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The Magazine of RAF Shawbury

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Edition 2
2024



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taking storytelling to the edge



*Len Cabral

*Shonaleigh

Dan Walsh



Ciderhouse Rebellion

Sahand Sahebdivani



Time Bandits

*Photo Credits: Len Cabral - Jim Hooper, Shonaleigh - Katherine Betteridge

FESTIVAL AT THE EDGE

Do you like a good story?

We've got plenty. I can tell you one now, about how we set up a festival over 30 years ago, all about stories and storytelling. But it's better if you come along and see for yourself. And not all stories begin "Once upon a Time."

Festival at the Edge takes place at Hopton Court, on the outskirts of Cleobury Mortimer, in the beautiful walled garden. We've filled it with stories, poetry, music and dance - and there's a selection of excellent food and drink to be had too - including beer from our favourite local brewery, Hobsons.

Performances take place in three marquees where you can experience amazing tale tellers, such as the fabulous **Len Cabral** and **Shonaleigh** - and musicians, such as **Ciderhouse Rebellion with Jesse Summerhayes** and **Dan Walsh**, who will hold you spellbound. FatE prides itself in bringing storytellers and musicians together in interesting ways, in creative collaborations you won't see anywhere else.

It's a safe space for children - we have dedicated children's story sessions, including bedtime stories, circus skills and craft workshops, or they can just run around and play.

There's plenty of opportunities for adults to join in, too, with story rounds, workshops, and wellbeing sessions, or just sit and relax with a beer, or a coffee, and let the world turn.

You can camp on-site for the weekend, or commute in - there are plenty of local hotels and B&Bs nearby. If you're staying over, you can listen to campfire tales late at night or enjoy (and join in!) with the music sessions in the bar.

This year we have fire breathing morris dancers who will get the festival off to a magical start at our opening ceremony, and on Saturday night we'll be hosting "**Sing-along-a-Wickerman**", combining the iconic 1973 classic film with subtitles, hymn sheets, and a "goody bag full of dark secrets", ...trust us, it's very funny.

In other highlights - you can find out just what it takes to get a play performed at the Edinburgh fringe (and how much it costs!) and hear about fishing songs and stories from East Anglia in a beautiful set piece performed by **Mossy Christian** and **Megan Wisdom**.

We can't promise wall-to-wall sunshine, but we can promise a varied and interesting programme to keep you entertained from dawn till dusk.

More details are here at www.festivalattheedge.org



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A Juno helicopter over a field of Oil Seed Rape.



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Editor's Welcome

By Flt Lt Ade Vine

Well, I hope as you read this Welcome that the weather has improved or at least is not quite so wet! In any case, settle down for a great read with our second edition of Aries for 2024. As ever our people have been involved in a wide range of activities and we will hopefully give you a flavour of life at RAF Shawbury and beyond.

In February we held our 10K race, this event was organised by some of our more junior members and it was great to see participants from the local community and beyond braving the winter weather. Fortunately the weather was good enough to allow not one but two 'ball drops' at Shrewsbury Town FC's Croud Meadow Stadium during March. Firstly for the Military Match day and secondly for the RAF's Senior Representative Team 'home' games against the Royal Navy. We are grateful for our links with Shrewsbury Town FC and their support of the Armed Forces community.

Training is continuous at RAF Shawbury and several recent graduations are featured in this issue. Despite the pace of training



many of our trainees and staff find time to support local community projects and organisations, read about volunteering at Severn Hospice in this edition.

In the last edition we introduced a new section 'Partner News' with Ascent our partner in flying training featured. There is more from Ascent and a piece on volunteering from Aquila in this edition. Whatever the weather grab a brew and enjoy your Aries Magazine.

FOREWORD

Foreword by Wing Commander Mike Kluth BSc MA RAF

A very warm welcome to Edition 2 of the Aries magazine for 2024.

I am very pleased to have been asked to write the foreword to the Aries magazine for RAF Shawbury and our local community.

I started this tour at RAF Shawbury nearly a year ago, so I'll indulge in some thoughts about my third time on this Station. There are things that have not changed; the support of our friends in the Shawbury community and around wider Shropshire, the refreshing sense of keenness from our trainees and the devotion to our mission from the whole force staff. These are all just as I remember from being a Defence Helicopter Flying School trainee, and then as a student Qualified Helicopter Instructor. There are things that have changed; the Juno and Jupiter have replaced the Squirrel and Griffin and the formation of Defence College of Air and Space Operations has bought with it the training of Air Battle Space Managers to RAF Shawbury. A very welcome addition to our family.

Change is going to be a key theme of the next year. We are going to replace nearly the whole airfield's operating surfaces (runways and taxiways) in an 18-month programme that is just starting. We are going to update the Juno aircraft (the eagle-eyed will notice the taller tail fins starting to appear) and we are going to introduce a new

approach system (called performance-based navigation) and change the altimeter setting on the airfield. These are each individually large change programmes, so the effect of doing all of them at once will be inescapable. I'll be relying on the forbearance and professionalism of all involved, but the prize at the end of all this work is an airfield and a training environment that is refreshed and fit for the next 20 years.

The county of Shropshire has been an enchanting place for Becky and me to live. We bought a dog (Bella) with us, and our family will be growing again this summer with the arrival of our daughter. I cannot think of a better place to bring a new child into the world. Wondering around the shops and bars of central Shrewsbury has been a treat, I cannot think of a town with so many independent businesses in such a picturesque setting. To those at RAF Shawbury on courses, I urge you to get away from the camp and explore our local towns and countryside – you will not be disappointed.

RAF Shawbury has always been a busy Station; the training mission is



relentless across the Defence College of Air and Space Operations and 1 Flying Training School. We permanent staff should remember that the future of parts of the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Army Air Corps are with us today, and that they will learn from our actions. Let's make our actions and those lessons a reflection of the professionalism and drive for excellence that I remember from my two times here as a trainee.



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The Great Escape

Stalag Luft III was a Luftwaffe run POW camp established in 1942 at Zagan Poland; eventually the camp would be home to 10,949 inmates. These individuals were guarded by 800 Luftwaffe personnel, some of whom were sympathetic to the plight of the (mostly) RAF personnel who were imprisoned there and would smuggle in supplies for the POWs.

The POWs kept there would attempt two breakouts during the course of World War Two. One in 1942 and another in 1944. The latter was made famous by John Sturges' 1963 film *The Great Escape*.

This escape was masterminded by Squadron Leader Roger Bushell, who planned to dig three tunnels codenamed Tom, Dick and Harry under the perimeter fence that would allow up to 200 prisoners to escape. A fourth tunnel named "George" was originally planned as a contingency but had to be abandoned due to approaching winter conditions.

The Squadron Leader would even go as far as to ban prisoners from digging their own private tunnels, to ensure he had the manpower to properly execute his plan. The secrecy of this plan was



Model recreation of Stalag Luft III



Stalag Luft III in outline map form

essential, Sqn Ldr Bushell threatened to court martial anyone who mentioned the word tunnel and with over 600 people involved such strict secrecy was vital.

The Escape was originally designed to liberate 200 personnel, split into two groups of frequent escapees and those who had a lower chance of making it back to Allied territory. However, the escape tunnel 'Harry' was discovered with only 77 men liberated from Stalag Luft. Fifty of these men were executed on orders from Hitler himself, who saw the mass escape as an embarrassment. Twenty four escapees would be recaptured and only three were lucky enough to make it to Allied lines.

The camp would eventually be abandoned. This process began on 27 January 1945 with over 11,000 POW's being marched across Germany. Many would make it to Stalag XIII-D to join over 120,000 POWs in a camp originally designed for 14,000.

After the War an investigation was

undertaken, which would lead to several Nazis being charged and punished as part of the Nuremberg trials. Ultimately it was deemed the execution of the POWs was a war crime and those involved were found guilty of a crime against humanity.

Stalag Luft III has now been transformed into a memorial and museum to remember those held there. One such individual was Shropshire's own Flt Lt Cyril Swain.

Cyril served as part of 105 Sqn and worked for Bomber Command until he was captured after being shot down on 28 November 1940 during an air raid on Dusseldorf. He would become a POW in Stalag Luft III and was one of the escapees. He was also one of the escapees murdered by the Nazis on the orders of Hitler and Himmler, following his re-capture.



Shropshire born Flight Lieutenant Cyril Swain

RAF Shawbury 10K

Enjoying the freedom of running on an airfield

On 24 February, RAF Shawbury hosted its annual 10K Race. As 200 runners lined up for the start, the appearance of the sun brought some welcome warmth across the winter airfield.

Wind conditions were also light which set the scene for some really good running conditions and the fastest time recorded on the day was an impressive 30 minutes and 46 seconds. The RAF Benevolent Fund's Ben Elephant led the encouragement and cheering of all the runners and led the Children's Race in enthusiastic style.

Congratulations and thank you to all of our runners which again raised a fantastic sum of money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.



The RAF Benevolent Fund's Ben Elephant encouraging runners from start to finish



Weather conditions enabled a fast start for the race

RAF Shawbury STEM Engagement Day

RAF Shawbury held their inaugural STEM Engagement Day on Tuesday 29 April, attended by sixty year 3 and 4 pupils and ten teachers from St Mary's Primary School.

Hangar 4 was the location for the activities and after a quick Health and Safety Brief and a warm up game of "rock, paper, scissors, evolution" (invented by Flight Lieutenant Furlong) the children were split into four groups and rotated in a round robin of the following stands:

Stand 1 was learning about the principles of flight, supported by a walk round and talk on the gliders held on station. The pupils then made their own gliders followed by a throwing competition along a runway to see whose glider could fly the furthest.

Stand 2 was building and launching rockets, again with a flying competition and a space-based Q&A – who knew

Preparing rockets for launch



The children busy building the best wheelbarrow of the day



children could be so competitive?!

Stand 3 was using Oculus headsets to give a 3D flight in a helicopter supported by a display of helicopters on the flight line.

Stand 4 was involved utilising the mobile team challenge kit and the children had to engineer and build a vehicle to quickly transport water, around a course, without spilling any.

The STEM Team involved were Flight Lieutenants Darko, Furlong, and Guthrie; Flying Officer Isaac; Sergeant Ford, Corporals Lally and Openshaw, with assistance from Flying Officer Jones, Warrant Officer Morley and Corporal Brown.

All children and staff had a great day. The feedback from the school was really positive, with the teachers saying "Thank you so much for a wonderful, engaging day. The children got so much from the experience and couldn't stop talking about it when they got back to school.

Your hard work was truly appreciated, and we look forward to working with you again in the future."

The RAF Shawbury STEM Team is now looking forward to welcoming the next local school for another fun-filled STEM Engagement Day.

Pictured right: Learning how to make gliders for furthest flight distances



Pictured left: Technology and flying combine through VR headsets



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1 FTS Aircrew Adventure Training: Gusty Scottish Adventure

Grantown-On-Spey, Scotland – 18th-22nd March 2024

Following successful completion of their Rotary Wing Ground School at RAF Shawbury Rear Crew course 115-032 embarked on an adventurous week of Advanced Personal Development Leadership Training, facilitated by 1 FTS and the RAF's Force Development Centre in Grantown-On-Spey.

The trip began with quite the journey up the mighty M6, a total of seven hours of tarmac and eventually the nice views of the Scottish countryside. On arrival we settled into Grantown with a well-deserved curry from the nearby Indian restaurant before getting some much-needed rest for the week ahead. After meeting and greeting with students from 3 FTS we were informed of our activities for the week.

Day 1 was rock climbing and the morning began with a short trip to the nearby rock-climbing hotspot. Then came a basic how-to guide from our knowledgeable instructors, before getting stuck in and ascending the challenging routes they had laid out for us. The weather was perfect with blue skies and little breeze. The



Canoeing along the River Tay



Canoeing on Lake Lochy

novices amongst us (most) chose to start out on the easier climbs to practice techniques and get a feel for be-laying for one another. As the day progressed, we challenged each other and ourselves by selecting more challenging routes; this is where the teamwork aspect of climbing enabled us to guide one another around the foot and handholds traversing the route. We found that what you could see from below was always much more than what you could see whilst climbing and so communicating our observations was very important.

Day 2 was spent canoeing on Lake Lochy. A day spent learning the skills we would need to navigate the river for our expedition the following day. We began by discussing the teamwork needed when canoeing to ensure turns and stops were achieved effectively, before putting them into action on the Loch. By picking names from a hat, we were assigned canoe partners, a great way of meeting new people and learning about different backgrounds and trades. Once we had mastered the art of canoeing (not quite), our instructors suggested we practise another very important skill... capsizing. In pairs we took turns taking the cold plunge into ice cool Scottish Loch water, using vital procedures to ensure crew and vessel safely made it back to the riverbank.

On Day 3 we were tasked by our instructors to plan a river expedition and it was left to us as a group to decide where, how long, the safety aspects and the logistical elements of the trip. This provided us with a great opportunity to develop task planning

skills, something we will take forward with us in our careers. Elements such as weather, safety, equipment, time, navigation, and accommodation were all important factors and as a team we discussed the best course of action and several redundancies in case of a change in conditions. The trip consisted of a 9km canoe along the River Tay, visiting some grade 2 rapids along the way before settling for the night in a nearby bunk house in Aberfeldy. The task was ambitious due to the lack of white-water experience amongst the group; however the task finished successfully with all canoes still in one piece. A few hairy moments amongst some fast-flowing rapids made for great fun and laughs amongst the team, building confidence and trust working together on the water.

Waking up on Day 4 and checking nearby isobar charts, the eager ground school graduates noticed how close the isobars were together and knew this meant it would be very windy... 60kts gusting 70kts. This meant the river was off the cards and the backup plan of a hike around some hopefully sheltered Monroe paths was needed. Geal-Charn was the peak of choice, careful planning was necessary to ensure we used the wind to our advantage when trying to reach the summit. It was a great experience to be out in wind that most of us had never experienced before and highlighted the difficulties of communicating and navigating when conditions were tough. A slow steep ascent followed by a quick walk back to the vans assisted by the valley winds between two Monroes saw the end to what had been a truly amazing expedition.

Concluding the week with a positive debrief, all could agree that a great deal of knowledge and skill had been learned, with some overcoming fears both on land and water and all benefitting hugely from the opportunity to practise their planning, leadership, and teamworking skills in an environment with real risk – something which will no doubt have stood the course in good stead for their following flying training courses!



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DCASO Dits

The winter months have seen a flurry of activity within the Defence College of Air and Space Operations (DCASO), with the Joint Air Traffic Control Course (JATCC) transformation team surging towards the new course commencing in January 2025. Some exciting changes and opportunities for all DCASO Training staff, in conjunction with affording our future trainees a course that is designed to meet the needs of initial frontline employment more readily.

The Annual DCASO Dinner was held at the end of March with honorary guest Air Officer Commanding 22 Group presenting the 2023-2024 achievement awards for the most outstanding trainees throughout the College. WO Sarah Bell attended the event and assumed the role of the College WO shortly after. DCASO would like thank A/WO Tudor-Smith for her hard work and dedication throughout her time in the seat and wishes her success as she moves over to Assurance Squadron.

ANNUAL DCASO DINNER

The 3rd annual DCASO Dinner was held on 21 March, and we were honoured to host VIP guests AOC 22 Group Air Vice-Marshal Townsend, Educational Psychologist Dr Jon Allsop, along with our Aquilla partners Mr David Riley, Hamish Robson and Dan Penter. A great DCASO turnout with 113 from across the College attending the evening which was beautifully supported by the RAF Salon Orchestra who played spectacularly throughout the dinner.

During the evening, we had the pleasure of presenting five trophies for the respective DCASO courses. These trophies highlight excellence in training and are awarded to the top graduates over the last Training Year (TY) and to those who demonstrated the highest of standards during their time at Shawbury.

The first trophy presented by Sqn Ldr

Boland (OC Air Traffic Control Training Squadron) was the Dziuba Trophy. In a surprise twist it was presented firstly to Flt Lt Charlotte Mannion, who due to Covid restrictions, missed out on a formal presentation for the TY 19/20. The trophy was then awarded to Fg Off Taje-Wayne Sutherland for TY 23/24. The next two trophies were presented by Flt Lt Furlong (on behalf of OC Aerospace Battle Management Training Squadron); the BAE Systems Identification Officer Trophy was awarded to Fg Off Ryan Morris and the BAE Systems Weapons Trophy was awarded to Sgt Daniel Burges.

The final trophies were presented by Sqn Ldr Munro (OC Air and Space Operations Training Squadron); First was the Lion Trophy awarded to Flt Lt Perry Worrell followed by the Bairstow Trophy awarded to AS1 Flaherty, collected by WO Williams on his behalf. A huge congratulations to all trophy winners and good luck for their future RAF careers.

The evening ended with AOC 22 Group giving an informative speech on RAF current affairs and words of encouragement for the future development within the RAF.

A huge thanks to Project Officer AS1 Amy Gisborn, OIC Flt Lt Vic Allan and the entire DCASO committee for organizing a thoroughly enjoyable evening. The event would not have been possible without their efforts.



The annual DCASO Dinner 2024

This year's award winners:



AEROSPACE BATTLE MANAGEMENT TRAINING SQUADRON (ABMTS)

A very busy 2024 with some personality changes within ABMTS and lots of adventures. Sgt Kirsty Bland and Cpl Liam Parkin have joined the Mission Support Flight with Fg Off Jeorgia Carr joining Control Training Flight from RAF Boulmer. Jeorgia replaces Flt Lt Madeleine Hobbs who has gone to the dark side and taken a role within MOD Main Building. Three Surveillance Training Flight students (Plt Off Connor Hill, Plt Off Andrew Bunting and Sgt Scott Turner) helped with the 'Wild Meadow Garden' program; cleaning, planting and further developing the plants in the forest area over at the Youth Activity Centre, showcasing their gardening talent. The Mission Support Flight AS1 Sam duo (Sam McGeachy and Sam Bradshaw) deployed from Shawbury to RAF Boulmer for Exercise 'CROC' where they gained some valuable job experience to bring back to the team.



Surveillance Training Flight students on the Wild Meadow Garden programme.



What the Children will see in the Garden

ABMTS played their part in the organisation of the Annual DCASO Dinner with the success down to a joint DCASO committee but led by our own Flt Lt Victoria Allen as the Project Officer and assisted by AS1 Amy Gisborn. Our Weapons courses have been out and about on some fantastic Force Development opportunities with Weapons foundation Course (WFC) 23-5 venturing out to Swanwick (Mil) in Southampton and WFC 23-6 testing

their head for heights on a High-Ropes Course; some fantastic days out for both the trainees and trainers that were able to take part.



The finished product



The 2024 Air and Space Operations Professions Symposium at RAF Cranwell.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TRAINING SQUADRON

Excuse the Navy pun, but it has been all hands-on deck for this period with the huge changes happening as part of the Joint Air Traffic Control Course Implementation, as well as continual deliverance of professional and world class training to our budding Air Traffic Controllers. The course design is making tremendous progress in keeping with the timeline, and trainers are learning new ways in which to deliver training with plenty of staff upskilling. The course rewrite has seen some very familiar faces return to

ATCTS in varying civilian and full-time reserve roles to aid the design process using their vast and diverse experiences.

The 2024 Air and Space Operations Profession Symposium was conducted at RAF Cranwell on 23 and 24 April 2024. Speakers from the wider RAF delivered presentations on several subjects, including Air Ops Training (from DCASO, 20 Sqn and Professions Advisory Team), Space, Professions Milestones and Air C2 to name a few.

In attendance were guest speakers Air Vice-Marshal Jason Appleton, Air Officer Commanding 2 Group and Head of Profession, as well as Warrant Officer of the Royal Air Force, WO Murugesvaran Subramaniam.

And finally, ATCTS are extremely proud of WO Gemma Wosik who was selected to become the next Station Warrant Officer of RAF Cosford amidst stiff competition. This is bittersweet, as the Sqn will lose our Sqn WO in July this year. Good Luck!

AIR AND SPACE OPERATIONS TRAINING SQUADRON (ASOTS)

Finally, we have emerged from the long and dark winter and the promises of a glorious summer are on the horizon. Air and Space Operations Specialist Courses (ASOSCs) 13 & 14 have been and gone since the last edition of the *Aries* Mag, with the latter having just departed RAF Shawbury last week for their first postings. We wish them well in their future careers. However, ASOTS never stops and ASOSC 15 arrived on the 22 Apr with Flight Operations Training Course 4 due to start on 29 Apr.

Sgt Hannah Pollard and Cpl Sam Hendry are the latest arrivals to ASOTS, both will undoubtedly bring their unique skill set ensuring that we continue to evolve and improve the quality of training we deliver. ASOTS said a final farewell to Cpl Quiney who has left the RAF for pastures new, we wish him very well in his new role as a project manager at the University of Wolverhampton. Sgt 'Spuggy' Turner, an RAF Shawbury and DCASO legend, has finally left ASOTS and is currently on track to become an Identification Officer with a posting to RAF Boulmer

taking him closer to his beloved Sunderland Football Club. Last, and by no means least, we bid a very fond farewell to Sqn Ldr Munro whose tenure as OC ASOTS has come to an end. His impact over the last two and a half years to ASOTS has been monumental and everyone will be sad to see him go, but we all know that he will ensure due diligence during his handover to Sqn Ldr Wells who we look forward to working with over the coming years.

ASSURANCE SQUADRON

The last couple of months have seen Assurance Sqn participating in various events around the station. Our very own WO Morley has been conducting SWO duties to ensure the requirement for this role is met and had the honour of welcoming HRH Queen Consort to RAF Shawbury recently. Some 40 DCASO staff were involved in the route lining for Her Majesty Queen's arrival, all of which was coordinated by DCASO Drill Instructors! In addition to this, as the Air Cadet Liaison Officer (ACLO), WO Morley arranged a visit for the stn-based air cadets to have a look around a Chinook (CH47) during the recent 18(B) Sqn detachment. This was a welcome treat for the cadets as they were able to experience something different and slightly more exciting than usual!

DCASO were honoured to show their respects in providing a Guard of Honour at the funeral of D-Day Veteran and Legion d'Honneur recipient LACW Rose Davies. Assurance Sqn's WO Tudor-Smith led an all-female Guard of Honour at



The all-female Guard of Honour

Rose's funeral after she sadly passed at the age of 107. All ranks from AR-WO were represented from RAF Shawbury.

We would also like to give a special mention and a massive thank you to Lt Cdr Vicky Gaffney, SO2 Assurance, for her service within the Sqn and DCASO during her time at Shawbury. Good luck down in sunny Plymouth! You, Sherlock and Lithia will be missed!



Warrant Officer Tudor-Smith paying her respects

The DCASO Diarists

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Welcome to St Mary's Church of England Primary School and Nursery.



Our Vision seeks to inspire and nurture a love of learning, independence and self-belief in a peaceful and stable environment. Building on a strong framework of Christian beliefs and values, we aim to support each other and the wider community.

At St Mary's, our six values - empowerment, ambition, collaboration, positivity, respect, and integrity - are threaded through the curriculum and are underpinned by the value of peace. Our dedicated team is committed to providing a nurturing and disciplined learning environment, where every child can strive to be the best they can be.

As a church school, we embrace the spiritual, educational, and social development of our children, fostering a love for learning, independence, and self-belief.

We are proud to be part of Empower Trust which is a forward thinking and outward looking multi academy trust. Together, we can create a community that works collaboratively and celebrates the achievements of every individual.

Every child is striving to be the best they can be to make everyday matter and to be part of a community that works together so everyone counts.

Where every day matters, and everyone counts.

Recent Graduations

The Defence College of Air and Space Operations has recently graduated several courses.

ASOSC 13

Air and Space Operations Specialist Course 13 graduated on 11 March. The Reviewing Officer was His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire, Anna Turner JP. The Daren Hucknall Memorial Trophy was won by Air Specialist 2 Liam Valdes. The Salesian Trophy was won by Air Specialist 2 Jamie-Lee Bamford.



ASOSC 13 with His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire.



Daren Hucknall Memorial Trophy Winner Air Specialist Class 2 Liam Valdes being presented with trophy by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire.



The Salesian Trophy Winner Air Specialist 2 Jamie-Lee Bamford being presented with trophy by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire.



ASOSC 14

Air and Space Operations Specialist Course 14 graduated on 19 April. The Reviewing Officer was Group Captain Karen Moran MA RAF.

The Daren Hucknall Memorial Trophy was won by Air Specialist 2 Polata. The Salesian Trophy was won by Air Specialist 2 Cox.

Pictured left: ASOSC 14 with Group Captain Karen Moran MA RAF

JATCC 463

Joint Air Traffic Control Course 463 graduated on 15 March. The Reviewing Officer was the High Sheriff of Shropshire – Mandy Thorne MBE DL. The Bunting trophy was won by Sub Lieutenant Watson. The Marshall Trophy was won by Flying Officer Duncan. The Alenia Marconi Systems Trophy was won by Sergeant Federici.

Pictured right: JATCC 463 with the High Sheriff of Shropshire



The Bunting Trophy Winner Sub Lieutenant Watson presented with the trophy and certificate by the High Sheriff of Shropshire.



The Marshall Trophy Winner Flying Officer Duncan presented with the trophy and certificate by the High Sheriff of Shropshire.



The Alenia Marconi Systems Trophy winner Sergeant Federici presented with the trophy and certificate by the High Sheriff of Shropshire.



Daren Huknall Memorial Trophy Winner Air Specialist Class 2 Polata being presented with trophy by Group Captain Karen Moran MA RAF.



The Salesian Trophy Winner Air Specialist 2 Cox being presented with trophy by Group Captain Karen Moran MA RAF.

Central Flying School (Helicopter) Squadron qualifies Kenyan QHIs



Graduation photo of QHI and QHCI Course 396 with reviewing officer Air Commodore Sharrocks, Head of Flying Training and Commandant Central Flying School, Group Captain Jordan.

Congratulations to Majors Robert Yegon and Stephen Kayaa. These newly Qualified Helicopter Instructors graduated from the Qualified Helicopter Instructor (QHI) and (Qualified Helicopter Crewman Instructor (QHCI) Course 396 and recently travelled back home to instruct in the Kenya Air Force.

Robert and Stephen are the first International Defence Trainees to come through CFS(H) Squadron since the introduction of the Military Flying Training System.

Not only have they been an excellent addition to the squadron but have also provided a solid example of the exceptional instruction and output standard that CFS(H) can deliver. We wish them the best of luck and hope to cross paths in the future!



Majors Yegon and Kayaa with the Juno Helicopter



Testing out the new VR headsets.

Delivery of new Virtual Reality Headsets

Central Flying School (Helicopter) Squadron, in collaboration with Central Flying School Headquarters and ASTRA funding, has recently taken delivery of ten Virtual Reality headsets. This is a new project with huge potential and possible wider applications to modernise and enhance training techniques for our future Qualified Helicopter Instructors (QHIs). The headsets provide trainee instructors the ability to “fly” and observe some of the many complex flight profiles and exercises with high fidelity and 360-degree views whilst listening to textbook instructional guidance.

This is taking armchair flying to a whole new level!

RAF Shawbury celebrates first ever QHI Graduate Direct from Pilot Training

Lieutenant Jack Cook marks the First Central Flying School (Helicopter) Squadron Graduation

RAF Shawbury recently celebrated the graduation of the first ever Qualified Helicopter Instructor (QHI) to complete the Central Flying School course, having only finished ab-initio pilot training just a few months earlier. This groundbreaking path continues to display why the No 1 Flying Training School and the Central Flying School are the envy of our allies, partners and foes, demonstrating adaptation to changing environments and adoption of contemporary thinking.

Lieutenant Jack Cook joined the Royal Navy in 2012 as a direct-entry Aircrewman and passed through the training pipeline, achieving his Wings on the Merlin Mk3 with 28 Sqn RAF in 2014. Appointments followed on 845 Naval Air Squadron (NAS) (Merlin Mk3), 847 NAS (Commando Wildcat), and 846 NAS (Merlin Mk4). His time on these Front-Line units included multiple exercises and operations in Norway, the US and the Mediterranean, as well as delivering Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief in the wake of Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean in 2017.



Lieutenant Jack Cook

Selected for commissioning and pilot training, Jack joined RAF Shawbury on the Juno helicopter. Achieving the award of the best overall trainee on 670 Squadron Army Air Corps, his exceptional instructional potential was noted by the staff. As a result, he was re-streamed from his intended Commando Wildcat role to join No 395 Qualified Helicopter Instructor (QHI) course in August 2023. Graduating from the Central Flying School in December 2023, he converted to his role with 2 Maritime Air Wing and was set loose with his first ab-initio trainees at the start of 2024. He will spend the next

period of his career instructing the basic syllabus and working up towards a categorisation as a B1 QHI, before eventually returning to his roots on the Commando Helicopter Force at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

For the right candidate, this accelerated route through to instruction is an entirely appropriate pathway and the early success of this individual demonstrates why the No 1 Flying Training School and Central Flying School (Helicopter) Squadron are renowned as the best Rotary Wing Flying Training units in the world.



Lieutenant Jack Cook delivering training as a Qualified Helicopter Instructor



Lieutenant Jack Cook receives his Central Flying School Certificate from Lieutenant Commander Ian Oakes

Ascent video spotlights rotary wing training

.....
You may have spotted filming taking place in April across the Shawbury site, involving the UK Military Flying Training System Team (MFTS).
.....

Ascent has been working on a video focussing on the full training system design, from courseware creation to lesson delivery, for UKMFTS trainees. Its purpose is to promote the professionalism and expertise of all UKMFTS instructors to the wider defence sector. It will be used at industry events, the Ascent and Lockheed Martin websites and on social channels.



Ascent personnel simulator filming



Setting up winch training shots



Filming the Juno front seat

The two-minute video – sponsored by Head of Flying Training – will demonstrate how courseware is created in-house and show how a collaborative approach supports UKMFTS as a world-class training organisation that delivers aircrew to the frontline. The video will showcase the evolution and development of our training in-line with safety requirements and technological updates.

Recent filming at RAF Shawbury included footage of the Juno aircraft, synthetic ground-based training equipment (simulators, rear crew trainer, winch trainer and classrooms), Ascent personnel and military trainees.

Look out for the full video, coming this summer!



Juno Aircraft and Aircrew filming

Flight Simulator Operators from Aquila volunteering for Severn Hospice

On Friday 1st March a group of Flight Simulator Operators (FSOs) from RAF Shawbury took part in some volunteering for Severn Hospice.

Severn Hospice provide specialist care and support for families living with incurable illnesses in Shropshire. Many of our team have seen the benefits of their services, whether personally or through family members or friends, and wanted to give back.

Nine FSOs spent the morning at Severn Hospice Bicton, helping the gardening team. Head gardener Joel showed them around and they quickly realised how important the outdoor space is to the families at the Hospice. Forks to the ready they started to aerate and scarify the grass areas. A couple of people collected the sand in the wheelbarrows and then spread the sand in the holes. The sweeping of the sand was difficult, but the team were up for the job. A well-deserved break resulted in the consumption of delicious cake and hot drinks at their café. Back to work, they managed to complete aerating the



FSOs group photo outside Severn Hospice

lawns and finished up refilling the bird feeders and the bird tables.

Two FSO's spent the morning supporting staff in the new Market Drayton store and using their IT skills they were whizzes at alphabetising

and assisting with the IT. One FSO spent the morning supporting staff in the Oswestry store, helping with the window dressing and sorting. Everyone felt that they made a difference.

To further our support for Severn Hospice a team of FSOs are taking part in the Dragon Boat Race in Shrewsbury.



The team helping out in the shop



Bringing in the sand

RAF Shawbury HIVE

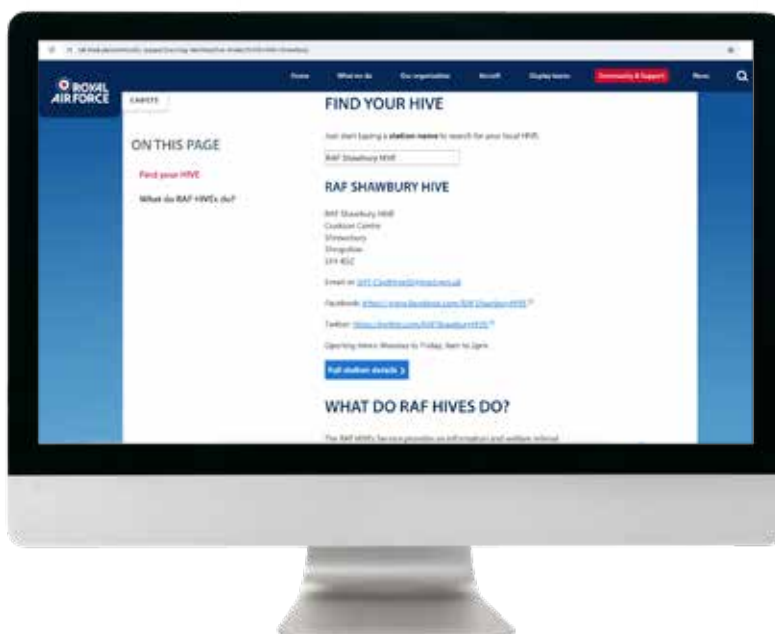
Supporting Deployed Families

Deployment Information, previously known as deployment pack ups, often varied in content and quality from station to station. The RAF HIVE Service introduced three new Deployment and Detachment Support Guides in November 23, offering one resource to access deployment information for RAF Service Personnel and, most importantly, their family members.

Now accessible to all Serving personnel and their families and unlike previous versions, these new guides have been tailored to specific groups: one for Serving personnel (SP), one for family members (such as parents, spouses, or partners), and one for SP with children. Additionally, each guide will be customised by local HIVE staff to provide unit-specific information on the support available to family members of deployed personnel.

These refreshed guides mark the beginning of a wider review, aimed at enhancing the support provided to our SP and their families, during detachment and deployment. This in turn, heralds the beginning of a wider review of communications to RAF families, primarily through RAF HIVE. Through recent families' forums conducted by RAF Community Support Staffs from HQ Air Command at a number of our Stations across the UK, RAF Community Support recognises a need to get 'back to basics' with a refresh of communication channels and methods of reaching out to families, to ensure they are well informed and able to engage with the RAF whenever possible.

There are many forms of welfare and wellbeing support available for our personnel and families living either on or off unit. The RAF HIVE Information Officer (HIO) Cheryl Foster and the Station Community Support Team are on hand to support our people and their families by providing timely and accurate information and assistance.



HOW TO CONTACT HIVE Information Centre

Email: SHY-CSptHiveIO@mod.gov.uk

Tel: 01939 250351 ext 7206
Located within Cookson Community Centre, RAF Shawbury.

Opening hours:
Monday – Friday 09.00 – 14.00.

Station specific guides are available in digital or hard copies from RAF Shawbury HIVE Service: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/hive-finder/>

There are many forms of welfare and wellbeing support available for our

families living either on or off units. The RAF HIVE Information Officer (HIO) and the Station Community Support Team are there to support our people and their families by providing timely and accurate information and assistance.

For further information signposting the relevant HIVE services contact HIVE Service Management email: Air-COSPers-DelComSptHIVEMlbx@mod.gov.uk

Cheryl Foster
HIVE Information Officer
RAF Shawbury HIVE
Information Service

Station specific guides are available in digital or hard copies from RAF Shawbury HIVE Service: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/hive-finder/>

Force Development Squadron staff compete in the London Landmarks Half Marathon

Raising money for Station Charity **Tough Enough To Care**

On 7 April, Squadron Leader Andy Smailes and Flight Lieutenant Eddie Edwards from Force Development Squadron took part in the London Landmarks Half Marathon raising funds for Tough Enough To Care, one of the Station's supported charities for 2024.

Andy had taken part in the event in 2023 and during an evening of socialising persuaded Eddie to also take part and represent Tough Enough To Care. The intrepid pair then began a period of preparation and training to get ready for the event. It was probably safe to say that the training was somewhat intermittent, nevertheless they travelled to London ready to take part in this fantastic, closed road event with a route which takes in all of the historic and cultural highlights that London has to offer; including, St Paul's Cathedral, Downing St, Pall Mall, Trafalgar Square to name but a few. Andy said, "The race was brilliant with a fantastic atmosphere and support throughout. It was an honour to run for Tough Enough To Care". Eddie added, "This was my first time competing in this awesome event, the support we received from the crowd and entertainment throughout the run, made the event so special, and to help support a great charity like Tough Enough To Care was the icing on the cake".

Tough Enough To Care is a charity who's aim is to focus toward male dominated

spaces, to promote conversations around mental health and remove the toxic stigma surrounding mental health within these spaces. It was founded in 2019 after Stu Bratt, the founder and CEO lost two friends to suicide within four days. Up to that point he was a product of male dominated environments where even talking about feelings or emotions was seen as a sign of weakness. His idea to set up a charity stemmed from seeing a couple of beer mats with simple messages about checking on a mate who has been quiet or missing lately. Within a few hours of setting up a small FB group he had offers of help and support from a huge number of people. Within six weeks they had distributed over 150,000 beer mats and 10,000 emergency contact cards worldwide. They now provide a one stop shop for mental health support all over the country, with the latest support group being set up at RAF Shawbury which is held every Wed evening at 1900hrs in the Duke of Edinburgh Youth Activity Centre.

You don't have to be suffering with your mental health to attend the support groups, its simply a safe space for men



Squadron Leader Andy Smailes and Flight Lieutenant Eddie Edwards complete London Landmarks Half Marathon

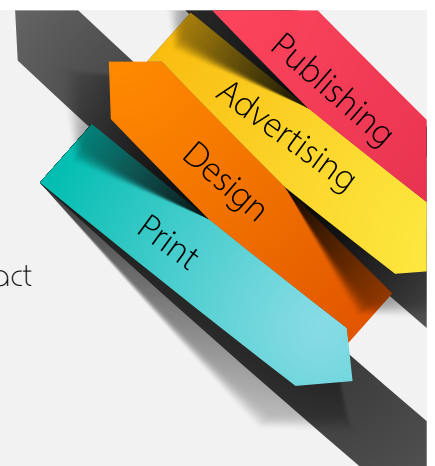
to meet and chat. Please come along and share stories and experiences over a cup of tea or coffee.

Contact Squadron Leader Andy Smailes OC Force Development Squadron for more details.

<https://toughenoughtocare.help/>

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Lottie's Way completes huge Kenya delivery visit



A mixed Military/Civilian team operating from RAF Shawbury, in North Shropshire, has completed a huge delivery visit to Kenya in East Africa.

The Taking Football to Africa and Beyond Charitable Appeal delivers 'Aid through Football' by collecting donated items of football kit and redistributing them to

children and adults across the globe. The Appeal, which is organised by Wing Commander Neil Hope MBE and Squadron Leader Mark Smales, was set up in 2006 to deliver kit to Africa. It quickly became global and to date has delivered 377,423 items of kit, including over 106,427 football shirts to 63 countries worldwide.

Gilgil, Kenya. Her aim was to complete her degree in Primary Education and then work in Kenya to continue helping others.

The Appeal team departed for Kenya on 27 March with 15 people and completed 35 separate deliveries in and around Nairobi and in Gilgil, 2 hours north of the capital on the Great Rift Valley. In total, the team delivered 18901 items including 5331 football shirts. In completing the deliveries, the team interacted with children and adults in the major slum areas of Kibera, Kibagare and Mathare as well as schools, orphanages and football teams who were all in need of essential, life changing aid. Kibera is Africa's largest slum with over one million people



Jamie Gordon, Flt Lt Dan Mills and Alec Berry distributing uniform from Grange Primary in Shrewsbury at the Rotary School in Kibera

The Appeal has recently become part of the new Lottie's Way Charity – the Charlotte Hope Foundation, set up to support less privileged children and adults across the world, but predominantly in Kenya, in honour of Charlotte, who was tragically killed in a car crash on 9th April 2022. Charlotte was an integral part of the Appeal and volunteered at the Restart Centre in



Daisy Smales in Kibera



AS1 Halle Poland and Sqn Ldr Mark Smales distributing RAF FA Vets kit at Loving Hands in Gilgil



Gail Moore and Julie Chadburn distributing Wallsend Boys Club kit at the Starkids Academy in Githorogo

living in an area of around 3 square kilometres with no permanent running water or electricity supplies and no sewerage system. In Gilgil, the team were honoured to be able to spend 2 nights at the Restart Centre, founded by the incredible Mary Coulson MBE.

Kits delivered included items donated by football teams and individuals from across the United Kingdom; from England (The Football Association) and Premier League clubs including Leicester City, Manchester United, Aston Villa, and Wolverhampton Wanderers. The team also delivered a kit donated by the Appeal's local club, and one of its top links, Shrewsbury Town FC, as well as items donated by clubs throughout Grassroots football including County Football Associations; member clubs of Sheffield & Hallamshire CFA, Hampshire CFA, Essex CFA, Worcestershire CFA, and Wallsend Boys Club amongst many others.

Community Development Officer Gail Moore said, "As a Civil Servant at Shawbury it was a honour and a privilege to be able to be part of the new Lottie's Way Charity Taking Football to Africa. Being able to use six days volunteering and leave helped fulfil my ambition to support a worthy charity



Delivering items purchased through Lottie's Way at Loving Hands Orphanage in Gilgil

and one very close to my heart working with young people."

Neil said, "This delivery visit was superb in allowing the Appeal to renew its friendships across Kenya. Building on our continued success coupled with this being my 18th Kenya delivery trip and with over 120 people taking part over the years was special, especially given the emotional issues in continuing to return to the country and people my daughter cherished. The trip was emotionally difficult but made easier by the excellent team of people joining and supporting me. I am proud that we have now started fundraising for Lottie's Way with some excellent work by the Charity lead, Chris Hope, and the Trustees. More detail at <https://lottiesway.com/> We were



Wg Cdr Neil Hope with the player of the Tournament at the Charlotte Hope Tournament organised by Mary Mbaka and the Hearts of Ruiru in Ruiru, Nairobi



The team, and friends, at DEB School in Gilgil

able to start spending the funds raised on this visit, providing essential aid through educational items for Starkids Academy in Githorogo, The Rotary School in Kibera and STATRA Academy in Kibera. Food and Bay formula was bought for Loving Hands Orphanage in Gilgil and Hope House Orphanage in Mountain View. In total over £1300 was spent, baby formula and food to orphanages and schools in Nairobi and Gilgil. I would like to thank all the people, clubs and schools that donated items delivered on this visit and to the Appeal, as well as all who have helped us achieve this amazing success, especially the team at Shawbury who help with the Appeal including Supply Receipt and Despatch and at RAF Brize Norton, BATUK, and Braeburn Garden Estate School."

Lottie's Way - The Charlotte Hope Foundation
<https://lottiesway.com/>

Four miles high in the French Alps



And it all starts at RAF Shawbury Gliding Club

During the year there are several opportunities for our club members to take part in gliding expeditions that allow service personnel to further develop their flying skills.

This year six RAF Shawbury Gliding Club (RSGC) members, including RAF Cosford based RSGC's Ian Gallacher as the expedition deputy CFI, were selected as some of the lucky participants to take part in the annual service expedition, Parcours Combattants 20 April 2024 to 5 May 2024, to Sisteron in France. If you haven't flown there before then you have to be prepared for the magnificent setting of the splendour of the French Alps. Sitting at over 1,700ft,

Sisteron airfield lies on a large plateau bordered to the West by the valley of the River Durance, and to the North, East and South by the Alps. The expedition is open to all post-solo pilots and is a fantastic and challenging opportunity for young service personnel to fly in the southern French Alps, with the surrounding area making unique demands on the flying skills, airmanship, and personal courage of pilots of all experience levels. The minimum qualification to attend is to have flown solo in a glider and amongst the Service personnel attending this year are three graduates of the RSGC gliding scholarship programme all of whom were sent solo at RAF Shawbury.

Expedition members have enjoyed some fantastic flying this year and if you think that you'd like to challenge yourself in the French Alps next year and you'd like to know more then, for an informal discussion about learning to fly with the RSGC, please contact WO Kev Morley kevin.morley863@mod.gov.uk, or Ian Gallacher ian.gallacher375@mod.gov.uk, both of whom will be delighted to answer your questions. Also available on ModNET Skype or Teams. You can also find more details on our website at <https://www.rafshawburygc.co.uk> #rafgsa #gliding #raf_shawbury #raf_cosford.

Stunning views of Sisteron and the River Durance in the French Alps - Ian Gallacher



RSGC's Ian Gallacher is at 19,500 ft flying at in Wave in the French Alps - Ian Gallacher

<https://www.rafshawburygc.co.uk/>

My Brazilian Jiu Jitsu journey so far... by Sergeant Jez Smart

During December 2022, my mental health was in a bad way. I needed something to find myself again. Whilst I was in the Station Gym I saw some people training Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, so I went over and talked to our very own Military Provost Guard Service, Staff Sergeant Mark Badham who was running the session. He told me that he had just opened up his very own BJJ Gym, The Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy in Market Drayton and I should come and have a look and see what I thought.

So off I went thinking what I have got to lose. Instantly I was made to feel welcome by everyone at the Academy especially Mark, and immediately fell in love with the "Gentle Art". I now found the focus I needed to help my mental health. Meeting friends for life and even competing in a few competitions even though I was only doing it for a few months. One sticks in my mind for a plethora of reasons.

On Sunday 4 June 2023, the Charity REORG, which is a charity set up to create safe environments through functional fitness and jiu jitsu for

veterans, military, and emergency services personnel to support their physical and mental wellbeing, held the REORG Open Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) tournament at Aldersley leisure Village in Wolverhampton. Competitors of different sizes, ages and impairments from all over the country descended to the Open and enjoyed the festival of BJJ to support this amazing charity. This was my second tournament and I was excited and apprehensive but was made to feel greatly at ease as everyone there was very sociable, especially the founder of the charity Sam Sheriff MBE who took the time to speak to me, which is one of the great traits of the BJJ community. Overall, the results didn't go my way; however, I came away with a bronze medal and I was proud to represent Marks BJJ Academy.

A Year after I started BJJ, I was surprised by Mark on the Academy's 1st Anniversary, awarding me my blue belt which filled me with a sense of immense pride and self-belief. On a personal level, BJJ greatly helps my mental health and, if anyone is looking to find something to help their mental health if they have lost their way, then I strongly suggest taking up BJJ; it's not just a sport for all abilities, it's a community which welcomes anyone and supports each other giving a huge sense of belonging. I cannot thank



Sergeant Jez Smart

Mark enough for the training and support he gives me and my fellow BJJ practitioners/Friends and would 100% recommend his Academy if you wanted to take up the "Gentle Art".

Hopefully see you soon on the mats!

**Sergeant Jez Smart,
RAF Regiment**

**The Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Academy Unit
43, Tern Valley Business Park,
Market Drayton TF9 3AG**



*Sergeant Jez Smart's
Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Blue Belt*



*Sergeant Jez Smart with
Staff Sergeant Mark Badham*

<https://reorgcharity.com/>

Royal Air Force Shawbury

Sporting Round Up

The last few months have been extremely busy on a sporting front, with several RAF Shawbury personnel competing and representing their sports at the highest level.

RAF SHAWBURY BOXING CLUB

RAF Shawbury Boxing Club personnel recently won two RAF Boxing Association Awards (RAFBA) at the Annual Awards Dinner: Sergeant Cam Lewis received the New Member of the Year award - Awarded to an individual who has joined the Royal Air Force Boxing Association (RAFBA) within the last year and in the eyes of the Committee, has demonstrated commitment and dedication above all others to the sport. He had won Silver at National Association of Boys and Girls

Clubs, had a very active season across the UK Armed Forces Development Championships and pushed up into the Elite cadre. Locally, he has supported RAF Shawbury Boxing Club completing his Level 1 Coaching course and regularly delivered training to novice boxers whilst committed to Phase 2 training. Squadron Leader Dan McIl Murray was awarded the President's Cup, which is awarded to an individual by the RAFBA President for their continued dedication and commitment to supporting the RAFBA at all levels.



Sergeant Cam Lewis receiving New Member of the Year Award RAF Boxing Association

RAF RUGBY UNION

Following on from his fine performance representing the UKAF Rugby Union team in the International Defence Rugby Competition in France, which resulted in the team achieving the Bronze Medal, Cpl Mark Williams was selected to represent the RAF in the recent Inter Services Competition against the Royal Navy and British Army. Mark was selected to play at outside centre in the first fixture against the Royal Navy at Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club. The match was an outstanding spectacle which highlighted the great level of Services Rugby with International players Cpl Josh McNally and Leading Aircraft Engineering Technician Sam Matavesi representing the RAF and RN respectively. The game came down to the wire and resulted in a 24-25 victory for the Senior Service. Unfortunately, Mark suffered an injury to his ribs during the game which made him unavailable for the fixture against the British Army at Kingsholm Stadium Gloucester in May. This game was again very close but resulted in the Army pulling away in the second half of the game to secure a well-earned victory.



Squadron Leader Andy Smailes presented with the RAFRU President Award by Air Marshal Harv Smyth

RAF FOOTBALL

Corporal Pip Wilson recently represented the RAF Women's Football team in the Inter Services Competition against the Royal Navy and British Army. The RAF team started the tournament with a match against the Army Women at Aldershot on 5 March. The game resulted in a 2-0 win for the RAF Women with Pip performing extremely well. This then led to the final match against the Royal Navy Women which was played at New Saints Football Club on 20 March. The game resulted in a 1-0 win for the RAF Women with Pip scoring the only goal of the match - a 20-yard thunderstrike - to secure the Inter Services Title for the 2nd consecutive year. Pip was also voted the player of the match. Pip has now been selected to represent UKAF Women's Football in forthcoming fixtures in the UK and Germany.



RAF Vultures Training Camp

The RAF Vultures, who were based at RAF Shawbury for their training camp prior to playing the Army at Gloucester, were unfortunately beaten by the Army Masters in a high-level game which again showed that Over 35 players can still produce an excellent level of rugby. It is widely accepted that Services Veterans Rugby is the best in the World. Despite suffering a defeat, the Vultures were very positive about the future and hope to come to RAF Shawbury again in the future to train and prepare for matches.

Sqn Ldr Andy Smailes was presented with the RAFRU President Award by Air Marshal Harv Smyth for Services to RAF Rugby Union. Andy has been involved with the RAF Vultures as a player and part of the management team since 2003 winning 18 Inter Services Caps and is currently Safety Manager for RAFRU.



RAF Vultures practising the all-important line out



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SCAN ME

If you would like to know more about boarding, please contact Mr Lee Irwin, Director of Boarding via email lee.irwin@tas.318education.co.uk



Open Events 2024

School Open Evening

Tuesday 17th September, 5.30 - 8.00 pm

Sixth Form Open Evening

Tuesday 24th September, 5.30 - 8.00 pm



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The Affordable Alternative: How State Boarding Schools Serve as a Lifeline for Service Families

In the contemporary educational landscape, the dichotomy between independent and state boarding schools is becoming increasingly significant, particularly for families seeking high-quality education without the financial burden associated with private institutions. For service families, whose lives are marked by frequent relocations and unique challenges, state boarding schools offer not only a stable and supportive environment but also an affordable alternative that doesn't compromise on quality. Among these, Thomas Adams stands out as an exemplary institution that provides exceptional boarding services with a strong commitment to supporting military families.

The financial demands of independent boarding schools are substantial, often placing them out of reach for many families. Annual fees can exceed £30,000, a figure that is prohibitive for those who do not have substantial disposable incomes or who are unwilling to allocate such a large portion of their resources to education alone. In contrast, state boarding schools like Thomas Adams offer a compelling alternative. By charging only for the boarding aspect, with education funded by the state, these institutions present a more financially feasible option for families desiring the benefits of a boarding education.

State boarding schools generally charge around £12,000 to £15,000 annually for boarding fees. This considerable reduction in cost, while maintaining educational excellence, opens doors for many families who might otherwise be excluded from the boarding school experience. It is particularly advantageous for service families, who often face financial constraints and require a stable educational environment for their children amidst the demands of military life. Military families confront distinct challenges that make the stability offered by boarding schools particularly valuable. Frequent relocations can disrupt a child's education, making it difficult for them to form lasting friendships and maintain academic continuity. The stress of having a parent deployed in conflict zones can further exacerbate the need for a stable and supportive school environment. State boarding schools provide a haven where children can thrive academically and socially, regardless of their parents' postings.

Thomas Adams, with its deep understanding of the needs of service families, provides an environment that addresses these challenges head-on. The school's commitment to creating a stable, nurturing environment ensures that children of military personnel receive the consistency and support they need to succeed.

As Director of Boarding at The Thomas Adams School in Shropshire, Lee Irwin knows that the landscape is changing "One of the primary benefits of state boarding schools is their affordability. With tuition fees subsidised by the government, state boarding schools offer an excellent education at significantly lower costs than private schools. This affordability opens up access to boarding education to a wider range of students, irrespective of their financial background. With the CEF, boarding for forces families, can be as little as £10 per day."

The school's approach to education extends beyond the classroom. Recognising the unique needs of military children, Thomas Adams provides tailored support that includes dedicated pastoral care and counselling services. These programs are designed to help students cope with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with military life, ensuring they feel supported and understood. For military families, creating a sense of community and belonging is

crucial. The frequent relocations and extended periods of separation from family members can lead to feelings of isolation and instability for children. Thomas Adams addresses this by fostering a strong sense of community within the school.

The school organises numerous activities and events that encourage students to build strong, lasting relationships with their peers and staff. This sense of belonging is further reinforced by the school's inclusive ethos, which values and celebrates diversity. By creating a supportive and inclusive community, Thomas Adams ensures that all students, including those from military backgrounds, feel valued and included.

Affordability is a critical factor that makes state boarding schools an attractive option for many families. Unlike independent schools, state boarding schools only charge for boarding, with education costs covered by the state. This makes them a more viable option for families who might not be able to afford the high fees associated with independent schools.

Thomas Adams has a long-standing tradition of supporting military families. The school works closely with families to ensure that the specific needs of military children are met. This collaboration includes providing additional support during times of deployment and helping families navigate the challenges associated with military life.

The school's staff are trained to understand and respond to the unique challenges faced by military children. This includes providing emotional and psychological support, as well as practical assistance with issues such as transitioning between schools and maintaining academic continuity during relocations. By offering this comprehensive support.

In addition to providing a stable and supportive environment, Thomas Adams is committed to preparing its students for future success. The school offers a wide range of extracurricular activities, including sports, arts, and community service programs, that help to develop well-rounded individuals. These activities not only enhance students' skills and interests but also provide valuable opportunities for personal growth and development.

The school's careers guidance program is another key aspect of its commitment to preparing students for the future. This program provides students with the information, advice, and support they need to make informed decisions about their education and career paths. For military children, who may face additional challenges in planning for the future due to the uncertainties associated with military life, this support is particularly valuable.

State boarding schools like Thomas Adams play a crucial role in the educational landscape by providing an affordable, high-quality alternative to independent boarding schools. For military families, in particular, these schools offer a stable and supportive environment that addresses the unique challenges they face. As the demand for affordable boarding options continues to grow, it is essential to recognize and support the invaluable role that state boarding schools play. By providing accessible and high-quality education, these schools ensure that all children, regardless of their background or financial circumstances, have the opportunity to thrive. For military families, who make significant sacrifices in service to their country, state boarding schools like Thomas Adams offer a much-needed lifeline, providing their children with the stability, support, and opportunities they need to succeed.



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