

YOUR ASSOCIATION

For any enquiries about your membership of the Royal Air Forces Association, to volunteer or get support, this is your first port of call. Use the contacts below:



0800 018 2361

0900 to 1700 GMT/BST every weekday. Closed for English bank holidays and Christmas holidays.



enquiries@rafa.org.uk



rafa.org.uk/portal

for 24/7 access to your Members' Portal, which contains a digital version of this magazine.



@RAFAssociation



@RAFAssociation



@raf.association



RAFAssociation

Headquarters, RAF Association, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE3 1UT.

TALKING AIR MAIL



An audio version of this magazine is available for

visually impaired members. Call 0800 018 2361 and ask about receiving Talking Air Mail. It's free.

Welcome

nimals are part of our personal and our professional lives - and extremely strong bonds can develop between us and the animals we work, rest and play

This Air Mail looks at animals and the RAF: from the dogs which are essential modern military assets to Antis, the dog that won the hearts of the Czech and British forces in the 1940s. We also meet the horses and riders of today's RAF Equitation Association



and the RAF personnel who volunteer to save endangered turtles in Cyprus - and say it makes their tour. We learn the latest techniques for ensuring flight safety and removing birds from stations, but also look at the first project to save curlews - a globally-endangered species that loves nesting in the grass next to runways. And in news from the RAF we hear that the Astra People's Choice prize was awarded to a project to foster pet dogs when their RAF owners are deployed.

Last but not least, we hear the story of Gerald, a widower who definitely made a connection for life after an outreach call from the RAF Association.

I hope these stories cheer you through the winter months and wish you a very happy 2023.

AIR MAIL MAGAZINE

Contact, comment, connect.

To contact the Air Mail team about editorial, notices or advertising or to submit articles and letters: airmail@rafa.org.uk Or write to us at the address to the left. **Editor/Content Manager:** Annie O'Brian **Content Officers:** Joe Hall; Dan Judson Thank you to: all contributors and supporters from across the membership and secretariat of the

Published on behalf of the **RAF** Association by Key Publishing Ltd.

Cover image: An RAF Military Working Dog and handler team silhouetted in the doorway of a hangar. Photographer: Corporal Lee Matthews. © MOD/Crown 2015.

Air Mail copy deadlines:

Apr-Jun 2023: 3 Feb '23 Jul-Sept 2023: 5 May '23 Oct-Dec 2023: 4 Aug '23 Jan-Mar 2024: 3 Nov '23

Average distribution (posted) in last 12 months: 47,206

ISSN 0002-2446 © The RAF Association

Please recycle the packaging of this magazine.



Views expressed in Air Mail are those of the contributors alone and do not represent policy of the RAF Association except where stated. Written permission of the editor is needed to reproduce any part of this magazine. While every effort is made to ensure information is accurate at the time of going to print, no responsibility can be accepted for loss or damage caused by inaccuracies. Every effort has been made to secure permission for copyright materials. In the event of any material being used inadvertently or where it has been impossible to contact the copyright owner, acknowledgements will be made in a future issue. The editor regrets that it is impossible to respond personally to all submissions. Submission of unsolicited information does not guarantee inclusion or return.

Annie O'Brian



Association.

Registered Charity 226686 (England & Wales), SC037673 (Scotland).

Features

Deter, Detect, Delay, Deny, Defeat

A single dog team – one dog, one handler - can provide the same output as a section of infantry, using the canine's super-senses to search large open areas. We explore the contribution that the RAF's Military Working Dogs make to Force Protection.

) Horsepower

Wing Commander Haley Norris, Chair of the RAF Equitation Association speaks to Air Mail about all things equine - and how you don't even need to own a horse to take part.

Endangered!

The RAF is part of the first project to incubate rather than destroy curlew eggs from military airfields. We find out how flight safety and bird conservation are both protected.

Beach patrol

In the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, volunteers have spent the last 30 years helping more than 40,000 turtle hatchlings make it safely to the sea. We talk to the people protecting the breeding habitats of two of the world's most endangered turtle species.

8 Antis: dog of war

In 1940 the lives of a Czech airman and a German Shepherd puppy became inextricably linked while fighting for survival in no-man's land. Author and war reporter Damien Lewis tells their story.

In harmony

During the national lockdown in 2020 Gerry had little human contact, until an unexpected call from the RAF Association gave him a connection for life.

VS 38-51

All the latest from the Association and the RAF community, including: Annual Conference roundup; RAFATRAD breaks sales records; Finding it Tough? relaunches; Rothbury's formal opening; the release of the census' veterans information and much more.





Dear Air Mail

Branch news

News from the RAF

Culture vultures

Brain teaser

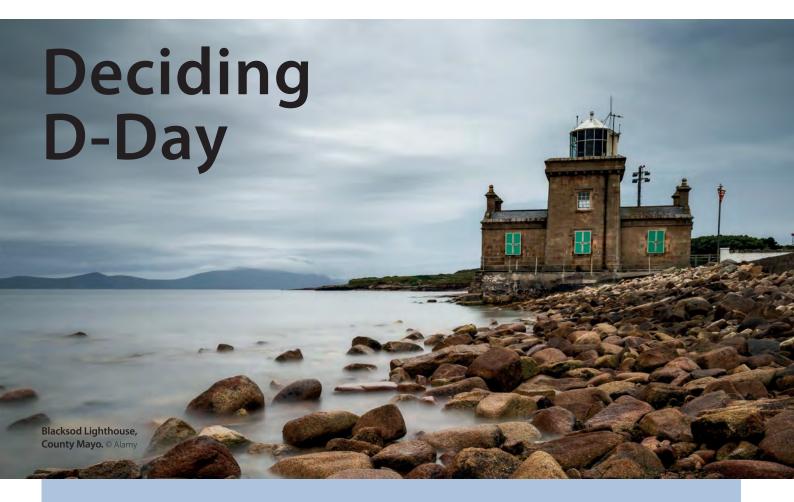
63 Crossword

64 Ad Astra

Notices

Dear Air Mail...

... your letters and emails



I enjoyed the article The man who decided D-Day in the last issue, so thought I'd offer an additional note. When Group Captain Stagg was compiling the various weather reports in order to make a decision regarding D-Day, one vital report came from a remote lighthouse named Blacksod. Sitting on rocks at the bleakest and most westerly point of County Mayo in Southern Ireland, it is one of the main reporting stations on changing weather conditions in the Atlantic and in 1944 was manned by an Irish Coast Guardsman and local Post Office employee Edward 'Ted'

Sweeney. D-Day had been planned for 5 June, but Ted had reported a storm brewing in the mid-Atlantic, thus enabling Allied commanders to put the invasion back for 24 hours. Ted submitted hourly reports thereafter, and later predicted the break in the bad weather which Stagg and the Allied commanders seized upon to launch D-Day. As an interesting postscript, today Ted's son Vincent is the lighthouse keeper, and Blacksod is still a saviour to all seamen. ROBIN BROOKS

Deciding D-Day 2

I was surprised and disappointed that [Air Mail, Oct 2022] did not include the observations carried out by the five Weather Squadrons (251, 517, 518, 519, 52) in the article about Group Captain J M Stagg. The squadrons were part of Coastal Command, and definitely made a contribution to the D-Day Weather. If [one] reads the book Even The Birds Were Walking: a history of the Weather Squadrons [one] would discover details of all the Met Recce Flights that covered the 72 hour period from 4 to 6 June. The Met Office hold a copy of this book in their library. PAMELA RACKLIFF

A burst of nostalgia

Pat Lelliot's memory of kitting out at Cardington [last issue, p9] reminds me of going through the same procedure myself in early December 1954. As we marched up to the airship hangar where this took place I was impressed by the sight of a silver barrage balloon tethered nearby at about hangar height. I was even more impressed when, as we were leaving, it was struck by lightning. The balloon exploded and the remains sank to the ground together with its now unsupported, and very hot, steel cable. Great fun. ROB BURTON

Animal memories

The (in)famous Dalby

When I served at RAF Honington in 1977-8, the mascot was a large black and tan Alsatian called Dalby. He was acquired after being discharged from the station's Police Dog School for being afraid of the dark. However, this foible made him a local celebrity. Dalby even appeared on television as a guest on the regional news programme 'About Anglia', and gained notoriety throughout the region when he vomited over the show's presenter live on air. As a result of this, Dalby became a regular attraction at many local fetes. Despite his size, Dalby was fabulous with children, and even guarded the FA Cup when it came to RAF Honington in 1978. His other claim to fame was devouring RAF headwear, with his most prized delicacy being the Station Commander's No.1 hat! TERRY DENNETT

Floral faux-pas

During training in the 1970s on a Fitters Course at No. 1 Radio School, RAF Locking our apprentices had a donkey mascot which, if memory serves me correctly, was named Heather McCrackers. One day, our Station Routine Orders carried the following unexpected entry: "Leading Apprentice McCrackers is demoted to Apprentice for eating the floral clock on the Freedom of Weston-Super-Mare parade". DAVE HOWITT

Kennelmaids

Having served with RAF Police Dogs (1974-2002), I can say that our organisation would've been far less efficient had we existed without our Kennelmaids (KM). [They] were marvellous specialists within our trade, and bore a tremendous burden of work looking after some fearsome beasts; my wife Kaz, a former KM, has the scars to prove it.

While handlers were usually teamed one-on-one with a dog, KMs tended to be based at the Dog Training School, however they were also individually deployed to dog sections on stations. They maintained the continuity of a dog's care during





Smokey in the Blue Peter garden at Television Centre, London. © Steve Atkins.

the handler's periods of absence. A section's capability, and the standard of care it could offer, was greatly enhanced by the Kennelmaids' efforts. They were worth their weight in gold GARETH 'TAFF' JONES

15 minutes of fame

In October 1973, I was part of the RAF Police Dog Demonstration Team which appeared on the 'Blue Peter'TV programme. Once the equipment was set up, we were joined in the Blue Peter garden by presenter Peter Purves and the dogs then performed various tricks to camera. When our turn came, I sent my dog Smokey off to leap through fire and over a series of ascending and descending platforms to retrieve a flaming dumbbell [pictured above].

In a later pre-recorded section, Peter asked the audience at home if dogs were colour-blind. Smokey was shown a coloured flag, then told to retrieve the dumbbell of the corresponding colour. The director pointed out that many viewers still had black-and-white televisions, so the colours were guickly numbered. Now the guestion was, could Smokey count too? Eventually this particular item was deemed too complicated to air, so Smokey's counting and colour-blindness tests were left on the cutting room floor. However, he did get a Blue Peter badge. STEVE ATKINS

Soaring ambition

In 1971, the Central Flying School's new mascot – a bow-tiewearing pelican named Frederick – was unveiled. Born near Lake Barigo, Kenya in 1968, and educated at the Birdland Institute of Zoology, Bourton-on-the-Water, he commenced his service in the General Duties Branch in the rank of Senior Under Pelican. After a probationary period, he was promoted to Pilot Officer in May 1971. In view of his exemplary conduct he was promoted to Flying Officer the following year. For establishing cordial relations with the local community and providing good publicity for the RAF, in 1974 he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant. There was even talk about a potential promotion to Squadron Leader Spec Aircrew, but it was decided that he had not quite demonstrated sufficient qualities. This must have been a blow, for, as a career-officer, Frederick was once reportedly heard to say that his ambition was to become Commandant of the entire Central Flying School. JIM GARDINER

Dental delay

As an Air Steward with 10 Squadron in 1996, we were on our way to Bermuda from Puerto Rico when a slice of pizza I had slightly overcooked cracked our flight engineer's tooth. Once in Bermuda, he arranged to have a temporary filling. However, flying rules dictated that he was unable to fly for 24 hours due to the possibility of small air bubbles in the filling. At altitude, these could expand and cause excruciating pain. The problem was that we were supposed to be heading straight from Bermuda to Washington State to collect a contingent of UK soldiers and bring them home to their waiting families. We killed time sightseeing until the flight engineer was eventually cleared to fly. We then collected the soldiers and headed back to Brize Norton. Upon landing we discovered some of the soldiers' wives had complained to the newspapers that the RAF had made their husbands late for their planned homecomings. Discretion being the better part of valour, I didn't mention my part in the pizza-related postponement. ROBERT WYATT

To comment in or contribute to Air Mail, please email airmail@rafa.org.uk. Alternatively, write to Annie O'Brian, Editor, Air Mail, RAF Association, Atlas House, Wembley Road, Leicester, LE1 3UT. Your correspondence should be clearly marked FOR PUBLICATION. The editor's decision on inclusion is final, and longer letters may be abridged due to limited space. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication. The deadline for inclusion in the next issue is 3 February 2023.

A royal recollection

After my RAF National Service I joined HM Customs and Excise, where one of my duties was dealing with people flying into RAF Marham from overseas. One day I received a message saying a 'Brenda' would soon be arriving, so over I drove to the tin hut at Marham. Unusually, it smelled of coffee and there were some beautifully cooked biscuits. Apparently 'Brenda' was in fact [HM Queen Elizabeth II] taking a private trip! Forty years later I was at an event also attended by the late Queen. While chatting to some diplomats, she caught my eye and beckoned me over. "Where was it?" she said. "Many hundreds of years ago I was your customs officer at RAF Marham," I replied. She smiled and asked if I remembered the biscuits they made for 'us'. She then asked if I had seen the new customs office at Marham, I hadn't. "You must go and see the difference," she said. I suggested that it may be difficult as it was a top security

base. She agreed and then left shortly after. Suddenly she came back and whispered in my ear: "You could mention my name..." and we both laughed.
GEOFFREY NEWMAN



RAF Association Shop

OROYAL AIR FORCES Association
The charity that supports the RAF family

100% of profits from all purchases go towards helping the RAF community.

New RAF Association 2023 diary, stationery, homewares and so much more.



- 1.) RAF A5 hardbound notebook, 767-RV08, £7.00
- 2.) Biplane pencil sharpener, 000-6955, £4.00
- 3.) RAF Association Sekonda wings steel silver men's watch, 735-3381M, £55.00
- 4.) RAF Association 2023 diary, XR23, £7.00
- 5.) RAF pocket velvet notebook, RV37, £7.00
- RAF Association crest metal ballpoint pen, available in red, black, white and silver, 467-P-RAFA1, £4.00 each
- 7.) RAF Aircraft silhouette mug, GOTMUG19, £6.00
- 8.) BBMF union flag aircraft mug, SP5777-BOB-UJ-AIRC-MUG, £7.00
- 9.) VE-Day white mug, SP5598-MUG, £7.00
- 10.) Red Arrows ground coffee 250g Tin, RA-COFF-TIN, £16.00

Standard UK delivery cost £3.95, next day £6.95





- 12.) RAF Typhoon coffee beans 500g, TYPH-COFF-BEANS, £18.00
- 13.) Lancaster Bomber tin and teabags, RS87, £6.00
- 14.) Battle of Britain BBMF crew box tea bags, BBMF-TEABOX, £10.00
- 15.) Military Heritage Spitfire mug, MH138, £6.00
- 16.) Battle of Britain BBMF metal mug, CF095, £10.00
- 17.) D-Day photo mug, SP5597-MUG, £7.00
- 18.) Spitfire tin and teabags, RS80, £6.00
- 19.) Aviator rustic table lamp, HD-9665, £115.00
- 20.) Art deco flight clock, AP104, £78.00
- 21.) Spitfire travel model, AP099, £55.00
- 22.) Propeller clock, AP111, £88.00
- 23.) WWII Mustang desk model, AP098, £55.00

Standard UK delivery cost £3.95, next day £6.95



* EXCLUSIVE MEMBERS ONLY DISCOUNT - USE CODE AIRM2301 to receive 10% OFF all orders over £30 *

To order please call 0800 018 2361 or visit our online shop www.rafa.org.uk/shop



Air Marshal Sir Baz North



National Presidential Certificates

Congratulations to the following recipients of National Presidential Certificates (NPCs), awarded to coincide with His Majesty The King's New Year Honours 2023.

NPCs are given by the RAF Association President to outstanding individuals whose continued personal efforts have made a substantial difference to the RAF Association and the wider RAF community.

In recognition of their exceptional and dedicated service the following will receive awards:

Cosford and District Branch **Marilyn Addison**

Dave Chappell BEM Northumbria Branch

Robert Hunt MBE North Costa Blanca Branch

Susan Kidston Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Branch

Squadron Leader (rtd) Peter Moralee Diss Branch

Anne Mellor Huddersfield Branch

Right: The golden pin badge awarded to NPC recipients. © RAF Association.

t was my enormous pleasure to meet face-to-face those who attended and who shared their ideas about the future of our Association at the Annual Conference in October. For those who were unable to join us at our first physical

Conference since 2019, a report of the event in words and pictures is included in this issue of Air Mail; more detailed formal reports will be published through branches and on the Members' Portal. I encourage you to engage in the debates and discussion papers that have come out of the event – particularly with respect to the enfranchisement of the membership; Council and I are keen to hear your views. I was delighted to hear that those members who were attending for the first time had such an enjoyable weekend getting together with others that they are already trying to book their places for next year.

At Annual Conference we were delighted to welcome our new chairman, Air Vice-Marshal Alastair Reid. Alastair is known to many of you from his RAF career and a personal statement from him is opposite my message. His considerable RAF experience makes him ideally suited to the role as Chair of Council. I am delighted that Annual Conference elected him by acclaim and we are all looking forward to working closely with him.

Alastair is well-placed to help the Association combat the difficulties facing the RAF community. We are living in extraordinary times with unprecedented rises in living costs which mean that, for the first time in 70 years, RAF veterans have been battling to heat their homes adequately and feed themselves properly.

For older veterans, this is particularly difficult: they are more likely to live alone, meaning that they are amongst the most vulnerable. The worst is yet to come; as the winter draws on, fuel bills and inflation are set to rise again, plunging many of our veteran RAF community into crisis.

So that no veteran is left cold, hungry or lonely because of the cost of living crisis the Association is taking action right now to fund food provisions, provide heating and warmth, and bring companionship to those in need. Not since the end of the Second World War have RAF veterans had to cope with such significant challenges. This is exactly why our Association exists, and we must continue undaunted.

I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and a safe, healthy and companionship enriched 2023.



Air Marshal Sir Baz North **President of the RAF Association**

Air Vice-Marshal Alastair Reid

was approached about the role of Chairman of the RAF Association shortly after my formal retirement from the Royal Air Force. I was flattered to be in the list of those thought to be suitable candidates as, so often, I'm only seen as a medic. I have had several approaches trying to entice me into NHS roles, but this was so different; it was the only one I was interested in, and oddly perhaps, to some eyes, even more attractive to me as it was an unpaid volunteer role.

One of the many things all of us need to reconcile when retiring is that the years of knowledge and experience you have gained can potentially languish on a dusty shelf in your memory for the rest of your days. It can feel such a waste. Consequently, it took me less than 24 hours to decide I wanted to throw my hat into the ring.

To add to my motivators, two of my closest friends are volunteers for the Association in very separate parts of the UK doing assessment visits and telephone befriending. Their examples, experiences and powerful sense of satisfaction have also enthused me to do something for this specific organisation.

As a medical man, there is a natural core of altruism; there has to be when you devote your professional life to helping people. More than that, I am not immune to the brickbats of life and recent close-tohome experience has given me a poignant and emotionally challenging insight into the loneliness of old age and the impact of health issues on both the individual and the carers.

Moreover, retirement requires you to think about your own health and welfare, so in addition to the above, I welcome the continued connection with the RAF and a real opportunity to invest in my own future mental wellbeing by having the intellectual challenge and new friendships that I am confident that this position will bring me.

Rounding my thoughts off, a personal statement would be incomplete without giving some insight into what I might add to the Council. Not only I am now a veteran (and still finding my way as to what that means) but I spent 28 years in the RAF, had four overseas tours, served operationally, and lived in 12 married quarters. I have seen the good and the bad consequences of postings and the effect on moving families, whether it be accommodation, schooling or the challenges of partner employment.

With a firm eve on the global financial situation, my recent experience with the half-billion-pound budget of the Defence Medical Services and the team cohesiveness required to manage it, will, I hope, translate to serving the Association in its continuing mission to support the RAF community.

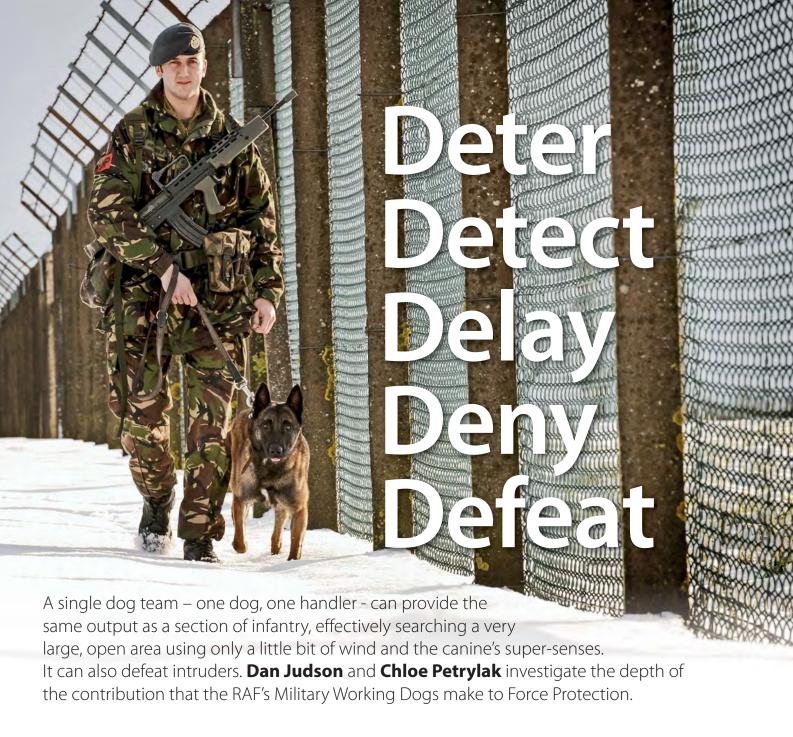


Finally, I have a lifelong curiosity about the human condition which will help me explore what motivates people to support charities, and what influences the tipping point that lies between self-reliance and seeking assistance, both crucial to the continued success of the RAF Association.

Air Vice-Marshal Alastair Reid CB

After a period of general medical practice, Air Vice-Marshal Reid joined the Royal Air Force in 1983, with tours to RAF Bruggen, RAF Lyneham, the RAF School of Aviation Medicine, RAF Akrotiri, the Falkland Islands, RAF Henlow, and RAF College Cranwell. He then become the Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Occupational Medicine (RAF) and President of the RAF Medical Board. In July 2019 he was appointed as the Surgeon General, the senior clinical professional in the UK Armed Forces.

Above: From left, Air Vice Marshal Alastair Reid (facing camera) talking to Lady Knighton, Air Marshal Sir Richard Knighton (just seen) and Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North before the Sunday Service at Annual Conference. Sylvia Reid is sitting on Alastair Reid's riaht. © Heidi Burton.



he bond between humans and dogs goes back thousands of years. It's believed that the domestication of canines can be traced back to the end of the world's last Ice Age, 11,000 years ago. This makes them the first species to ever be considered a human's pet or domesticated animal.

Today this strong and long-standing bond is used to the RAF's operational advantage. In 1942, the Ministry of Aircraft Production Guard Dog School was formed by Lieutenant Colonel Baldwin but, just two years later, was absorbed and retitled as the RAF Police Dog Training School. Since then the team has provided military working canines, developing into the Military Working Dogs. Dog teams have evolved with the times and the threat. They now operate 365 days a year and protect high value

static military locations and assets as well as personnel.

Flight Sergeant Mark Ginger, one of the Provost Marshal's Dog Inspectors and RAF Police Dog Display Team Technical Director, explains: "Each Ministry of Defence main operating base has a dog section and there are a few other smaller dog sections at various other RAF locations as well." The RAF currently has around 180 dogs in service and about 135 handlers. Each team of one dog and one handler contributes the equivalent work of eight to 15 personnel.

Detection and protection

There are two types of Military Working Dogs' work – detection and protection. Police Dogs are described as incredibly "multi-faceted" animals that can also be used when someone has fallen unconscious - because of an individual's

diabetes or for another reason entirely - and these dogs have the ability to find them within an open area, woodland or buildings.. "Our Police Dogs are trained to terminate or emergency stop because there is something about the scenario that is unsafe or we no longer want to continue the pursuit", explains Mark. They could also help search for people suffering from mental health issues who may be lost, before any harm comes to them. In those instances, instead of biting and detaining, the dogs will provide their handlers with an indication of that person's location.

The world of detection dogs can be broken down into more specialist divisions such as explosive detection, which includes arms and explosive search canines, as well as vehicle search dogs and drugs detection dogs.

Protection dogs, which are patrol dogs,



"a pivotal

capability that

supports Air

and Space

are deemed to be more of a scalpel - they are equally effective but used for a very specific need. They protect assets and "are a massive deterrent".

'But their main role within Force Protection is to assist their handler to patrol areas that the RAF is trying to protect and keep secure, indicating when they have picked up on the presence of someone who shouldn't be there."

This includes monitoring airfields where the RAF needs to protect the site and all of the assets that are kept there. Mark clarifies that they do not train their "patrol dogs to terminate an attack and, once that dog has been released it will pursue its quarry and it will detain the person" in question if and when necessary.

Dogs in action

During the interview with Flight Sergeant Ginger, Air Mail was shown a Military Working Dog in action on a property search.

Mark describes the exercise to: "find a lost piece of equipment. Or it could be a burglary has happened and property has been hidden, or someone [has] been arrested but, during that arrest, some evidence was discarded. The dog has the ability to search an area - whether that be an open area or a technical area out on the station somewhere – and find that piece of property" so that it can be used in any future investigations.

The clever thing about this is that the dog doesn't even have to know exactly what it's looking for. Instead of looking

for a certain item, they're trained to search for something the team refer to as a 'scent out of context' - in other words, the thing that has been lost or intentionally discarded that doesn't smell like it belongs in this new environment. Mark explains how the dogs are searching for the property which: "doesn't smell like grass [and] it doesn't smell like

> field. It's been in that person's possession, so it smells like that person, [especially

since] they've discarded it relatively recently."

Regardless of what it is, for example a purse or a wallet, it will have a specific odour attached to it. The dog

can pick up the smell of the material it's made of, such as leather, or can detect the scent of the money or plastic cards that are kept within it. As soon as the canine picks up the smell that doesn't fit into the environment they are working in, it thinks "what's that?" and they show their handler where the scent is coming from.

In this type of scenario, the dogs are taught not to engage with the item once it has been located. To show they've found something of interest, they are trained to indicate; they may lie down or perhaps sit and stare at the location they want their handlers to investigate further. Where stealth is key, an audible indication such as a bark would be counterproductive.

Training is key

But how do these clever canines get to this point and serve the military so well?

All phase one training for dogs in the Ministry of Defence is done at the triservice Defence Animal Training Centre in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. Then, dependent on their specialism, Military Working Dogs can go through training that lasts anywhere from 12 weeks to six months. However, their handler's training is just as important as the courses the animals undertake.

After ten weeks of RAF Basic Recruit Training and a further 22 weeks on an RAF Police Initial Course, recruits can specialise in working with dogs. Dog handlers go through phase three training, which lasts for three weeks and "is basically a gold standard of safety and how to care for the animal...and then up to a basic operational standard so that



they can get to their units". Then there are traditionally further specialisation courses for various roles such as arms and explosive search, vehicle search, and drug detection. The training doesn't end there though. Once an individual has completed their role-specific training, they will then go to the certification stage, which is a rigorous process mandated by a Joint Service Publication.

It's common to automatically think of the dogs serving at home, in the UK. However, there are many who join deployments overseas. These canines are gradually prepared to work in a new country - whether that be much hotter or a much colder than the UK. The team works to acclimatise the dogs by exposing them to as many different scenarios as feasibly possible in a bid to cover any of the eventualities that may come their way on deployment - even if the posting is only on a short-term basis.

To ensure they remain at the top of their game, "teams are regularly tested to maintain standards, and personnel have the opportunity to strive towards selection for Military Working Dog's trials and volunteer for the RAF Police Dog Display team."

It's all about the dogs

Not all dog breeds are the same and nor do they have the same skill sets. The RAF dogs all come from the Netherlands under a military contract to supply police and patrol dogs. The RAF relies on shepherding breeds such as the German Shepherd, Belgian Shepherd, Dutch Shepherd and the Malinois which have the desire to track, pursue, and protect

Below: Each dog has an individual exercise and nutrition plan, based on the latest scientific research. @ MOD/Crown.





their handlers. When it comes to the RAF's other detection dogs - those whose natural instincts are to hunt, flush out, and/or retrieve what they are sent out to find - the Force looks to gundogs, such as Springer Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels, German Short-Haired Pointers, and Labradors.

During their service careers, the dogs live in RAF kennels that are supported by Kennel Assistants - civilians who are there to clean, walk, and feed the dogs and their homes, day and night. The newest kennels, at RAF Waddington, even have underfloor heating. Each of the dogs is handled as an individual: their favourite toys or pieces of furniture are kept in their kennels, they have a bespoke diet and exercise regime, and are also perfectly matched with the handler based on their skill set and unique character. Research constantly guides their treatment. Mark says: "It's our job in the Provost Marshal's Dog Inspectorate to try and stay ahead of the game. Science is a huge driving factor and we work alongside DSTL [the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory], But it's also about us evolving, developing and encouraging our talented handlers to do the same."

But it's not only about the service they provide while serving in the RAF. As Mark explains: "We need to make sure that we retire the dog into a happy home. They've spent their entire life grafting and working for us. The least we can do is make sure that they have a nice warm rug to curl up on when they finish their service career."

Since they operate with around 25 per cent more dogs than handlers – to provide resilience of service and cover

for injuries, illnesses, and any age-related drop in performance - this means that, at any one time, the RAF has a number of animals getting ready for their new lives in their forever homes.

Generally, by the time the dogs reach the age of eight, the handlers and the Military Working Dog team begins to look at retiring the animals from service. Of course, every dog is different, so they may retire sooner or later than this depending on their motivation and physical capacity.

This may all sound easy, but trying to pair soon-to-be ex-service dogs with their new home is trickier than it seems. "These dogs have lived their lives working and protecting airfields or working as a search dog, and those dogs may not have encountered things like cats or small children or living in a civilian environment", clarifies Mark.

The majority of ex-RAF canines will retire with their last handlers. The ones who don't do this need re-adjustment training for their new, civilian life. The dogs are exposed to various environmental factors, including everyday noises, children, and other pets. Mark rounds off: "We see these dogs from passing out training all the way to being rehomed. That does give you a sense of pride." AM



Top of the class,

2022

n November, members of the RAF Police and their Military Working Dogs competed to be crowned champions in the annual RAF's UK Military Working Dog Trials held at RAF Honington.

Competitors were tested in a variety of operational scenarios including the core skills of agility and obedience, threat perception during day and night patrols, and a dog's ability to track and trace intruders through wind scent capabilities.

Corporal Thomas Shepherd and Alwix, from RAF Brize Norton, were crowned champions. Speaking immediately after the trials Corporal Shepherd talked about being such a new team and said: "Not only to compete, but to win, it's just a huge honour. It's something every dog handler should want to do. The main thing I have learned this week is how we are as a team, and the points we need to work on. My advice to any future competitors coming to trials is to make sure you do your standard operating procedures, your CT [continuation training] and your drills so you have the utmost confidence whenever you go into any scenario."

Second place went to Corporal Benson and Pacific, also based at RAF Brize Norton. Third place was won by Corporal Pearson and Dingo, from RAF Waddington. And best obedience and agility was secured by Corporal

Greenfield and Tyson, also deployed at RAF Waddington.

Group Captain Foster-Jones, Provost Marshal, said after the competition: "Congratulations to all of the competitors that have taken part in this year's trial. Military Working Dogs provide a pivotal capability that supports the protection and enablement of Air and Space Power. It is humbling to see the passion and drive that each of the competing teams has shown throughout the competition."

Announcing the winners, the RAF website said: "RAF Military Working Dogs play a vital role supporting RAF Police Handlers to protect people, fight crime and secure assets, with their sensory superpowers. The Military Working Dog





Trials represent the core values shared between the handlers and their dog companions while inspiring the current and future generations of the RAF to develop their skills in the pursuit of excellence." AM

Top: Corporal Shepherd and Alwix in the bitework section of the RAF Police Military Working Dog Trials in November. Above: Corporal Shepherd and Alwix with the champion's trophy for 2022. Left: The trials sections test the dogs' ability to help the RAF Police protect people, fight crime and secure assets. All images on this page © MOD/Crown: Corporal Payne and Air Specialist 2 Williams.

finding it tough? MENTAL WELLBEING COURSES

Okay.

So if you really want to know - yeah - things are a bit tough at the moment. I'm a 27 year old mum, and sometimes I look at my friends whose partners come home every night, regular as clockwork, and I do feel a bit envious.

I'm so proud of Simon but I do have moments when he's away when it all gets on top of me a bit. Trying to juggle kids, work - I feel just a bit overwhelmed sometimes I guess. I know it's stupid - he's always there on the end of the phone and he's so supportive -

I just can't help how I feel sometimes.

He's due back next week. I can't wait for him to get home and everything to be normal again. We just need to get through the first few days of all living in the same house together again - he'll be tired, the kids will be over the top excited and I'll be in the middle....

But I'm not moaning. There's plenty worse off than me. Si's a great husband and a great dad. I just need to be positive. Get on top of things.

Then I'll be fine.

Promise X

'No
it's







really, all good"

Are you a veteran? A family member of serving personnel? Working on an RAF station?

We are offering tailored online mental wellbeing training courses for non-serving members of the RAF community, bespoke to your RAF connection, that will help you overcome some of life's biggest challenges.

Participation is completely confidential. Book your free place today.







10rse 90Wer

Wing Commander Haley Norris, Chair of the RAF Equitation Association speaks to Air Mail about all things equine: from representing the RAF in competitions to what happens during overseas detachments, and how you don't need to own a horse to take part.

Tell us about the RAF Equitation Association

It all started, many decades ago, as a way to have inter-station competitions. There was also a desire to have an RAF team where people with their own horses could compete against the other services. But if people didn't have their own horses we would arrange visits to riding stables – as we still do now – to give them the opportunity to ride. The Equitation Association no longer owns any horses itself.

Riders can attend competitions, riding and dressage tests and show jumps. We compete against other stations but also have teams going off to bigger competitions, either civilian or military. A lot of stations have Saddle Clubs, which allows like-minded people on stations to get together and talk about horses [and ride at beginners' level]. Where possible we do like to get spouses and children involved too.

I think we are one of the few sports which doesn't split between age or sex. Our teams comprise both males and females, and include all ranks. I think Air Marshal was our highest

rank, through from Air Specialist 1s- we have everybody riding. RAF Akrotiri has got a Saddle Club and they've done a lot of work out there. That's a key one for people when they're deployed, and they do a lot with the dependants and the children doing lessons. When I was in the Falklands, I used to run a Saddle Club out there using the local horses. It's completely different to what we do in the UK, but again it's an opportunity for like-minded people.

Membership has also increased over the last few years. Not just with people that are new to the RAF, but also existing RAF personnel becoming more aware of the sport. We had one rider who joined the Air Force because she wanted to ride a horse in the RAF Equitation Association. So, from the recruitment angle we do our bit.

Right: Haley Norris with Archie: "Archie is 21 years young and has been involved in RAF Equitation for about ten years, mostly show jumping. He did a little bit of dressage - not too great, and we attempted cross-country – again not very good at that. So mostly show jumping. He's well known for being either awesome or awful!". @ MOD/Crown.

So you don't need to own a horse to take part?

No, absolutely not. Most station Saddle Clubs have links with local stables who can provide horses. If you want to work your way up and do the team events you need to develop that relationship with the horse, but you don't have to own it. You could link up with a good riding school who can lend, or offer a share of a horse. Even to do the top level stuff you don't have to own your own horse.

How do the competitions work?

So we start with the grassroots inter-station league, for people who perhaps don't have horses and wouldn't have the opportunity to compete. We go to local riding stables and hire the horses, then two stations come together and do a riding test and a course of [small] show jumps.



Next, we have the development level, which I introduced a few years ago to bridge the gap between grassroots and the main team. These are people who either have their own horses or have access to a horse that they might share. They either do some dressage, show jumping or eventing. Some people even do all three. If they want to we can try and progress them through to senior level, but it's not compulsory.

Then there are the senior teams, the people who jump from 90cm and over, do novice level plus dressage and cross country. Along with military and civilian competitions, some of our senior representative riders compete four times a year to challenge for the Loriners Trophy, our inter-service competition.

We've always had really good riders, but the standard of horses and riders across all services has really gone up over the years. The Army has always been really competitive as they've got a lot more people, so have a lot more choice. The scoring is definitely a lot closer now though.

We've also made various national competitions, but to compete at Olympics level you probably need a spare £100,000 just to get a good enough horse. We definitely have the ability though; Olympic-quality riders just without the horsepower, unfortunately.

It must take a lot of dedication?

It's a sport, but it's a passion. We don't leave our sport at the end of the day; we're up at silly o'clock in the morning doing it, we're there in all weathers doing it. It's not something that you can just pick up and put down.

There's a lot of work involved in running the [Equitation] Association too, and without the dedicated committee we couldn't do any of it because of how much work is involved. I'd also say we're probably one of the most expensive associations in terms of the costs of running our equipment.

We get a grant from the RAF Central Fund and last year we were awarded the most money we've ever had, which is great, although a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to justify what we want to do. But they also see the work we put in, and how we are able to improve and grow from grassroots up to senior.

We do have very low-level sponsorship and some very lovely sponsors that provide us with chocolates and prizes and things like that. But ultimately a lot of your own money gets put in; I won't put on record how much because my partner may be reading this! Let's just say that over the years I've probably funded most of the local vets' sports cars and holidays.

What happens to a horse when its owner is posted overseas?

It can be a real mix of things. It can be especially hard if it's short notice and you have to quickly find a home for the horses. In my case I'm not sure my husband would cope looking after them for six months!

When I went to Afghanistan my horse went to my friend's. When I've been deployed on other ops I've had to pay extra livery for them to be looked after. Most livery yards will offer what we call full livery, where you pay for everything to be done. Very expensive, but it's another option.

Some people put their horses out on loan, which is where you loan the horse to someone else and they pay for the care costs while you're away.

This is also where the Equitation Association comes in. The contacts and networks enable people to help each other out. So if you're on the same station people can either help or will know of someone who can help. A friend of mine is going away and our team trainer is having her horse to work with while she's gone.

Animals and the RAF

It also brings opportunities though. I'm lucky in that I've deployed a lot, and wherever I go I try and find a horse to ride. I've ridden in the Falklands, America and Norway, and I'm still in contact with all those people. We're like-minded, and once you get to know someone, especially in the horse world, you bond because of what you have in common.

Do you take part in any official duties?

We don't take part in ceremonials – we leave that up to the Army – but we do represent the service at events like the Royal Windsor Horse Show. When you're parading in front of The [late] Queen, or even jumping in front of her if you get into the jumpoff, it's important to make sure everyone looks good. In the past we've used RAF roundel quarter marks [a pattern brushed into the hindguarters of a horse's coat] because it looks super smart, and it's lovely to add those little extra touches. It was an amazing experience to be able to parade past The Queen. You just hope your horse behaves!

We also had some riders take part in the Initial Officer Training graduations at RAF College Cranwell a few months ago. Part of the graduation includes scroll-passing ceremony, and they like to look at different ways of doing it so we were invited to take part.

Aside from the enjoyment, have you noticed any other benefits the sport provides, especially for working in the **Royal Air Force?**

Having the courage to do something that pushes you beyond your boundaries. Our riders frequently have to get on horses they've never ridden before then go and compete. That's scary - it takes guts and it takes skills. We're riding half-tonne animals with minds of their own.

It also builds connections by meeting people from other stations and different branches and trades, even inter-service. We train at DATR [Defence Animal Training Regiment] for example, and have a great relationships with them. They've got such good facilities that we normally do our team training there for both the dressage, show jumping and cross country.

Having our people at the events and shows just helping each other out is lovely to see as well. I get feedback all the time from people who have come to their first competition and say how brilliant it was being around the RAF Equitation family, and knowing there was someone to step in and help them if they didn't know what was going on.

The opportunity to have a break from work and do the sport you enjoy is also becoming harder and harder. People have a lot less time now, so we really push to make sure we can keep it going. AM









horse racing. This challenging and rewarding sport allows men and women to compete on equal terms regardless of their rank or age. Whether you aspire to compete for the RAF at high profile events or are just passionate about horses and want to help, then the Equitation Association would love to hear from you. Retired or serving personnel, civil servants, contractors and dependents should contact their local RAF Station Saddle Club and ask to join the RAF Equitation Association Facebook group. On station, the physical training instructors can help point you towards the people who run the Saddle Club.

Email: equitation.sec@rafsportsfederation.uk Twitter: @RAFEquestrian Facebook: @RAFequitation Website: rafa.org.uk/rafea

he distinctively long and slender bill of the Eurasian curlew is a rare sight in UK. Only six nests were confirmed with fledglings in Southern England during 2018. The declining population means the birds are now red listed as a Bird of Conservation Concern and a Priority Species, under Section 41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.

As a ground-nesting species, the remaining curlew gravitate to military airfields which mimic the natural open grasslands they prefer; and where security fencing can help deter predators such as foxes. But curlew are relatively big birds and pose a significant flight safety risk. Michael Tomlin, Environment Protection Advisor at the RAF Safety Centre, said: "We knew that during 2018, the number of eggs destroyed under licence on Royal Air Force airfields significantly outnumbered the number of birds successfully bred in Southern England."

Michael is the RAF lead for 'Head Start'. the first project in the service to try to remove and incubate bird eggs instead of destroying them.

Pilot

In 2019, the RAF and its partners had worked with Natural England (NE) and

Michael explains: "To control potential flight safety risks, curlew eggs would normally be destroyed under NE licence by Aerodrome Wildlife Control Units (AWCUs). The Head Start project aimed to redress this imbalance. While the priority was always air safety, the RAF wanted to establish a practical conservation project to test whether curlews could be supported within the air safety constraints."

The project needed a collaborative approach between Air Command, the RAF's Environmental Protection team, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Heads of Establishments, grounds maintenance staff (Amey), Station Air Traffic Control Officers (SATCOs), NE, the WWT and the AWCU staff.

Co-ordination and enthusiasm

Curlews lay a clutch of three to five eggs, which can appear over five days. The Head Start project's ambition was to remove full clutches of eggs. "We wanted to avoid birds continuing to lay eggs in an attempt to replace those that had been removed," explains Michael, "so monitoring was a vital part of the project protocol developed by the stakeholders - initially to identify nests, but then to assess the threat to flight safety." The



Endangered!

Eurasian curlews weigh up to 1kg and have a 1m wingspan; they pose a significant flight safety risk and they love nesting on military airfields. But they are also a critically endangered species. The Royal Air Force is involved in the first project to remove and incubate birds' eggs, rather than destroy them.



Grounds maintenance, Natural England, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust,

WWT Slimbridge inhibited our plans. "This was resolved when the Pensthorpe Conservation Trust (PCT) joined the project, with new purpose-built rearing facilities funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The PCT has a rich history of participating in captive breeding programmes with national conservation partnerships, so the experience it provided was a welcome addition to the project." It became clear that all stakeholders were highly motivated to repeat the success of the 2019 trial. Fifteen airfields

participated during the 2021 season,

though not all managed to collect eggs.

In total, 147 eggs were transferred from eight locations to the Pensthorpe and

Slimbridge rearing facilities, as follows:

Aerodrome Wildlife Control Units and Station Air Traffic Control Officers - just

some of the partners involved; here at RAF Waddington. © MOD/Crown 2021.

monitoring was carried out by the AWCU and SATCO teams. When necessary they ensured nests were managed under existing licence conditions, but if possible, monitoring continued and the eggs remained in situ until they could be removed by NE or WWT staff for transfer. "The coordination required to successfully transfer eggs was immense and obstacles were only resolved through constant dialogue between all stakeholders, in addition to their sheer

hard work and enthusiasm," says Michael. The result saw 18 clutches of eggs (58 eggs) transferred from RAF stations to the WWT's Slimbridge Reserve in April and May 2019. From this, airfields took part in 2021

50 fledged curlews were later released into the wild.

This remarkable achievement was recognised during the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's 2020 Sanctuary Awards, when the pilot project received the Environmental Protection & Enhancement Award.

2020 and 2021

The WWT aviculturists and other partners had learned a lot from the 2019 trial. "We knew eggs could be removed earlier than preferred from an ecological perspective, and we also knew curlew eggs could hatch successfully after being transferred for periods of four to six hours in a battery-operated portable incubator," explains Michael. "The intention had been to utilise our experience to develop the project during 2020, but of course all plans were abandoned with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic."

As the situation developed during 2020. it became apparent the project could possibly be resurrected during 2021, providing robust COVID-19 procedures were devised. Michael set up a meeting for project stakeholders in November

2020, when embryonic plans for 2021 were discussed. He said: "Our ambition had always been to expand the project by involving additional airfields, but the limited capacity of the rearing facility at

Top right: **Nests are**

found and marked on the airfield, [see

blue lines on grass]

then eggs are

handlers. MOD/ Crown 2021

Above: The short

airfields makes

perfect nesting

as the Curlew.

MOD/Crown 2021

grassland of

grounds for

birds such

collected by

licenced

2021 - 9 of the 15 airfields managed to collect eggs:	Eggs licensed for collection - 2021	Eggs collected - 2021
RAF Barkston Heath	60	36
RAF Cranwell	16	8
RAF Marham	40	23
RAF Scampton	60	48
Teesside Airport	16	4
RAF Topcliffe (Alanbrooke Barracks)	12	7
RAF Waddington	40	12
Wattisham Flying Station	12	
RAF Wittering	16	9
	TOTAL	147

2021 - 9 of the 15 airfields managed to collect eggs:	Eggs licensed for collection - 2021	Eggs collected - 2021
RAF Barkston Heath	60	36
RAF Cranwell	16	8
RAF Marham	40	23
RAF Scampton	60	48
Teesside Airport	16	4
RAF Topcliffe (Alanbrooke Barracks)	12	7
RAF Waddington	40	12
Wattisham Flying Station	12	
RAF Wittering	16	9
	TOTAL	147

Animals and the RAF

200% better than expected

Chrissie Kelly, the Head of Species Management at Pensthorpe, reflected on a fantastic year during which twice as many eggs were received than anticipated. This meant an intense hatching period when young curlew were transferred to the rearing pens. Mark Roberts, the Principal Conservation Breeding Officer at Slimbridge, explained how the 2021 season presented

new challenges for the WWT, compared to the 2019 trial: "The eggs were required to be transported twice, initially to the Slimbridge reserve for incubation, and then to the Duchy of Cornwall Estate for hatching." That year, 112 birds were reared and released at three locations, the Duchy of Cornwall Estate, the Sandringham Estate and Wild Ken Hill, the location for the BBC

Autumnwatch TV series.

Michael sums up: "This was a phenomenal achievement that boosted our confidence in our ability to successfully rear and release curlew from the project. However there was a lack of knowledge about what happens to the birds after their release. That was the next stage of the project."

Tracking the adults

The British Trust for Ornithology used colour leg tags to identify the Head Started curlew after release. Radio tags were also fitted to some birds to enable local tracking. "A smaller proportion have had GPS tags fitted. This was a first with juvenile curlew, so numbers were restricted because of the experimental nature of the endeavour," says Michael.

Results from the first year's radio tracking suggested similar survival rates to wild birds. In the longer term, it is hoped colour tag sightings and GPS tracking will help the project to understand the locations of curlew when they reach breeding age.

Monitoring is a long-term process, with four or five years of information needed to fully understand what is happening, but the project hopes to have some breeding information from the surviving project birds by 2023. "We may discover birds from the project have dispersed far afield from their release sites, and therefore cannot make a major difference to the declining/ disappearing curlew population across Central and Southern

It really is an amazing thing being done Air Commodore Sansome, Inspector of Safety RAF

England, but this RAF initiative is still critical from an ethical perspective," says Michael.

2022 and 2023

"Natural England had not anticipated the increased number of eggs found during 2021, so for 2022 the Pensthorpe facility was extended to prevent overcrowding," says Micheal. And a further 96 eggs were collected in 2022. "The DEFRA funding bid has already gone in for the project for 2023," he adds.

Discussions are also underway regarding the rationale of egg collection times; another example of valuable knowledge being gained by the aviculturists participating in the project. While final figures are still being compiled for 2022, there were more GPS tags and radio transmitters fitted to the 2022 fledglings to boost efforts to track their movements. And up until the end of May 2022, 26 birds out of 79 released had been spotted; the majority were on the east shore of The Wash near release sites. But one had travelled as far as Somerset and another to the Exe estuary in Devon.



Above: Eggs are taken from RAF Waddington to be incubated. Chicks are then reared by specialists at Slimbridge Reserve or Pensthorpe Conservation Trust. Above right: Once they have been incubated, curlew chicks are moved to pens to learn to forage for food, before being released. © Keith Cowieson, RAF Ornithological Society. Right: Curlews lay three to five eggs per clutch, usually in April or May. © MOD/Crown 2021

Above: Recently-hatched wild curlew chicks. © Keith Cowieson, RAF Ornithological Society.

The Eurasian curlew Head Start Project has been incredibly successful and achieved with minimal impact on military activity, but it is impossible to predict where eggs will appear each year. "And don't be completely beguiled by the romance of the project, says Micheal. "There are also still curlew eggs that don't make it. As I tell the curlew project partners all the time, flight safety is the RAF's priority. But I am so proud we are continuing to try to make a difference to this critically endangered species. What is guaranteed is the commitment of all stakeholders to do everything in their power to recover curlew eggs that might otherwise be lost. Our enduring ambition is to ensure more of these iconic birds are raised in captivity and ultimately released into the wild, providing a major boost to the conservation of curlews in Southern England and East Anglia." AM





Flight safety and wildlife control

Enemy intel, tracking facilities, a range of tactics, excellent preparation and access to a wide range of weapons: sounds like the recipe for success in any RAF operation. But in this case the enemies are birds and every time any aircraft takes off or lands, it's a matter of life and death for both sides.

Alan Marenghi is the contracts manager and wildlife biologist for Phoenix Bird Control Services. Already responsible for wildlife management on nine RAF stations in the eastern region, Phoenix will be taking over at six more stations in the west from February 2023. Wildlife management on RAF stations falls under the safety teams – specifically Station Air Traffic Control Officers working with Aerodrome Wildlife Control Units, with support from grounds maintenance and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation. Alan and his colleagues advise them and also train his on-station teams to manage wildlife to allow the safest possible flying by the RAF.

Prevention

Preventative action is the first line of attack. "I make recommendations for habitat management [usually grass, but not always] to remove food insects and stop the birds feeling safe there. I also keep abreast of trends in terms of certain types of bird species. I look to see if the birds on station are associated with any kind of habitat there, or within the 13km radius that is the statutory safeguarding area for all airports. It might be something very close - where birds will feed and then sit on the airfield - or further out where they roost or transit across the flight paths. This is especially important for RAF training airfields where there is constant flying such as at Cranwell, Wittering and Scampton," [which will still be using their airspace until the end of March 2023]. But all airfields and all types of aircraft are affected by birds – from engine ingestion into jets to rotor damage in helicopters and wing and canopy strikes in tutor aircraft and even aliders.

"I also keep an eye on planning applications. If someone wants to dig a lake or set up a landfill site, that can bring in birds. I then work with Defence Infrastructure Organisation and its wildlife management team. We comment on planning applications and also monitor the sites afterwards if there is approval to build. We also oil eggs to stop them



hatching or remove nests completely. It's odd to hear an ecologist talking like this, but Alan says: "It's very rewarding. You are contributing directly to flight safety and strikes can cause very serious incidents for personnel, the general public and for RAF assets. And it is saving the birds. If they get hit they are definitely going to die. If I can move them off before then, that is a success."

Moving into action

If preventative measures fail, then the Phoenix teams move into active bird control measures. Duty hours depend entirely on a station's operational needs and teams are on duty from one hour before flying until the end of flying that day. While USAF stations such as RAF Fairford favour using birds of prey, Royal Air Force techniques are different. The most obvious tools are the brightly coloured wildlife control vehicles. These drive across the airfield with sirens, or playing the sounds of different bird species' distress calls. Birds nearby investigate, and then disperse if they can't see the real threat - or simply fly away straight away. Other 'weapons' include loud noises, like blank firing guns and sirens, and a special 12-gauge pyrotechnic which is fired to give a very loud bang and flash. Flags and falconry lures (which look like a bird in distress) are also used. But "the birds do learn and often they won't move for any vehicles except ours," says Alan."

"No one thing works in all conditions, and against all species at all times. Some birds, such as corvids (crows, rooks, etc) are very clever and become habituated. And I have seen lapwings mob birds of prey and they will also mob aircraft - they are



very defensive of their territories." The final method is lethal control such as netting or shooting, which is generally used where an individual bird is not moving and is an immediate risk. The technological arsenal is also increasing. Since 2021 RAF Lossiemouth has trialled a specialist avian radar. Teams can track the number, size, height and direction of travel of the 10,000 geese that arrive nearby every winter as well as year-round covid and gull movements. And Alan talks of future developments: "Lasers are now starting to be used on the Ministry of Defence estates. We are going through risk assessment of that now and through air safety and individual RAF station requirements. In low light and misty weather you can see lasers as a constant beam so it's like waving a very large stick across the airfield. The birds see it as a physical thing so they move when it comes near them."

Top: The Phoenix wildlife management team. Alan Marenghi is front centre and Regional Manager Paul Medlicott is on the far right.

Above: The priority is to protect RAF personnel and assets and the general public. Active bird control as a F-35 Lightning takes off.

Both images @ Phoenix Bird Control Services

he cliffs between RAF Akrotiri and British Forces Episkopi are home to the last remaining breeding colony of Griffon Vultures and the equally rare Eleanora's Falcon. Thanks to the work of volunteers, local beaches are also nesting grounds for two of the world's most endangered turtle species. The Western Sovereign Base Area in Cyprus is bursting with rare wildlife which can only be found in the region. It is one of the most environmentally-sensitive areas on the island and has recorded 260 different bird species plus hundreds of rare plant species.

The Turtle Watch project protects the breeding beaches and young of two of the world's most endangered turtle species – Green and Loggerhead Turtles. Year-round work by the RAF and people linked to the service sees its volunteers clear rubbish from beaches, organise patrols to locate and protect turtle nests, and actively protect nests from animal predators and human destruction. It also undertakes bigger projects to prevent erosion of these critically important beaches and raises awareness of the turtles' activities and their importance within local communities.

Since its small beginnings as two separate groups in 1991 and 1996, Turtle Watch

has evolved into a major conservation effort, involving university researchers and hundreds of RAF personnel, their families and their local Greek and Cypriot neighbours. In 2004 it won a Sanctuary Magazine Award for its work and in 2007 the RAF was commended in the House of Commons with the motion giving: "its wholehearted support to the continued success of this project; and commend[ing] all those RAF personnel who have made this initiative possible."

Flight Sergeant Ken Winslade, an Air Traffic Controller at Akrotiri, has been involved with Turtle Watch since 2014, and Officer in Charge of the project since 2019: "I oversee a team of about 40 volunteers who walk two beaches within the Western Sovereign Base Area (SBA) between May and August every year during the turtle breeding season.

"When the walkers find turtle tracks on the beaches it is fed back to me and my second in command, RAF Photographer Corporal Laura Bullas. We send the information to the Environmental team in the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) and environment centre in Akrotiri. Then either one of the Cypriot wardens from

Beach Patrol

In the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas, RAF volunteers have spent the last 30 years helping more than 40,000 turtle hatchlings make it safely to the sea.



Left: An adult turtle in the shallows near the Western Sovereign Base in Cyprus.

© Ken Winslade.

Far left: **A** Loggerhead turtle hatchling making for the sea © Travelscape images/ALAMY.

the environment centre or I check the tracks to confirm if a nest has been laid. If it has, we place a [protective] cage over it, record the date and species and wait [around 50 days] for the eggs to hatch. A week after the hatching, we excavate the nest to record success rates. We also liaise closely with, and assist, the team that covers a number of beaches closer to Episkopi.

"The whole thing is a voluntary undertaking from those within the RAF, with no funding and limited support; though we do have a small shop on camp to raise funds for anything we need.

"Volunteers range from Air Specialist (Class 1) up to Wing Commander, along with spouses of serving personnel, civil servants and teachers. The walks are conducted early in the morning either before work or on days off. All walks have to "The fine for be completed by 0800 to allow the wardens

the tracks before the heat of the day. "Like many others, I started by walking the beaches looking for tracks whenever required. Then due to postings an opportunity arose to take a more active role. I became the coordinator in 2016 and was licensed by the SBA administration to check for nests and excavate or move as needed. I was responsible for collating information every morning from the walkers and disseminating to the wardens. Then in 2019, I became the Officer in Charge.

"The volunteering has no impact on my primary role, but as a shift-worker I get lots of time during the summer months to support Turtle Watch. Some days, if I'm checking nests and caging it can take up to four hours of my day.

> Between May and September I am doing something projectrelated almost every

single day. It also gives me the opportunity to meet new people, and provide those on

lifetime opportunities. We seem to have an endless stream of volunteers who usually want to get involved after hearing from their friends what an amazing opportunity it is.

"We also have an excellent environment centre in Akrotiri. It oversees education support to visitors regarding all flora and fauna within the SBA. We work closely with the centre during the season as a number of their staff operate as the wardens we work with on the beaches. I also give talks and support lessons in Akrotiri primary school when they are learning about the local environment or lifecycles of animals - specifically turtles.

"Feedback from parents is always good, with some telling me how their children have 'told off' beachgoers for throwing their rubbish into the sea. I have also given short presentations to families in the station HIVE, explaining what we do and how they can get involved.

"Due to winds, storms and occasional apathy from visitors, litter and debris are +

Below: Ken Winslade is trained and licenced to check the nests. The fine for anyone destroying a nest is €17,000 © Ken Winslade. Bottom: After volunteers locate tracks, the Turtle Watch team checks them, puts protective cages on them and warning signs. © Ken Winslade, Below left: Checking all the young turtles have hatched and logging numbers © Ken Winslade







our beaches. "The biggest surprise for me when starting was learning how seriously turtle protection is taken within the SBA. On the beaches, the fines for things like walking dogs, camping or driving are about 85

bags of rubbish being collected

as well as some surprising larger items

that have been discarded, dumped or

problem is discarded fishing equipment.

cause of numerous deaths of turtles on

Nets that end up in the sea have been the

washed-up. These have included car tyres and fridge doors, but the biggest

'success' rate of nests. An average nest has about 100 eggs. It is estimated that it takes about 1,000 eggs for one turtle to make it to adulthood and be able to reproduce. It is also believed that those which do lay eggs, do so on the beaches where they were born. This means we are now seeing the results of our Turtle Watch predecessors from 20 years ago.

"For the majority of people who join the team, Turtle Watch is one of the highlights of their tours. Many volunteers have had the pleasure of seeing adult





Top: Females risk their lives by hauling themselves up beaches several times, usually at night. They dig 25-30cm into the sand and lay up to 100 eggs per nest. © Ken Winslade. Above: Adult turtles weigh up to 900kg (142 stone) and spend most of their lives at sea. © Ken Winslade.

turtles leaving nests that they have laid when they begin their walks at first light. Some who have joined me in excavations have also witnessed hatchlings being released who weren't strong enough to escape the nests themselves. I myself have also helped to rescue a number of sick or trapped turtles during my time here.

"Knowing that something I'm so heavily involved in gives such pleasure is a source of great pride." AM

To find out more search 'WSBA Turtlewatch' on Facebook.

To protect and conserve

In 2002, the Sovereign Base Area Administration (SBAA) Environmental Department was established in recognition of new and impeding environmental legislation to which the administration has legal and policy responsibilities. Since the 1960 Declaration on the Administration of the SBAs, the administration has aimed to replicate the legislation of the Republic of Cyprus - and this also applies to environmental legislation. The SBAA is also a signatory to many international conventions with an obligation to demonstrate good environmental stewardship of the bases. It has a responsibility for some of the most unspoiled natural areas in Cyprus, with statutory obligations to protect and conserve.



NOW YOU CAN

BUY DIAMONDS & BESPOKE JEWELLERY



DIRECT FROM THE MANUFACTURERS

Showrooms based in the heart of the diamond centre. Hatton Garden London and King Street Manchester, we supply retail shops with a vast range of exquisite diamond engagement rings, wedding bands and bespoke diamond jewellery.

We are delighted to offer the same trade prices of 50% off retail prices to RAF staff, civil servants and family.

Enter discount code **RAF50AB** on our website and receive discounted prices across our entire range.

PROUD SPONSORS & PARTNERS OF







Round Brilliant 5 Stone 1.20ct Diamond Eternity Ring

Your price £2,200 inc VAT Retail value £4,650





Round 1.00ct Centre Diamond Platinum Engagement Ring

VAT REFUNE available to personnel stationed abroad

Your price £6,840 inc VAT £14,500

Retail price



Round Solitaire 0.70ct Diamond Platinum Engagement Ring

Your price £3.000 inc VAT Retail price £6,850

9ct Yellow Gold Laser **Engraved Signet Ring**

Your price £850 inc VAT

Retail value £1,950



1% of all orders donated directly to charity

MANCHESTER 76 King Street Manchester M2 4NH t: 0161 823 5688

e: info@alanbick.co.uk

www.alanbick.co.uk



Est.1968



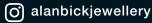
LONDON | MANCHESTER

Serving the Trade and Military for over 50 years

LONDON

Audrey House 16-20 Ely Place (off Hatton Garden) London EC1N 6SN t: 020 7242 5831 e: sales@alanbick.co.uk





obert Bozdech eyed the abandoned farmhouse warily. Even if the enemy hadn't seen exactly where their aircraft had gone down, a giant black fist of smoke now rose above the trees to mark their position. Having left his injured pilot nearby, he had to find somewhere safe to move him before the German patrol arrived. As a Czech national who had escaped the Nazi occupation of his homeland to fight with the French Air Force, Robert knew there would be no prisoner of war camp for him, only a

It was the winter of 1939–40 and Germany and France were locked in the so-called 'phony war', though having just been shot down in the no-man's land between French and German lines, there seemed nothing phony

firing squad.

about it.

Once inside the farmhouse, a sound caught Robert's ear. Cautiously moving aside a chair, he saw a sleeping figure.

One moment there was a tiny ball of curled up fluff, the next it had stumbled to its feet and was peering up at him anxiously, growling out a throaty little challenge.

Robert whisked the puppy up by the scruff of its neck and clutched it to his chest. He couldn't leave it here, with no food and at the mercy of shelling from

both

sides.

Below: Robert Bozdech's flying dog of war. Right: When Robert suffered injury on a sortie and was hospitalised, Antis waited for days in the cold and rain beside the runway for his master's return.

All images © the Bozdech family unless otherwise stated.

That night he, his injured pilot and the puppy crept through the darkness to return to French lines.

Much of the next few weeks and months Robert spent moving from airfield to airfield, fighting a rear-guard action against the German advance with his new puppy often in the aircraft beside him. Yet despite their courageous resistance, on 17 June 1940 the announcement was made that France would sue for peace with Germany.

Determined to fight on, Robert, his newly-named puppy Ant and a group of fellow Czech airmen headed for the UK. They arrived on 12 July, having escaped from occupied France via Gibraltar.

Once there, Robert found that the way he pronounced 'Ant' was causing confusion among the Brits, with many assuming he was saying 'aunt'. So Ant now had to be known as Antis – a minor alteration which he hoped wouldn't confuse the dog too much

With the RAF

Having signed up with the Royal Air Force, Robert was transferred to RAF Speke. Walking back to base with a few

Antis:

of War

In 1940 the lives of a Czech airman and a German Shepherd puppy became inextricably linked while fighting for survival in no-man's land. Author and war reporter **Damien Lewis** tells their story.



friends after an evening out in Liverpool, Antis suddenly became rigid. Moments later flares popped into life above them.

With no cover in sight, Robert threw himself flat on the pavement, pulling the dog beneath his body to shield him from the blast.

The screeching of the bombs turned to a roar as they tore through the buildings. Dropped with delay fuses, they exploded deep inside their targets, punching out walls in a whirlwind of shattered masonry, and firing debris at the speed of bullets over the heads of those lying prone in the road. In moments it was over.

With cries for help all around, Antis led the way with Robert and his friends close behind. They found and freed one man, and as more rescues followed the assembled helpers watched Antis like hawks, knowing he would lead them to the next casualty regardless of the twisted metal and broken glass which

Below: Antis, official mascot of 311 Squadron. Below right: Antis was wounded on more than one occasion. In later life, one ear would droop due to an old injury sustained while flying.

littered the ground.

Searching for his seventh survivor, Antis raced ahead of his master when there was an almighty crack. Before Robert knew what was happening a wall had collapsed in front of him. The lead went slack in his hand.

For several seconds Robert stood dumbfounded, then he fell on the rubble and began to frantically dig. Miraculously the dog's head soon appeared, covered in dust but moving.

Robert began to sob. He didn't care who saw the tears coursing through the dust that coated his cheeks. Antis was alive and that was all that mattered.

It was well after midnight when they arrived back at camp. For the last few hundred yards he'd had to carry his exhausted dog, so painful had his paws become to walk on. Both went straight to the sick quarters, where Robert began to painstakingly clean his dog's cuts and bandage his bleeding paws. Not until he'd finished tending to Antis did Robert accept any treatment for his own

Not long after the air raid on Liverpool, RAF Speke was also bombed. Caught in the blast, Antis was buried beneath the rubble for a number of days before digging himself out. Once again Robert nursed his puppy back to health.

311 (Czech) Squadron

cuts and bruises.

As the RAF's raids on enemy territory intensified, Bomber Command's losses climbed at a dizzying rate. Brave airmen were needed to fill the vacancies, and Robert had no hesitation volunteering

to join 311 (Czech) Squadron as an air gunner.

On New Year's Day, 1941, they flew into RAF East Wretham. They were met by a sea of familiar faces, including a few of the original airmen Robert and Antis had escaped from France with. Once he had finished dashing about in joy, Antis went from man to man, seemingly checking that all were present. Not all had survived the dangers of war however.

Each time Robert climbed aboard his Wellington and disappeared into the sky, he would entrust Antis to their dogloving ground crew chief Adamek. Once the aircraft was out of sight, no amount of coaxing by Adamek could get Antis to leave the dispersal area until Robert's

"A whirlwind

of blasted steel

fragments tore

through the

fuselage"

return many hours later. As losses mounted, Robert became painfully aware that if ever he failed to return he would be leaving behind an orphaned and very likely traumatised dog. During one raid a shell burst right beside Robert's aircraft, sending a shard of metal through the Perspex gun turret. The aircraft was partially crippled, and Robert badly

cut on the forehead. Back at the station, Antis watched the other bombers come in to land. As the morning wore on it became obvious that Robert's aircraft was not returning and Adamek tried to move Antis off the dispersal area. He would not budge.

Coaxing him with a plate of roast liver didn't help, and Antis continued staring at the sky even as the dark clouds rolled in. When it began to rain the ground crew built a shelter around him.

Later on, news arrived that their aircraft >>





had made an emergency landing at RAF Coltishall, with Robert rushed to the nearest hospital. As there was no way of informing Antis of this happy fact he remained outside, refusing to eat. Special dispensation was soon made which allowed the still-injured Robert to be released from hospital for a few hours to come and fetch his dog.

Arriving at the station, Robert was gently helped out of the car. Antis tried to climb into Robert's arms but was too exhausted to manage it. Instead, the wounded airman picked up his dog and carried him to the waiting car for the return journey to the hospital.

Airborne

Once fully recovered, Robert's first raid was as part of a thousand-bomber operation to Bremen. Seated in the forward gun turret Robert's thoughts turned to Antis. For the first time ever as they had taken to the air Antis had been nowhere to be seen.

Not far from the German coast, Robert was snapped out of his reverie when the navigator tapped him on the arm. When he turned to look the man was bent over his charts, oblivious to Robert staring at him. Puzzled, Robert gazed into the darkened belly of the aircraft, and in the dim light he caught sight of a familiar shape – a German Shepherd lying prone on the floor.

Recovering from the shock, Robert noticed the dog's flanks were heaving,

Below: The airmen's huts were horribly crowded, but Robert made sure that Antis always had a blanket bed on the floor by his master's side. Below right: Hit repeatedly by German fire, their rugged Wellington bomber refused to go down as Robert and Antis manned the rear gun turret.

his lungs desperate for breath, which was very likely why he'd alerted Robert to his presence. They were climbing to 16,000 feet and Antis was having trouble breathing in the oxygen-starved atmosphere. Robert placed his oxygen mask over the dog's nose, only removing it occasionally to take a breath when he himself felt light headed.

Soon flak was buffeting the aircraft, and the bright dazzling searchlights periodically illuminating the otherwise dark confines of the turret,

but Antis remained calm throughout.

Upon their return, Antis was the first to jump out. Bouncing and prancing, he went through an ebullient war dance followed by several wild circuits around the aircraft. Robert and his fellow airmen couldn't help but laugh at their dog's antics.

A jeep soon pulled up and out jumped Wing Commander Ocelka. Although Ocelka was thoroughly smitten with Antis, regulations prohibited taking an animal into the air. The group fell silent as Ocelka surveyed the scene.

"Antis is back on form, I see," he said in an ominous tone. "No guessing where he's spent the night then."

As Robert opened his mouth to explain, Ocelka threw up a hand to silence him. Climbing back into his jeep, he turned to Robert with a slight smile: "There's a very good English expression: 'what the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over". With that, he drove away.

"Robert threw himself flat on the pavement, shielding **Antis from** the blast"



Returning from one raid on Hanover, the crew were made all too aware of the dangers of flying with their four-legged crew member. With thick

fog blanketing East Wretham and all nearby stations, they were advised by ground control to abandon their Wellington and parachute to safety. A brief discussion among the crew ended in a unanimous decision: they would instead attempt a crash-landing at nearby RAF Honington.

Nobody had said as much, but they all knew that if they bailed, Robert and his dog would have to jump together, and if Antis panicked both of them stood next to no chance of survival.

With almost zero visibility and the engines working on fumes, they







Three Wellingtons of 311 (Czech)
Squadron based at East Wretham, Norfolk;
the squadron where Robert and Antis had
many of their aerial adventures. © IWM.



nonetheless set down squarely on the runway; their mascot once again proving his worth.

Grounded

Despite their good fortune so far, the war over Europe was far too dangerous for this state of affairs to last.

Just after bombs-away on a raid over Mannheim, disaster struck when a shell exploded right underneath Robert's aircraft.

The force of the blast almost flipped the Wellington over as a whirlwind of blasted steel fragments tore through the fuselage. Their pilot, Capka, struggled desperately with the damaged controls as more flak exploded all around. The crippled Wellington finally came back level, and they set a course for home. However, it was painfully obvious to the crew that their aircraft was far too fragile to allow any evasive action.

In the rear turret Robert fixed his eyes on the skies. Antis seemed remarkably calm after what they had just been through, and not for the first time Robert marveled at the courage and fortitude of his dog.

Suddenly the turret was illuminated by a searchlight before the terrifying sound of heavy cannon fire punched through the aircraft.

The crew steadied themselves for the final deadly attack when the searchlights seemed to fade. Capka had piloted them



into a cloud bank. Looking down, Robert saw Antis looking up at him, but his eyes were glazed.

With a growing sense of panic Robert flicked on the turret light. The sight that met his eyes sickened him. His dog was lying in a slick of blood. He was lost for words, and could feel hot tears pricking his eyes. Antis had been injured before, but not like this. Robert held his dog's head, gently stroking him for the long return journey.

After a belly-landing at East Wretham, Robert kicked open the emergency exit door and ran – dog in arms – to the waiting ambulance.

While Antis recovered, Robert found him a mission of his very own, one designed to take his mind off being grounded: Operation Jacqueline.

Jacqueline was a four-year-old girl who lived near to the station. Her father had been killed at Dunkirk, and her mother and grandmother worked all day. With the family's blessing, Robert set Antis the task of being the little girl's babysitter, chaperone and protector. Very quickly there developed an unspoken understanding between dog and child, who would often head off together on whatever adventures Jacqueline had planned.

After a few more raids Robert's tour of duty was at an end. It was a historic one for many reasons, but most notably – and tragically – because they were the first Czech aircrew to complete an entire tour without losing any members. Robert had completed 206 operational flying hours, many of which he had shared with his dog, and both he and Antis had been wounded in action.

Trouble

After a short Christmas break Robert received his new orders: a posting to a gunnery training school at RAF Evanton in the Scottish Highlands.

Before this however, Robert was sent to RAF Chelveston for a brief gunnery leaders' course, and left Antis with a friend to avoid more paperwork for what would only be a few days apart.

Shortly afterwards, Robert received startling news – Antis had chased a sheep and been shot by a local farmer. He was recovering well, but there would be a hearing, and the police were arguing for Antis to be put down.

Robert couldn't get time off from his course, so wrote to his former superiors for their assistance. When the hearing finally took place, their testimonies were read out, including that of Wing Commander Ocelka, whose letter played a key part in swaying the judge. A firm ruling was made against ending the life of such a veteran

war hero, and the British press finally had proof – in sworn court documents – that the oft-rumoured flying dog of war existed. Soon Antis was frontpage news.

After a worthwhile but unsatisfying period at the gunnery training school, in Autumn 1943 Robert – now a flight lieutenant – and Antis were delighted to hear that they would be rejoining 311 (Czech) Squadron, now based just a few miles away at RAF Tain. The squadron had swapped Wellingtons for Liberators, and now formed part of RAF Coastal Command hunting U-boats in the North Sea.

Retraining as a radio and radar operator, Robert formed an integral part of the



cockpit team. However, in contrast to when they flew in the rear gunner's position, there was simply no room for the big German Shepherd in a Liberator cockpit. As such, Antis reverted to his old ways of sitting in the dispersal

area until Robert's aircraft returned; sometimes up to 12 hours later.

Antis continued to serve as 311 Squadron's mascot – albeit ground-based – as Robert served out the remainder of the war flying over the north Atlantic.

Home

were arguing for

Antis to be put

down"

On 15 August 1945, Robert flew with Antis and his fellow surviving Czech airmen back to Czechoslovakia. They received a heroes' welcome, and Robert set about rebuilding his life in his native land along with his veteran friend and survivor, Antis, the now-famous dog.

Sadly, less than three years later Robert was forced to flee his homeland for a second time, in a daring and death-defying escape. The country had fallen under the control of the Soviet Union, and the Communist purges targeted anyone with links to the West.

During a knife-edge escape, Antis saved the life of Robert and his fellow escapees



Above left: Operation Jacqueline. Seriously wounded by shrapnel during a sortie over Mannheim, Antis was grounded and given the duty of looking after a local widow's daughter. Above: Antis's Dickin Medal – the Animal Victoria Cross – 'For outstanding courage, devotion to duty and life-saving actions while serving with the Royal Air Force'. Below: Antis took up the same position during every sortie that his master flew, faithfully awaiting his return. No matter what, he would not be moved.

on more than one occasion by warning them of approaching patrols, and in one case by attacking and driving off the soldiers.

Eventually, man and dog made their way to the UK where Robert rejoined the RAF. A year later, Antis was formally recognised as a war hero when he was awarded the Dickin Medal, commonly known as the 'Animal Victoria Cross'.

In August 1953, after being at Robert's side for 13 years, Antis passed away and was buried at the Animal Cemetery in Ilford. The gravestone holds a simple inscription:

There is an old belief That on some solemn shore, Beyond the sphere of grief, Dear friends shall meet once more.

There follows a shorter inscription in Czech: Věrný až do smrti - Loyal unto death'

Damien Lewis is the author of 'War Dog: The No-man's Land Puppy Who Took to the Skies', which charts the intertwined lives of Robert Bozdech and Antis. See page 59 for more details. Their story is also being made into a film, 'Antis: the War Dog', produced by Spot Films Inc.

The Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Lapel Badge

All of us mourn the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who devoted herself to Crown and Country through more than 70 years on the throne, becoming the longest reigning British Monarch in history.

AWARD has commissioned a special Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Lapel Badge to commemorate the 70 years of the Queen's reign and as Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces. This exclusive special issue can be worn with pride by all those who served Her Majesty between 1952 and 2022.

The attractive, two-part, hand polished enamelled badge with the satin gold-plated crown, is produced by the die-striking process. The frosted reverse is sequentially numbered and fitted with a non-turn, superior jewellery style clutch and is presented in a handsome presentation case which makes a perfect gift.





- Hand polished and enamelled by hand
- Two parts construction & die stamped for fine detailing
- The Crown is in relief & enhanced with satin gold
- Sequentially numbered on back
- Actual size 31 x 32mm
- Handsome presentation case

Code: LBER £24.95





How to order

Order Online - www.awardmedals.com

Order by Phone - Call us between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday on **01952 510053** Alternatively, please complete the order form enclosing a cheque/ postal order or completing the credit card details and send to:

Award Productions Ltd, PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, SY5 6WP, UK

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms		AWARD PROUD TO SERVE	Order Form
Daytime Tel. No.		AWARD Productions Ltd, PO Box 300, Shrewsbury, SY5 6WP, UK Yes, please send me the following EIIR Memorial Lapel Badge(s): Code Description Price Qty Total £	
Email address		LBER Queen Elizabeth II I Delivery Subject to availability	Memorial Lapel Badge £24.95 Postage/Packing/Insurance £2.50
Award Productions Ltd or please debit my card account no:	(Switch only)	Please allow up to 28 days for	Total £
Security Code: Cards accepted: Last 3 digits on signature strip Last 3 digits on signature strip Expiry Signature	Switch Issue No. / date: Valid from:	The Queen Elizabeth II Me Productions Ltd, in complete confidence kno guarantee. For full ter	WARD Guarantee emoral Lapel Badge is brought to you by Award ternational medallist. You can order with wing that every item is backed by the AWARD ms and conditions please visit our website: www.awardmedals.com
If cardholder's name, address and signature are different from the one shown pleas	o include these details	Award Productions Ltd. Registered in F	England No. 2001900. Shrewsbury SY4 4UG

AM30

During the national lockdown in 2020 Gerry had little human contact, until an unexpected call from the RAF Association gave him a connection for life. harmony

ovember and December are particularly hard months for me," says Gerry, an RAF veteran with 14 years service. "At the end of November 2014 I lost my wife, then in December I had to arrange the funeral."

For Gerry and his wife Carol, it had been another ordinary day in their 44-year marriage. When Carol felt a pain in her chest they both assumed it was a bruised rib caused by the exuberance of their new puppy. They decided to see the GP, who suggested it could be gallstones.

They set off for the hospital where Carol would undergo a scan - only for the doctors to spot a growth on her liver. The test results showed that Carol had stage four cholangiocarcinoma, a rare cancer of the bile duct that's hard to detect. The doctors said that she would not survive more than three months.

"The hospital gave us our options," says Gerry. "Does Carol want to stay there, does she want to go into care or would she like to go home? Whichever option was chosen, the end result would be the same."

Carol went home and Gerry, a former electrical fitter in the RAF, began his round-the-clock care.

"We did get visits from two carers who would come and bath her and try make her feel more comfortable. We also had two nurses visit: the first would come in the afternoon to check her drugs and drips, and again last thing at night.

"The night nurse was a brilliant relief. They would come and take over from me and it would give me chance to get some sleep. There were times that they'd read with Carol too.

"Carol was a very private person and didn't want other people to know just how ill she was."

Carol didn't make the doctor's prediction of three months. After six weeks, Gerry watched his wife pass away at home as he held her hand for one last time. At a time when family togetherness and Christmas was all around him, Gerry was alone.

"During her illness, I'd reached out to St Catherine's Hospice in Crawley. This is where Carol could have gone," Gerry said. He was invited to a drop-in for those who have been bereaved. "We were able to help each other. We sat and talked."

Just before Carol's funeral, Gerry was talking with a close friend on the RAF Apprentices Association online group about Carol's death. The friend asked if he could attend the funeral. Without hesitation Gerry said 'yes'. As her coffin arrived, three RAF colleagues turned up and effectively formed a guard of honour.

Gerry says that Carol would have been delighted that three of 'Trenchard's Brats' honoured her passing: "RAF comradeship still exists all these years on... 60 years have passed and we're still looking out for each other."

Gerry's neighbours also stepped in - and continue to do so. "When one neighbour found out that Carol had passed, he came round and we sat with a bottle of Scotch. I get a yearly invite for Christmas Dinner... and if I'm not up for it, they will plate it up and drop it round."

While the whole situation was hard to process, Gerry has never been one to quit and has tried to tackle his problems head on. "I still get bad days, but Carol would've wanted me to carry on the best I can. I still undertake my hobbies and try to live life as normally as I can. She would've expected me to."

In March 2020, England went into national lockdown. Gerry's beloved Basset Hound had died just weeks before. Gerry's RAF training had provided some preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was stationed in Borneo for 12 months," remembers Gerry, "there was a cholera outbreak in the nearby village

so the whole camp went into lockdown. Three years later I was in the Gulf and we had a malaria outbreak in another village down the road.

"My military discipline has taught me to get on with it as I knew it would be over sooner or later. Besides, my remaining dog kept me company."

Aside from his dog however, Gerry had little human contact except with other dog walkers in the village. And it was still hard to be alone, especially around wedding anniversaries, and even more so on the anniversaries of that terrible day in November 2014.

Meanwhile, the RAF Association was calling on RAF veterans to check on their welfare during the pandemic. Out of the blue, Gerry received one of more than 120,000 calls made to members of the RAF community. As he spoke to the caller he took up the charity's offer of a regular conversation.

Gerry was introduced to Lynn, his RAF Association Connections for Life volunteer. He says: "I didn't know it [Connections for Life] existed. It came as a complete surprise. I'm quite lucky."

After a couple of calls, Gerry and Lynn were discovering common ground. Gerry is a keen writer who loves to compose short stories, and he also had another creative ambition. "I always wanted to play a musical instrument. When I said this to Lynn she told me that she plays the piano". With her friendly encouragement, Gerry started teaching himself to play the electronic keyboard.

"Whenever I learn a new piece, I play it over the phone to Lynn. If I'm struggling for whatever reason, she is so supportive. She goes to her piano and talks – or plays - me through it.

"To date I've covered 50-odd bits of music. I mostly play classical music and have learnt some ABBA!" he laughs. Gerry still looks forward to his Friday evening



calls. The phone rings and he gets an hour with Lynn – and her piano.

After two years of support from the RAF Association, "there came a point where I realised that we had been talking for so long over the phone and I really wanted to meet Lynn in person, so I asked: 'is there a way?".

Before the pandemic, the Association's volunteers made house calls or met up with their veterans in town. Lynn had undertaken the necessary training to allow a visit and eventually there was an opportunity.

"We decided to meet for lunch," recalls Gerry. Lynn is such a natural, easy person to talk to... and before I knew it, we'd spent two hours together.

"Connections for Life really does mean

that. For me, it's two people that have become friends. I was so pleased. It restored my faith in human nature.

The Royal Air Forces Association is worthwhile joining. It offers so much support and I'm also lucky to have a branch nearby; our bimonthly lunches allow me to keep in contact with other veterans."

that"

Gerry is still being creative - and is writing music which he continues to share with Lynn over the phone.

"I'm currently composing my fourth piece," Gerry says. "'Dusk Over a Village' imagines the quietness of the river running through the village." Lynn suggested he covers the rest of the

village in audio form too: "so I've also written 'Daybreak'. It leads to a crescendo as the village wakes up."

Asked if he's able to incorporate any other instruments to his masterpieces, Gerry chuckles: "I did try the pan flute and the recorder – but I didn't get on with them!"

Gerry signed up to the RAF as an Apprentice at RAF Halton, beginning his career as an Electrical Fitter. He did 14 years' service "under the colours". This included his two years of Boy's service as an Apprentice, as he signed up at the age of 16. He worked on V Bombers during the Cold War, flew as a crewman on helicopters, and was deployed on tours across the Far East and the Persian Gulf. AM

Roundup & resolutions

ssociation President, Air Marshal Sir Baz North, welcomed members to Birmingham for the 2022 Annual Conference in October and celebrated the first face-to-face Annual Conference since 2019.

Telegrams and messages of greeting were read out and The Silent Tribute to the Fallen was conducted by The Chaplain in Chief and Archdeacon for the RAF, the Venerable Dr (Air Vice-Marshal) Giles Legood.

Morning business saw officers and employees present the Annual Conference Committee's report, the results of the elections of Area Elected Trustees, the financial and auditors' report for 2021, the Association's annual report and the Secretary General's report. The Chair of Council, Honorary Treasurer, Vice-Chair and Secretary General took questions from members.







Dr Byan Pattison OBE, Air Vice-Marshal John Cliffe CB OBE and John Tisbury MBE (all pictured below) were created Life Vice Presidents of the Association.







Air Vice-Marshal Alastair Reid was elected by acclaim as Chairman of Council from 2022 to 2025 (formally under Resolution 6 of Annual Conference business).

Other resolutions were debated and voted on as follows:

Resolutions 1 and 2 covering Byelaw 11



Conference and Elections were approved by more than 98 and 93 per cent of delegates respectively.

Resolution 3 proposing that newly elected Area Representatives be able to take up their posts immediately after the Area Conference at which they were elected was passed by 100 per cent.

Resolution 4 proposed that Associate Members could be recommended for Ordinary membership by their branches after five years. This needed a two thirds majority to pass. It was voted down by 50.5 per cent against to 49.5 per cent for.

Resolution 5 covering annual income thresholds and the requirement for branches to register with the Charity Commission in England and Wales was passed with 69.7 per cent voting for and 30.3 per cent voting against.

Resolution 8 resolving to introduce a discussion paper seeking the views of delegates on the enfranchisement of our members was passed by 93.68 per cent for and 6.32 per cent against.

Resolution 9 resolved to introduce a discussion paper seeking the views of delegates on the role of Area Councils and received a 100 per cent endorsement.

Resolution 11 resolving that the 2023 Conference be held as a hybrid event, to allow delegates the choice of attending in person or on-line, was passed by 94.95 per cent for and 5.05 per cent against.

Resolution 7 on the appointment of auditors and Resolution 10 on sourcing a venue for Conference for 2023 were also passed.

The address on behalf of the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) by Air Marshal Sir Rich Knighton, the RAF's Deputy Commander Capability (pictured below). Sir Rich is also



a Lifetime member of and Ambassador for the Association and a Connections for Life volunteer. He spoke on behalf of CAS about the importance of people to the RAF and what the Service is doing for the United Kingdom, the government and us. He talked about recent operations, threats to the UK, and how the RAF is easing bottlenecks in training, addressing unacceptable behaviours and helping RAF families thrive through increased childcare and spousal employment. He also thanked the RAF Association for its support in helping the RAF deliver a connected, empowered and resilient Air Force.

The rest of the weekend

As well as formal business, Annual Conference gives members a chance to catch up with each other, take part in events such as the



Standard Bearers' competition, to hear from organisations such as the RAF Presentation Team and worship at the Sunday Service. The highlight of the weekend's social calendar is the Gala Dinner, with entertainment this year from singers from the RAF Cadets Music Services, and drinks beforehand.

Above:: Renewing old acquaintances, and taking part in extra activities. Below, middle right and bottom right: Good company, great music and food at the weekend's social events. Far right: The RAF's Presentation Team giving the latest on the Service. Top right: Talking it through - the day's debates and business.











Photographs, watch again, minutes and

All photographs in this article are ©Heidi Burton. Photographs taken over the Conference weekend are available on the members' portal.

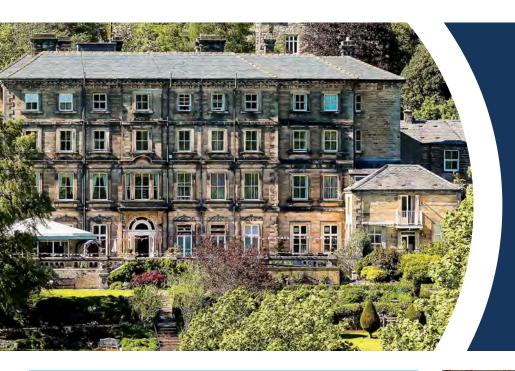
All the business and presentations, including Air Marshal Sir Rich Knighton's talk were live streamed and also recorded. They can be watched on the Association's YouTube channel.

For copies of the full written report of Conference please contact your branch, log on to the Members' Portal or telephone the Association's Customer Care Team on 0800 018

If you have any enquiries about the RAF Association Annual Conference 2022, please contact Adelle Jarvis on: 0116 268 8769 or email: adelle.jarvis@rafa.org.uk.

AVAILABLE NOW RETIREMENT ACCOMMODATION





ROTHBURY HOUSE

IN ROTHBURY, NORTHUMBERLAND

Rothbury House is a beautiful former county hotel, with breathtaking views across the Northumberland countryside.

FACILITIES

- All bills included
- Communal activites, including coffee mornings and day trips
- Shared, landscaped garden
- Staff on-hand 24 hours a day
- · Meals, WiFi and phone bills included
- Lift
- On-site parking
- Nearby local amenities include shops, cafes and a cinema





Nestled among rolling green hills, our thoughtfully developed site at Rothbury House will enable you to retain your independence while living among like-minded people who share an RAF connection.

If you would like to find out more, or arrange an overnight stay to experience the breathtaking views and welcoming community for yourself, email retirementhousing@rafa.org.uk or call 0800 018 2361.



rafa.org.uk/retirement
retirementhousing@rafa.org.uk
or call 0800 018 2361

Awards presented at spectacular Gala Dinner

National Presidential Certificates and Association trophies for 2021 were awarded at a gala dinner and ceremony at the 2022 Annual Conference in Birmingham. The event also celebrated members and supporters who had been recognised during 2020 and 2021 lockdowns and who had not had a chance to attend an awards ceremony.

National Presidential Certificates for 2021 were awarded as follows:

National Presidential Certificates, for outstanding individuals whose continued personal efforts have made a substantial difference to the RAF Association and the wider RAF family, were awarded to: 1 Jim Goodfellow of Newcastle Under Lyme Branch; 2 Mike Chappell of Brecon Branch;

Christopher 'Mal' Craghill of Headquarters Branch; 4 Micheal Blackman of Whitley Bay Branch; 5 Dr Bryan Pattison OBE of Swiss Branch; 6 Frank Barrett MBE of Lincoln Branch; and **7** Dave Chappell BEM of Northumbria Branch.

Branch trophies for 2021 were awarded as follows:

The Sir Thomas Pike Trophy and the Gwynne-Vaughan Wings Appeal Trophy were collected by 3 Alan Clark and Robin Norman for Wantage and Oxford Branch.

The President's Cup was awarded to the Armourers' Branch and was collected by 9 Branch Chair Martin Turner and committee members Nick Keep, Dewi Humphreys, Colin Dillon-Davies, Les Lloyds and Steve Mullis.

The Trefusis Forbes Trophy was won by Guernsey Branch and collected by 10 Branch Chair Heather Chan.

For having the best communication process with members, the Sir John Baker Trophy was awarded to Global Branch and collected by 10 Branch Chair Steve Mullis.













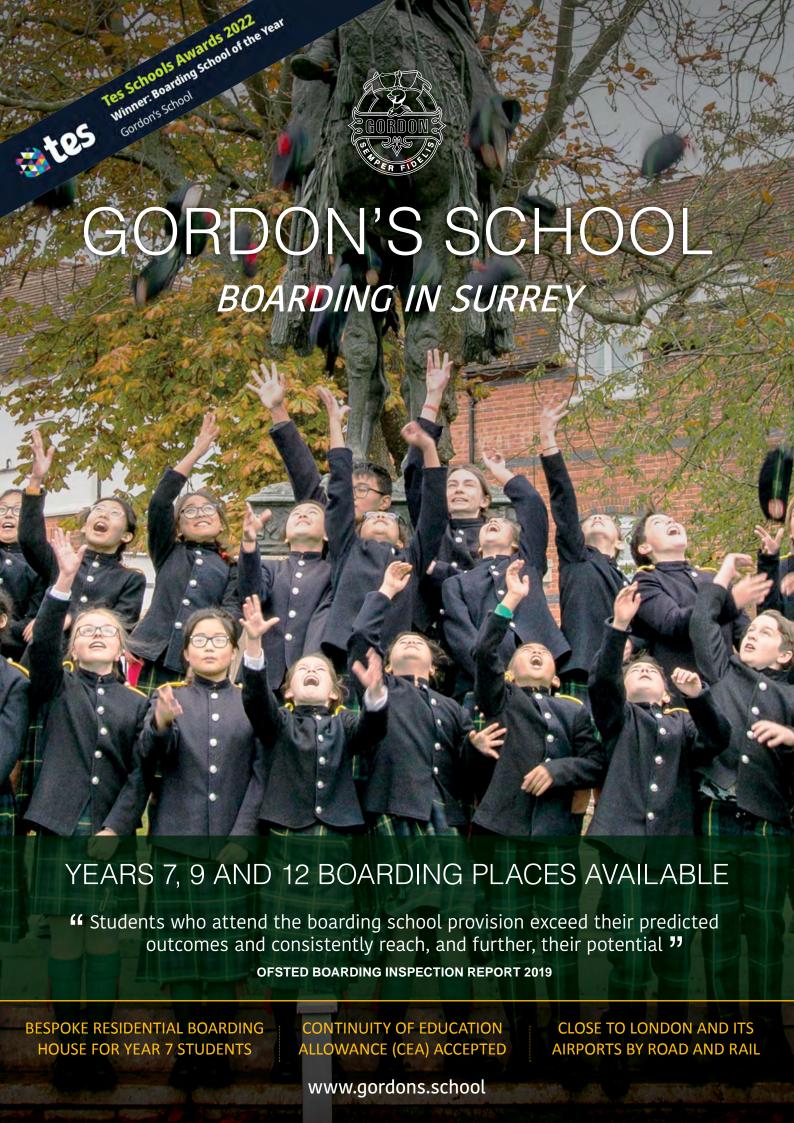


























Congratulations once again to all 2019, 2020 and 2021 winners, and good luck to everyone for next year



RAF Station trophies for 2021 were awarded as follows:

The RAFALO team from RAF Brize Norton collected the Lord Tedder Trophy for raising a total of more than £17,000 for the Wings Appeal and also the Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy for exceptional achievement in support of the RAF Association.

RAF Scampton raised more than £15 per member to claim the Sir Charles Wheeler Trophy, collected by Flight Lieutenant Eric Powell, Flight Lieutenant Kenny Hewitt and Wing Commander Neil Atkins.

RAF Cranwell was awarded the Marquis of Amodio Trophy for new member recruitment, and the trophy was collected by station Community Development Officer and Ian Whitehead.

Three RAFALOs of the Year were recognised: our 2019 winner was Warrant Officer Michelle Rees-Martin; our 2020 winner was Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones and the 2021 winner and current holder of the Wally Marriott Trophy is ¶ Flight Lieutenant Simon Arnett. See more on page 51.

Membership trophies were awarded to:

European and Overseas Area for achieving an annual membership renewal rate of 45.79 per cent and 6 Area President Andrew Neal collected the Dame Anna Neagle Trophy to celebrate this.

South East and Eastern Area for the highest number of new members in 2021 – 850 – and 77 Area Chair John Gilmore collected the Sir Andrew Humphrey Trophy to recognise this.

The standard bearer competition results from earlier in the day were also announced:

Winner of the John Kirkpatrick Trophy and the Association's National Standard Bearer from 2022 to 2025 is 13 Shawn Marston of Shrewsbury Branch. Deputy Standard Bearer for the next three years is Paul Ellis of Calne and District Branch (pictured centre). Assistant Standard Bearer until 2025 is 13 Glenn Connor of Northampton and District Branch (pictured on the right).

A small number of award winners could not be present and the following trophies were collected on behalf of them:

- Carrickfergus Branch was awarded the Lord Stirrup Trophy and the Lord Craig Trophy for raising a total of £340 per member and a grand total of £25,000.
- Lyon Branch won the Bill Baily Trophy for raising £583 per member.
- Gibraltar Branch collected the Ken Jago Trophy for raising £41 per person in the Wings Appeal.
- Victoria College CCF won the Sir Douglas Bader Trophy and the Sir Robert Saundby Trophy for raising £137 per person and a total of £3,294.
- 2026 (Carrickfergus) Squadron RAF Air Cadets was awarded the Sir Gus Walker Trophy for raising more than £22 per person for the Wings Appeal

These and other photographs are available on the members' portal.

All photos on these pages © Heidi Burton

























Expanding

A free training course aimed at helping members of the military community to identify and deal with the symptoms of poor mental wellbeing has been opened to thousands more people.

With around one in six adults in the UK experiencing

some form of depression (Office for National Statistics, 2021) - seven per cent higher than prepandemic levels - the Royal Air Forces Association has opened up its Finding it Tough? training course to all civilians working in conjunction with the RAF.

The course, which launched in 2020, was originally designed for the partners of serving RAF personnel. Within months of going live, huge demand from the veteran community led to the training being opened to former personnel.

The charity was determined to support as many members of the RAF community as possible and, since September 2022, anyone working on an RAF station such as MOD civil servants and defence contractors, medical staff, civilian staff or volunteers have been eligible to take part.

The RAF Association's Director of Welfare and Wellbeing, Rory O'Connor, said: "Recognising that our country is facing a growing mental wellbeing crisis, we felt that our hugely popular and well-received course could benefit thousands more people.

"A new bespoke version of our unique online training course was developed, and we're now encouraging anyone who supports the RAF in their career, either as a civilian contractor or in a volunteer role, to sign up."

The 2.5-hour course will sit alongside the charity's training programmes already on offer to RAF veterans and their families, and the family members (aged 18 and over) of anyone currently serving in the RAF.

The programmes aim to equip people to be more resilient to life's pressures, and to help them to identify and support others struggling with mental wellbeing issues. Trainees are

COURSES

also equipped with skills to signpost relatives, friends and colleagues to more specialist help and support.

Liana Cunliffe (40), of Burton-on-Trent, whose partner is an RAF aircraft technician serving overseas, undertook the new online Finding it Tough? training.

She said: "The course was beautifully done. It was really wellorganised, the material was extremely helpful and was divided into bite-sized pieces that were easy to understand.

"The small-group online session meant that participants could share some of our own thoughts and ideas, and feel reassured that we were not alone.

'Touch wood, I've never needed to support my partner with his mental wellbeing, but I now feel well-equipped to look out for any signs of difficulties. I also know how to ask him the right questions and provide signposting to specialist help, should the need arise."

Feedback from the majority of the attendees of the face-toface delivery of the new FiT course rated their experience as very good, and 100 per cent said it improved their general understanding of wellbeing and positive mental health. Participants said they had learned "how stress and anxiety affects people differently" and "how to be aware of the signs".

The expansion of the course to civilian RAF support workers and volunteers is being made possible by funding and practical support provided by aerospace and defence companies Boeing, Leonardo and MBDA.

For more information about the RAF Association's Finding it Tough? training, and to book a place on the course, visit: findingittough.rafa.org.uk

Above: Liana Cunliffe, whose husband is an RAF Aircraft Technician, undertook the RAF Association's Finding it Tough? training. © Liana Cunliffe

Good cheer for the whole year

Employees from Verizon handwrote 500 Christmas cards to RAF veterans in December. In the second year of the project, 50 of its London and Reading employees sent the greetings to the RAF Association Connections for Life beneficiaries. At Christmas 2021 they had sent out 250 cards. In 2021 one beneficiary was so delighted he rang to say thank you and to ask where he could send a return Christmas message.

Verizon, is a leading global technology company that supplies enterprise networking, security, 5G and edge computing, and delivers agile technology platforms to enable the connected enterprise. It supported the RAF Association throughout 2022. In April 40 volunteers took part in the Founders' Day Outreach project; Verizon advertises the RAF Association's Connections for Life project to all their employees; it supports the Association's Information

Technology team with advice and projects; and a number of Verizon employees took part in RAFARides 2022. For Christmas 2023, the

company has already committed to sending out 750 Christmas messages to veterans.

Right: Some of the 50 Verizon employees who wrote and signed Christmas cards for **RAF** Association beneficiaries in 2022.





Often feel fatigued? Try magnesium

Feeling tired and don't know why? You're not alone. According to a recent study, less than half of us consume our recommended daily amount of magnesium, a mineral that helps turn the food we eat into energy.

Best known for helping to reduce tiredness and fatigue, magnesium is also vital for our health.

Deficiency can cause mood swings, migraines, eye twitches and muscle cramps.

If you have low magnesium levels, you are also less likely to get a good night's sleep.

Magnesium is present in foods such as black beans, bananas and pumpkin seeds, but to get the benefits we need to absorb it into our bodies.

One way to ensure we consume a consistent level of magnesium is by taking a daily supplement - but not all supplements are equal.

Your body's ability to absorb the magnesium depends on the way that the supplement

'Most supplements use magnesium oxide - it is the most common form, as it has a high concentration of magnesium but it's not easily released into the body,' explains Dr Miriam Ferrer PhD, head of product development at FutureYou Cambridge.

'Taking more magnesium to try and make up for the problem isn't the best approach, as too much can cause an upset stomach so we created Magnesium+

using magnesium lactate which is twice as absorbable as a standard magnesium oxide supplement. This means you need much less per capsule to deliver the same amount, making it a much more efficient way to take this essential mineral.'

Reviews gathered on independent website Trustpilot speak of its effectiveness. 'It gives your body a magnesium boost without upsetting your diaestive system,' writes Robert.

And Nicole, 57, says: 'I



genuinely started to feel different within a couple of weeks. I started to feel much more perky – that's the best word to describe it.

'I feel like I've got more energy and more desire to do stuff. I've taken them religiously ever since.'

Free MAGNESIUM for the over 50s

Leading Cambridge company to offer scientifically proven energy range supplements for free.

*Just pay £1.50 postage

FutureYou Cambridge, a nutraceutical company known for its well-researched nutritional supplements, is giving away packs of its flagship energy product to new customers.

The offer is aimed at helpina the over 50s, who commonly suffer with low energy and fatigue, but is open to people of all ages. It comes after the Cambridge firm received a flurry of positive reviews for its best-selling energy product on Trustpilot, the independent

online review platform.

'I am a woman of 74, and a few months ago I realised that I

"Within two weeks I was a different woman, with energy to spare"

had no energy at all. I put it down to my age, but it was really impacting on my life in so many ways. My husband read an ad for Magnesium+ and I thought I would give it a try. Within two weeks I was a different woman, with energy



to spare,' says Anne.

Adam Cleevely, FutureYou Cambridge's CEO, explains the thinking behind the offer: 'After receiving so much positive feedback on Magnesium+, our team is confident that people will love it within their first pack.

'So we've decided to offer that first pack for free, because our team is excited to spread the word about Magnesium+ with as many people as possible as excited as our customers. who have been leaving such amazing reviews.'

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR FREE PACK

To claim your free 28 day Magnesium+ subscription trial pack worth £11.50, visit

FutureYouOffers.co.uk or freephone

0800 808 5740 quoting code

MGF634

Your first box is free (just pay £1.50 postage) and you will be enrolled into a flexible subscription costing £11.50 every 28 days, which you can cancel at any time, without obligation.





Letterbox



100% satisfaction, guaranteed



Award-winning Customer Care





Housing formally opened at Rothbury

Lady Wigston, wife of the Chief of the Air Staff, and Association President Air Marshal Sir Baz North were guests of honour at an opening ceremony held at the RAF Association's Rothbury House in early October. The event celebrated the completion of the first phase of an extensive refurbishment project that will ultimately create 26 apartments for members of the RAF veteran community.

Residents are now moving into the first 16 apartments at the Northumberland site.

Members of the public, branches, business leaders and charitable trusts partnered with RAF Association members across the UK to donate the £500,000 needed for the conversion.

The RAF Association's Director of Welfare and Wellbeing, Rory O'Connor, said he was thrilled the charity was able to respond to an overwhelming need for more good quality, affordable retirement accommodation for veterans.

He said: "We understand the detrimental impact that inadequate accommodation, loneliness and isolation can have on our community's wellbeing, particularly among older veterans.

"Using the Association's many years' experience of running retirement complexes, we can now offer more accommodation to provide people with a safe environment where they can live independently for longer, surrounded by a community of likeminded people."

Among the first residents to move in was 86-year-old-widower David Bryan, who, after the death of his wife, Anne, in February 2022, had felt overwhelming concern about facing the future alone.

David, who served in the RAF for five years from the age of 18, became Anne's full-time carer after she was diagnosed with vascular dementia seven years ago.

He said: "As the dementia progressed, and Anne's needs became more demanding, the situation became more and more stressful."

Having devoted all of his time and energy to caring for Anne, to whom he had been married for 55 years, David lost touch with many of their friends. After Anne's funeral, David, then living in Bradford, was overcome by grief and loneliness as he contemplated life on his own.

"I wondered what on earth I was going to do," he said. "I thought about moving to a care home, but decided I would rather take my own life than lose my independence."





All © John Millard 2022.





Fortunately, David heard about the opening of Rothbury House and decided to apply for an apartment.

He said: "Now I'm here, I realise that I couldn't exist without Rothbury. The staff are marvellous – lovely, kind and helpful.

"Living in this community is giving me the company I need, and the RAF connection means there's always something to

With just a few of the first phase apartments still vacant, would-be tenants are being urged to contact the Association as soon as possible. RAF veterans, their spouses, widows or widowers in any part of the UK who are looking for independent living accommodation with an on-site scheme manager are welcome to apply.

Rothbury House shares a site with existing RAF Association retirement accommodation at Lord Tedder and Malcolm Courts. All of the site's residents share communal facilities including a dining room, lounges and extensive gardens. Daily meals are prepared by an on-site chef.

The charity also runs retirement accommodation in Leicestershire, West Sussex and southern Scotland. For more information about all of the RAF Association's accommodation, and any vacancies, visit:

rafa.org.uk/retirement or call 0800 018 2361.

Record breakers

RAFATRAD Ltd, the trading company that runs the RAF Association's online shop, reported record sales figures in October and November.

The pandemic and the resulting cancellation of air shows meant RAFATRAD has endured a challenging few years. However, the decision was taken to invest in its online operations, including moving to a new website in September 2021. The results are now clear to see. Website turnover from October 2018 (pre-COVID-19) to October 2022 has grown by almost 800% and a record-breaking number of parcels have been shipped.

Daniel Greaves, Head of Retail at RAFATRAD Ltd said: "Thank you to everyone who has been buying from us for Remembrance, Christmas, birthdays and other special occasions. It makes a huge difference and helps us raise funds for the RAF Association's critical welfare work. Thank you to





Left to right: The top seller - more than 1,100 of this poppy badge with the RAF emblem in the centre were sold in 2022. Second place for 2022 sales goes to the veteran poppy badge. The third most sold was the poppy with the Lancaster bomber in the centre. All @ RAFATRAD Ltd.

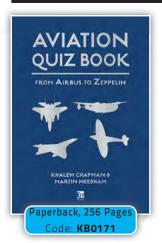
all of my team for their hard work, not only for achieving such impressive volumes of sales but also for fulfilling the orders to such a high level of service. With the significant growth of our online operations and the return of air shows, we're very much looking forward to a successful 2023."

100 per cent of profits from sales on rafatrad.co.uk go the RAF Association to help the RAF community.

10% OFF **ALL KEY BOOKS** with discount code **AIRMAIL10**

MAIL ORDER

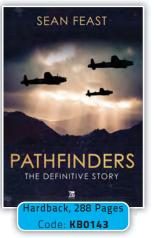
AVIATION QUIZ BOOK



Test your knowledge with this quiz book covering all aspects of military, commercial and historic aviation. Written by two highly experienced aviation journalists, it will test skills of both the novice plane lover and the tenured enthusiast through tailored questions that vary in difficulty to suit all those with a passion for aviation.



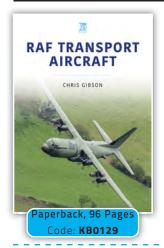
PATHFINDERS



Pathfinders is a new history of Bomber Command's corps d'elite and the men who led the greatest striking force ever known. The story explores the genesis of Pathfinder Force (PFF), from its initial inception and less-than-spectacular start to its development as a precision instrument that gave the razor edge to the RAF bomber offensive.



RAF TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

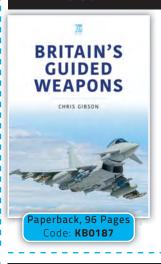


Modern Military Aircraft Series, Vol 6

This book describes the evolution of the aircraft that provided the airlift capacity for Britain's armed forces wherever they served, and as the 2021 Operation Pitting showed, transport aircraft are still vital.



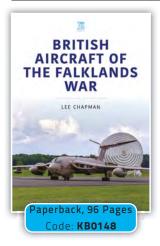
BRITAIN'S GUIDED WEAPONS



Britain has been at the forefront of weapons technology since the industrial revolution began and, with the Brennan wire-guided torpedo, pioneered guided weapons.

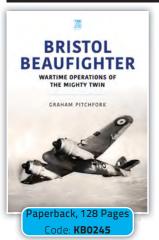


BRITISH AIRCRAFT OF THE FALKLANDS WAR



With over 150 high-quality images, this book features an informative history of the significant British aircraft types in service with the Royal Navy, RAF and Army Air Corps during the conflict.

BRISTOL BEAUFIGHTER



Historic Military Aircraft Series, Vol. 22

Over the jungles of Burma and the South-West Pacific, it became the scourge of the Japanese, as RAF and RAAF squadrons attacked the enemy's supply lines on land and at sea.

shop.keypublishing.com/books

Or call UK: 01780 480404 - Overseas: +44 1780 480404

RANGE OF BOOKS, VISIT **OUR SHOP**



Awards after club rises like phoenix

The RAF Association Banbury Branch Club won a national award and was nominated for two others in the prestigious Club Mirror Awards 2022.

Known as Newland House Club, Banbury Club won the Club Mirror Turnaround Club of the Year award. Its two other nominations were for Business Initiative of the Year and Charity Club of the Year.

During the pandemic the branch president and trustees had inherited a club business that was failing and arguably, had already failed. The membership had dwindled to below 60, the building and its rooms were desperately in need of some TLC and there was much legislation and licencing that had been allowed to lapse. It was facing imminent closure.

President Chris Adams, said: "Newland House Club was in a sorry state, but with the dedication and commitment of some truly wonderful people, the phoenix rose from the flames and we were able to reopen our doors and provide a safe and welcoming environment for veterans, where comradeship and friendship could be nurtured in a spirit of joint understanding."

The new branch and club committees felt that the Association in Banbury should aspire to high objectives and develop, from scratch, a professional physical presence that could also be used during the day as a safe space for welfare drop-ins for the military family, other veteran charities and members of the public.

Chris Adams continues: "We are now able to offer a oncea-month Sunday carvery and the Banbury Armed Forces Breakfast Club will be migrating to Newland House in early 2023. We have recently formed ladies and men's darts teams and home fixtures have become very well supported events. Next year, we will also be establishing Aunt Sally Teams who will play home matches in the garden. [Aunt Sally is a traditional regional pub garden game - Ed].

The club is now open six nights a week, as well as during the day when needed or required by the local community for welfare purposes - and does teas and coffees and 'small food' as well as the bar. The garden has also been brought back

The first floor of Newland House has been fully refurbished as The Guy Gibson Lounge. This space is now regularly used by charity and community organisations as a business space away from the regular offices. Local youth cadet organisations already use the space for award ceremonies, dinner nights etc.

The club now also hosts monthly tri-service welfare clinics with the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Department for Work and Pensions and military support organisations such as the Royal British Legion and SSAFA-The Armed Forces Charity.

England and Wales Census findings

Almost 1 in 25 adults in England and Wales was a veteran of the UK armed forces at the time of Census 2021, new data shows.

For the first time – in support of the Armed Forces Covenant – the Office for National Statistics (ONS) collected census information on the veterans' population who have either previously served in the regular forces, reserve forces, or both.

The statistics, released in early November, show 1.85 million people in England and Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces (3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over), with more than three-quarters of those saying they had previously served in the regular forces.

The local authorities with the highest proportion of veterans include Gosport (12.5%), North Kesteven (10.2%) and Richmondshire (9.5%) in England, and Conwy (5.9%)

"In the coming months we will learn even more about our veterans as more census data are released, data which will have a huge impact on service personnel, veterans and their families," National Statistician Sir Ian Diamond said. "Perhaps unsurprisingly a large proportion of our veterans live or are located near military establishments, suggesting they tend to stay in the same areas after they have left service.

Within England, the regions with the highest proportion of veterans were the South West (5.6%, 265,000 people) and the North East (5.0%, 109,000 people).

A 2021 Census special release on armed forces populations in Northern Ireland is planned for summer 2023. The 2022 Scotland Census also asked about previous

armed forces service: results are currently being compiled. For more detailed information on the England and Wales armed forces veterans' data visit rafa.org.uk/ eng&wal_census





Above and right: The inaugural Sunday carvery. Activities at the club now include social events, food and drinks, veterans' breakfast clubs, welfare drop in sessions and garden games. © RAFA Banbury Club.



Our new holiday home is now available for breaks all year round.

Why not apply to stay in our new holiday home for serving RAF personnel and RAF veterans? Situated only a 15-minute walk from the traditional seaside town of Bridlington.

It's the ideal destination to visit for a holiday with kids or for some peace and quiet.

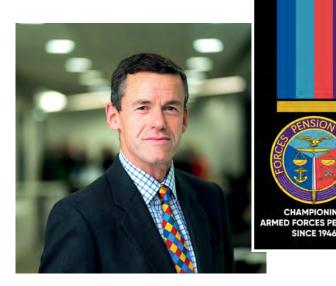
The four-bedroom chalet bungalow is suitable for wheelchair access, along with a disabled friendly bathroom. A real home from home, with everything you need for a memorable holiday.

To find out more and apply, visit: rafbf.org/thefolly

CALL 0300 102 1919









Left: Major General Neil Marshall, Chief **Executive Officer of** The Forces Pension **Society** © Forces Pension Right: Looking after your service pension. @ MOD/Crown

RAF pensions latest: the McCloud ruling

Major General Neil Marshall, Chief Executive Officer of the Forces Pension Society provides some helpful answers to the key questions being asked about the McCloud Case.

What is the McCloud Case and who is affected?

In late 2018 an age discrimination ruling was made in the courts against Public Sector Pension Schemes introduced in 2015. This resulted in the government having to find a remedy for all those affected, namely all personnel in service both on or before 31 March 2012 and on or after 1 April 2015 including service leavers.

What was government's decision and how might it impact me?

Government considered two options and chose the one that we at the Forces Pension Society advocated as being in the best interests of the Armed Forces community. It has the unlikely title "Deferred Choice Underpin" and it means that when benefits become payable, all those impacted will be able to choose between the benefits of their legacy scheme (AFPS 75 or 05) or the reformed pension scheme (AFPS 15) for the remedy period of 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022.

The great advantage of this option is that it allows you to make an informed decision based on actual pension benefits earned.

How will I make a decision when the time comes?

You will need to assess the pros and cons of the alternatives and judge which is best for you, based on your and your family's needs at that time. This could involve a complex calculation – and depending on your circumstances may require guidance from our Forces Pensions Consultants.

When will I need to deal with this?

Right now there is no need for you to take any action – though you might want to consider joining the Forces Pension Society in order to be kept fully informed step-by-step as more details become clear.

It will likely be several months until the necessary legislation has been enacted. If you have already left the Armed Forces or are in resettlement by the time the process is in place, you will be contacted by Ministry of Defence/Veterans UK and provided with the information you will need.

If you would like further information about the Society's work and how to become a member, please visit: forcespensions ociety.org.

Speaking truth unto power

The RAF Families Federation has started a new RAF Community Forum to boost its survey data with spoken evidence from serving personnel and their families. It will be made up of RAF personnel (Regular and Reservists) and family members, and will include people from a diverse range of backgrounds. It also includes people in overseas locations.

The first forum came together in early December to discuss the impact of the cost of living crisis on RAF personnel and their families. The anonymous information from the discussion is being fed into a presentation to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

Generally, forum members will be providing direct evidence on life in the RAF/Armed Forces community. Each forum will gather honest, unattributable feedback which the RAF Families Federation will present to the Royal Air Force, government ministers and other organisations.

Forum members might be a partner of someone serving and have a range of views on the opportunities and challenges of service life - or may be an aviator looking to add evidence and views to change their service experience for the better.

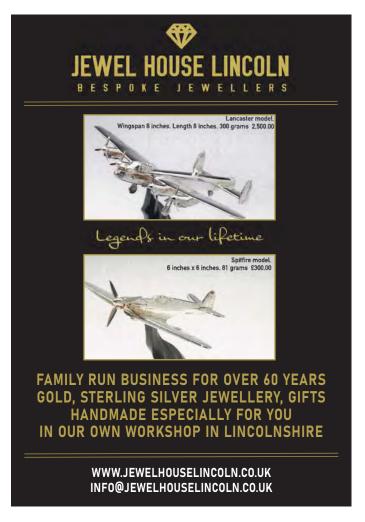
The RAF Families Federation was set up to use its influence to enact positive change on behalf of the RAF community. Getting this kind of information from the forums is extremely valuable, and adds to the data from surveys in a very vivid way. Being a member also offers a great opportunity to add a volunteering line on a CV – or an additional piece of voluntary work for an SJAR (Servicepersons' Joint Appraisal Report).

Subjects for future forums could include: accommodation; access to healthcare and additional needs; education and childcare; partner employment;

transition; serving-specific themes (ie dual serving couples).

New members from the serving community are always welcome and are invited to contact the **RAF** Families Federation Communications Manager, caroline. woodward@raf-ff.org.uk in the first instance.







APRIL - JUNE ISSUE

Copy Deadline:
Thursday 16th March 2023

Travel Insurance with No Age Limits!

Peace of mind for your next holiday

- **Experts in Cover for Medical Conditions**
- **▼** Cover for Cruise Holidays
- **▼** Cover for Covid-19

Call us FREE for an instant quote - It's easy!

0808 196 2120

Friendly UK based team waiting to help vo





goodtogoinsurance.com





Goodtogoinsurance.com is a trading name of Ancile Insurance Group Limited. Authorised & Regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority - No. 471641.

*Discount applies to base premium only and not to any medical screening premiums or optional extras. Discount valid until 30 June 2023.

Three RAFALOs of the Year

The Association was not able to celebrate in person with the RAF Association Liaison Officers of the year for 2019, 2020 and 2021 because of lockdowns. But we made up for it at Conference 2022, recognising all three at once.

The Wally Marriott Trophy is awarded annually to the RAFALO judged to have made an outstanding contribution to the Association. Over the past three years, the following have been recognised for their dedication to the Association, and unstinting service as RAFALOs – Warrant Officer Michelle-Rees Martin, Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones and Flight Lieutenant Simon Arnett.

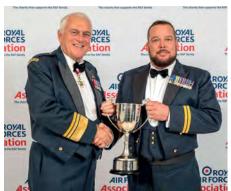
While at RAF College Cranwell, our 2019 RAFALO of the year, Warrant Officer Michelle Rees-Martin, was a key member of the highly successful RAFALO team. Among myriad achievements, the team raised £60,000 for the Association. Michelle is now one of the RAF Association's trustees, as a member of Council, and is continuing to make a hugely valuable contribution to the charity.

Our 2020 winner has been a RAFALO since 1996. Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones's considerable drive, commitment and achievements were recognised in a previous Air Mail [January

Our 2021 winner has been a longstanding RAFALO who has led an extremely effective committee during his time on his station. Flight Lieutenant Simon Arnett maintained excellent links to many local branches. He enthusiastically stepped up to be chairman designate to support his local branch and epitomises all that is great about the Association and its strong bond with the RAF, via the RAFALO Network.

Sharing is good. From left to right RAFALOs of the year for 2019, 2020 and 2021 - Warrant Officer Michelle Rees-Martin, Flight Lieutenant Steve Jones and Flight Lieutenant Simon Arnett. Each posed with President of the Association Air Marshal Sir Baz North and the Wally Marriott Trophy. © Heidi Burton







100th birthdays

Richard Froom

Richard 'Dick' Froom celebrated his 100th birthday in September, alongside his family and fellow members of Mid-Somerset Branch. Richard joined the RAF after his elder brother was killed in 1940 during a flying accident in France.

After initial flying training, in June 1944 Richard married Florence Turner who was serving in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. The following day he was posted to 302 Ferry Training Unit in Oban, Scotland, as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. In July he was part of the crew delivering a Catalina flying boat to Madras via Gibraltar and the Middle East. On return to the UK he was posted to RAF Chivenor and flew with Coastal

> Command's 14 Squadron on Wellingtons until the Richard end of the war. Froom During his birthday

lunch the branch presented Richard with a framed and dedicated photograph of a Catalina, which brought back many powerful memories. Members of today's 14 Squadron had earlier presented Richard with a replica of their current

aircraft, the Beechcraft Shadow, and continue to keep in touch with their oldest veteran.

Nancy Kay

Nancy Kay was born in Birmingham in September 1922. When World War Two began she was a 17-year-old secretary. Knowing she would be conscripted, and wanting to learn how to drive, Nancy volunteered as a driver. She was based on the coast and drove officers from Group Command to different air bases.



Nancy Kay

After the war, Nancy attended a reunion in London for exservice personnel. It was here that she met David Kay who had served as a pilot but had been captured and spent some time in a prisoner of war camp.

They married and settled in London where David worked in insurance. Eventually, they bought a house in the suburbs where they brought up their two sons. When David retired they moved to Hampshire and in the early 1980s joined Romsey Branch. Nancy has fond memories of those days, and of hosting the branch's coffee mornings and annual barbecue.

A long-time supporter of the Association, Nancy is a valued member – and Life Vice President – of Romsey Branch.





Anglesey Branch

In August the branch was invited to participate in the RAF Valley Families Day. Chairman Jack Abbot, Edwina Evans and her family successfully raised £789. Recently Edwina lost her husband Ivor, a stalwart of the branch, but vowed to carry on raising money for the Association in his memory.

Angus Branch

The standard of the Association's long-closed Arbroath and Montrose Branch recently came into the possession of Angus Branch, who laid it up at the Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre during a special ceremony in August. The standard will be displayed in the remembrance area of the heritage centre along with a plague provided by Angus Branch. As the centre was conducting an open day at the time, the parade and ceremony were witnessed and enjoyed by many members of the public from Montrose, Angus and further afield.

Ayr and Prestwick Branch

The branch held its annual Battle of Britain service in September at the Prestwick town memorial before a sizeable crowd. It was attended by numerous dignitaries including the Polish Consul General for Scotland, who all spent time in conversation with 104-year-old branch member Harry Richardson DFC. Following the service, dignitaries retired to the grounds of the branch club where a short service was held to remember those Polish pilots who gave their lives during the Battle of Britain.

Balderton Branch

In August branch members enjoyed socialising during an evening jazz cruise on the River Trent aboard the MV Sonning. Soon after it was back to work, with members staffing a stall at the RAF Air Cadets' Air and Space Camp at RAF Syerston.

Barnstaple and North Devon Branch

The branch attended a service for the dedication of a memorial stone commemorating the victims of a fatal air crash. Family members of those in the crash and a representative of the RAF were also in attendance.

Beccles Branch

In September the branch's Wings Appeal collection in Exchange Square was followed by an annual Battle of Britain Sunday service to commemorate those lost in the battle. The event was attended by a large number of dignitaries, veterans and cadets from local RAF Air Cadet squadrons. A march through the town of Beccles was suspended as a mark of respect for the mourning period of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Birkenhead Branch

Branch members celebrated the 75th anniversary of the branch in October. The event was attended by the Mayor of Wirral, and the branch's standard – with new gold and platinum tassel to denote 75 years of existence – was paraded before the membership. The evening then continued with food, drink and live music to complete the celebrations.

Bognor Regis Branch

With a number of veterans from the Royal Green Jackets now meeting at the branch club, Chairman Cliff Mewett gave them a warm welcome by officially mounting their regiment's shield in the bar. The ceremony took place during the club's 'Battle of Trafalgar' tri-service veterans' lunch in October, hosted by the resident Royal Naval Association Branch.

Bridport and Lyme Regis RMG

Members Bill Davies, Knocker White and Jon Tomlin raised funds at a local music event in Bridport town square. The event included a bric-a-brac stall, and used a 1940s Willys jeep – loaned from a local supporter – to draw the crowd. More than £500 was raised for the Wings Appeal. In September, Jon Tomlin also created an information display for the Registered Members' Group's Battle of Britain service.

Bristol Branch

Great use is being made of the improved facilities provided by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's grant of £35,000. In August the branch had its 20th veterans' lunch, which veterans and widows of all the services attend on the second Wednesday of the month. The recent change of name from City of Bristol Branch to Bristol Branch also saw the dedication of a new standard.

Caduceus Branch

The first RAF Medical Services dinner since lockdown took place in Swindon in October with 130 attendees. The guest speaker was Simon Harmer, Combat Medical Technician for the British Army who lost both legs in an IED blast in Afghanistan. The event was a great fundraiser for the branch, with the main prize for the raffle being the oil painting 'The Quiet Battle', donated by the artist Donald Macdonald.

Calne and District Branch

The branch collected for the Wings Appeal at the annual Calne Motorcycle Meet, with thousands of motorcyclists in attendance. Over £450 was raised by a lucky dip, a children's game and the sale of Wings items. This year a card reader was used for the first time, which was most helpful in processing sales.



Carlisle and District Branch

All future instructions and messages to branch members will now be sent by email. If there are any members who still wish to receive a paper message, could they please contact Theresa Hewitt at: ATC Building, 1862 Sgn, Cringledyke Street, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 4OB.

Chelmsford Branch

The branch club continues to host meetings of The Parachute Regimental Association and the National Service (RAF) Association, and was recently visited by The Worshipful Mayor and Mayoress of Chelmsford. The branch is also on a drive to encourage locals to sample the delights of the club, which is home to a ferocious table tennis team.

Downham Market Branch

Supported by the King's Lynn Branch, members enjoyed a visit to the Shuttleworth Trust in September. The branch also raised £1,151 for the Wings Appeal Collection in September, and held a parade to lay wreaths at the Downham Market War Memorial.

Durlsey and South Gloucestershire Branch

The branch celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special lunch, at which they awarded long service badges to various members. Other members have been raising money for the Wings Appeal by wingwalking, parachute jumping and organising golf tournaments in addition to the usual street collections.

Formby Branch

In October branch officers attended 1128 (Crosby) RAF Air Cadets' annual awards evening. June Sefton and Alan Smith presented a newly-inaugurated shield and the prize of an outdoor clothing voucher to the most improved cadet. The first recipient of the award was Cadet Imogen Batty, who was both surprised and elated to be chosen. Formby Branch is committed to supporting and fostering good relations with six local RAF Air Cadet squadrons.

Gloucester Branch

A Battle of Britain service was held at St John the Evangelist Church, near the old RAF Innsworth, with many former RAF personnel and branch members attending. The branch standard was paraded and a collection held for the Wings Appeal. In September the branch also adopted 2419 (Quedgeley) Squadron RAF Air Cadets. These cadets assisted with the Battle of Britain collections, gave readings at the service and had previously provided a guard of honour for the laying up of the old branch standard at the church.

Haywards Heath and Mid-Sussex Branch

Bob Cameron and Bob Jacobs laid a wreath on Battle of Britain Day in September at Muster Green in Haywards Heath.

Huntingdon and District Branch

To mark its 75th anniversary, the branch laid-up its old standard at St Mary Magdalene Church in Brampton. The new standard, with gold and platinum tassel, was then dedicated by Reverend (Squadron Leader) Dawn Colley, Chaplain at RAF Wyton.

Leigh Branch

In August the branch celebrated its 75th anniversary. Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Bairsto, Area President, presented the tassel for the branch standard, alongside the Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester and Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester. A Hurricane flypast also took place and multiple RAF Air Cadet squadrons attended alongside other dignitaries.

Letchworth, Hitchin and District Branch

The branch was honoured to announce the appointment of Lord Hugh Trenchard as its Honorary President. Lord Trenchard served in the British Army from 1972 – 1980 as a Captain in the 4th Battalion, the Royal Green Jackets. In 2006, he became Honorary Air Commodore of 600 (City of London) Squadron RAuxAF. He has also been a loyal supporter of the branch for many years, most recently attending its services to mark the 100th anniversary of the RAF in 2018. Lord Trenchard is the grandson of the Marshal of the Royal Air Force Hugh Montague Trenchard – often referred to as the father of the Royal Air Force.

Mid-Somerset Branch

The branch returned to the Wells Golf Club for a late summer lunch in September. This was a special event for a number of reasons. In addition to being the 100th birthday of branch member Richard Froom (see page 51), it was also an opportunity for Area Councillor Roy Lobley to present the Area Branch Efficiency Cup and certificate for 2021 to the Branch Chairman John Hawkins. The Chairman reciprocated by presenting Roy with an inscribed goblet to mark his retirement from Area Council.

Moray Branch

2022 saw many Wings Appeal collection events take place in such places as local supermarkets, the annual Lossiemouth Sea Festival and many collection tins around Moray, increasing the 2021 total of £2,000 by several hundred pounds. The branch has also been working to increase membership and encourage lapsed members to attend meetings and events by holding them at RAF Lossiemouth and organising a catered social event in Elgin.

Branch News





A wreath was also laid at the new Nimrod Memorial located at Morayvia which remembers those lost in Nimrod crashes in Afghanistan, Toronto and Kinloss.

was able to raise a total of £2,652 for the 2022 appeal; roughly £1,000 more than in 2021. This was mainly due to the efforts of new members.

Newcastle and Gateshead Branch

The branch held its annual Battle of Britain ceremony in St Georges' Church, with guests including the Sheriff of Newcastle, Wing Commander Andy Foy (Officer Commanding 20 Squadron), personnel from RAF Boulmer, RAF veterans and RAF Air Cadets. A ceremony was also held in St Edmunds Church to lay up the standard of the former Gateshead Branch and to dedicate the new standard of the combined Newcastle and Gateshead Branch.

North Walsham Branch

A Battle of Britain service saw the branch laying a wreath at North Walsham Church. This was special as it marked a return to the church where the branch's original standard is laid up. Lunches and stall collections have also helped raise funds for the Wings Appeal, with membership application forms also passed out at the latter.

Romsey Branch

In September the branch held its annual Battle of Britain service, which was well attended by local dignitaries, branch members and cadets of 1391 (Romsey) Squadron RAF Air Cadets. October also saw the branch chair and membership secretary present several of the awards at the squadron's prize giving evening. In return, the branch was presented with a plague marking the branch's 75th anniversary and the continuing good relationship between the branch and squadron. Another significant milestone was a party to celebrate the 100th birthday of Life Vice-President Nancy Kay (see page 51).

Ryedale Branch

The branch was pleased to be invited to Whitby Armed Forces Day at Eden Camp Modern History Museum, and the Helmsley Walled Garden. Fundraising at these events, among others, helped the branch to raise over £2,300 for the 2022 Wings Appeal. Branch Standard Bearers were also present at a number of remembrance events and funerals.

Sheringham & District Branch

A Wings Appeal collection day in September at Sheringham, Holt and Cromer saw members and their families collect almost £750. This was aided by a display of model aircraft, collections at Morrisons supermarket in Cromer and the cadets of 1895 (Cromer) Squadron, who collected £232 of the total. As a result, the branch

Sud-Ouest Branch

Lunches were organised in both Bordeaux and north Charente Maritime where members reminisced about their memories of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and took time to remember aircrew who fought in the Battle of Britain. The 2021 Battle of Britain ceremony took place under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, with members from both Sud-Ouest and Île-de-France branches alongside staff from the British Embassy.

Wantage and Oxford Branch

In August the branch attended the RAF Benson Families Day, where £600 was raised for the Wings Appeal. In October it joined Rugby Branch for a tour of RAF Benson, before enjoying a VIP lunch. Several Wings Appeal collections and a coffee morning were also held.

York Branch

Members of York Branch attended a ceremony in September at the unveiling of a memorial in Holtby village to mark the 70th anniversary of the loss of a Halifax bomber which crashed nearby. The event was organised by Wing Commander Greg Smith. A street collection was also held that same month which raised just under £2,000, bringing the branch's 2022 total to £15,450. To help reduce costs of heating the branch club, and to improve comfort for members, secondary glazing was fitted to all main windows in October. A Hallowe'en themed dining-in night was also held later that month.

We welcome all submissions for Branch News, preferably by email to BranchNews@rafa.org.uk. Word count should be no more than 100 words. You may submit accompanying photographs, but only one will be used. If sent via email, please attach photos as a separate image file and at a size of at least 1MB and 300dpi. Send postal submissions to the not be published. Submission does not guarantee inclusion and where there are too many reports for an issue, the editor reserves the right to edit. Where the number of submissions exceeds the space available, preference will be given to news over photographs. Only submissions made by email will be acknowledged before publication. The deadline for inclusion in the next Branch News is 3 February 2023.



NEWS FROM THE RAF

Space race

The rocket for the first satellite to be launched from UK soil arrived in Cornwall after travelling from California, 99 Squadron used a Globemaster C-17 to transport Virgin Orbit's 'LauncherOne' rocket to Spaceport Cornwall, after it had been built by Richard Branson's company in the United States. It will be fitted under the Virgin Orbit Boeing 747 for a planned January launch. The Orbit crew included Squadron Leader Mathew 'Stanny' Stannard, an

Exercise Baltic Striker saw RAF Typhoons attack targets on the ground and at sea while Swedish aircraft provided protection from threats in the air. Swedish ground units also attacked. © MOD/Crown



RAF test pilot currently working with the company. This will be the first orbital rocket launch from British soil, and the first British-led rocket launch since 1979.

Astra Awards

The Royal Air Force celebrated the innovative ideas and creativity of the whole force at the 2022 Astra Awards in October. Hundreds gathered at the RAF Museum for an evening of sharing ideas and celebrating achievements. Astra has had many successes in the past year and the awards recognised some of the most inspirational people, ingenious ideas, and the incredible impact they've had on operations in the UK and overseas.





Among the winners was Corporal Reed of RAF Lossiemouth for her work on Project FOSTER. She won The People's Choice Award for developing a fully supported and insured fostering scheme for pet dogs in the service community. It reduces the additional stress and costs that can come when needing dog care during difficult periods such as deployments and

courses. The project improves life for people who are serving, particularly those based in remote locations.

RAF Scampton closure

A Lancaster bomber was flown over Lincolnshire to celebrate the heritage of RAF Scampton as the station closed after 106 years of operations. Dozens of personnel paraded as part of a series of events marking the event.

The Dambusters' World War Two raids were launched from the station, and it is the only one in the country to have earned three Victoria Cross awards. It was also home to nuclear weaponry in the late 1950s and the Vulcan Bomber Force during the Cold War. After more than two decades occupying a spot at Scampton, The Red Arrows have moved to RAF Waddington.

A dedication service was held at Scampton Church, where a stained-glass window commemorating the station has been installed. The artist, Claire Williamson, has been commissioned to create another window dedicated to the Dambusters, to mark their 80th anniversary next year.

In sport

Three RAF rugby union players were selected to represent their home nations at the Rugby World Cup in November. Forward Amy Cokayne, who has 64 England caps, played for the England squad in New Zealand. Selected for Scotland was Amy's RAF colleague and Harlequins teammate, Sarah Bonar. It was Scotland's first

World Cup in 12 years. Another RAF star, Carys Williams-Morris, was selected for the Welsh squad.

In football the Royal Marines won the 2022 Combat Cup at RAF Cosford after they beat the RAF Regiment 3-0.

And in E-sports the RAF Reapers held their 'Switcharoo' tournament on Twitch in November. 13 teams participated. They were all serving forces, who have never played together before. The four winners were Hexillionaire, shiloh, Razer, and OjpT_EU.

Community engagement

6 Squadron and Voyager Logistics have been on joint exercise with the Royal Australian Air Force and joined their Australian colleagues' community outreach programmes. There were visits from India Air Force Cadets and a group of 60 cadets from the local Australian Air Force

deployed to Qatar to support the Qatar Emiri Air Force (QEAF) with forming its first Typhoon squadron. The sixmonth deployment known as 'Project Thariyat' has seen 200 personnel and eight Typhoon aircraft deploy. The Qatari Emiri Air Force oversaw air security for the World Cup, delivering the majority of operations. The UK's contribution will add expertise and capability, in part gained through the UK's Olympic experience in 2012.

elow: **Members of the RAF, on** Exercise Pitch Black, visited Project 21 in Darwin Australia as part of local community



Cadets Squadron were shown around a Typhoon by RAF pilots and engineers. Members of the public were also able to meet RAF aviators at an open day at Royal Australian Air Force Darwin and see both Typhoon and Voyager aircraft.

Meanwhile, RAF aviators have taken part in a Science Technology Engineering and Maths community engagement programme in Darwin. Visits were made to Essington School and to Project 21, a learning centre for young people with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities.

On operations

12 Squadron - the joint UK-Qatar Typhoon squadron - has

On exercise...

Force Protection specialists from the RAF have been put through their paces on a major European Air Group Force Protection exercise (Volcanex) in Belaium.

RAF Typhoon and Lightning jets have successfully conducted their largest ever mass firing of Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missiles. Across 10 days, pilots from eight different squadrons successfully launched a total of 53 missiles at target drones over the sea in the Hebrides Air Weapon Ranges.

Two RAF Eurofighter Typhoons from 6 Squadron at RAF Lossiemouth and two Swedish JAS-39 Gripens participated in Exercise Baltic Striker with the Swedish Air Force as part of the Joint Expeditionary Force in the vicinity of Ravlunda Range in southern Sweden.

Exercise Atlantic Thunder saw three RAF Typhoon jets, HMS Westminster, a Wildcat helicopter, a United States P-8 Poseidon, F-15Es Strike Eagles and USS Arleigh Burke use an array of high-powered weaponry for simulated attacks on the decommissioned frigate, USS Boone.

Exercise Cobra Warrior, the

RAF's capstone tactical training event, finished in September.

Battle of Britain

The Strongest Link Garden has been unveiled at London Biggin Hill Airport. The commemorative space was opened by Randolph Churchill, great grandson of Sir Winston Churchill, during a special event with veterans and their families. The garden and statue, designed by award winning designer John Everiss, features a sculpture of a young pilot looking up at the sky. Standing at four metres tall and constructed from 223 layers of laser cut stainless steel, the contemporary statue is a powerful and moving tribute to all those who have served and continue to serve in the military, regardless of their nationality. AM

a discount on subscriptions to the RAF's fortnightly publication RAF News. Call RAF News/Johnson Press on **01909 517 331** or email rafnews@johnsonpress. co.uk. You will need to give your RAF Association membership number to subscribe.





We've got you covered.

Forces Mutual Car Insurance isn't for everyone. If you look on price comparison websites, you won't find us. Why? Because our car insurance is exclusively for the Military family, which includes serving, retired/veteran Armed Forces, civilian staff and their families who are resident in the UK or British Forces Germany (BFG).



Buy online and you will receive a 10% discount*

Call 0151 363 5290 Visit forcesmutual.org/car or scan the QR code



Lines are open: Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm.

Forces Mutual Car Insurance is provided by Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Ltd.

*The 10% discount is available online only. It is applied to the basic premium when you buy a new car insurance policy. The discount is not available on optional extras and minimum premiums apply. The discount will be automatically applied to your quote. The offer applies to new car insurance policies purchased online. The discount can be withdrawn at any time and is provided by Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance Ltd.

PMGI Limited, trading as Forces Mutual is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Financial Services Register No. 114942. Registered in England & Wales No. 1073408. Registered office: 55 Gracechurch Street, London, EC3V ORL. For your security, all telephone calls are recorded and may be monitored.

ADV CI P 0064 0123

Culture Vultures



"War Games: Real Conflicts | Virtual Worlds | Extreme Entertainment"

Exhibition Imperial War Museum London Free with museum admission

Video games are now among our most popular forms of entertainment, with Britons spending more than £7 billion on gaming in 2020 alone.

Delving into one of today's most popular storytelling mediums, the Imperial War Museum (IWM) presents the UK's first exhibition to explore what video games can tell us about conflict.

Challenging perceptions of how video games interpret stories about war, it presents a selection of games which, over the last forty years, have reflected events from the First World War to the present. From first-person shooters – which present the game world through the protagonist's eyes and base their gameplay on immersive gunfights - to real-time strategy campaigns and titles which explore civilian and refugee experiences, the exhibition covers a variety of war games.

Showcasing immersive installations, never-before-displayed objects and perspectives from industry experts, War Games also includes a playable retro gaming zone and a programme of supporting events.

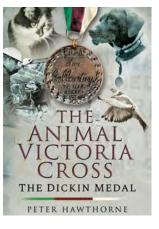
By displaying software used to train militaries and an Xbox 360 controller used to operate the camera of an unmanned aerial vehicle in Afghanistan and Iraq, the exhibition also explores how video game technology is being used to shape real wars today.

War can seem uniquely suited to exploration through gaming; the challenges of combat or command can both be powerfully evoked in gameplay, while war also offers a

natural setting both for competition and cooperation among players.

As visitors to the IWM's 'War Games' exhibition will see, video games allow today's audiences to interact with a hugely diverse range of experiences.

> This exhibition at the Imperial War Museum's London site ends on 28 May 2023.



"The Animal Victoria Cross"

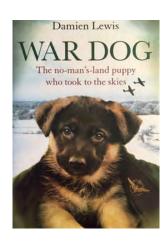
by Peter Hawthorne Pen & Sword Books RRP £12.99

Sixty-three animals have won the Dickin Medal, the highest award for animal bravery. Their inspiring stories are told, for the first time in one book: The Animal Victoria Cross.

Four types of animal have been honoured, dogs, horses, pigeons and one cat. Simon, the feline, is credited with saving an entire ship's crew. Canine breeds include Alsatians, Terriers, Collies and Spaniels. The majority of awards were related to war service and the conflicts include the Second World War, Korea, Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. The Al-Qaeda attack on the Twin Towers as well as the Blitz saw great courage exhibited by animals such as Rip, the dog who saved many lives.

Written by Peter Hawthorne, Head of History and Lecturer in Law at Stafford College, this delightful book will be treasured by animal lovers everywhere. It is ideal to dip into or read from cover to cover.

Air Mail readers can purchase this book by visiting: rafa.org.uk/animalvc



"War dog" by Damien Lewis Little, Brown Book Group RRP £8.99

Czech airman Robert Bozdech stumbled across a tiny German Shepherd after being shot down over noman's land. Unable to desert it, he took the dog and made his escape. In the months that followed the pair would save each other's lives countless times as they fled France and flew together with Bomber Command; the puppy - Antis - becoming the Squadron mascot along the way. Wounded in action, facing crash-landings and parachute bailouts, Antis was eventually grounded due to injury. Even then he refused to abandon his duty, waiting patiently beside the runway for his master's return.

By the end of the war Robert and Antis had become very British war heroes, and Antis was iustly awarded the Dickin Medal. Thrilling and deeply moving, their story will touch the heart of those who understand the bond that exists between one man and his doa.

See page 32 for more about this story. To buy the book: rafa.org.uk/wardog

"AN INSPIRATIONAL TRUE STORY OF AN **AMAZING** MAN WHO **DEFIED THE ODDS"** ORPHAN HIGH-FLYER DENIS ELLIOTT & PHILIP MARTIN

4.5 out of 5 stars on Amazon

FROM ORPHAN TO HIGH-FLYER

Flight Lieutenant Denis Elliott, a former WW2 RAF bomber pilot. captained American-built RAF B-24 Liberators out of India at the age of 20 against Japanese forces in Burma, Malaya and Thailand. He also flew Lancasters after the war out of Malta and Cornwall. After he almost died in 2018, his best friend and carer managed to convince him to record his incredible life story. The result is their book From Orphan to High-Flyer. Denis, in a raw and honest account, tells how he overcame a Victorian-style London orphanage

and an abusive foster father. He also talks about how the Air Defence Cadet Corps, Air Training Corps and RAF changed his life.

Denis's RAF service took him through Africa, the Middle East, the Far East, parts of Europe and the UK. In May 2021, many of the mysteries surrounding Denis' biological family were solved; much of this information has been included in the book.

TO FIND OUT MORE, GO TO: WWW.FROMORPHANTOHIGHFLYER.COM

MODEL SHOPS IN...

- Stroud Gloucester Bristol • Plymouth
- Cardiff Stonehouse



CALL US: 01453 377030

Email: info@anticsonline.uk

WHAT A SIZE!

This all new 1/24th kit is a must for any Spitfire fan! The Elegant and graceful to look at, the Spitfire's appearance masked the fact that this was a deadly fighting aeroplane and one which was

adaptable enough to undergo almost constant development throughout the wartime years.





BATTLE OF BRITAIN 75TH ANNIVERSARY

ZK349 GN-A, Flt. Lt. Ben Westoby-Brooks, RAFNo.29 (R) Squadron, Battle of Britain 75th Anniversary commemorative scheme, Typhoon Display Team, RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire, Summer 2015 As Britain prepared to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain in the early summer of 2015, the RAF were determined that

their tribute would be a particularly impressive one... RRP: £179.99





F-35A BEAST MODE

The new fantastic Tamiya F-35A Lightning II kit full of detail can be-assembled with one choice of the three ordnance patterns - stealth mode, air-to-air mode, and beast mod

RRP: £89.99



PACIFIC FIGHTER

The Flying Tigers of the 1st American Volunteer Group achieved incredible success against overwhelming odds in their robust but ageing Curtiss fighters, at a time when Japanese forces were advancing across vast areas of the Pacific region. RRP: £49.99

£29.95



THE MISSING MAN

On August 18, 1944 Horbaczewski led 12 aircraft over France at an airfield near Beauvais they encountered a large formation of Fw-190s. However, sometime during the melee he went missing and in 1947 his aircraft and body were found. He is credited with 16.5 kills and downing 4 V-1s.

RRP: £90.99

£79.95



Slitherlink

from the **RAF** Association Puzzle Book

an you navigate your way around the grid? To test your cognitive skills we bring you another challenging brain teaser from the RAF Association Puzzle Book.

If one puzzle isn't enough, you can buy a copy of the whole 256page book from rafa.org.uk/RAFApuzzle or on 0800 018 2361.

Buying direct from the Association helps raise funds for our welfare and wellbeing work with the RAF community.

Briefing:

Connect some of the dots to draw a single loop past every non-zero number, using only horizontal and vertical lines. The loop must pass by each given clue the stated number of times. So for example, three sides of a '3' clue must be visited by the loop.

Solutions to the puzzle are on page 66.



Missi	on 1						
2	1	2	1	1	2	3	3
1	2		2	•		_	1
2	2			3	_	3	3
3	1	0	2		2	_	
		2		1	3	1	3
0	2		0			3	2
2			-	1	_	1	2
3	1	1	2	3	2	2	2
_		- '	- '			-	

Mission	2						
3 3 1 1 1 3 1	3 3 0 2 3 2	3 1	3 1 2	3	3		3 3 3 2
3	2 3	.2	3	2 2 2	2		3 3 2
1 2	0 2 2	3 2	2	1	1 2	3	1

About the author: Described as "The king of puzzles" Dr Gareth Moore has produced more than 100 puzzle and brain-training books for children and adults, including The Mindfulness Puzzle Book, The Mammoth Book of New Sudoku and The Ordnance Survey Puzzle Book. He is also the creator of the daily brain-training website BrainedUp.com, and runs popular puzzle site PuzzleMix.com. Find him online at DrGarethMoore.com. **ASSOCIATIONS**

RAF LOCKING APPRENTICE ASSOCIATION

www.raflaa.org.uk

Calling all Ex-No 1 Radio School Apprentices to join in the Reunions of Apprentices that completed all or part of their training under the umbrella of No 1 Radio School



For more details contact the Membership Secretary via the website or email: imdoran1@outlook.com or Mob: 07747 464122



BOOKS

York Military Books

Military, Naval, Aviation & Militaria Books bought & sold. Relevant part or whole collections always sought

Tel: 01423 360828 Mob: 07717 155619 www.yorkmilitarybooks.co.uk



For details email: adverts@rafa.org.uk

AIRMail





Helena P. Schrade

Award-winning novelist Helena P. Schrader presents two books on the RAF in WWII.

"This is the best book on the Battle of Britain I have ever read." Wing Commander Bob Doe

"... a tribute to those who fought for freedom." The Foreign Service Journal



Buy online at amazon.co.uk or order from your local book store.



Why stairlift

when you could have a lift?

A Stiltz Homelift is an ideal and affordable alternative to a stairlift. You can now safely travel between the floors in your home while keeping your stairs the way they have always been.

Neat, discreet, affordable and elegant

A Stiltz Homelift can be installed into almost any room in your home.

A Stiltz is uniquely compact with the smallest model taking up just over half a square metre. At the touch of a button a Stiltz Homelift turns your now home into vour forever home.

Free, no obligation survey

A Stiltz Homelifts Consultant can visit your property to help you plan the best location for your homelift.

They can also answer any questions you might have, as can any of the friendly, UK-based phone team.

For a FREE brochure or no obligation survey give Stiltz Homelifts a call today!

The UK's No. 1 Homelift

- Speedy service
- Cost-effective
- Small footprint
- Freestanding design no wall needed
- Wheelchair model available
- Manufactured, installed and fully guaranteed by Stiltz
- 3-floor travel available
- Finance options available

* ask an adviser for details

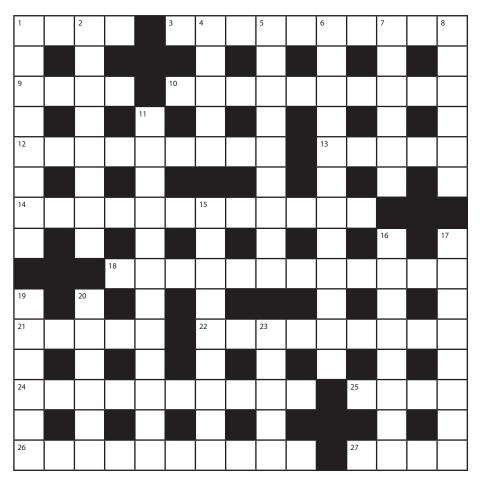
Call FREE on 0808 271 8487 For a FREE brochure or no obligation survey call us or visit stiltz.co.uk





New Year 2023 Crossword

by Enigma



Across

- White precipitation (4)
- 3&21 Time for the New Year (7,3,5)
- 'Mite' become a piece of news (4)
- 10 One of great cerebral ability (10)
- 12 Cologne from France and Arg(entina)
- 13 Romeo: had some pull over Juliet (5)
- 14 Advocate for retaining, eg, capital punishment (12)
- Act of cruelty (12) 18
- 21 see 3ac
- 22 Unhappily, inter a son related to patriarch of Constantinople (428-431)(9)
- Skinfold of the eye sometimes covering 24 the inner corner (10)
- Operatic solo vocal (4) 25
- Vehicle for orbiting the earth (10) 26
- Present (4) 27

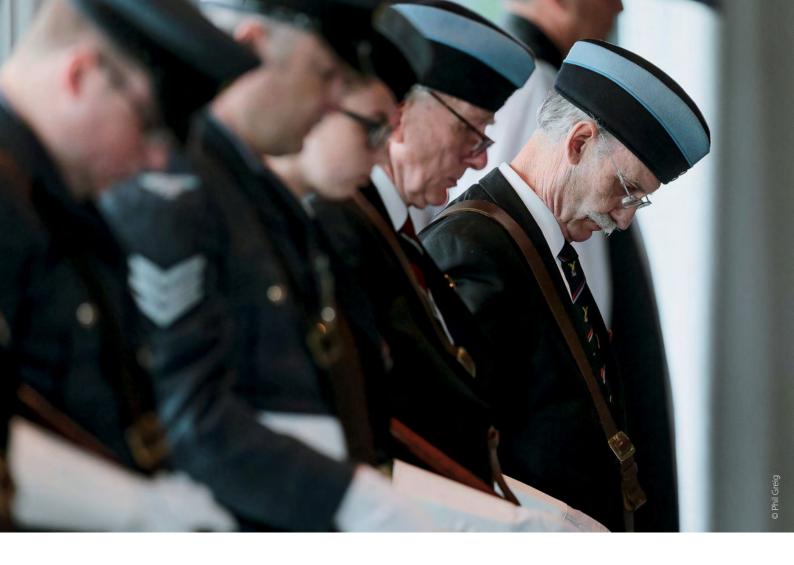
Down

- World War II fighter aircraft (8)
- Hams! (8)
- 4 A profit once more (5)
- 5 Increase the risks of some action (2,3,4)
- 6 Act relating to the countryside (12)
- Steal (6)
- 8 Tolerate drug under change (6)
- 11 Carriage of foreign goods through a country (7,5)
- 15 Musically to train on a monochord (9)
- 16 Line of ancestors (8)
- 17 Stage of culture before general use of metal (5,3)
- 19 Pudding (6)
- Medicinal tincture of composite plants' 20 flowers (6)
- 23 Cram material (5)

aram sang - masan gar - mara sang - aram

anagrams – samarang - naga arms - anam rags - nama rags - mana rags - aram sang - masan gar - mara sang - aram snag - anagrams – samarang - naga arms - anam rags - nama rags - mana rags rags - aram sang - masan gar - aran

snag - anagrams – samarang - naga arms - anam rags - nama rags - mana rags - aram sang - masan gar - mara sang - aram snag - anagrams – samarang - naga arms - anam rags - nama rags - mana



AD ASTRA

We record with sadness the passing of the following members of the RAF Association

Mrs M Archer Wing Commander P Baker Huntingdon and District

Mr G Baxter

Mr A Beaumont-Jones

Mr J Boylan

Mrs C Breckon

Dr H Bernard-Smith Mr W Bloomfield

Mid-Somerset **Mr R Browning** Leamington Spa, Warwick and

Headquarters

Anglesey

Thurrock

Corsham and Chippenham

Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea

Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District

Air Vice-Marshal B Brownlow

AFC CB OBE **Huntingdon and District**

Mr R Burling Clacton-on-Sea Torquay Mr T Butcher Mr E Choulerton High Wycombe Mr J Clarke Wittering and District

Mr J Cooke Leigh Mr J Cooper Fareham **Mr R Cundy MBE** Nottingham

Mrs V Curtis Dereham and Swaffham **Mr M Daniels** Mr P B Davies

Mr B Davis Mr M Day

Mr R Duke-Berkeley MBE

Mr D Dyer

Air Commodore B Easton

Air Commodore G Edge

Mr B Emms **Mr R Endacott** Mr D Faulkner

Mr M Fitzaibbon

Mr R Flatt

Mr J Frost Mr G Gale

Mr D Gale Mr R Garfitt

Mr J Giddings MBE Mr E Gill

Mr J Goatham Mr H Gosling

Mrs B Grindrod Mr S Guinan

Mr D Hill

Mr R Gurry Mr C Harris

Dereham and Swaffham Mr G Hassall

Headquarters

Mr E Hayden Great Yarmouth and District Mr J Hernon

Southampton and Eastleigh RMG

Towyn and Aberdovey

Alresford and District

Carterton and Brize

Headquarters

Headquarters

Stowmarket

Bognor Regis

Stone and District

Wittering and District

Manchester and District

Birmingham Moseley

Exmouth

Armagh

Rushden

Exmouth

Cranwell

Preston

Thurrock

Sud-Ouest

Lincoln

Newmarket RMG

Huntingdon and District

Royston

Sud-Ouest **Balderton**

Kenley and Caterham Mrs M Holland Mr J F Humphreys Solihull and District Mr P Hunter Headquarters Mr J Jackson Headquarters **Mr R F James** Peterborough

Mr J Jochimsen Horsham and Storrington RMG

Squadron Leader Dr F Kane Armagh

Mr A King Ayr and Prestwick
Mr J King Kenley and Caterham

Mr G KnightShrewsburyMr D LakeHeadquartersMr M LaveryHeadquarters

Mr H Lewis Dursley and South Gloucestershire

Mr W Lewis Norwich
Mrs M Ludlow Christchurch
Mr R Lund Headquarters
Mr J Maclean BEM Peterhead
Mr J Mann South Lincolnsl

Mr J Mann South Lincolnshire
Mr D Marney Basingstoke
Squadron Leader T Marsh
Mr D Martin Headquarters
Mr W J G Mawhinney Newtownards

Mr D May Salisbury and Boscombe Down

Mrs K McAllister
Mr B Moffat
Mr J Morey
Mr D Morter
Mr J Nelson
Mr M Newman
Mr A Noble
Mr B Moffat
Headquarters
Wantage and Oxford
Headquarters
Bedford

Mr A Noble Bedford
Mr A Pashby Scarborough

Mr R Preece Northampton and District

Mr K Raitt Aberdeen RMG

Mr M A RichardsNorthampton and DistrictMr D RoachWitham and RivenhallMr T RobinsonRugby and District

Mr M RoeLeicesterMr F RolphHeadquartersMr B RosewarnHeadquartersMr I SampsonWorthingMr M SargentHeadquartersBaroness P SharplesHarrow and DistrictMr F E SmithHigh Wycombe

Mr F Snoxall Sturminster Newton and

Gillingham

Mr A Stansfield Hinckley and District

Mr R SturmanSheffieldMr P SuttonLincolnMr K SuttonWorthingMr M TempertonBedfordMr R A TippingBanbury

Mr W Tobin Dunkeswell (AC) and Honiton RMG

Mr J Tobin
Mr A Tristram
Mr R Turner
Mr C Vaughan
Mr R Veart
Mr E Vernon
Mr B Ward
Mr

Mr E Warman Bognor Regis

Mr A Warrington Jones Manchester and District

Mr D Waters Global
Mr J Watson Headquarters
Mr D Watson Worthing
Mr C R White Plymouth

Mr F B Williams Towyn and Aberdovey

Wing Commander P Wood Christchurch Mr R Wormald Thurrock

Mrs J Wycherley Mansfield and District

Mr E Young Yeadon

"In friendship and in service one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the memory of those of all nations who died in the Royal Air Force and in the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause. Proudly and thankfully we will remember them."

We specially remember late members who had reached or passed their **100th birthday**

100

Mr E Coleman Crawley RMG
Mr N Gregory Diss
Mrs M Hulse Harrow and District
Mr P Manson Ayr and Prestwick
Mr S Mould Hull
Mr W Webb Stourbridge RMG
Mr H White Whitley Bay

To notify the RAF Association of the death of an RAF Association member, please contact their **branch**, email **membership@rafa. org.uk** or telephone our contact team on **0800 018 2361**. The Air Mail office regrets that we cannot directly accept notifications of a member's passing.



Notices

REUNIONS

Did you ever serve at RAF Bawdsey? If so, why not join the **RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association** at our next annual event at Bawdsey Manor on Saturday 3 June 2023. For details please contact Doreen at doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com or phone 07513301723.

RAF Icarus FC has 70th anniversary reunion events planned for 2023. Created in the 1950s, the officers' representative team was formed to play football at the highest level in the service. From players in the National Service era who went on to compete at international level through to today, it came to represent outstanding football and combined great comradeship and social interaction. Have you been involved with Icarus FC over the years (or even played against them)? Would you like to share some memories or come along to any of the planned anniversary events? For more details please contact Rob Swinney on 07920 281957 or rob_swinney@hotmail.com.

OTHER

The Boy Entrant Golf Society's next match is being held on 24 May 2023 at Kenilworth Golf Club in Warwickshire. For further information contact Chuck Marshall on clarkemarshal@aol.co.uk.

RAF Changi Association welcomes enquiries from all former serving personnel 1946 to 1971. For more details, or to join, email memsecchangi@outlook.com or call 01494 728562.

Ron Spack is interested to hear from anyone who served at both **RAF Northolt** and **RAF Turnhouse** and witnessed the C17, as he did as a National Serviceman in the late 1950s. To contact Ron call 01268 779 697.

Does anyone recognise the **RAF mascot dog** in this image, or can you shed any light on the location or date it was taken? The photo was purchased many years ago from a charity shop. Please contact William Cumberland at cumberlandbilly411@gmail.com with any information.

Have you ever served at **RAF St Athan**? Do you have a story to tell about your time there? From 2023 the RAF will no longer be stationed

at or associated with MOD St Athan.

Howard Provis of Barry Branch wishes to compile a book to be displayed at the South Wales Air Museum in St Athan. If you would like to contribute your story, Howard can be contacted at barryrafa247@virginmedia.com or on 07851 643 560.

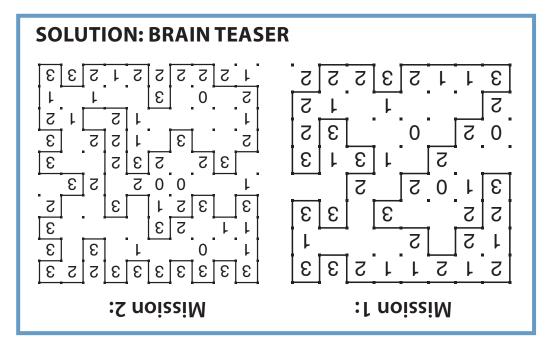


Submit your notices – free for all members

Notices is a free member benefit to help you keep connected with people and places from your time in the RAF or the RAF Association, or to announce news of births, marriages, christenings, engagements, and more. For inclusion in the next issue, email your text to **notices@rafa. org.uk**, post it to the address on the inside front cover or call 0800 018 2361 by 3 February 2023.

Make sure to include an email address and/or telephone number within your message so readers can contact you. This is a service for members only.







Ultra comfort

3

2

0

 ∞

/

9

4

2

SALE!

TRULY MADE-TO-MEASURE RISE & RECLINE CHAIRS AND ADJUSTABLE BEDS



CHOICE OF SEAT WIDTH

RISE & RECLINE CHAIRS

Choose from our extensive range of chairs and selection of 400 fabrics & upholsteries



£300
Part exchange for your old furniture

OFF
THE 1ST ITEM

NEW

ELECTRIC SOFA BED

+

✓ CHOICE OF WIDTH ✓ CHOICE OF DEPTH ✓ CHOICE OF HEIGHT



5 YEAR
WARRANTY INCLUDED
FREE WITH EVERY
MECHANISED ITEM

Flexible finance packages available

SSafa the Armed Forces charity





- FREE home demonstration
- FREE home delivery and set up
- FREE nationwide service
- NO cold calling
- FREE removal of old furniture





CALL FREE TODAY FOR A FREE BROCHURE & HOME DEMONSTRATION

0808 265 1357

www.mobilityfurniturecompany.co.uk/sale





Limited Edition of 9,999

PAY NOTHING NOW

ORDER FORM

Please Respond Promptly

To: The Bradford Exchange, P0 Box 653, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 4RA YES! Please order __ (Qty) of the 'HEROES OF THE SKIES' 85TH ANNIVERSARY CHRONOGRAPH WATCH for me as described in this advert.

Complete today or Call 0333 003 0019

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms)	
Address	(PLEASE PRINT)
PostcodeTelephone	9
Mobile	

Email Address



Applicants must be aged 18 or over. Please note, we may contact you via mail, email and mobile with information about your reservation. For details of our privacy policy, please go to www.bradford.co.uk/privacypolicy or contact us at the above address or phone number.

Order Ref:426590

NATIONAL COMMEMORATION OF THE FEW

85TH ANNIVERSARY HEROES OF THE SKIES

LIMITED EDITION CHRONOGRAPH WATCH

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few"

Winston Churchill

REAR OF THE CASING:

Reverse etched with individual edition number, and 85th anniversary first flight tributes



PRESENTATION CASE:

Accompanied by a **custom-designed presentation case**perfect for gift-giving or presenting within a collection



KEY DETAILS

LIMIT: Limited to just 9,999 individually numbered editions.

EVENT: The 85th anniversary of the Spitfire's first flight.

HIGH SPECIFICATION: Intended as a collectors' timepiece, this chronograph watch features Philip E. West's art,

rose gold-plated casing, precision chronograph dials, a genuine leather strap and engraving.

COULD BE YOURS FOR £139.95 (plus £9.99 S&S)*, payable in five interest-free instalments of £27.99 each. Pay nothing now. Order online now!

In commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the first flight of the Spitfire, as well as the service of the courageous men known as The Few, The Bradford Exchange is proud to present the prestigious *'Heroes Of The Skies' 85th Anniversary Chronograph Watch* – **limited to just 9,999 numbered editions**. Marking the debut of the Reginald J. Mitchell aircraft that earned a place in the annals of British military history for its contribution during many WWII theatres, this handcrafted rose gold-plated timepiece showcases artist Philip E. West's vivid WWII aviation artwork.

Rose gold-plating, leather, Philip E. West art and individual numbering

In addition to the rich **rose gold-plated bezel and crown**, this watch depicts a **genuine leather strap** in addition to **glow-in-the-dark hands** and rose gold-plated chronograph dial edges. Three precision chronograph dials gleam with a metallic silver tone, whilst the upper watch dial is adorned with **Philip E. West's art**, capturing the aircraft in flight. The casing reverse is engraved with fighter aircraft images, 85th ANNIVERSARY, SPITFIRE FIRST FLIGHT and an individual edition number.

Not availabel on the high street – order your numbered limited edition now!

Limited to just 9,999 editions and individually numbered on the casing reverse, this anniversary tribute is only available from The Bradford Exchange, and your purchase is covered by our 120-day money-back guarantee. Applications are now open and this offer is likely to attract considerable interest, not just from watch collectors, so prompt application is advised. Don't miss out by delaying your application! Order online at www.bradford.co.uk/hotwatch, or complete and return your Priority Order Form today!

Shown larger than actual size. Face measures 42mm diameter excl crown | Please note: The first 100 edition numbers may be secured at a higher price whilst stocks are available. | © 2022 The Bradford Exchange / Philip E. West | *S&S - Shipping & Service. Offer applies to UK only. Our guarantee is in addition to the rights provided to you by consumer protection regulations. 526-EAS16.01

FASTEST WAY TO ORDER www.bradford.co.uk/hotwatch

Or call our 24hr hotline on 0333 003 0019

and quote reference code 426590