

Helicon

The Magazine of RAF Odiham Issue 1 • 2021

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**RAF Odiham celebrates
LGBT+ History Month!**





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Article Submissions

Please send all articles to
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Deadline date for the next issue:
Monday 7th June

PLEASE SUBMIT ALL ENTRIES
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE NO LATER
THAN THE DATE STATED ABOVE.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The editor assumes article contributors are aware that the magazine has a wide distribution to both Service and Civilian communities and contributors are ultimately responsible for the vetting of their article submissions. The editor also assumes that the contributor has ensured that personnel included in the photographs they provide are aware and have no objection to these images being used in the magazine. Advice on content or preparation of future articles can be obtained by contacting the editor. To this end the Helicon editorial staff endeavour to ensure all articles are suitable for publication. The Helicon is the magazine of RAF Odiham and its intended audience is Station Personnel and their families. It is not an official document and the opinions expressed within it are not those of the MOD, the RAF or the editorial team.

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RAF Odiham Website

www.raf.mod.uk/rafodiham

ON THE COVER

RAF Odiham celebrates LGBT+ History Month

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LANCE PRINT LTD
ADVERTISING: DARREN G
darreng@lanceprint.co.uk

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STATION COMMANDER'S FOREWORD

Group Captain Nicholas Knight

Welcome to the 2021 Issue 1 of RAF Odiham

Happy New Year!

It seems a little odd to be writing this greeting in March - a time when the supermarket shelves are filled with Easter Eggs and we are about to 'spring forward' the clocks to British Summer Time. It is, however, my first Helicon foreword of 2021 and so I felt compelled to start it that way.

I think 'uncertainty' best describes the period since I last drafted my comments for Helicon. COVID has continued to fuel much of that uncertainty, whether another period of national lockdown, the ongoing inability to see friends and family or the realities of home schooling (the newfound respect for teachers from last year is now even greater). The Prime Minister offered reason for renewed optimism in late February with clear milestones identified on the roadmap to easing of restrictions - this being driven by data and not dates. This optimism is further buoyed by the rate at which the vaccine is being rolled out across the UK; record numbers of jobs being registered on an almost daily basis. Furthermore, Lateral Flow Device testing has been introduced on station and the COVID statistics for those tested positive or isolating have reached an all time low - testimony to the excellent processes we have in place and how we continue to adhere to PHE guidelines. The Integrated Review has also added



a degree of uncertainty. As I pen these words, we await direction on how Defence will be configured to meet tomorrow's challenges. Notwithstanding the uncertainty, this issue of Helicon serves to reinforce that life goes on at RAF Odiham and how impressive the station's achievements are when set against a backdrop of ambiguity and adversity: support to operations has been unhindered, exercises successfully delivered, the estate has benefitted from much needed improvements (runway resurfacing to playgrounds) and our people continue to go above and beyond in their charitable fundraising exploits.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Helicon. On reflection, and despite the obvious challenges, it looks like 2021 will be a happier year and that certainty is around the corner!

Editor's FOREWORD

Flying Officer Rosie Middleton

Welcome to the first edition of The Helicon Magazine for 2021. A busy start to the year here at Team Odiham!

As always, I have enjoyed collating the articles for this edition and it has been a nice reminder that even despite COVID restrictions we are still running, cycling and bear crawling to raise huge amounts of money for charity, supporting our local community and delivering on operations! As we look forward to the next few months and as restrictions start to ease, I have no doubt that the upcoming editions of The Helicon will be packed with Chinook 40 celebrations,



outdoor sports activities, exercises, adventurous training and further charitable endeavours!

We hope you enjoy this edition, thank you to all of you who contributed and please do contact the team if you have any submission ideas you would like included in future editions!

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RAF Odiham Family Run and Cycle 1,000 miles for RAF Benevolent Fund

RAF Odiham's Phillips Family have completed 1,000 miles over the course of February to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Corporal Matt Phillips and Flight Sergeant Fiona Phillips are both currently serving in the Royal Air Force, based at RAF Odiham where Matt is a General Technician (Mechanical) and Fiona is an RAF medic. The husband and wife are completing the challenge together with their children, Ben (9) and Henry (6).

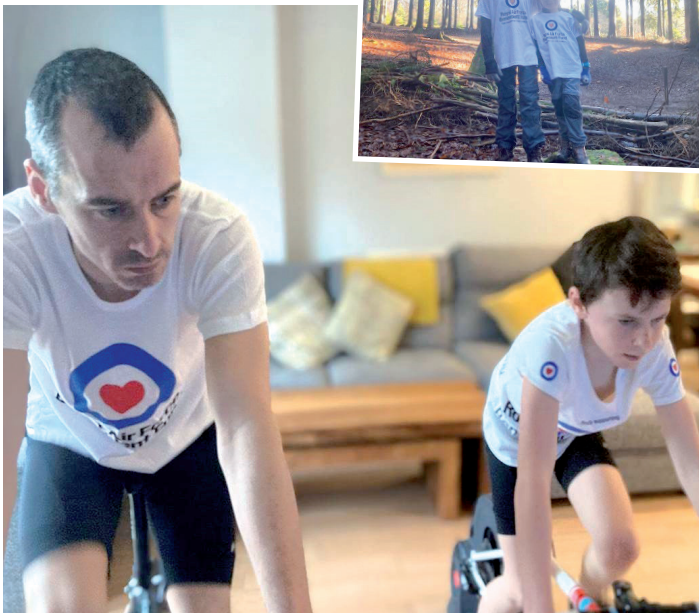
Fiona said: "Throughout our time in the RAF we've seen what great work the Fund does for both serving and former personnel and their families. Our children have benefited from Airplay parks and activities and I have seen many welfare facilities refurbished with grants from the Fund. More recently I read about the charity's support for vulnerable veterans throughout the pandemic, so we decided to get involved by fundraising."

"With Matt due to deploy soon and both of us working full time, we wanted to do something fun as a family. We asked our youngest son the biggest number

he could think of and he said 1,000 – I'm glad it wasn't any higher! The children have been keeping us motivated, and have even woken us up on several occasions in their running kit at 6.15am."

You can sponsor the Phillips family via their fundraising page: justgiving.com/familyphillips1.

Heather Kemp, Regional Fundraiser at the RAF Benevolent Fund, said: "It's so heart-warming to see the whole Phillips clan getting behind this fundraising challenge. As an RAF family, they have seen the impact of the Fund's work first-hand at RAF Odiham. Through this challenge the Phillips are not only helping to raise much-needed funds, but also raising awareness of the support available to current and former members of the RAF and their families."



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RAF ODIHAM

PTI'S RUN, CYCLE AND BEAR CRAWL FOR RAFBF

A team of seven physical training instructors based at RAF Odiham are running, cycling and bear crawling to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund, the RAF's leading welfare charity. The team, led by Corporal Harrison Knight (25), is completing a kilometre for every pound raised throughout January and February.

The team are inviting other personnel to join in by running biweekly virtual circuits on Zoom, posting challenges and workouts on the RAF Odiham MyZone fitness app, and sharing video clips on social media.

Harrison said: "January is a month to return to fitness, but morale can be low. We created this challenge to help stay motivated throughout lockdown while raising money for the RAF Benevolent Fund along the way."

"The Fund makes massive contributions to our wellbeing on station, for example through the funding of our stretching and recovery room in the gym at RAF Odiham. We know that many charities are struggling for donations, so we wanted to make sure veterans, serving personnel and reservists can access whatever support they need."



So far, the team have raised £400. You can sponsor the team via their fundraising page: justgiving.com/rafodi.

Heather Kemp, Regional Fundraiser at the RAF Benevolent Fund, said: "It's great to see Harrison and his teammates using this opportunity to challenge themselves physically by fundraising. They have helped spread the Fund's message while inspiring others at RAF Odiham, and through this they are helping us to continue supporting the RAF Family, whenever they may need us."

COVID UNCERTAINTY GROUNDS AIR TATTOO

This summer's Royal International Air Tattoo, which was due to take place at RAF Fairford, in Gloucestershire on July 16-18, has been cancelled by organisers, the RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises (RAFCTE).

RAFCTE Directors concluded that the ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 meant there were too many risks associated with pressing ahead with the airshow. It is the second year running the event has been unable to take place.

Air Tattoo CEO Paul Atherton said he and his team had been working hard during the past six months to explore ways in which the Air Tattoo could take place against the backdrop of the pandemic but, with five months to the event, there still remained too many unknowns. "If we knew, with some degree of certainty what the situation would be in the summer," he said, "we'd be able to plan ahead but, the truth is, we simply don't know. We have reached a point where, to plan further, would involve us committing large sums of money to secure the event infrastructure. Without any insurance being available this year, this money would be lost if the airshow had to cancel nearer the time. It was simply too big a risk to take."

"I know how disappointed all those who are involved in the airshow will be, from our incredible army of volunteers and loyal ticketholders to our valued corporate guests, suppliers, traders and sponsors, as well

as the many military air arms from around the globe, but I also know they will understand and support our decision. Public safety is paramount, and we also have a duty to protect the future of RIAT. By making this decision in a timely and controlled manner, we will be in a far stronger position to bounce back in 2022."

Mr Atherton added that it was particularly disappointing to have to announce the cancellation of the airshow this year, the Air Tattoo's 50th anniversary.

He said: "Everyone was looking forward to marking the Air Tattoo's 50th at RAF Fairford in July and we had some great ideas as to how best to celebrate the incredible achievements of this much-loved event since it was first staged in 1971. We remain determined to identify new opportunities to mark this important milestone this year, both by building on the success of last year's inaugural Virtual Air Tattoo as well as other exciting activities, where possible."

All ticketholders for this summer's Air Tattoo will be contacted by the end of February and offered either a refund or the opportunity to roll over their tickets to the 2022 Air Tattoo, which will take place on July 15-17.

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CANADIAN PILOT FOLLOWS IN GRANDFATHER'S FOOTSTEPS SERVING WITH THE

Royal Air Force in Africa

A Royal Canadian Air Force Chinook pilot is following in his grandfather's footsteps by serving with the Royal Air Force on Operations in Africa.

Captain Scott Stewart is currently serving as an exchange pilot with the RAF's 27 Squadron based at RAF Odiham, Hampshire. The Squadron however is currently deployed in Gao, Mali providing a heavy lift capability to the French military deployed on Op Barkhane, the French Counter Insurgency Campaign in the Sahel region of West Africa.

Capt Stewart's Grandfather, Robert Brown served with the Royal Air Force during WW2 including service with what was known as the Desert Air Force during the North African Campaign. Sadly, Robert passed away just over a year ago but before he died he was able to see Capt Stewart off as he left for the UK on his exchange. Capt Stewart said: "My Grandfather was so excited that I was going on this exchange. He was so proud of his RAF service, and now here I am serving in Africa as well."

Robert Brown was originally from Carstairs in, Lanarkshire, Scotland and joined the RAF as an 18 year old Airman in 1940. After first serving in the UK during the Battle of Britain, he was posted overseas to North Africa, joining 204 Group which later became the Headquarters of the

Desert Air Force and then to 205 Group. 205 Group was formed to oversee the bomber campaign in North Africa in support of what became the famous 8th Army

From Africa, Robert, or "Ho Ho", as he was known then served as a Radar technician in Burma. After the war Robert joined the Police in Devon. He was married to Anita, a former Land Girl who he had met on his return from the war



and they had two daughters. The eldest Sue emigrated to Canada when she was 23, and who later married William Stewart. Capt Stewart is their only son and Robert's only Grandchild.

Captain Stewart said: "After my Grandfather's retirement from the Police in England, he and my Grandmother moved to Canada to join us all in British Columbia. He told us his fondest memory was of seeing elephants in Burma during the war. The elephant by the way features on the squadron crest of 27 Sqn in which I am now serving, he would have liked that!"

This current tour is Capt Stewart's second tour with 27 Sqn to Mali and on his return; he will be posted to 450 Sqn RCAF to fly the Canadian CH-47F Chinook from Petewawa Air Base in Ontario Canada.

Reflecting on his time with the RAF, Capt Stewart said: "It has

been a blast, when I first arrived, coming from the CH-146 Griffon, it was challenging to learn a new aircraft, SOP's, accents, places, plus all the RAF rules and regulations in a short time. This was compounded by constantly being teased for my North American accent, being a Griffon pilot, love of ice hockey, and withdrawals from real Tim Horton's coffee. My 27 Sqn adventures have included most notably Ex Saif Sareea 3 in Oman, first to embark on HMS Queen Elizabeth, and being on the initial crew working to assist the Environment Agency at the Whaley Bridge dam incident.

On a personal note myself and my wife Viktoria will always remember being invited to the Queen's Buckingham Palace Garden Party, introducing the RAF to "Moose Milk", and the numerous dinning in nights at the RAF Odiham's Officers' Mess.



Snowy Training With

16 Air Assault Brigade

On 11 Feb 21 a crew from 18(B)Sqn C-Flt headed to the snowy plains of Suffolk in response to a tasking request from 16 Brigade for some underslung load training to re-validate a large number of their troops

The wintry conditions added a much-welcomed extra dimension to the training... well at least to those sheltered inside the Chinook. With Covid preventing us from getting to Norway this year, luckily the weather had bought Norway to us.

It proved to be a very productive day for the Chinook crew, with OC C-Flt specifically benefitting from a good work out prior to his fast approaching biannual Staneval Check. The training was also much appreciated by the troops on the ground. To quote the Air Ops SNCO of 13 Air Assault Support Regiment: "We re-validated 6x Landing Point Commanders and rigger marshalls for a further two years, giving them the ability to support 16 Bde as part

of the Lead Airborne Force (LAF). We also used the sortie to expose 30x new soldiers that are part of Arnhem Troop (a course ran by 23 Engineers to prepare future paratroopers and Air Assault soldiers) to what they will be doing when we deploy on operations with aviation. The self-hook up was also new to most, as we don't usually rig so you can hook up yourself. This was expertly demonstrated by the two Chinook crewmen.

The weather was also great for our training, it's not often we get to conduct Heli skills when there's a thick blanket of snow! A couple of my riggers found out the hard way by not wearing a face covering..."

All in all a great day of training was had by all, and we have already liaised regards further training in the forthcoming months.



RAF Odiham Catering Flight

complete the 'RAF Odiham to Mali' Challenge



The Challenge:

The distance from RAF Odiham, Hampshire to Mali, West Africa is 2299 miles. The Catering Flight from RAF Odiham decided to take on the challenge of completing this number of miles (2299) by either running, cycling or walking over a period of 30 days for two hugely important charities.

Execution:

Throughout the bitterly cold month of November, a team of 15 TG19 personnel consistently ran, cycled and walked in all weathers to achieve an average of 5.1 miles each per day. Some team members completed several half marathons, whilst others managed to accomplish over 154 miles running, not including additional miles completed on the bike. Despite

some of the team being tasked for short notice deployments onto Exercises CLOCKWORK, CERBERUS and LOYAL LEDA, they all maintained dedication to the cause by completing their miles in their down time.

Impressively, the Catering Flight completed the 'RAF Odiham to Mali' Challenge with 3 days to spare! However, dedicated to achieving the 30-Day challenge, they continued to build over and above the original 2299 miles. The final total for distance covered by the team was an impressive 2503 miles!!

The team raised a combined total of £2269 for their nominated charities: RAFBF and NHS charities. Due to everything that has happened throughout 2020, the NHS was deemed the favoured charity raising £1596 with the RAFBF accumulating a healthy £673, both very worthy causes.

Cpl Wickham



Prime Minister Awards

Outstanding Young SSAFA Fundraiser For Aviation Art

A 14-year-old boy and aviation enthusiast who has illustrated a book on military planes in aid of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, has received Prime Minister Boris Johnson's daily Points of Light award.

Jack Berry, from Sunderland, who has autism and is also selectively mute, began using art as an emotional outlet during the Coronavirus pandemic, channelling his interest in planes into drawing Lancaster bombers, Spitfires and Tornados. Jack's illustrations are now featured in a book, 'Flying High in the Sunlit Silence', which are accompanied by details explaining the history of each plane and helicopter, written by pilots and military experts.

While Jack's family do not have a military background, they chose for part of the proceeds from the book to go towards SSAFA's Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum (FANDF), a Tri-Service group for current Serving families or individuals who have a child or adult dependent with an additional need and/or disability, ensuring Forces families with additional needs and disabilities receive the support they need.

In a personal letter to Jack, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

"Every day I write to thank somebody in our country for doing something special. Today that person is you! With your beautifully illustrated book, you have captured the majesty of our nation's aviation history. From the restored NHS Spitfire which lit up our skies with the names of NHS heroes, to the splendour of the Red Arrows, your

pictures tell uplifting stories all while raising important funds for SSAFA."

Reacting to the Prime Minister's announcement, Jack's Mum Sara said:

"This is marvellous news for Jack and he is over the moon. For him, he just wanted to help people and do his part during the pandemic. Jack loves drawing and his drawings have pulled communities together on the whole. The book is a community project, we have had a number of letters from war veterans and as his mum I think it's amazing that war veterans want to make friends with a child with autism spectrum disorder and selective mutism."

Sir Andrew Gregory, Chief Executive of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, said:

"Jack is the 1608th person to receive the Prime Minister's UK daily Points of Light award, which was first launched in April 2014 to recognise outstanding individuals making a difference where they live. Each day, someone, somewhere in the country is selected to receive the award to celebrate their remarkable achievements, including hundreds of volunteers who have been recognised for how they have served their communities through the coronavirus pandemic. Jack has inspired everybody with whom he has come in contact; I and all in SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity salute him!"



Jack's book Flying High In The Sunlit Silence is out from January 25.

If you would like to support SSAFA's FANDF and other military charities, you can purchase it from Amazon for just under £10.

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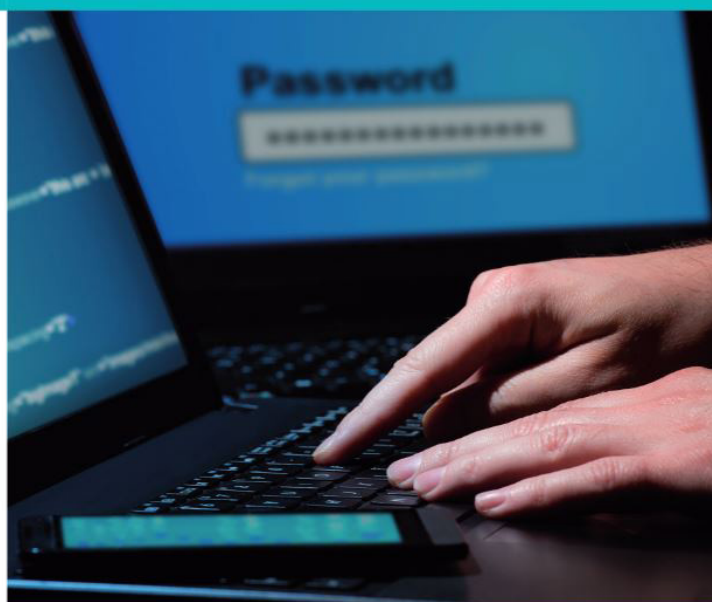
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Cyber Confident aims to ensure that all Defence personnel are cyber aware and know how to safeguard the sensitive information, critical in enabling us to carry out our Defence tasks. Information which, if it fell into the hands of our adversaries, could result in national security being seriously compromised. Secure password or passphrase creation and management plays a key role in this protection.

But having secure passwords is also critical to protection against online harms in your personal life, safeguarding you, your family, your finances, devices and even your identity.

Many day-to-day things we do online require the use of passwords or passphrases to access them – be it email, social media, shopping, banking, entertainment, subscriptions or a host of others. This makes our passwords invaluable to fraudsters, identity thieves and hostile actors. Therefore, it's critical to choose and use passwords with great care so that they cannot be used by others.

We've compiled a list of practical, easy to remember tips to help you choose and use passwords and passphrases safely and securely.

- **Use long and strong passwords.** Three random words with upper and lower-case letters, numbers, punctuation marks or special characters is best, with a total of at least 15 characters. For example: **c&ndleMOBileBOx26\$**. Do not include family, pet, sports team or similar names, birthdays or numerical sequences.
- **Never reveal passwords, passphrases or PINs** to anyone else. Do not send your passwords by email, SMS or DM, or on social media sites. **Never reveal passwords to callers** claiming to be from a company or government department you have dealings with. No reputable organisation will ask you to do this.
- Use a **separate password** for every account in case one gets breached (in which case the adversary or fraudster would be able to access all your accounts).
- If you have reason to think that some else has learned a password by any means, **change it immediately**. This may apply where there has been a data breach, or you have inadvertently revealed your password(s).
- Very few people can remember all their passwords. If you must write passwords down to remember them, make sure they are meaningless to, and unusable by other people. Keep any records of passwords remotely from your computer or mobile devices. **Never store passwords on mobile devices.**
- Consider using a **password manager**. These enable you to access all of your passwords in one secure location, and some also feature secure password generation functions. Get recommendations, read reviews and choose a password manager with two-factor authentication or 2FA (see below).
- Whenever possible, use **two-factor authentication (2FA)**, which is an additional security layer designed to verify your identity for transactions and other online services. Being required to enter a four or six-digit code that you've received by email or text, is a commonplace example of 2FA.
- **Protect your computers** (including user accounts) and **mobile devices/ PEDs** with a passphrase or PIN as a first line of defence against unauthorised access/usage.

For comprehensive, practical, expert advice visit www.getsafeonline.org

Did you know that every device that's connected to your home Wi-Fi not only receives, but also transmits data?

That's not just your computers, smartphones and tablets, but smart TVs, intruder alarms, security cameras, lighting and locks, voice assistants and smart speakers, appliances, wireless printers and even your children's toys and baby monitors. The data is transmitted to enable the very functionality of these devices and help the manufacturers to understand your usage to make upgrades and sometimes offer you add-on services.



If your smart devices or network aren't secure, the data they transmit could end up in the wrong hands – including those of cybercriminals who could hack into them – or your home network – to snoop on you and your family, control your smart devices remotely without your knowledge or authorisation, or defraud you out of your money or identity ... or both.

As RAF personnel, you could even be targeted by one of our country's adversaries for sensitive information.

We've put together some expert tips to help keep your connected home safe and secure.

The types of connected devices referred to in this advice are also sometimes referred to as 'The Internet of Things'

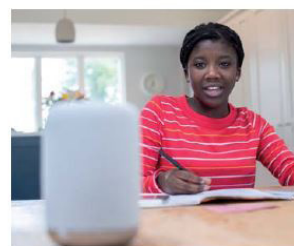


Read these practical tips to protect your connected home, your family and the RAF.

- For devices for which you need a password (as well as your Wi-Fi password) to connect, **replace factory-set passwords with secure ones you create yourself**. This is because a lot of default administrator passwords are common to every device shipped, and potentially insecure. If in doubt, check manufacturers' instructions on how to change passwords.
- **Don't use the same password for more than one connected device**, nor passwords you already use for other online accounts.
- **Make sure your Wi-Fi network is secure**, see our advice page on Wireless Networks & Hotspots at www.getsafeonline.org
- **Make sure that all your computers and mobile devices are fitted with updated internet security software/app**, and also that access to these devices is protected with a PIN or passcode.
- **Check the apps associated with your connected devices and install updates as soon as prompted**. Also, regularly check manufacturers' websites for updates, as they can be slow to push them out via their apps.



- **Read terms and conditions of use** for smart devices and apps to be clear on how manufacturers can use your data.
- **Make sure you don't discuss anything confidential** within listening range of a voice assistant or camera: this applies to personal and RAF-related conversations. If in doubt, unplug, disable or turn it off.
- **Consider that buying well-known, reputable brands** means that more care has probably been taken in securing the products – and your and your family's security.



For comprehensive, practical, expert advice on keeping safe and secure online, visit www.getsafeonline.org #RAFSafeonline

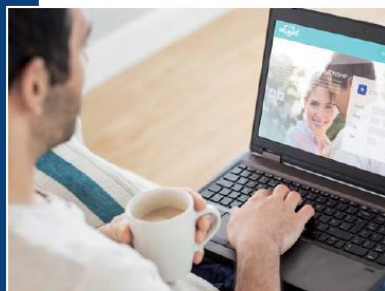
Keep your online dating safe and secure.

Fun, companionship, choice, romance ... maybe even a lifelong relationship. These days, going online is the most popular way to find a new date. And now, even more so with the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But like many things you do online, it's important to follow expert advice to ensure you do it safely.

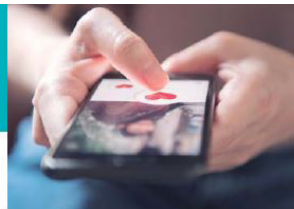
Firstly, there's romance fraud – where your 'date' is actually a cybercriminal who isn't interested in you as a person, but your money. Or catfishing, where you're lured into a relationship by someone with a false or stolen profile. Even worse, there's the possibility of physical harm when you meet your date.

We've also had cases of our adversaries posing as dates, threatening RAF and national security.



Read our expert tips to help you keep online dating safe and secure.

- Pick a reputable dating service and don't move the conversation away from the website or app's messaging service until you're confident your date is who they say they are, and that their motives are honourable.
- Use unique and secure login details on dating sites and apps to avoid your account being hacked. Never use your MoD email address to log into dating or other personal services.
- Check that matches are genuine by putting their name, profile pictures or any repeatedly used phrases and the term 'dating scam', 'romance scam' or 'catfish' into your search engine. Do a reverse image search to see if the photo is actually of somebody else.
- Get to know the person, not the profile. Ask plenty of questions, don't let your heart rule your head and don't rush into anything. This may also help you avoid becoming a victim of a false relationship where you're simply being used for sex and possibly extortion.
- Never send money, your bank details or other passwords to someone you've met online, no matter how convincing or heart-breaking the reason they give for needing it, nor how long you've been speaking to them. Banks usually do their best to track and recover your payment, but aren't responsible for any losses.
- Don't overshare personal details. Revealing your full name, date of birth, home address could lead to fraud, identity theft or even personal harm. Revealing information about your role in the RAF or your work location could compromise our security. Protect the names, details and locations of your children, family members and RAF colleagues.
- Be wary about sending intimate images or video of yourself to someone you've met online. This could lead to a range of problems such as extortion or reputational damage, and you can never be sure who will get to view the content.
- Be wary of anyone you meet online who tells you not to mention them to your friends and family. Fraudsters and sexual predators work by isolating their victims.
- Before meeting someone in person for the first time, tell a friend or family member that you're meeting, and where. Keep your mobile phone switched on, and think about arranging for someone to call you during the date so that you can make your excuses and leave early.
- Exercise digital responsibility: don't use dating services to ask for money, promote products, encourage illegal or irresponsible behaviour, spread ideologies or carry out recruitment of any kind.
- If you become a victim of romance fraud, don't be embarrassed but report it immediately to Action Fraud on www.actionfraud.police.uk or on 0300 123 2040 – as well as the dating site where you met the perpetrator. Report any assaults to the police, and any potential or actual threats to RAF or national security to RAF Police in the first instance.



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ABOUT HWCC

Hartley Wintney is one of the oldest and most beautifully sited cricket clubs in the country. Cricket has been played on our pictureque ground since the clubs inception in 1770, making us the oldest club to be playing on the same ground as we started.

As a founder member of the Hampshire Cricket League, we run 3 adult teams on a Saturday, 2 adult teams on Sunday, and operate a thriving boys and girls junior section which runs from the under-7 Development Squad through to our under-21 Academy. We are also re-starting ladies cricket in 2021!

There is also a whole host of knockout cup competitions and friendlies, as well as an annual tour of Cornwall with the Hampshire Trouts.

We are incredibly proud of our heritage. As part of our history we host an annual charity game which sees us face up against the famous faces from Hampshire County Cricket Club!

Put simply, there is something for everyone at Hartley Wintney Cricket Club.

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Photo from a recent charity game against Hampshire County Cricket Club (when crowds were a thing!)

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- Playing and non-playing memberships
- Prices starting from £25 a year
- Pavillion hire for events and parties available for all members
- Discounted bar prices for all members
- Exclusive offers from a variety of local businesses

BE PART OF THE HISTORY

If Hartley Wintney sounds like the club for you or you'd like to find out more. Get in touch with Rob Cook who will be happy to help:

cricketdirectorhwcc@gmail.com



HWCC1770



www.hartleywintney.play-cricket.com



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For Those Who Served

RAF Odiham Unit Representative LGBT+ Freedom Network

Last year we took great pride in celebrating 20 years since the ban on Homosexuals serving in the Armed Forces was lifted.

The celebrations and media coverage marking this significant historic event

resonated across all three services around the country. A range of defence buildings were lit up in rainbow colours to mark the anniversary, including Edinburgh Castle, RAF Odiham Gate Guardian and Defence Headquarters. I believe this show of positive progression has accelerated the rate at which LGBT+ equality is becoming the norm in HM Armed Forces.

With that in mind, I am confident that everyone who is part of the various Tri-Service LGBT+ Networks and their civilian counterparts, will have been delighted to hear the recent announcement by Rt Hon Johnny Mercer, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans, that thousands of British military personnel who were dismissed on grounds of homosexuality will be able to have their service medals restored where they had been stripped away when they were dismissed from the armed forces. Statistics show that approximately 200 to 250 personnel were dismissed each year because of their sexuality, and frequently had their service medals removed. The ban wrecked lives. People stepped forward for the privilege of military service and were hunted down, arrested, sent to prison and dismissed in disgrace. In

some cases, medals were cut off with a pair of scissors. This announcement, coupled with the lifting of the ban 21 years ago, shows a real commitment by the Government and HM Armed Forces to restore the honour and dignity lost by those who were dismissed before the ban was lifted.

A prime example of the pre-2000 dismissals, is the case of Senior Aircraftsman (SAC) Carl Austin, now known as Carl Jason Austin-Behan OBE:

Carl joined the RAF on 2 April 1991. Following successful completion of basic trade training at RAF Swinderby, and basic Fireman training at RAF Manston. He was posted to RAF Chivenor in May 1992.

A Citation of Carl's heroic events the following year are awe-inspiring and is as follows:

"On 30 September 1992, SAC Austin was a member of a 7-person Crash/Rescue team at RAF Chivenor. At 11:50am, an armed hawk aircraft crashed on the westerly threshold of the main runway. One pilot had ejected but the other remained trapped in the burning wreckage. SAC Austin and the crew arrived at the scene within 2 minutes of the alert being sounded. As a member of the immediate rescue team of 3, Austin knowing the aircraft to be armed with cannon ammunition and bombs, completely disregarded his own safety and entered the area surrounding the cockpit, which was still thick with flame



and dense acrid smoke, in order to assist with the pilot's rescue. Once the rear canopy had been blown to gain access to the cockpit, Austin climbed onto the top of the fuselage and succeeded in lifting out the unconscious pilot. Temperatures were in the region of 650°C at the height of the fire and Austin ran the risk of receiving serious personal burns.

Throughout the incident SAC Austin displayed exceptionally high levels of courage, professionalism and determination in such a life-threatening situation. His unselfish actions ensured that he played a full part in preventing a pilot from dying in the burning wreckage of his aircraft."

For his actions in February 1993 Austin was awarded the Royal Humane Society Bronze Medal for his efforts in saving a member of aircrew from the burning wreckage.

Fast forward a few years, and on 15 April 1997, Carl was called into a meeting with senior RAF staff and the RAF police. In the six years of service, he had dedicated his life to the RAF, had been mentioned in the Queen's Birthday Honours list and in 1993, was recognised for

his act of heroism. This meeting, however, was not to applaud him for his continued contribution to the armed forces, it was to begin dismissal proceedings for having been identified as a homosexual by a member of the public. Carl was stripped of his medals and given an hour to pack up his belongings, before he was escorted from MoD property. Military personnel found to be gay could be sent to jail for up to six months. Carl avoided this conviction due to his exemplary service record, and instead was suspended from the RAF with immediate effect.

In 2001, he was awarded the title of 'Mr Gay UK', and then years later, in 2011, he was elected the Labour councillor for Burnage. In May 2016, a year after his marriage to his partner Simon, Carl became the first openly gay Lord Mayor of Manchester. In 2019 New Year's Honours Carl was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

The announcement by Rt Hon Johnny Mercer, means Carl will now be able to reclaim his Royal Humane Society Bronze Medal, awarded to him after rescuing a pilot from a burning



aircraft in 1992. A medal that he undoubtedly deserves to wear with pride.

This story sends such a strong message; yet the fact that Carl had served in office as the Lord Mayor of Greater Manchester and been appointed OBE before he could wear his medal once again, means there is more to be done, and we must tackle issues not just of today and tomorrow but of yesterday also.

Today, our Armed Forces are the most inclusive in the world. We take pride in all who serve regardless of their sexuality. In stark contrast, in the 21 years since the ban was lifted, nothing

has changed for some LGBT+ veterans, many of whom have criminal records, face housing, health and financial problems and have been neglected by organisations that have a duty under the Armed Forces covenant to be inclusive.

We hope that this is the beginning of a long overdue return of LGBT+ veterans to the military family and the protections of the Armed Forces Covenant. I hope that support comes quickly to a part of our veteran community who were treated unfairly.

Corporal Farren Ekins

Royal Air Force Chinooks Conduct

Heavy Lift Operations In Mali



An RAF Chinook has delivered heavy equipment to extend French and Malian forces operational range in as part of the French Op Barkhane counter insurgency operations in the West African Sahel region.

The recent operation saw a Chinook of 1310 Flt lift a large Air-portable Fuel Container to a Forward Operating Base to enable ground and air reces to operate at a greater distance from Gao. This operation required several days of planning before personnel from the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron and the crewman of the CH-47 were able to successfully under sling the container and transport it the 25 nautical miles to the camp.

The three Chinooks based in Goa Mali that form 1310 Flt are currently operated by personnel from RAF Odiham based 27 Squadron RAF, together with supporting elements from the Tactical Support Wing and Joint Helicopter Support Squadron.

Lt Col Steve Brining, the UK National Component Commander, said: "The UK's contribution to the French mission, Op Barkhane, is important by providing heavy support helicopter lift. This enables French and Malian ground and aviation elements to operate at significant range and remain resupplied.

"The key to our success has been the full integration of 1310 Flt with the French GTD-A, and latterly, the Danish Aviation Detachment, to integrate our Chinooks with the Danish Merlin and French, Cougar,

Puma Tiger, Gazelle and Caiman helicopters. 2020 saw the detachment maintain a high tempo of operational sorties that delivered strong support to the ongoing mission and is a

testament to the skills and professionalism of all the personnel deployed here in Mali"



Another recent operation demonstrated the integration of the French led helicopter force, when an RAF Chinook flew in formation with a Danish Merlin and a French Caiman helicopters to extract French infantry from a location south of Gao at the conclusion of their task. The whole formation was escorted by two French Tiger helicopters and demonstrated how the whole force is now integrated.

Colonel Sylvain the French Commander of the Groupement Tactique Desert – Aerocombat (GTD-A) said:

"The GTD-A, takes under command all of the deployed helicopters supporting Op BARKHANE within Mali. The aim is to provide direct support to

ground units, deliver MEDEVAC and possess the capability to conduct autonomous operations against armed terrorist groups.

Given the huge scale of Mali and the operating area, these tasks are achieved on a daily basis by French, British and Danish aviation aircrew and aircraft. These personnel are fully integrated into the structure of the GTD-A, all share common missions and frequently fly as mixed formations. Sorties are standardised in order to enhance flight safety, but this also gains efficiency across the board. The excellent degree of operational success illustrates the exceptional levels of integration and synergy between the three nations. It is a fantastic example of teamwork with a common mind-set."



RAF Odiham in pictures







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OMCC Basingstoke Hospital

Christmas Donation



Over the last 20 years, the RAF Odiham Motorcycle Club has been donating Christmas presents to the Children's Ward at Basingstoke Hospital. This year was no exception, even with COVID hampering shopping and wrapping the presents.

Cpl Dean Pyle and Sgt Jim Field arranged with Smyths Toys in Basingstoke to pick up £500's worth of toys. The shop kindly offered to open an hour early to give them both free rein in the shop, kiddies in a sweet shop comes to mind! The children can age from babies to teenagers, so it is a bit of a minefield. Luckily the store manager was there to help select a good mix from slime to Jumanji. It was nice to hear that all of your childhood board games are also still cool!

Normally, a manic present wrapping event happens at the Families Club where the OMCC meet. This year though with

COVID mitigation measures in place at the hospital, the staff informed us that the presents would be left to 'cold soak' for a few days and then they would wrap the presents themselves. Children on the ward over the festive season are kept to a minimum, there are however always children who have choice but to stay in and be monitored. Presents are handed out to all those who are in on Christmas Day and if there are presents that are left over, then the community nurses take them to those who are being looked after at home.

No other charity has donated like this in the past and the OMCC also do the same at



Easter with chocolate eggs being donated to those children who are in at that time.

The OMCC have a full season of events planned with Airfield Riding Days, Off Road Riding, Tours, Biker Down courses to name but a few for 2021. Our website has just been revamped and we invite all of you with interest in riding to take a look at www.omcc.co.uk It's free

for military personnel to join and the benefits can be huge with lots of discounts on offer through various shops and even ferry travel. Your support means that we can generate more monies for good causes.

Please contact FS Gary Baker who is OIC of the club for more information.

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"No really, it's all ~~good~~" too much!

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

Are you or someone you care about finding it tough? We are holding mental wellbeing training courses online for non-serving members of the RAF family.

We'll help you to see things differently and learn practical steps to overcome some of your biggest challenges.

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