

THATCHAM NEWS

Christine's a high flier

Daring 78-year-old shows no fear as she completes wing walk for RAF charity

A 78-YEAR-OLD woman has proved age is just a number after completing a wing walk on top of a plane at more than 80 miles per hour.

Christine Belcher, from Thatcham, completed her charity flight at Rendcomb Aerodrome, Gloucestershire, to raise funds for a Royal Air Force charity.

Mrs Belcher was strapped to the top of a Boeing bi-plane for a 15-minute journey in aid of the RAF Wings Appeal, which helps raise the funds needed to support serving and ex-RAF personnel and their families.

She said on the morning of the flight, at the end of May, there was no time for her to feel nervous, as by the time she was suited, it was time to fly 800ft in the air.

"It was quite exciting, I wasn't actually scared," she said.

"I was quite comfortable up there, I surprised myself and the sound of the [plane] roaring was very exciting."

However, she said the process of climbing atop the plane was more



Christine Belcher gives a thumbs up after her wing walk and, left, during her time with the RAF

difficult than originally expected.

"It took every one of my 78 years to get up, you don't get any help – it was like climbing Everest," she said.

"I was relieved to get on to it, and thought everything else would be OK after that."

"It was a great exhilaration to get

to that point."

As her family watched from below, Mrs Belcher spent 15 minutes being tilted and thrown about in the air.

"I couldn't wave, the wind was too strong, but did manage a thumbs up when I got down," she said.

Apart from being a 'bit of fun', Mrs Belcher said she wanted to do the wing walk to prove to herself that she was capable of doing

something so extreme.

She said: "The last couple of years had started to make me feel more anxious about things I couldn't control so I decided to do something to terrify myself and see what happened."

"So many write people of my age off so it was a challenge I was determined to overcome."

Despite her morning of excitement in the air above the Cotswolds, Mrs Belcher said that she is going to be staying on the ground for a while – and she has said a firm no to tandem parachuting in future.

"I'm now full of bruises I didn't even realise I had!"

In total she managed to raise £2,390 for the cause, which she said she chose to raise money for as 89p out of every £1 donated goes to welfare – which she said is very important to RAF families.

The charity is also special to Mrs Belcher for another reason, as this year will mark 60 years since she joined the RAF at 18, as a nursing attendant in Lancashire.

She also went on to accompany her husband on his tours of duty in various UK RAF hospitals, as well as in Germany and Cyprus over 30 years.

Her youngest son also served as an engineering officer for 22 years, so the cause remains one close to Mrs Belcher's heart.

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Keeping in touch

Have you got a story? Contact our Thatcham reporter Madison Rolfe on (01635) 01635 886637 or email: newsdesk@newburynews.co.uk

News updates from Thatcham are now available online throughout the week. Go to newburytoday.co.uk and select the district pages

newburytoday.co.uk



Town council to publish accounts

A REPORT of Thatcham Town Council's accounts will be published at a full council meeting on Monday.

The meeting will also cover the issue of bins, the future of the Brownsfield Road site and recommendations to finalise the Thatcham Town Cricket Club lease.

Public attendance is welcomed at the meeting in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brownsfield Road.

It starts at 7pm.



School staff rise to the challenge

A GROUP of school staff have been taking strides to raise money for improved outdoor spaces at their Thatcham school.

Twenty-eight staff members from Francis Baily Primary School took on the challenge of walking 13 miles from Hungerford to Thatcham.

On Sunday, May 17, the group took part in the sponsored walk to raise funds to improve its school playgrounds and outdoor spaces.

The current quotes for the school to re-tarmac some areas and update the markings across the playgrounds come in at around £15,000.

The staff said this new provision will be essential for children's development – in providing a space for them to relax, play, build friendships and develop confidence and social skills.

From the walk, the group raised £3,100, and they are already looking for other ways to raise funds in the future.

A spokesperson for the school said: "The walk was amazing, it was such a good day and the weather was perfect."

"It was also lovely to spend time with friends and colleagues and just have a chat."

"We covered over 13 miles in the end and are currently at



They did it! The group reaches the end of their 13-mile walk

just over £3,100 in sponsorship which is fabulous.

"Many are already talking about next year!"

They thanked those who had already shown support: "We are very grateful for the support we have already received from families and the local community, and hope this event will raise both funds and awareness for the value of well-resourced outdoor play

areas for children."

The school also recently celebrated the opening of a new building for Year 5 and 6 pupils in March, which includes six new classrooms, two breakout learning areas and was built with sustainability in mind.

The project began in 2022 and was funded by the Department for Education through a successful bid to the Condition Improvement Fund.

Motorists warned of Lower Way roadworks

MULTI-WAY signals will be installed on Lower Way next week, causing possible delays for motorists.

From 9.30am to 2.30pm on Wednesday, June 24, multi-way traffic lights will be in place adjacent to the junction

of Robertsfield.

The lights are in place for utility repair and maintenance works by Thames Water.



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