has the most incredible music and it's a really joyous team to work with. It has a great fan base and there's no feeling quite like being in it. The buzz being out there each night is amazing."

Originally released in 1977, the *Bat Out of Hell* album – for which Steinman penned all the songs – launched Meat Loaf to rock superstardom and is one of the best-selling in history. The sequel, which came out in 1993, was another huge success for the duo.

For the stage musical, which premiered in 2017, Steinman incorporated songs from the *Bat Out of Hell* albums, including the title track, *You Took the Words*



RENEGADES: The Lost of Obsidian

Right Out of My Mouth, I Would Do Anything for Love (But I Won't Do That) and *Two Out of Three Ain't Bad*, as well as the previously unreleased *What Part of My Body Hurts the Most*.

"It's a bit like going to a gig but with a great story that's being told," Glenn said of the production, that features an eight-piece rock band on stage and multi-level platforms to bring the story to life.

Strat's love interest Raven is played by Katie Tonkinson, who said of the character: "She's been kept locked up for her whole life and she's looking for freedom and



FORBIDDEN LOVE: Raven (Katie Tonkinson) and Strat (Glenn Adamson)



Books

Frankie Gosling

by Nolwen Jones (troubadour.co.uk)

WRAF service inspires new novel

A FORMER member of the WRAF has written a fictionalised memoir that covers the protagonist's time in the Service.

Frankie Gosling, by Nolwen Jones (troubadour.co.uk), starts in 1960 where Nolwen is growing up in a remote part of West Wales.

Her life is not always easy; she is bullied at school, where she's given the long-lasting nickname 'Frankie Gosling'. Against her parents' wishes, she joins the WRAF at the age of 17, where she struggles to face new challenges – personally and professionally.

Nolwen's ability to adapt and persevere is tested again when she is forced into a second career. Her fortunes change for the better with a fulfilling role, the rediscovery of a dormant talent, and the security of love. However, this happiness eventually comes at a cost.

In her twilight years, when Nolwen is diagnosed with a condition that affects her mind and memory, she revisits the

events of her life.

The author was the eldest child in a family of four and, like her character, joined the WRAF at 17, completing 23 years.

She later worked for a large corporate company where she wrote business documents but now has the time to write books for pure enjoyment. She has travelled the world with her husband and the couple are based in Gloucestershire, though she revealed that her heart will always lie in the country of her birth, Wales.

Nolwen said: "Writing has always been a significant part of my life. Throughout my military service, civilian career, and a recent campaign to protect my local countryside, I wrote many factual, business-related documents. These weren't written for fun but rather out of necessity.

"However, I have always been a daydreamer, and after retiring, I found myself at a loose end one day. That's when I considered

writing for pleasure – writing something for myself, something that came from the heart, and, most importantly, something I truly wanted to write."

She added: "I reflected on my life, and a storyline unfolded within hours. I quickly identified the most significant events and influential factors that shaped me into who I am today. With my imagination in overdrive as usual, I easily embellished a visualised autobiography and soon found myself unable to stem the flow of ideas. This creative surge extended into formulating an imagined future for Nolwen – the book concludes in 2033. I was completely captivated by the entire process."

We have copies of *Frankie Gosling* to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

How many years' service did Nolwen Jones complete in the WRAF?

Email your answer, marked Frankie Gosling book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 22.



Theatre

Death of a Salesman

UK tour

Hayman chases the American dream

ACCLAIMED ACTOR David Hayman (*Sid and Nancy*, *Dad's Army*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*) leads the cast in a new touring production of *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller – described as one of the greatest plays of the 20th century.

Hayman stars as Willy Loman – the play takes the audience on a journey through the 24 hours of Loman's life, filled with his memories, dreams, and struggles and pitting a father's expectations against his son's realities. Clinging to the belief that charm and ambition are the keys to success, Willy's world unravels as he faces the truth about his life and legacy.

A timeless tale of ambition, family, and the price of chasing success, the powerful and moving story explores the sacrifices people make in pursuit of the 'American Dream'.

The production is touring until early May and visits venues including the Palace Theatre, Southend (April 8-12), Dublin's Gaiety Theatre (April 15-19), High Wycombe's Swan Theatre (April 22-26) and Fareham Live (April 29 to May 3)

Renowned actor and director Hayman said: "I'm absolutely delighted to be bringing *Death of a Salesman* to theatres across the UK. This play is a true masterpiece – raw, timeless and deeply moving. Willy Loman's story is one that resonates with so many people, and it's a real treat to step into such an iconic role."

The Pulitzer Prize and multi award-winning classic play is directed by Andy Arnold. He said:



BIG NAME: David Hayman as Willy Loman, right, with Dan Cahill

"*Death of a Salesman* is one of the greatest plays ever written, and it's a privilege to bring it to life with such a brilliant cast led by David Hayman. Arthur Miller's exploration of family relationships and shattered dreams is as powerful and relevant today as it was when first performed."

The cast also features Beth Marshall as Linda, Daniel Cahill as Biff and Michael Wallace as Happy. **Go to: westendtheatre.com for full tour details.**

exploration and love. She's still quite innocent, she doesn't have a lot of knowledge of the world and because she's so excitable she is quite emotionally reactive to things. That's a lot of fun to play."

Like Glenn, she's a big fan of Steinman's songwriting. "Everything in it matters. The way the songs are written, they all tell a story and they're full of drama. That's why they work so well in a musical," she added.

Also like her co-star, she promises that the combination of the music and the story makes for a great night out. "It's a night of fantastic songs, with the chance to relive your youth if you're of a certain age and to discover these incredible songs if you're younger, plus it's a love story and an adventure. It's a rock and roll rollercoaster."

Husband and wife Rob Fowler and Sharon Sexton originated the roles of Falco and Sloane and have returned to the show many times. Rob is especially impressed with the new production, tailored for

theatres around the country.

"It has kept all of Jim's authenticity and music alive," he said, "but it is more accessible to every theatre in the UK. From a performer's point of view, it's definitely more in-your-face rock and roll. It's like everybody in this piece is now a rock star."

Sharon added: "The great thing with *Bat Out of Hell* is that it constantly evolves, but Jim's story, music and lyrics remain the heart of the piece."

That music, Fowler said, is timeless. "Jim's songs are like a two-act play. Every song has its own story and journey, and that keeps the piece moving. It's like going to your favourite theme park. Every ride is exhilarating, an adrenaline rush, and makes you want to get on it again."

The show tours until September 20 and includes visits to Leeds, Plymouth, London, Milton Keynes, High Wycombe, Sunderland and Bristol.

Go to: batoutofhellmusical.com for full details.



Your Announcements

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

Seeking

I am seeking SAC Mary Cessford in connection with our 60th anniversary, which is in July 2026. My wife Ann (née Maddrell) and I (Richard) met in 1965 at RAF Wittering, Mary was instrumental in bringing us together. All three of us were in the Supply Squadron (stores). Ann was discharged in January 1968 and myself in 1972. It is my intention to have a celebration function in July 2026 and we would dearly love Mary to be present. If anybody out there knows of Mary's whereabouts please would they contact me – email: dick.squire4@gmail.com or mobile: 07792 629059.



Mary Cessford

Reunions

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

ALL ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to contact the undersigned

with a view to arranging a reunion in 2025. Please email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com

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

45TH Entry RAF Hereford Suppliers. 63rd Reunion June 27-28 at Barns Hotel, Cannock. Contact Dave Bell, Hull: 01482 377625.

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

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

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

Associations

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never..!). Its aim is to foster esprit de corps and comradeship, to promote and maintain the ethos and heritage of this incredible Signals Unit.

Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: www.591suassociation.co.uk for

membership details and news of the next annual reunion along with other upcoming events for 2025.

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 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. Please see: rafaarmourers.co.uk or please contact the committee via email: plumbersrest@outlook.com.

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; or you can contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

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 for membership enquiries.

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 send an email to: janedjones6@btinternet.com. The first year of membership is free.

Obituary

A proud Scotsman



MAN OF PRINCIPLE: WO William Alexander McKay had an extraordinary life

IT IS with great sadness that we announce the passing of Warrant Officer (Ret'd) William Alexander McKay, aged 89, formerly of the RAF Fire Service, who passed away peacefully at his beloved home in the Netherlands on January 21. At the time, Bill was preparing a home-cooked meal, with a glass of wine ready on the table.

Born in Portobello, Edinburgh, on January 3, 1936, Bill remained a proud Scotsman throughout his life. After briefly nurturing his love of food and sports, he began his journey into the RAF – a career marked by achievement, dedication and adventure.

His passion for sports was evident in his accomplishments as a diver and water polo player. However, he is most fondly remembered for his significant contributions to RAF Rugby, famously playing his last station-level game at the age of 52.

Bill served across the UK and Europe, including tours in Akrotiri and Aden.

He also served twice in Germany, and on a prestigious exchange with the Sultan of Brunei's defence forces.

He eventually settled in the Dutch town of Roermond with his wife Jess after years of service. Among his fondest memories was the RAF Fire Service shedding the RAF Regiment; he took pleasure in recounting the tale of their ceremonial burning to his son-in-law, a member of the RAF Regiment.

Bill was a man of principle and a pillar of strength both emotionally and spiritually. He leaves behind his daughter Heather and son Bob, along with their extended families, who remember him with love and admiration.

His memorial service celebrated his extraordinary life and impact on those who knew him. Bill's ashes, along with those of his wife Jess and son Andy, have been spread from Flamborough Point, a place deeply significant to his family.

How to use our service

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

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Your Announcements

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tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk



BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL: Sgt Ken Ivory with wife Tracy and Countess Howe

Gong for charity champ

RAF HIGH Wycombe-based Sgt Ken Ivory received the British Empire Medal recently at Penn House, Amersham, home of The Earl Howe.

The ceremony was presided over by the current Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Countess Howe, assisted by Vice Lord-Lieutenant Sir Francis Hapgood, writes *Laurence Parker*.

In front of invited guests, Sgt Ivory stood to hear his full citation read out

before receiving his medal for over 30 years' service as Honorary Treasurer to the local branch of the military charity SSAFA.

Sgt Ivory said: "It was awe inspiring. Just to hear the other citations as well was very humbling. The best part of the day was sharing it with my wife, Tracy. It was nice for her to get some recognition. Although my role with SSAFA is voluntary she has had to make allowances whilst I worked during many a weekend on Treasurer business."

Chiefs get Court up in fundraising challenge

UNDER THE leadership of the unstoppable Cpl Hayley Court, a determined team - including Air Officer Wales, Air Cdre Rob Wood, Station Commander RAF Valley, Gp Capt Gez Currie and AMF Commander Air Wing, Gp Capt Andy McIntyre - took on the challenge of climbing Snowdon for Healing Military Minds.

The charity was founded in 2021 when Cpl Court recognised the devastating impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on UK charities. Determined to ensure that veterans struggling with PTSD continued to receive essential mental health support, she launched a fundraising mission for Combat Stress.



LEADING BY EXAMPLE: Snowdon team raised more than £2,000

"I knew a lot of people who had benefited from Combat Stress, particularly after Afghanistan, so I wanted to make sure they could still get the support they needed through the incredible work the charity does," said Hayley.

Following the success of the Healing Military Minds Ball last November,

Hayley wanted a physical challenge that supporters could rally around - so she set her sights on Snowdon, the second-highest peak in the British Isles.

The team's sterling efforts raised more than £2,000, bringing the Healing Military Minds fundraising total to an incredible £153,000.



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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 382

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

- 7. Cake decoration includes his first mandarin masterpiece (1,5)
- 8. I enter spot to fish (6)
- 10. Stalin's henchman is back first from chilly region (7)
- 11. Some of Diana Ross's weaker material (5)
- 12. King's jet (4)
- 13. Southern Spike is a slow mover (5)
- 17. Spa city east of the Wash (5)
- 18. In Japan, Nelly is a girl's name (4)
- 22. Watchful warning (5)
- 23. Growing type of grape in Gateshead (7)
- 24. RAF plane has bad smell by end of December (6)
- 25. Not skating, in workplace (6)

Down

- 1. See 15 Down
- 2. See 21 Down
- 3. Without me, Germany becomes resentful (5)
- 4. Foreign air base has core value from French identity (2,5)
- 5. See 14 Down
- 6. Five choose Scottish language lines (5)
- 9. RAF uses these as diners swallow first aperitif (9)
- 14. And 5 Down. Jota's felt-tip damaged by speedy traveller (4,3,5)
- 15. And 1 Down. Mini aerialists use these to cause alarm (4-3,7)
- 16. Dogged planes? (7)
- 19. Two graduates and I film classic (5)
- 20. Rough body of water outside Montgomery (5)
- 21. And 2 Down. Loosens Fife bathrobe to reveal comic character (5,3,4)

Name:

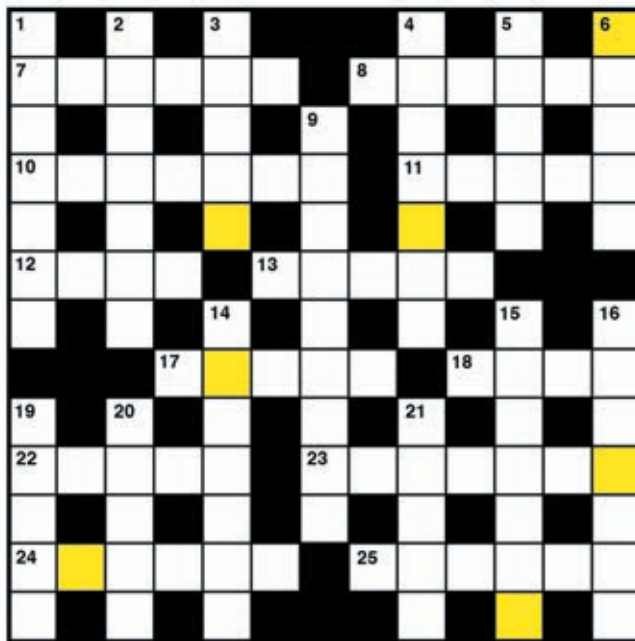
Address:

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RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 382

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top military title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by April 22, 2025.



Prize Crossword No. 381 winner is: Mr John Maw, Leeds.

Solution to Crossword No. 381

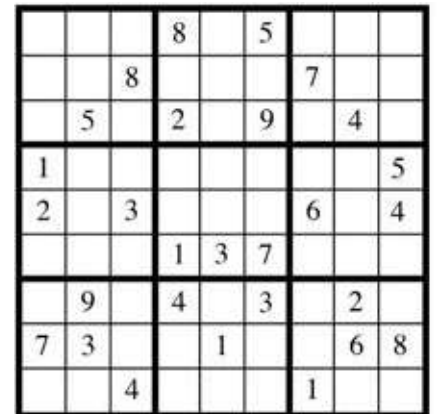
Across – 1. ABBA 8. Spinnakers 9. Disposal 10. So-so 12. Edison 14. Subway 15. Breech 17. Breaks 18. Adze 19. Loitered 21. Maria Eagle 22. Nine
Down – 2. Bewildered 3. ASAP 4. Gibson 5. Angles 6. Sky Sabre 7. Oslo 11. Shackleton 13. She-devil 16. Helmet 17. Bridge 18. Army 20. Eden
RAF word – *Aircrew*



Prize Su Doku No. 392

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 April 22, 2025. The winner of Su Doku No: 390 is: David Read, Dunstable.



Solution to Su Doku No. 391

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



Film Review Beyond the Borders (15)

In cinemas now

Sanctuary's out of reach

THE PATHS of an ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agent in training and a Mexican immigrant are fated to cross in this dark and violent drama about life on the US border, starring Zoe Saldana in her latest role since picking up the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress.

Esmee (Saldana) is an exotic dancer in a club down in Mexico where the violence is inevitable. Fleeing the country and heading for the States, the unauthorised trip across the border is equally as harrowing. Especially for women, who face the threat of abuse from their so-called guides.

One character explains that the name Coyote comes from a manifestation of the devil, and these are the people to whom Esmee has entrusted her life.

Meanwhile, the ICE Taskforce is on a mission to root out these illegal immigrants. Among them is brooding new recruit Shipp (Garrett Hedlund) who gives little away but clearly has his demons. Whilst other officers – especially sadist partner Dobbins (Chris Coy) – seem to enjoy the hunt of the job a bit too much, Shipp tries his best to prevent their brutality.

The story is framed like a cat and mouse thriller, but instead offers a grim meditation on hardship and exploitation: where some people cannot escape their situation, and the system reduces them to criminals. When Esmee arrives in Texas, she is immediately at the mercy of another predator, who blackmails her into submission, knowing that she has no one to turn to.



TRAPPED: Zoe Saldana and Maeve Garay

Saldana gives a powerful performance as Esmee. She demonstrates quiet strength yet remains powerless to change her circumstance. Almost voiceless, her words are often reduced to pained cries and desperate pleas. Hedlund's Shipp is intriguing, defying the expected white knight archetype, though the film leaves some of his motivations frustratingly vague.

Beyond The Borders paints a bleak picture of life with compelling characters and performances, but while its ambiguity adds intrigue, some themes and motivations feel underexplored.

Review by Sam Cooney
 3 roundels out of five



Music Martha Wainwright

Tour and rereleases

20-yr anniversary

TWENTY YEARS ago Martha Wainwright stepped out of her family's illustrious shadow – she's the sister of Rufus and daughter of Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle – and announced herself to the world with her debut album *Martha Wainwright*.

On May 23, this album will be released on vinyl for the very first time. The classic debut will also be released on CD and digital with extra tracks and a bonus disc that features 14 rarities and alternate versions.

Gems include *Bring Back My Heart* featuring Rufus Wainwright, the never before released *Our Love* with Kate & Anna McGarrigle and *Far Away*, featuring the late Garth Hudson.

"In the years before my first album was released I was doing my own version of 'artist development' – playing a lot of gigs and going into the studio to make demos," Martha remembered. "I got to New York

City in 1998. It was a magical blur of fun and discovery, meeting musicians, playing and seeing shows and going into the studio. Hopping from bar to bar in the Lower East Side and Williamsburg.

"These are some of the recordings that came out of that time," she said of the bonus material. "Some were released as EPs that I would sell at shows but others have never been released. These are the ones that best reflect that time and the wild

eclecticism I've always had, for better or worse, as an artist."

To support the release, Martha will play 11 shows including two in London – those have already sold out.

The UK branch of the 20th anniversary tour kicks off at The Apex, Bury St Edmunds on May 27 and culminates at London's Cadogan Hall on August 30.

Go to: marthawainwright.com for full tour details.

