

**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Bomber Girls novel**

● R'n'R page 4



**Lanc: RAF icon**

● See page 17



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, May 17, 2024  
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# RAF NEWS

## Agile Combat Employment is keeping Alliance one step ahead in *Dangerous Decade*

See pages 14-15



**Athletics**  
**Euro silver in Masters**



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**Equestrian**  
**Loriners joy in dressage**



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**Boxing**  
**Axe dream pro debut**



● See page 28

# The King steps in



### Tracey Allen

KING CHARLES III has taken on two key honorary roles with the RAF as he marks the first anniversary of his reign.

Buckingham Palace announced that His Majesty has become patron of the RAF Museum and the Royal Air Force Association in a move which celebrates his lifelong links with the Service.

It comes after a review of more than 1,000 royal patronages conducted by the Royal Household.

Prince Philip, the late Duke of Edinburgh, was royal patron of the RAF Museum from 1968 until his death in 2021.

A museum spokesman said: "We are honoured and thrilled to announce that His Majesty King Charles III has graciously accepted the role of Royal Patron for the RAF Museum."

● Continued on p2



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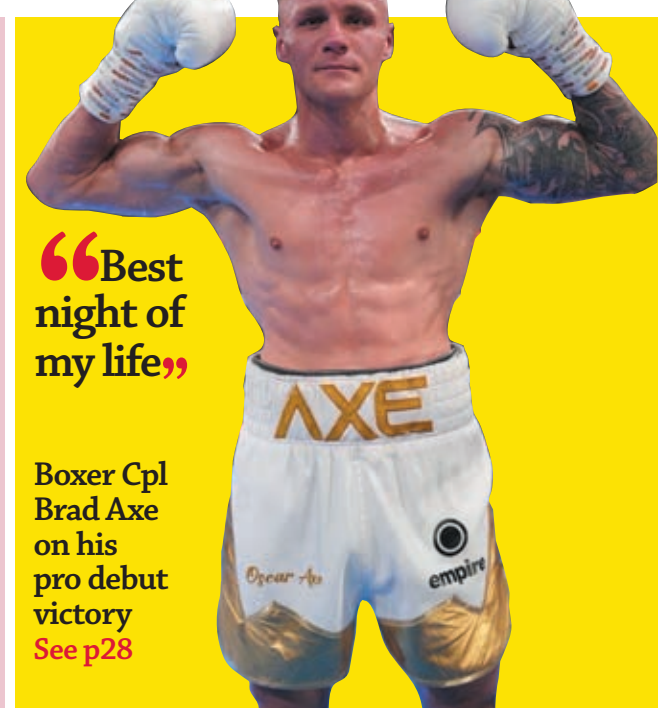
**“We are very grateful to the Croatian military and civil authorities,”**

**Red Arrows chief Wg Cdr Adam Collins on preparations abroad for the upcoming season**  
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**“I start with egregious flattery of my audience,”**

**Griff Rhys Jones on getting the crowd onside for his new tour**  
See R'n'R pages 4-5



**“Best night of my life,”**

**Boxer Cpl Brad Axe on his pro debut victory**  
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## ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

### RAF News

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# Palace confirms King's new roles in the RAF

● *Continued from front page*

“His Majesty’s dedication to honouring the legacy of the Royal Air Force and his unwavering support for our mission to share the story of the Service make him a fitting ambassador.

“We look forward to further advancing our mission of sharing the rich history and enduring legacy of the Royal Air Force with audiences around the world.”

The review by the Royal Household featured the close involvement of members of the Royal Family and focused on organisations Queen Elizabeth II supported as patron and those the King and Queen represented as patron or president before their accession.

King Charles has been a member of the RAF Association since 1971 when he enlisted in the Service and has previously

held the role of President.

He became Commander in Chief of the British Armed Forces following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and continues to hold a number of honorary titles in the RAF.

Nick Bunting, Secretary General for the Royal Air Forces Association, said: “We are immensely proud to have His Majesty The King as the new Patron of the RAF Association.

He said: “Having been a member of the Association for over 50 years and a previous President, His Majesty The King has long been a supporter of our work.

“We are incredibly grateful for his continued support and are honoured that he has chosen to follow in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI to become the next Royal Patron of the RAF Association.



“It means a great deal to our entire organisation and the wider Royal Air Force community we are here to support.”

## This Week In History



### 1940 Dunkirk mission

MORE THAN 200 Spitfires and Hurricanes support the mass evacuation of British and French troops from the beaches at Dunkirk during operation Dynamo.

### 1951 Royal Colours

HRH PRINCESS Elizabeth presents the first King’s Colour for the Royal Air Force in Hyde Park, on behalf of King George VI.



### 1982 Harrier Falklands raids

1 SQN Harriers on board HMS Hermes launch their first ground attack sorties of the Falklands conflict, led by Wg Cdr Peter Squire.

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

# Mission of Hope



Charities aid slum kids *and* honour tragic Lottie

## Staff Reporter

**SHAWBURY CHARITY crusader Wg Cdr Neil Hope led a mission to help youngsters living in some of Kenya's worst slum areas, delivering thousands of items of sports kit to schools and orphanages.**

The campaigning airman and a team of 15 military and civilian volunteers travelled to Kibera, where more than one million people live in a two square mile area with no permanent electricity, running water or sewerage.

They delivered footie strips donated by UK league teams and the FA, including Leicester City,



**REMEMBERING CHARLOTTE:** Volunteer with some of the youngsters in their donated football shirts and, *top left*, Sqn Ldr Ian Hope

Manchester United, Aston Villa, Wolverhampton Wanderers and their home side, Shawbury Town FC.

Neil set up the charity Taking Football to Africa and Beyond in 2006 and has delivered nearly 400,000 items of kit to more than 60 countries, working with UK football teams, sports manufacturers and aid workers across the globe.

Last year he set up another charity, Lottie's Way, in memory of his

19-year-old daughter Charlotte who planned to work as a teacher in Kenya before her tragic death in a car crash in 2022.

Charlotte (*inset below*) was an integral part of the appeal and volunteered at the Restart Centre in Gilgil, Kenya. She planned to complete her primary education degree and work full-time as a teacher in the region.

The foundation, now run by Neil's son Chris, has raised more than £50,000

to fund university tuition for students from slum areas.

Neil said: "Our latest visit has allowed the appeal to renew its friendships across Kenya. It's my 18th Kenya delivery trip and with more than 120 people taking part over the years was special.

"Given the emotional issues in continuing to return to the country and people my daughter cherished, it was difficult but made easier by the excellent team of people joining and supporting me.

"I am proud that we have now started fundraising for Lottie's Way with some excellent work by the charity lead, Chris Hope, and the trustees."



## Window of opportunity to mark foiling of Nazis in plane challenge

TO MARK 80 years since D-Day and Operation Taxable, the RAF Benevolent Fund has launched a special challenge.

The legendary 617 Dambusters Sqn dropped aluminium foil, known as window, from 16 Lancasters, ahead of the D-Day landings as a decoy to persuade the Germans that an Allied invasion of the Pas de Calais was imminent in 1944.

The spoof invasion, part of Operation Taxable and the broader deception plan Operation Bodyguard, was executed at the same time as the genuine landings and played a major role in the success of the D-Day landings.

Now the RAFBF has launched the Tin Foil Aeroplane Challenge, encouraging people to make their own tin foil aeroplane to mark the milestone anniversary.

Entrants will post their efforts on social media and submit their score on the Fund's leaderboard before

being entered into a randomised prize draw, with the chance of winning a special edition Red Arrows coin.

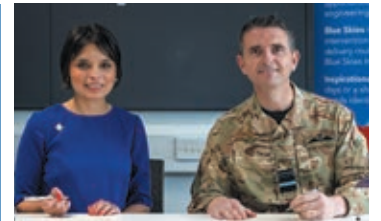
Ben Alonso, the RAFBF's director of fundraising, said: "It is important for us to commemorate the efforts and sacrifice made by RAF personnel during D-Day and throughout the Second World War. Operation Taxable was a tactical, strategic and extremely clever decoy that played a huge role in the success of the D-Day landings.

"We hope members of the RAF family, Fund supporters and the general public get on board with the Tin Foil Aeroplane Challenge for some creative and competitive fun."

● You can view the Fund's 'How To' guide and video tutorial on making a tin foil aeroplane, as well as the online leaderboard, at: [rafbf.org/tinfoilchallenge](http://rafbf.org/tinfoilchallenge)



**DECOY:** D-Day Lancaster and, *inset*, tin foil aeroplane promotes RAFBF challenge



**DEAL:** Emma Egging and AVM Paul Godfrey

## Space chiefs give boost to Egging Trust

UK SPACE acs and youth charity the Jon Egging Trust have teamed up to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds work in the aerospace industry.

The pact was signed at UK Space Command's headquarters at RAF High Wycombe, by JET founder Dr Emma Egging and Commander of UK Space Command AVM Paul Godfrey.

Emma said the partnership builds on 12 years of support from the RAF and will help to deliver the charity's vision that every JET student should have access to space opportunities as part of the Blue Skies project.

"Space touches every aspect of modern life, and yet so often people see it as an abstract concept which doesn't relate to them," she said.

"By working with UK Space Command to build inspiring space-related content and workplace opportunities into our programmes, our students are able to grow their confidence and aspirations, develop vital competencies including teamwork and communication skills, and get a real sense of the breadth of career opportunities available within the sector."

AVM Godfrey added: "Through this venture, UK Space Command and the Jon Egging Trust will demonstrate to thousands of young people that space really does matter, and everyone can be involved."



**Royal Air Force  
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# Off to a flyer

## Cadet Amelia lands £15,000 to fund RAF fast jet dream



INSPIRING: ATA pilot Molly Rose

### Tracey Allen

A 17-YEAR-OLD student whose ambition is to become an RAF fighter pilot has been awarded a £15,000 flying scholarship.

Amelia Richardson from Buckinghamshire was chosen from 55 applicants aged 17 to 24 to receive the second Attagirls Molly Rose Pilot Scholarship.

The only one of its kind in the UK, the scholarship entirely funds all elements of attaining a Private Pilot's Licence, said Paul Olavesen-Stabb of Aetheris Films who established the scholarship and created the Attagirls brand.

Molly Rose, who died in 2016 aged 95, was one of the aviatrix heroines of World War II. She is featured in the novel and film screenplay *Attagirls*, based on the true story of her life as a pilot in the ATA.

Paul added: "Amelia was selected from five finalists who attended interviews and a flight test in April, and she will receive full pilot training at the Cambridge Aero Club over the summer."

"The scholarship was funded by Marshall of Cambridge, with contributions from Graham, Gregory and Nigel Rose, the three sons of the Air Transport Auxiliary pilot Molly Rose; Philip Meeson, the founder of Jet2; and the British Women Pilots' Association."

A Cdt Sgt in the Combined Cadet Force (RAF Wing), Amelia intends to join the RAF, and said she hopes to be a fighter pilot. She



went solo at 14 and achieved her Basic Instructor rating three months after her 16th birthday. She is now looking to achieve the Aerobatic Sports badge at RAF Shawbury Gliding Club.

She said: "Being awarded the scholarship is a huge honour and a fantastic leap towards achieving my career aspirations. Thank you to everyone for supporting me."

Paul added: "The scholarship is synonymous with Molly's story as she was not afraid to embrace opportunities that during her time were exclusive to men."

"She was an apprentice engineer at Marshall of Cambridge and thereafter a pilot, and at a time when it was extremely rare for women to take on such roles."

### In Brief



**RUNNING TOTAL:** Sqn Ldr Wakeham raised £2,400 for Samaritans charity

### Tam's on track

MARATHON RUNNER Sqn Ldr Tam Wakeham has smashed her fundraising pledge for Samaritans after completing the London Marathon in just over four hours and four minutes.

She wanted to raise £2,000 but has so far made more than £2,400 for the charity that helps those struggling to cope and are at risk of suicide.

High Wycombe-based Tam chose to support Samaritans after struggling with her sexuality gave her suicidal thoughts. She now volunteers for the charity.

The experienced runner said: "I completed the marathon, no problems. The atmosphere in London was unbelievable, the crowds were amazing."

"My finishing time wasn't quite what I wanted, and I ran 26.66 miles going around people."

"I've signed up for the Richmond Marathon in September in aid of Sense, for children and adults who are deaf and blind."

# Five-star rating

### Tracey Allen

TV'S SATURDAY Kitchen presenter and professional chef Matt Tebbutt made a special visit to RAFAKidz Abbey Wood as the nursery programme marked its fifth anniversary.

RAF Association ambassador Matt surprised the children and nursery workers with a special celebration cake and cupcakes.

RAFAKidz Abbey Wood provides childcare for children aged three months to five years old at the Defence site in Filton, including government funded places for two, three and four-year-olds and specialist services for children with special educational needs.

Matt (right) spent time with the children of military personnel, helping them to decorate the cupcakes



before joining in with a rendition of happy birthday to kickstart the anniversary celebrations.

He said: "RAF personnel and their families give a huge amount in the service of their country. RAFAKidz and RAFA do a fantastic job supporting serving families."

"It was great fun to get involved, join in with the celebrations and spend time getting messy with the children."


Abigail Wood, nursery manager at RAFAKidz

Abbey Wood, said: "It made it such a special occasion and the children had an absolutely fantastic time chatting to Matt and decorating the cupcakes."

RAFAKidz has 14 nurseries located across the country.



**CAKE THAT:** Saturday Kitchen presenter Matt Tebbutt joins parents and toddlers at Abbey Wood to mark RAFAKidz anniversary



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# Maw the merrier for WWII plotter Kate, 102

## Tracey Allen

A WWII plotter who helped defend India against Japanese bomber raids has marked her 102nd birthday alongside serving members of her local RAF station at St Mawgan.

India-born WO Kate Orchard and her two sisters volunteered for duty with the Women's Auxiliary Corps in 1941, working around the clock to track enemy aircraft targeting industrial sites supporting the Allied war effort.

She was joined by four generations of her family, a traditional Cornish choir and St Mawgan personnel deployed to the Remote Radar Head at



Portreath to mark her birthday. Reminiscing about her wartime service, Kate said: "I wanted to do something for my country, which we all wanted to do during the war."

There was a large grid in this room with a map of India. As the messages came through you had to identify if it was hostile or friendly.

"The enemy was the Japanese aircraft. They were the ones we were plotting on the big grid. It saved a lot of lives, otherwise we would have been bombed."

"If I could put my uniform back on and do it all over again, I would in a heartbeat."



**CELEBRATION:** Veteran Kate marked her birthday with personnel from St Mawgan  
PHOTOS: CPL TOM CANN

## In Brief



**GULF WAR HERO:** Former navigator John Nichol will be touring the UK

## John's tour of Remembrance

FORMER TORNADO navigator and bestselling author John Nichol will start his first-ever theatre tour later this year.

The show, titled *Unknown Warrior - A Personal Journey of Discovery and Remembrance*, is based on Nichol's forthcoming book and kicks off in October.

The veteran navigator was shot down during the Iraq war and he and pilot John Peters were taken captive, tortured and paraded on TV.

Nichol has since written 17 books, including *Tornado Down*, co-authored with Peters, which described their ordeal as prisoners of war.

The theatre tour sees Nichol take an emotional and personal journey, retracing the Unknown Warrior's journey home from the battlefields of Northern France to Westminster Abbey to be buried 'Among the Kings'.

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

# Tanks a lot

## Ormond St charity chiefs salute Voyager crew as mascot takes to the skies



HUNDREDS OF cuddly charity mascots took to the skies on board an RAF Voyager for a refuelling sortie, raising more than £10,000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital.

The Giraffes on Tour group overran the Brize Norton departure lounge ahead of the flight to net funds for the famous London hospital which treats youngsters with acute medical conditions.

Charity founder Ian Conway said: "After spending 24 hours with the RAF, I was hit with the reality of what this incredible adventure means to so many children and their families at Great Ormond Street."

"Our 500 giraffes all had the most amazing time and we do hope that they can find new homes. We cannot thank the RAF enough."

The charity's website was inundated with orders for the giraffe mascot after shots of the flight were posted on social media platforms, more than doubling last year's fundraising flight.

Voyager pilot Flt Lt Mark Scott, pictured left, added: "It's an honour to help with something extraordinary. After our successful night air-to-air refuelling training with an Atlas A400M we brought the giraffes safely back to RAF Brize Norton."



Compere: Howard Leader  
TV and Radio Presenter



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## In Brief



**SWEEPING THE BOARD:** British Armed Forces champ AS1 James Kenyon

## Jim checks in

SERVICE CHESS maestro AS1 James Kenyon is heading for a showdown with Nato rivals after storming to victory in the recent UK Armed Forces and MOD play-off.

He outclassed former champ LCpl Alexander Tenin to win the home title and will now represent British Armed Forces in the forthcoming Nato tournament.

UK Grand Master Danny Gormally threw down the challenge to Service competitors, playing all 33 entrants at the same time, winning 32 but losing to former RAF champ Wg Cdr Glenn Parker.



## Relive the war in '44

THE NATIONAL Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire has launched a new commemorative exhibition that uses personal stories to explore the events of 1944.

Interactive displays reveal the reality of life on the Home Front during the final year of the conflict and tell the stories of some who lived through it.

Exhibition spokeswoman Rachel Smith said: "1944 was undoubtedly a turning point in the war.

"On the Home Front, continued food rationing, evacuations and the new terrifying threat of missile attacks were having a huge impact on daily life at the same time as families worried about fathers, sons and brothers involved in conflict overseas."

● Go to: [thenma.org.uk/1944](https://thenma.org.uk/1944) for details.

# Academy goes Pro



**UK RETURN:** 54 Sqn instructor training on the Protector simulator in Dakota.

## Staff Reporter Dakota

**THE UK'S new generation of Protector crews are on target to begin training in the UK for the first time as instructors with the RAF's ISTAR Academy return from the US.**

54 Sqn and 56 Sqn personnel have been honing their skills with General Atomics at Grand Forks in Dakota ahead of delivering an intensive training package designed to get crews to the frontline in record time.

Based at Waddington, 54 Sqn will deliver a bespoke course before pilots move to the 56 Sqn Operation Conversation Unit,

ahead of frontline deployment with 31 Sqn.

The fast-track intensive course could see graduates arrive on Protector's frontline squadron as soon as 18 months after finishing their entry training at Halton or Cranwell, air chiefs say.

Pilots, Sensor Operators and Mission Intelligence Coordinators drawn from across the Service will join initial crews on the programme, which will use higher levels of synthetic training than ever before.

54 Sqn commanding officer

Wg Cdr Rob Evans said: "The completion of the Basic Phase Course is a huge milestone in the delivery of the Protector programme, with 56 Sqn personnel now able to return to the UK to complete vital testing and unlock UK training and global operations.

"The staff on 54 Sqn now focus on how they will impart that knowledge to others, working with the Central Flying School and GA-ASI to prepare for UK training delivery later this year.

"It has been a huge effort by

the remote team to get to this stage and another proud moment in the history of the squadron."

Equipped with a suite of advanced equipment and precision strike weapons, Protector will provide armed surveillance around the globe.

The aircraft is also cleared to operate in unsegregated airspace thanks to 'detect and avoid' technology, and can stay airborne for more than 30 hours.

Protector is expected to reach operating capability by 2025 and Waddington crews will provide launch and recovery to support domestic training and command and control for overseas operations.



**ARRIVAL:** Waddington

News



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# Atlas delivers hope to Gaza



**LIFESAVING:** Loadmaster looks out over war-torn northern Gaza as the RAF delivers the latest aid package to Palestinian civilians  
PHOTOS: ASI NIRAN LEWIS

**Staff Reporter**

**UK FORCES continue to support international aid efforts to alleviate the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza with a ninth delivery of vital supplies of water, rice, baby formula and ready meals.**

A Brize Norton-based Atlas transporter joined aircraft from other nations during the latest large-scale mercy mission to the war-torn area, dropping 11 tonnes of supplies onto the UK-designated drop zone on the northern coast.

The RAF mission came 48 hours after US and Jordanian transport aircraft flew into the area during a coordinated mercy

mission as the conflict threatens to bring famine to the region.

Army personnel from 47 Air Despatch Squadron supported the UK sortie.

The UK government has pledged to deliver more supplies to Gaza by land, and deliveries will be scaled up with the opening of the Erez crossing, a spokesman said.

Thousands of tonnes of international aid pre-screened in Cyprus is to be delivered through a maritime corridor and brought ashore via a temporary pier constructed by US Forces and through Ashford Port following an agreement with the Israeli government.

## Czech hero Kafka honoured

**ONE OF the final two surviving Czech veterans to serve with the RAF in World War II has celebrated his 100th birthday.**

Jiří Pavel Kafka was born to a Jewish family in Prague and was one of the 669 'kindertransport' children rescued from occupied Czechoslovakia and brought to Britain by Sir Nicholas Winton on the eve of war.

Like many refugees who fled the Nazi terror, he wanted to fight and at 18 joined the army. His real ambition was to join the RAF and three months later signed up as an on-board radio operator and gunner.

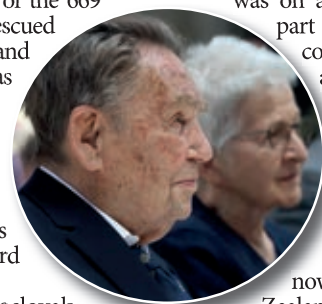
Flying with 311 Czechoslovak Sqn, he took part in Atlantic patrols to find and destroy enemy ships and submarines and later took part in the landing of Allied

troops in Normandy on D-Day.

Czech military historian Jiří Rajlich said: "Jiří Kafka simply knew where he belonged and he behaved accordingly. In June 1944, he was on a 10-hour-long patrol flight as part of D-Day, which we will be commemorating the 80-year anniversary of this year."

311 Sqn suffered the heaviest losses out of any Czechoslovak formation in the RAF, accounting for more than half of those killed in action.

Relatives, including those now living in the UK and New Zealand, joined Czech military personnel to mark the event and a delegation from the British consulate delivered a personal greeting from HM King Charles.





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**In Brief**



**GREEN MACHINE:** Typhoons top up with a blend of sustainable and traditional aviation fuel

## 'Phoon fuels Net Zero bid

VOYAGER CREWS have topped up UK Typhoons with a mix of aviation fuel and recycled chip oil as part of the MOD's Net Zero drive.

A Brize Norton-based tanker refuelled the swing role fighters with a blend of traditional fuel and 40 per cent sustainable aviation fuel refined from used vegetable oil.

The sortie follows a series of recent milestones including the world-first RAF Voyager flight fuelled by 100 per cent sustainable fuel.

The RAF has set a target to reach Net Zero by 2040, ahead of the government's own target of 2050.



**VISIT:** AM Walton chats to Cynthia Fowler

## Star turn

THE SERVICE'S highest-ranking woman officer, Air Marshal Clare Walton, met elderly RAF veterans during a visit to the Star and Garter home in High Wycombe.

UK Defence's chief medical officer joined pioneering air woman Air Cdre Cynthia Fowler, who retired in 2000 after rising through the ranks to become station commander at RAF Hillingdon and later run Service-wide welfare programmes.

AM Walton said: "It was a pleasure to meet some of the residents and team who work at the Star and Garter home.

"I was genuinely impressed by the thought and attention that has clearly gone into the home, it is entirely fitting to the provision of care to our veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia."



# Photo of the week



F-35 LIGHTNING jets returned to their home base at Marham after supporting Nato war games from HMS Prince of Wales.

The fifth-generation stealth fighters spearheaded combat air power across Eastern and Northern Europe during the four-month Exercise Steadfast

Defender, involving more than 90,000 military personnel from across the Alliance.

The UK Carrier Support Group was deployed on the annual exercise for the first time, supporting war drills in the High North. PHOTO: AS1 AMBER MAYALL

# CAS on Red alert with Arrows Croatia flight

THE CHIEF of the Air Staff took to the skies over Croatia with the Red Arrows as the team put the finishing touches to their landmark 60th display season during training on Exercise Springhawk.

ACM Sir Rich Knighton joined Red 1, Sqn Ldr Jon Bond, for the flight from Zemunik airbase, near Zadar, ahead of meeting with Croatian air force chief Maj Gen Michael Križanec.

The Reds will be showcasing their world-renowned aerobatic skills with displays across Europe and North America this summer.

As part of their Diamond Jubilee season the UK aerobatic aces will also be marking the Royal Canadian Air Force's centenary with a series of shows across the country.

Reds chief Wg Cdr Adam Collins said: "Preparations for the new 2024 diamond season are going very well, involving a huge team effort from the Red Arrows air and ground crews.

"As always, we're extremely grateful for the support of the Croatian military and civil authorities – together with the British Embassy – in allowing Springhawk to take place at Zemunik and to the base's local community. The dedicated training is extremely valuable for the entire team.

"The visit by the Chief of the Air Staff was a brilliant opportunity to



**RED ALERT:** CAS, ACM Sir Richard Knighton (left) with Arrows chief Wg Cdr Adam Collins at Zemunik during training in Croatia

showcase this work and provide an update on plans for an exciting year ahead in which the team aims to inspire people through this new, dynamic display."

Springhawk allows the Reds to maximise flying time with settled weather conditions, flying up to 15 sorties a week.

The training culminates in

a final assessment by air chiefs before the team is granted a licence to thrill, a Public Display Authority, ahead of their first show later this month.

# SCAND AND ANTI

## How Nato's newest Nordic members are raising the stakes for combat air power



ACE EXERCISE: Marham F-35 lands at MOD Boscombe Down PHOTO: AS1 JAKE HOBBS

**NATO TOP brass will be looking to the Alliance's newest members to help step up deterrence and face down Russia and China when they meet in London later this summer.**

Air and space chiefs from across the Alliance and other allied nations will gather in London in July to discuss growing threats in Europe and the South Pacific as PM Rishi Sunak puts Britain on a war footing.

Among the high-powered guests at this year's Air and Space Power conference will be air force chiefs from Sweden and Finland, which both became full members of Nato earlier this year.

Along with their Scandinavian neighbours, they pioneered the Agile Combat Employment tactics during the Cold War to counter the Soviet threat along their borders.

Now Nato is placing ACE at the heart of a global move to deter enemy powers in an era dubbed the 'dangerous decade,' as allies eye the escalating danger of conflict.

Assistant Chief of the Air Staff AVM Tim Jones (pictured right) said: "The Nordic countries have been compelled to collaborate by dint of geography and we look to them for inspiration in terms of agile operations and Agile Combat Employment.



"As a feature of deterrence – getting out of the way of the threat and not making it worth the effort trying – ACE is a key part of what we are rediscovering in terms of the way we operate and the operating mindset."

Big ticket training exercises in the US and Europe have focused on ACE tactics and RAF chiefs say more hit-and-run combat drills are planned for this year in the UK.

AVM Jones added: "The operational mindset of the last 25 years has been reserved for the 'away game.' We have seen that our people are brilliant at it. There's no difficulty getting into the mindset when it is required – we should take heart from that.

"But there is definitely a challenge for us to think about. That is why we have been working so hard on ACE.

"Compared with 30 years ago, we have a smaller number of large bases. Those days have gone but that does not mean we can't be agile. We have to think differently about how we do that.

"Early indications are positive. When we went to Boscombe Down to run QRA operations it was successful. That gave us confidence that this is doable – we just need to do it.

"What we are seeing when we talk to frontline is



“Air power message... go with us and lose – and

SOMEFIN DIFFERENT: Main picture shows RAF Typhoon in road landing in Finland PHOTO: AS1 TOMAS BARNARD

that they are up for it. They want to be on operations.

"The fact that we have had to send our people abroad to do it is a fact of life. But the idea of being operational from your

own frontline base is something our people are really up for."

Buoyed by the recent increase in the defence budget and with a freshly-minted strategy on the development of uncrewed

platforms with aerospace industry leaders, the RAF is well-placed to respond to the changing nature of global threats, chiefs say.

The new Autonomous

# D DELIVER



er sends a swift  
et into a conflict  
you are going to  
d lose badly”

**AVM Tim Jones**



**FLYING VISIT:** RAF Typhoon from Coningsby at Benson as part of ACE manoeuvres  
PHOTO: ASI IAIN CURLETT



**COLD WAR:** Fuel preparations in Norway on Ex Arctic Phoenix  
PHOTO: SGT CATHY SHARPLES



**ROAD TO SUCCESS:** ACE in Sweden

augment the operations of our existing crewed combat air platforms. We expect to field an operational capability within the next year.”

AVM Jones added: “What we have seen over the last few years confirms what we have been thinking about the nature of threats in the air.

“The Iranian proliferation of uncrewed systems was up and running in 2021 and the current situation in Ukraine has not changed our thinking but the threat in the air is becoming more dynamic and changing.

“Our thinking with the uncrewed strategy has been vindicated but it puts down the challenge to us to get on with it; that we are making the right choices with combat air to meet all of those threats.

“Air power has the unique ability to send a very swift message that we can respond quickly and that if you want to get into a conflict not only are you going to lose but you are going to lose badly.”

**● The Chief of the Air Staff’s Global Air and Space Chiefs’ Conference takes place on July 17-18. Go to [airspacepowerconference.com](https://airspacepowerconference.com) for details.**

Collaborative Platform Strategy lays out how the RAF hopes to exploit AI to boost frontline capability and keep the UK at the forefront of autonomous battlefield kit.

UK Defence giant BAE Systems unveiled its first ACP demonstrator prototype earlier this year. It can be configured to take on surveillance, reconnaissance and attack

roles and is designed to operate alongside existing combat fighters like Typhoon.

Launching the strategy, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton,

said: “Building on the Defence Drone Strategy and in close collaboration with the Royal Navy and Army, the RAF will focus on low-cost Autonomous Collaborative Platforms to



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By Tracey Allen

Feature

# Lanc: true workhorse of UK's WWII bomber corps



FOREWARD: BBMF's Flt Lt Seb Davey

**“EVERY TIME** we board our beautiful Lancaster, it is impossible to ignore the significance of what those who went before us achieved, and endured, approximately eighty years ago,” writes Flt Lt Seb Davey, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster Captain, in his foreword to Sarah Louse-Miller’s new book *The Lancaster Story* ([mombooks.com](http://mombooks.com)).

He added: “As a nod to the importance of what we are about to do, on embarkation as a crew, we all tap a small brass plaque mounted just aft of the entrance door. It is engraved with the Bomber Command crest and four simple words that sum up the whole raison d’être of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight: ‘To Remember The Many’”

From its introduction in 1942 to the end of World War II, the Avro Lancaster flew more than 150,000 sorties, dropped more than 600 tons of explosives and took the Allied fight to Nazi Germany, confirming its place in history as an aviation icon.

Described as the true



MERCY MISSION: 195 Sqn Lanc is loaded with food at RAF Wrattling Common, near Newmarket in Suffolk ©IBCC



AUTHOR: Dr Sarah-Louise Miller

workhorse of the RAF’s bomber corps, the Lancaster played a major role in some of the war’s most daring and celebrated missions, including the Dambusters raid and the Operation Hydra bombing.

The heavy bomber took lives and incurred huge losses – nearly half of the 7,337 Lancasters in service were lost in action – but was also considered a vehicle of hope and freedom.

### Operation Manna

And after WWII the formidable aircraft was used to bring ex-prisoners of war home during Operation Exodus, and for food drops to relieve the Dutch famine during Operation Manna.



WE HAVE copies of *The Lancaster Story* by Sarah-Louise Miller to win. For your chance to own one, simply answer this question correctly:

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Win!



HEAVY BOMBER: Lancaster drops a huge Grand Slam bomb ©AHB



DEBRIEF: Lanc crew with WAAF officer Fay Gillon after a mission in 1944

She said: “Millions around the world have fallen in love with the magic of flight, flocking to air shows for the chance to see aircraft out of the ordinary. The Avro Lancaster – of which there are only two flying examples left in the world – is high on the list of coveted sightings. This aircraft is more than just an aircraft – she means something to us.”

### BBMF

She added: “In 2023, I was one of the 33,000 people who turned out to watch the ‘museum without walls’ that is the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight... The BBMF reflects – as do we all at the sight of the Lanc – on the work and sacrifices of the thousands of men and women who, in the air and on the ground, toiled toward freedom on our behalf, it is these men and women, in particular those who are part of the story of the Avro Lancaster, that this book is about.

“It is the story of an aircraft: an impressive feat of aeronautical engineering, capable and versatile, loved – and feared – by many. And it is also the story of people. The people who designed the Lancaster, who built her, who looked after and flew her, who kept the stations she flew out of running and cared for her crews. It is the story of many whose lives were affected on a daily basis by her existence and presence on the ground and in the sky – those who lived and died, endured, suffered and survived the war in which she fought.”

Published on May 23, the book includes a colour plate section that features rare archival photographs and many never-before-published accounts.



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# Burma veteran who was awarded the DFC

## Howard crewed Beaufighter and Mossie on daring sorties

**WARRANT OFFICER Albert Howard, who has died aged 101, was a navigator flying in Beaufighter strike aircraft in the Eastern Mediterranean and then during the Burma Campaign.**

He tried to join the RAF in 1938 but was too young and had to wait two years. He started training as a wireless operator/air gunner before being selected to be an air observer. He trained in Canada under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan before returning to England to convert to the Beaufighter.

### Tobruk

With his Canadian pilot, Gus Gieselman, he joined 47 Squadron at Gambut III airfield 30 miles east of Tobruk, in Libya, in January 1944. Heavily armed, it was one of four Beaufighter squadrons operating over the Aegean Sea attacking German supply ships supporting their garrisons on many of the Greek islands.

Flying at very low level to launch torpedoes and strafe escort ships with its 20mm cannons took a heavy toll of

the Beaufighter crews. On one occasion, a crew was shot down and Howard and his pilot remained overhead transmitting distress calls until their fuel reached a critical level. When they landed, the aircraft ran out of fuel. Howard commented, "the two engines were running on fumes."

On some attacks, the Beaufighters escorted Mitchell bombers of the USAAF. Howard felt the bombers should have been the escort since, "one of their aircraft had more guns than all our formation put together!"

On February 22, the 5,343-ton MV Lisa, one of the few large merchant ships still operating, was attacked by 47 Sqn with torpedoes as other squadrons engaged the escorting flak ships with their cannons and rockets. At least one torpedo hit the Lisa and the ship, carrying 1,750 tons of fuel and 660 tons of ammunition and other vital supplies for Crete, was sunk.

Although costly, the campaign in the Aegean was successful and the Beaufighters inflicted severe damage on the German shipping, forcing them to use local fishing

boats (caiques) often operating at night to resupply the many remote outposts. These too were attacked.

By the end of March 1944, the situation in the Aegean had become less critical and 47 Sqn prepared to depart for India. It converted to the Mosquito – nicknamed the 'Wooden Wonder' because of the use of plywood in its construction – and moved to an airfield near Calcutta. Shortly after commencing operational sorties, the aircraft was grounded following a series of fatal accidents. The problem was put down to the climatic conditions and the type of glue being used to bond the plywood during the manufacturing of the aircraft's main spar. The squadron was re-equipped with the Beaufighter.

### Rangoon

In January 1945 operations began in support of the advance of the 14th Army. The squadron's primary role was to attack the Japanese lines of communication, supply routes and oil installations. Operating at long range, over mountainous terrain and often in monsoon weather, operations



**INDIA:** Howard with 47 Sqn, near Calcutta – where the climate troubled the Mossies

were a hazardous affair. Howard commented: "We covered the Army crossing the Irrawaddy, where the enemy were firmly entrenched on the other side. We attacked well behind enemy lines."

As the Army progressed further south, Beaufighters flew from advanced landing grounds enabling them to attack supply lines and bridges south of Rangoon. In May, Howard and his pilot converted back to the Mosquito and continued with their long-range interdiction sorties, bombing supply dumps and river crossings.

With the fall of Rangoon in early May, Howard left the squadron and for the next few months was with a salvage and repair unit flying Dakotas recovering usable items. At the end of hostilities, Howard and Gieselman were awarded

the DFC for, "action above and beyond the call of duty."

Throughout his RAF service Howard was always known as 'Foo'. When asked why, he replied: "Fou is French for fool or stupid and there was always something stupid going on – and I was always there. So, the Canadians gave me the nickname in training, and it stuck."

### Princess

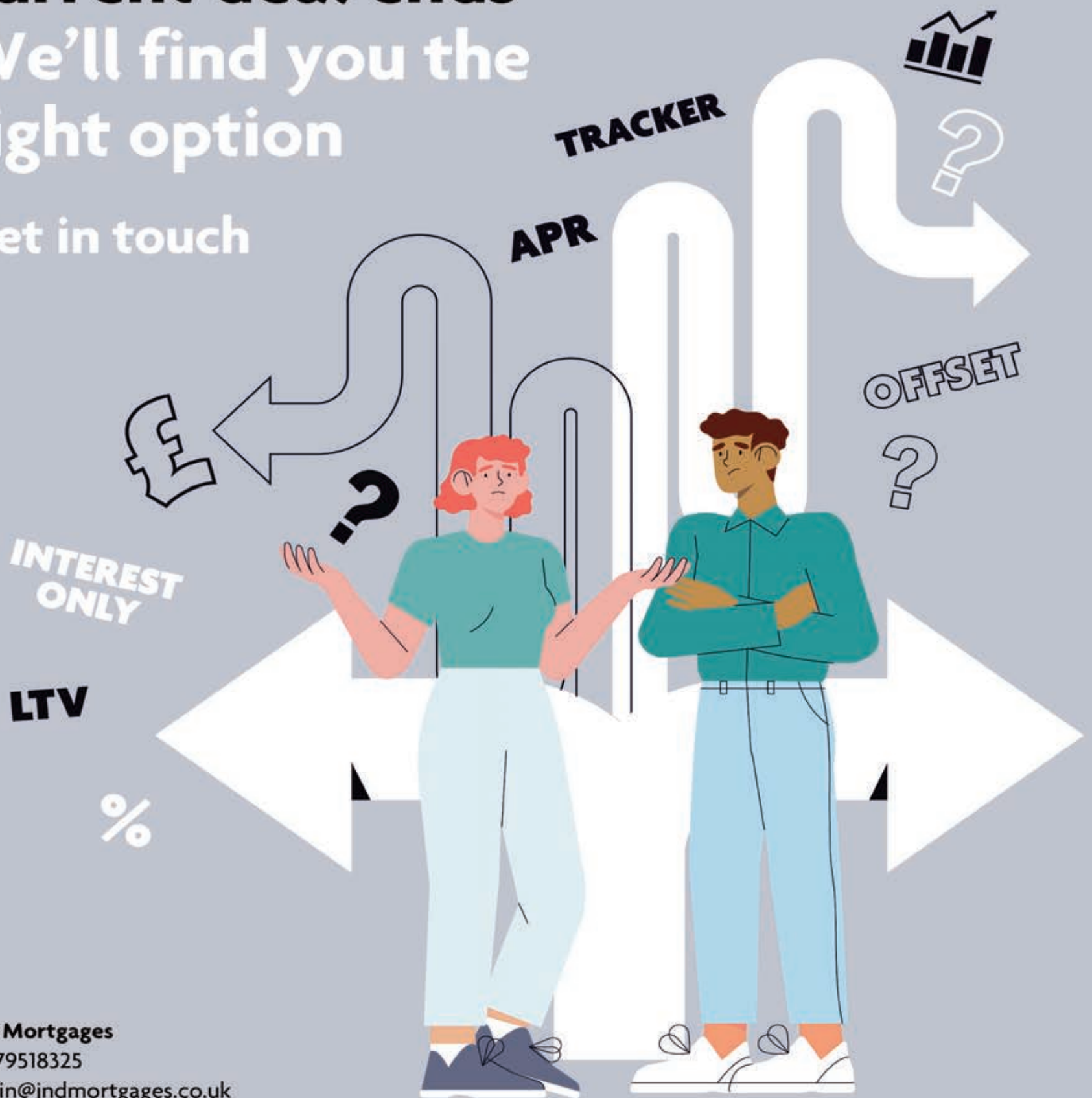
Howard was demobilised in November 1945 and initially worked in the family greengrocery business before spending most of his time in the building trade and road construction.

He was a strong supporter of the 47 Squadron Association and was its senior member at the time of his death. At a recent reunion, he was introduced to HRH The Princess Royal.

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Tim Morris

Peugeot 508 GT (from £36,670 otr)

Motoring



# 508 has style by the mile

PEUGEOT'S FAST-TAILED hatchback returns with a new look and a lot of fresh va va voom. In the modern world of crossovers and SUVs, it's hard to find a good sleek family motor. They're an endangered concept and many have already become extinct. The Passat, gone. The Mondeo, history. The Insignia, toast. That's why I love seeing the 508 doing so well. It's a great mid-size hatch that loves being a mid-size hatch.

### Exterior

The 508 has a bold new look that makes it stand out from more reserved rivals. New bumpers, a redesigned grille and updated headlamps combine to make the 508 GT a car that turns heads. The three-claw LED daytime running lights instantly grab your attention and it looks aggressive from the front.

Frameless doors, a lower-looking roofline and sporty alloy wheels help to give it a fast executive profile, while Peugeot's new signature rear lights make the back end a pretty affair.

### Interior

Interior quality is impressive. The dashboard and surrounding areas make good use of soft-touch materials and eye-catching trim inserts. The GT also features

coloured stitching on the leather surfaces. There are still a few cheaper looking plastic areas dotted around if you go looking for them but it's no major detriment.

The 508 employs Peugeot's trademark i-Cockpit layout, with a 12.3in customisable instrument binnacle. You sit low, directly behind the wheel, with the instruments visible above. The front seats offer a wide range of adjustment, so it's easy to find the right position.

A 10in touchscreen infotainment display sits in the centre of the dash, providing control over most of the car's interior functions. The system can be a little sluggish to respond to rapid prods at times but the piano keys below it make operating the system easier on the move.

Overall the cabin is stylish and well laid out.

### On The Road

The 508 handles keenly through the bends. It remains level and the fast steering makes it easy to plot a precise course. It grips tenaciously too, front and back, which inspires confidence. You don't get much feedback through the steering but that's a rarity these days anyway.

On the move, it feels like a well-packaged saloon. Part of the reason for this is that it's built on Stellantis' EMP2 platform, a sophisticated chassis that has been in the making for years. Stellantis has got it right here, building in multi-link rear suspension to complete the package. The dynamics work well, in most circumstances and the 508 is relatively light for its size. This weight reduction also helps to mask the lack of power developed by the smaller engines in the range.

On that note, our test car was the PHEV, powered by a 1.6 litre petrol engine, assisted by an electric motor. Together they produced 225bhp, which felt lively enough when accelerating smoothly, but clunky under hard acceleration, between tight bends. The eight-speed auto box, standard on all versions, did not feel well-suited to my rapid driving style but was smooth enough on gentle runs. 0-62mph was achieved in 8.3 seconds and felt brisk enough. The official electric-only range is 'up to 34 miles' but I managed only around 25.

On the plus-side, the 508 performs well around town, is silent for most of the time and provides comfortable family motoring.



### Peugeot 508 GT

#### Pros

- Looks good
- PHEV particularly economical
- Hatchback practicality with saloon style
- Well-equipped

#### Cons

- Could do with more power
- Gearbox could be quicker
- Cramped in the back

#### Verdict

The new 508 looks good and has a well-finished interior. It also comes with a decent amount of standard kit. Only the fastest version will give you a buzz behind the wheel but it's considerably more adept than a crossover, in any guise. Some German rivals in this class are more practical and have better dynamics, but the 508 looks more exciting. The plug-in hybrid is surprisingly cost-effective too. Style over substance, perhaps, but nobody will know that unless you tell them. Shhh.



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ATHLETICS

# Ramm! Bam! Thank you, ma'am



RAMM: Solid silver for FS

SILVER SERVICE was the order of the day for pentathlete FS Laurence Ramm at the 14<sup>th</sup> European Masters Indoor Athletics Championships in Poland.

Competing in the 50-54 age category, he completed the five events of 60m hurdles, long jump, shot putt, high jump and 1km run over one day, finishing just behind ex-Olympian Swedish athlete Mattias Sunneborn.

The day attracted 3,500 competitors, with discipline ages groups separated by five years.

Ramm, representing Great Britain, produced a mixed bag of results – a season's best in the hurdles, a poor long jump, a near personal best in the shot putt, followed closely by a fine high jump (a clearance which would have seen him win the gold in the individual event) – taking him to a solid 2<sup>nd</sup> position before the 1km run, a placing he managed to maintain to clinch silver.

Anyone interested in Service athletics can email FS Ramm at: laurence.ramm816@mod.gov.uk for more details.



GRIDIRON



NUMBERS GAME: RAF Mustangs swarm around American player in last year's tie, and United States Visiting Forces player in full flow, below

## Mustangs are playing U.S. at their own game

### Daniel Abrahams

IT WILL be a whole new ball game as the RAF Mustangs take the field for the second annual United States Visiting Forces (USVF) versus UKAF NFL flag match.

The game at RAF Lakenheath, which will feature the now Inter-Service champion Mustangs, is designed to build on the success of 2023's inaugural event.

This year the NY Jets are not only providing jerseys, merchandise and equipment but are also bringing along alumni players Tony Richardson and Erik Coleman as honorary coaches to impart their knowledge and on-field experience to both teams.

Mustangs assistant head coach and general manager Sgt Paul Wakeford said: "This is an extreme privilege for all those involved to have been selected to be a part of the UKAF American football team.

"Although this is a slightly different format to what we have competed in for the Inter-Service Trophy, it still highlights the talent that the UK Armed Forces has by being able to compete against the Americans at their own game.

"This of course has the added bonus of being sponsored by the NFL's New York Jets, with two alumni players coming over, plus a half-time show."

The combined Forces event on May 17, after RAF News goes to press, will also mark the beginning of the NFL's annual Salute to Service campaign.

Chief community relations officer 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, 1Lt Ethen C. Harris, said: "The event promises to be a day of spirited competition, with a pre-game tailgate party hosted by the United Service Organization, and a post-game celebration at the Liberty Club at RAF Lakenheath."



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

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MOUNTAIN BIKING

# Wordsworth proves poetry in motion on Abergavenny trails

THE OPENING round of the RAF Inter-Station Mountain Bike Series provided the perfect chance to blow away the winter cobwebs at Dirt Farm, Abergavenny.

AS1 Helen Wordsworth (Brize Norton) took first place with Cpl Danielle Riley (Marham) second and Cpl Katie Sweeting (MOD Southwick Park) third in the year's first trails in Wales, at which seven female RAF riders debut.

Cpl Robert Nijhuis (Odiham) came second in the men's event and Sgt Andrew Lochhead (Lossiemouth) third, with Army rider Cpl Tom Nisbet taking the top spot.

Cpl Sweeting said: "Designed to be inclusive and introduce new riders to racing, the series saw a mix of seasoned RAF Gravity racers, developing riders and those who were racing for the first time.

"A special mention for an amazing turn out of women on the hill, after several successful RAF cycling development events.

"Any nerves quickly disappeared and were replaced with smiles as the riders got to grips with the track; lots of pumping, a bit of pedalling, nice big catch berms and a few cheeky jumps made it feel more like a rollercoaster than a mountain trail."

In the non-team rider category, AS1 John Webster came home first, with Sqn Ldr Simon Ward second and AS1(T) Toby Blunstone third.

Sweeting added: "The day's action was run alongside a new timing system provided by RAF Cycling, which made for a smooth race day following timed practice runs and seeding taking place before the day's racing."

● Any female personnel interested in mountain biking can contact Cpl Sweeting: [katherine.sweeting100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:katherine.sweeting100@mod.gov.uk).

● For more details on RAF MTB visit its Instagram page @RAF Cycling.



LIFE ON THE FARM: Women riders excelled on the Abergavenny hills in Wales

CYCLING

# Bowl masterblasters

## Sheppard and Pugh turn on the power in RBL race



CLOSE AFFAIR: Men's race



RAF PODIUM: Sheppard (centre), Pugh (left) and Catherall

A SOLO blast secured AS1(T) Laura Sheppard first place in The Royal British Legion Race criterium series at the Milton Keynes International Bowl.

The RAF-hosted category four event was held over a free-flowing course, which saw a tense start to the women's race with the riders sticking together and no one really getting away.

Then, just after the halfway mark of the 45min+ three laps, Sheppard put in a strong attack to go solo all the way to the finish line. In trying to follow, Sgt Sue Pugh also put in a strong performance to clinch second, whilst AS1(T) Zoe Catherall completed the podium in third.

A tough Category 2/3/4 Handicap men's race saw breakaways being hauled back and a peloton which could not hold form to produce any consistent speed. A strong sprint finish from Matthew Wilson took the win with RAF man Flt Lt Ed Calow second. The remaining points came down to a hotly, but fairly contested, bunch sprint.

● Follow RAF Cycling on Instagram @RAF Cycling.

Sport

EQUESTRIAN

# A DAY TO CHERISH

## IS dressage breakthrough for Service at the Loriners

**Daniel Abrahams**

“THE ANNOUNCEMENT ‘RAF Win’ was one of those memories you don’t forget,” FS Melanie Day told *RAF News Sport* after a stunning IS dressage win.

Speaking after the fantastic team victory in the opening round of the 2024 Inter-Services, at Sparsholt College, Winchester, she added: “The RAF finally winning the dressage title meant emotions ran high. We did find a bit of time to bask in the glory and the rosettes, sashes and wonderful prizes all added that extra sparkle to the day.”

The team prepared for the opening Loriners event with training and selection days at the Defence Animal Training Regiment (DATR), Melton Mowbray and at Weston Lawns, Bedworth, under the watchful eye of new coach Sam Whyley.

Day added: “With our new dressage coach in place we are aiming to finally catch the Army in the upcoming IS, having been beaten marginally every year.”

“The Army kindly allowed us

the wonderful facility to train indoors at Melton Mowbray and we followed this with another fabulous facility, but this time riding outdoors. Despite battling the great British weather, many of the riders competed in the Weston British Dressage competition on our third day there.”

With discussions ongoing behind the scenes between Chef D’Equipe Flt Lt Mandy Meikle and head coach Whyley, team selections were made for the various categories of the 2024 season, along with the four best riders and two reserves chosen for the RAF for the Loriners dressage leg.

Day added: “On the day of the Loriners competition spirits were high. Team talks took place and, with Sam’s expert advice, the team members warmed up to perfection.”

The first rider out was RAF stalwart Wg Cdr Caitlin Wroe on Regal Rock, and the pair did not disappoint, securing a great score for the perfect start in the novice test.

Up next WO Keeley Martin and Rachan Wind Dancer,



**SWEET TASTE OF VICTORY:** RAF dressage team and, above, FS Melanie Day and Maisie

producing another superb novice test round, with Meikle and Faeside Sir Derry securing a tremendous score, leaving Day, on Maisie, to produce another high score after an accurately ridden elementary test to see the team home.

The show jumping and combined training legs of the Loriners competition take place later in the year at The Royal Tournament (Army Championships) and the Navy Championships.

● Follow RAF equine on Instagram @raf\_equitation.



RUGBY UNION

# NI rugby union given a boost thanks to Flt Lt



**WE’LL DRINK TO THAT:** Wilson and Blackthorns (in black) on way to winning Festival of Rugby competition

HAVING STARTED the first Reservist-led Northern Irish rugby union team, Flt Lt Jamie Wilson has now kickstarted the inaugural Festival of Rugby in Belfast.

Wilson’s side, Blackthorns NI, duly went on to win the four-team event held at RAF Aldergrove.

The aviator’s rugby union background saw him form part of the RAF Scotland and Northern Ireland Rugby Union set-up. He was the only Northern Irish Reservist in the side that played in a Tri-Service tournament at the Oriam Centre in Edinburgh in 2022.

“I felt that a Reservist-led team in NI would be a positive step in promoting military sport locally. I set about finding out how to do this and from that NI Blackthorns were born,” he told *RAF News Sport*.

“The team draws on personnel from all the units in NI, incorporating a broad range of experience and ranks.”

After Wilson organised sponsorship, the team were able to sport their own

kit and then it was a case of finding a competition to compete in.

He said: “I was left pondering what would be an appropriate debut fixture. I proposed an idea for a Festival of Rugby to the Ulster Branch of the IRFU, which they supported.”

Hollywood RFC, Civil Service RFC and City of Derry RFC joined the NI Blackthorns for the tournament.

Blackthorns prepared with an intensive three-day boot camp led by Sqn Ldr Patrick Johns.

Blackthorns won their debut match against Hollywood 12-7, before going on to win the tournament outright.

Wilson added: “It was a privilege to be involved in such a successful initiative, with every participating club requesting an invitation for next year’s tournament. We have clearly demonstrated an appetite for both a Tri-Service Rugby Union team in NI as well as a tournament in Ulster, while helping influence perceptions of the military in Northern Ireland.”



FOOTBALL

# Regt and TG5 shoot for stars

Pair to meet in Astra final

Staff Reporter

RAF REGIMENT FC and RAF TG5 FC First will battle it out for the Astra League title after a tense penalty shoot-out and goals-galore semi-final victories.

Speaking after his team's nail-biting spot kicks win, Regiment manager FS Tom Morton said: "It's a great feeling getting to the final, especially knowing that this season was always going to be more difficult.

"Aries gave us a huge test last season and we knew we had to be even stronger this season. I thought we got stronger the longer the game went on and we were unlucky to not win it in the 90 minutes."

The clash, at Oxford City's Court Marsh Farm ground, saw last season's tournament winners Regiment face Churchill League winners Aries FC, in what can only be described as an excellent match.

The teams came out fighting and produced some superb action, with both keepers pulling out quality saves to ensure a 0-0 scoreline after 90 minutes.

Positive changes to formations, tactics and players by both teams produced even more chances at both ends, RAF Regt FC being denied a winning goal right at the death by an excellent save from Aries No.1 Sgt Ben Binns.

Binns had already denied L/Cpl Adam Mollard and Sgt Mike Campbell with a brace of outstanding saves and would, like his counterpart AS1 Jamie Bartlett, be called upon to produce more dramatics after the final whistle.

Bartlett saw one saved penalty denied after he was deemed to have moved off his line, and he saved the retake. While another stop was also deemed a retake, and this time he was not so successful, but his team went on to win 4-2.



CLOSE GAME: Gunners (in white) beat Aries in a penalty shoot-out



3-0: TG5 (in orange) got better of Icarus

The action in the second clash took place in regulation play with Bader division winners, Icarus FC facing league newcomers TG5.

From the start TG5 looked like a team on a mission, scoring early. They backed that up with a second-half brace with AS1 James Mercer, AS1 Andy Home and Cpl Dean Kerr bagging the goals respectively for a 3-0 win.

Speaking to RAF News after his team's victory, TG5 manager FS Richie Killick said:

"To reach the final of the Astra League in our first season is a great achievement and to do so without the involvement of RAF Representative players makes it extra special.

"We had 12 excellent players unavailable for the semi-final and we hope to get a few back for the final."

The final will be held on Thursday, May 23, again at Oxford City, kick off 1pm.

● To find out more visit thefa.com and search Astra League.

MARHAM'S RUGBY club hit the rock of Gibraltar for their annual training camp in preparation for the final of the RAF Cup.

Also known as Marham Bulls RFC, the team - who will face either Coningsby or Akrotiri in the final at Stafford Rugby Club - played two matches during the week-long camp, against local teams Ibex Buccaneers and Gibraltar Barbarians, winning 33-26 and 70-15 respectively.

The Bulls are a mixture of RAF and Royal Navy personnel who maintain, support and fly the F-35B Lightning Aircraft that operate from HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales.

The joint venture has given the Bulls access to play in both RAF and RN domestic cup

## Bulls Rocking in Gib

competitions, resulting in them being the RAF Plate Champions in 2021 and currently top of the RAF Cup Merit Table.

The team's overseas camps are usually to Cyprus to play the RAF Akrotiri Flamingos, but the move to Gibraltar saw 32 players and support staff make the flight to the Rock to participate in a touch rugby competition at Europa Point, where they were hosted by the Gibraltar RFU, winning all the games they were involved in.

● Follow the team on Instagram @plaza.de.toros.

RUGBY



JUST CHAMPION: Fg Off Amy Cokayne raises Six Nations trophy aloft and, below, celebrating with Red Roses and Leicester teammate Meg Jones

# Another Grand Slam as Cokayne back with a bang

FG OFF Amy Cokayne 'relished' her latest Red Roses triumph as she helped England storm to Six Nations Grand Slam glory with a six-try, 42-21 win over France.

"It was a great occasion in Bordeaux. There were 28,000 French fans making it an amazing atmosphere. I really enjoyed everything about the game," she told RAF News Sport.

"It was a massively physical game against a combative French pack, and I really relish those battles. Achieving the Grand Slam was our goal, but it was so much sweeter to achieve it against a great French side in their backyard."

The win sealed the third successive Grand Slam for the Red Roses and sixth Six Nations title in a row. It saw Cokayne bounce back beautifully, from a one-match suspension after being sent off against Scotland, with a first-half try at the Stade Chaban-Delmas.

Sitting on the shoulder of opening try scorer Muir inside five minutes, she was again involved in the second try, for Alex Matthews, to put England 14-0 ahead after 12 minutes.

Providing the line-out for her own 39<sup>th</sup>-minute try, Cokayne added the power and precision to see England lead 14-35 with the fifth first-half try.

The win also saw the Red Roses extend their championship-winning streak to 29 games and was the first under new head coach John Mitchell.

Cokayne now returns to the white heat of RAF rugby with the remaining Inter-Service clash.

She said: "Now my focus returns on the Inter-Services, and it is fair to say I am really looking forward to pulling on the light blue jersey again."

"After that I go back to the Premiership with Leicester Tigers."



# 5

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



# BOXING

# All guns blazing for firefighter on debut

## Cpl Axe wins every round in his first professional bout



### Daniel Abrahams

“THE BEST night of my life,” said Cpl Brad Axe speaking to *RAF News Sport* after winning his first professional boxing bout by a unanimous points decision.

Fighting Latvian Edgar Kemsky at the Brentwood Centre in Essex, former RAF Boxing team vice-captain Axe produced a consummate performance to quell his experienced opponent.

Axe, Instructor at The Fire Service College on the Defence Fire Training Unit, said: “I had trained for 10 years for that fight, and I am still buzzing days later.”

He took all four three-minute rounds and now plans to move on to six-round bouts for his next fight, likely to be in September.

Axe said: “Kemsky started quicker than I thought he would and I knew I needed to stay calm, go back to my boxing and from then he rarely put a glove on me.

“I feel ready to push on to six-round bouts now.”

Kemsky’s tactics included running towards Axe, playing to the crowd and turning his back as the Cpl attacked – all designed to fluster the debutant.

But the disciplined military man dealt with the opening minutes well before settling down and producing good combinations to slowly take control.

He added: “I was able to calm my nerves and adjust to what was needed. I have been working with Flt Lt Al Pepper (Central Flying School, human performance specialist) on the sport’s psychology side of things, such as visualisation and helping to get my head in a strong place for the two weeks before the bout.

“I wanted to embrace the moment. You only get one debut,



GO PRO: Cpl Brad Axe, right, lands a jab on the head of wily Latvian Edgar Kemsky

so during my ring walk I was looking around and soaking it up. I felt very calm before and during that and working with Al helped

so much – live the experience you could say, otherwise it can be gone in a minute and that’s that.

“I pictured the whole thing beforehand, and it happened exactly like that. After my opponent’s quick start, I just returned to the script that I had seen, and things went perfectly.

“I am bringing my Service background with me, working with Flt Lt Pepper means he has become part of the team now so it’s the RAF working together producing results and success.”

● Scan the QR code below for more about Cpl Brad Axe and visit Instagram @Brad\_Axe and Brad Axe on Facebook.

## New rules for Champs

RECORDS TUMBLED and history was made at the RAF Powerlifting Championships at Cosford, with the event run under British Powerlifting rules for the first time.

AS1 Lisa Shaw (Lossiemouth) took first place in the women’s event, while AS1 Alexander Ayres (Wittering) won the men’s.

Around 55 athletes, supported by 18 event staff, from UK and overseas units competed to win the title of the RAF’s Strongest Powerlifter, and put themselves in contention for selection for this year’s Inter-Service

championships in September.

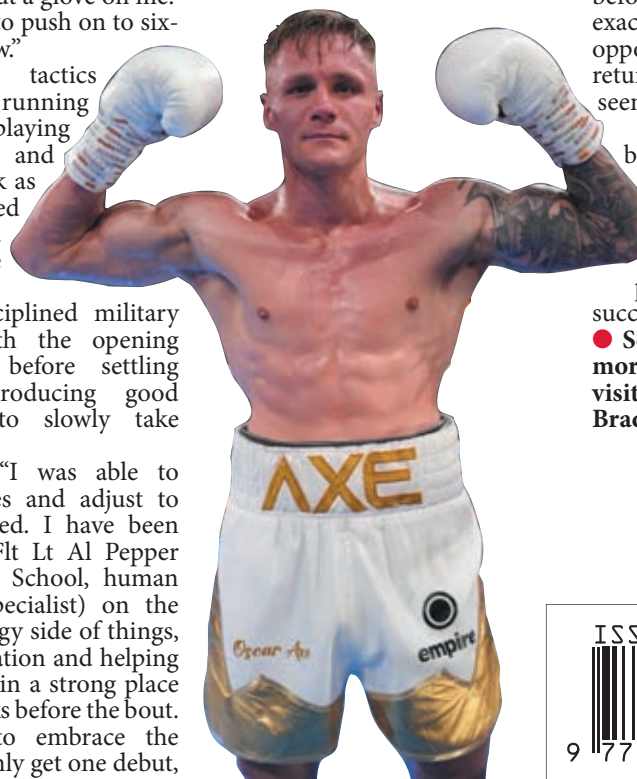
Cpl Cam Beckingham (ProjO) said: “From start to finish, the event ran effortlessly, which could not have been done without the great team of support staff.

“Every athlete showcased their hard work and dedication to the sport, smashing PBs and putting on an incredible competition.

“A notable lift came from our own Sgt James Benson, who broke RAF records with an astonishing 200kg bench press.

“This event has set the bar for all future RAF/BP events.”

● Follow RAF Powerlifting on Instagram @rafpowerlifting.



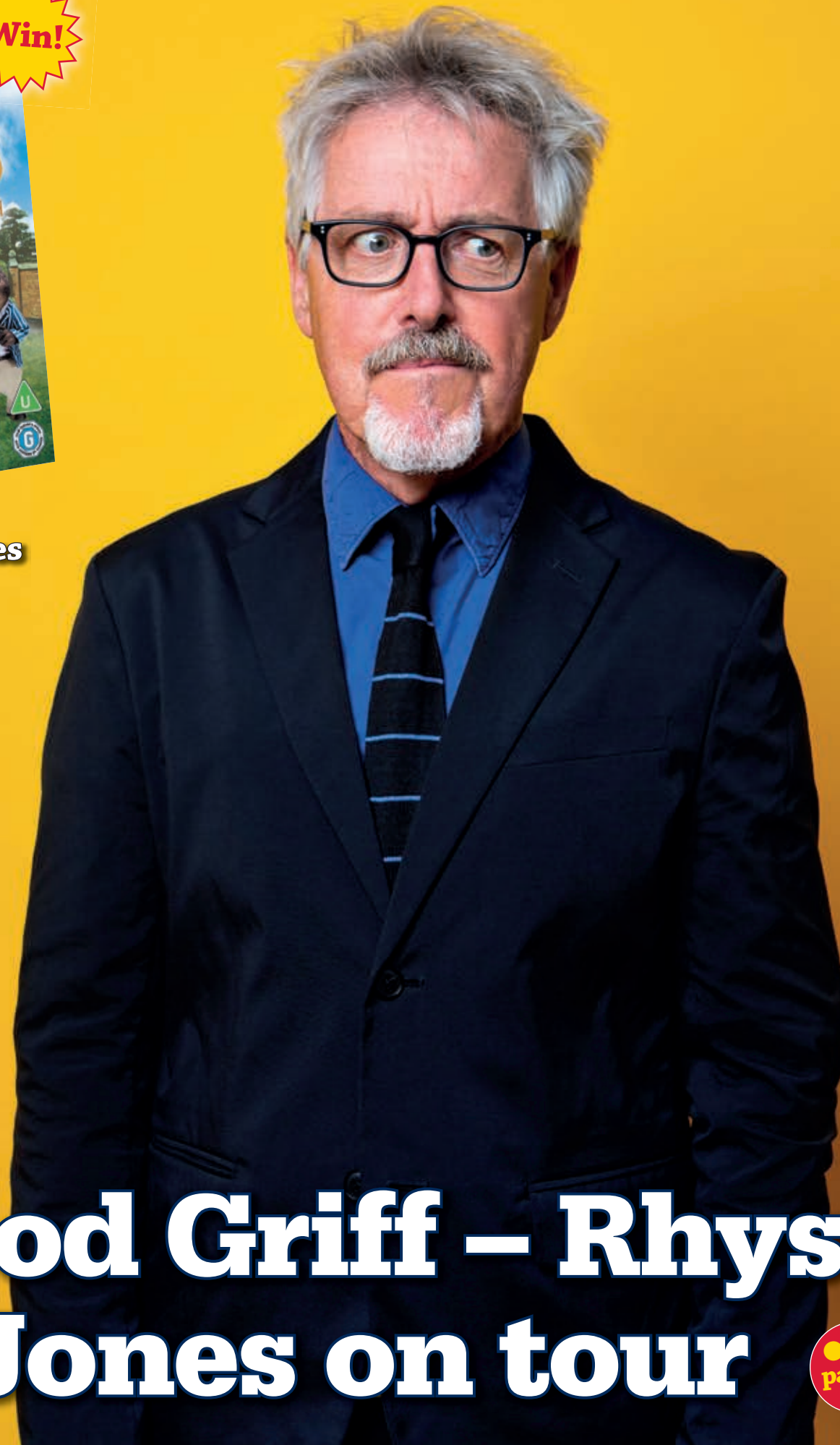
# R'n'R

## Announcements

- p6-7  
Puzzles
- p8



Win classic series  
box set ● p8



# Good Griff – Rhys-Jones on tour



# A Coat of Arms and Surname History Scroll for *YOUR* family name.

**GREAT  
GIFT!**

Discover the fascinating origins of your surname plus the earliest-known coat of arms for a bearer of the name, with this beautiful printed scroll.

Ever wondered about the story of your own name? *Hall of Names* has the history of more than a million surnames and you can see your own surname's history faithfully reproduced on high-quality A3 parchment paper. A full colour rendition of the name's earliest-known coat of arms also features at the top of each scroll to create a real talking point. If there is a motto, this is usually in Latin with a translation at the end of the scroll. With attention to detail, the surname history is extensively researched and includes fascinating facts and intriguing details about your chosen surname.

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- Notable bearers of the name
- Passengers on the Titanic
- Convicts to Australia

Beautiful border graphics complement the coat of arms and relate to the name's country of origin. Each surname history scroll comes with an individual certificate number and a gold seal. In addition, a bibliography of sources is printed on the reverse. These beautiful scrolls are a real talking point, and the perfect gift or keepsake to celebrate a family name. Plus, the scrolls are available unframed or in your choice of two stunning quality frames, hand finished in our UK workshop.



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# Touring's a family affair for voice of an angel Carly



**PART OF THE FAMILY:** Carly with her beloved terrier Fred, who joins her on the road

...and that includes furball baby Fred

**F**OR CARLY PAOLI, going on tour is something of a family affair – for her tours with Aled Jones and The Fulltone Orchestra this month, and with Alfie Boe in June, the stunning soprano recruits her father as her driver, her mother's in charge of packing Carly's gorgeous stage gowns, and her beloved terrier Fred also joins her on the road.

And on June 6 Carly will be performing, as part of the Royal British Legion D-Day 80 Service of Remembrance, at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Carly is a special guest appearing at concerts until May 30 with The Fulltone Orchestra and Welsh National Opera star Gareth Dafydd Morris, presented by singer and TV and radio star Aled Jones.

She said: "I'll have two months living out of a suitcase, which will be good fun. Packing for tours is always a real challenge because, of course, I sing in gowns and I think two gowns pack a suitcase. That's my mum's little nightmare, bless her, because we really have to pack wisely. I'll be bringing out the showstoppers with the Swarovski crystals, which really catch the light."

Carly has worked with both Aled and Alfie before. She's Alfie's special guest on his Encore tour, which runs from June 1-17.

She added: "We recorded a

special Christmas programme together at a beautiful castle in Otterburn and that will be out on TV later this year. That was the first time Alfie and I had the chance to work together and joining his tour is a lovely way to continue that rapport as artists."

The British/Italian singer is a star of both the classical and crossover worlds and has a broad repertoire to choose from. With the 50-piece Fulltone Orchestra she will be singing classics including *Se Tu Fossi* and *Moon River*. And her 30-minute set on Alfie's tour will feature interpretations of *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, *Time To Say Goodbye*, *Never Enough* and *O Mio Babbino Caro*.

She said: "I love classical music, of course, but as a young artist I grew up engrossed in all the musicals as well and the concerts will include songs from my latest album, *The Movie Collection*."

After he heard her version of *Ave Maria* in 2016, Pope Francis described Carly as having 'the voice of an angel'. She has sung for members of the Royal Family and has performed live and recorded with some of the world's greatest artists including Andrea Bocelli, Michael Bolton, José Carreras,

David Foster and Elaine Paige.

Carly is a performer at many major sporting fixtures and in 2023 was invited to sing the Italian National Anthem at the opening ceremony of the very first Ryder Cup in Rome.

The May concerts presented by Aled conclude with a surprise finale. "I can't give too

much away, you'll have to come and see them," she said: "I joined Aled on his tour two years ago. We had a fantastic time but it was two months of being cold because we toured the cathedrals in winter, usually getting changed in a crypt. But cathedrals are beautiful places to perform."

She has just released some new music, on streaming platforms, including songs she's looking forward to performing on her upcoming tours – keep an eye on her website for details.

Carly added: "I love being in the recording studio but my heart is absolutely on stage in front of an audience. I don't think there's anything more special than having that connection."

*Interview by Tracey Allen*

● **Goto: [carlypaoli.com](http://carlypaoli.com) for more details and to: [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk) and [alfie-boe.com](http://alfie-boe.com) for concert information.**



**TOUR:** Carly & Alfie Boe



## Film Review La Chimera (15) In cinemas now

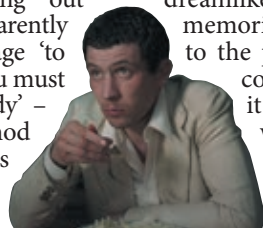
# The charming tomb raider

**F**RESHLY RELEASED from jail in Tuscany, an Englishman wanders back into the company of his friends, a disreputable but loving gang of grave robbers led by his uncanny gift for dowsing.

Arthur (Josh O'Connor, *Challengers*) has an aura that attracts people, in spite of his demeanour which is largely aloof, if not cagey. Grieving the loss of his girlfriend and without a job or place to go, he finds himself staying with the mother of his absent partner Flora (Isabella Rossellini, *Blue Velvet*) in a

ramshackle palace frequented by her army of daughters, and Italia (Carol Duarte), one of her least talented students.

Tone deaf but undertaking vocal coaching, Italia stays in the house, curiously observing Arthur and carrying out the housework apparently in aid of her tutelage 'to exercise the voice, you must first exercise the body' – a convenient method of teaching that saves Flora from having to pay a maid.



With segments shot on 16mm, or in a wacky altered frame rate, *La Chimera* has many playful affectations but it never feels forced. Classical music provides interstitials filled with cutaways that are observational and dreamlike, like long-forgotten memories. There is a vibrance to the picture, not only in its colour but in the life that it depicts. Each character with their wild uniqueness emerges naturally from this world, which, in



**QUIRKY CHARACTERS:** Arthur (Josh O'Connor, centre) and the people in his life

case you were interested, is the small commune of Riparbella sometime in the 1980s.

Just like his grave-robbing gang – the so-called 'tombalari' – desperate to have Arthur's guidance, pointing the way to underground chambers filled with undiscovered relics, *La*

*Chimera* is funny and charming. In fact their humour and attitude is deeply infectious, and it is a pleasure to spend time in their company.

A wondrous and whimsical experience.

**4 roundels out of 5** ●●●●  
*Review by Sam Cooney*

# R'n'R



**Comedy**  
Punt & Dennis  
UK tour



## Radio 4 comedy hosts back on the road after a decade

**SITTING PRETTY:** Punt & Dennis  
PHOTO: TONY BRIGGS

**T**OP COMEDY duo Steve Punt and Hugh Dennis are on a nationwide tour after a decade-long hiatus. Older but still unapologetically irreverent, their latest show is called *We Are Not A Robot*.

Fans will know the pair as hosts of Radio 4's *The Now Show*, which has sadly just finished its final series. Before that they were half of BBC sketch show *The Mary Whitehouse Experience* alongside David Baddiel and Rob Newman and then had their own BBC series.

Punt is also a writer, presenter, script editor and voiceover artist. As well as being a panellist on *Mock The Week*, Dennis is well-known for playing dad Pete

in *Outnumbered*. And he has appeared in *Fleabag*, the C4 thriller *The Couple Next Door* and played a scientist in the James Bond movie *No Time To Die*.

Punt said: "We were supposed to tour in 2021, but because of the pandemic it didn't happen. And you start to look at the calendar and think, if we don't do this now we're probably never going to do it."

"It's also because *The Now Show* has ended after 25 years. It seemed like a perfect confluence of things. It's just asserting your independence. It's very easy to think people live in the radio or on the telly, but I always think that live shows are the core of everything."

Why is the show called *We Are Not A Robot*?

He explained: "One of the consistent themes in *The Now Show* has been society's relationship with technology. So we're bound to touch on that. Plus, it's a funny title, I just like the idea of it. It sums up our relationship with all the gadgets that we use in our lives."

Dennis revealed that the show features some of the duo's classic TV characters.

"Mr Strange seems to be remembered even though he's from 1992. I still get people shouting his catchphrase 'Milky Milky' at me in the street. There are lots of things I don't want people shouting at me in the

street so 'Milky Milky' is good," he said.

"There's a character from the TV show, the World of Wine expert, who works really well in a live context. We could say in a very poncey way that it's about his journey through the changing media landscape, but basically the joke is that he used to be on BBC Two and is now on YouTube," said Punt.

Dennis added: "And the Minister who I play. He's always wanting to resign and then saying he's not going to resign and then resigning. Even if you didn't know him originally, it's a timeless thing."

How do they feel about *The Now Show* ending?

"Conflicted in a way. I immediately thought 'oh no, we're going to miss the election,'" explained Punt.

"But there's a big part of me that's looking forward to being liberated from everything I write being a hilarious look at the week's news. It's very limiting and also, increasingly, it's a problem because topical jokes are done immediately on social media. Meeting on Tuesday, recording on Thursday and going out Friday feels very old now."

Dennis revealed the pair have a new radio series coming up, called *Routemasters*.

He said: "We've got 10 episodes starting in October, on Radio 4 and BBC Sounds. It's a programme where we're trying to find entertaining links between different subjects. So series one will start at the subject of beer and at the end we get to eternity – simply so we can say it's from beer to eternity."

● **The tour continues until June 26. Go to: [rbmcomedy.com](http://rbmcomedy.com) for details.**



**Comedy**  
Griff Rhys Jones  
UK tour

**M**ULTI AWARD-WINNING comedian, writer, actor and presenter Griff Rhys Jones's national stand-up tour *The Cat's Pyjamas* is now underway.

The show sees Griff sharing witty observations and rambling comic stories, with anecdotes from TV travel, his childhood, Welsh family, age, fraud, late-night trains and nostalgia to the TikTok generation, crocodile smuggling and opal noodling in Australia.

Comedy legend Griff is widely known for *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, *Smith and Jones*, *Restoration*, *It'll be Alright on the Night* and multiple arts and travel documentaries, including *Griff's Canadian Adventure*: a critical and ratings success for Channel Four last August.

Theatre includes lead roles for Alan Ackbourn, Sam Mendes, Peter Hall and Nick Hytner and Griff has won two Oliviers, two British Comedy Awards, two Baftas, an Emmy and... a regatta in Barcelona last July.

What can fans expect from the live show?

### Family

"It's the fourth show I've done where I tell stories from my life – about myself and things I've been involved in," he said. "Trouble is, some of the stories get longer and longer and longer. I start out with a list of about 20 and end up with about two."

"In one show on one tour I was on stage in Cardiff, talking about my family and things like that. I looked into the wings and my stage manager was tapping his watch signalling the end of the first half and I hadn't even properly started the show at all by that point."

What's the significance of the title *The Cat's Pyjamas*?

Griff said: "I just like the sound of it. My daughter said 'You can't call it that' and when I asked her why not she said 'Because it means you have to be good!'"

"Also 'the cat's pyjamas' is a very interesting phrase and I might talk about how it started in the 1920s in New York. Apparently, there was a famous society hostess who used to take her cats for a walk along Fifth Avenue and wore pyjamas when doing so. But really what I'm saying at the start of the show is that it's you the audience who are the cat's pyjamas. I start with egregious flattery of my audience."

### Nervous

He revealed: "I get nervous in the early stages because I'm wondering what I'm going to be saying once a tour starts. It's never a walk in the park. It's fun if it's more of a walk on a tightrope."

"Some people go on stage and perform exactly what they've written every night. I'm sure that would be a



**BOOKS**  
**A Wedding for the Bomber Girls**  
Vicki Beeby



## New Beeby Bomber Girls novel

**H**ISTORICAL NOVELIST Vicki Beeby's new book, *A Wedding for the Bomber Girls* (canelo.co), is the sequel to her popular title *The Girls of Bomber Command*, once again featuring characters Pearl Cooper and her sister, Thea.

At RAF Fenthorpe, instrument repairer Thea is helping Pearl to plan her wedding alongside fellow WAAF and maid of honour Jenny. Thea is a misfit among the women on the station though, and is struggling to get others onboard.

When Flt Sgt Fitz makes a point of befriending and

standing by her, sparks fly between the two. And when Fitz's crew member Jack faces being stripped of his rank due to cowardice, Thea throws herself into seeking justice and support for him.

Just as she begins to be accepted by her fellow WAAs, a shadowy figure from her past and is determined to ruin not just Thea, but also Pearl's wedding. Will Thea's reputation be marred once again? And will



**THE LATEST BOOK:** Vicki Beeby, inset left

she face this struggle alone?

We have copies of this page-turning, feelgood World War II saga to win. For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

**At which fictional RAF station are Pearl Cooper and her sister Thea based?**

Email your answer, marked Bomber Girls book competition, to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk) or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by May 31.





Edited by Tracey Allen

# Griff's the cat that got the cream with new show



GRIFF: The comic legend is feline fine



**Comedy**  
**Joe Pasquale**  
UK tour

## The king of cack celebrates 40 yrs

COMEDIAN AND former king of the *I'm A Celebrity...* jungle Joe Pasquale says his current tour is 'me flying by the seat of my pants most nights.'

"It's a mixture of comedy and questions from the audience. The show is a relentless barrage of nuttiness, really. I just go out there and have fun," he said.

"I don't have Ray Tizzard with me, who used to play my twin brother Raynard. He's got a family now and his wife doesn't want him on the road in his pants anymore. He's now the stage manager at Wolverhampton Grand but he's always calling me and saying: 'I miss it so bad', so when we're in Wolverhampton [on August 27], he'll be coming out for the return of Raynard."

Joe's tour, which runs until November 23, with a break in June, is called *The New Normal - 40 Years Of Cack...Continued*.

He said: "It's self-deprecating. I watched a Jim Carrey documentary and he said when he first went onto the stage, he thought: 'What do the audience want?'. He had an epiphany and realised that what people wanted from him, or any live performance, was to be free of concern. If he could adapt himself to be the person on stage who is free of concern, the audience will see him like that, and I try to apply that to myself every time I go on stage. It's almost like a meditation."

Pasquale (*inset*) is also an actor, television presenter and author. His stage roles include Frank Spencer in a tour of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*.

He said: "That was a brilliant experience. The director and co-writer, Guy Unsworth, wanted to get the rights to do a stage show and got in touch with the writer, Raymond Allen. He asked Guy who was going to play Frank, and when he told him it was me, he said he'd been watching me for 20 years. Every time I toured, he'd buy a ticket and sit in the front row."

"When I met Ray, it was like meeting the original Frank; the most warm, genuine man I've met in my life. Even as he got older and weaker (he died in 2022) he still travelled from the Isle of Wight to see as many of the *Some Mothers* shows as he could. And he would sit in the front row and cry; not because he was embarrassed

but just for the joy of seeing it on stage."

As well as winning *I'm A Celebrity* in 2014, Pasquale has taken part in *Dancing On Ice* and *The Masked Singer* - where he appeared as Dunny, the singing toilet.

"I loved it - the best telly I've ever done! I learnt that I was a much better singer than I thought I was when I couldn't be seen! My confidence went through the roof, and people said to me: 'I didn't know you could sing like that', and I said: 'Neither did I!'"

Pasquale's shows are very physical and he admits he works hard at keeping in shape.

He explained: "Because of the nature of my act, I have to be physically fit. I don't drink or smoke. When I'm not working, I'm at the gym all the time as I don't want to get to a point, particularly in panto, when I can't move. I know I'm getting older [he's 62], but I want to remain as physically fit as long as I can."

He's written three books of short horror stories and is now writing his first novel, provisionally titled *The Vampires of Whitby*.

He said: "I love horror in all formats. I enjoy being scared; I did a zombie hunting thing in a secret underground bunker off the A12 and I nearly cacked myself, it was so brilliant."

**Interview by Clair Woodward**  
● Go to: [joepasquale.com](http://joepasquale.com) for tour dates.



much better way of doing it but I don't always do it myself. I get side-tracked by talking about things like what happened to me in the car park on the way to the theatre.

"I once had a Birdman moment where I went to get a shirt out of the car and I couldn't get back into the theatre unless I walked in with the audience. A woman turned to me and said 'I hope you're going to be good tonight' and I replied 'Well, I'll do my best!'"

Griff throws the second

half of the show open to the audience to ask questions.

He said: "Often it starts with people asking me about *Not The Nine O'Clock News*, which was so long ago can't I can't remember it, let alone answer questions about it."

"I get asked a lot if comedy is harder in the current woke climate. The honest answer is I don't know because I don't play the comedy scene. I don't go to Edinburgh and all that stuff. So I honestly have no idea. It's never affected me in any way whatsoever. All the stories I tell are about unfortunate and terrible things that have happened to me, so I'm not really causing offence to anybody else."

What's the weirdest venue he's ever played?

"Mel [Smith] and I did Live Aid, which was a pretty bizarre sort of experience. It was like walking out on the deck of an aircraft carrier," Griff said. "You just kept walking until you realised that you couldn't walk any further. It was a genuinely weird experience because you made a joke and then you had to wait because the people near the front would laugh, then the laughter would travel all the way to the very back. It felt like a huge Mexican wave of laughter."

● The tour runs until June 1, some dates are already sold out. Go to: [socomey.co.uk](http://socomey.co.uk) for more details.



## Your Announcements

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

### Deaths

**ALLEN** Alma Pauline (née Morgan), passed away on March 13 aged 94. A former WAAF, Alma was the widow of Sqn Ldr George Allen, Mosquito pilot and flying instructor. Alma is much-missed by children Dawn and Neil, daughter-in-law Tracey, grandchildren Nick, Rosie, Steve, Kim, Tom and Beth and great-grandchildren Adam, Dylan, Thomas, Noah, Amber, Asher, Elliot, Evelyn and Joe. Alma's funeral was held at Swansea Crematorium on May 13, with donations to the Alzheimer's Society.



**Alma Allen**

**SAWYER** Tom, BEM (retired Warrant Officer) died on April 9, 2024 aged 85. Loving husband to Marlene. Much-loved Dad to Lesley, Linda and Lance and wonderful Grandad to George, Conor, Holly, Amy and Grace. Tom's funeral service was held on Tuesday, May 14 at The Crematorium, Redan Road, Aldershot. If you would like to contact Lance (his son), please email: [lance.sawyer@outlook.com](mailto:lance.sawyer@outlook.com)



**WO Tom Sawyer**

### Reunions

**RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association.** Have you ever served at RAF Bawdsey? If so, why not join our Association and come along to our next annual reunion to be held at Bawdsey Manor on Saturday, June 1. For full details please email Doreen Calver on: [doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com](mailto:doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com) or telephone: 0751 3301 723.

**45TH Entry C Flt 3 Sqn Suppliers.** 64th anniversary reunion at Barn Hotel, Cocksparrow Lane, Cannock on Friday/Saturday June 28-29. If interested please contact Dave Bell on: 01482 377625.

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

### Associations

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

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

activities and events we offer all over the world.

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

**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. So why not come along and join us? For more information send an email to: [janedjones6@btinternet.com](mailto:janedjones6@btinternet.com). The first year of membership is free.

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

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

### RAF Wainfleet

**LOOKING** for photos/memorabilia/stories from RAF Wainfleet. The current owner of the tower would love you to get in touch. Please contact: [willroughton@hotmail.com](mailto:willroughton@hotmail.com).

## SSAFA has new service

ARMED FORCES charity SSAFA has refreshed and modernised its RAF service support after being successful in its bid to continue its RAF Personal Support and Social Work Service.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "The RAF PS & SWS team provides comprehensive and confidential support, with a special focus on services for adults, but includes children, young people and their families. It can offer support with issues such as mental health, difficult relationships, domestic abuse, financial and cost-of-living concerns, resettlement, housing, childcare, equality issues, bereavement, military discharge or deployments."

The new service means it's easier to contact its team of

welfare officers via WhatsApp or Live Chat. They can be called on their helpline, emailed or found on most RAF stations.

Sir Andrew Gregory, SSAFA's CEO, said: "We are extremely honoured to be given the opportunity to continue our work which has been essential in ensuring that the RAF's military personnel can fulfil their roles."

"SSAFA staff have worked tirelessly to meet this remit, adapting as necessary, and we will continue to do so."

● Email: [psswsraf@ssafa-fhs.org.uk](mailto:psswsraf@ssafa-fhs.org.uk); call: 0800 058 4690 (UK callers) 020 4570 3939 (overseas callers); Live Chat: [ssafa.org.uk/raf](http://ssafa.org.uk/raf); Facebook: [facebook.com/ssafarafpssws](https://facebook.com/ssafarafpssws) and WhatsApp: +442037690808.

## Salute to fallen airmen



**TRIBUTE:** The memorial on Cleeve Common overlooks the town of Cheltenham

A MEMORIAL to seven airmen lost in the crash of a Halifax bomber in August 1944 will be dedicated on Cleeve Common overlooking the Cotswold town of Cheltenham, on August 26 - the 80th anniversary of the crash.

The memorial will be officially dedicated by AVM The Venerable Ron Hesketh (ret'd), a former Chaplain-in-Chief to the RAF. The service will take place at the memorial site, with speeches and refreshments for invited guests later in nearby Cleeve Hill Golf Club.

Mike Bryant, chairman of RAFA's Cheltenham branch, said: "Surviving relatives from Canada and across the UK will be in attendance alongside local dignitaries together with members of the Cleeve Common Trust and the Royal Air Forces Association."

"Weather permitting, there will be a flypast by a Lancaster bomber in salute to fallen comrades."

● Please email: [rafacheltenham@gmail.com](mailto:rafacheltenham@gmail.com) if interested in attending.

## D-Day event at airfield

RAF, GLIDER pilot regiment and Army veterans, former flight refuelling airfield staff, their families, friends and anyone with an affinity with the former Tarrant Rushton airfield and its remarkable history are invited to attend a special commemoration on Saturday, June 1 to mark the 80th anniversary of the airfield's part in D-Day.

Gates open at 10am and close at 12.30pm for a 1pm start at the 'Windy Corner' memorial, Tarrant Rushton (on the Witchampton road), Dorset DT11 8DB.

● Email: [tarranrushtonam@gmail.com](mailto:tarranrushtonam@gmail.com) for more information or to register your interest in attending. Those attending are welcome to bring chairs.

### How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535. We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk). Please note that due to the coronavirus pandemic we are currently unable to accept notices submitted by post.

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

# Help artist create work

ARTIST KIRSTY Chapman is looking for Service personnel and their families to help contribute to her poppy fingerprint paintings.

Kirsty creates military-themed artwork using her own fingerprints to represent the individual mark each Serviceman, woman and veteran makes on history.

She said: "For the past few years I've been working on a very special painting made from veterans' fingerprints instead of my own.

"I'm now on my second canvas - the first took over two years and was donated to the Chavasse clinic in Brighton last summer. It was unveiled by the Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex and Lt Col Benjamin Caesar. It was also filmed by ITV News.

"I'd like to find Service personnel and their families to add some poppy fingerprints to the new painting. They can be added in person or via post."

Kirsty has strong family Armed Forces connections.

"My nan used to work with



**ARTWORK:** A veteran makes his mark on Kirsty's painting. Kirsty is far left.

Sir Archibald McIndoe looking after the burned RAF pilots at Queen Victoria hospital in East Grinstead. My great-grandfather was in the glider regiment in World War II and my great-uncle served in the Royal Navy," she explained.

"I work at the McIndoe Hospital in East Grinstead, which is on the site of the original

burns unit. I also visit our local cemetery every few weeks and place a rose on every military grave. The majority of them are RAF graves, the youngest is Sgt George Buckland, who was just 19."

● Email Kirsty at: [poppyartuk@gmail.com](mailto:poppyartuk@gmail.com) if you would like to be involved in contributing to the special painting.

# New Isle of Man stamps tell war campaign stories



**COLLECTABLE:** The stamps depict the D-Day landings and Operation Market Garden

COMMEMORATING BOTH the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings and the 80th anniversary of Operation Market Garden, Isle of Man Post Office has issued a two-part collection of 10 stamps sharing powerful imagery and stories from two of World War II's most significant campaigns.

The stamps tell the stories of both campaigns: D-Day 80 - The Road to Paris and Operation Market Garden.

The first five stamps depict the ground-breaking Normandy landings of June 1944, advancing through to the liberation of Paris. The first stamp in this collection

features footage captured on D-Day by Manxman Norman Clague of the Army Film and Photographic Unit, whose material is used for the first time on a stamp.

The second half of the issue includes five stamps on Operation Market Garden.

Throughout this campaign, a number of Manx military personnel saw battle. Their faces are displayed on the stamps - Fg Off John Clague, Pte Robert Cojeen and Maj Robert Henry Cain VC, feature prominently.

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

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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

# R'n'R



## Prize Crossword No. 361

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

### Across

- 6. Regal confusion about Artificial Intelligence in this country (7)
- 7. Great leader puts snakes in pants (5)
- 9. Medic uses single protector (5)
- 10. Pick cot from part of plane (7)
- 12. News about how the Red Arrows like to fly... (11)
- 14. ...and this is one example (7,4)
- 18. RAF birds who dive spectacularly (7)
- 19. With little oar, rowers dart (5)
- 21. See 11 Down
- 22. Part of car that may wear out? (7)

### Down

- 1. After nasty remark, Penny may drink noisily (5)
- 2. Paul's partner Leonard has no French (6)
- 3. **And 8 Down.** Maybe Nordic mama has headquarters at RAF High Wycombe (3,7)
- 4. Noise made by Emma Raducanu? (6)
- 5. Left out tropical mixed fruit (7)
- 8. See 3 Down
- 11. **And 21 Across.** Studying tug from submarine platform (7,5)
- 13. Oddly, Prince makes fuss right before lancer (7)
- 15. **And 17 Down.** Key US communist briefly upsets American icon (6,5)
- 16. Neither route reaches country (6)
- 17. See 15 Down
- 20. Drop a cross egghead (3)

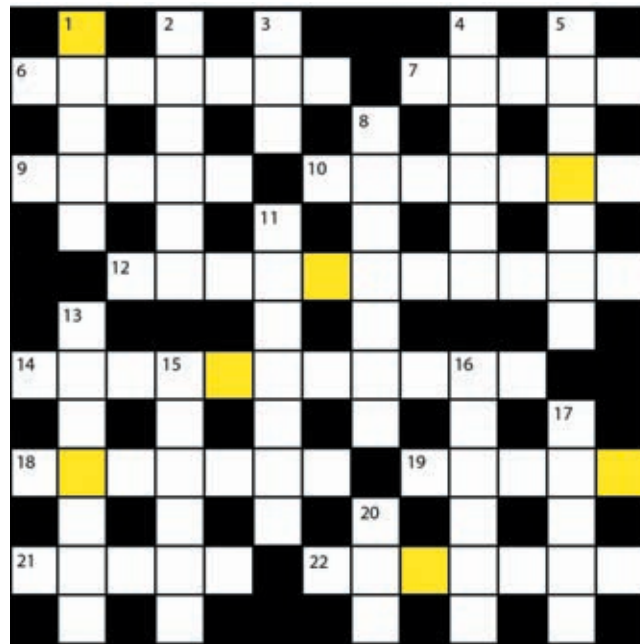
Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

RAF word: ..... Crossword No. 361

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by May 31. Prize Crossword No. 359 winner is: David Read, Dunstable.



### Solution to Crossword No. 360

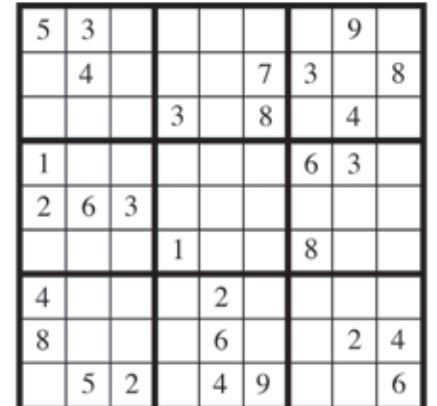
**Across** – 1. Scab 8. Inaccurate 9. Operator 10. Nigh 12. Darwin 14. See You 15. Ashram 17. Silent 18. Bawl 19. At A Pinch 21. Apostrophe 22. Mows  
**Down** – 2. Caspian Sea 3. Bier 4. Halton 5. Acorns 6. Cranwell 7. Mesh 11. Ground Crew 13. Wireless 16. Meagre 17. Shapps 18. Beak 20. Item  
 RAF aircraft – Protector



## Prize Su Doku No. 371

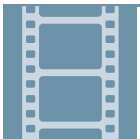
Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

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 May 31. The winner of Su Doku No: 369 is: Mr B Tanner, York.



### Solution to Su Doku No. 370

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



## Film

**Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run (12)**  
 On UK digital now (Trinity Creative)

# American DFC takes his Dad's novel to big screen

**D**ESCRIBED AS a timeless tale of sacrifice and bravery, the epic action film *Love, Courage and the Battle of Bushy Run* is out now.

The historical drama shines a light on the momentous battle that changed the course of American history and forged a nation.

Based on CM Bomberger's novel *The Battle of Bushy Run*, the saga has been brought to the big screen thanks to his son Col A Hess Bomberger II, a decorated World War II American veteran. Hess earned the DFC, flew 66 missions with the 356th Fighter Group and was based at Martlesham Heath aerodrome, near Ipswich.

He finally got to see the finished film before sadly passing away last year at the age of 101.

The year is 1763 and following Britain's victory over France in the Seven Years' War, tension is mounting in the American Colonies. With the departure of French troops, the native population fear British retaliation and under the leadership of Ottawa Chief Pontiac, start a violent siege at Fort Pitt, Pennsylvania.

Determined to save their settlement



**HEROES:** Col Henry Bouquet (right) and his men

and the hundreds of men, women and children trapped within and facing certain death, the courageous Colonel Henry Bouquet (Tom Connolly, *Lost, The Chosen*) decides to do whatever it takes to save them.

He enlists anyone and everyone he can, forming an army that sees brave and fearless Scottish Highlanders, British soldiers and American volunteers stand side by side as they set forth in an epic battle...

The film also stars Rachale Schank (*Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D*) and Adam Baldwin (*Full Metal Jacket, Independence Day*).



## DVDs

**The Wind in the Willows (U)**  
 The Complete Collection on DVD (Fabulous Films/Spirit Entertainment)



# Join Mole and pals on their many adventures

**T**HE CHARMING adventures of four intrepid animal friends – Ratty, Mole, Badger and Toad – are brought to the TV screen by the award-winning animation team Cosgrove Hall Films in *The Wind in the Willows*.

A magical experience for the whole family, the box set features more than 24 hours of the best of British animation, bringing together all four series of *The Wind in the Willows*, as well as the fifth season, also known as *Oh, Mr Toad*.

It tells the story of Mole, Ratty and Badger as they try to help Mr Toad, after he becomes obsessed with motorcars and gets into trouble.

The series is narrated by Ian Carmichael and voiced by an all-star cast including Sir David Jason as Toad, Sir Michael Hordern as Badger, Richard Pearson as Mole



Cosgrove Hall made the animated film of *The Wind in the Willows* in 1983 (included in the Extras), which earned the company a BAFTA and an Emmy award. Its success led to the creation of this stop motion series for ITV. Other Cosgrove Hall TV series include *Dangermouse*, *Count Duckula* and *Chorlton and the Wheelies*.

We have copies of *The Wind in the Willows The Complete Collection* on DVD (rrp £59.99) up for grabs. For your chance to own one, tell us:

**Who narrated the series?**

Email your answer, marked Wind in the Willows DVD competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by May 31.