

# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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ON LATEST  
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Cover picture: Graeme Main

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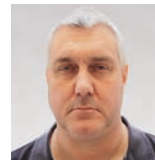
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## Yesterday's war, today's lessons



EXACTLY two decades ago this month, the UK government launched a campaign in Iraq that would forever

change the face of the British Army.

The subsequent six years of Op Telic altered the Service's military mindset as much as it marked a significant evolution in the likes of protected vehicles, kit and equipment.

The deployment also attracted huge criticism – not least for a lack of forward thinking in planning for peace. But British troops, with historic connections to the region, ultimately helped to take the country forward.

Learning past lessons has always been one of the Army's great strengths. And in a world 20 years on from Telic, amid a Russian invasion of neighbouring Ukraine, those who took part in the mentoring of the Iraqi security forces have gifted their experience to a new generation.

Today's Op Interflex has again seen British instructors lead the training of another nation's force, this time on UK soil as they help counterparts from Eastern Europe defend their homeland.

As we remember the Telic generation in this issue, including 179 troops who lost their lives, it is heartening to see that their important legacy prevails.

**Cliff Caswell • Assistant editor**

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A temporary task force has been set up to deal with the problem of mould in Service quarters

Picture: Shutterstock

## 'It's not going to happen overnight'

Housing maintenance backlogs are coming down, says DIO, as it outlines more improvement measures

**O**VERDUE maintenance tasks on married quarters have dropped by more than half since December but pressure must be kept on suppliers to do better, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's head of accommodation has said.

In an update with *Soldier* on the troubled families housing contract, Air Cdre James Savage (pictured) said outstanding works were now numbered at 8,322, down from 21,100 before Christmas, when cold weather left some 230 homes without heating or hot water.

Speaking shortly before this issue went to press, the officer said that figure was now in single digits, while calls to Pinnacle's National Service Centre were being answered "in seconds, rather than minutes or hours".

"The direction of travel is positive," he continued. "The two biggest categories of complaints by far have been the duration of works and communication."

"The backlog of tasks is coming down significantly and the average response times have been improving."

"On the communication side we've told Pinnacle, Amey and Vivo to stand up a network of case handlers."

"When a family calls in reporting a significant problem that can't be fixed quickly, a point of contact out in

the regions will be identified to liaise with them to make sure the scheduling of work is as quick as possible and update them on what's going on."

A 19-strong team had been recruited and should come online early this month, predicted Air Cdre Savage.

Elsewhere, a temporary task force has been set up to deal specifically with houses affected by mould.

In serious cases families would be offered alternative accommodation, while lesser instances would see them given support with cleaning and prevention measures, he said.

The developments followed high level meetings between ministers and senior executives from the contractors.

But with the first anniversary of the Pinnacle/Vivo/Amey contract approaching in April, *Soldier* continues to receive reports of poor service.

Residents of Trenchard Lines, Upavon, for example, said they had yet to notice any improvement, with appointments still frequently missed and persistent mould left unaddressed.

However, Air Cdre Savage insisted the DIO would be "keeping up the pressure on suppliers".

"Director-level meetings are still happening two or three times a week," he added.

“Average response times have been improving”



> continued page 11

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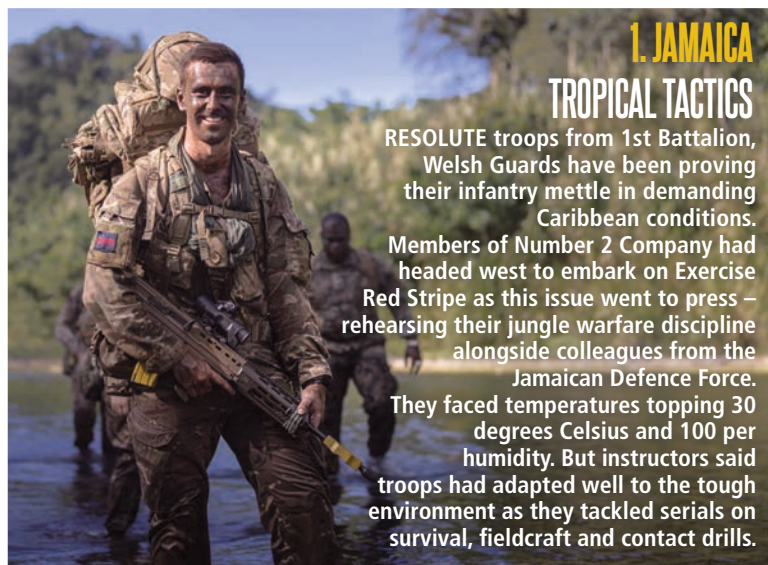


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# GLOBAL SITREP



## 1. JAMAICA

### TROPICAL TACTICS

RESOLUTE troops from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards have been proving their infantry mettle in demanding Caribbean conditions.

Members of Number 2 Company had headed west to embark on Exercise Red Stripe as this issue went to press – rehearsing their jungle warfare discipline alongside colleagues from the Jamaican Defence Force. They faced temperatures topping 30 degrees Celsius and 100 per humidity. But instructors said troops had adapted well to the tough environment as they tackled serials on survival, fieldcraft and contact drills.

## 2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

### RUN RABBITS

AN arduous test of core soldiering skills lies in store for personnel from 1st Battalion, Scots Guards who have arrived in the South Atlantic.

They have taken over as the Roulement Infantry Company – relieving colleagues from 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

Nicknamed The Rabbits, the troops from C Company are poised to operate with counterparts from the two other Services and the Falkland Islands Defence Force.

Officer commanding Maj Matt Teasdale (SG) said soldiers were looking forward to their time on the islands, where past comrades fought in the 1982 conflict.



## 2. FALKLAND ISLANDS



## 3. GERMANY

### NEW TOUR DAWNS

CABRIT-BOUND personnel had been given a final clean bill of health for their demanding six-month Estonia outing as this issue went to press.

The troops – from The Queen's Royal Hussars battlegroup – are now setting up in the Baltic state after taking part in the three-week Exercise Tallinn Dawn.

Some 800 soldiers and 250 vehicles – including the lead unit's Challenger II tanks – took part in the validation package at Sennelager, signing them off as the backbone of Nato's enhanced forward presence in the east.

Battlegroup boss Lt Col Stephen Wilson (QRH) said troops were well drilled for Op Cabrit 12. "The opportunity to hone our skills in a new environment is the pinnacle of our role as armoured soldiers," he added.

## 4. OMAN

### POACHERS PUT TO THE TEST

THE austere plains of Ras Madrakah training area provided a rigorous trial of desert-warfighting skills for the 2 Royal Anglian battlegroup.

With a stint at the spear of Nato's very high readiness task force looming in January 2024, the personnel, operating alongside the Royal Army of Oman, took on a notional peer enemy during Exercise Khanjar Oman – the first in a four-month series of drills at the Duqm regional hub.

CO Lt Col Ben Hawes said the opposition had thrown test after test at his troops.

"We've operated with every one of our radio frequencies jammed, with no GPS and have worked at night for long periods," he commented.



## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

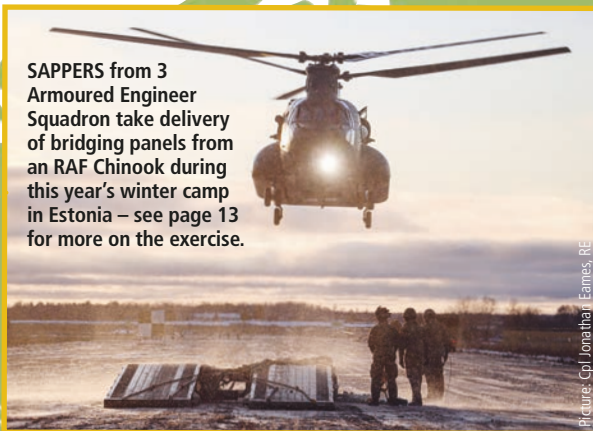
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SAPPERS from 3 Armoured Engineer Squadron take delivery of bridging panels from an RAF Chinook during this year's winter camp in Estonia – see page 13 for more on the exercise.



Picture: Gp Jonathan Eames, RE



Picture: Mick Latter

### 7. NEPAL EYES RIGHT

MORE than 200 Nepalese recruits are beginning their Army careers at Catterick's Infantry Training Centre after an attestation ceremony and parade in Pokhara (shown).

Having fought off hundreds of competitors to secure their slots, including during the infamous Doko race – a 5.8km uphill slog carrying baskets weighing 15kg – the latest intake became the first new Gurkha personnel to swear their allegiance to King Charles III.

### 5. NORWAY TRUE NORTH

MEMBERS of 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps teamed up with Royal Marine colleagues to put aircrews through survival training in the Arctic Circle during Exercise Clockwork.

Staged at Bardufoss camp, the cold weather aviation operators' course saw personnel from Joint Helicopter Command spend five nights in the field, and take part in avalanche rescue and ice-breaking sessions.



Picture: PO Phot Kyle Heller, RN

### 6. KENYA UPSKILLING AFRICAN ALLIES

THE Nairobi-based British Peace Support Team (Africa) has dispatched UK instructors across the vast continent as part of its ongoing mission to strengthen partner nations' armies.

In the latest package to take place on the outfit's home turf, a short-term training team from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards put 23 soldiers from the Kenyan Defence Force through their paces in dismounted recce and stabilisation operations drills.

As OC Lt Sean Douglas explained, the train-the-trainer course (pictured above) would enable personnel to pass on vital skills to units likely headed for Somalia and the



Democratic Republic of Congo in the near future.

"Given the extremely high tempo of their deployments, it is imperative that these capabilities are continually developed," he added.

Training the trainer was also the focus of a month-long package in Liberia (shown right), where, thanks to a UK cohort of mixed cap badges, eight newly-qualified medics and 11 counter-IED instructors will now share their knowledge with colleagues gearing up for UN duties in Mali.

A further 150 of the country's personnel received tuition in infantry drills for peacekeeping operations.

The Brits' officer commanding, Capt James Furse (R Welsh) put the success of the training down to the "enthusiasm, creativity and

professionalism of the instructors, as well as the engagement shown by the students".

And an all-female class from the Zambian Defence Force completed a three-week team medic course ahead of forthcoming stints on UN missions in Mali and the Central African Republic.

Under the guidance of British and Zambian instructors, 39 Servicewomen learnt life-saving skills for austere environments, including first aid under fire, rapid triage, casualty extraction and paediatrics, plus female-specific care.







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The Mantis X sensor has helped to produce some remarkable results

# Are you well on target?

Hi-tech sensors are upping the marksmanship game of recruits

**A** CUTTING-EDGE system that records live-firing performance is showing massive potential for improving marksmanship among new recruits, recent trials have found.

The equipment allows instructors to view and analyse rounds being fired in real time, and marries that information to data gathered on the soldier's technique as well as ambient conditions such as wind and humidity, which can affect a bullet's trajectory.

It means recruits and instructors can quickly understand the areas requiring focus and improve results.

The kit, called XCalibr, also provides constant feedback to the soldier via a mobile phone app, so they can gauge their performance and double-check techniques during the course of the live-firing session.

The Futures Directorate is continuing to evaluate how the technology can be used to improve marksmanship performance. But the results so far have been extremely impressive, Maj Alan Lipowski (Scots) of the department's combat training section told *Soldier*.

"Both the instructors and recruits who took part in the trial all speak very highly of the system," he added. "The soldiers can benefit from virtually every single round that they fire.

"While using it we almost doubled the first-time pass rates of the annual combat marksmanship test.

"Also, for the first time, we were able to fully and objectively assess an

individual's performance in live-fire tactical training."

The supplier of the equipment – Cervus Defence – created XCalibr by combining their own software with existing technologies.

One is the location of miss-and-hit bars which are already used by the Army and employ sensors to record exactly where a round strikes the target board.

The other, Mantis X10, is a small, highly sophisticated measuring device that is mounted on a weapon's Picatinny rail (shown in red above).

This collects data on even the smallest movements of the rifle before, during and after a round is fired to provide instant feedback.

When these devices are combined with Cervus's own software, the package provides a full picture of the soldier's performance, accurately identifying underlying reasons for any fluctuations in accuracy.

"It's simple to use and the positive impact it's had on the marksmanship of the recruits has been remarkable," said Maj Lipowski.



“We almost doubled the first-time pass rates”

## HOUSING MAINTENANCE

> continued from page 7

■ "There is very close engagement and close supervision of what they are doing, and we absolutely intend to do so until the standard of performance is up to the degree required.

"Realistically, that's not going to happen overnight. It's months' work to get to that point, but we're not accepting anything below what we set out in the contracts."

● see page 49

# 8,322

Repairs still outstanding on Service families' housing

IN NUMBERS

## GURKHA LOGGIES MOVE ON

■ 15 AIR Assault Support Squadron has joined the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team. The unit – now part of 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps – has relocated from Abingdon to Colchester.

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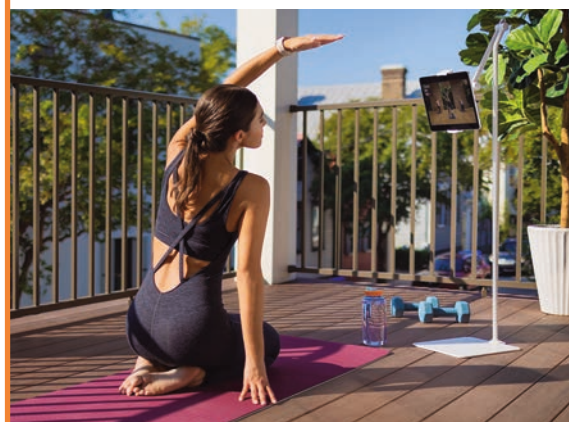
LAST month's spine line clues – (Cfn Vladimir) Oleinic, (Pte Aiden) McDonald, (Cfn Sam) Dalby, and (Pte Seb) Potter – were all leading contenders for honours at the Army Judo Championships.

This month we have teamed up with Twelve South, a leading designer of Apple accessories, to offer one lucky reader a **HoverBar Tower** – a flexible floor stand for tablets that's ideal for home workouts.

It is height adjustable, from under three feet to more than five feet, and comes with a rotating bracket to hold a tablet in portrait or landscape position. It is available for purchase only through Apple and Amazon.

To be in with a chance of winning one for free, tell us what links the clues on the spine of this issue.

Answers, including phone number, to the usual address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by March 31.



SPINE LINE COMPETITION



# TEAM TURKEY



Pictures: Sgt Robert Weideman, RLC

■ AIRBORNE medics deployed to earthquake-struck southern Turkey to lend specialist skills to the aid effort there.

Troops from 16 Medical Regiment, some of whom had been on exercise in Turkey when the disaster struck, worked with their Royal Air Force counterparts to establish a treatment facility in Turkoglu, close to the epicentre.

Equipped with clinicians, a surgical capability, an emergency department and two intensive care beds – among other provisions – the set-up was ready soon after their arrival and is one of three facilities now operating on the site of a community hospital damaged in the tremors.

Lt Col Seb Burn (RADC) said together with the Turkish authorities and staff from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, troops were geared up to provide life-saving support.

"It is hard to comprehend the scale of devastation and human suffering caused by the earthquake," he continued.

Pharmacy technician Sgt Hayley Brown (RAMC) added: "As a mother, watching the television and thinking of how my own family would deal with something similar has been heartbreaking.

"We're expecting to treat a lot of patients with a wide range of issues, but we'll take it day-by-day and do all we can to help."

Meanwhile, humanitarian aid – including tents and thousands of thermal blankets – has also been delivered by the RAF.



Words: Simon Ballinger Pictures: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC



## Lessons learnt

**RESOLUTE** soldiers braved subzero temperatures as they waged warfare against a tough mock enemy in the depths of Eastern Europe's frozen forests.

The troops – from The King's Royal Hussars battlegroup – joined Nato allies as they prosecuted Exercise Winter Camp around their Tapa base in Estonia. And the two-week package pushed personnel to the limit as they were tested in combined arms manoeuvre as well as personal skills and drills.

Challenger 2 tanks were among the assets deployed for the serials, which also saw air moves carried out by alliance helicopters. All the while, counterparts from 1st Estonian Brigade took on the role of a determined enemy force.

The exercise proved a fitting conclusion to the hussars' six-month Op Cabrit tour – leading Nato's enhanced forward presence battlegroup in the country.

With Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine continuing to underscore the deployment's importance, top brass believe soldiers are capably carrying a deterrence mission as they maintain their vigil of the alliance's eastern flank.

Speaking afterwards, Cabrit commander Col Dai Bevan told soldiers they had proved themselves capable in tough conditions.

He continued: "Winter camp has necessarily been complex – the cementing of the battlegroup's cold weather credentials.

"The impact of winter on operations is profound – mobility is reduced and administration and maintenance in the field takes skill, effort and time."

Battlegroup commanding officer Lt Col Will Hodgkinson (KRH, shown left) shared the sentiment, praising troops for carrying off a crucial mission. His force was being relieved by The Queen's Royal Hussars – which will be leading the formation into the summer – as this issue went to press.

"Winter camp has drawn together the full range of Nato force elements out here in Estonia," the CO concluded. "This has succeeded in enabling us to become more agile, integrated, lethal and expeditionary." ■



“It enabled us to become more agile and lethal”







# on winter camp



## Meanwhile back on home soil...

■ UKRAINIAN president Volodymyr Zelensky was given an insight into how the Army is helping ready his troops for action during a whistle-stop tour of the UK.

The premier dropped in on Lulworth Camp with prime minister Rishi Sunak, where he spoke to Armoured Vehicle Fighting Gunnery School instructors helping to train his personnel on Challenger 2 main battle tanks donated to the war effort.

One of those, Armoured Group 2iC SSgt Gav Smith (RDG, shown above right), said it had been a very busy time at the school but Ukrainians there were focused and eager to learn.

"They have also surprised us with the speed they take on information considering the language barrier," he told *Soldier*.

"We translate through an interpreter, so lessons take double the time. And Challenger 2 is a complex piece of kit.

"But morale is really high, you can tell that.

"Some of them are from areas in Ukraine that pretty much no longer exist, so they are keen to get trained and go back to join the fight again."

He described the moment he met President Zelensky as the leader came off a Chinook helicopter in Dorset as "pretty surreal".

"I have been watching this conflict and what it means since the war began," he explained.

"The president shook my hand and asked how the soldiers were getting on, and I told him they are doing very well.

"They really are doing fantastically."

# 10,000

Ukrainian troops trained so far at sites around the UK as part of Op Interflex



# “ They really are doing fantastically ”



View from the  
**GROUND**



**We asked troops about the highs and lows of winter camp 2023...**

**LBdr Brady Gilmartin, RA**

**Age:** 24

**Role:** Working with the multiple launch rocket system

**Takeaway:** The issued Carinthia kit – trousers, gloves and jacket – are far warmer than our usual clothing

**Top tip:** Layer up and don't be afraid of working with other nations



**Tpr David Kavanagh-Taverner, KRH**

**Age:** 20

**Role:** Driver

**Takeaway:** Frozen conditions make driving more difficult. We put snow chains on the wheeled vehicles and applied a crampon to the tank tracks to give better traction

**Top tip:** In the snow, it's important to drive at lower speeds so you don't spin out



**LBdr Lauren Parry, RA**

**Age:** 24

**Role:** Detachment commander, 12 Regt RA

**Takeaway:** The importance of getting used to the sort of climates we could fight in

**Top tip:** Enjoy the time here while you can. It can be hard but the leave at the end will be worth it



**Tpr Thomas Wood, KRH**

**Age:** 21

**Role:** Working in SQMS packet

**Takeaway:** The cold weather changes how you operate. You have to think differently and sometimes on your feet

**Top tip:** Take time to get the basics right in your planning. This gives you the space and capability to operate in the field

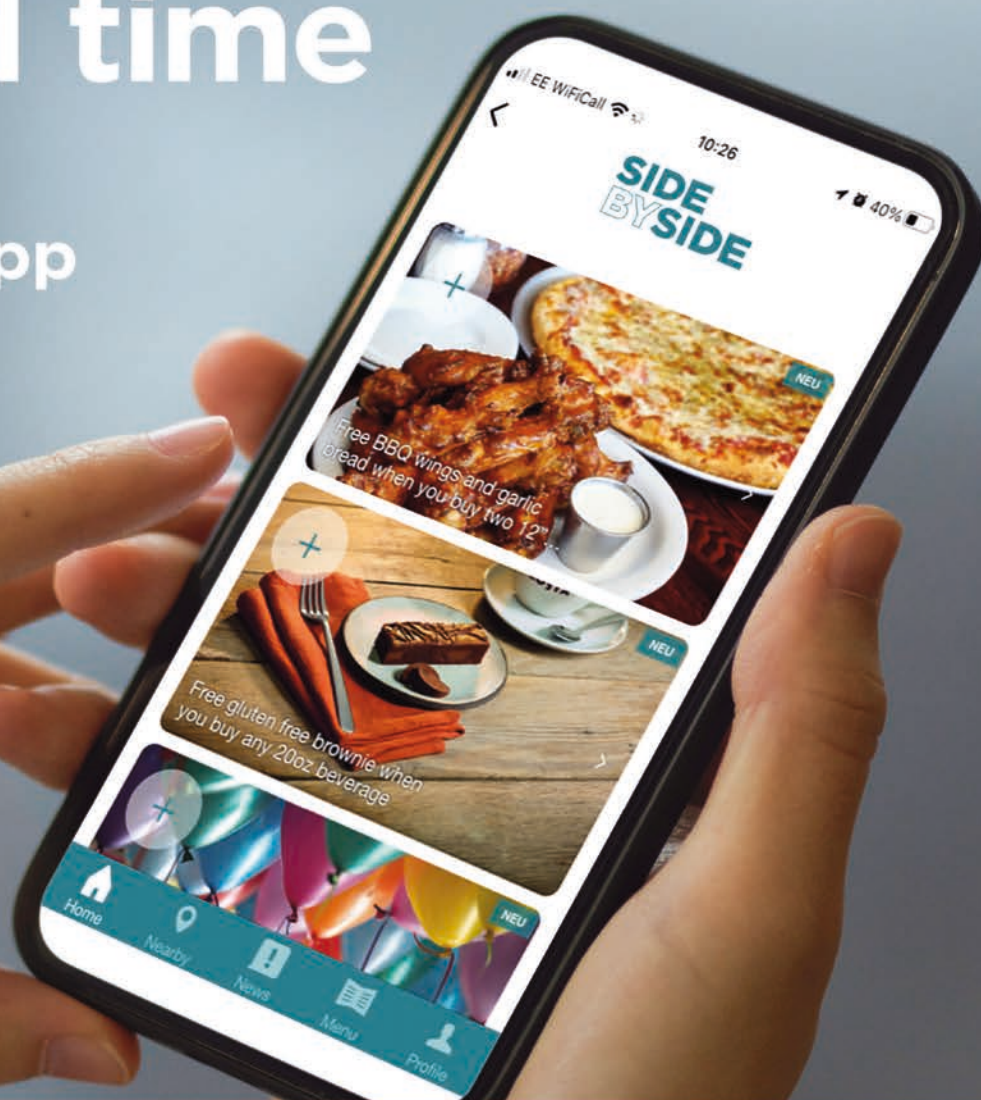




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# Engineering great art

**A**RTIST and Reservist WO2 Matt Emery (RE) is showcasing a selection of his latest works at the Royal Engineers Museum in Chatham, Kent. Entitled *The Sapper As An Artist*, the exhibition runs until March 26 and features a variety of Army-related paintings including a scene of personnel from 36 Engineer Regiment on UN humanitarian operations in South Sudan (shown above) and depictions of the Queen's funeral (below).

"This exhibition is about narrative, not just paintings but what's happening in them," WO2 Emery told *Soldier*.

"Whether they be the Queen's funeral military scenes or an old, abandoned car, it's about the narrative.

"I find interest and beauty in a variety of places I am drawn to – not only the celebrated but also the unloved or unnoticed, such as a rainy street in London or an abandoned tube station."

Follow @memeryart802 on Instagram or visit [memeryarts.co.uk](http://memeryarts.co.uk) for more information. ■



“  
I find interest  
in a variety of  
places  
”



## GENERAL FOR A DAY

How would you use your newfound rank? [news@soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://news@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

**I**AM a Reservist. I work as a virtual corporal at ATR Grantham, which means I deliver training online while working as an intelligence analyst in civvy street and a single mum at home.

If I was general, I would make smarter working one of my priorities. How can we train our people better?

The virtual basic training I deliver is a good example of how we might. And it's brilliant for Reservists because it lets them devote their facetime to the more hands-on stuff.

But it also allows people from all walks of life to serve. And to me, that is what the modern Army should be.

Just because I'm struggling to get away for two weeks at a time right now, doesn't mean I can't contribute.

Our Army ought to represent wider society. But at the moment it's not quite working that way; it's not easy to juggle parenthood and Reserve service.

I would also consider how we could lead from the lower ranks more.

Leadership in this

organisation is brilliant – it teaches you skills you wouldn't get anywhere else.

But I've been reading *Turn This Ship Around!* by David Marquet and the idea of turning followers into leaders makes sense. After all, it's feedback at the bottom that changes things at the top.

I would also look at how we could do more joint training. The issue is that

Reservists need to train at weekends, but

Regulars obviously need that time off.

Annual camp is a great opportunity but that only comes around once a year.

So if I was a general

I would try to get more support from employers.

As a civil servant I get three weeks a year to train, but even that is not really enough, and smaller employers cannot afford to release staff for long.

It's hard – and possibly one of those problems that can never be solved.

But virtual training is one way to counter that – although it wouldn't work with every trade.

I would also be interested to find out how much admin generals have to do, and how many times a day they receive the salute.

Do their arms get tired eventually?

**Rank/name:**

Cpl Ellen Hallam

**Cap badge:** Int Corps

**Role:** Instructor, Army Training Regiment Grantham

**Age:** 29

**Years in:** 10

**Deployments:** Whaley Bridge and Op Rescript

“  
Do their arms  
get tired  
eventually?  
”



## View from the GROUND



**Army padre Rev Ailsa Whorton (RACHD), based with 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, tells us about All Stop at her unit**

“THE day gave everyone an opportunity to talk, observe and listen in a safe space.

It is not often that happens in units – especially when troops are separated on different missions and working as attached arms more often.

A real sense of camaraderie started to come through.

One of the biggest issues for the Army today is housing, so it also gave personnel chance to talk about what was happening in their own homes.

What came across was a feeling of being undervalued – “perhaps I’m not important enough for a roof to be fixed”. But talking about this as a team created a sense of everyone being in it together.

NCOs were fully involved as well.

The day also presented a good opportunity for me in my role as padre. Chaplains get about, and soldiers know who we are, but you don’t always get to see everyone.

So taking part was a huge privilege.

Even the sceptical ones at the back got involved – I didn’t hear a negative comment about it.”



# Clearing the air



Pictures: Graeme Main

## Personnel hit pause on the day job to talk life over and get after problems

“A sense of camaraderie started to come through”

SOLDIERS, officers and civilians from across the British Army halted all non-operational work for the day in a bid to air their views and iron-out any problems within their teams.

The All Stop Day, as the annual event has become known, saw troops discussing everything from leadership and working conditions, to social attitudes, standards of behaviour and life on the home front.

It was part of the Service’s ongoing Teamwork programme, which aims to overhaul working culture across the ranks and create stronger, battle-winning teams as a result.

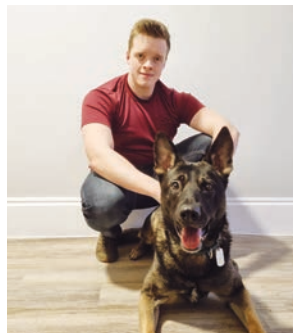
The idea is that by having time to talk and understand each other, troops begin to trust in their colleagues more and enjoy better day-to-day working environments as a result.

Staff of every rank took part, including those at the very top of the organisation. Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Patrick Sanders dropped in on Wellington Barracks in London to take part in discussions with Scots Guards personnel (shown below).

Those who were unable to attend the day – including Reservists – have until April to complete their unit’s All Stop Day activities. ■



## FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



### CANINE CAPERS

A SUPER-FIT NCO has been busy preparing for the ultimate dog walk across the inhospitable Welsh mountains in a trek to help out furry friends.

LCpl Pat Kernohan (Int Corps) is aiming to take on Pen-y-Fan, Cadair Idris and Snowdon at the end of March with pet German Shepherd Kane.

He hopes to complete the 125-mile journey in just two days.

The soldier is raising cash for a cause that helps rehome dogs which have served with the military.

LCpl Kernohan said: “It’s a small charity that’s close to my heart.”







# Sense of satisfaction



Volunteers boost recruiting mission, with AT and winter sports the big draws

Picture: Graeme Main

**A**RM Y recruiters have reignited the satisfied soldier scheme as part of their mission to sell a career in the military to outsiders.

The initiative, which launched in 2018 but was shelved during the Covid pandemic, sees young Servicemen and women – from private to corporal – volunteer for a return to their hometowns, where they support Army career or assessment centres in an array of recruiting activities.

It means they can live at home for four to six weeks, or longer in some cases, and provide Recruiting Group with the positive role models needed to engage with possible candidates and talk about their Service experiences.

Among those currently deployed is Gdsm Wesley Guren (IG, pictured right). He has returned to Birmingham and has been interacting with year ten and 11 students as they ponder their futures at school career fairs.

"If people here are interested in joining the Army, I can say I have walked in their shoes and help guide them, becoming a friendly face in the process," he told *Soldier*.

"It's a good opportunity to connect with the community again. When you

are at battalion or embroiled in family life you sometimes forget there is a wider world out there."

Gdsm Guren said he has fielded lots of questions about the varied career paths available, with infantry, medical, engineering and HR among the many roles enquired about.

He also said the wider Army offer has proved appealing.

"From the conversations I've had, it is things like adventurous training and the fact we get to do winter sports that are of most interest," he added.

"I get a lot of questions about how much we get paid, and they are quite surprised to hear you get money the minute you walk through the door."

"But I've also found that they're looking for a sense of purpose."

"I give a realistic account of the Army, saying it is hard work and you only get out what you put in. I look at my experiences and have said that if I have had any issues, I have been able to flag them up and get things sorted."

"The Army is more popular than some of the other options we see at career fairs. There's a lot of people with gimmicks to give away, but we get just as much traction." ■



“You can forget there's a wider world out there”

## TAKING THE FALL

■ **PROFESSIONAL** stunt riders visited the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment to give troops a crash course in how to fall safely.

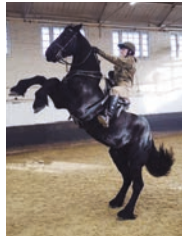
Instructors from the Centre of Horse Combat schooled ten recruits in the early stages of training in techniques similar to those used by jockeys to avoid serious injury.

Training Wing OC Capt Mark Quickfall (RHG/D) said the session, at Combermere Barracks in Windsor, was aimed at reducing the number of soldiers suffering broken bones.

He explained: "We're trying to create muscle memory so that if they do fall off, they do so in a position that will minimise the damage to the body."

"It's also a confidence-booster, especially for personnel who have hurt themselves previously."

With the trial having been well-received by those who took part, bosses now hope it will become a permanent fixture in the 23-week equitation course.



## BUSKING PAYS OFF

AN ARMY barmy 11-year-old has been hitting the right notes for military good causes after taking up his trusty saxophone and busking in town centres.

Louis Hoskin has so far clocked up more than £8,000 for charities – including the Ancre Somme Association that honours fallen personnel – after taking up the instrument during lockdown.

He has set his sights on raising even more in the coming year – expanding his repertoire and playing with dad Philip.

Louis, who lives in Kirkby Lonsdale, told *Soldier*: "We play all kinds of stuff including jazz and blues – but my favourites are hit film tunes."

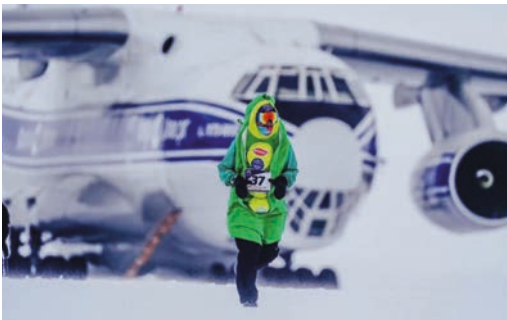
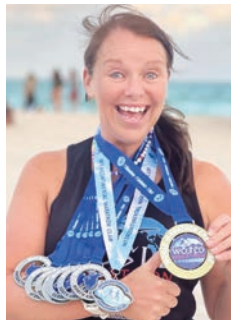


## MAJOR WORLD MARATHON WIN

**FORMER** major and endurance runner Sally Orange (ex-RAMC) has become the first female veteran and fifth British female to smash the World Marathon Challenge.

The punishing feat saw her complete seven races on seven continents in seven days – taking her from Antarctica to Cape Town, Perth, Dubai, Madrid, Fortaleza (Brazil) and Miami.

The 48-year-old, shown, who runs dressed as fruit and veg, began the event as a bag of frozen peas and ended clad as an orange, raising £10,000 for mental health charities and Service causes.



Pictures: World Marathon Challenge and Sally Orange





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# Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, offers his take on Service life...

**L**IFE continues to be extremely busy as I put pen to paper this month – there has been a fair bit going on where Eastern Europe is concerned as well as an event for troops to reflect on the Army's values and standards.

And all the while there has been no let-up in training or operational activity.

Let's start with Op Interflex – the training package we have been delivering to Ukrainian troops defending their homeland against Russian aggression.

Last month I mentioned that I'd been hoping to secure an opportunity for RSMs from partner nations working alongside us to see their instructors in action first-hand.

This was arranged during three days in February, with senior soldiers from countries including Holland, Norway and Finland joining us in the UK.

Although they are not involved in training, we also had a representative there from Japan – a country with which we have been building new ties and where we will be embarking on more joint exercises in the future.

As you might imagine, it was a busy programme.

In addition to seeing the work on Interflex

we also had the opportunity to visit locations including Minley and Pirbright to watch British troops training.

And we dropped in on the Centre for Army Leadership at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Our guests were impressed, particularly with Interflex, where junior leaders are showing great professionalism as they assist Ukrainian colleagues who will be defending their nation against Vladimir Putin's forces.

In an arena in which multinational working is critical, these types of events with allies are a key opportunity to develop relationships and share good practice – learning from each other's armies to make our own better.

But it is important to point out that building and maintaining ties is not just something that happens at a senior level – everyone has a part to play in strengthening alliances as we work with Nato and other partner nations.

One year on from Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, an already uncertain world has become a far more volatile and unpredictable place.

Let's all do our bit in maintaining the peace.

“  
**Learning from each other's armies makes our own better**  
”

**UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**



**Q** What's the best advice you've been given in the Army?

**A** Always be the first to ask a question – others will be thinking the same.



Picture: Graeme Main

THE quality of our most junior soldiers is critical to success on operations. So it is important they have access to the best training early on.

With this in mind, we have now introduced an 11-week course for instructors, to help them better develop the skills they will need to teach the next generation of young troops.

I've been to visit the first intake of the all-arms

instructor training cadre at Pirbright, which brings together NCOs from across the Army. And they look impressive.

Previously, candidates for these roles would have been prepared within their own cap badge system.

But the new course will see greater consistency, while ensuring that the likes of CBRN and medical knowledge are fully up-to-date.

## PULLING TOGETHER

■ IT WAS great to see everyone across the Army come together to pause and reflect on how we conduct ourselves during our second Teamwork event.

We first stopped for this initiative last year. It was a huge success, and everyone from the chief of the general staff downwards was involved this time.

In stopping all but essential business, we as soldiers had an opportunity to reflect on Army-wide values and our own principles and think about how we might improve. It was great to see speakers including Steven Bartlett, from TV show *Dragon's Den*, sharing insight from the business world too.

We should always strive to do better.



# Stronger

Veteran's quest to help overseas troops conquer resettlement

► **MAKING** the move to civvy life is a daunting prospect for just about all military personnel, but those hailing from abroad face additional hurdles.

That's why author and transition strategist Samuel Reddy (ex-RLC) is on a mission to support his fellow foreign and Commonwealth troops.

Originally from Mauritius, the 45-year-old served in the Regulars for seven years before taking on a diverse portfolio of civilian roles – a journey described in his books *Leavers to Leaders* and its follow-up *Reinvented*. At the heart of his approach is the belief that many of the extra difficulties these soldiers experience can be overcome by the power of community.

To this end, he has set up the Leavers to Leaders foreign and Commonwealth network, so that overseas personnel can benefit from his own connections across organisations such as the Rotary Club, Business Networking International and the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

Below, the former lance corporal outlines four of the common problems he sees affecting the cohort and his top tips for addressing them...

## 1 Lack of community

In the Army you have a ready-made family. But this is not the case on civvy street, especially for foreign and Commonwealth personnel who are unlikely to have a wider support network to call on.

- It's important to get involved with local organisations and develop your social profile. It takes work but make an effort to do this well before you leave, not in the last couple of months. Developing connections is far more important than your CV.

## 2 Prejudice

The military has measures in place to deal with racism – more so than wider society – but if an individual has had a negative experience, they may understandably carry that into their job search.

- I try and reframe this mindset by suggesting they see themselves first and foremost as veterans – and be proud of the contribution they have made to the country.





# together



## 3 Visa admin

There is no point working on your resettlement if you don't have leave to remain in the country long term.

- From day one, make sure you're clued up on your rights and the fees for you or your family. The Home Office rules are complex. You can get help from the Army Families Federation via [aff.org.uk/advice/foreign-commonwealth](http://aff.org.uk/advice/foreign-commonwealth)

## 4 The credibility gap

This isn't unique to overseas personnel but many struggle to repackage themselves – their career and experience – into something the commercial world will understand.

- A key focus of my work with Service leavers is to develop a strong sense of identity. Only when you know your worth will you have the confidence to go and pitch yourself to companies.



## 2 top tips

### Talent tops skill

The exposure to learning is amazing in the Army and it's your responsibility to actively develop yourself to the full. But one of my first jobs after leaving the Regulars was managing entertainments on a cruise ship. I was a mover by trade, so it wasn't my skills that got me the role, it was my talent and ability to adapt.

### Your first job is never your next career

I've had at least ten different roles since leaving. I set up a logistics company, then worked on cruise ships – now I'm a leadership consultant, I've nearly completed a doctorate and I teach in universities. Think about each job as a way to get you into a corridor from which multiple doors can open.

### Profile

**Name:**  
Samuel Reddy

**Age:** 45

#### Military career:

Served as a Regular for seven years, first with The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, then the Royal Logistic Corps, as well as using his French skills to become an Army linguist

**Civvy role:** Founder of leadership consultancy and coaching company L2L Partners. Also promotes youth literacy in Commonwealth countries



### Want to connect?

Follow Samuel Reddy on LinkedIn via [@SamuelTReddy](https://www.linkedin.com/company/samueltreddy) or visit [samueltreddy.com](http://samueltreddy.com), where you can take the L2LScorecard test to assess your resettlement readiness



# A higher call

New mission down under beckons  
for former Army pilot

► BEN Brown (ex-AAC) vividly remembers the moment that his dream of flight began – when his imagination was fired by a poster on his church noticeboard.

The advert, for a charity called the Mission Aviation Fellowship, showed how the Christian organisation delivered aid from the skies to the world's remotest communities. The youngster yearned to be a pilot and play his part.

Exploring his options as a student, the Army Air Corps came out on top – offering all the right opportunities where professional flying was concerned.

And the reality did not disappoint – his career took him away on ops and developed him professionally at every turn.

But 14 years later, having retired as a major at the controls of cutting-edge military helicopters, life has come full circle.

Enlisting with the good cause that first inspired his dream of flight, he is preparing to travel thousands of miles to put his Service skills to use in a new challenge.

This month, he and his artist wife Esther, together with their two young children, will swap Middle Wallop in rural Hampshire for Australia's Northern Territory, where he will begin a four-year stint coordinating airborne support to Aboriginal settlements in the Arnhem Land area.

"The region is huge – the size of Iceland – and when you look from above, it is as if you are crossing an ocean of bush," the 36-year-old explained.

"My base is at the town Nhulunbuy and the nearest city is Darwin, 600 miles away – the same distance from Army HQ in Andover to Aberdeen.

"You immediately get a sense of why aviation is important – what the charity does in terms of provision of healthcare and education gives hope to communities."

Day-to-day life down under will see him using his experience to manage flights across vast distances to locations that could otherwise take days to reach.

Temperatures can routinely reach a searing 40 degrees Celsius during the summer, making aerial operations even more of a challenge.

But Brown is confident that his experience both as a pilot and officer will stand him in good stead.

"I've been quite well prepared," he added with a smile.

"Professionally, life has been eventful since going through the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2008, qualifying on Lynx and serving on Op Herrick in Afghanistan.

"I also flew the Dauphin helicopter in Northern Ireland – and more generally the leadership and management skills learned in the Army will be invaluable.

"As a family, we are quite experienced in terms of travelling, too, as my military career has seen us move location and home several times over the years."

It will, nonetheless, be a demanding posting and Brown has already been out to Australia to conduct a recce.

Additional preparation has seen the ex-Serviceman complete a three-month course covering the basics of life as a Christian missionary, helping him to be spiritually ready for the challenges he will face.

"It is an exciting time for us – this is going to be a very different adventure," Brown concluded. "But we are all ready and looking forward to experiencing a completely new life as we head out to Australia."



**CV:** Ben Brown

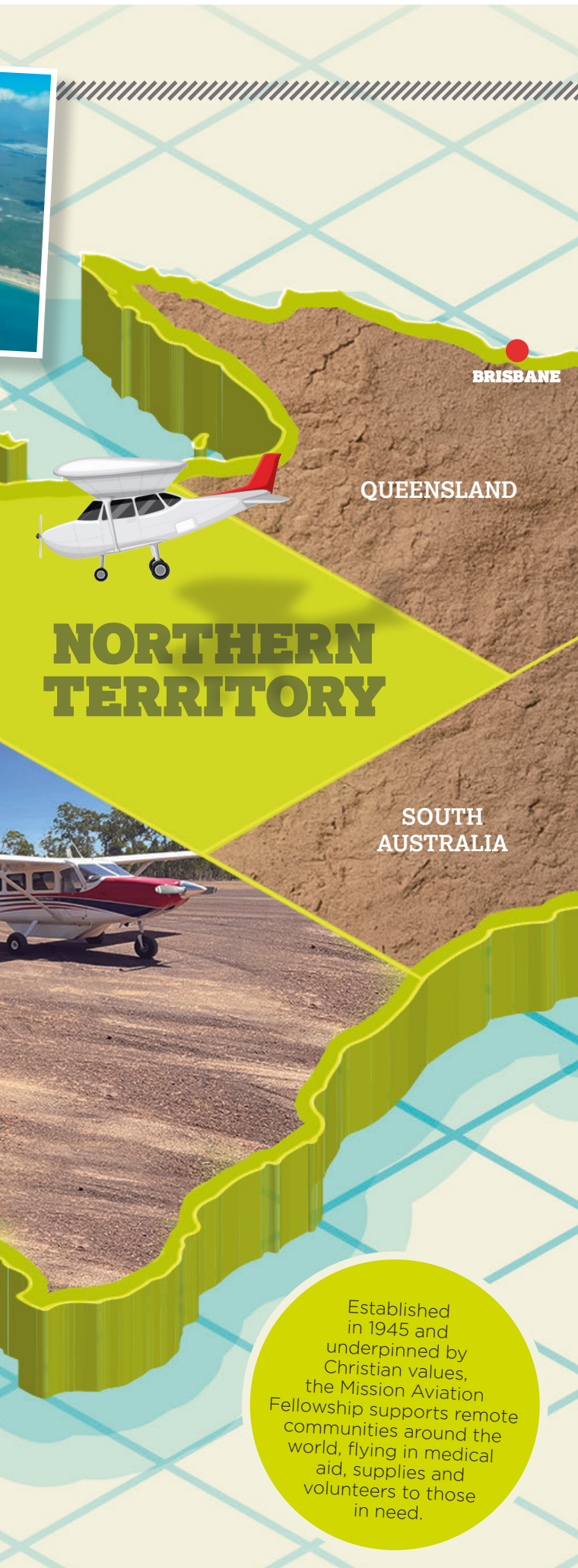
**Age:** 36

**Years of service:** 2008-2022

**Rank on retirement:** Major

**Operational experience:**  
Includes two Herrick tours;  
additional flying in Northern  
Ireland, USA, Germany





► **CASH**

# Household help

How the **Defence Discount Service** can save you pennies on daily essentials

► **WITH** prices rising faster than they have done for 40 years and the cost of living getting steeper, the Defence Discount Service is offering the military community savings on household bills and utilities.

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# 'Between them, the padres saved me'

Bereaved mother reflects on chaplains going above and beyond in her darkest hour

► **LAST month *Soldier* reported on how British Army chaplains are finding new and inventive ways to support Service personnel as the military modernises.**

**While the way they go about their business is evolving, the role itself is as important as ever, says Cpl Hollie Davis (RAMC, shown right).**

**In 2020 she found herself at her lowest ebb following the loss of her 20-week-old son Kitt to sudden infant death syndrome.**

**With her world crumbling around her, she was helped by padres from the Royal Tank Regiment, to whom she was posted at the time, and 1 Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, the unit where Kitt's father was serving.**

**Here, she explains that while not religious herself, it was the spiritual support that proved vital...**

G

When Kitt died, my life fell apart. I fell apart and I had an existential crisis.

Why, if there was a God, would they let my baby son die?

It made no sense to me, but the padres handled it beautifully.

It didn't matter that I was dismissive of religion, and they didn't attempt to find an answer to my questions.

What they did was to pick me up, be there and provide consistent support so I felt less alone.

They were gentle. Sometimes I'd get a text message to ask if I wanted a brew and I'd go and talk about anything but what had happened.

On other occasions I'd rage and shout, saying I hated parents and other children because those people had what I'd lost.

No matter what I said they never judged me – they were completely unshockable and after speaking to them I would realise that I wasn't a lunatic, I was grieving.

In my worst days I turned to alcohol and part of me was worried I would drink myself to death or do something ridiculous. Living alone I was high risk and often didn't want to live at all.

Between them, those padres saved me. One had five or six children of their own, but if my mum or friends were worried and messaged the welfare service, a padre would come to my home – even in the middle of the night.

And when they did, they were kind, I never felt pressured, and they always went above and beyond to help me.

For my mum, grieving the loss of her grandson and watching her daughter fall apart, they were a godsend. And they always went that extra step to help.

Kitt's funeral was a big thing, but I don't remember bringing any of it together. The padres from both units took the service, had obviously listened to what I'd said I wanted, and led it beautifully – in a spiritual rather than overtly 'churchy' way.

My family and I can't thank them enough.

What is difficult – and it's the case across the Army – is the rapid changing of faces. A padre will be posted to a unit, settle in, get to know people and then get moved on. One of those who helped me is now in Kenya.

A bit more continuity would be helpful, especially for the personnel who





serve their careers in one place – I've been in Tidworth for seven years now – and especially as the Army Welfare Service is a permanent fixture.

For me, it wasn't so much about religion, more about having that same voice and shoulder to cry on.

As an Army, I think we need more padres. ■



## SUPPORT EFFORT RECOGNISED

FOLLOWING the death of her son Kitt, Cpl Davis formed the Defence Child Bereavement Network as a way of supporting personnel who have also suffered the loss of a child.

The 33-year-old received royal recognition for her work when she was awarded an MBE in the New Year honours list.

"I'm still gobsmacked now," she said. "When you look at all the people who have received this it is very special. I'm just a full screw in the Army and feel quite humble."

The network now has more than 190 members and includes those who have suffered miscarriages, stillbirths, and ectopic pregnancies, among others.

"We've all had very different experiences, but the loss is ultimately still the same," Cpl Davis said.

● For more details, visit the **Defence Child Bereavement Network Facebook page** or search for the group on **Defence Connect**





# Super-helper syndrome

When doing good does you harm

► AS IF Army life wasn't busy enough, the pages of this magazine are testament to how many extra-curricular activities troops take on – from expeds to fundraising, volunteering and more.

But too much selfless commitment – at work or in your personal life – could eventually lead to burnout.

Psychologists Jess Baker and Rod Vincent have dubbed this tendency “super-helper syndrome”. Here, they explain why Service personnel may be more likely to suffer from it, and when to act.

## Soldiering is a ‘helping profession’

The type of person who joins the military might be more naturally disposed towards being a helper because they want to serve and make a difference. We define super-helper syndrome as putting others first to the detriment of your own wellbeing. Volunteering to protect strangers, especially in a conflict zone, for example, is the very definition of this.

## The focus on teamwork

Military work depends very heavily on collaboration. The downside of this is that when the team comes first it could make it less acceptable to ask for help as an individual.

## Troops are susceptible to ‘helper’s guilt’

Nurses describe the moral distress of feeling like they are not able to help patients enough, for example due to lack of time or resources. This is not unlike the concept of moral injury, which those forced to make difficult decisions in battle are exposed to.



## Added family pressure

Lots of people have caring responsibilities to children or aging parents, however the stress of deployments and uncertainty of military life mean troops face additional worries around loved ones, possibly leading to more guilt.

## Communal living

Many personnel live in close quarters with each other, which can get quite intense, particularly for those who tend to mediate in disputes or are the person everyone comes to when offloading problems. It may also feel like there is no escape when you live and work in the same place.

## Checklist

If you tick four or more of the following boxes, you might be a super-helper

- ✓ You spend lots of time supporting others
- ✓ Other people turn to you to fix their problems
- ✓ You tend to put other's needs before your own and have a hard time saying “no”
- ✓ You feel guilty taking time out for yourself
- ✓ You rarely voice your own needs
- ✓ You feel others sometimes take you or your kindness for granted

## What to do...

**Allow yourself to take a break and don't feel bad about it.** Remind yourself it's not a weakness to need to rest, sleep, ask for help or tell someone “sorry, not this time”

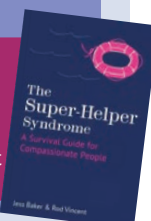
**Try to set boundaries by choosing who and when you help.** Ask “do I really have the time, how much can I realistically help this person, is this my responsibility?”

You could **try writing down what is important to you** and listing the activities that support your own wellbeing

**Speak to someone you are close to** and who will listen while you offload your stresses

**Remember it's okay to let off steam** – research shows banter and dark humour can be effective psychological coping mechanisms, creating bonds among those going through horrific experiences together and increasing levels of hardiness

● For more information and advice read *The Super-Helper Syndrome: A Survival Guide for Compassionate People* by Jess Baker and Rod Vincent





# Confused about your McCloud pension choices? You have every reason to be. Join us. Job done.



HELPING YOU MAKE  
BETTER CHOICES

From October this year, all those affected by the AFPS15 Remedy (McCloud) will be faced with making complex choices about their pension entitlement. This will involve complicated calculations, the details of which the Government is still working through. Right now, this is the position.

The AFPS15 Remedy will be delivered in two stages- the prospective remedy, followed by the retrospective remedy. The prospective stage saw all affected personnel still serving moved to AFPS15 on 1st April 2022. The retrospective remedy will allow personnel to choose their preferred benefits for the remedy period when they access their pension or Early Departure Payment.

Eligible members who have already left, or will leave between 1st April 2015 and 1st October 2023 with a pension payment or EDP, and eligible dependants, will be contacted by Veterans UK within 18 months from 1st October with details of remedy options.

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# 'I was always playing catch-up'

Polar Preet reflects on the challenges of her second Antarctic quest



## IN NUMBERS

# 922

MILES COVERED – 15 MORE THAN THE PREVIOUS  
RECORD FOR THE FURTHEST UNSUPPORTED  
SOLO POLAR SKI EXPEDITION,  
HELD BY THE LATE HENRY WORSLEY

# 1,696

HOURS ON THE SNOW





**I**N THE early weeks of 2022 Capt Preet Chandi (RAMC) became the first woman of colour to complete a solo expedition to the Antarctic.

Fast forward a year and she was back on the snow attempting a full crossing of Antarctica

via the South Pole – an effort that, if successful, would see her travel more than 1,100 miles while carrying all her equipment on a pulk in some of the harshest conditions on earth.

Ultimately, the officer fell just short of her goal. But with 922 miles in the bank she had completed the furthest ever

unsupported solo polar ski expedition.

Such a colossal effort did not come without consequence and Capt Chandi spoke to *Soldier* about her adventure just days after surgery on her leg, where a skin graft was needed to treat the severe chilblains sustained in the early stages of the quest.

**“How did this attempt compare to your South Pole exped last year? Is it safe to assume the extra distance and weight carried added to the challenge?”**

It was a lot harder than I thought it would be. I struggled with the conditions and faced a lot more sastrugi (wind-sculpted snow features). At the start my pulk weighed 120kg and it was 100kg when it flipped over in the sastrugi for the first time – that happened a lot and dragging it over those was difficult. Even when the terrain looked smoother the snow would be so soft, making it much harder to pull. I was always playing catch-up and it felt like I never had any free time. The previous attempt seemed so easy compared to this, even though it took 40 days to reach the South Pole.

**Tell us about the effort required for a mission like this.**

Before I reached the South Pole, I was getting four or five hours' sleep a day. But after that I was spending 20 to 25 hours on the snow. Putting the tent up takes time and I wanted to limit that as much as I could. At one point I did more than 30 hours, but I soon realised I could not do that again as I was so tired and therefore not operating productively. I had never been in that mindset before, where I found something so hard, but I had to keep going. I was telling myself 'you're okay' and when I got through a really tough part I'd think 'at least I don't have to do that again'. The sastrugi, in combination with the soft snow, was the hardest part – it felt like there was no respite. There were beautiful days when the sun was out and the visibility was great, but the soft snow made it such tough work.

**Was back-to-back expeditions always the plan? Did the swift turnaround take its toll?**

When I got back from my first trip I was still in debt. I did four months of school talks and then went back to Norway to start training again. I was struggling, both financially and mentally, and felt like I could not keep up. I've always been confident doing talks or presentations, but it was the time in between that I found difficult. When the talks were over, I started a new full-time job, and I was training around that while also trying to get the money together for the next expedition. The plan was always to go again, I had to take unpaid leave from the Army, but I managed to get full sponsorship this time round. While this trip was harder, I came back feeling much better.

**What scuppered your hopes of making the full crossing?**

I was out of time. I was supposed to be picked up on January 22, the plane was in position, and I made it on January 23 – the last

passenger flight home was a day later. I was also running out of food – I had enough freeze-dried rations to keep going but I was low on the snacks which I could eat on the move. I knew that I was always behind time as it had taken so long to reach the pole. I pushed as hard as I could.

**How did you cope with the disappointment?**

Mentally, it was hard. I knew in the back of my mind that it was taking too long, and I was just not quick enough in reaching the pole. I was very hard on myself and, while I was disappointed, I tried not to think about it when I was skiing – but I was absolutely gutted. However, I wasn't going to stop as the trip was too important. I realised afterwards that it's okay to change the goalposts – you can dream big and try to achieve that, but it's fine to adapt as well.

**What's next, and what do you think the legacy of this will turn out to be?**

I wanted to do something big and thought of Antarctica. It was a case of pushing my boundaries as far as I could. There will be something else, although at this stage I'm not sure what that will be. As much as I love these adventures it is not my job, and I can't keep taking time off work. I ran a schools' competition to design stickers for my pulk and I've already done a talk in my hometown of Derby since I've been back. It was nice to speak to the students and hopefully they will realise that they too can go and achieve anything they want.

**”**







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# KINGS OF THE JUNGLE

## Signallers make waves in Belize on Exercise Mercury Canopy

**T**HICK and wet vegetation; steep terrain that reduces the line of sight; hot, humid weather. Everything that makes movement in the jungle a challenge for humans applies to the airwaves as well.

It means that the range of a soldier's radio, which might be measured in kilometres on Salisbury Plain, becomes just metres in the wilds of Belize.

For members of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron, however, this austere environment was the perfect testing ground for not only their soldiering skills, but the Army's incoming tactical comms system.

The multi-mode radio (MMR) started being »

Words: Gareth Palmer Pictures: Cpl Danny Houghton, Cpl Aaron Stone, both RLC





Airborne signallers tested the multi-mode radio in the jungle



» dished out to British Armed Forces last year in a £90 million programme aimed at better linking troops with their Nato allies.

Exercise Mercury Canopy gave the signallers of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team their first opportunity to see how it would perform in stickier climes – with some Android team awareness kit (Atak) chucked into their daypacks for good measure.

Mounted to body armour and an increasingly common sight on UK training exercises, these situational awareness devices provide a smartphone-like capability, allowing troops to plan routes and communicate with each other under radio silence.

The potential

benefits of both technologies were not hard to see as the training scenario unfolded. The soldiers were deployed to support a mock counter-narcotics operation, using their innovative kit to assist the local security forces.

Drafted in to establish a mobile network supporting specialist recce troops of the Pathfinders, the signallers then relayed live video surveillance of a drug cartel's base to an HQ in Colchester for analysis.

The intelligence that was gathered allowed local police – a role played by the Belize Defence Force – to carry out a raid on the base and arrest the cartel leader.

Those at the sharp end of the package told *Soldier* how it was putting them

through their paces...

## READINESS

Often in the background, signallers made the most of being front and centre during the training serials in Belize.

"As an independent brigade signal squadron, we would normally deploy in support of other units," OC Maj Liam Crane (R Signals) explained. "But this time we're the primary training audience and other units are supporting us."

"This has made for a fantastic and unique opportunity to focus on learning by doing. We used some of the newest and most advanced technology that the Army has, while surviving in the jungle, to really push the boundaries of expeditionary communications."

Alongside the focus on innovation, the exercise was a powerful reminder to the troops of their core role.



Maj Liam Crane, R Signals





"We provide command and comms support to the global response force," Maj Crane, a veteran of Ops Herrick and Pitting, added. "We are held at very high readiness for operations and we need to be ready to deliver anywhere in the world at short notice."

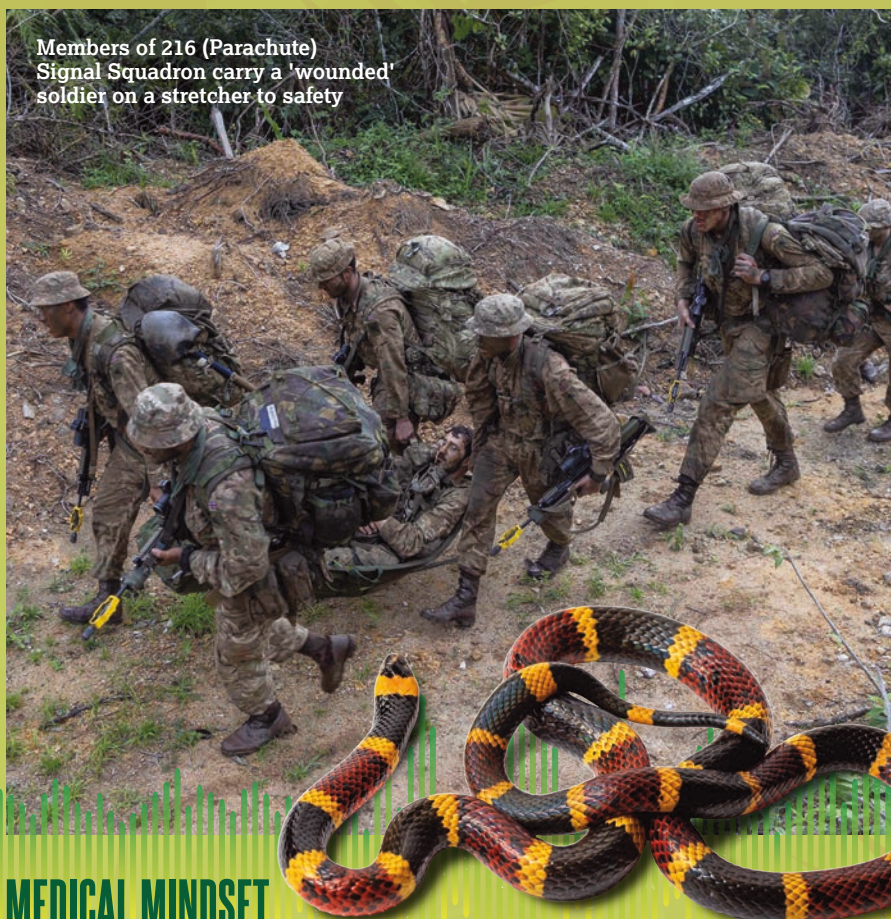
"Coming to the jungle, notorious as the most arduous environment to soldier in, has really made everyone think about the demands of what we do and how we need to be on top of our skills."

## DEALING WITH DATA

While Bowman has been mocked as "better off with maps and Nokia", the MMR is making waves as the Army's new tactical communication and information system.

It is dual-channel, giving line-of-sight voice and data over wideband radio with a simultaneous global link via satellite. »

Members of 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron carry a 'wounded' soldier on a stretcher to safety



## MEDICAL MINDSET

Snakes, scorpions, jaguars, and crocodiles – nature seems to be out to get you in Belize.

While there were no animal bites on the exercise, it did bring sightings of the fearsome fer-de-lance and coral snakes.

With every change of location, medics had to check they could hit the two-and-a-half-hour target time to a lifesaving injection of anti-venom in hospital.

"All we can do without anti-venom is keep the casualty calm and stabilise the injured area," LCpl Elleke Wicks (RAMC) explained. "So we test the comms and movement – by road and helicopter – to make sure we can get there in time."

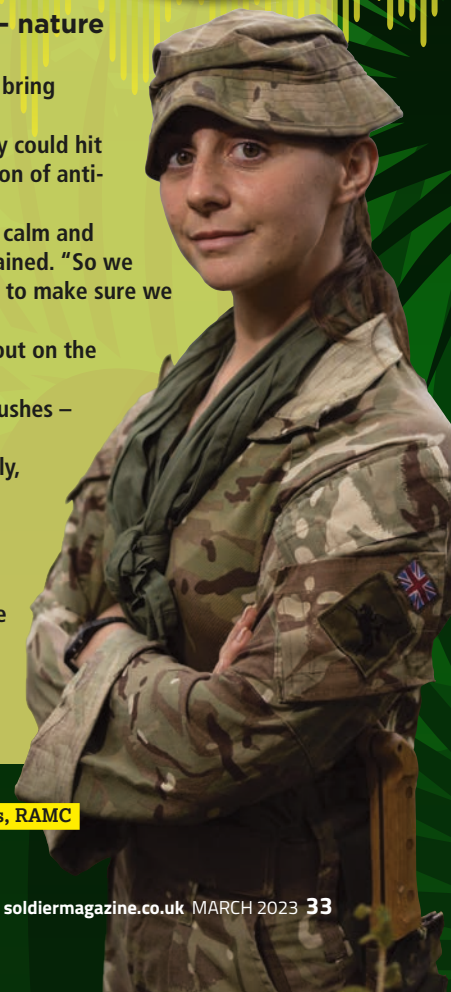
"But the best treatment is preventative, and everyone out on the ground had lessons about the risks of animals."

But even smaller threats – mosquito bites and prickly bushes – are not to be taken lightly.

"In the jungle you have to take the smallest cut seriously, because it's such a dirty environment and wounds are much more prone to infection," the combat medical technician added.

"Looking after yourself, with things such as foot care, is vital. A little blister that you wouldn't think about in the UK can become a big issue."

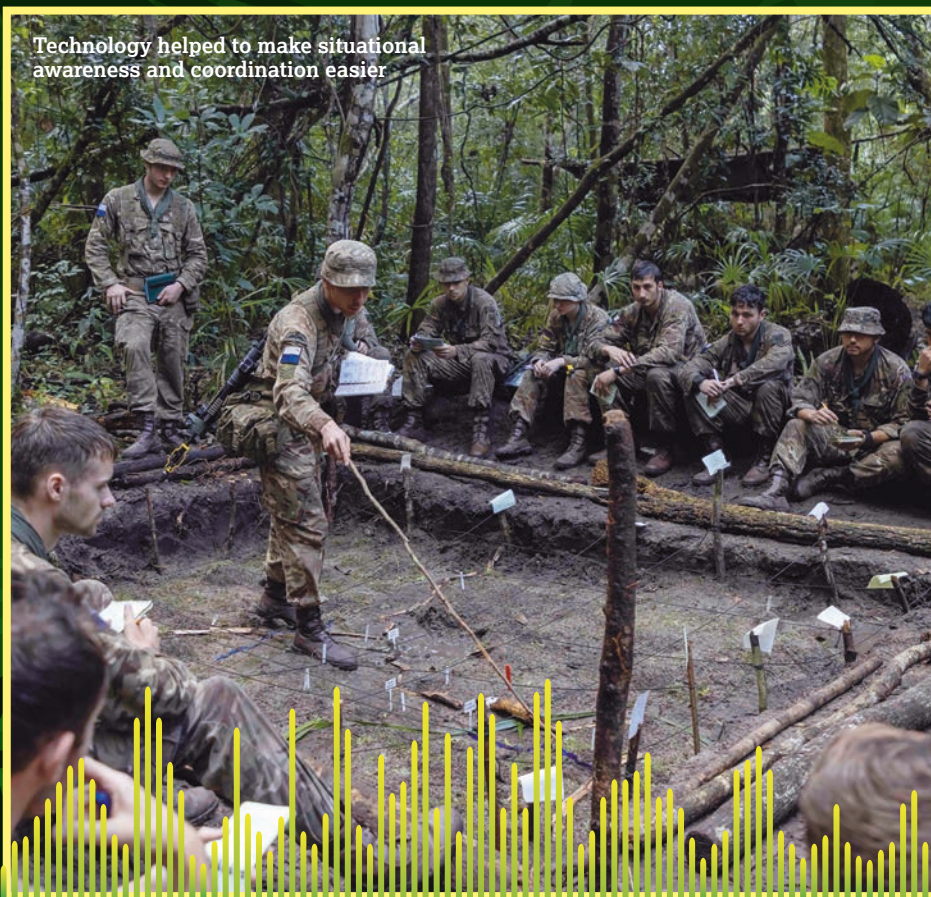
"For me, the UK will be plain sailing after the jungle. The demands of living and working out here give you real confidence in your own skills."



LCpl Elleke Wicks, RAMC



Technology helped to make situational awareness and coordination easier



» The MMR can be used by ground or mounted troops and is already a mainstay for other Nato militaries. “Modern operations use a huge amount of data,” information systems engineer Sgt Tom Gale (R Signals) said. “And while Bowman was good in its day, it just can’t transmit the amount of data we now need.

“MMR gives us that bandwidth. It has performed very well out in the jungle.

“We’ve linked it to a satellite bearer and tested how it can transmit data across a fully meshed network.

“This is brand new to the Army, and it’s been a real challenge for us to learn how to use its new capabilities.

“We’ve hit speed bumps but worked out how to get around them every time, and that’s been very rewarding.”

As well as performance, size is an improvement too. The MMR can fit in a

webbing pouch, where the less capable Bowman radio would have filled around half a daypack.

“We’re not just doing voice down to the man on the ground through a bulky system that can take time to set up – this is a small box providing reliable voice and data comms that’s switched on all the time,” Sgt Gale concluded.

## BETTER DECISIONS

Effectively giving users the functionality of a smartphone, Atak is about sharing situational awareness among everyone involved in a tactical action – from deep in the jungle to the ops room in Colchester, and from corporal to brigadier.

Network engineer Cpl Jack Morgan (R Signals) got his hands on the system to see the benefits for himself.

“Out in the jungle we had to fight for comms,” he told *Soldier*. “Atak made the wider coordination and situational awareness easier, saving time and giving me less to worry about as a commander.

“You’ve got your own location fixed, where other call signs are, a chat function, phase lines and so on, and that’s all updating in real time.

“All the information you need is there on the screen in front of you, so that way you can make the best decision possible with the most information.” ■



Cpl Jack Morgan, R Signals



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# IN THE MIX

Infanteers must upskill in one vital way if they are to rise to the challenge of future conflicts. *Soldier* found out more at the **Infantry Battle School...**







“  
We asked  
ourselves  
what the role  
of the infanteer  
on the modern  
battlefield was  
”

**T**HE first phase of the mission was to conduct aerial surveillance of the tree line – a duty that fell to the team’s young drone operator.

He prepared two devices, attaching cameras and improvised munitions consisting of explosive material packed into short metal pipes fitted with fins made on 3D printers.

A nail protruding from the head of each pipe was used as a firing pin, penetrating the blasting cap when the “bomb” hit the ground nose-first.

Minutes after their launch, the drones’ surveillance images revealed Russian soldiers occupying an extensive trench system in the woods.

The subsequent attack was short and fierce.

Once the airborne systems dropped their payload, the Ukrainian troops went in, following the trench until they came to a complex of dugouts and bunkers full of soldiers.

An ensuing close-quarters battle – a frenzied exchange of small-arms fire and grenades – resulted in multiple casualties on both sides.

The Ukrainians withdrew and would attempt another attack later that day, but the Russians, by then, had been able to call up snipers, mortars and their formidable Orlan-10 unmanned aerial reconnaissance vehicle, with 16 hours of flying duration and giving artillery the ability to engage a target within three minutes of identification.

The lack of combined arms support, including electronic

jamming capabilities, made breaking through this fortified position impossible for the Ukrainians.

And the nature of this battle, which took place in Pavlivka in western Donetsk just two months ago, underlines why the Infantry Battle School at Brecon is making sweeping changes to its courses for junior and senior NCOs and officers fresh out of Sandhurst.

According to the establishment’s CO Lt Col Rupert Anderson (RGR): “We asked ourselves, ‘what is the role of the infanteer on the modern battlefield after everything we’ve seen, read and been told?’”

“In 2018 we moved back to basic infanteering to get away from – but not neglect – the focus on Afghan-style ops with things like counter-IED and operating mostly out of forward operating bases.

“The Ukrainians’ experience in Pavlivka highlights there is still a place for conventional infantry, but the key to success is infantry leaders who are integrators of capabilities.”

## EMERGING TACTICS

Not that staff at Brecon had been ignoring the tactics and techniques emerging from conflicts in places such as Ukraine. That grinding war has already informed some of the alterations to the career courses over the past year.

“We’ve been keeping what we have been doing as a baseline, but in the classrooms instructors have been using reports from Ukraine,” explains Maj Adam Mackness (R Anglian), officer



commanding the platoon commanders' division.

"We're processing lessons being learnt such as the threat of ordnance being dropped from drones into trench positions and asking the students to take these tactics into account."

Instructors at Brecon have also been equipped with Parrot drones to help familiarise students with both the threats from these ubiquitous devices and the advantages they offer a user.

"We already have numerous qualified drone operators at the school through our training support and infantry weapons divisions, and they are preparing to provide us with even more of that capability in the near future," directing staff member CSgt Jonathan Parker (Yorks) says as a group of second lieutenants practise an assault on a trench during the platoon commanders' battle course.

Recent intel indicates that Russians are increasingly using medium weight drones to scout some way from their positions – and the school's instructors have taken note.

"The result is, we've been teaching students that they need to move to their target dispersed, but then fight united – that's something they are getting to grips with," adds the senior NCO.

A defensive exercise for the platoon commanders has also been changed to take into account some of the tactics being employed in the defence against the Russian invasion.

"The personnel will be doing fight and withdraw, to effect a delay and trade space for time, inflicting maximum casualties on the enemy in the process," explains Capt Josh Bough (Mercian), also part of the directing staff.

"This gives platoons and companies in the rear the time to prepare fortified defences.

"It will be the first time we've done this, and that change has been introduced directly as a result of what we've been seeing in Ukraine."

## TIP OF THE SPEAR

However, as relevant as these curriculum tweaks may be, they don't go far enough in preparing infantry personnel for the burgeoning demands placed on them in the modern battle space, says Lt Col Anderson.

"If your mission is to seize and control ground, there will always be an infanteer at the tip of the spear," he says. "Nowadays those infantry leaders, who we create here, have to stitch the mission and capabilities together, especially in environments such as urban or woodland.

"They must know how to combine their own light-role resources with other assets such as engineers, military police, electronic warfare, artillery or air support."

With that in mind, commanders at the Infantry Battle School are bringing in heavily revised syllabuses for the three primary career battle courses from next month.

"We realised we urgently needed to increase the time people spend in command appointments while also doing more urban and defence tactics," explains Lt Col Anderson.

The students must also learn more about the systems operating on the modern battlefield that weren't around a »



Maj Adam Mackness, R Anglian







“  
This is  
undoubtedly  
the biggest  
change we have  
gone through in  
living memory  
”

» few years ago, such as drones, adds Maj Daniel Cole (PWRR, pictured opposite), officer commanding operations and training.

“This is undoubtedly the biggest change we have gone through in living memory,” he says.

“We are updating our approach to all aspects of the battle, including the introduction of ground-based air defence, and giving all junior NCOs on the section commanders’ course remotely-piloted aircraft systems operator qualifications.

“This means they can fly them in the latter parts of their time at Brecon and in the final exercise.

“They will also be freshly equipped with this skill when they return to unit.”

While the duration of the career courses will remain the same, each one will focus more on combined arms manoeuvre than it does now, looking at how this underpins the three main aspects of fighting and winning against a near-peer enemy – manoeuvring, lethality and survivability.

In fact, one of the most significant changes is that each of the revised courses will kick off with a major combined arms manoeuvre module.

“This shift in focus means our officers and NCOs will be able to appreciate and use the potential of the combined arms approach right through their course and into the final assessment exercise,” Lt Col Anderson says.

“At present they are taught only about traditional infantry support – sniper, recce, mortars, and so on – so this is a significant shift.”

For students, the changes will be felt not only in the classroom but during the numerous serials on each course as well as the final exercise, currently called Grim Warrior but to be rebranded Combined Warrior.

## LARGER EXERCISE

The Infantry Battle School is aiming for this final package to have numerous other capabilities directly involved by August, providing the platform for a truly combined arms exercise.

It will also give regiments and corps from across the Army the opportunity to supplement their own training courses through their participation.

This end goal will require a considerable amount of coordination between the Infantry Battle School and other units and schools, but even if the fruit hangs relatively high the benefits will be significant, says Lt Col Anderson.

“The people we train are not going to stay at their ranks forever so to get it right here will be invaluable to the Army as these personnel move up in future years,” he explains.

“With Combined Warrior we want to create a reliable foundation stone that is available three times a year for other capabilities to plug into.

“All parties will benefit and it brings greater efficiencies as well,” he adds. “If they are training here they are not doing it elsewhere, freeing up exercise areas for others.

“I spoke to the Experimentation and Trials Group only last week and they have already expressed an interest.



“Other units have indicated the same, and we’ll be able to confirm more details in the months ahead.”

In addition, shuffling the three course itineraries will, for the first time, allow officers and NCOs to finish their modules at the same time, allowing them to form working platoons on the final exercise.

Officers will command prospective sergeants and corporals during serials in urban, trench and woodland environments, providing an ultra-realistic dynamic within each sub-unit.

Previously, these three cohorts had to form platoons from within their own ranks or use supplementary personnel drawn from outside the school.

“It will be interesting to see how mixed platoons work, as well as having mortars, guns, medics, or whatever, supporting,” notes CSgt Parker.

“We are currently running what is probably the last course in the current format and although we have an airlift of troops with American Ospreys down at Thetford, which will be a great experience for them, if we can expand the combining part of our final exercise it will become more realistic and beneficial for all personnel.

“There are challenges, though, such as how you integrate artillery fires meaningfully. And getting vehicles involved at Brecon is difficult too. It might be decided to hold the final ex in a more suitable location, such as Salisbury Plain.”

The challenge of turning Combined Warrior into a true combined arms experience is not a small one.

However, the will and intent is very evident among the Infantry Battle School’s hierarchy.

And with the facility now under the command of the Combat Manoeuvre Centre – a one-star headquarters charged with ensuring that combined arms manoeuvre and interoperability are enshrined within the British Army at all levels – word is being spread about the potential opportunities of an expanded validation exercise.

Watch this space. ■

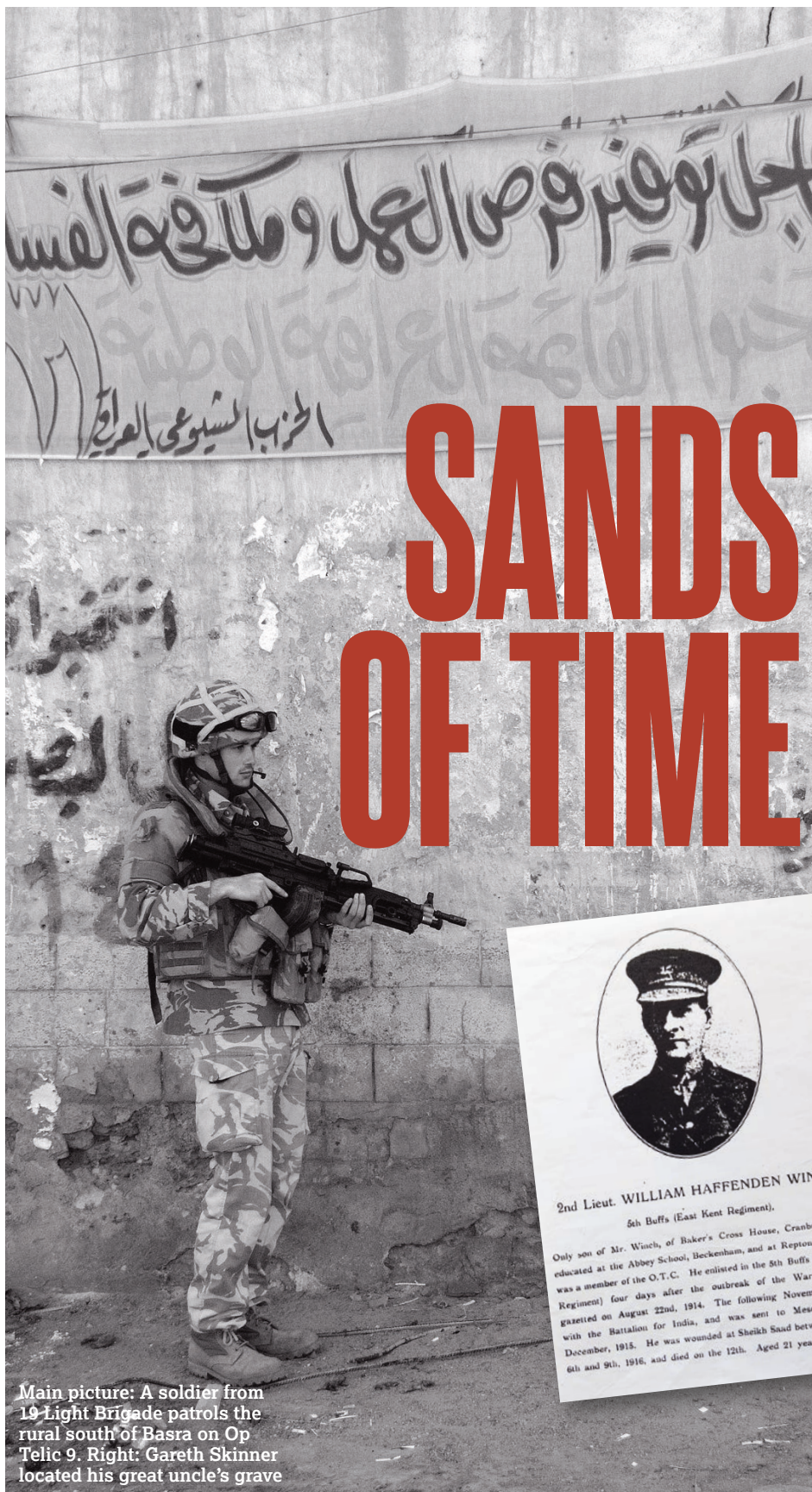
## INFANTRY BATTLE SCHOOL – WHAT IT DOES

- Platoon commanders’ battle course – 10 weeks
- Platoon sergeants’ battle course – 9 weeks
- Section commanders’ battle course – 8 weeks
- Live fire tactical training course – 6 weeks
- All-arms skill at arms instructor course – 8 weeks
- All-arms range management course – 2 weeks
- Urban operator instructor course – 4 weeks
- Close quarter battle instructor course – 4 weeks
- Dismounted close combat trainer – 2 weeks
- Jungle warfare instructors’ course – 8 weeks
- Operational tracker instructors’ course – 5 weeks



Maj Daniel Cole, PWRR





Main picture: A soldier from 19 Light Brigade patrols the rural south of Basra on Op Telic 9. Right: Gareth Skinner located his great uncle's grave

## Troops reflect on the passing of 20 years since the launch of Op Telic

**G**ARETH Skinner was struck by a haunting sense of history repeating itself when he first deployed to Iraq on Operation Telic.

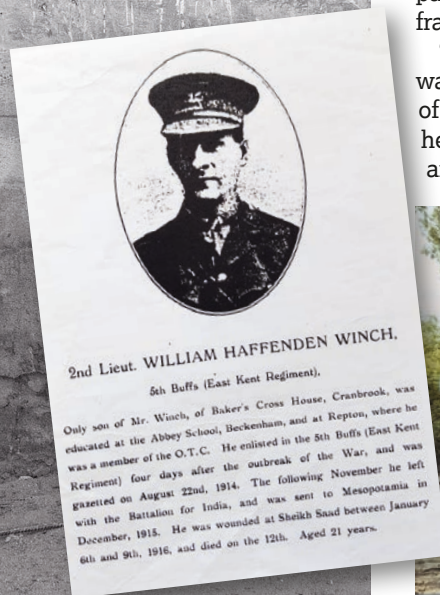
Aware that his great uncle had died serving in the region during the First World War, there was a strange feeling as he gazed on his ancestor's final resting place while, close by, the modern British Army prosecuted a 21st century campaign.

In the crumbling Basra Military War Cemetery, he was lost in thought as he stood among the dead from more than 100 years ago.

"Lt William Winch was killed at the height of the conflict in January 1916," recalled Skinner (pictured below) – who recently completed his 23-year career as a warrant officer in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

"The graveyard was falling to pieces, but a local man and his son had painstakingly reassembled the marble fragments that made up the memorials.

"I'm not especially emotional but it was really odd being in that place – some of the troops were from units I'd never heard of and I had a realisation that our army had been here already, generations



2nd Lieut. WILLIAM HAFFENDEN WINCH.  
5th Buffs (East Kent Regiment).

Only son of Mr. Winch, of Baker's Cross House, Cranbrook, was educated at the Abbey School, Beckenham, and at Repton, where he was a member of the O.T.C. He enlisted in the 5th Buffs (East Kent Regiment) four days after the outbreak of the War, and was gassed on August 22nd, 1914. The following November he left with the Battalion for India, and was sent to Mesopotamia in December, 1915. He was wounded at Sheikh Saad between January 6th and 9th, 1916, and died on the 12th. Aged 21 years.





before we arrived.”

Like Skinner, many Iraq-bound personnel discovered that they had family members who had fought against forces of the old Ottoman Empire when they began deploying on Op Telic two decades ago this month.

In the six years that followed, they would find a new empathy with their relatives as they worked in a hostile environment where temperatures regularly exceeded 40 degrees while fighting a determined enemy.

Some – like their forefathers – would make the ultimate sacrifice.

Yet the UK’s long association with the Middle East also gave the British troops an advantage in the complex Telic campaign. With a cultural awareness and sense of history cemented in training at all levels, they managed to make a difference against the odds as they put their lives on the line.

The Iraq outing that began in 2003 was – by all accounts – one of the most contentious deployments of recent times.

Back then, with the US still reeling from the 9/11 attacks and President George W Bush clamouring for the removal of dictator Saddam Hussein, the issue had comprehensively divided the international community.

While backing intervention, British PM Tony Blair had pressed for a UN resolution on the basis of alleged weapons of mass destruction possessed by the dictator and his oppressive Ba’ath Party government.

But this was not carried – crucially undermining credibility in the action from the outset – and an invasion by

an American-led alliance was launched as a Bush ultimatum for Saddam to step down passed. The attack, under the US codename Operation Enduring Freedom, opened with a ferocious aerial bombardment with troops advancing from neighbouring states.

In a matter of days, images of jubilant Iraqis pulling down Saddam Hussein’s statues were being beamed around the world as American tanks rumbled unmolested through the streets of the capital Baghdad.

But a subsequent calm that followed the storm was short lived.

As the Brits set up ops in the southern city of Basra plus four neighbouring provinces and the Americans took responsibility for the north, the challenge of holding the peace in a complex deployment was to prove nightmarish.

With growing unrest among the populace, local militia groups gaining prominence and foreign Islamist fighters drawn into the mix, a multi-layered insurgency took hold.

It continued despite the capture of Saddam, discovered hiding near Tikrit, with British troops and their allies facing attacks that ultimately left 179 UK personnel dead and many others injured.

“The military manoeuvre during the warfighting phase was a textbook operation but there had been little planning for the peace,” recalled David Loyn, a BBC reporter who was embedded with US marines and is now a visiting senior fellow in the Department of War Studies at King’s College London.

“Politically, there were some dreadful mistakes made in the wake of

## TAKING COMMAND

Lt Gen (Retd) Sir James Everard led 20th Armoured Brigade on Op Telic 8 and has held several senior posts. He gave *Soldier* his reflections on the era...

### What were your first impressions of Iraq?

We were well aware of the complex strategic picture and that we were in for a difficult tour. The country was still without a government at the time and politically the UK had to balance its own interests with those of its American allies.

### How did the brigade perform on the tour?

The soldiers did a great job, particularly as the threat from insurgents was growing with IED strikes, ambushes and indirect fire attacks against them.

### Are there any moments that stand out?

A Lynx helicopter was tragically shot down over Basra at the beginning of our deployment and 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry deployed to secure a perimeter around the site and recover the dead. They didn’t flinch until the task was done.

### Are there any lessons from the Telic years?

Yes – that there are quick, off-the-shelf solutions to many military problems. This is often how we managed to address threats in Iraq. You don’t want to be waiting for something new to be developed by defence if you face an immediate issue.

### How did Iraq shape the modern British Army?

I think history will look on us kindly – we performed well with the available resources. But the campaign did take our focus off conducting conventional operations, a gap that the chief of the general staff is addressing.



“  
I had a realisation  
that our army had  
been here already  
”





## TOOLS OF TELIC

### Hatch down

WITH insurgent attacks against British forces increasing – and casualties mounting – extra armour for patrolling soldiers was soon introduced to the deployment.

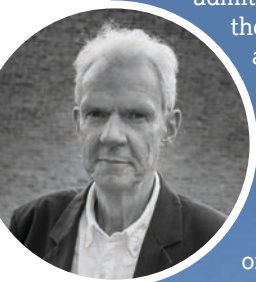
Notably, a range of vehicles were brought in from American firm Force Protection Incorporated, including the Mastiff (pictured below), which gave troops decent mobility and far better protection levels.

The Bulldog – a top-down reworking of the ageing FV432 platform – also proved successful, with an uprated powertrain among the refinements. Extra armour was also introduced for platforms including Warrior and Challenger 2.

### Front-line hacks

The war in Iraq saw – for the first time – defence correspondents embedded with coalition military units as they advanced across the battlespace.

As a senior BBC journalist working in the region at the time, David Loyn admitted to being cynical of the process at first – but admitted that it worked well. Later embedding and travelling himself with the US marines, he highlighted that the scheme allowed the public a new perspective on military operations.



## TELIC TIMELINE

### 2003

**March:** American and British Forces launch attack on Iraq from Kuwait. Royal Marines assault the Al-Faw Peninsula.

**April:** British troops arrive in Basra, Iraq's second city. Some 46,000 personnel in theatre or supporting ops.

**May:** Troop numbers fall to 18,000

**June:** Shock as six RMP soldiers are killed during an incident near Al-Amarah, north of Basra

**December:** Saddam Hussein captured by US forces near his home town of Tikrit. He is later executed after a trial by the new Iraqi government.

### 2004

**October:** Troops from The Black Watch battlegroup embark on Op Bracken,

assisting US troops with an action in the flashpoint town of Fallujah

### 2005

**June:** British C-130 crashes with the loss of nine RAF Servicemen and a soldier

» Saddam Hussein's fall and failing to fill the void left by his regime – disbanding the Iraqi army and police being one disastrous example.”

The author of several books about the era including his latest study of Afghanistan, *The Long War*, Loyn said this move and other miscalculations bred resentment, fuelled hostility and destabilised the country.

But he pointed out that many soldiers were committed to forwarding the cause of peace and had worked hard to help in tough conditions.

In particular, he believes that the conduct of the British troops – with their considerable historical connections in the area – helped them build bridges with local people.

“I remember staying with the military in Basra during the early stages of the operation and seeing the personnel directing traffic around a tank that had broken down,” Loyn added. “They had a

calm and relaxed demeanour.

“Maybe experience in Northern Ireland helped the troops understand how to work among the people – soldiers also tend to have a keen sense of how the past influences the present, as the British Army teaches history well at all ranks with battlefield tours and other events to promote learning.”

Training and experience were certainly needed in an ever-shifting environment in which the security situation could change from day-to-day.

“I ended up doing four Telic tours in all – starting with the first in 2003 – and there were huge differences between all of them,” recalled Skinner.

“The warfighting phase was over quickly and everything suddenly went quiet, which actually felt pretty odd in itself. But when I went back later, violence had flared up and we were taking fire again.”

Then a sergeant with experience of the



**December:**  
Democratic elections held in Iraq

## 2006

**May:** Lynx helicopter shot down over Basra, killing all five personnel on board

**November:**  
Attack at Shatt al-Arab leaves four personnel dead

## 2007

**January:** UK hands over responsibility for security in Basra to Iraqi forces; soldiers withdraw to the central airbase hub

## 2008

**March-April:**  
Iraqi forces – supported by British and US mentors – launch Operation Charge of the Knights, taking on militias in Basra

## 2009

**January:** Basra airport is handed back to Iraqi control; Op Telic concludes by late May of that year

volatile Balkans under his belt, Skinner described the Telic 9 tour – starting in late 2006 – as being his toughest.

“We had deployed just as a bomb at a bridge across a waterway called the Shatt al Arab exploded on Remembrance Day, killing several British personnel,” the former recovery mechanic said.

“Our first duty was to assemble for a repatriation ceremony, which set the tone for the entire tour.

“The coming months were scary – we were out in Basra city each night and being contacted by small arms and RPG fire pretty much all the time.”

Laurence Roche – a retired instructor with the education and training branch of the Adjutant General’s Corps – recalled flying home on the day of the Remembrance Day bomb after a hectic tour with 20th Armoured Brigade.

His six-month Telic 8 deployment had grimly started with the shooting down of a British Lynx helicopter, killing all

## NEXT GENERATION

Cpl Dan McNaught (REME, pictured right) joined the Army after living through the Telic era as a child. Here, the 26-year-old recalls how his father’s service inspired him.



“I WAS six at the time Op Telic began. I don’t remember a huge amount about that time, although I do recall my dad going out to Iraq. He did two tours in the Middle East and I remember the Christmases when he was absent.

As a kid you don’t tend to be aware of the dangers facing your parent. But if anything my dad, who was in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, was a positive influence on my decision to join. But to his credit he didn’t attempt to push me. I have a son myself now, and will take the same approach.

I initially enlisted in the Royal Engineers before switching to the REME after a few years. I’m a recovery mech now – the same role as dad before he retired.

Iraq is somewhere I’ve never been. I’m just about to deploy on Op Cabrit with The Queen’s Royal Hussars battlegroup.”

The Bulldog armoured vehicle arrived in theatre in 2007



Black Watch troops on patrol in Basra with the Iraqi police in 2003





Deployed to Iraq, Gareth Skinner patrols the volatile Maysan province area of Al Amarah



“I’ve never been sorry and would do it all again, in the same time period, if given the opportunity”

» five personnel on board.

The level of violence in Iraq, and mounting casualties, left its mark on personnel, he said.

While acknowledging the operation’s failings, however, the ex-officer is also convinced that troops played a role in promoting stabilisation and peace.

“When the UK arrived in 2003, the Iraqis looked back to the past imperial era and there was a hope that British money and investment would come again – particularly as their infrastructure was in tatters,” he added.

“Unfortunately, their expectations were not met,” he continued. “Our attempts to better the lives of local people through improvements to the electrical power grid, for example, were also hampered by insurgent attacks.”

But Roche – who also taught at Army Foundation College Harrogate in his 20-year military career – went on to point out that the British did make a difference in mission critical areas, such as training Iraqi personnel.

The Middle Eastern soldiers had proven their skills in an action to drive insurgents from Basra during an op in 2008, dubbed Charge of the Knights.

“With mentoring, the personnel grew in confidence rapidly and were adept at dealing with trouble by the later stages of the deployment,” the veteran added.

“There was also real uptick in the sense of self-belief among the population in general, which ultimately paved the way for the end of Telic.”

The withdrawal – in 2009 – was the end of a long and bitter action, dogged with controversy from the outset.

A civil war later erupted and British

forces remain with multinational colleagues in the region on a limited basis to this day, continuing to train and mentor their Iraqi counterparts.

But troops who served in the Telic era are reflective.

Skinner, who made a profound connection with the country after visiting his great uncle’s final resting place in Basra, remains proud to have played his part.

“I’m very glad to have served in those years,” he said. “I’ve never been sorry and would do it all again, in the same time period, if given the opportunity.”

While highlighting its serious flaws, Loyn is adamant that the learning from both Iraq and Afghanistan must continue to be distilled – particularly counter-insurgency skills – as the military focus shifts back to conventional warfighting.

“When you look back in recent history, most of the campaigns in which we have been involved have been among the people,” he added.

“We are undoubtedly going to face this situation again – and we owe it to the memory of the Service personnel lost in Iraq to continue maintaining the required skills.” ■

**IN NUMBERS**  
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SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN KILLED



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[ssafa.org.uk/adoption](https://ssafa.org.uk/adoption)





# Female Volunteers Needed

*for a Human Performance Study*

## What are we investigating?

The effect of energy and calcium intake during load carriage on bone health.

## Who can take part in the study?

- Women
- Both civilian and military
- Aged 18-36 years
- Women not currently using the implant, injection, or taking the 'mini pill'

## Where?

Army Health & Physical Performance Laboratory,  
Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Camberley

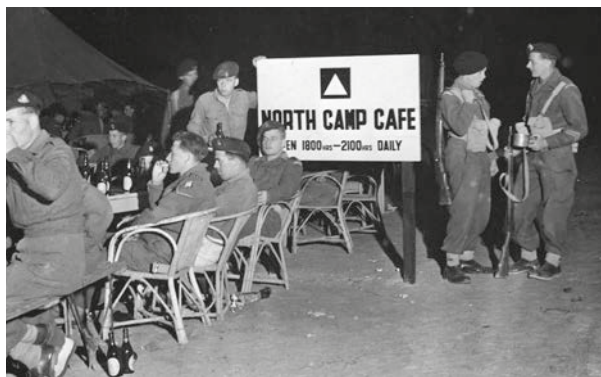
## Contact:

Dr Tom O'Leary ([Thomas.OLeary100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Thomas.OLeary100@mod.gov.uk)) or  
Dr Charlotte Coombs ([Charlotte.Coombs102@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Charlotte.Coombs102@mod.gov.uk))  
01264 886795

## What do I need to do?

- 3 laboratory visits which include a pre-screen, and two load carriage exercise sessions
- Take a calcium supplement before one of the load carriage exercise sessions
- Blood samples will be taken during laboratory visits
- You will be compensated for your time





## ‘Cooking up a morale boost’

**T**HE old adage that nobody can cook as well as your mother has some validity, but it isn't 100 per cent true.

As a youngster in post-war East London, mum did the best she could with what was available. Then, as the years rolled on and rationing and austerity ended, she developed into a great cook and we ate like kings.

I'm lucky in that my wife and daughter are also very handy in the kitchen, with my better half renowned among our friends for her tasty shepherd's pie, the ingredients of which are a family secret.

But I have to say that even the skills of mum and my darling, long-suffering wife pale in comparison with the cooks who manned the field kitchens during my time in the Army.

When I found myself abroad wearing the Queen's uniform, helping to hold back the Red Menace across the East German border, trained soldiers in cook's whites

from the Army Catering Corps (ACC) would arrive and set up their kitchens in no time – and in these small spaces miracles would happen.

From arriving at the location, they would usually be serving up delicious hot grub within an hour, despite the often horrific conditions and makeshift cooking facilities that came out the back of a four-ton lorry.

You can imagine how their presence lifted the morale of hundreds of wet, cold and miserable soldiers. We thought they were heroes.

The ACC does not exist anymore – it was amalgamated into the Royal Logistic Corps in 1993, although there is, apparently, talk of it being reinstated due to the shortcomings of the civvy catering contractors the Army has now.

I hope it does come back. It would do the Service wonders. – **Tony Levy (Ex-R Signals)**

**Left:** Army Catering Corps chefs cook-off in a 1967 Service competition  
**Right:** Grateful soldiers enjoy a desert stop-off at Moascar, Egypt in the early 1950s

“We thought they were heroes”

## HOUSING HORRORS CONTINUED

In last month's edition we published two letters about the ongoing shortfalls in maintenance and customer service experienced by those living in family housing. This is a response from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's head of accommodation, Air Commodore James Savage...

**F**IRSTLY, as chief executive Mike Green set out in his letter to families before Christmas, we in DIO are very sorry for the level of service that you and your loved ones have received under these new accommodation contracts.

They were designed in collaboration with the front-line commands and families federations to put families first, so we are deeply disappointed at how they have started. The service you are receiving is certainly not what we contracted for.

In September, we instructed our suppliers to put in place rectification plans which focus on resolving many issues. Considerable progress has been made but we recognise that there is significantly more work to do to achieve

the level of service you deserve. I go into more detail in my interview on [page 7](#).

We recognise the impact of these issues on the lives of personnel, therefore getting the service right is our highest priority and we are robustly holding our suppliers to account over their progress.

Equally, they are putting a great deal of effort and resource into delivering their rectification plans.

For the latest news, visit [gov.uk/guidance/defence-infrastructure-organisation-service-family-accommodation](http://gov.uk/guidance/defence-infrastructure-organisation-service-family-accommodation) where you can subscribe for updates.

Service personnel can also join our new **DIO Service Families Accommodation** group on Defence Connect.



YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style. Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

✉ [mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk)



# BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



## CAREERS

**SaluteMyJob** has launched a cyber career jumpstart programme to attract, train, qualify and place members of the Forces community into jobs. Visit [salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways](https://salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways)

**JobOppO House** is an app containing career resources and introduction opportunities for Service leavers. There are already more than 2,000 people in its community, including veterans who can offer feedback on the civvy job market. It can be downloaded now from the Apple/Google app stores.



## COMPETITIONS

January 2023

**HOAY (J2 base layer set) winner:** Sgt Yojan Gurung, RLC  
**Spine line (Nintendo Switch Lite) winner:** Joshua Brickell, Walsall



## SEARCHLINE

**Armed Forces charity Little Troopers** has opened a therapy programme for teenagers feeling the impact of family life in the military. It offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified therapist for those up to age 18. Referrals can be made by a parent, school, community group or welfare worker. Visit [littletroopers.net](https://littletroopers.net)

**The University of Chester's Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans** wants to learn more about the experiences of former British Army personnel from the Indian subcontinent and West Indies. The research – funded by charity The Forces in Mind Trust – is examining how service shaped the lives of ex-troops and their loved ones. Contact [veterans@chester.ac.uk](mailto:veterans@chester.ac.uk)



## WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are always a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with

pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

### Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.  
[army.mod.uk/hives](https://army.mod.uk/hives)

### Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families. 0800 731 4880  
[ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline](https://ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline)

### Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via [rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk) or 01904 882051/2053

### ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own you can get confidential, free advice from your medical officer during routine hours, or your unit duty officer.

### Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

### NHS support

[nhs.uk/livewell](https://nhs.uk/livewell)

### BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

**Army Mediation Service**  
0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691  
[army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

### Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or  
mil 96770 4656  
[army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk)

### Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 014 2381

### CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

**Army Families Federation**  
The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004  
[aff.org.uk](https://aff.org.uk)

**Flexible working** has been

introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at [discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk](https://discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk)

### DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

This can be a considerable burden, made worse by dealing with it alone. The following organisations can provide support.

### Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988  
[forcespensionsociety.org](https://forcespensionsociety.org)

### Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives  
[joiningforcescu.co.uk](https://joiningforcescu.co.uk)

### Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators  
[moneyhelper.org.uk](https://moneyhelper.org.uk)

### National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000  
[nationaldebtline.org](https://nationaldebtline.org)

### StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111  
[stepchange.org.uk](https://stepchange.org.uk)

### GAMBLING

#### National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK 0808 8020 133

### GRIEF

#### Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677  
**SSAFA support groups**

A network of people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding compassionate group  
[supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk)

### HOUSING

**Joint Service Housing**

### Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120  
[rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

### Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797  
[spaces.org.uk](https://spaces.org.uk)

### Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support  
[veteransgateway.org.uk](https://veteransgateway.org.uk)

### INJURY/SICKNESS

#### Personnel Recovery Centres

can be found across the UK. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence Connect or email [rc-pers-arc-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-pers-arc-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

### LONELINESS

#### Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation  
[afvbc.net](https://afvbc.net)

### Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123  
[samaritans.org](https://samaritans.org)

### The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080  
[britishlegion.org.uk](https://britishlegion.org.uk)

### MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone to talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. Charities and organisations that can also provide support include:  
**Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline** 0800 138 1619

### Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an [@armymail.mod.gov.uk](mailto:@armymail.mod.gov.uk) email address  
[work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll](https://work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll)



**Mind – The Mental Health Charity**

0300 123 3393  
[mind.org](http://mind.org)

**NHS**

[nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

**Samaritans**

116 123  
[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**The Ripple Pond**

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured

troops and veterans  
0333 900 1028  
[theripplepond.org](http://theripplepond.org)

**Togetherall**

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health  
[togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

**RELATIONSHIP  
BREAKDOWN/ABUSE**

**Aurora New Dawn**

Safety and support for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and

stalking 02394 216 816  
[aurorand.org.uk](http://aurorand.org.uk)

**ManKind**

Support for male domestic abuse victims  
01823 334244  
[mankind.org.uk](http://mankind.org.uk)

**Relate**

UK provider of relationship support  
[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)



**REUNIONS**

The 25th Anniversary of the **Artillery**

**Clerks' Association** will be held in the Royal Artillery sergeants' mess, Larkhill on June 23-25. Visit [artyclerkassn.org](http://artyclerkassn.org) for further details and updates.

**The Army Apprentices National Association**

celebrates 100 years of Army apprentices on May 13-14 at Mickleover Court Hotel, Derby and at the National Memorial Arboretum. For more information on the milestone event please contact [info.armyana@gmail.com](mailto:info.armyana@gmail.com)

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**ssafa** the Armed Forces charity

TEN details have been changed in this picture of members of Nato's Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup at the conclusion of their winter camp in Tapa, Estonia (page 13).

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 970, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by March 31.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a beautiful hand-built Toff London wristwatch, produced exclusively for SSAFA, the UK's oldest tri-service military charity.

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The winner's name will appear in the May issue and all the usual competition rules apply.







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6th Prize	£1000
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10 x	£100

### CONTACT US

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# REVIEWS

## PICK OF THE MONTH

### Burning Horizon

**Troops reflect on Iraq invasion, 20 years on**

▶ ALTHOUGH for those who took part it no doubt seems like yesterday, this month marks the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq (page 42).

The voices of the personnel who deployed on the first phase – Operation Telic 1 – have been captured in new book *Burning Horizon*.

While the mission would quickly become mired in a grinding counter-insurgency, the early weeks were characterised by a massive logistical effort followed by a short, brutal fight to oust Saddam's forces.

Author and battlefield guide Julian Whippy (ex-R Anglian) has tracked down veterans of the initial campaign to fill what he believes is a gap in the historical record – brought about largely by the controversial legacy of the war.

The former Reservist and policeman told *Soldier* how the seed of the idea came during the pandemic, while struggling to research amphibious operations on behalf of a client.

"In battlefield guiding we try and bring any conflict to life through personal stories but when it came to Iraq, I found virtually nothing," he explained.

"There was plenty on the politics, the weapons of mass destruction fiasco and the Chilcot inquiry but not much else, so I thought I would try and speak to some people and then that snowballed into the book."



**P57**

GAMES

**P58**

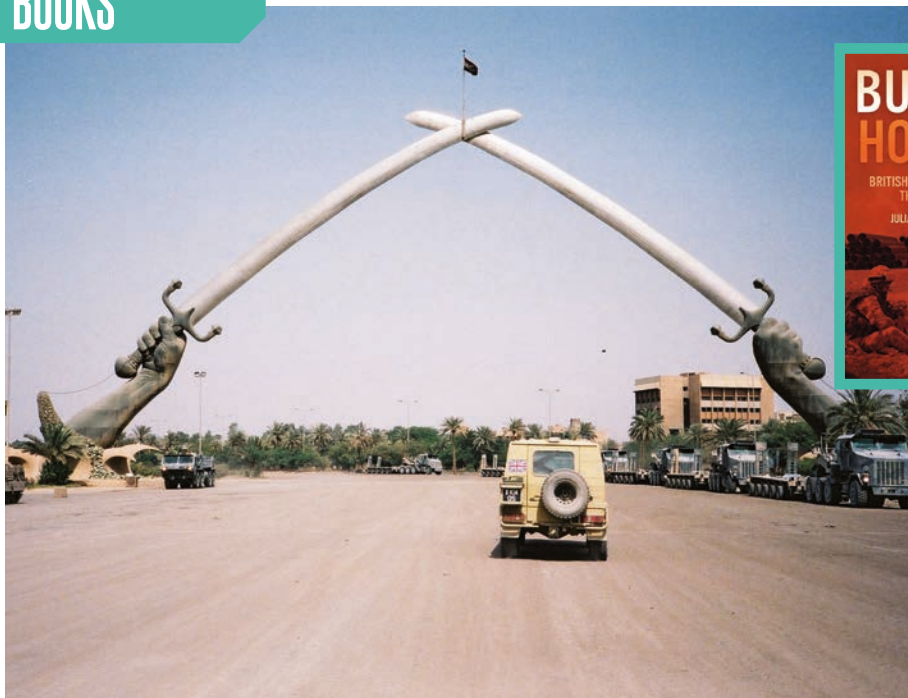
MUSIC

**P59**

PODCASTS



## BOOKS



As the project progressed, Whippy (pictured below) recognised some “golden threads” emerging.

“One of these was the preparedness of our forces,” he continued. “The veterans who had previously served on Gulf War One in 1991 tried to say, ‘this is how it’s going to be’, and found they weren’t well received.

“The other thing was how completely hamstrung the deployed troops were by the tardiness and lethargy in Whitehall.

“The politicians knew before Christmas, but they said, ‘you can’t draw any maps and don’t paint any trucks sandy coloured’ – and then when it did happen, the whole thing ended up as a real rush job.

“You don’t just drive heavy equipment off a ship and go into action – you need time to get the vehicles ready, the guys and the kit have to acclimatise; you need everything positioned in the right places.

“They had hundreds of tonnes of stuff missing in shipping containers – and RSMs standing on the docks pulling their hair out because their night vision goggles were lost somewhere in a giant game of *Tetris*.”

The differing experiences of the thousands of Reservists who were mobilised was another element Whippy was keen to reflect.

“Some of them had a very good workup and really felt prepared and part of the whole thing, whereas others were rushed and sort of torn away from their core role,” he added.

“There was one guy – a REME lance jack, who ended up as a full corporal in charge of an



Infantry section from The Black Watch.

“He found himself going into action with them thinking, ‘this is a bit above my pay grade’.

“It wasn’t until they were about to get on the transport home that he confessed he was a Territorial mechanic – otherwise he knew he would get a load of abuse. Those kinds of stories stand out.”

Later iterations of Op Telic would only add to the public’s perception that the conflict had been a misguided endeavour from the very start – leaving a complicated legacy that Whippy believes many are not yet comfortable reflecting on.

“It’s a kind of unfashionable war,” he concluded. “In the Second World War, Hitler was killing Jews. He was the bad guy.

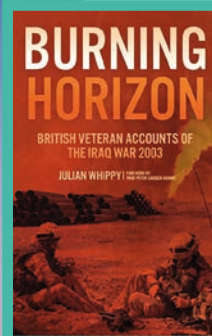
“With Iraq in 2003, we went in because of WMD. Only there weren’t any, so we were seen as the bad guys.

“Some of the boys and girls who were there describe being called baby killers in restaurants when they came back. But they were told to go and do a job.

“There is a sense of having done their bit and having been let down by the end game – as well as being lied to.

“So I hope the book does a bit of justice for those who fought or died. I’m pleased to bang the drum for them because I think that they’ve been a little bit overlooked.” ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



*Burning Horizon* by Julian Whippy is out now, published by Casemate and priced £29.95

## BOOK RELEASES



**The Longest Stag**  
by Jonathon Riley and Alasdair Goulden

RIGHT from the start of Operation Banner to its very end, The Queen’s Regiment served in Northern Ireland through one or more of its

battalions. While this may be a one-regiment book, it is really fascinating. It takes the reader through the Army’s time in the province, showing the changes in tactics, equipment and politics along the way – on both sides of the conflict. Anyone who has served there, regardless of cap badge or rank, will be able to follow this excellent account and recognise their own experiences within.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



**From the Battlefield to the Stage**  
by Norman S. Poser

THE handsome Gen John Burgoyne – resplendent in his red coat on the cover of this very readable biography – had a varied career: dashing cavalry

colonel, satirical playwright, reforming MP, bon vivant and gambler. The last was his undoing in the Saratoga campaign of 1777. Author Norman Poser fairly assesses the ambiguities of the officer’s plans for the advance from Canada and the operational mistakes made. Seven chapters cover the American War, while others describe different aspects of Burgoyne’s life. A few factual blemishes are noted – William Howe did not capture Quebec in 1759. Nonetheless, this is probably as rounded a biography of this talented figure as we shall get.

Rodney Atwood, military historian





PICK OF THE MONTH

# Toy Soldiers

For Switch

Mechanised fighting with a new model army...

► THE trenches of the 1914-18 conflict have – for better or worse – been far less replicated in video game form than the theatres of other military confrontations.

In contrast to a huge Second World War back catalogue, there have been fewer titles exploring early mechanised fighting.

The visceral *Battlefield 1* is the notable exception, putting players in boots of troops from Belgium to Gallipoli.

But now *Toy Soldiers* has entered the fray. Bringing digital Great War battles to the Switch, this blend of action and strategy charges armchair officers with defending their trenches against waves of marauding opponents.

And if prosecuting battles is your Naafi break bag, there is plenty on offer here in a real-time strategy outing that will happily fill more than a few hours.

*Toy Soldiers* essentially gives players the tools to defend their territory – including barbed wire and tank traps plus a range of authentic period

weaponry – before leaving them to the task of managing the ensuing encounter.

Commanders, however, need not leave their troops to follow orders – and have the option of jumping into gun positions and taking to the trigger themselves.

Their options also include the ability to direct counter-attacks and claw back ground as well as commandeering vehicles to provide a front-line punch.

If all this sounds as horrific a proposition as real-life First World War combat, rest assured that the game is sensitively handled in a couple of ways.

As the title suggests, the combatants involved in these encounters are all depicted as plastic models rather than flesh-and-blood men.

The action takes place on tabletop dioramas too, with the tongue-in-cheek approach shunning gruesome realities to open out an experience for a wider age range.

Somehow this also makes placing the ghastly

array of realistic wartime weaponry, including chlorine gas canisters, industrial flame-throwers and a shockingly destructive range of artillery, a tad more palatable.

It will not have the depth of gameplay to satisfy either hardened strategy fans or military history buffs, but *Toy Soldiers* is a curiously entertaining title that is not only very playable but has decent visuals and an excellent soundtrack as well.

The action is well paced, with battles gradually increasing in their difficulty level as players are introduced to the range of available weaponry. Some multiplayer options provide the scope for matches with pals.

Controlling the action is easy too, with a mercifully simple interface that allows for switching between front-line arcade action and setting up defences across the battlefield. Jumping into vehicles is also fun, particularly biplanes that allow players to strafe advancing troops from the skies.





## GAMES

» Criticisms are few but the action can become repetitive, meaning the game is best played in short bursts, and the £25 price tag is potentially a little too steep.

But misgivings aside, *Toy Soldiers* is as polished as it is fun while delivering a still emotionally-charged subject matter with a decent level of care. ■

### VERDICT:

Definitely worth a game of soldiers

★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*

## Enjoyed *Toy Soldiers*? Try these for more virtual trench warfare



### Battlefield 1

A VISCERAL, fast-paced actioner in keeping with other titles in EA's long-running series, players fight

around the world in this Great War-themed shooter. The solo campaign features stories spanning the Middle East to the Western Front in a package that often teaches the awful realities of the conflict as effectively as any documentary. The game was released across most previous generation platforms.



### Valiant Hearts

AN altogether different offering – and with a younger audience in mind – this package from French publisher Ubisoft has a slower

pace with adventuring and puzzle solving at its heart. Developed to coincide with the war's centenary in 2014, it follows the fortunes of four characters from different countries whose lives are connected through the fighting. The use of real-life letters and testimonies gives the all-formats game a credibility as well as an originality that offers a refreshing take on the conflict.

## MUSIC



## PICK OF THE MONTH

# Gloria

### Award-winner shows a taste for innovation

» **SAM SMITH** has enjoyed a meteoric rise since their vocals graced *Latch*, the debut single of electronic duo **Disclosure**, a decade ago.

Picked up by reviewers for their work with the song, and later on **Naughty Boy's** *La La La* chart-topping hit, the young musician's talent was soon in demand.

In the space of just two years the artist was nominated for both the BBC Critics' Choice Award and Sound of 2014 poll – walking away with both accolades.

Now, after further recognition and a string of hits – including the title track for recent James Bond movie *Spectre* – the 30-year-old's already rich musical journey has taken something of an experimental twist with fourth album *Gloria*.

A collection of 13 songs that includes

collaborations with rock mainstay **Ed Sheeran**, R&B artist **Jessie Reyez** and reggae maestro **Koffee**, the record canters through a variety of styles to show a phenomenal musical curiosity.

"*Gloria* is also a celebration of genres and all the female divas, vocalists and pop writers that I love," Smith told reporters. "I harnessed all of these memories before putting them into one album – and I also wanted to be defiant."

"Is it my diva album? I think so – I think that I have finally let my Gloria out."

Smith – who identifies as non-binary and takes the pronoun "they" – has previously cited **Adele** and **Amy Winehouse** among their influences, and is clearly open to different styles as they continue to explore their own direction.

While all tracks on *Gloria* are underpinned by the artist's distinctive vocal, the album certainly defies categorisation. Seamlessly switching from style to style, the collection steers a course from pop to dance and most genres in between.

Notable tracks include *I'm Not Here to Make Friends*, solidly held by a funky bassline and sweeping strings to provide a disco-like vibe, and



*Unholy* – a work with Jessie Reyez that has a definite Middle Eastern flavour.

The title track *Gloria* is a beautifully delivered choral piece – sung a cappella – before the album resumes its upbeat and rhythmic energy.

It is impossible to fault the performances throughout as Smith cements their position as a musical A-lister while building on an already impressive back catalogue.

Indeed, the artist shows an extraordinary **David Bowie**-like potential for reinvention in carrying off an album that is every bit as diverse and rich as it is accomplished.

Coinciding with the recording, Smith released dates for several concerts, with a world tour opening on home turf at London's O2 Arena before moving on to several venues in North America, Australia and New Zealand.

If the album is anything to go by, it should be a hugely impressive live show. Smith is certainly one to watch – particularly as they are still relatively early on in their musical career and there is definitely far more to unpack.

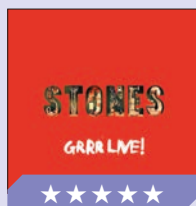
While Smith already has a huge global following, *Gloria* is also a good place to start for those who have yet to sample this extraordinary talent. ■

#### VERDICT:

A top-notch album that oozes diversity

★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*



#### Grrr Live! The Rolling Stones

ALWAYS guaranteed to lift the spirits, **Mick Jagger's** legendary band of rockers have

joined troops across

the decades in CD, cassette and digital form – becoming a feature of life on deployments from Ops Banner to Cabrit. And this newly released live selection from their *Grrr* greatest hits collection looks as if it will be equally well played as an on-tour favourite. All the classics are here in a line-up that includes *Paint it Black*, *Brown Sugar* and *The Last Time*, delivered with the same relentless energy that has characterised the outfit over the decades. Highly recommended.

**Cliff Caswell, *Soldier***

## PICK OF THE MONTH



## Bought the T-Shirt

**Ex-Commando delves into some extreme existences**

► “FEAR is the number one tool of survival,” notorious Shard climber George King tells Chris Thrall’s *Bought the T-Shirt* podcast in one of its latest instalments.

It’s the kind of hard-won wisdom listeners can expect by the bucketload from the ex-Royal Marines Commando and his colourful array of guests in a podcast series that is now in its fourth year.

These are the people who have learned life’s lessons in some of the most troubling and death-defying scenarios imaginable. And as a result, the conversations that transpire are not for the faint-hearted.

The interviewer (although he goes out of his way to renounce that role, preferring instead to define his broadcasts as something more akin to a chat) has no rules set down for these discussions.

And the lively accounts begin close to home, too. Thrall served in Northern Ireland and after training in Arctic warfare and survival, he earned his parachutists’ wings before leaving the Forces, overseeing his own business empire, becoming homeless, suffering psychosis from crystal meth addiction and working as a nightclub doorman for the 14k triad group.

And that is just the backstory.

The veteran then rebuilt his life, became a qualified pilot, skydiver, adventurer, endurance athlete, bestselling author and, of course, motivational speaker.

Thrall uses his resulting knowledge of addiction, endurance, criminal underworlds, military ops – and everything in between – to

trigger some fascinating debates.

Sure, the instalments may be long winded (many close to two hours) and a tad repetitive at times. But to anyone looking for authentic insight into the full spectrum of characters who make our human race so intriguing, that is a small price to pay.

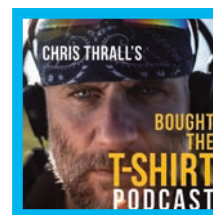
The roll call of guests here takes some beating. And as a result, the relaxed, meandering nature of the conversations (which would undoubtedly get tedious with more subdued interviewees) seems to work.

Episodes take on the quality of two muckers sitting up drinking together into the night, sharing their maddest moments in life.

Much of the content is inspiring, and some is just plain grim – crystal meth, heroin and other drug-taking experiences are described in graphic detail.

But whether it is grilling people on their time served inside, on elite ops or fronting gigs, it’s safe to say that anyone bored of *Bought the T-Shirt* is bored of life, podcasts – or both. ■

- *Bought the T-Shirt* is available to download from the usual podcast providers



#### VERDICT:

Get downloading for your longest road trips

★★★★★

REVIEW: SARAH GOLDTHORPE, *SOLDIER*



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# SOLDIER SPORT



## « POLICE PRESENCE

THE British Police travelled to Aldershot for a double-header with the Army men's and women's rugby union teams. The matches formed a vital building block for the Reds as they ramped up preparations for this season's Inter-Services campaign. Read full reports on pages 71 and 72...





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Pictures: Janey McGill and Graeme Main

# SERVICES CLASH IN SIGHT AS SEASON RAMPS UP

**T**HE Army's Telemark skiers head to the slopes of Meribel this month on a mission to claim the ascendancy over their Forces rivals.

Staged as part of the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships, the competition will see the soldiers attempt to defend their title from last season – their first win since 2016 – in what will be the latest chapter in their battle with the Royal Navy.

The event comes on the back of the first Ex Telemark Titan (British, Navy and Army Championships) since 2019, which attracted 110 skiers to Pralognan-la-Vanoise in the French Alps – 40 per cent of whom were new to the sport.

"The Navy have been very successful, but our team is looking particularly strong this year," Maj Rich Wright (AGC (ETS)), secretary of Army Telemark, told *SoldierSport*.

"Commitments on HMS Queen

Elizabeth may have something to say about who they have available, and we are confident."

Wright was pleased to report a return to normality following the disruptions caused by Covid and said the mission to attract new talent in what is a varied and popular Army winter sports scene will continue next season.

"I did a fair amount of downhill skiing before coming across to Telemark," Wright added. "I was reasonable but didn't really make the grade in terms of being the quickest on the slopes."

"I wanted a new challenge. This is a very different type of skiing and while it is not the fastest, it is stylish, and that's part of the appeal."

"We still have more to do. Firstly, the team will continue to establish female participation by identifying personnel with the potential to compete at Service level and then develop them alongside male athletes."



**"WHILE  
IT IS  
NOT THE  
FASTEST,  
IT IS  
STYLISH"**

"Secondly, we want to build on our development of grass-roots Telemark and widen participation to as many soldiers as possible."

"We are tracking several individuals who have competed in the discipline at national level and have now joined the Service, and will hopefully be eligible, and available, to compete for us in 2024."

Elsewhere, the Army and Inter-Services Ice Sports Championships were underway as this issue went to press.

Featuring bobsleigh, luge and skeleton, the events in Lillehammer came on the back of a successful outing at Ex Raging Ice 1 – the Service's novice training camp – in early January.

"All three were fully subscribed, and we identified some really good talent," explained Maj Tim Haskell (RA), deputy director of Army ice sports. "It was really pleasing to see the uptake this year



as we have seen some of our experienced people move on.

"This season is still slightly different to normal due to Covid and we've had to combine the Army and Inter-Services Championships in a two-and-a-half week chunk.

"Hopefully we can have an expanded programme next year with all three sports staging separate camps to give everyone more time on the ice."

And with the Forces clash in mind, Haskell said each discipline will have different expectations on the ice.

"I'm the outgoing chairman of Army skeleton and we have used this as a development season – we need to bring fresh blood into the sport," the officer added.

"So it is about gaining experience and getting our novices used to the ice and a different track. If we get second place, I will be over the moon.

"Luge has some good novices coming through and they also have the likes of Sgt Dani Scott (QARANC) and Capt Lucy Wyatt (RE) coming back, who are seasoned performers.

"Historically, the Army has always done well in luge and with that experience onboard we should have a good chance.

"The bobsleigh team will also want to be competing at the top. With Olympian LCpl Nick Gleeson (Para) and The Parachute Regiment involved they should be strong." ■



## CRESTA IN NUMBERS

TESTING CORNERS ON THE CRESTA RUN IN ST MORITZ

10

TOTAL DROP, IN FEET, ON THE COURSE AS THE GRADIENT AVERAGES AT 13 PER CENT

514

WEEKS TO COMPLETE BUILDING WORK ON THE FIRST RUN, WHICH WAS ATTEMPTED IN JANUARY 1885

9

STARTING POINTS – TOP AND JUNCTION – THE FORMER OF WHICH SEES FASTER RIDERS REACHING MORE THAN 70MPH

2



## RIDING THE CREST OF A WAVE

**T**HE Army Cresta team has been reflecting on an encouraging season on the ice, the highlights of which were success at Inter-Services level and an influx of new talent joining the fold.

With the Forces clash proving difficult to predict, the competition was settled by the narrowest of margins as the Army's top four finishers triumphed over their Royal Navy counterparts by just two-and-a-half seconds. The Royal Air Force finished third.

Surg Cdr Dave Potter led the charge for the Senior Service as he topped the individual standings, but it was the soldiers' collective effort that proved decisive.

"Either of the Services could have been victorious – it was as close as it has ever been," Maj Tom Wythe (RL), captain of Army Cresta, told *SoldierSport*. "Dave Potter has had a great season, achieving some incredible times, but we came out on top with our strength in depth.

"By identifying and encouraging talent from

previous years we have a significantly larger pool of athletes to pick from.

"It was a difficult decision to work out who our top six people would be."

Maj Jack Barnes (RHG/D) finished second, with Wythe in fourth and Lt Alex Villiers-Smith (Gren Gds) fifth in what was his first year on the team.

Staged on a three-quarter-mile ice run in St Moritz, Cresta sees athletes riding head first on a toboggan using metal spikes on the end of special boots to brake and steer.

The season started in early January with a beginners' week that attracted 35 personnel – 25 of whom were total novices. The Army Championships followed, before the top performers headed to the Inter-Services.

"Cresta is a small sport, so a lot of our recruitment is done by word of mouth," Wythe continued. "If you want to challenge yourself there is nothing like hurtling head first down the run, inches above the ice, reaching speeds of 50mph even as a beginner." ■





# 

**T**HE Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team (AFPST) is working on a fast-track plan for its latest snowboarding talent in a bid to see him progress to the Paralympic stage.

LCpl Jack Silverwood (Yorks) only started in the sport in 2021 but with encouraging performances in his training and competitions to date, big things are expected of the 27-year-old moving forward.

The soldier, who lost his right arm in an accident in Germany in 2019, was recently invited to the Royal Navy Festival of Winter Sports and will head to France later this month for the annual Inter-Services Championships in Meribel.

His season then winds down at an AFPST training camp in Colorado, after which he should hear if his bid to join the Army's elite sports programme has been successful or not.

If so, Silverwood will be able

to train full-time and gain the experience needed to test himself at the highest level.

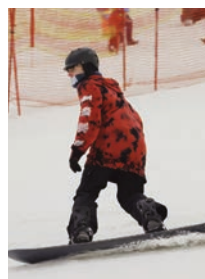
"I had never done snowboarding until a year-and-a-half ago," the athlete told *SoldierSport* during a break in training on the indoor slopes of Snozone Yorkshire (pictured).

"I came here with the AFPST for a basic introduction and after that I loved it. I only live down the road so I come as often as I can.

"I love the speed and the Gs you can pull in some of the corners – there's a corner on one of the courses I tried in France where your legs can't even hold you up.

"I think I'm doing alright. The AFPST have given me training programmes, as well as diet and fitness plans, and whatever they've said I'm going to do I have got stuck in.

"I will not get an opportunity like this again and if there's a chance I can make the Paralympics



**"I WILL  
NOT  
GET A  
CHANCE  
LIKE THIS  
AGAIN"**

I will give it my best shot."

Silverwood has also been working with the GB Paralympic progression team and has completed instructor courses that will allow him to pass on his newfound expertise.

He was helping at a Navy training camp in the Netherlands as this issue went to press and will instruct potential Invictus Games athletes from Nigeria and Australia in Colorado.

"When I last went back to my unit the lads thought I was on a jolly, but my body is in clip," Silverwood – who competes in the slalom and bordercross disciplines – added.

"As soon as I became confident on a snowboard, I wanted to do my instructors courses. If anything, it gives me more time on the snow, but it also means if anyone needs an instructor, they can call on me.

"The next big thing for me progression-wise is getting on a



training programme in Argentina over the summer. It is six weeks of in-depth work which really drills down into your technique."

Silverwood's introduction to the sport came completely by chance when he met AFPST snowboard coach Cpl Amy Richardson (AGC (SPS)) in a Catterick Garrison guardroom. Noticing he only had one arm, she asked if he would be interested in joining the military set-up and passed on her contact details.

"I was the guardroom commander and he thought he was in trouble when I opened the door and shouted at him to come back," Richardson recalled.

"I gave him my number and it went from there. I've chased someone out of the gym before and asked them if they wanted to get involved.

"You have to keep your eyes open. This is another recovery pathway and if you see someone in the gym, they have clearly got something about them, they want to get out doing things.

"Jack really applies himself. He is the right side of 30 to compete and has the right attitude, he does not see things as impossible.

"I'm surprised at how well he has done, but at the same time I am not surprised. There have been occasions when I have turned round to teach him something and he's already on the snow doing it." ■



## REDS FALL SHORT DESPITE HOME WIN

INTER-SERVICES  
U23 FOOTBALL

ARMY

3

RAF

0



**A** CONVINCING 3-0 win over the Royal Air Force appeared to have laid the foundations for an Army triumph in this season's Inter-Services Under-23 Championships.

With the RAF drawing 0-0 with the Royal Navy in the competition's opening fixture, victory in Aldershot saw the soldiers assume pole position ahead of their clash with the Senior Service.

However, a 2-1 defeat in Portsmouth – with the winning goal coming from a dubious penalty decision – saw the title slip from their grasp.

The knockout blow came in the 81st minute of a close encounter, in which Sig Luke Trice (R Signals) struck a deserved equaliser after the Army fell behind early in the second half.

A draw would have been enough to secure the trophy but with the Navy converting from the sport, and further chances not coming their way, the soldiers had to reflect on what might have been.

Goals from Pte Owen James (RLC), LCpl Arran Moore

(REME) and Spr Ryan Fagan (RE) did the damage against the airmen, who threatened on occasion but could have little argument over the outcome.

The Reds were the first to threaten as Moore rattled the crossbar from 20 yards, before LCpl Josh Rogerson (REME) saw a goal harshly ruled out for a foul at the far post.

The RAF spurned a glorious opportunity midway through the first half as AS1 Josh Randall blazed over and they were punished in the 32nd minute as Moore outmuscled the defence to allow James to fire home.

A second goal followed shortly after half-time when opposition skipper Cpl Connor Balment was caught in possession and Moore arrowed a shot into the bottom corner.

Fagan coolly converted when one-on-one with the keeper to complete the scoring.

"I thought we played really well," Army skipper LCpl Alfie Moulding (REME, pictured left) told *SoldierSport*. "The RAF were dangerous in attack, but we held firm and managed to keep a clean sheet." ■



# MONTH IN SPORT

## March's key dates...



**WHAT:** Inter-Services Netball Championships  
**WHEN:** March 8 to 10  
**WHERE:** RAF Cosford  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The

Army swept the board at last season's competition – winning the open, development and masters tournaments. Can they repeat the feat?



**WHAT:** Inter-Services Hockey Championships  
**WHEN:** March 14 and 15  
**WHERE:** HMS Temeraire, Portsmouth  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The soldiers returned to form in last year's clash, winning all but one of the trophies on offer. They will have hopes of going one better as they head into the latest outing



**WHAT:** Inter-Services Football Championships  
**WHEN:** March 21 and 22  
**WHERE:** Aldershot Town FC  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The

Reds start their campaign with a double-header against the Royal Navy, with the women playing on the Tuesday followed by the men a day later. Both games kick off at 1900

# COURT APPEAL ON THE RISE



**T**HE Army Tennis Association (ATA) made a promising start to the new year on court by hosting a fully subscribed indoor championships in Aldershot.

After three days of action, top seed Pte Marco Wright (Para) was crowned men's champion after he downed third seed Tpr Dan Smith (RAC) 6-0, 6-1 in their tournament final.

It was a similar story in the women's showpiece, where number one Cpl Chloe Pike (Int Corps) defeated Pte Georgie Mullin (AMS).

Elsewhere, there were wins for Cpl Milan Garbujia (R Signals) and Capt John Cadwell (AMS) in the men's plate and masters competitions respectively.

"The tournament was full, which was fantastic for us," ATA secretary Lt Col (Retd) Ian Haigs said. "We found new talent on the women's side, that is really pleasing as they can now feed into the Army development team."

"We are getting more engagement with new people, and we hope to continue that with this season's corps-level competition."

"We are changing the format to have two- or three-day events where they can come and play matches. Previously, there were 22 fixtures in a year, which is far too much."

The Army Inter-Unit Cup gets under way this month, running until June, and the set-up's emerging players travel to Portsmouth for the Inter-Services Development Championships on March 25 and 26. ■

## "WE FOUND NEW TALENT"



● THE Army's Brazilian jiu-jitsu set-up celebrated a successful outing at the European Championships.

Sgt Leon Hinds (RLC, pictured), Bdr Josh Gibbs (RA) and LCpl Ricky Bellingham (Rifles) all claimed gold in their respective brown belt finals, with Bellingham and Hinds also adding silver and bronze medals respectively.

The sport returns to Aldershot this month with the Combat Sport Centre hosting the Army Championships on March 15.



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READY TO RUMBLE: THE ARMY TEAM WILL LOOK TO DEFEND THEIR UKAF TITLE AT HMS DRAKE IN PLYMOUTH ON MARCH 9





# COACHES JOIN ELITE FOLD

**GB BOXING BOLSTERS TRAINING TALENT POOL WITH RECRUITMENT FROM SERVICE SET-UP**

**T**HE GB Boxing set-up has called on some of the Army's finest coaching talent as it looks to develop a new generation of fighters that could potentially medal on the sport's biggest stage.

Sgt James Allen (REME), Cpl Alanna Nihell and Cpl Kez Keane (both RLC) have all been included on the organisation's coach development programme, which will see them sharing their expertise at training camps over the next 12 months.

The trio, along with Capt Baz Philpott (AGC (SPS)), were among 14 successful candidates selected for the scheme from more than 80 applicants and were recommended by Army boxing programme manager Ben Stewart, who is also a Team GB performance coach.

As well as benefiting the country's top talent, the association will boost the Service's full-time boxing programme as the coaches will be able to come back and share the lessons learnt from working at the elite level.

Allen – a former English amateur champion who then progressed to become Army head coach – brings vast experience to the role and told *SoldierSport* he took a lot from the first camp he attended earlier this year.

"They had us working with their academy fighters; supporting training and sparring and taking individual coaching sessions," he said.

"I was surprised how involved I was considering it was my first camp. I learnt a lot; you are working with top coaches, and you then talk about different things over a brew.

"The experience I've gained from five years of coaching the Army team paved the way for this – outside the governing body we are the only full-time programme in the country.

"So in a way it has confirmed that we are doing a good job and are producing top boxers. It shows that our programme is bang on."

Nihell was one of the Army's first female fighters and embarked on her coaching journey after a successful career in the ring that peaked with a bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games (pictured near left, bottom).

Her involvement with GB has seen her coaching academy talent and female fighters and she feels fully confident in the elite environment.

"Boxing is my bread and butter," she explained. "I've been doing it for 25 years. Yes, I am learning but there is nothing that makes me feel like I am out of my depth.

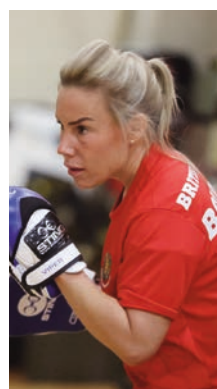
"It is great to be able to put your own stamp on things – when you get a boxer on the pads, that is your time to shine.

"I've had so much experience at international level, which means I can relate to them as athletes and explains why I feel comfortable in the GB gym.

"I've always loved coaching, but I've never been able to fully commit to it as being a boxer was always my priority. However, now I am retired I have the chance to give something back.

"I am grateful for the opportunity and am excited for the future. My goal is to become a full-time coach with GB when I leave the Army."

Nihell set the standard for



**"TO  
COACH  
AT THIS  
LEVEL IS  
SUCH AN  
HONOUR"**

female boxing in the Service and her exploits paved the way for the likes of Olympic medallist, and former soldier, Karris Artingstall and Scottish international Cpl Megan Reid (RLC), who has fought at the World Championships.

And with fresh talent now on the scene she believes more success will follow.

"The girls coming through are so strong," she added.

"We had two national finalists last year and who's to say we can't have two winners this season. If they put the work in, they will get the results."

Keane (main picture and left) will attend her first female-focused camp later this month and is looking forward to the test, having excelled with the 6 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps team and then her corps squad.

"It was something I didn't apply for," the coach, who also boxed on the Army team for five years, explained. "Ben put my name forward and said I would be well suited for the role. I had a few Teams meetings and then got invited to my first camp.

"I was taken aback. It is a privilege to be a coach for the Army team and through that doors have opened and I'm now going to work with GB.

"I am surprised it is happening, but I don't always give myself credit. I do this seven days a week and when I'm not in the gym I'll be at home watching boxing videos on YouTube. I live for coaching.

"I'll be apprehensive when I go up there, but I will be myself and it can only benefit the Service squad. I will do my best and hopefully get invited back. To coach at the highest level is an absolute honour." ■





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# NEW TALENT MAKES CASE FOR SERVICES INCLUSION

**T**HE Army's fringe players made a strong case for selection in this season's Inter-Services as they ran in seven tries in a convincing win over the British Police.

Victory in challenging Aldershot conditions provided the perfect start for new head coach Lt Col Tim Osman (RA), who was finally able to see his players in action following a training camp in December.

They wasted little time in signalling their intentions as LCpl Sitiveni Vereti (REME) crashed over for an unconverted score in the third minute as the soldiers methodically worked their way across the field before capitalising on their numerical advantage out wide.

Sgt Dan Lewis (RAMC) was the next to touch down as the Army expertly gathered from the back of the lineout and surged towards the line, with the second rower on hand to barge over.

Lewis and his fellow forwards laid the foundations for the Reds'

third try on the stroke of half-time as they rolled through the phases, allowing scrum-half Capt Sandy Wheatley (RA) to pounce with a close-range finish.

And they added to their 19-0 half-time lead in the early exchanges of the second period as the visitors gifted a score to LBdr Jack Fitzgerald (RA).

Fly half Lt Matt Smart (Yorks) looked to find touch for a penalty and, in his attempt to keep the ball alive, police fullback Grant Hancox played in Fitzgerald for the simplest of scores.

The impressive Spr Cameron McDonald (RE, pictured right) then showcased his quick feet and pace to stretch the lead to 31-0, before replacements Sgt Joe Brown (RLC) and Tpr Junior Vunivosa (QDG) capped a fine night's work with tries late on.

The police crossed for a consolation at the death as the match ended 43-7.

"I thought the boys did pretty well, considering," Osman said, as he reflected on the team's



performance in the rain and fog.

"It was nice to run out on grass. There's been a lot of 4G and Astro with the frost, weather, and rain, and despite the conditions I thought the skill set was pretty good.

"We want to play some attacking rugby, we want to be good to watch, and we want to score tries. So it was pleasing to see the boys deliver that."

The Reds host the French Army on March 15 before an Inter-Services training camp at the end of the month.

"The performance tonight makes it difficult for us as coaches as we look at the next round of options and then make some calls in a month or so," Osman said, considering his selection headache as the team moves forward.

"We've got some depth and have had a lot of changes to the senior squad this year with injuries, deployments, people not available or moving on. It is an exciting time." ■





## ROBERTS RETURNS

THE match against the British Police marked a welcome return to rugby union for SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME).

The centre enjoyed a successful stint in rugby league with Super League giants St Helens and was part of the England squad that reached last year's World Cup semi-finals.

However, the decision to focus on her career saw Roberts switch codes over the winter and she was delighted to return to the fold.

"It is great to be back with the girls," she said at full-time.

"The camaraderie has been great, everyone has supported the new girls and it's been brilliant.

"We put our structures together so we can walk away from the game with our heads up."

And Roberts said she has a simple plan for the remainder of the campaign.

"I'm just going to enjoy myself and play some Army rugby union," she added. "I'm back in work full time now so I want to concentrate on my career as well.

"I've learnt a lot from different coaches over the past couple of years so I thought I'd come back in and hopefully pass some of that on and share the experience I have gained."



## POSITIVES TAKEN FROM POLICE DEFEAT

WOMEN'S RUGBY  
UNION FRIENDLY

ARMY

17

POLICE

22



WHILE the result was disappointing, head coach WO2 Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) was keen to reflect on the positives as the Army women slipped to a narrow defeat against the British Police in Aldershot.

As was the case in the team's victory over Sweden in January, Mitchelson chose to blend emerging talent with her more experienced squad members and that thinking appeared to have paid dividends in an entertaining opening half.

The Reds struck an early blow when a surging run from Maj Anika Willis (RE) sparked a cross-field move that was rounded off by Gnr Charlotte Tweddle (RA) in the corner.

However, the lead did not last long as the police camped themselves in the Army 22 – resulting in a converted try for prop Gemma Paul.

The hosts then hit back with some front-row power of their own as SSgt Nat Lewis (R Signals) touched down.

Pte Courtney Pursglove (RLC) sparked some slick

passing play from the right that resulted in Willis charging for the line. But when she was held up, Lewis was on hand to pile over.

A penalty from ex-Scotland international Lisa Ritchie drew the sides level at 10-10 and the visitors took the lead on the stroke of half-time as Helen Lyon crossed.

The introduction of SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) at the break breathed new life into the Army attack and the centre made an immediate impact as she cut through the defensive lines to play in fellow replacement Gdsm Mamuqalo Komaitai (IG) for a simple score under the posts.

But wing Sophie Scanlon had the final say as her 48th minute try secured a 22-17 victory for the police.

"Yes, we lost but that's not the reason why we are here," Mitchelson said afterwards.

"It is about looking at players and I know that if we played the way we did in the first half throughout the game we could have walked away with a win." ■



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Not having enough time to train together without being committed to other tasks, which is becoming more of a problem as the Army gets smaller.

**Capt Jack Wright, R Anglian**



So far I've found that the best teams are led by commanders who allow section leaders on the ground to use what they think are the best tactics and techniques for the situation and aren't dictatorial in that respect.

**2Lt Henry Clark, RGR**



Poor communications. Commanders should be open and approachable. Getting people involved in stuff outside their comfort zone can be useful for team bonding.

**2Lt Duncan Wrigley, Yorks**



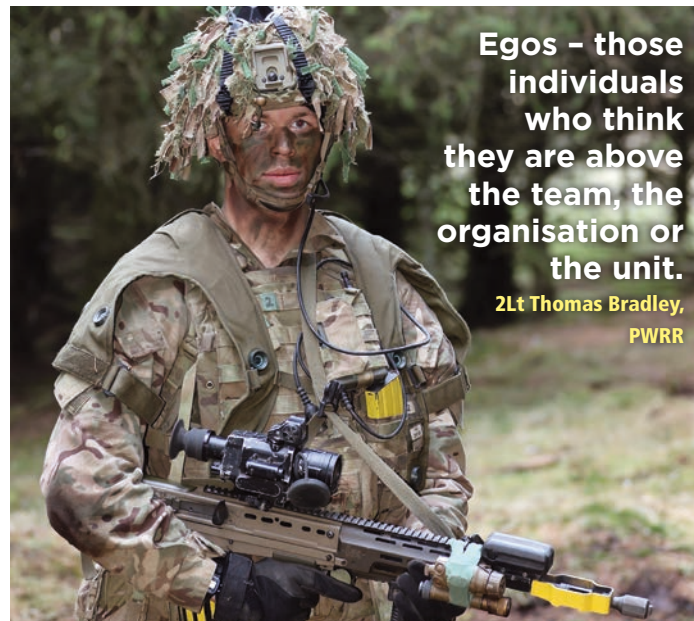
The gapping in workforce structures is a growing hindrance – when you lose people in key positions such as sergeants and corporals it stops us being as effective as we can be.

**Capt James Beddow, AGC (RMP)**



**Comms equipment can be a struggle. You want to be able to speak to the right people at the push of a button but that's not always the case.**

**2Lt Josh Cunningham, Para**



**Egos – those individuals who think they are above the team, the organisation or the unit.**

**2Lt Thomas Bradley, PWRR**

## Operating obstacles

We asked staff and students on the platoon commanders' battle course what gets in the way of creating strong teams...

**Teams that aren't prepared to adapt to a changing situation. They become really good at something, then the requirement changes but they don't change with it because they are rigid in their thinking.**

**2Lt Robert Russell, SG**







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