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Cover picture (left): An Apache attack helicopter sits ready for action in a hanger at Wattisham Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: The Army's fledgling kabaddi team takes on an England representative squad Picture: Graeme Main





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"Don't know about you Garth, but all this new stuff they're cramming into my head is giving me more nightmares than PTSD."

● Take a trip down memory lane – Pages 30-31

Future forces

DESPITE all the talk of failing banks, credit crunches and plummeting shares over the past few months, nothing seems to have swayed Britain's gadget-lovers from indulging in their hi-tech hobby.

While I reached the peak of my technological know-how earlier this year by figuring out how to use a Blackberry, others are not happy unless they're playing the latest computer game in high-definition on a TV bigger than their wall.

But as proud as the civvy techno-heads are of their all-singing, all-dancing electronic hubs, they will never be able to claim they are truly at the forefront of technology.

That honour lies with the men and women of the military.

Take the aforementioned video games. *Soldier*'s resident Xbox 360 guru can often be found enthusing about virtual battles with fire-breathing ants, but a team from Birmingham University are using the same technology to train medics in treating traumatic injuries (Page 45) and to help identify the causes of post traumatic stress disorder (Pages 34-35).

Stepping away from the joysticks, the Army's front-line kit is furrowing a similarly modern path. This month's cover star, the sleek-but-deadly Apache AH64, has been overhauled with new technology to make it the ultimate asset in fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan (Pages 36-39).

As nice as it is to see an expensive and shiny new piece of kit, this month's vox pop (Page 98) from troops about to deploy on Operation Herrick shows that even the smallest changes can have a battle-winning impact on a soldier's morale and

effectiveness. From new weapon grips to custom-made ear plugs, today's troops are going to war with a complete arsenal.

Rather than puffing out its collective chest and reflecting on a job well done, however, the military community is constantly striving to break new ground and boffins across the pond have turned to science fiction to further push the boundaries.

In a case of life imitating art, US scientists are making giant strides in creating Batman-esque armour-plated suits (Pages 26-27), regrowing damaged body parts (Pages 28-29) and making the *Men in Black*'s memory eraser a reality (Pages 30-31).

Today's Services scientists are setting the pace in redefining what is possible, but that is only to be expected given the military's heritage of using its unique skills to overcome unique challenges.

In our new feature *Ranked* (Pages 42-43), Maj Neil Powell (AGC) highlights ten of the best battlefield breakthroughs. His fascinating choices show just how inventive the military can be, but the list is only the tip of the iceberg. If you agree, disagree or can think of anything more deserving of inclusion, we want to hear from you.

Elsewhere, Help for Heroes co-founder Bryn Parry tells all in an exclusive interview (Pages 50-51) and *GQ* editor Dylan Jones explains his support for the Services in a guest editorial (Page 7).

And a special mention this month to news editor Cliff Caswell, who came within a mouthful of passing the curry-eating challenge of the Gurkha's top chefs in this month's *Media Ops* (Pages 53-55). ■

The smallest changes can have a battle-winning impact*

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Heidi "Danger" Mines

Motormouth Mines has just taken on her maiden *Media Ops* challenge by tackling the combat medical technicians course. See next month's magazine to find out if she passed or passed out.



Cliff "Casevac" Caswell

Having proved his cowardice during an officer-training exercise, calamity Cliff this month curried favour with the Gurkhas, who claimed he did "better than most Brits" in tackling one of their red-hot dinners (Pages 53-55).



Samantha "Spam" Chapman

The Spam is fast becoming *Soldier's* Forces sweetheart after exploding onto the scene. She beat the sappers at their own game by making and blowing up a bomb in the South Atlantic.



1. I PREDICT A RIOT – FAILED

Casevac beaten back by Sandhurst's finest
Army 1 Soldier 0

2. MISS DYNAMITE – PASSED

The Spam beats the Brit bombmakers
Army 1 Soldier 1

3. CURRY ON CLIFFORD – FAILED

Chilli challenge too hot to handle for Caswell
Army 2 Soldier 1



Style icon and *GQ* editor Dylan Jones reveals his reason for sporting a Help for Heroes wristband

● G-Force – Page 49

Supporting act

FOR about six months I've been wearing a Help For Heroes wristband. It's no big deal, but about eight months ago a friend of mine who's a personal trainer started wearing one, and told me where I could get them. So I went online, and bought a whole bunch, giving them to friends and family and to my kids. In that time I've never taken it off (OK, once, to wash it), and I don't intend to stop now.

Like I said, for me it's no big deal. I'm not a soldier, I'm a magazine editor, and the nearest I get to danger is when Naomi Campbell calls me up and berates me for editing her copy. But I like the cause, and try and go out of my way to publicise it.

Not that I'm partial to wearing wristbands, that is. I remember about ten years ago there was a trend for wearing little ribbons on your lapels to advertise your allegiance to some charity or another, and I just wasn't interested. Then, when Lance Armstrong started wearing his wristband, and there were suddenly dozens of coloured wristbands proclaiming to save this, that and the other, I thought it was all a bit tragic.

Because when charity meets fashion, it has to be done perfectly. Otherwise, it looks lame. Well, my wife wears one, so maybe I shouldn't be so vociferous (in case she reads this), but you get my drift.

Help For Heroes is different, though, and is a cause I think we should all be proud of, particularly in the media. Although I am tremendously proud of our Armed Forces, I've never agreed with the invasion of Iraq, and have published dozens of articles in the

magazine to support this opinion; but then *GQ* has also published articles outlining the enormously difficult job our troops have to do, both there and in Afghanistan.

Hopefully, *GQ* has been able to stress the genuine bravery involved, and although the word "bravery" has been devalued by its constant use in connection with entertainers who are "brave" enough to take on a new project, or "brave" enough to sing in public on *The X-Factor*, with *GQ* we try and go out of our way to show the bravery of the British troops in the Middle East and beyond.

'Help for Heroes is a cause I think we should all be proud of'

Having been responsible for sending so many journalists to Iraq and Afghanistan on behalf of *GQ*, I have become used to reading their harrowing tales, not just concerning the bravery of the allied forces, and the horrendous things they have been forced to witness, the awful fear they have had to endure, but also the bravery of the journalists themselves.

I know two journalists – one a good friend – who have been held captive in the Middle East, and listening to them talk, hearing them tell of the constant mental torture they had to endure – not knowing if they were going to live or die from one day to the next – made me understand the real nature of bravery. I took one to lunch soon after he was released, and every time a waiter walked behind him, he jumped. And I doubt a single day goes by out there when one of our troops doesn't jump for one reason or another.

And that's why I wear my wristband. Basically to say thank you. ■

● Dylan Jones is the editor of *GQ*



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Picture: LA (Phot) Gaz Faulkner

Effects of the light: Further actions like Operation Red Dagger (pictured) are likely as incoming soldiers suppress insurgents and promote reconstruction

Opportunity knocks

Commander optimistic of progress as brigade faces vital Afghan mission

PERSONNEL deploying on the next Operation Herrick tour will face a crucial task as Afghan civilians prepare to go to the polls, a senior officer has warned.

Brig Tim Radford, commander of 19 Light Brigade, hinted that many actions carried out by British soldiers and their allies would focus on laying the ground work for elections in August and helping advance the spread of democracy.

He predicted that troops would face a testing time in both helping to promote reconstruction work in the province and keeping Taliban fighters at bay.

Brig Radford added: "The majority of operations will be geared up to prepare for the provincial elections in Helmand, which take place on August 20. It must be seen that there is a political rather than military solution in Afghanistan."

The commander believed there would be chances to consolidate recent successes against the insurgents, particularly if forces were bolstered by a raft of extra Nato troops.

He also revealed that there would be an "offensive rather than reactive" campaign to counter IED attacks carried out by the enemy.

Brig Radford said: "There have been

reports of more US forces coming into Afghanistan – if they are correct, and they come into Helmand, we would see that as an opportunity as it would free up the support arms to deal with some of the focus areas.

"We have been training hard and I am extremely happy with the way my brigade has prepared for this tour. We are now very much ready to deploy in the coming weeks."

Brig Radford said that soldiers had

been exercising with allies, including troops from Estonia and officers from the Afghan National Army, during the mission rehearsal.

He added: "It is important to develop the Afghan Army and police force.

"We are trying to make sure that we can move from training and mentoring them to partnering with them until they can take full responsibility themselves."

● **Theatre ticket – Page 11**

Transatlantic boost for Helmand

THE arrival of extra American forces in Afghanistan will result in an increase in operational tempo as Nato troops move against the Taliban, the MoD has said.

As this issue went to press, the United States Department of Defense confirmed that it was deploying two brigades, bolstering personnel by around 16,000.

But officials in Whitehall said the road to peace remained tough.

A statement from the MoD added: "Plans for an increase in US forces are welcome and we look forward to working closely with them in southern Afghanistan."

"The influx of personnel will make the International Security Assistance Force more capable than ever of fighting the Taliban – this will of course result in an increase in operational tempo and the risks to our forces remain high."

According to the US Government, 8,000 troops from the Marine Expeditionary Brigade will deploy in the spring and will be followed by a further 4,000 from the 5th Stryker Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division later this summer.

Some 4,000 support troops will bolster the front-line personnel.

Under Big Ben

A digest of what is being said on Army matters in Parliament

Taliban fighters hit by latest air forces

BATTLING soldiers serving on operations will notice the extra punch provided by assets in the sky after the introduction of new weapons and aircraft.

Responding to a question from MP Jim Cunningham, Defence Procurement Minister Quentin Davies said "significant enhancements" had been made to fast jets used in close support roles.

The latest modifications included the Paveway IV guided bomb, which was fitted to the Harrier late last year. In addition, the Eurofighter Typhoon had been declared fit for air-to-ground strikes.

Davies also pointed out that two extra C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft had been proving their worth in theatres.

Slow take off: Airbus Military has announced a series of delays in the development of the new A400M transport aircraft, Davies has confirmed. He told the Commons that the manufacturer was planning the aeroplane's first flight no earlier than the second half of this year and suggested that UK deliveries would not begin for some time. Davies estimated the A400M would be in service by 2014.

On the run: The number of soldiers going Absent Without Official Leave has been declining in recent years, according to the latest figures shown to MPs. Reported incidents of troops who were AWOL has fallen from a high of 3,030 in 2004 to 2,105 last year, although rates for the Army remain considerably higher than the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

House call: The agency responsible for carrying out repairs to military homes was called out to deal with more than 225,000 jobs last year, according to Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth. Modern Housing Solutions was asked to fix problems such as burst pipes and issues relating to general wear and tear of accommodation.

On the radar

Enemy tracked as high spies appear in Helmand

COMMANDERS on the front lines of Afghanistan had their first taste of the sophisticated top cover provided by a new eye-in-the-sky when it entered active service for the first time.

Operated by a tri-Service team of crews, the Airborne Stand-Off Radar (Astor) made its operational debut in theatre after completing initial trials.

Made by contractor Raytheon Systems and operated from five Sentinel R1s – specially converted business jets – the latest system proved invaluable in pinning down the movements of elusive Taliban fighters.

Maj Will Tosh, detachment commander with the Intelligence Corps, said personnel serving with 3 Commando Brigade had been quick to show their appreciation of the new asset.

He added: "The Astor system provided a near real-time, wide area search capability for the first time. It worked in unison with the troops on the ground, delivering timely intelligence and situational awareness to the front line.

"The brigade was impressed and the flexibility of the system surprised them."

Astor is operated by 5 (Army Co-operation) Squadron at RAF Waddington,

Lincolnshire and can detect moving and static targets.

The information gathered by the Sentinel aircraft, which can stay airborne for nine hours at a time and are crewed by at least three radar operators, is beamed to ground stations to give commanders an immediate bigger picture.

The intelligence allows attacks from weapons such as the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System to be directed with pinpoint accuracy.

Operated in all weathers and around the clock, the Astor equipment is so advanced that it can provide a photographic quality image from radar readings.

Gp Capt Harry Kemsley (RAF), commanding 5 (AC) Sqn, said lessons had been learned during Astor's operational outing and crews would work with ground troops to improve its capability.

The officer said: "This system is about answering the questions that the customer on the ground needs answering – getting the information that soldiers need to the soldiers.

"The ability to look beyond the range of the eye, binoculars and rifle sight is now available. We are here to support land forces and shall do it well."

Two dead in Helmand actions

SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, The Rifles have been reflecting on the lives of two valued colleagues killed during separate contacts in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

Cpl Danny Nield died in a suspected RPG attack near Musa Qaleh on January 30.

Just over two weeks later, LCpl Stephen "Schnoz" Kingscott was killed during an assault on an enemy position in Nawa.

Both men had been involved with mentoring and assisting counterparts in the Afghan National Army.

An experienced soldier who had been on operations in the Balkans, Northern Ireland and on a previous tour of Afghanistan, Cpl Nield joined the Army in 1993 and served with The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment.

The 31-year-old, who was from Cheltenham, left the Army for a two-year stint in civilian life in 2004, after which he went on to pass the Forward Air Controllers' course following the founding of The Rifles.

LCpl Kingscott, who was 22 and from Plymouth, signed up for service soon after taking his GCSEs and had served in Iraq, Belize and the Falkland Islands.

He had been singled out as having a flair for languages on his pre-deployment train-



● LCpl Kingscott



● Cpl Danny Nield

ing and passed a ten-week Dari course.

Lt Col Joe Cavanagh, CO of 1 Rifles, described Cpl Nield as being "at the top of his profession", adding that he would be keenly missed by his many friends.

The CO said: "He was a popular rifleman, full of character and revelling in the qualifications and experience in skills that always took him to the front of the battle.

"He was full of ideas on how new techniques should be developed."

Of LCpl Kingscott he said: "The depth of his previous experience and speed with which he picked up new skills made him a model rifleman.

"He was a splendid representative of the battalion and The Rifles and we are all very proud to have served alongside him."



Picture: Graham Harrison

Dawn of a tour: Members of 1 WG work through the final stages of their Op Herrick pre-deployment training package on the Stanta training area in Norfolk

Theatre ticket

Helmand-bound force is given the green light for ops after final exercise

PERSONNEL from 19 Light Brigade have completed the final phase of their training ahead of deploying to southern Afghanistan's Helmand province this month.

Units including the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment and 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland have been put through their paces in a series of manoeuvres in the UK and overseas, which culminated in a full mission rehearsal on Salisbury Plain.

The 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, The Light Dragoons and 40th Regiment Royal Artillery are also deploying in the force package that replaces 3 Commando Brigade.

In announcing the Op Herrick 10 deployment, Defence Secretary John Hutton said troop numbers had been bolstered from 8,000 to 8,300 to ensure that the Taliban continued to be placed on the back foot.

Hutton added: "These additional forces will come from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers – they will

be building on the recent gains in central Helmand province."

Despite the prospect of an intense tour in Afghanistan's searing heat, commanders said their soldiers were well rehearsed for the demands of Afghanistan.

Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe, commanding 1 WG, said: "It is the fusion of our

tactics, training and procedures and our kit that will save lives this summer."

Lt Col Rob Thomson, CO of 2 Rifles, said his soldiers' preparation for the Afghanistan tour had been assisted by a stint in Kosovo last summer. He added: "The Balkans was a decent mission rehearsal for us."

'Sensitive' journalist is mourned

THE achievements of a much-respected broadcaster and defence correspondent have been remembered following her death early last month.

Katie Roy, who was well known around the military as chief reporter for BFBS Television, collapsed at home on January 21, just days before her 44th birthday. She did not regain consciousness and died in hospital less than two weeks later.

Having joined the broadcaster as a secretary two decades ago, Roy soon realised her journalistic ambitions by joining *Scene Here* – the forerunner to *BFBS Reports*.

It was the start of a career in journalism during which she would report from war zones including the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan, earning both the Nato and Telic campaign medals in the process.

Richard Jones, editor of *BFBS Reports*, remembered the journalist as being "full of good humour and determination".

AVM David Crwys-Williams, managing director of SSVC, praised Roy as a great professional who was "brave, sensitive, purposeful and fun". He added: "I cannot recall a single assignment when she did not bring back great stories."

IN BRIEF

● PERSONNEL who lose sensitive data could face stern disciplinary action in the future, the MoD has said.

In a warning to all staff, the department made it clear that security breaches would now be divided into three levels – minor, major and gross – with those responsible facing dismissal and police prosecution in the worst cases.

Commanders and line managers have been urged to familiarise themselves with the latest policy via the Defence Intranet. Email Steve Chesters at steve.chesters551@mod.uk for information.

● COMIC Relief is calling for a dose of soldier humour to make this year's fund-raising event on March 13 the best ever.

Troops have been urged to do something funny for money, whether it is a sponsored rugby match, karaoke or a fancy dress night.

All cash raised is being used to help disadvantaged people in the UK and across the world turn their lives around. For further information visit www.rednoseday.com

● MILITARY personnel who think they have what it takes to come out on top in an arduous competition have been urged to put themselves forward.

The world-renowned Cambrian Patrol is taking place between October 23 and November 1 and will see teams of eight tackling a series of demanding tasks in the Welsh countryside.

Email WO1 Brian Pratt at pratt683@land.mod.uk for further information.

● SOLDIERS have been urged to stub out their cigarettes for the ninth military No Smoking Day on March 11.

Designed to coincide with a national campaign, the initiative is set to feature a number of events at units around the country to help smokers think about kicking the habit.

The MoD provides free patches and nicotine gum to help soldiers who want to make the break. Further information is available from unit medical or health training staff.

● AS spring beckons so does a new skydiving season – and The Red Devils are looking for anyone interested in a tandem jump to help raise cash for the group. The official display squad of The Parachute Regiment and the British Army, the popular skydive team is made up of 22 soldiers serving with the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Paras.

If anyone would like to take part, contact tandems@reddevilsonline.com or for info on displays contact rd@reddevilsonline.com

Alternatively call 01980 628211 or log on to www.reddevilsonline.com

Net tightens on bombers

Army moves to counter Taliban's IED campaign

MORE bomb disposal experts are being deployed on the forthcoming Op Herrick tour as the Taliban continues to resort to the improvised explosive device as its principal weapon of choice.

According to senior officers, enemy fighters are now increasingly employing these types of ambushes in the face of the superior firepower of British-led forces in southern Afghanistan.

But preparations are now under way to counter the problem, with 19 Light Brigade commander Brig Tim Radford promising "a more offensive campaign" to hit insurgents planting bombs.

As his formation prepared to relieve 3 Commando Brigade, scores of specialist soldiers were put through their paces on exercise in a move to keep British troops one step ahead of the Taliban.

Munitions experts from 29 (Land Support) Engineer Group were among the troops given a week to hone their battlefield skills and drills on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire.

Made up of search teams, including experts in IED disposal and arms and explosives search dogs, the group tack-

led several serials featuring situations likely to be faced in theatre.

Rollestone Camp was used to represent Bastion where tasks were assigned to the teams once intelligence reports had been received. Each task was based on search or bomb disposal operations.

Capt Nigel Marsh, training officer with 33 Engineer Regiment, said: "The aim has been to try and recreate Helmand province – we have done a lot of work to create an intelligence picture.

"The reality of life in Afghanistan is that you don't get the amount of time you have been told you will need to search and dispose of an IED. You will face a much tighter constraint.

"It is very much a monitoring process here. In the group we have now we have people who have completed operational tours of Afghanistan and Iraq but we also have those who are new to this."

In an interview with *Soldier* Capt Judith Gallagher, a team leader with 11 EOD Regt RLC, said her troops were well prepared for the threat.

She added: "We are ready to be based in forward positions and are geared up to respond quickly if required."

Basra death shocks Telic troops

A SERVICE of remembrance has been held for a "kind-hearted and gentle" young soldier who was found mortally injured at the UK's headquarters in southern Iraq.

Colleagues of Pte Ryan Wrathall, of the 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, gathered at Basra's Contingency Operating Base to remember his life.

Pte Wrathall, who was 21 and from Surbiton in Surrey, was found with a gunshot wound on February 12. He died despite the best efforts of medical teams to save him. MoD officials have said the incident will be fully investigated, but emphasised that there is no evidence to suggest that anyone else was involved.

A popular soldier with many friends, Pte Wrathall signed up in June 2007 and joined his battalion in Paderborn, Germany, after completing infantry training.

After taking part in an exercise in Canada, he started the pre-deployment work for Op Telic 13 and had been serving as part of the 5th Battalion, The Rifles (Strike) Battlegroup in Iraq.

Lt Col Charlie Sykes, CO of 1 PWRR, said the young soldier was well liked by all ranks and his sudden death had come as a bitter blow to his colleagues.

The CO added: "The city of Basra is now at relative peace and we fully expect ours to be the last major British deployment to Iraq."

"This relative peace makes Pte Wrathall's death even harder to come to terms with as, much like the sandstorms here in the desert, it came out of a clear blue sky."

"Kind-hearted and gentle, our thoughts are with his family now. No words can ease their suffering and nothing can bring him back – our loss is but a fraction of theirs."



● Pte Ryan Wrathall



Picture: Matt Cardy/Getty Images

Polling station: A soldier from the 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment surveys the streets of Basra shortly before the provincial elections

Partners in peace

Coalition soldiers help to underpin security as Baswaris go to the polls

BRITISH commanders in Basra have praised their Iraqi counterparts for successfully taking responsibility for security during the country's recent historic elections.

Troops and police officers from the Middle East state were out on the streets during the provincial polls, which passed off without major incident.

Crucially, more than 50 per cent of Iraqis voted and Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the strong turnout sent "the clearest signal" of the population's commitment to democracy.

All leave was cancelled for 28,000 British-trained Iraqi soldiers and police in the lead up to voting while civilians were encouraged to report any rogue militia activity via a hotline.

Many roads were also closed to traffic in a move to deter car bombers.

British Army spokesman Lt Col Dickie Winchester said commanders had kept a keen eye on the situation during the polls but their forces had not been needed.

He pledged that soldiers would also be on hand in the weeks ahead to assist the Iraqi security forces if they could not cope with violent "bad losers" in the wake of the election results.

Lt Col Winchester added: "The Iraqi

forces are prepared to counter violence.

"That said, all major parties called on people to vote in large numbers. Nobody has boycotted the election and nobody has said anything about carrying out acts of violence."

Lt Col Winchester's assertion was supported by latest figures, which showed incidents of trouble in Iraq had declined and were now at the lowest level since the 2003 war.

According to the country's authorities,

just under 200 Iraqi civilians, soldiers and police officers were killed in January – 40 per cent down on December's death toll.

Basra has also been returning to normal after last year's Charge of the Knights operation to oust militias.

Iraqi Defence Ministry spokesman Maj Gen Mohammad al-Askari said the hard work of troops and the backing of communities had helped keep a lid on terrorist activity.

Democracy flourishing, says MP

ARMED Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth has praised the work of British Forces in Iraq after visiting soldiers on the final leg of the Operation Telic mission.

The MP described the achievements of troops as "a fantastic contribution" to peace, adding that Basra had been transformed in the space of 12 months.

He also paid tribute to the soldiers' work with the Iraqi Army in the Military Transition Teams, which had helped build credible security forces.

Speaking after the country's elections, which were carried out peacefully, Ains-

worth stressed: "I came here a year ago and Basra was still a troubled place.

"It is a testament to the success of the UK's transition strategy that Iraqis are solving Iraqi problems – democracy is flourishing here and people can now go about their daily business."

During his visit to southern Iraq, the Armed Forces Minister was taken to key locations as well as meeting British personnel and Iraqi commanders.

He pledged that the "sacrifices and efforts" of soldiers during the six years of Op Telic would never be forgotten.

● TROOPS heading for Afghanistan were all ears after being told that better protection is now being issued to help defend against hearing loss.

Every Serviceman and woman from 19 Light Brigade embarking on the forthcoming Herrick 10 tour has had the opportunity to have a mould taken of their ears for custom-fitted plugs.

Senior officers hope the move will give soldiers the best protection against deafness while in theatre.

● IF you've ever fancied life as an Apache attack helicopter pilot, now is a very good time to apply.

The Army Air Corps is looking for men and women to fly its sophisticated machines and candidates can put their name down through their Military Careers Management branch.

In addition, the corps is recruiting specialist Direct Entry ground crew officers, a post which offers very promising career opportunities.

It is also developing its own specialist aviation career stream to keep pilots flying for longer.

● Gunship Evolution – Pages 36-39

● FORMER Gurkhas have been given the green light to join the Territorial Army once their regular service has finished following a decision by MPs.

Parliament has rubber stamped proposals for thousands of non-naturalised foreign nationals who have served in the regular British Army to allow them to sign up with the TA.

Applicants must have lived in the UK for at least five years, served for four and been given indefinite leave to remain in the country by the Home Office.

● A FUND giving COs an annual £31 allowance for every Regular Army officer and soldier serving in their unit has been extended.

Called the Commanding Officers Public Fund, the Land Forces Top Level Budget (TLB) initiative has been widened to include Joint, tri-Service and Defence Units in other TLBs.

From April 1, any unit CO can claim the cash for Regular Army troops, non-regular permanent staff, Military Provost Guard Service personnel and Full-Time Reserve Service staff.

● A NEW breed of super NCO common to the American Army is to be trialled by the British military.

Three Command Sergeant Major posts are being created in 1 (UK) Armoured Division, 3 (UK) Division and HQ Theatre Troops for a two-year tour starting in April. The appointed WO1s will have roles relating to promoting high standards among all ranks.

Soldiers die in car crash

Three friends are killed in accident close to base

SHOCKED personnel from the 14th Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare) have been mourning the deaths of three colleagues in a road accident soon after returning from a tour of southern Afghanistan.

Cpl James Luton, Cpl Daniel Ginty and LCpl Christopher Beckett were killed a short distance from their base at Cawdor Barracks in Pembrokeshire, North Wales.

The car in which the three were travelling left the carriageway in the village of Roch and collided with a wall on the evening of February 14, although their vehicle was not found until the following morning. Police are investigating.

Described as an "excellent technician and field soldier" 24-year-old Cpl Luton, from Beldevere in Kent, had completed P-Company, the demanding All Arms pre-Parachute selection course.

He joined the Army in 2002 and had also served in Northern Ireland during his career.

Cpl Ginty, 26, from Welwyn Garden City, enlisted in 2001 and had served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He had also passed P-Company and had volunteered for a further tour in Helmand province.

LCpl Beckett was on his first posting in the Army after initial training but was described as "a popular and well-respected junior NCO".

The 25-year-old, from Telford, joined up four years ago and had been praised for his performance in Helmand.

Lt Col Tim Carmichael, CO of 14 Sig Regt, said that his soldiers had been left in shock at the tragic deaths, adding that his thoughts were with the trio's friends and families.

Remembering Cpl Luton, he said: "We in the Army have suffered losses on operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere in recent years, so it is poignant that he recently returned from an operational tour where he served with distinction."

Of Cpl Ginty the CO added: "He was a rising star. Dan was the best of his bunch – a strong leader and a role model for the junior lads."

Lt Col Carmichael said LCpl Beckett had thrown himself into his chosen Army career.

He added: "Chris had faced the tough challenge of a tour in Helmand province. To have returned and had his life cut short within a few miles of our base in Pembrokeshire is particularly tragic."

Stateside respect for British allies

A SENIOR American Army commander has praised the work of British troops on overseas operations during a meeting at the MoD in London.

Gen David Petraeus, Commander of US Central Command, met with Defence Secretary John Hutton at Whitehall where he expressed his admiration for the British Armed Forces serving on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan.

He said: "The significance of the UK's contribution on current operations should not be underestimated.

"The country's military activities and non-military assistance have been instrumental in successful capacity building as well as the progress that we have made in various endeavours."

The rendezvous with the MoD was one of a series of meetings the senior officer has been undertaking with key Nato allies in Europe.

Gen Petraeus said: "This visit highlights Central Command's engagement with our Nato partners to reiterate the strategic importance of the alliance and the critical role it plays in the Middle East region and especially in Iraq and Afghanistan."

"The UK is a strategic partner and we value the strong military and civilian co-operation between our two countries that advances our common goal for peace and security in the Middle East."

"We have in recent years stood together against forces and elements that have sought to destabilise the region."

The general's praise follows glowing remarks made by new US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

She recently thanked the British Armed Forces for their sacrifice and selfless commitment in putting their lives on the line in demanding operational theatres around the world.



Picture: Matt Cardy/Getty Images

Sweep and clear: An Iraqi soldier hones his assault skills under the watchful eye of an experienced British infantryman during the final phase of the cadre

Delivering a sting

Military mentors pass their experience to Iraqis in Scorpion cadre series

JUNIOR Iraqi leaders have been treated to a masterclass in command after British soldiers put them through their paces in a demanding series of leadership tasks.

The Queen's Royal Hussars have been testing their Middle Eastern counterparts in the Scorpion cadres, which are designed to develop basic skills.

The QRH, who are in Iraq serving as part of the Germany-based 20th Armoured Brigade, have been leading the ten-day commanders and tactics course at the former Iraqi Naval Academy in a northern district of Basra city.

The training is organised into an intersection competition, includes exercises in basic infantry skills and culminates in a house clearance.

The Iraqi troops, serving with the 14th Division's 51st Brigade, have impressed their British counterparts. But both senior QRH officers and the infantry instructors assisting the training said they had high expectations and were taking their responsibility to train the Iraqi soldiers extremely seriously.

While confirming that the Iraqi Army is well led at its highest echelons, Lt Col Christopher Coles, QRH commanding officer, believed that its most junior

NCOs could benefit from a British Army-style cadre.

He added: "We're trying to introduce the concept of junior leadership, and the Iraqis have come on quickly.

"They are very courageous and focused – they know why we are here and that they're responsible for many of the successes that we have had in Basra."

Pointing out that British troops were due to begin their withdrawal from Iraq in the summer, six years after the launch of the Operation Telic mission, he said the Iraqis were confident in their own ability to deliver security.

He added: "This underlines the point that the UK mission here will be complete when we say it will be."

Upgraded armour makes tracks

ARMoured vehicle technicians have been commended after upgrading their 1,000th Warrior personnel carrier for the rigours of front-line duty.

The backbone of the Army's fleet has been steadily beefed-up with the latest kit and protective measures care of the Defence Support Group in Donnington.

After clocking up the landmark upgrade, project leaders praised maintenance personnel for carrying out the thorough overhaul. Defence Support Group chief executive Archie Hughes said: "These vehicles leave better than new.

"The team at Donnington is utterly committed to the safety and protection of the soldiers and puts everything into turning

these vehicles, often damaged because of accident or enemy action, into modern, finely-tuned fighting machines."

Carrying out such a large refurbishment initiative is a key achievement for the Defence Support Group, which was created in April last year after the amalgamation of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency and the Army Base Repair Organisation.

The Warrior is one of the Army's most important assets, having proved invaluable on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Packing a punch care of its 30mm Rarden cannon and 7.62mm chain gun, the vehicle now has a raft of impressive extra features, including enhanced armour and better thermal imaging kit.



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Picture: Danung Dennis

Oar inspiring: Packer rowed his way from Folkestone to Calais in a 15-hour Channel-hopping adventure and is now training hard for the London Marathon

Pulling for victory

Wounded ex-soldier notches up a one-in-a-million feat for Forces charity

INJURED officer Maj Phil Packer (RMP) has started training for the London Marathon after successfully rowing across the English Channel.

The Westminster resident, together with adventurer Alistair Humphreys, navigated the 30-mile crossing from Folkestone to Calais in just 15 hours as part of the Phil's Million challenge, a bid to raise £1 million for Help for Heroes.

Packer is now undergoing intensive preparation work at Headley Court ahead of next month's marathon through the capital, which he plans to complete at a rate of two miles every day.

"No one had really done it [rowed across the Channel] like we did and especially not in February – most people wait until the summer when the water is like a millpond," Packer told *Soldier*. "We both thought we could do it in under 24 hours and at one point we were gunning it to try and beat the tide, but we were really happy with how we did."

"At Headley Court we will be focusing on my legs. They are long days but they are also very beneficial and I will need to work hard to hit my target."

The gruelling slog to France took place less than a year after Packer lost the use of his legs in an accident in Basra.

Despite being told he would never walk again, the officer is determined to prove doctors wrong and is inviting people to task him to take on sporting challenges to raise cash for charity.

The appeal has so far made more than £180,000 and further funds will be added from already-planned events including the London Marathon, a 3,000ft climb up the El Capitan rock face in California and a yacht race.

Packer also wants to use his challenge

to help Battle Back, an MoD-supported initiative providing adventurous training opportunities for injured troops.

"I want to put something back and say that if there is a smaller sport that someone wants to try but no one is looking at it, I will push its case," he said. "If there's an area where it's possible to enhance opportunities for disabled personnel, I want to take that challenge."

● www.philpacker.com

MoD clarifies internet regulations

OFFICIALS in the Ministry of Defence have stressed that serving soldiers have not been banned from using social networking sites, but have urged them to be cautious about what they post.

In a statement, the department said that personnel could continue to use the likes of *Facebook* and *MySpace* but needed to be aware of sensitive information being published over the internet.

A new order, called *Contact with the Media and Communicating with the Public* was issued by the MoD in February and gives guidance about going online.

But several press reports suggested that soldiers had been told to stop using social networking sites altogether as well as pulling back from posting messages on gaming forums such as *Call of Duty 5*.

An MoD spokesman said: "Of course soldiers are allowed to go on *Facebook* and contribute to blogs. However, we do need to ensure that sensitive information is not inadvertently placed in the public domain."

"A routine instruction has merely been refreshed. The first line reads: 'We want our people to communicate the achievements of the MoD and the Forces'."



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Picture: Soliderarchive

Service with a smile: Female Territorial Army volunteers learn the skills and drills of the field during a camp shortly after the women's corps was created

Femmes fantastic

Army celebrates its girl power as fairer sex clocks up 60 years of service

FEMALE soldiers past and present have been reflecting on their proud history, 60 years after women were formally welcomed into the Army.

The contribution of women to operations around the world was remembered during a reception at London's Armoury House, which was hosted by former *Blue Peter* presenter Konnie Huq.

Although females had always backed the Forces in behind-the-lines roles such as the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the creation of the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) in 1949 allowed them to pursue a full military career.

With the Queen Mother as its Commandant-in-Chief, the WRAC existed until 1992, after which members were integrated into their respective corps.

Today, 7,000 females make up nearly eight per cent of the Army, work in 70 per cent of roles and have most recently served on the front lines of Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan.

While women once had to leave the Service if they were married, they can now pursue a career to the highest ranks alongside their family life.

Lt Col Eileen Cunningham, of Recruiting Group National Headquarters, paid tribute to the thousands who had

served, and continued to serve, their country with distinction.

She added: "The contributions and achievements of women in the Army over the years have been phenomenal. The positive change, adaptation and rapid progression has been remarkable.

"We look forward to women breaking new boundaries and continuing to fulfil their potential."

The sentiments were shared by Lt Col Tony Blanch, Commander Regional Re-

cruitment for Wessex, who said women now served shoulder-to-shoulder with male colleagues.

He added: "They are able to do anything men can do apart from close combat – there is some controversy about women being on the front line, but where do you draw the front line?

"They are taking part in operations on a daily basis and are exposed to very dangerous situations all the time. If that is not the front line, what is?"

Dannatt to take on towering role

THE outgoing Chief of the General Staff is to take up a new appointment at one of London's most celebrated landmarks, the MoD has confirmed.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt will become the 159th Constable of the Tower of London when he hands over the Army's top job to Gen Sir David Richards in the summer.

He will be the Queen's representative at the building, which is both a fortress and royal palace and one of the most visited heritage sites in the UK.

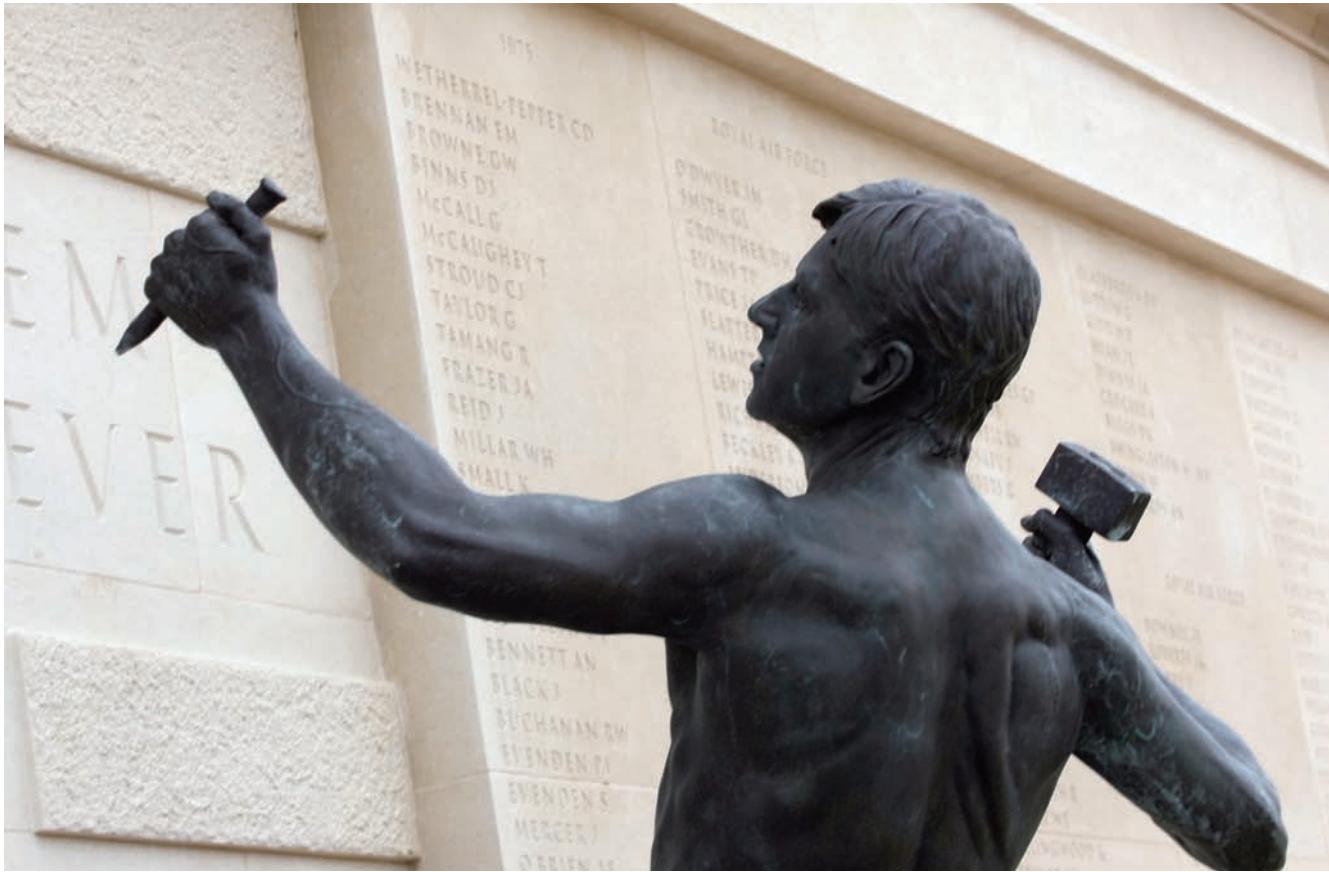
Since 1784 the constable has always been a senior military officer. Today the

honour is given to Field Marshals or retiring generals with distinguished service.

Gen Dannatt, who is expected to hold the position for five years, will succeed Gen Sir Roger Wheeler who leaves the prestigious post at the end of July.

The Chief of the General Staff said: "I am delighted to be appointed as the next constable of the Tower of London, following in the footsteps of some illustrious forbears.

"It is a considerable honour and I look forward with relish to undertaking the duties and responsibilities of this historic office," he added.



Picture: Graeme Main

Their name liveth: Loved ones of soldiers killed on active service are to be awarded a personal memorial, the design of which is set to be revealed this year

Scrolls of honour

Families of fallen military personnel to be recognised for their sacrifices

VETERANS' Minister Kevan Jones has confirmed that plans to introduce a special award for the families of troops killed in action are progressing on schedule.

The recommendation that loved ones of those who die on operations should be honoured with a memorial scroll was first reported in *Soldier* last July.

But since then the finer details of the award and an accompanying decoration have been under discussion and Jones said it was hoped the finished design would be available by the end of 2009.

He added: "As a backbencher I campaigned for this move. It has been a long process [to instigate the scroll] as the wording had to be agreed. I believe the Queen also has to sign off the design and is currently in the process of doing this."

The Minister was speaking at the Historic Dockyard at Chatham in Kent after announcing the first Armed Forces Day, which is to be held on June 27.

The national event replaces the old Veterans' Day and commemorates Service personnel past and present.

The Historic Dockyard has been selected as the focal point for people to

show their support of the Armed Forces, although activities are also scheduled all around the country.

Jones said personnel "rightly deserved" the nation's support. He added: "We wanted to make sure we had a day where we would recognise the sacrifices

personnel make on our behalf. But we are hoping for around 200 smaller events across the UK."

Jones said that attendance levels for recent Armed Forces homecoming parades showed the public were behind the nation's troops.

Sing when you're winning

A TALENTED group of vocalists have spoken of their delight after their special charity album hit the high notes for wounded British soldiers.

Paul Booton, spokesman for the Kidderminster Male Choir, said scores of the *Songs for Heroes* CD had been sold, raising £30,000 for troops.

The cash is being handed over to Help for Heroes at a forthcoming concert and Army officials have praised the efforts of the vocalists.

Booton told *Soldier* that he and his colleagues had been pleased to assist such a worthy charity, adding that all the singers had been "deeply moved" by the positive reaction to the CD.

He added: "The album was launched on Remembrance Day last year and within a few weeks we had sold 1,500 copies – we have been very pleased with the response.

"We were also honoured to be able to give a special performance for wounded British soldiers and their families at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham."

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, paid tribute to the choir's endeavours. The success of the CD had been an "excellent" achievement, he added.

Bryn Parry, chairman of Help for Heroes, said the album would help change the lives of wounded personnel.

● Kindness of strangers – Pages 50-51

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— WO2 British infantry serving with US Forces



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— D.C. Special Operations Command (not pictured)



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FIX A LEAKING TAP

1. Cut the supply

Turn off your mains water supply. Make sure the tap is turned fully on and put the plug into the plughole to prevent any small parts falling down the drain.

2. Unscrew the head

Unscrew or lever off the cover of the tap to reach the main screw. Remove this and the head of the tap should come clean off.

3. Loosen the main nut

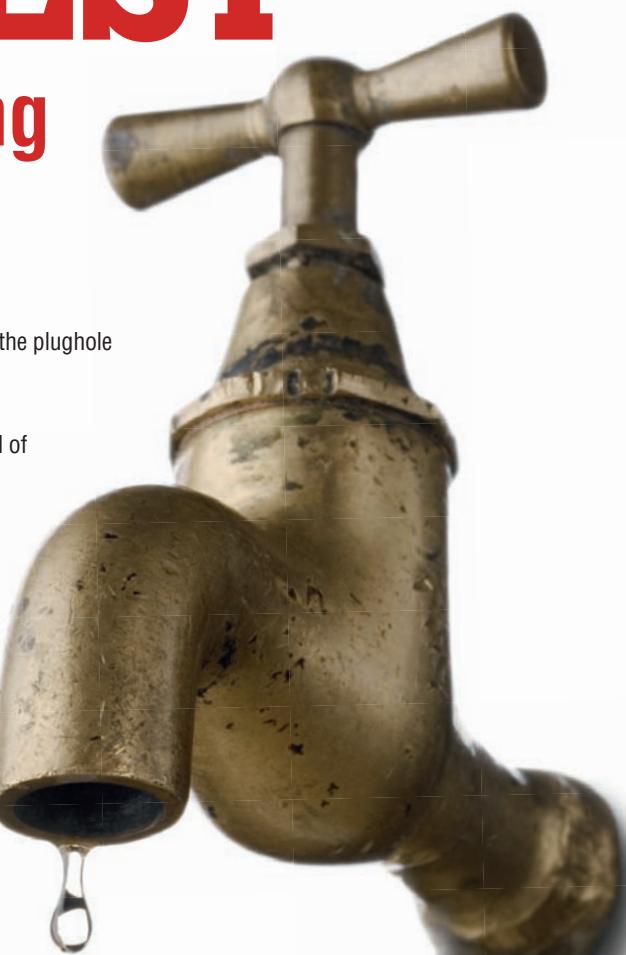
Underneath the head is a large nut which will require a spanner to undo. If it's stiff, apply some vegetable oil and wait ten minutes. If it's really stiff you could cause damage by exerting too much leverage.

4. Free the washer

Get your screwdriver and prise off the washer. There may be a small nut holding the washer in place so unscrew it with your spanner. Again, if it's particularly stiff to undo, add some vegetable oil and let it soak in.

5. Add a new washer and reassemble the tap

Get a new washer and replace the old one, adding a small amount of grease – Vaseline will do. Replace your tap parts in order, ensuring you tighten any nuts that came off.



REMOVE A RED WINE STAIN

The secret to cleaning this notorious stain is to act quickly.

On a shirt

- Go to the bathroom and wash the red stain out. If that is not possible, blot the stain with damp paper towels or a clean damp cloth.
- Don't rub it or the stain will spread.
- If you have white wine to hand, cover the red wine stain with white wine. This will remove the colour. Then rinse with water, or sponge with a damp cloth.
- Machine-wash the garment as soon as you can.

On dry clean items

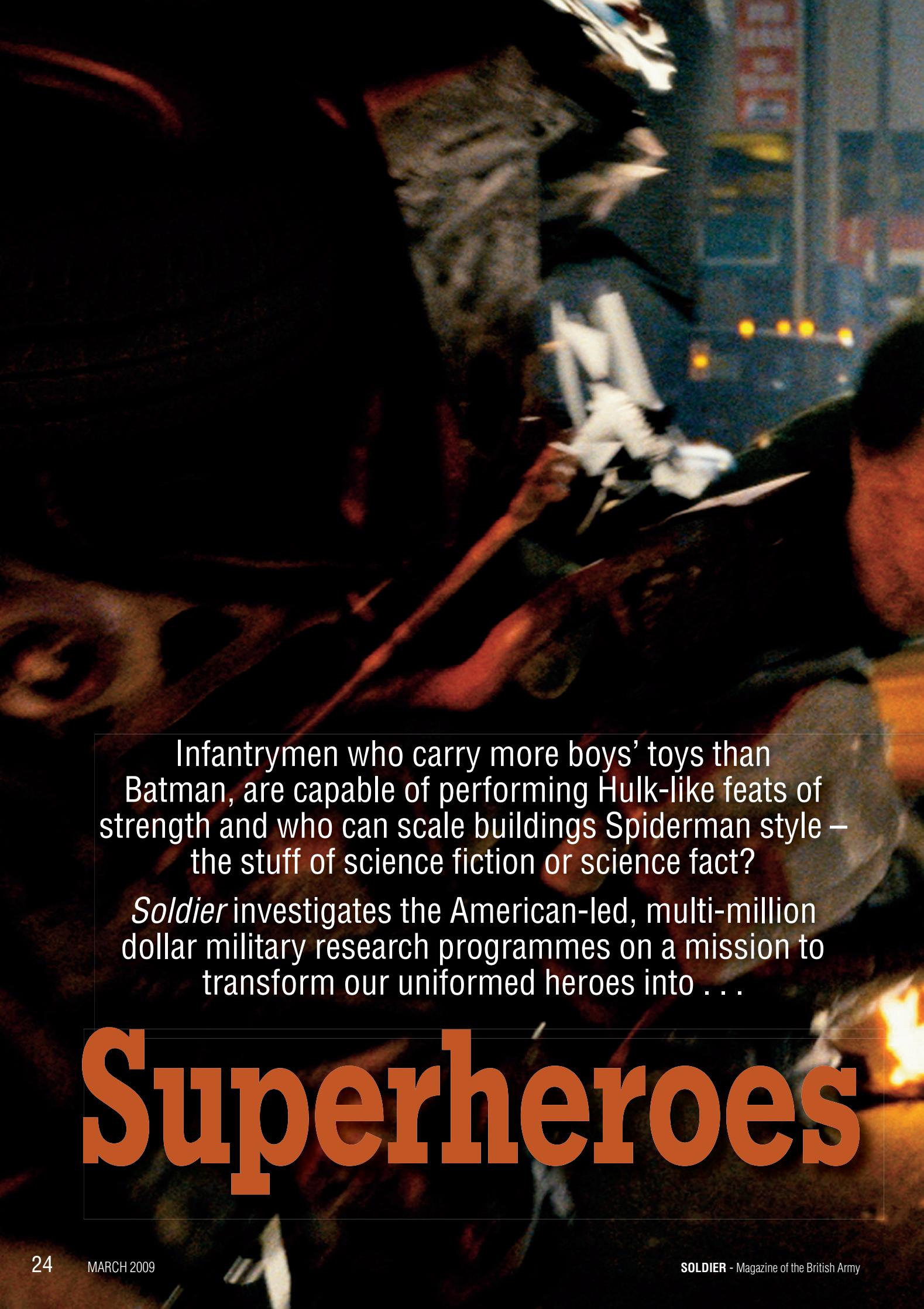
- Sponge the stain with damp paper towels or a clean damp cloth, removing as much of the colour as possible.
- Get the garment dry cleaned promptly.

On carpets

- Soak up as much as possible with tissues or a clean cloth.
- White wine or clear vinegar may remove the remaining red colour.
- If not, scrub with warm water and a mild washing-up liquid.



Extracted from 'BE THE BEST... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.



Infantrymen who carry more boys' toys than Batman, are capable of performing Hulk-like feats of strength and who can scale buildings Spiderman style – the stuff of science fiction or science fact?

Soldier investigates the American-led, multi-million dollar military research programmes on a mission to transform our uniformed heroes into . . .

Superheroes



KNIGHTS IN SHINING ARMOUR

Report: Andrew Simms

ISSUED with bulletproof combat uniforms that can "feel, see and hear" and fitted with powered exoskeletons, the infantryman of tomorrow will be better equipped than Batman thanks to the advancement of nanotechnologies.

Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the US believe that their research in the field – which relates to the control of matter on an atomic scale and the development of new materials – will deliver a range of kit far more extraordinary than anything devised by Wayne Enterprises for Gotham City's caped crusader.

The director of the Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies at MIT, Dr John Joannopoulos, told *Soldier* that his team's work is set to revolutionise body armour by delivering a lightweight fabric capable of defeating a bullet.

"The goal is to produce armour that is not only really strong, but flexible so that it can be worn over joints and flex with the soldier in ways which other materials like Kevlar just can't do," the *New Yorker* enthused. "The idea involves taking single carbon nano-tubes and single sheets of graphene [linked carbon atoms] and joining them together in patches to create a connected network. The layers of this 'molecular chain mail' will then be able to shift over each other.

"Theoretical calculations on how strong this material could be are very impressive. We're talking about five-times stronger than industrial steel and yet the material would be flexible, lightweight and, because there are lots of holes in it, breathable. Some people might think this technology is in the realms of science fiction because it sounds too good to be true, but I really believe something will come of our research."

The extraordinary properties of nano-fibres do not stop at super-human strength and, in time, could provide the skin of "smart" uniforms capable of full-body sensing – clothing that can essentially feel, see and hear.

Nano-fibres which can detect light and heat are already being developed and it is anticipated that such technology will allow line-of-sight laser communications and provide a means of infrared combat identification. The uniforms could also act as a triage nurse in the event of a soldier being wounded, assessing the location and severity of the wearer's injuries and relaying the information to a medical unit.

The familiar textile-like appearance of nano-fibres will mean that, unlike the Dark Knight's outfit of choice – which, as any bat buff will tell you, consists of several titanium-dipped Kevlar plates attached to a waterproof

neoprene undersuit – chain mail combats will not look as though they've been procured from a fancy dress store. And, according to Dr Joannopoulos, utility belts laden with 007-style gadgets are unlikely to make the transition from the Batcave to the battlefield.

"The key to equipping the soldier of tomorrow is simplicity, not complexity," he said. "When I see models of the future soldier looking like Iron Man I find it funny, because what we want to see is troops that don't look as though they have too many things to carry.

"There's no reason why they won't be dressed in a normal fashion, but the garments they will have will be extremely multi-functional.

"The aim is to get technology to such a high level that it is all embedded in a simple framework."

Although it is highly unlikely that any designs for troops' clothing will include a Batman-style cape or Iron Man-inspired rocket-propelled boots, nanotechnology is being used to emulate another superhero's party piece. At the University of California, Dr Kimberley Turner is leading US Army-funded research into "biologically inspired reversible adhesive". Replicating climbing techniques honed by Mother Nature, the project is close to delivering Spiderman-like capabilities to humans. Using pads lined with synthetic nano hairs and hooks, which emulate those found on the feet of geckos, the programme has already trialled gloves that allowed a climber to scale the side of a building without the use of ropes.

"In terms of military uses, we are currently developing adhesives for small, hand-sized micro robots, to enable them to walk on walls and ceilings and interrogate an area without putting any people at risk," said Dr Turner. "But the Spiderman possibilities are obviously very exciting because kids are intrigued by the whole superhero thing and the prospect of being able to walk up walls – and we are getting close."

The US military's plan to turn soldiers into supermen extends to fitting combat troops with powered exoskeletons. Since 2000, Raytheon Sarcos – in partnership with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency – has been developing a "wearable robot" that amplifies its user's strength, endurance and agility.

Already in testing, the futuristic suit enables its "driver" to easily carry a person on their back or lift 200lb free weights several hundred times without tiring.

Designed primarily to help soldiers carry heavier loads into battle, the exoskeleton is also agile enough to kick a football, punch a speed bag and climb stairs. And while the mechanical suit can't rival the Batmobile for speed – at present the exoskeleton is only capable of sustaining speeds of 3-6mph under load – its very existence should be enough to wipe the smile off any Jokers' face. ■

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of Christian Bale as Batman. He is wearing the iconic cowl and suit, with a serious, slightly smirking expression. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and suit, set against a dark, moody background.

Gotham garments: Christian Bale
as Batman in *The Dark Knight*

● See Movies – Pages 80-81

Picture: Stephen Vaughan/Courtesy of Warner Bros Entertainment

MARVEL OF MEDICINE

Report: Andrew Simms

RETRACTABLE claws and primal fury aside, there will be few arguments among soldiers as to who was at the front of the queue when the creative minds at Marvel Comics were giving out super powers.

Blessed with amazing healing abilities that make him near indestructible in battle, the anti-hero of this spring's big superhero flick, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*, is understandably the envy of many of those facing the daily spectre of IEDs on the blurred front lines of Afghanistan.

And while Wolverine's knack of instantly regenerating damaged or missing body parts is very much the stuff of make believe, thanks to the "giant leaps and bounds" being made in the fields of biological therapies and bio-engineering there are echoes of reality amid the fiction.

Driven by the growing prevalence of personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with complex, life-threatening injuries, the US Department of Defense last year established the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (Afirm) – an academic consortium harnessing the expertise of 250 scientists and focused on developing techniques to replace or regenerate human cells, tissues and organs.

"We are not going to be regrowing limbs in the next few years, I think we're decades away from that. But we are working on preventing limbs from being lost in the first place," said project director Col Bob Vandre, who insisted that Afirm's research would soon be improving the lives of those who, because of better body armour and improvements in evacuation and in-theatre medical care, had survived severe blast trauma but now faced the challenge of overcoming debilitating limb, head, face and burn injuries.

"When a certain amount of bone, nerve or muscle is lost [in a blast injury] amputation is often the best and only option available to surgeons, but if we had a better way to fix problems such as bone healing and soft tissue regeneration, then we might be able to salvage more limbs."

The US Army's Institute of Surgical Research, one of the 30 institutions that make up Afirm, is investigating one possible solution based on stem cell-enabled treatments.

"We are working towards growing back the muscle, bone and skin tissue of injured soldiers," Sgt Glen Rossman told *Soldier*. "By packing sheets of cellular-matrix – essentially the building

blocks of all cells in the human body – between two muscles in a wounded limb we have already seen that regrowing muscle mass is possible.

"In another case, where someone had lost the tip of their middle finger, we packed the wound with a powdered version of the matrix and let the patient's body do the rest.

"The finger tip grew back, but it wasn't just a lump of flesh, there was skin, fat, muscle tissue, tendon and even the nail bed."

Sgt Rossman explained that stem cell therapies are key to scientists securing an effective method of skin regrowth, a technology which would revolutionise the treatment of burns and dramatically reduce scarring.

"If we can differentiate the stem cells found within body fat tissue and 'put them' on a collagen sheet, we will have the means of 'remaking' skin," he explained. "German scientists are already working on a spray, which literally paints stem cells onto an area and stimulates skin regrowth."

"The vision of the future is that before soldiers go off on operations they will have their own stem cells harvested through liposuction and stored for use if they get wounded. That way while a casualty is being stabilised overseas, we will be in the US growing them muscle, skin or bone ready for surgery."

"This technology all sounds as though it's from a Hollywood movie and that is exactly what it is, but we'll get there."

Col Vandre was also quick to reassert that Afirm's mission, although fantastical, was grounded in reality and pointed to the work of US transplant surgeon Dr Jay Vacanti – who, in 1997, grew a human ear from cartilage cells on the back of a mouse – as evidence of the possibilities of regenerative medicine.

"It is the cartilage in an ear that makes it the shape and size it is," he said. "So by placing a biodegradable frame populated with the patient's own cartilage cells beneath the skin, it is possible to grow an ear. Over time the frame dissolves and is replaced by natural cartilage. This is the sort of thing we can already do."

"Soldiers always want to know that if they get wounded they will get the very best treatment available and they do. But there are certain problems modern medicine just can't fix. Afirm's research is very exciting news and should be very reassuring to soldiers. Some day we will be able to fix a lot of things. We currently have 12 clinical trials ready to roll and that is a sign that Afirm has arrived and is very much for real."



***X-Men Origins: Wolverine* is
set for UK release on May 1**

Picture: Courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox



Take a trip down
**MEMORY
SLAIN**



Report: Andrew Simms

VIRTUAL human beings and the concept of mind manipulation – once the sole preserve of Hollywood blockbusters – are no longer mere fantasy and could help ease the headache of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to US Army scientists.

With operations in Iraq and Afghanistan leading to a proliferation in the cases of traumatic brain injuries and psychological problems, US military laboratories are actively partnering with universities and the private sector to interrogate the field of neuroscience – the study of the nervous system – for possible cures.

And while the idea of deleting specific memories sounds as fanciful as the mind-altering “neutraliser” used by government agents in the *Men in Black* films to erase the memory of anyone who stared into its flash, the US Army’s director of research and laboratory management insists that science fiction is fast becoming science fact.

“We are trying to utilise the capabilities of neuroscience through various types of brain scans in a bid to identify objective measures that will enable us to understand when a soldier has suffered from PTSD or, for example, a traumatic brain injury,” said Dr

John Parmentola, who cited the research being carried out by Professor Joe Tsien at the Medical College of Georgia as an example of medicine catching up with the movies.

“Tsien and his colleagues developed a technique where they were able to go into the hippocampus [part of the forebrain] of a mouse and actually study a particular region that stores episodic memories.”

Dr Parmentola explained that the military-funded academics had created a series of traumatic events for the mouse, including a simulated close call with a bird of prey, and were later able to “erase” the experience from the mouse’s memory.

“If somebody was put through an extremely traumatic situation and the reoccurring memories of that event meant they were unable to function properly, there’s a possibility that we could help them using a mechanism like this.”

“This kind of research is helping us understand how the brain works.”

Amazingly, if a method for deleting the T in PTSD is realised, the scientists claim a similar

technique could be used to implant simulated memories – a concept again first envisioned by science-fiction screenwriters.

The possibilities of a device like the Rekall machine, which featured in Arnold Schwarzenegger space flick *Total Recall* and allowed people to experience new worlds by implanting engineered memories, are mind-blowing.

However, more subtle of-this-world methods of getting into the heads of soldiers are already being used on both sides of the Atlantic. With video games poised to eclipse all other forms of entertainment and the powerful processors in consoles and high-end PCs making virtual worlds ever more realistic and immersive, the British and US Army are engaging the “PlayStation generation’s” pastime of choice.

Here in the UK the use of virtual training packages to complement live exercises has become increasingly common-place. The British Infantry has long been able to hone its urban fighting skills from the safety of a desk using the *Half Life*-inspired Dismounted Infantry Virtual Environment – a digital double of the Copehill Down training area, and last year the roll-out of JCOVE [Joint Combat Operations Virtual Environment] allowed soldiers to practice tactics, techniques and procedures before deploying to theatre.

Across the pond, extensive Army-funded research is focused on immersive technology and taking game-based training to the next level. Collaborating with the gaming industry’s big players and with Hollywood, developers at the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) in California are striving to generate virtual worlds that are indistinguishable from reality.

“One of the key challenges we have in this area [immersive technology] is to create virtual humans and neuroscience plays a key role in trying to create ‘characters’ that to all intents and purposes act and interact just like humans,” Dr Parmentola told *Soldier*, explaining that virtual worlds can not only help troops prepare for battle, but also help them to recover from any psychological scars they may have suffered in the fight.

“We’ve been using virtual environments – pioneered out at the ICT – to try to see if there are ways, through using training environments, to essentially heal or suppress the episodic memories that soldiers have through PTSD,” he said. “By putting those soldiers through similar experiences that occurred when they acquired the disorder – virtual environments in which we can recreate explosions and other events – we found that a repetitive type of therapy winds up suppressing these memories.”

Although the very thought of military-funded programmes into “mind-control” techniques will – like the sci-fi thrillers that inspired them – fill many with horror, for those serving on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan the exploration of neuroscience is a brainwave worth riding.

Gen Peter Chiarelli, the Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army and former commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, said: “I see more and more individuals returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from these [psychological] problems.

“So, if you are asking me what is keeping me awake at night, it’s PTSD and traumatic brain injuries and coming up with the necessary protocols for their treatment.” ■

Science fact: Emulating the neutraliser used by Agent K (Tommy Lee Jones) and Agent J (Will Smith) in *Men in Black*, US researchers are exploring the possibilities of deleting memories with a view to treating post traumatic stress

Picture: Courtesy of Sony Pictures

THIS IS HOW MUCH WORK GOES INTO A CUP OF TEA:
TWO DAYS OF SITTING IN SILENCE.

SEVEN DAYS OF YES/NO ANSWERS.

TWO ONE-SIDED ARGUMENTS.

THREE DAYS OF AVOIDING EYE CONTACT.
THREE FITS OF RAGE THREE INSULTING REMARKS.
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ONE CUP, SOME MILK
AND TWO SUGARS.

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It's takes a whole team of people to care for those with mental health needs, and lots of time. It's work that demands emotional strength, humility and patience. And it isn't always easy. Sometimes it may feel like you're taking a few steps back, before moving forward. But it's one of the most rewarding careers you can have. We have many roles available, from Registered Mental Nurses and Healthcare Workers, to Caterers and Maintenance positions at all of our 23 hospitals across England, Wales and Scotland. Visit www.partnershipsincare.co.uk/careers to find out more about what it takes and the training and rewards on offer.



Partnerships in care
Changing lives for the better



CLICK IN' SNIFF

**Pioneering technology could
lead to the scent of battle
wafting from computer games**

Standing odours: Computer game scenes from the Middle East could soon be enhanced by adding in aromas



Report: Samantha Chapman

SNIFFING out the enemy is right up there on the list of priorities for a soldier searching for insurgents on the battlefield.

Eyes and ears might traditionally be the human tools of a soldier's trade but noses could soon be trained to detect an atmosphere about to turn sour.

When deployed in towns and built up areas where pungent and unfamiliar smells waft freely, the assault on the senses can be brutal.

To combat this, a team of dedicated "serious" computer game experts in Birmingham are working on revolutionary technology that would see aromas added to training simulations.

"Smell is the most underrated sense, but next to vision it is the most information-rich one we have," explained Professor Bob Stone of Birmingham University, whose team test and build pioneering software for a range of government bodies.

The idea of adding aromas to computer games is being tested by a member of Prof Stone's team, PhD student and former

Royal Navy sailor Mark Blyth.

His aim for the three-year project is to assess how realistic this would make the experience for a soldier on their way to operations.

"Certain smells activate people's memories," said Blyth. "Our plan is to get people who have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan to smell the aromas and tell us if they are realistic or not. Then we could put them into the game."

The smells range from gun fire to the spicy scent of a Middle Eastern market to the downright horrible stench of raw sewage.

These have all been captured by an American company which impregnates jars of paraffin wax with the smell before putting them into a box with a fan, which is attached to the computer. The aroma is then wafted into the gamer's nose as they play.

"The smell is activated when the virtual soldier walks past something like a market or a tiny side street, and the computer triggers the

scent," explained Blyth. "What we are trying to discover is if smell enhances a person's perception – is it better if we add in the scent or not?"

Blyth is 12 months into the three-year project but his idea is to recreate a scene where a soldier is "walked" through a Middle-Eastern village and exposed to a series of associated scents. This could then help prepare for their future deployment experience as they get used to the unfamiliar aromas.

"It's a way of capturing feelings. Sometimes people have a sense that something is wrong, but we have to find out how they know that. Is it smell? Is it someone running through the marketplace? Is it the silence?" he asked. "If smell is one of the main factors then there is a lot of scope for this to be used to help train soldiers' noses."

Although the game will eventually be tested on troops to see if the scents work – or are even credible – the simulation will first be tried out on student guinea pigs who will examine the workings and technical detail.

Then serving soldiers will be asked to make sure the smells correctly correspond to their experiences.

The game has also attracted interest from defence psychologists who have asked Prof Stone to examine its potential to help treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

The idea is that by walking a soldier who has been traumatised by a particular operational experience through a virtual town, it may be possible to pick up when they are feeling distressed. If a soldier reacts badly to a certain point in the

simulation, it may help to determine their stress trigger point.

"It depends on the level of therapy the soldier is undertaking," explained Prof Stone. "But we can add in sights, sounds and hopefully smells to find out what it is that has affected them.

"We could start with them walking past a Warrior and nothing happens, but the next visual could be of a man running across the road and that might set them off. If not we could add in prayer chanting or the smell of a market. There are potentially hundreds of different things we could add into the scene.

"Psychologists can talk people through their problems, but with this technology it is possible to actually programme a scene – making it much more relevant to that person's experience.

"We would never be able to make a game that is totally generic because everyone's experience will be different."

The team has already created a test demonstrator for the PTSD model which has five different scenes ranging from a street to a sniper incident, to a gathering crowd. As with the group's other projects it is a work-in-progress that is subject to MoD approval.

"The sense of smell is so closely linked to emotion," said Prof Stone. "It has such a powerful effect on our everyday lives. When people lose their sense of smell it can cause serious depression.

"By testing out the idea of using scents to train soldiers we are touching on state-of-the-art technology and pushing the boundaries of serious games even further." ■

● Virtual infirmary – Page 45



Gunship evolution

Two decades after it was designed to hunt its prey over the plains of western Europe, the Apache has mutated into a very different beast

Report: Cliff Caswell

Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN plans for a brand new attack helicopter were first on the drawing board in the United States more than 25 years ago, the world was a very different place.

Having introduced the first AH-1 Cobra gunships to support troops in Vietnam, the US Army was focused on an aircraft that would be able to fulfil a new role of cutting through columns of enemy armour during an anticipated battle for Europe.

Armed with a package of Hellfire missiles, 70mm rockets and a devastating 30mm chain gun, the Apache was the helicopter designed to eat the Red Army's tanks for breakfast. With a generous covering of armour plating, it was also well-prepared to fly its crew of two back to a nearby base to rearm and refuel for a second helping.

Today in Afghanistan, however, it is a very different story. In an extreme environment, Nato allies are conducting a war in difficult terrain. With helicopters often the only way of deploying troops, the gunship has come full circle and British pilots are facing the same battle as their cousins in the Cobra.

Yet despite operating in a scenario far removed from the Cold War for which it was designed,

the ingenuity of British technicians, pilots and tacticians has made the Apache one of the most decisive weapons available to soldiers in the field.

"This aircraft was originally built around the Hellfire missile and was designed to stop an armoured advance in Europe," said Col David Turner, Commander of the Attack Helicopter Force based at Wattisham Airfield near Ipswich, Suffolk.

"Obviously everything is different now – low-level anti-tank drills are not what we need in Afghanistan and we have had to adapt to a new environment. Out there the helicopter is not attacking armoured vehicles but is being used as an anti-personnel weapon and a force protection asset."

"In this environment we found that the weapons were not optimised for the theatre that we were in. For example the 30mm gun was needed most while the Hellfire missiles had to be adapted to be more effective against buildings."

Col Turner's analysis was shared by Ed Macy, a former Apache pilot, who flew missions against the Taliban during a series of ferocious encounters on Op Herrick 1. He believed the helicopter gunship had returned to its roots.

"In Afghanistan we are flying at high levels much like the original AH-1 Cobras of the US Army," he said. "We are in a situation where there is close combat and we have had to look at the tactics used by the first gunship crews." >>

'Apache was the helicopter designed to eat the Red Army's tanks for breakfast'

Despite sharing some similarities in helicopter deployment, southern Afghanistan is a very different mission to the one faced by America in Vietnam in the 1960s and the Apache is being used in many more diverse roles than the US air power of times past.

With a wealth of the latest technology on board, the British attack helicopter has evolved into a formidable weapons and observation platform, with the ability to track more than 250 potential targets.

Together with AugustaWestland, the company that builds the helicopter under licence from Boeing in the UK, the Army has also ensured the aircraft is frequently upgraded so that it is able to work around the clock in the most extreme conditions.

Having already fitted more powerful Rolls-Royce engines, British designers have been working to increase both the punch and range of the helicopter as well as the crew's awareness of potential targets. Most recently the Apache was reworked to allow it to carry either extra fuel or ammunition depending on the task. With external fuel tanks available in the load options, pilots have more time to hit the enemy harder.

"As the 30mm weapon is the one we use the most, there can be a penalty to having a reduced magazine," explained Col Turner. "Having the flexibility to carry more ammunition allows us to react to any incidents."

He added that the ability to fly for greater periods and engage more frequently had been bolstered by enhanced vision equipment, such as the Modernised Target Acquisition Designation Sight (M-TADS). Crews could now spot the enemy more easily with a better day and night vision capability.

"The introduction of M-TADS has meant we have a system that is so much better than the one we have been using," Col Turner asserted. "Previously the crew had an image that looked as if it had been taken through a snowstorm, but the quality is now as good as a black-and-white photo."

"My intention is to get all the modified aircraft out to theatre as soon as possible and we are hoping to have half of the fleet fitted with M-TADS by September."

The modifications to the Apache are certainly welcome in theatre. Huge gains have been made in Afghanistan in the last three years, with military success now underpinned by reconstruction efforts. But British commanders have warned that the Taliban remains a credible threat that will need to be suppressed as the operation continues.

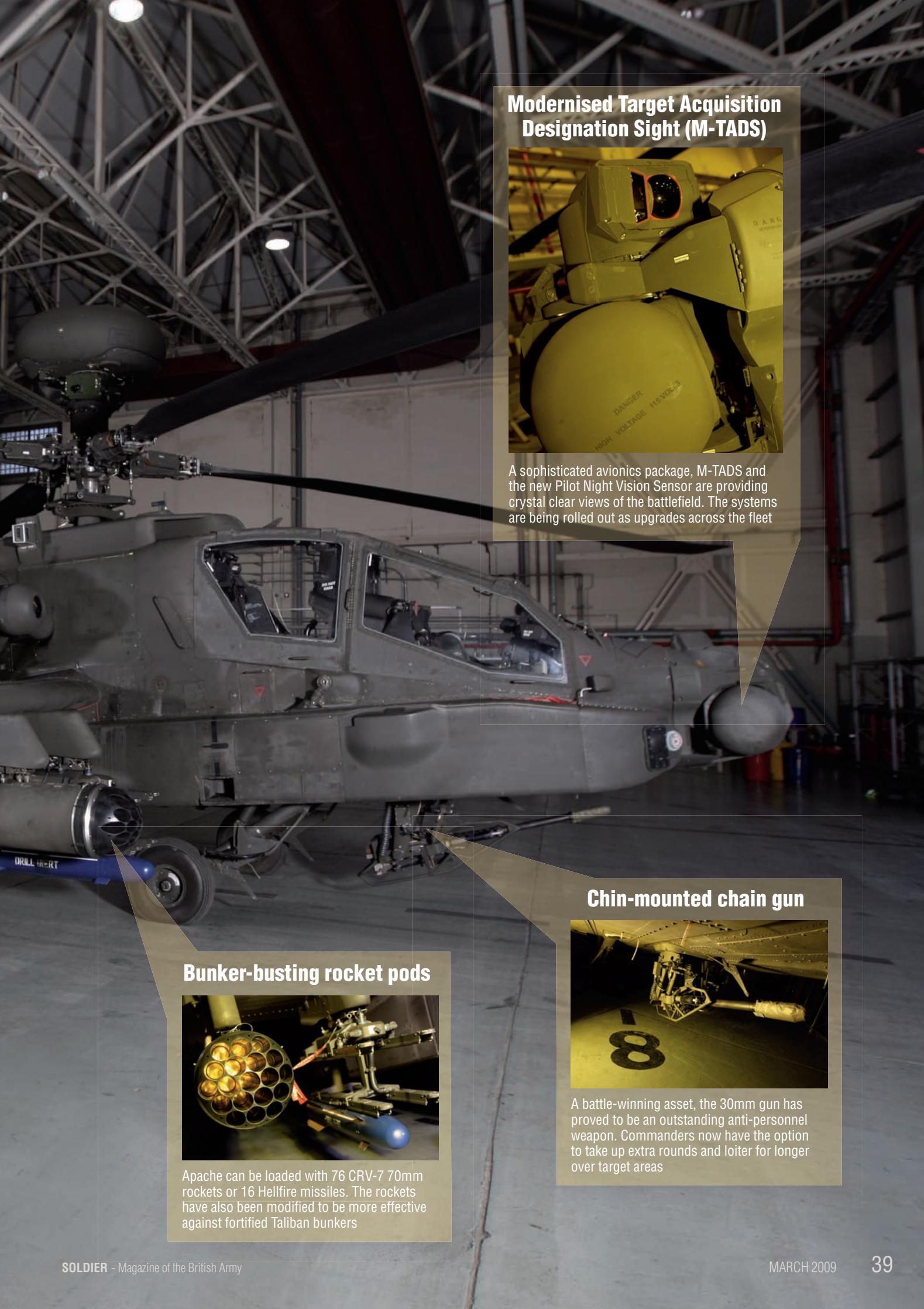
With this in mind, a helicopter that was designed to fulfil a niche anti-armour role in a war of the distant past will continue its coming-of-age in the months and years ahead.

Loved by British troops and hated by their adversaries, the Apache is an iconic aircraft that has its place in history assured. ■

Rolls-Royce powerplant



Built under licence from American aviation giant Boeing, the British version of the Apache is fitted with Rolls-Royce engines delivering more power than the US version



Modernised Target Acquisition Designation Sight (M-TADS)



A sophisticated avionics package, M-TADS and the new Pilot Night Vision Sensor are providing crystal clear views of the battlefield. The systems are being rolled out as upgrades across the fleet

Chin-mounted chain gun



A battle-winning asset, the 30mm gun has proved to be an outstanding anti-personnel weapon. Commanders now have the option to take up extra rounds and loiter for longer over target areas

Bunker-busting rocket pods



Apache can be loaded with 76 CRV-7 70mm rockets or 16 Hellfire missiles. The rockets have also been modified to be more effective against fortified Taliban bunkers



VIEW

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Report: Cliff Caswell

HOSTILE fast jet pilots will take their lives in their own hands if they attack British troops after it was announced that an Army anti-aircraft missile is to receive a new lease of life.

The MoD has confirmed that the Starstreak system will be maintained and upgraded for the next 11 years after the Air Defence Availability Project was awarded to contractor Thales UK.

The Starstreak missile has proved itself to be a potent weapon in more than a decade of service. The laser-guided projectile races to its target at more than three times the speed of sound before launching a trio of deadly darts to take down its prey.

Made at the Thales factory in Belfast, Northern Ireland, it is a highly effective option against attacks by enemy aircraft and armoured helicopter gunships.

Under the terms of the £200 million deal, the defence contractor will ensure troops have "a specified level" of available missiles and that the kit is kept in top condition until 2020.

Crucially, the agreement means the missiles can be upgraded with a package of refinements including an enhanced fire control system and automatic target tracking. A new type of dart will improve the weapon's lethality.

According to Thales, the project will also allow Starstreak's systems to accommodate the company's lightweight multi-role missile,

unveiled at the 2008 Farnborough Air Show.

This new weapon, which has been undergoing a series of trials, is highly versatile, can be fitted to a wide range of platforms and launched at air, land and sea targets.

Minister for Defence Equipment and Support Quentin Davis said Starstreak, which can be fired from the shoulder, a multiple launcher or mounted on the Stormer armoured vehicle, continues to provide an important capability, and that the latest deal would ensure soldiers could deal with the full spectrum of threats.

Davis emphasised: "This is an important contract as it ensures the availability of the high velocity missile, a crucial weapon system for the Armed Forces.

"We are sustaining technologies in the UK industries that are important for our future defence needs. I am committed to providing our Services with the best

possible equipment to deal with a wide range of potential operations," he added.

Rear Admiral Amjad Hussain (RN), Director General Weapons, DE&S, was confident the latest deal would have far-reaching benefits.

He said: "This support arrangement will reduce the cost of ownership for high velocity missiles while also providing the ability to transition from peacetime to live operations." ■

Prepare for launch: Updated, Starstreak remains a potent weapon against enemy helicopters and fast jets attacking British ground troops

Picture: © Crown Copyright www.defenceimages.mod.uk

STREAK CRED

Low flying pilots risk the wrath of upgraded pocket rocket



1 PENICILLIN

THIS wonder-drug tops a long and illustrious list of technological advances in a field which is, quite rightly, highly valued by soldiers – battlefield medicine.

All too frequently in history the casualties suffered by one side or the other have determined the outcomes of battles, campaigns and even wars, so the ability to return as many wounded to active duty is key.

Penicillin's emergence in the 1940s provided a welcome tonic to the Allied efforts during the Second World War, during which it helped combat a total of 14,000 cases of meningococcal infections, limiting the death toll to just 599. The building block of all modern antibiotics, it continues to save lives on the front line today.

2 CHAIN MAIL

THIS great, great, great granddaddy of the Osprey system worn by our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan today was a true pioneer of personal body armour and is worthy of the runners-up spot on the grounds of the complexity of its design alone.

The fact that chain mail was developed during the 14th Century – in an age when people still believed the world was flat – and provided an effective defence against slashing blows by an edged weapon and penetration by thrusting and piercing weapons is incredible.

3 THE RIFLE

Fired for the first time in anger during the American Civil War, the rifle had an impact on warfare that reverberated far beyond the United States's own shores.

Adopted by the Confederates in preference to the smoothbore musket, which was used by the Northern Infantry and fired ball-shaped ammunition at low velocity to a range of 200 yards, the SA80s distant forefather changed battlefield tactics forever.

Capable of firing at a rate of ten rounds per minute and accurate up to a range of half a mile, charging the enemy was no longer a viable option. The answer? Dig in, a necessity which characterised the First and Second World Wars.

4 GORE-TEX

THERE will be some people reading this who will remember exercises like Lionheart in the 1980s and recall being stuck on the German plains for weeks on end, dug in and soaked through.

Thick heavy combats that when they got wet they stayed wet – for days; boots that had puttees attached and were no more waterproof than a pair of slippers and rubberised waterproof clothing that made you wetter from the sweat they produced than from the rain they were trying to protect you from.

Young guns might not fully appreciate it, but Gore-Tex fabric – 100 per cent waterproof, windproof and breathable – has made a tremendous difference to the comfort of soldiers on exercise and operations.

5 BOWMAN

AN unpopular entry I imagine, but I beg you to see beyond any perceived problems and consider the potential digitisation can bring to the soldier – communication and battlefield science that far outstrips anything our enemy can come close to matching.

The secure integrated voice and data services that Bowman is designed to provide to dismounted soldiers, individual vehicles and command headquarters up to Division level creates a clear benefit.

Imagine Jack Bauer technology for Pte Smith. Digitisation has the potential to allow the well-equipped soldier to be informed in a way that the airborne troops at Arnhem in 1944 could have only dreamed of.

6 BAILEY BRIDGE

IN 1943 the Royal Engineers introduced the Bailey bridge to operations and changed the face of warfare for the next 65 years.

It allowed the pace of battle to be maintained and reduced the impact of bridges being destroyed by enemy troops. A portable truss bridge capable of spanning gaps up to 60 metres wide, it requires no special tools or heavy equipment for construction, is strong enough to carry tanks and its elements are small enough to be carried in trucks.

By 1945 the Allies had built more than 3,000 Bailey bridges in Sicily and Italy, an engineering feat which made an immense contribution towards ending the war.

RANKED

ARMY'S GREATEST BATTLEFIELD BREAKTHROUGHS



7 T34

THE Russian-made T34 created such an impression that it greatly influenced tank development across the world.

Produced between 1940 and 1958, it changed the way the Germans developed their tanks, and became the most important weapon system that the Russians deployed throughout the Second World War.

Germany had to adapt its tank design, moving to slower production of larger, expensive and complex second-generation tanks. The T34 eventually led to the development of the T54/55 – the armoured mainstay of the Soviet Union during the Cold War.



9 BARBED WIRE

A PERFECT example of how technology does not have to be complex to be effective. Wire obstacles first saw significant military use during the Second Boer War, and reached their pinnacle during the First World War where they were very effective when combined with machine gun fire.

Invented in the 1860s for animal farming, it was not long before the military had developed a devastating use for such a simple piece of equipment. By planting mines in and around it, a wire obstacle becomes a formidable barrier.

A simple wire entanglement can be further enhanced by adding trip-flares to make night-time infiltration harder.



10 GAMING

COMBINE the manual dexterity and swiftness of mind needed to play games consoles with titles (*Brothers in Arms* and *Call of Duty*) that provide lessons in tactics and history, and the hi-tech hobby's importance is clear.

Today's Army requires fast-thinking soldiers that can operate the highest available specification in military technology.

The Playstation generation are technologically adept and are ideally equipped to work on the most complicated Army equipment. Systems are even being designed which mirror the control pads of these systems.

8 POLY FORT

AFTER the invention of explosive artillery, military experts had to devise structures to withstand the force, and devised the polygonal fortress. With a deep, vertical sided ditch cut directly into the rock, it is the layout of a series of straight lines surrounding the fort that gives this structure its name.

The fort profile is very low and is surrounded by a sloping open area, which provides no protection for an enemy.

The fort itself provides a minimal target for enemy fire, and the narrow ditch makes it a difficult target for plunging shellfire.

Many of these were used in the Second World War as they provided convenient strongholds, and their open emplacements were perfect for anti-aircraft batteries and quick firing guns.



AUTHOR

MAJ Neil Powell signed up with the 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry in 1982. He left to become a civilian policeman before rejoining with the RMP's Special Investigation Branch. In 1999 he transferred to the education branch of the Adjutant General's Corps, where he teaches battlefield studies.

A veteran of Northern Ireland and the Balkans, Maj Powell has a Master's degree in War Studies from King's College, London.

● Next month in *Ranked*, we examine the Army's top sporting triumphs. To have your say, email suggestions to styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk





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Report: Samantha Chapman

BLOOD is smeared across the soldier's neck and windpipe as he lies stripped to the waist on the operating table.

Alert but frightened, his eyes flicker between the surgeon and scrub nurse who are battling to save his life.

Aside from the bleeping heart monitor, the rest of the field hospital is quiet and the focus is on the man on the table whose silent plea for life is evidenced by the tense line of his jaw.

The surgeon thinks for a moment and then clicks the mouse on the correct instrument needed to begin the procedure. This life-and-death scenario is being played out on a piece of software used to help train battlefield-bound medics.

Using three-dimensional software, the Interactive Trauma Trainer (ITT) is simulating a real-life situation where a patient has a severe neck wound and needs urgent medical assistance.

Without it, his trachea will collapse and he will go into a rapid decline. The surgeon's job is to save his life by running through the correct sequence of events within a certain time-frame.

The simulation is being produced and tested by Professor Bob Stone and his team at Birmingham University as part of his work with the Human Factors Integration Defence Technology Centre.

"We are looking at these games for troops who have never been out to theatre," explained Prof Stone. "We look at the designs and carry out early assessments – our brief is to evaluate whether they add or detract to the training value."

"With the trauma trainer the surgeon has to make the right decision at the right time to save the patient. In total you have around four-and-a-half minutes before he dies."

"A lot of people haven't been in this situation before so the idea is that you could put this onto a DVD so that surgeons flying out to theatre can train on the way there."

As research for the software Prof Stone spent six months in a morgue and hospital in Johannesburg to see which wounds would be best reproduced on screen.

"When we began to build the game we realised that giving someone an injection or a catheter using a mouse or joystick would be a non-starter. It would be impossible," he said.

"So we had to look at how we do that using animation. Basically you look around the screen, find the surgical equipment you require and click on it. Questions will then flash up – for example it will ask which fluids you want to administer."

"All the time you are putting in your answers the computer will record them and give you an analysis at the end. It will also flag up your reaction speed."

This game is just a small part of Prof Stone's work, with much of it devoted to providing this type of technology for the Royal Navy and the Army. For example, an offshoot of the ITT called Pulse is currently being developed for the US Office of Naval Research.

This opens up the interactive theatre to more doctors and nurses and looks at how they all work together. The next stage of this simulation is looking at anthrax and how to cope with this type of chemical weapon in a combat situation.

"We are also looking at combat casualty care," explained Prof Stone. "This revolves around primary care – looking at how to treat someone who has just fallen. It would be really important for the Army – it would make soldiers aware of what they could face and how to deal with it."

Although the ITT is not yet in use in the Army, Prof

Stone and his team are continuing to test the software with MoD backing and are hoping it could soon be brought into action.

"We look at the human factors – how it plays, how useful it is and whether it is realistic," said Prof Stone. "At the end we will write an evaluation and report back to the MoD. If they approve of what we have done then it's up to somebody there to put the wheels in motion and take it forward."

He added that the Surgeon-General of the Armed Forces, Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite, has already stated he would like to see more simulations like ITT used to train Servicemen and women for operations.

"This puts us in a strong position when it comes to showing what we have produced to the MoD," said Prof Stone. "Over the next 12 months we will be putting a lot of effort into this area. People are starting to sit up and pay attention to the endless possibilities of serious games and the important role they could play in the training of a soldier." ■



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Report: Samantha Chapman
Picture: Steve Dock

FOR former gunner Lee Love there is no such thing as a typical 24 hours. A senior healthcare worker for men with mental health issues, he has grown accustomed to the premise that no two days are ever the same.

Yet when it comes to the unexpected at his workplace – the medium-secure Kemple View facility in Lancashire for men with personality disorders and mental health problems – it is his Army training that he falls back on, relying heavily upon the discipline and team-building abilities ingrained in his psyche.

"As former soldiers, our skills are invaluable in a place like this," he said. "We make good role models for people here because of the discipline, motivation and work ethic you get from the Army. We were taught to think on our feet and remain calm despite challenging and changeable situations."

Love joined the Royal Artillery as a Junior Leader at the age of 16 before serving with 12 Air Defence Regiment in Germany.

He did four years' service after which he took on a number of different jobs, before finally settling on his current role.

"Now I am here I wish I'd gone straight into it," said 34-year-old Love. "It's a highly rewarding job. It's about having that respect and trying to put yourself in their shoes – it's not a nice thing to suffer a mental illness and it is a restricting environment for them to live in."

Love is just one of many ex-soldiers using their military training in the nursing profession following a spell in the Army. Initially it can be daunting for former troops to know which career to choose, so wide is the scope of industries looking for their work-orientated skills.

Yet Partnerships in Care, an independent mental healthcare provider which runs 25 hospitals including Kemple View, is keen for ex-Servicemen and women to consider working for them.

Already on their books are a number of former soldiers who, although mainly serving in nursing roles, have also taken up positions as violence and aggression management trainers, chefs and patient activities coordinators.

Kemple View unit manager Michael Jennings said: "I think that being in the Army has given Lee and the others a certain empathy for the residents. They understand what it's like being away from home and being around people you don't choose to live with."

"They are also used to thinking on their feet and to working under pressure. If they see someone carry out an assault, they need to react quickly and resolve the situation."

Former Royal Signaller Adele Mauback also works at Kemple View as a staff nurse and said she has never looked back.

"I was in the Army for nearly four years, she said. "When I left I became a computer engineer, but it was quite boring."

"My mum suggested nursing and I decided to go into mental healthcare which I have found to be incredibly rewarding."

Mauback said that although she had only ever encountered people with mild depression before she trained as a nurse, the satisfaction she reaps from helping her patients far outweigh any concerns.

"I like seeing someone work really hard towards a goal and achieve it," she said. "It is a lot harder for someone with a mental illness as they can be unpredictable. One man I worked with decided he wanted to be allowed to go on escorted day trips and he was so happy when he was given that privilege – it was great to see his work pay off."

Adding that the transition from the military to civvy street can be hard, Mauback said that she would recommend nursing as a second career.

"As a soldier you learn such valuable skills," she said. "Every day in nursing is totally different to the one before which makes life more interesting and fulfilling." ■



Loving life

Soldiers-turned-nurses say British Army offers essential work-orientated skills



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G-FORCE

Dylan Jones – super-stylish scribbler and editor of *GQ* – speaks of his remarkable respect for the Armed Forces

Interview: Samatha Chapman
Picture: Graeme Main

TEEN years ago when Dylan Jones strode into the stylish offices of *GQ* magazine, the “lad’s mag” phenomenon was already in full swing.

Titles such as *Loaded*, *FHM* and *Maxim* were flying off the shelves as publishers realised there was a whole untapped market of men wanting to read something other than a top-shelf sizzler.

Suddenly the already well-established and upmarket *GQ* had a range of pretenders to the throne, a challenge that 48-year-old Jones found irresistible.

“When I arrived the magazine needed a certain amount of reinvention because in the 1990s there was an upsurge of lad’s mags,” he recalled. “It was difficult for us to keep our head above water.

“We were basically operating at the other end of the market. *GQ* was renowned for lots of things, great photography, great lifestyle but what it wasn’t renowned for was its journalism. What we needed was the best journalists that we could afford.”

Cue the arrival of superhacks such as Boris Johnson and Piers Morgan, who had both cut their teeth on a range of publications, attracting controversy and admiration in equal quantities.

The magazine dug its heels in and worked furiously to re-establish itself as top dog in a market littered with publications akin to soft-porn. And it worked. Today *GQ* has a circulation of 135,000.

This success rides on the coat-tails of Jones’ already glittering media career. His previous positions include editor of *i-D*, *Arena* and *The Face*, associate editor of *The Observer Magazine*, editor-at-large of *The Sunday Times* and columnist for *The Mail on Sunday’s Live* magazine.

Coming from a military family – his brother and father are in the Royal Air Force – he is an avid supporter of the Armed Forces and aims to include as much coverage from the Middle East as he can in the magazine.

“I was the black sheep who didn’t join up,” he laughed. “My brother has been in since he was 17 or 18, and although I went in a different direction I try and support them in any way I can.

“We have had people in Iraq and Afghanistan. We sent Sean Langham three times – and he actually ended up being held hostage for some time in Afghanistan. We go out of our way to get as much Middle East reportage as possible and we do a pretty good job.”

Jones, who sports a Help for Heroes

wristband, has had the opportunity to go himself but said that he turned the offer down on the orders of his wife. Yet his admiration for the troops is reflected nationally as public backing and appreciation for the work of Britain’s military is currently at a unprecedented high.

“More people are now supportive of the Armed Forces than they were several years ago,” he said. “Even if people were anti-operation in the beginning, they are enthusiastic towards the Armed Forces.” ■



Interview: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Graeme Main

AS A Services charity, Help for Heroes has captured the public imagination like no other over the past few years.

Founded 17 months ago when public opinion was beginning to turn in favour of Servicemen and women, it appeared on the radar at just the right time.

Offering a high profile outlet for people who wanted to donate money to projects for the wounded, Help for Heroes has become synonymous with taking action.

Of the staggering £17 million raised since October 2007, £12.1 million has already been shelled out and a brand new rehabilitation centre and swimming pool at Headley Court is to be finished next year.

"It has been an extraordinary, wonderful thing," said Bryn Parry, who founded the charity along with wife Emma. "We seem to have struck a chord with the national consciousness."

And join they have. Celebrities such as *Top Gear's* Jeremy Clarkson and Manchester United footballer Cristiano Ronaldo are rarely pictured without the blue-and-red Help for Heroes wristband, national newspapers give reams of print to the charity's activities and ordinary members of the public raise around £1 million every month.

Not bad for a charity which the Parrys had intended to wind up after a fund-raising bike ride last year.

"We are not political or critical – we just want to help," explained Bryn.

"People who are fund-raising are from the same age group as those fighting in Afghanistan – they want to show their support. For many of them it is the first time they will have done this. It isn't about how they feel about the war – it is about doing something for the troops."

A former captain with The Royal Green Jackets (now part of The Rifles) Bryn spent ten years in

the Army, following in the footsteps of his father, a colonel in the Gurkhas, and paving the way for his son – a veteran of the 2nd Battalion, The Rifles.

After leaving in 1985 he continued his career as a cartoonist and he and Emma set up the Bryn Parry Studios in Salisbury, Wiltshire.

Yet in 2007 his thoughts returned to his former military days. "My old battalion was in Iraq taking large casualties and Emma wanted to do something to support them, so we decided on a bike ride," recalled Bryn.

"We went to Selly Oak and it was incredibly moving. Richard Dannatt pointed us in the direction of Headley Court and said that if we wanted to help, they needed a brand new swimming pool."

As a result, in October 2007 Help for Heroes was born and the Parrys watched with astonishment as the support snowballed.

"The single biggest donation we have received is £100,000 and the smallest was a cheque for two pence," said Bryn. "We have people like five-year-old Emily who gave up her birthday presents for £100 to be donated to us and little Luke who sent us the contents of his money box. It is across the ages and social divides."

So far £8 million of the £17 million kitty has paid for the Headley Court pool complex, £3.5 million is going to Combat Stress to pay for accommodation and treatment for people with PTSD and £500,000 is going to SSAFA Forces Help for its Norton House project in Surrey.

The rest of the money will be spent on smaller initiatives such as funding Troop Aid to make "grab bags" of basic supplies for

wounded troops in Selly Oak, and supporting the work of Battle Back which is a sporting initiative for disabled personnel.

"Of the £17 million we have received, 98 per cent is available to be donated which is very rare," explained Bryn. "The reason is that Emma runs Help for Heroes Trading – an important profit-making company where we can offset as much of the cost of running the charity as possible. And all the profits go back into the charity itself."

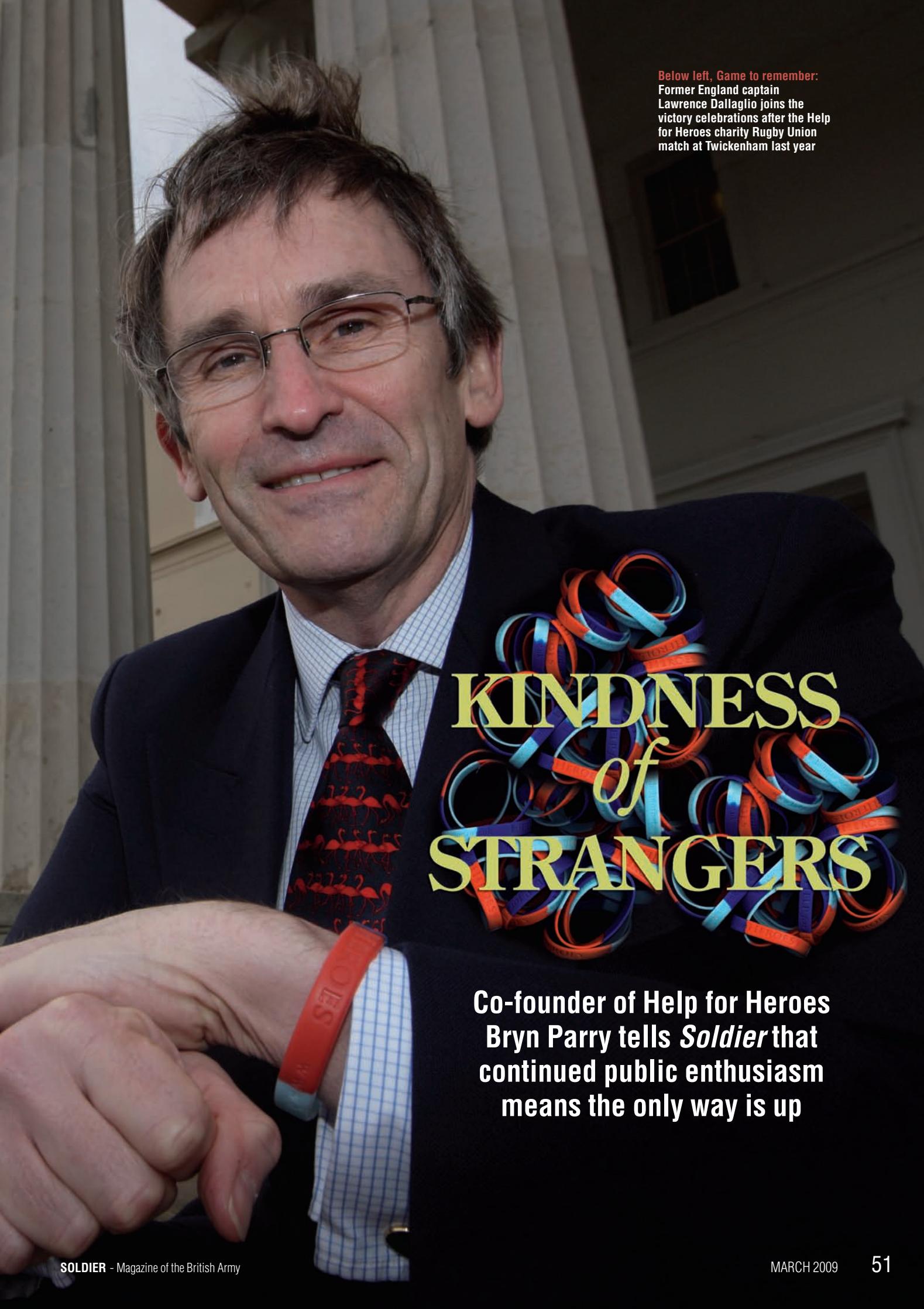
As the newest Services charity on the block, Help for Heroes is keen to work with more established stalwarts such as the Army Benevolent Fund and The Royal British Legion. Last November for example, they dedicated the whole of their website's front page to the Poppy Appeal.

"We have still got a long way to go," said Bryn. "We want to get the country thinking about how we can make life easier for wounded troops.

"They are risking their lives to fight against terrorism – it may not be on the white cliffs of Dover but it is still for us, for a better and safer world. They are doing their bit but the question is – are we doing ours?" ■



Below left, Game to remember:
Former England captain
Lawrence Dallaglio joins the
victory celebrations after the Help
for Heroes charity Rugby Union
match at Twickenham last year



KINDNESS of STRANGERS

The text 'KINDNESS of STRANGERS' is overlaid on a background of many colorful, interwoven Help for Heroes wristbands in shades of blue, orange, and purple.

Co-founder of Help for Heroes
Bryn Parry tells *Soldier* that
continued public enthusiasm
means the only way is up



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Curry on clifford

Red-hot Gurkha challenge turns up the heat for 'Casevac's' Media Op

Fire starter: Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment chef Sgt Sajan Gurung ready to put *Soldier's* tastebuds to the test

Picture: Graeme Main





Report: Cliff "Casevac" Caswell
Pictures: Graeme Main

MY total respect for the Gurkha soldier didn't begin on the front lines of Iraq. Nor did it start in the dangerous mountains of Bosnia, the volatile streets of Pristina in Kosovo or the snow-covered exercise areas of the Falkland Islands.

It began in the cookhouse of the Infantry Battle School in Brecon, south Wales.

While everyone else was out on exercise, a single Nepalese soldier was sat alone with his curry dinner, accompanied by a bottle of West Indian pepper sauce.

Anyone partial to spicy food will probably know that a dab of this infamous red concoction can strip the skin from your mouth, while an accidental wipe of the eyes is often enough to cause temporary blindness.

Yet this soldier's immunity to the pain as he generously added an entire bottle to his dinner was as mesmerising as it was astonishing to watch. And by the time his bread-mopped plate was collected, he was picking his teeth with the stem of one of the half-dozen chilli peppers that had garnished his curry.

It was awe-inspiring. After a few pints, my own vindaloo-eating antics had always been a favourite party piece. But by the standards of the man who could knock back bottles of West Indian best, I was the lightweight who would be laughed out of the balti house – the man who asked for korma “on the mild side”.

So going head-to-head with a Gurkha in a curry eating challenge would be a rite of passage, a true moment of spice, a battle of nerve and a total test of manhood.

But these were curiously not the thoughts that were going through my mind as I sat waiting for my wish to be granted. It was more the realisation of my unadulterated stupidity for asking one of their chefs to cook me “something hot”.

“We've just done you a few dishes that we would normally eat in the cookhouse every night,” quipped Sgt Sajan Gurung of the Aldershot-based The Queen's Own Gurkha

Logistic Regiment as he rolled out the potent parade of food.

“Back in 2003, we even managed to have a curry once a week while we were on Op Telic 1 in Iraq – obviously everything is served with rice and lentils but we have a choice of meat and also a tomato chutney that is quite hot.”

Quite hot – the words rolled innocuously off the chef's tongue as I spooned meat tentatively onto my plate. Feeling like Robert de Niro about to embark on a game of Russian roulette in *The Deer Hunter*, I was fully loaded up with Khukea ko Masu (chicken curry) and Sangun ko Masu (pork curry). And, under the watchful eye of my host, I was ready to receive the moment of truth.

It was all going well after the first bite. Tucking into the chicken on the edges of the plate was spicy, but not impossible, on the palate. The pork was much the same and after relaxing into my rhythm, I was beginning to think this would be a breeze. I could hear my boasting in the balti house – the evening I took on the Nepalese troops, the Brit who ate the hottest dish in town and won.

Less than a minute later, however, and this curry spectacular was beginning to show its potency. Just as the high altitude of the Himalayas saps the strength of Western explorers, the Gurkha spices quickly began to show their true power as a terrifying wave of extreme heat sent my throat muscles into spasm.

Sgt Gurung and his boss, SSgt Rai Prem, were suitably amused as the first beads of sweat appeared on my forehead. I'd barely nibbled around the edges when I managed to get a forkful of the infamous chutney – and then the fun really began. My mouth was burning with the full, white-hot rage of Lucifer's kitchen.

There was more hilarity as SSgt Prem scooted off to find me some water to douse the fire. A couple of civilian onlookers at Normandy Barracks had joined the spectators, clearly finding the whole episode completely incomprehensible. I dived into the water as it arrived but the drink merely fanned the

flames. My mouth ablaze, I was dabbing at every last uncontaminated morsel of rice, but the spice was spreading, the curry now an inferno that expert firefighter Red Adair would have had trouble extinguishing.

Like Dante's circles of hell, each bite was becoming hotter. And then SSgt Prem had the bright idea of introducing a few green chilli peppers into the mix. It was Sgt Gurung who delivered the payload, announcing that the lads loved them and would dispatch them in handfuls during their evening meal.

My mouth was already on fire and the chilli peppers seemed innocuous, so I had nothing to lose. I took a healthy bite and immediately realised that the knockout punch had been delivered.

Like the uppercut that lands the challenger on the floor, this was the blow that made it impossible to continue the meal. And as I begged for mercy, SSgt Prem told me the chillis were the “milder option”.

Fortunately, I had not disgraced myself. I had, at least, managed to make my way through most of the curry and while my efforts were tame by Gurkha standards, I was told that I had fared “better than most Brits” – praise indeed from the curry masters.

It might have been a borderline fail, but I was elated. This curry was not the standard balti house fare, but the real deal, eaten by some of the toughest soldiers in the world.

Yet, joking aside, tough does not even begin to describe the troops who cooked this meal.

As well as being among the best chefs in the country, these are trained infantrymen who wield the Kukri, as well as their cookery, with style. Courteous, loyal and ferocious, they are a unique breed in the British Army.

And as I leave the canteen having thanked the chefs, I can't help thinking the Gurkhas are a little like the chilli peppers they adore. Green, compact and lethal if you bite off more than you can chew. ■



Chilli master: Despite a brave effort, *Soldier*'s Cliff Caswell met his match in the infernal heat of a traditional Gurkha curry cooked by expert chef Sgt Sajan Gurung (QOGLR)

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'I feel like a rank outsider'

HAVING spent 2008 paying tribute to the Territorial Army for 100 years of loyal service alongside their Regular counterparts, it is a shame that there remains a discriminating corner of Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) – namely promotion.

I am an AGC (SPS) sergeant and was mobilised in 2003 for Op Telic, serving in Iraq before returning to UK. My "tour" was extended and during 22-months' mobilised service I returned to Iraq twice. I was then asked if I was interested in continuing to serve on a FTRS contract, which is due for completion/renewal in 2010.

Although still happy with my work, I'm left with a very bitter pill to swallow. I have been recommended for promotion on every annual report since 2003. Unfortunately, I am away from my parent unit and "out" of the TA "family" and so am never likely to take up a promotion slot in a TA unit, who will logically choose to look after someone that regularly attends training nights.

Surely five years' full-time service and five recommendations for promotion should be held in higher regard than five years of six weekends and two-week camps.

When I approached my TA unit about this problem in 2004 I was told that it was not an issue because there were no staff sergeant posts available, only to then see a regular TA attendee without mobilised or full-time service, and fewer courses under his belt, promoted. Disgusted with this I decided to change units only to see the same thing happen again.

My serving unit are more than happy

PRISE LETTER . . .

for me to be promoted, but are apparently prevented from doing so because there are no slots available in the TA unit.

Why are the Army Personnel Centre (APC) or Chilwell not managing the careers of mobilised personnel to make sure that they do not get overlooked for promotion? The Army appears to be trying to iron out these problems for Regular personnel, so why are the TA so far behind? – *Name and address supplied*.

Maj (Retd) Chris Collinson, SO2 RMAC, responds: Those serving on FTRS make an important contribution and the Army fully recognises this and is taking steps to ensure their service is suitably rewarded. However, all promotion to the rank of staff sergeant, whether Regular or TA, can only occur when there is a vacancy.

DIN 02-159 (2006) is clear about the rules and procedure for promotion while on FTRS. The scheme represents a manpower substitution measure that allows Reservist personnel to serve in Regular gapped posts. Where there are no gaps, there are no opportunities.

FTRS staff are usually employed in the rank of the post. Personnel who don't match the rank may be required to voluntarily revert if the appointment has a lower rank, or alternatively may

be awarded acting or substantive rank if selected for an appointment at a higher grade. The latter would appear to reflect the situation of this particular SNCO and therefore I see no reason why he hasn't applied for a staff sergeant post.

There is no question of a "discriminating corner". The FTRS commitment is an offer of employment which the applicant can accept or decline.

In the case of TA soldiers on FTRS, the parent unit is required to maintain a "watching brief" over the soldier's career to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. This also means that the soldier is subject to TA grading boards for promotion. Where personnel have been awarded acting rank they may be substantively promoted by the APC.

FTRS personnel who don't understand the promotion process should contact their regimental career management officer who will liaise with the APC and can provide advice on a case by case basis.



PS . . .

I'D like to point out to ex-Service personnel that wearing a uniform does not automatically get you a medal.

In the autumn of 1975, 14 Royal Green Jacket Army Cadets were hit by a motor vehicle on the outskirts of Banbury, Oxford. Of the 14, only four made it into the Services. The rest suffered serious mental or physical injuries. These lads have got on with life and do not moan. We can't march on Remembrance Sunday, we can't attend RGJ reunions and we did not get medals. But we did see pure carnage and plenty of blood, only to be told "you were only children." – G Kibblewhite, Banbury, Oxford.

Lunch lottery tests patients

I RECENTLY spent three weeks as an in-patient at a rehabilitation unit in Germany and, as the camp had Pay As You Dine (PAYD) facilities, was required to pay for all meals during my stay.

I checked JSP 754 to ascertain whether those attending rehab were entitled to free food and learned that if a unit is not PAYD all patients being treated there receive free meals. In addition, if the patient usually pays a daily food charge this is stopped for the duration of their time in camp.

As the unit I attended had PAYD, I was directed to the "free feeders" section of JSP 456, which contains a list of those entitled to free feeding and discovered in-patients were not eligible.

Surely this lottery as to whether or not you have to pay for food is unfair. Why is it that soldiers attending rehab at a PAYD unit are disadvantaged financially compared to those at a non-PAYD unit? – *Name and address supplied*.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: As an in-patient at a rehabilitation unit you should not be required to pay for food. I am concerned that there is confusion over your "free feeder" status and shall take steps to have the situation clarified.

In the meantime, you should make a claim on JPA for each meal that you took, at the core meal rate. As authority, you should quote JSP 754, Chap 9, Para 1011.

Mammoth cost of motor mag

As a serving soldier in Germany, I went to the Naafi to buy a car magazine, which had a cover price of £4.20 (approximately €4.78).

Imagine my disgust when I got to the till and was charged €8.4 – a mark-up of €3.62/£3.17!

Foolishly I purchased the magazine rather than returning it to the shelf. When I quizzed Naafi staff over the price they tried to fob me off by blaming shipping costs – even though the title delivers to BFPO addresses at no extra cost.

While a little extra on the cover price is acceptable, please don't rip soldiers off by

doubling the cost Naafi. If you are going to charge more than £3 over the usual price, may I suggest that you employ me to pick them up from the UK. I wouldn't mind a slice of the profits. – *A concerned soldier.*

Lee Coleman, Naafi communications officer, responds: Firstly let me start off by saying I am sorry to hear of your dissatisfaction with our service; we don't like to disappoint any of our customers.

In response to your letter, as a business we recognise the importance of magazines to our British consumers and accept that the prices, particularly in the current

exchange environment, are unpalatable.

We are currently looking at ways we can reduce our costs so that we can bring our magazine prices down to a more acceptable level. We hope you will see the benefits of this in the very near future.

With regards to pricing in general, I can advise you that we have recently reduced our prices on a number of British essential products such as bread and milk by as much as 24 per cent.

While magazines remain a top priority, I hope that the action we have taken has given you some assurances regarding our desire to offer fair pricing.

Fretting over threads

I'VE been trying to get a replacement for my No2 Service Dress for some time now and, due to my chest size, have been told that I am a "special measure".

The clothing store and garrison tailors informed me that as a result of Future Army Dress (FAD) and the introduction of new uniforms, all orders for the old style of Service Dress were cancelled as of September 2008.

The tailors did not have sizing charts for the incoming FAD and could not tell me when the new form of No2 dress will be made available.

This means that I am without a No2 uniform for an unknown period, which has caused some consternation within my chain of command.

Can anyone tell me when FAD will be available to order?

As a special measure it is probably prudent that I get my size requested before the supply chain becomes overwhelmed by demand for the new uniform. – *Sgt B Wall, PSPP-Threats Coord, MoD.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: It is unfortunate that your problem has arisen just as the changeover is being undertaken. A sizing pack is being set up for Main Building and London-based customers early this year.

If your case is still urgent go to your RQMS for a special measure procedure now. If not, go through the sizing routine at the first possible opportunity.

PS . . .

I'D be grateful for some clarification regarding the cross flags specialist badge. I previously served in the R Signals as a radio telegraphist and reached class 1 level. Last year I transferred into the RLC. Am I qualified to wear the badge? – *Cpl M D Palmer, 80 PC Sqn RLC.*

Capt Justin Yates, Corps Adjt RLC, replies: I am unable to provide a definitive answer without knowing your training record. The badge indicates that the wearer has completed a Bowman Advanced Signallers course or Regimental Signaller course at class 1 level, followed by a Bowman conversion course (or one of their predecessors).

Passed test, but can't pass ports

AFTER completing an application process which took just under a year, I recently obtained my British Citizenship.

I was born in South Africa and joined

the British Army in 2004. When I began naturalisation I went to my regimental administration officer and asked if it would be possible to claim back the associated costs of becoming a citizen.

It was explained to me that this would not be possible and I accepted the fact that it was my choice to become a British citizen.

The costs incurred included buying the citizenship text book (£11); paying for the test (£34); Nationality Checking Services (£36); application for naturalisation (£655), and travel to and from the citizenship ceremony (£20 and two days of annual leave).

I didn't mind paying this, but thought that I would be entitled to a passport through the Army system. However, when I approached the unit welfare office I was informed that I had to pay for my passport, as it was my first. It was my understanding that the Army picked up the tab for first-issue passports, and I know that dependants also get their

passports applied for and renewed when they are on overseas assignments.

At the time of writing I have no passport at all. The South African passport became invalid as soon as I became a British Citizen. Could you please advise me on the correct entitlements regarding passports? – *Name and address supplied.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: The tri-Service rules for allowances contained in JSP 752 Chapter 10 Section 11 Miscellaneous Allowances Annex A confirm that passports and visas will be paid at public expense where overseas duty travel is expected within the next six months.

This is the case irrespective of whether the passport is an initial issue or replacement. If your circumstances meet this criteria then I suggest you take this matter up with your unit RAO to secure a refund of the passport costs.

PS . . .

WHILE medals are awarded for taking part in campaigns and for acts of gallantry, they're also issued for reasons such as long service and royal occasions. Not everybody received these latter medals, which has helped to create a feeling of dissatisfaction among some veterans. If a National Defence Medal was awarded then I do not see how it would demean those risking their lives on operations, past or present, as every ribbon tells its own story. – *Mark Iles, ex-Regular.*

Technically true or medic myth?

WRITE in the hope that *Soldier* can help me to get some answers on the future of the Territorial Army's Combat Medical Technicians (CMTs).

I've been told by my unit that CMTs must be civilian paramedics and that those of us who aren't must either attain the necessary qualifications or "ship out" as we will not be allowed to treat casualties without them. Most TA CMTs cannot possibly take time off work to get these qualifications and even if we could, gaining entry into the ambulance service is like finding chicken's teeth.

So, do we re-cap badge? After 11 years as a CMT I cannot believe that there is nothing in place to allow me to either retrain or add to my present qualifications.

I fully understand the need for professional medical personnel, however CMTs have repeatedly proved that we can do this job in an operational role. — **Name and address supplied.**

Col David Morgan-Jones, Head of Cadre Combat Medical Technicians, AMD, responds: Where this rumour has come from is unknown. Currently, and probably for the foreseeable future, there will always be requirement for CMTs without these specialist qualifications.



"Sorry to be rude, but Harry wants to know if you boys are fully qualified paramedics."

Until advised otherwise your position is completely safe and there is no requirement for you to either train as a paramedic or re-cap badge.

This will be re-enforced by the Director

General's policy letters on the Scope of Practice of CMTs and the Employment Training and Administrative Instructions, which are due for publication in the next couple of months.

Terminal shortage of JPA terminals

I WOULD like to complain about the shortage of JPA [Joint Personnel Administration] terminals in Afghanistan on behalf of the Operations Support Group (OS Gp) currently serving on Op Herrick 9.

I realise that change takes time and am conscious that there is probably a myriad of explanations as to why the situation is as it is. My intent is to report the reality, as experienced by the customer.

PS...

I BEG to differ with Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer's reply to a letter regarding the wearing of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) medal. I fear the colonel's dates are incorrect.

He stated that the medal represents a double award because "barring the gap between July 1960 and December 1962, all recipients of the PJM were also awarded a General Service Medal (GSM)".

However, Singapore service dates for the PJM were August 31, 1957 until August 9, 1965. I served from March 1960 until July 1962 in Singapore and am not entitled to a GSM. — Mr L R Danby, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

As an adjutant, I am focussing entirely on the problems of JPA in respect of SJARs [Service Person's Joint Appraisal Report] and OJARs [Officer's Joint Appraisal Report]. The main issues are twofold – there are insufficient terminals available in theatre to support demand and the limit on the number of users at any one time is an unacceptable failure in provision.

The terminals available in Kandahar, Bastion, Lashkar Gah and Musa Qaleh give access only to troops based in those locations; the OS Gp has troops spread across theatre.

Hot and hasty figures suggest that less than 40 per cent of our number are based within easy reach of a terminal.

I will not bore you with how we manage this, but the solution fundamentally undermines the JPA concept that the system's security is password protected rather than by signature.

In some instances, access to JPA is only possible as individuals transit back through Bastion to go on their R&R. When an individual has spent three months living in the wastes of any operational theatre, the last thing they will want to do before flying home is spend time logging onto one of the few JPA terminals available.

Should they finally get access, imagine the frustration of reading an on-screen

message stating the maximum number of users are already logged on and to "try again in 15 minutes".

There are two parties that suffer in all this – adjutants and the report subjects. I feel no pity for the former but must consider the risk to the latter should, for example, board dates be missed. I would welcome comment or solution as, much like the implementation of JPA, I could be missing a trick! — **Capt D Chapman RA, Adjt Helmand OS Gp.**

Maj Paul Tingey, SO2 Infra, Coherence, HQ Land Forces, replies: While the frustration experienced by individuals wishing to conduct self-service administration on operations is understood, the use of JPA in operational locations is limited by the availability of both local IT infrastructures and of robust communication links back to the central JPA system in the UK.

The provision of additional restricted terminals is limited by the network architecture which will not change in the short term. A project is currently being scoped to provide additional restricted terminals in the medium term.

For these reasons PJHQ has directed that there should be no self-service on operations, with HR Administrators carrying out administration by proxy.



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Heat rising over insulation issue

WHILE Defence Estates (DE) are in the process of updating the Service Family Accommodation (SFA) at Blandford Camp, the majority of quarters, including my own, remain untouched.

My main concern at this time of year is that the heating bill rises through the roof. I understand from DE that my property has a ten-year-old, inefficient boiler and 50mm of insulation – nowhere near the 270mm that is the Government building regulation standard. I have been told by my Housing Manager that all loft insulation will be “brought up to the current specification as part of the DE Operations Housing Strategic Facilities Plan”, although dates for my property were not specified.

Having investigated the matter of Energy

Performance Certificates (EPC) on the Government's website, I understand that landlords “need to make an EPC available to prospective tenants from October 1, 2008”. However, my Housing Manager tells me that the MoD has no obligation to provide a EPC. Is this correct?

With energy consumption being at the centre of Government policy and debate, it seems odd that DE are not setting the example. Are SFAs so energy hungry and inefficient that DE are embarrassed to reveal the true extent of the issue? – **Capt W P Taylor, Blandford Camp.**

Nicki Sly, Defence Estates, RAF Brampton, responds: DE Operations Housing is committed to improving the condition of

all SFA, and work to bring properties up to current standards of insulation is part of the ongoing upgrade programmes.

Work is currently under way to identify the worst-insulated properties in order that priority is given to those with the greatest need. Unfortunately DE Ops Housing is not in a position to provide any assurances as to when work will be done on any individual property.

SFA is provided to entitled personnel under a licence to occupy. As there is no tenancy, there is therefore no landlord/tenant relationship. Accordingly there is no regulatory requirement on the MoD to provide occupiers of SFA with an EPC. That said, I can assure you that DE takes energy conservation matters seriously.

Quarter dampens spirits

WHEN I moved to Catterick last summer my family's quarters seemed fine, but now the cold weather has set in so has the damp.

Black mould is spreading around the house and is clearly visible in the hallway, bedroom and bathroom.

The bathroom in particular has been badly hit and the damp is so bad that there is water dripping from the ceiling. It's disgusting and not acceptable that I have to bathe my baby in a mouldy bathroom.

I have rung Modern Housing Solutions time and time again and on each occasion I am told a different reason why nothing is being done. I rang the complaints line and was told that these things take time. How much time do they really need? – **Name and address supplied.**

Nicki Sly, Defence Estates, RAF Brampton, replies: A surveyor has investigated this matter and confirmed that there is no damp at the property. There was, however, condensation and this is attributed to a lack of ventilation and heating issues.



“She says if they can't sort out the damp for her, she might as well cash in on it.”

A heating engineer also attended and checked all radiators, turned on and vented the overhead blowers, and turned the water stat down from 90C to 60C.

The occupant has also been contacted by telephone and advised on how they can combat the problems associated with condensation and how to prevent it.

‘Why can't they just get it right first time?’

IN response to recent *Talkback* letters regarding the cleanliness of housing on handover, the answers provided by Defence Estates and Modern Housing Solutions fail to acknowledge the crux of the problem.

That is to say: why don't their staff take the trouble to do their job properly to ensure that prior to any march-in all remedial work is done and that the property is clean?

It would show a respect for the future tenant which is abundantly lacking at the moment. It is inexcusable to accept that carpets need replacing the week that someone moves in when the house has

just been empty for three months. Of the 16 staff I work with in Aldershot Garrison, all of those in married quarters have had to request remedial work as soon as they were marched in.

When trying to get work arranged it has caused nothing but aggravation, and no one carries out quality control on contractors to ensure that work is carried out to an acceptable standard. This causes more frustration as work has to be done again.

If I treated the tenants in my own house in the same shoddy manner they would either move out or take me to

court. As military tenants can't exercise either option it would appear that the MoD is guilty of abusing its position. By passing responsibility to separate agencies, it provides an opportunity for the organisations to blame each other when something goes wrong, leaving the poor householder as piggy in the middle.

Service personnel wouldn't mind living in old quarters if they were clean, and work was carried out promptly and to an acceptable standard at the first time of asking. Is that too much to ask in the 21st century? – **W01 Brown RM, JTDT, HQ DCLPA.**

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No compensation consolation

AM writing to highlight what I believe to be an anomaly in the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme's (AFCS) Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP) system.

Since being injured in a parachuting accident in April 2007 I have had five major operations, with at least three more to come, on broken limbs. My treatment is ongoing and expected to last for a minimum of a further 18 months, although some of my injuries will be permanently disabling.

Now in my 23rd year of service as a Regular soldier, I am due to face a medical board early this year for discharge.

An AFCS claim was generated shortly after my accident and this has just been finalised. I have been awarded a GIP as compensation for loss of future income. However, as I have completed more than 22 years of service, the day I leave the Army I

will get an Immediate Pension (IP).

The GIP is awarded at a level which pays 25 per cent of its value, and will be abated by 75 per cent of the value of the IP. In real money the GIP of £30,000 (0.741 per cent of my final salary) is reduced to £7,500 and then again by £7,500 (75 per cent of my IP of £10,000), which leaves me with compensation to the tune of £0 per year. The GIP is worthless.

The administrators of the AFCS agree that my injuries qualify for a higher tariff, but interpretation of the criteria is preventing them from awarding a larger sum. Why can the GIP not be added to the IP fund or paid separately? I find it difficult to accept the policy line of "the MoD will not compensate for the same injury twice", as I've earned the IP regardless of my injury. — Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I have tasked my team to deal directly with you to sort out your case. However, you make two points which a wider audience would benefit from learning. The policy of not compensating individuals twice for the same injury is a Government-wide policy and is applied in all walks of life.

Secondly, on the AFCS – the GIP is awarded to compensate for a loss of future earnings and is therefore not calculated until you leave.

The GIP provides an income stream for life for those individuals who are forced, through injury or illness, to leave the Armed Forces early and therefore are unable to either accrue full pension entitlement or have only limited options for civilian employment due to their medical condition.

'Wear kitsch kit? No thank you'

THROUGHOUT their careers, whether long or short, I'd imagine that all soldiers have come across an instance when they've been "encouraged" to purchase a piece of equipment or clothing, be it a corps stable belt, unit T-shirt, GPS or decent bergen.

In the last few years the powers-that-be seem to have got a handle on this and, after consulting with their soldiers, have been procuring better and more suitable kit, ranging in size and value from boots to camelbaks, and weapons to vehicles.

However, what the top brass seem to have lost sight of is the pressure put on young soldiers by the directives dictating what can and can not be worn. We [the writer's unit] have been told that on an upcoming tour there will be a strict in-theatre dress directive. Uniform, unit PT kit or unit tracksuits are the only form of dress to be worn. I completely support this as it looks more professional and saves any wear and tear on our own clothing.

However, to be able to wear anything except full uniform the soldiers must pay



"Still watching the pennies, Jack?"

for it out of their own pocket. The caveat as always is that we don't have to wear these forms of dress, there is an alternative – issue PT kit. But no soldier in their right mind is going to resort to wearing this gear, be it from peer, chain of command or indeed self-induced pressure.

In a time when we need to retain as many quality individuals as possible, let's not go back to the days of telling our soldiers what they must go out and buy in order to obey

the rules. If you want us to wear it, issue it. — Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: I'm heartened that you recognise the need for a uniformed approach to theatre dress.

Your point about issued PT clothing has been recognised and Land Forces recently trialled a new kit with the aim of issuing it to everyone. It was well-received but, like the predicament you find yourself in, the Army must find funds to pay for it.

I hope you have raised this up your own chain of command for without that "complaint" this will simply remain a comment in *Soldier*.

Secondly, I am unaware of the details of your unit PT kit or tracksuit. Many organisations provide a tracksuit at initial training and often subsidise the purchase of T-shirts. There are other options but only if you engage the chain of command with the problem.

Another alternative is for you to wear the issued PT kit – go on, start a trend!

PS...

AS an ex-soldier who received an AFB 108 some 25 years ago, I'd like to correct Maj Maynard. Contrary to his reply to a Service leaver bemoaning the demise of the Red Book, "Seeing red over book deal" (January), the AFB 108 was a hardback booklet and not a "red plastic folder" as stated. The book did however come in a red plastic folder, which has kept my AFB 108 in pristine condition and of which I am very proud. — M Coles, Chepstow.

I MUST take issue with WO2 M J Dobner over his comments regarding ex-Servicemen complaining about lack of recognition for their service (*Talkback*, January). I, like many others, served in the British Army of the Rhine during the Cold War – a very tense time.

While I agree that medals should be awarded for bravery during military campaigns, many Armed Forces personnel who spent time in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan served behind the

front line but were still decorated. During the Cold War we were on constant alert and did many exercises on the border between the east and west – where trouble could have broken out at any time. Royal Air Force pilots flew with their aircraft armed and had many a close shave near the border.

Yes, medals don't make the person and wearing headdress and blazer is an honour in its own right, but we still deserve visual recognition for the fact that we served during a war. — Walter Rimmer, York.



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Neighbourhood watch: Army Families Federation chief executive Julie McCarthy ponders whether a return to estate wardens would ensure that modern military patches like the Matthew and Avon Estate in Tidworth – “clean, safe and in good repair” – were the rule rather than the exception

Picture: Steve Dock

Decline in state of estates

HOW does that old saying go? Isn't it "lies, damn lies and statistics"?

Well the AFF Families' Concerns are statistics that certainly don't lie, and this quarter they have caused quite a stir.

The housing queries coming into AFF accounted for 58 per cent of all issues and of these, repairs and maintenance matters made up 44 per cent. There was a staggering 145 per cent increase in these type of enquiries and we're not talking going from ten complaints to 24, the increase was in the hundreds.

To give Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) their due they took the rise very seriously and, when the majority of issues could be attributed to a particular area, they made immediate plans to tackle the problems. MHS's managing director Seumas Kerr asked me what they could be doing to improve things – and as you can imagine it could have been a long conversation – but at least they are trying to find solutions.

Cultural change programmes, customer handling skills, management spot checks and the introduction of hand held devices for sub-contractors to make jobs more efficient should go some way to improving the service that Army families receive.

But at the end of the day it comes down to money. The MHS contract is worth millions, there's no denying that, but with 49,000 Service Family Accommodation properties to look after on a tight budget it's no surprise that, in some areas, the service leaves something to be desired and no amount of cultural change will alter that.

I would never consider dumping rubbish on my estate rather than driving to the local tip or using the skip available in camp. I pick up whatever my dog deposits during our walks (even though it turns my stomach) and my idea of graffiti is doodling during long MoD meetings.

So why then are the number of complaints to AFF central office and local coordinators regarding "the estate" – fly-tipping, dog fouling, graffiti and general worries about security – on the rise? They increased by 61 per cent in the aforementioned Families Concerns. Why do people think abusing our estates in these ways is acceptable? It certainly makes my job harder when trying to fight for investment in Service housing. But I also wonder if it is a symptom of

the environment that Army families find themselves in?

The most common complaint AFF hears from families is that they never experienced these issues when there was an estate warden on site, so why can't Defence Estates bring them back?

I am torn on this issue. I see what families want – a person who they can contact and who knows their estate well.

‘We're not talking going from ten complaints to 24, the increase was in the hundreds’

But the other side of this argument is that when we had wardens there was greater investment in the general estate; play parks, garages and communal areas hadn't been missed out of the maintenance contract and it was

someone's responsibility to keep it clean, safe and in good repair. Would bringing wardens back fix that? I'm not convinced.

What I do know is that asking for an actual point of contact and expecting the area you live in to be looked after by Defence Estates is not unreasonable, it's a no-brainer. ■



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TEN details have been changed on this picture of 1 WG on a pre-deployment exercise in Norfolk.

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A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the May issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

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January competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Maj J A Harker, KDRT (NW), Fulwood Barracks**. Runners-up **Sjt Thompson, 5 Rifles, Op Telic 13** and **Mr C Carruthers, Dunbar, Eastlothian**, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: Gurkha headdress embellishment; epaulette on left shoulder; red stripe on trousers; breast pocket button; PWO badge on banner; lamp shade; crown on RTR badge; cap badge (bottom right), Para cap badge on beret; flags on QRL badge.



JANUARY'S caption competition (picture below right) provides further evidence of Pay As You Dine's continued unpopularity among *Soldier*'s satirists.

Seemingly held in lower esteem than the nation's politicians, the scheme – and more specifically its portion sizes – took the proverbial bullet for Veterans' Minister Kevan Jones on his *Freeze Frame* debut.

Mr P Clarke did however manage to take a jab at both subjects with "Think yourselves lucky I'm not John Prescott", a double blow which wins him an Army-branded iPod.

But with the lone exception of ex-sapper Charlie Northey, who penned "Smithy, cut it up small and I'll spoon feed him, you know how bad these MPs are at practical tasks", the knives were otherwise out for PAYD.

Setting the tone for the majority of entries was Ian Goodwin-Reeves (150 Recovery Company REME), who wrote: "After PAYD, the troops were introduced to the next



After declaring war on bankers' bonuses, Gordy felt it necessary to significantly bolster his personal protection ahead of his next visit to the capital's Square Mile.

Picture: Cpl Adam Fletcher RAF

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by March 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *From The Front Line*, Hew Pike's anthology of soldiers' letters home.

MoD upgrade . . . knives and forks".

Other offerings which refrained from jumping on the PAYD detractors' bandwagon but still raised a wry smile at *Soldier* HQ were: "The MoD experimental moratorium on dining room cutlery was causing some friction among queuing troops," from Clive Copestake (HQ 2 (SE) Bde) and "New ministers' lesson number four – the best lunches will always be had in Main Building," from Simon Harrison (Trenchard Lines).



Picture: Cpl Rupert Free RLC

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Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gtnet.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880;

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Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the

world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

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Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis support group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline

0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 2360058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

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SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

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169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

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DEFENCE DIARY

Until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story – 16 Air Assault Brigade exhibition. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

March – April 19, 2009: Women War Artists, Imperial War Museum North, Manchester. www.iwm.org.uk/north

Until end March 2009: Women's Royal Army Corps Exhibition. Guildford Museum, Quarry St, Guildford GU1 3SX. Tel: 01483 444750.

SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army

SEARCHLINE

Metal detector Karl Driske has found a WW1 medal awarded to **Pte H MacKie**, of the Royal Highlanders. Karl would like to meet any family members still in the Fife area. Email Karl at kathysorley@mac.com

Eileen Lewis is trying to find her natural father **Patrick Holbrook McCrudden**. In 1942-43 his address was 230 Hospital Street, Birmingham. Her parents were not married, but her father knew of her existence as the Army paid her mother an allowance. Contact Eileen by email mrseileenlewis@yahoo.co.uk

Chrysant Kluckner and her brother from Austria are trying to locate their biological father **Michael Parsons**, born in January 1956, possibly from the Yorkshire area. In 1976 he was in Leutasch-Seefeld, Austria as a cross-country ski trainer. He also served in Sandhofen (Allgau, Germany). The Kluckners do not have any financial interest, they just want to know their biological father. Email c.kluckner@gmx.at

Seeking **Royal Army Medical Corps, Operating Theatre Technicians (OTTs, ODAs, ODPs)**, Regular, Reserve, serving or retired in any area. For details of OTT Reunited contact Ken Hannah at ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk

John Lawrence is searching for anyone who knew his father **Alfred Lawrence** from Bethnal Green, London. He was in the Long Range Desert Group from 1939 to 1947, serving in Italy, Sicily, Egypt and Palestine. He wore a maroon beret. Email john.newks.lawrence@hotmail.co.uk

Dr Carl von Savigny is looking for eye witnesses, as well as their relatives and friends, of the **SS Sebastiano Venier (Jason)** incident of December 9, 1941 for a film documentary. During Rommel's Africa campaign, the Italian vessel left Benghazi, in Libya, carrying 2,000 POWs. The ship was attacked five miles south of Navarino on the Greek Peloponnese, but reached the shore at Point Methoni, near Pilos, with the help of one German engineer. Contact Dr von Savigny, c/o MPR, Prinzregentenstr. 25, D-81679 Munich, Germany or email c.savigny@web.de

Author Christine Rogers would like to hear from members of the Armed Forces and their families who have written poems about their experiences of the Services for an anthology called *Over the Water*. The book is non-profit making and will raise money for SSAFA. Email crissy.ann@yahoo.co.uk or christine.rogers736@mod.uk

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet. Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

March: No presentations. **April:** 21, Weymouth; 22, Bristol; 23, Warminster. **May:** 5, Dundee; 6, Edinburgh, 7, Glasgow; 13, Aberystwyth; 19, Wrexham; 21, Cardiff.

REUNIONS

All Arms Junior Leaders Regiment: Reunion April 3-5, at The Min-y-Mor Hotel, Marine Promenade, Barmouth, Gwynedd LL42 1HW. Phone Richard Abraham on 01442 842951 or 07732 335151 or email richard@peelhouselg.co.uk for details.

Mareth Troop, C Squadron, Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Engineers: 50th reunion for the 1959-1961 intake. April 17-18 at Old Park Barracks, Dover, Kent. Contact Douglas Hamilton-Cox on 01647 252259.

Air Formation Signals Association: Reunion May 8-10, at Stoke-on-Trent. Open to all personnel who served in Air Formation or Air Support Signal units. Enquiries to Chris Collier on 01902 338662.

Royal Engineers: 60th Anniversary of the Freedom of Ripon. May 15-17 inclusive. Further details are available from Kenn Hart by email shortwalker@tiscali.co.uk

South Molton Det 'C' Company: Devon ACF will be 25 years old in May 2009. All former-cadets, adult instructors, friends and supporters are invited to attend a reunion on May 25. For further details, email 25years@smacf.org.uk or visit www.smacf.org.uk

Infantry Boys Bn and Infantry Junior Leaders Bn Association: Memorial dedication weekend June 6-7. Meet at Rugby Club, Park Hill Camp, Oswestry. Contact Ken Nichol, 44 Cefn Road, Wrexham LL13 9NH, email KnthNic@aol.com

Commando Engineers: Reunion June 12-13 at Royal Marine Bks, Chivenor. To enable all personnel to attend and update address database, contact Clare Howard, Reunion Secretary, at 24 Commando Engr Regt, RMB Chivenor, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4AZ, ring 01271 857229 or fax 01271 857827.

Royal Engineers 'Greenlantern' Hameln: Reunion June 25 in Hameln, Germany. Invitation to all those who served in Hameln with the Royal Engineers in the 60s, 70s or 80s. Details from George Bird on 0049 5151 821137 or visit www.greenlatern-hameln.de

40 Army Engr Sp Regt/40 Army Engr Sp Gp (Willich): All those who have served in Willich are invited to a reunion July 11-13, to coincide with the Willich Schutzenfest. Further details from Tam Pearce on 0049 2154 2647 or email letstalk@t-online.de or Tony Hayward TonyH249@aol.com

Queen's Own Buffs: Reunion August 2, in Canterbury. Contact H Delo by phone weekdays only (1000-1600) 01843 842357 or email TheDelos@lidelos.freeserve.co.uk

52 Niagara Battery: Reunion in South Shields on September 5. All serving and ex-members welcome. Contact Dean Branscombe on 07841 128643 or email handymanserv6745@btinternet.com

19 Signal Regiment: Reunion Sep 11-13, at Warwick. Open to all who served in 19 Air Formation Signals from 1943 to 1971 and CAFSO Branch, Far East Air Force. Enquiries to Dennis Isaacs on 01793 762745.

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MOD LINKS

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www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

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www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

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Laura (26), curvy with dark hair and GSOH. Enjoys music, shopping, football (watching), films, going for meals and pubs. Seeking pen pals, any age group. P019

PEN PAL REPLIES:

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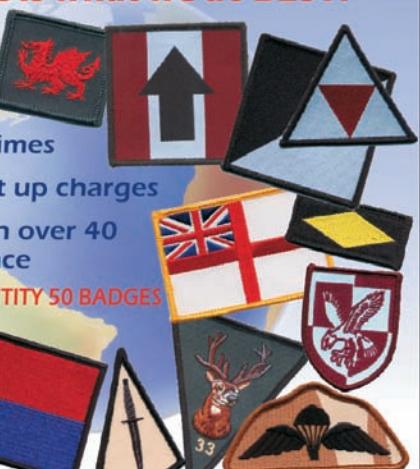


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SPLINTER CELL

Parasitic monster on the loose in survival horror

Movies

M A R C H R E V I E W



Primal fear: British director Toby Wilkins's *Splinter* features a bloodthirsty parasitic monster from the woods that transforms its still-living human victims into deadly hosts



Creature feature

British director brings bloodthirsty parasite to life on the silver screen

Interview: Stephen Tyler

AS firm fans of the horror movie genre, *Soldier*'s already-considerable interest in *Splinter* was further piqued after talking to director Toby Wilkins.

The 36-year-old Brit, who counts *Alien* and *Dawn of the Dead* among his favourite films, is a firm believer in adding equal parts of style and substance to his features and places a strong emphasis on making his movie plots every bit as gripping as their special effects.

But as worthy as his filmmaking ethos is, it was Wilkins's admission that his latest feature will also have audiences cowering behind their seats that had us scrabbling for a copy of the DVD, which is released on March 30.

"Bringing suspense and scares – and gore – to a film like *Splinter* is definitely part of the fun and we created a real rollercoaster-ride of a film," he told

Soldier. "But we also worked really hard to create characters that an audience can experience the film through rather than just watching people get picked off one-by-one."

As undeniably gory as the film is, *Splinter*'s mission to get under the skin of its audience is equally achieved through its tense plot.

Young couple Seth (Paulo Costanzo) and Polly (Jill Wagner) are on a romantic camping holiday in the Oklahoma wilderness, but are forced to pack up and look for a motel after their tent breaks.

Their weekend goes from bad to worse when they are car-jacked and taken hostage by escaped convict Dennis (Shea Whigham) and his drug-addled girlfriend Lacey (Rachel Kerbs).

The group end up at an isolated petrol station where the bloodthirsty parasite lies in wait and forces them to take refuge in the eerily deserted shop.

What follows is a claustrophobic

stand-off punctuated with brief glimpses of the voracious monster who finds increasingly gory ways to kill its victims before using their dismembered bodies as hosts.

Wilkins believes the nature of what scares people has remained the same throughout cinematic history and was happy to tease his audience by not relying too much on the shock-factor of the film's parasitic abomination.

"I do think there has been a period in which cinema has relied too heavily on cutting-edge tools, ignoring the audience's imagination which is more powerful," he said. "For me, *Splinter* was a chance to use a traditional approach to the horror. By doing as much as possible with on-set practical effects, I think it all feels more real."

Wilkins began his movie career making short films, many of which were by his own admission "fairly dark", and it was horror flick *Staring at the Sun* that earned him his big break.



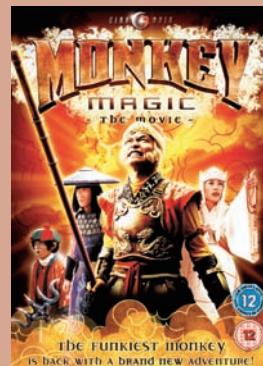
Director Sam Raimi signed Wilkins to his Ghost House Pictures company on the back of the film, and the *Splinter* creator is currently applying his talents to *The Grudge 3*.

Although he now lives in Los Angeles, Wilkins is a proud Brit and his grandfather was a flight lieutenant in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War, piloting Wellington bombers in the North Africa campaign and over Germany up until 1945.

He has also worked with a United States Navy diver on the set of his latest film and hopes to one day use the military as the basis for a feature.

"Before *Splinter* came along I was developing a script which revolved around the crew of a tank stranded on the edge of a war zone," he explained. "It was somewhere between thriller and psychological horror, but it was going to follow those soldiers, the camaraderie and discipline involved and how those things would be tested under extraordinary circumstances."

"It could make for a very rich and interesting look at a very specific slice of military culture that I don't think has been explored in a horror film yet. I hope to be able to revisit that project at some point in the future." ■



Monkey Magic, out to own on DVD now

IT was bound to happen – a remake of 1970s cult hit *Monkey*. Whether reacquainting yourself or discovering *Monkey* for the first time, what you see is what you get – unashamed overacting with a large helping of **Bruce Lee** screams and fight sounds. I'm not sure whether the subtitles work and suitably hammed up lip-synching – like that seen in the original series – would have been better. One to watch between stags on the main gate and if this doesn't become a computer game I'll eat my beret.

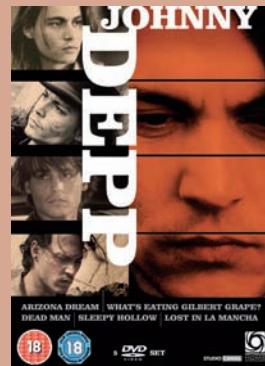
Capt Neil Johnson, 9 AAC



Blood Brothers, out to own on DVD on March 23

A STORY of romance and innocence which is corrupted by the lure of the city. Set in 1930s Shanghai, *Blood Brothers* captivates with the tale of three friends, two of them brothers. With elements of crime, love and compassion, *Blood Brothers* delivers it all, coupled with some shocking gun fight scenes that will shake the audience. **John Woo** and **Terence Chang** produce this gripping and well-shot examination of the effect the city eventually has on each of the film's characters.

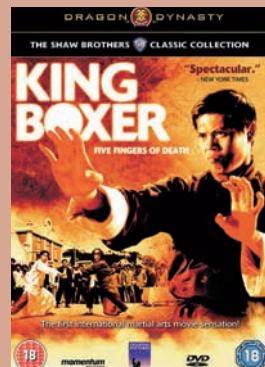
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The Johnny Depp Collection, out to own on DVD now

FEATURING *Arizona Dream*, *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Dead Man* and *Lost in La Mancha*, *The Collection* is a thorough compendium of some of **Depp's** best films in which he stars alongside a host of renowned actors and actresses including **Leonardo Di Caprio** and **Christina Ricci**. Chances are you haven't seen some of Depp's earlier films, so this is a good way to own five of his best. A great value box-set that any fan or film lover should own.

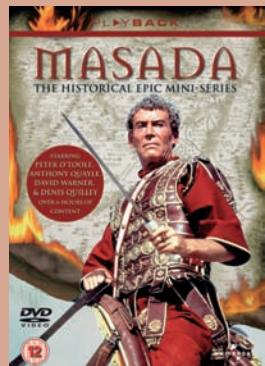
LCpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps



King Boxer, out to own on DVD on March 23

ORIGINALLY released in 1973, this is the first martial arts film to be successful in Europe and America and laid the groundwork for the Kung Fu genre which made stars of **Bruce Lee** and many others. *King Boxer* stars **Lo Lieh** as Chao, a student who enrolls at a Kung Fu school to study under a legendary master and help battle against a sinister group run by the vicious Meng Dung Shan. Featuring love interests, epic fights and evil rivals, this is a cracking film with slick action and a fast-paced narrative.

LCpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps



Masada, out to own on DVD now

THIS classic US mini-series from the early 1980s tells the story of a Roman general's attempts to defeat a band of Jewish zealots holed up in a near-impregnable mountain fortress called Masada. The politics of the Roman Empire are well depicted as is the hardship of fighting wars a long way from home. Perhaps most impressive is the cast: **Peter O'Toole** as the general who has tired of battle, **Peter Strauss** as the reluctant leader of the Jews and plenty of familiar British actors in support. This comes highly recommended.

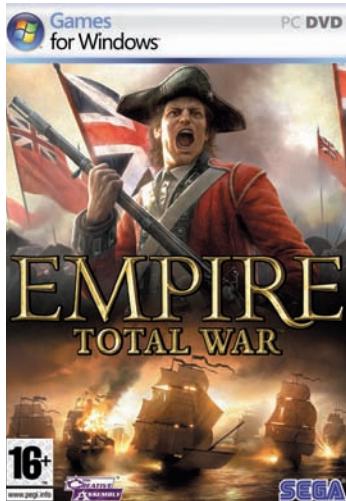
Dan King, MoD



Smother, out to own on DVD on March 16

NOAH Cooper has been fired from his physiotherapist position and has taken a crummy job as a carpet salesman. He also has to handle his recently estranged mother – who promises he won't even know she is there – and five dogs coming to stay. Mum's erratic behaviour, including taking a job at the same salesroom, does nothing to reduce Noah's stress levels, and in turn dampens his desire to start a family with **Liv Tyler**. A comfortably-paced comedy that reminded me that if my mother moves in, I am definitely moving out.

Capt Neil Johnson, 9 AAC



Global conquest: Sega's latest *Total War* outing focuses on the volatile and violent period of the 18th Century



Empire building

Imperial powers go to war as players battle to create a new world order

Preview: Cliff Caswell

IT is remembered by historians as the era of gentlemanly warfare, when battles were conducted in the open and fighting involved men marching towards each other.

Soldiers of the 18th Century wore colourful uniforms – red in the case of the Brits to hide their blood – and honour was the order of the day. By all accounts, romantics would have us believe that fighting back then was an altogether more sporting affair.

But when a team from developer Creative Assembly started work four years ago on making a war game about the period for Sega, they quickly discovered fighting in the 1700s was gruesome, brutal and exacted a dreadful toll on those who took part.

Horrible close quarter combat and exposed fighting meant poor Tommy Atkins was often spoilt for choice for painful ways to die. In *Empire: Total War*, players are given an insight into

his unfortunate lot, and the opportunity to try their hand at commanding him through the battles of the age.

“Despite it being an era of ‘gentlemanly’ warfare, the 18th Century was a period of horrible weapons that did brutal damage to limbs and life,” said Mark O’Connell, community manager at Creative Assembly. “The bravery required by troops who had to march into cannon fire while maintaining formation was incredible.

“In the game, riflemen can jam a bayonet in their gun to engage in melee combat while deployable items include the fougasse – an improvised mine – and the cheveux-de-frise, a spiked log that gives cavalry nightmares.”

The horrifying recreation of such terrible armaments is testament to the level of detail in *Empire*, which has been underpinned by some solid historical research. As well as looking at the kit of the era, O’Connell revealed that the development team had focused on the lives and aspirations of soldiers.

“We referenced journals and documents written by generals and admirals of the 1700s as well as studying accounts from the troops on the field to recreate their strategies and mindset in battle,” he said. “We also licensed original ship plans from the British Maritime Museum to build the models in the game.

“Our team are actually a very knowledgeable bunch – four of our eight designers collectively possess more than 80 years of historical research experience and their desks are stacked up with more books than a small library,” he added with a smile.

Soldier sampled a late-build incarnation of *Empire*, starting by assuming command of the colonist army in the Battle of Bunker Hill during the American War of Independence and culminating in a naval skirmish. All the indications are that the finished version will be an exceptional war game.

Players command both the political and military campaigns of their imperial



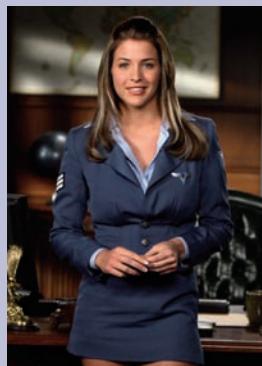
power, choosing their allies and trade partners and building up communities. But the most impressive aspect of the game is undoubtedly the battles, which are rendered in extraordinary detail.

As well as deploying weapons and tactics to best effect, commanders must also take into account the morale of their soldiers. Get them mown down by cavalry, bowled over by cannon fire or slotted by an advancing infantry column and they are less likely to fight with all their spirit. Successfully dishing it out to the enemy, on the other hand, makes them more operationally effective.

Issuing orders to units is simple, and players can zoom in and out to focus on specific encounters at differing levels of detail or to see the big picture.

Empire delivers on all fronts and should please both the purists of military history as well as those with even a passing interest in war game strategy. And it has certainly been a labour of love for the Creative Assembly team.

"The 18th Century was an age of imperialism and genuine exploration, with huge armed ships sailing to all four corners of the world," said O'Connell. "It was a period of change and dynamism in history and warfare." ■



Red Alert 3: Uprising, PC

AN all-star cast topped by actress, model and former *Soldier* cover star **Gemma Atkinson** (pictured) returns for the latest instalment of *Command & Conquer* mayhem. *Uprising*, which is available as a digital download this month, provides four new mini-campaigns and the opportunity to unlock powerful extra units in the Commander's Challenge mode. *Red Alert* set the standard for real-time strategy games in the mid-1990s and the latest title is another strong contender. *Uprising* should please fans of the series looking for a new challenge.



Prince of Persia Epilogue, Xbox 360 & PS3

FRENCH publisher Ubisoft has released a new series of downloads for its acclaimed *Prince of Persia* title. *Epilogue*, which was due for release as this issue went to press, provides players with a host of additional features, including a new region to explore in the shape of an underground palace. Extra combat abilities and powers are also on offer, extending the life of the title. *Prince of Persia* plays like a dream and has the graphics and soundtrack to match. The *Epilogue* downloads can only enhance the reputation of this excellent title.



Halo Wars, Xbox 360

THE next battle in mankind's conflict with the mysterious alien Covenant arrives this month, and *Halo Wars* should be worth a look if previous games in the series are anything to go by. With a storyline set 20 years before the era of the original first-person shooter, the latest title is a strategy outing that has been custom built for the Xbox 360. Despite the promise, it will be interesting to see how *Halo Wars* stacks up against the likes of Ubisoft's *EndWar*, which was launched late last year and raised the bar for the real-time console strategy genre with a highly successful voice control system.



Street Fighter IV, Xbox 360 & PS3

CHILDREN of the 1990s will be delighted to know that the latest incarnation of the *Street Fighter* series more than lives up to its fearsome reputation. Classic characters including the sultry-but-deadly Chun Li, karate-master Ryu and stretchy-armed yoga fanatic Dhalsim join a cast of more than 20 fighters. Gameplay is as swift as ever before, but button-bashers beware – the only way to beat the cream of the competition is to learn how to pull off each character's combination moves. As fun as it is to battle through on your own, *Street Fighter IV* comes alive in its multiplayer modes.



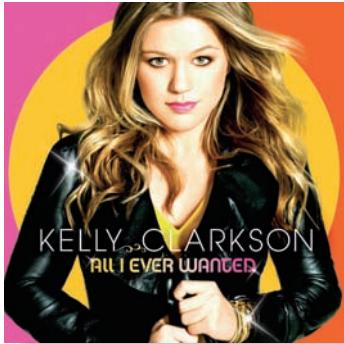
The Godfather II, Xbox 360, PS3 & PC

POISED for release as this issue went to press, *The Godfather II* promises more of the action that made the original 2006 game such a hit. Set in the 1960s and against the backdrop of Florida, Cuba and New York, players are tasked with building up their families through the seedy activities of crime and extortion. Additional features in the latest title include a greater emphasis on managing your empire, an improved combat system and the ability to hire specialists to carry out your dirty work for you. Watch this space for a full review.



Mega Drive Ultimate Collection, Xbox 360

THE games that dominated at the height of the 16-bit console era are well represented in this comprehensive collection from Sega. Many of these titles remain highly playable despite the passing of nearly 20 years and classics such as *Golden Axe*, *Streets of Rage*, *Shinobi* and *Ecco the Dolphin* are as impressive now as the day they were released. Retro collections always tend to be a hit and miss affair as the nostalgia of games past is often far better than reality. The Sega Mega Drive, however, has truly stood the test of time.



Miss Independent: Kelly Clarkson has sold more than 56 million records worldwide and returns with her fourth album, which is available from March 9



America's idol

Multi-platinum selling talent show queen returns to the UK charts

WHEN Kelly Brianne Clarkson won the first season of US television talent show *American Idol*, no one could have imagined the international success that lay ahead for the talented Texan.

The hazel-eyed beauty captured the nation's hearts from the moment she appeared on screens belting out Madonna's 80s hit *Express Yourself* and went on to win the competition with almost 60 per cent of the vote.

And now the *Miss Independent* singer, who has sold more than 56 million albums and established herself as a world-class act, is back with her fourth record *All I Ever Wanted*.

Despite this success it appears the Grammy Award-winner has her feet firmly on the ground, but the songstress is quick to explain that her pleasant nature doesn't mean she's a walkover.

"Everybody always says that I'm the girl-next-door, which makes me think that you all must have a lot of weird next-door neighbours.

"I'm very friendly, but I would hardly say that I'm that cookie-cutter," explained Clarkson, who has recently branched into acting.

Best known for her songs about dysfunctional relationships, most pointedly the powerful and emotive *Since U Been Gone*, the singer/song-writer explained that sad lyrics simply seem to sound better.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," said the 26-year-old. "I'm really a happy person, but I do tend to write a lot of depressing songs."

"That's because they make for better stories and a more passionate feeling in the song."

Despite this, the latest single *My Life Would Suck Without You* – which recently made history in the US with the fastest climb to the number one spot – is more upbeat and steers clear of any attacks on the male of the species.

"We made it a non-boy-bashing song, as opposed to the songs I usually do," she added.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes, however, is that the most successful female artist in American Top 40 history has returned with a sexier image.

But for those under the impression that Clarkson is comfortable with her new-found status – which has seen her included on VH1's list of ten sexiest women of the new millennium – they would be very much mistaken.

"I'm very flattered that people have called me sexy, but it makes me feel awkward. That is me in that picture on the front cover. Photo-shopped," said the refreshingly modest star.

She added: "I love dressing up and doing red carpet every once in a while, but I am very much a jeans and flannel kind of girl. Even when I date people I'm shy with most things, so it's all a little embarrassing for me."

With all her global success it would be understandable if Clarkson was ready to ditch her *American Idol* tag. Instead she is gracious about the television show which catapulted her to stardom.



"Personally, I think I'll always be entwined with the whole *Idol* thing because it was such a great experience for me.

"It was a sharp learning curve and I'm proud of everything I achieved. It's just such a different show now to what it was when I was on it," she explained.

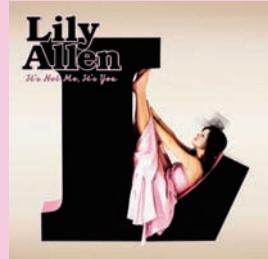
The star, who is a big fan of fellow pop princesses Katy Perry and Pink, is keen to get on the road and start performing.

"Touring is the favourite part of my job, and I love performing live," said Clarkson. But she admits this dedication to her career can cause problems in her personal life.

"With everyone I date, they see that I love my job like it's top priority, so I think I'm a horrible girlfriend to have," said the singer, adding that she is completely honest about the fact her work is so important to her.

Regardless of her relationship woes the star, whose rise to fame was borne from a singing competition that by her own admission she didn't even know was a TV show until the third audition, has at least proved to the world that she has talent. ■

To join the ranks of our reviews team (books, movies, games, music) email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk



It's Not Me, It's You (Lily Allen)

MISS Allen returns on the back of the debut album that practically redefined the genre in maverick female upstarts. On this offering her lyrics and delivery generally have an air of maturity, almost world-weariness, but there are still trademark whimsical lines and bum notes. She makes a concerted effort to distance herself from the previous album with sounds that replace the gimmicky vibes with dancier rhythms, which are more contemporary. I reckon this sounds like an album for the time. If Lily Allen is your flavour buy it now before the shelf life expires.

Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC



Annie Lennox Collection (Annie Lennox)

SEMINAL artist **Annie Lennox** has been taking a break from her humanitarian efforts to release her greatest hits collection. From a successful career spanning decades, this offering includes many of the timeless classics that made her one of the most respected female British artists in pop music history. In addition to the familiar chart toppers, also included are two new recordings; *Pattern Of My Life*, written by **Keane's** frontman Tom Chaplin and a cover of **Ash's** 2001 rocker, *Shining Light*. Fan or not, with so many hits on one disc, you can't go far wrong.

Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC



Rockwell (Anni Rossi)

ROCKWELL is the debut album from 23-year-old **Anni Rossi**. As a classically trained violist since the age of three, she uses her viola throughout. However, this is no classical album – think **Joni Mitchell** mixed with the vocal inflections of **Bjork**. Rossi performs a beautiful rendition of **Ace of Base's** *Living in Danger* that bears no resemblance, thankfully, to the original. My favourite track has to be the completely random *Ecology* – which initially sounds like **Crystal Waters**' *Gypsy Woman* before launching into gentle viola plucking while Rossi describes the manoeuvres of a swimming caterpillar.

Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



Amor Vincit Omnia (Pure Reason Revolution)

THREE years after their debut hit the streets, **Pure Reason Revolution** have released their second album *Amor Vincit Omnia*, an intriguing mix of rock riffs, electronica and sublime vocals which will appeal to most musical tastes. The first track *Les Mahleurs* starts the ball rolling in fine style, a five-minute, fun-filled romp showcasing precisely what PRR are all about. The rest of the album unerringly carries on the motion. If they are given some mainstream airplay and their latest tour is successful this could be a good year for the up-and-coming band.

SSgt Mo Morris, 3 LSR, RLC



The Fray (The Fray)

THE four-piece hailing from Denver, Colorado have returned with their second album – **The Fray**. However, The Grammy Award-nominated band's latest offering has been met with mixed reviews. The fact that the quartet couldn't pick a name for the album from one of their songs sums up the whole record. It's not good, it's not bad, it's just indifferent. It's the kind of thing you'd play on a Sunday afternoon while doing the washing up, definitely not in the car, while operating machinery or before a big night out. Bland, dull and uninspiring – their platinum selling hit *How To Save a Life* is about as good as this band gets.



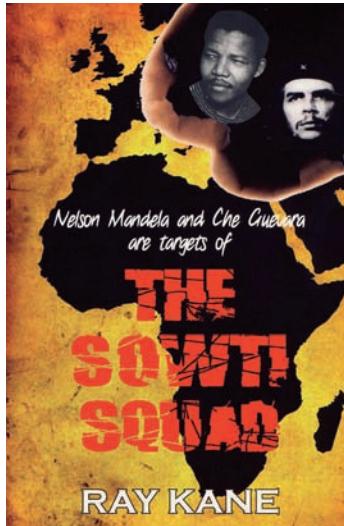
Underneath the Owl (Riverboat Gamblers)

SOME bands are better suited to the recording studio and others are more at home when performing live. The latter is where the **Riverboat Gamblers** earn their bread and butter. This punk-rock five-piece from Texas are the epitome of skater-boy-rock and from the opening track *Dissdissdisskisskisskiss* you are taken on a merry-go-round. There are times when you are permitted a moment of air – *Robots May Break Your Heart* is tame in comparison to the other tracks. If you're still unsure then think **Stiff Little Fingers** and **Blink 182**, and you'll know what I mean.

Ray Kalaker, ex-RETDU

Books

MARCH REVIEW



Out of Africa: Cuba's revolutionary hero Che Guevara (currently being played on the silver screen by Benicio Del Toro in *Che – Part One/Part Two*) is the target of an assassination plot in the debut novel of former officer Ray Kane



African alliance

Recollections of Rainbow Nation influence former British officer's book

The Sowti Squad by Ray Kane
(www.thesowtisquad.com, paperback, £7.99).

Review: Capt David Greaves REME

AS RAY Kane hitch-hiked through Africa on his way to commission into the British Army, he never expected to be mistaken for a mercenary by the Sudanese authorities. He was. And the officer-turned-writer's subsequent deportation is just one of the many experiences that influenced his debut novel.

Set on the post-colonial African continent, *The Sowti Squad* is an action-packed tale of profit-seeking mercenaries recruited, trained and paid for by the South African Government.

The bloody and brutal initiation of these soldiers of fortune sets in motion a chain of events that sees them tasked by the CIA to kill communist revolutionary Che Guevara, before returning to South Africa and attempting to spring Nelson Mandela

from incarceration on Robben Island.

Mercenaries were very much a part of the landscape in Africa during the 1960s and Kane, who completed a short-service commission in The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment after a brief spell in the South African Police Service, remembers the period well.

"At that time there were a lot of opportunities for someone wanting to get into that line of work," the novelist told *Soldier*. "You could leave the South African police and be training with mercenaries in a very short period of time. Plenty of people did."

Kane's own time in a police uniform provides much of the background to his book, with the novel's title being just one of the many personal memories he has committed to print.

"Sowti was something you were called if you were white but not an Afrikaner," the former British Army officer remembered.

"It was meant as a derogatory term, but like most of these things you ended

up wearing it like a badge of honour because it set you apart."

In a case of art imitating real life, this sentiment is seized upon by one of *The Sowti Squad*'s main protagonists, Oregon O'Connor, who applauds the adoption of the name for the small band of highly irregular soldiers.

O'Connor, an American, is just one disparate individual in the eclectic group assembled by Kane.

"The idea that one particular type of person makes a good soldier is nonsense," explained the author, who spent the bulk of his British Army career stationed in Germany and later served as an officer in The Desert Regiment of the Omani Army.

"The sowti squad is made up of a host of different nationalities, all with different priorities and persuasions, brought towards one common goal – making money through mayhem. They soon come to realise that nobody loves a mercenary, other than his mates."

The proxy Cold War battles fought



WITHOUT PREJUDICE

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF NATIONS IN CONFLICT

DAVID L. SCHOLES

Without Prejudice by David Scholes

A RARE and therefore valuable contribution to Iraq and Afghanistan-themed literature from a TA soldier-turned-engineering contractor. While the highlights are provided by tales of training, mobilisation and deployment, the book's focus is a critique of government policy and military action. Unfortunately, it draws heavily from existing sources and offers no new insights. Military readers will spot many flaws in the analysis and detail. Consistent errors in the use of Army terminology are disappointing from a military author.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

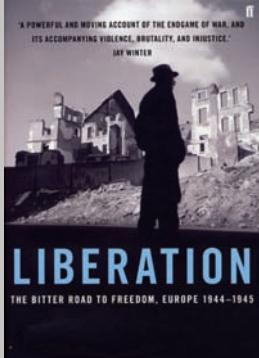
by east and west in post-colonial Africa provide a very real battleground for Kane's fictional band of brothers. The African bush is an arena that has generally been by-passed by modern authors and *The Sowti Squad* does something to redress the balance by telling the story of the violence and suffering that was endured by the continent and its people during the Cold War.

Kane draws attention back to a time when much of the current state of Africa was decided and admits his driving force for doing so was his love for "the ordinary, working people of Africa".

His passion makes for an impressive literary debut. Kane writes of the violence meted out and experienced by the squad with such graphic detail that it is impossible not to keep turning the book's pages. This reviewer will certainly be among the first in the queue to buy the three follow-up titles planned by this imaginative and exciting new author.

● Personnel on Ops Telic/Herrick can order the book from www.thesowtisquad.com for the special price of £6 (with £1 going to Help For Heroes). ■

To join the ranks of our reviews team (books, movies, games, music) email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Liberation by William Hitchcock

EXPLORING the liberation of Europe from a hitherto ignored perspective – that of the liberated – and using first-hand accounts, this book paints a less than rosy picture of what the Allied victory meant for the thousands of civilians living there. In many cases they were worse off than under the Nazis, with death, destruction, destitution and starvation quickly following on the heels of freedom. A readable and informative book that provides a potted history of the Allied march through occupied Europe.

Maj Jonathan Craig, PWRR

16 AIR ASSAULT BRIGADE

BRITAIN'S RAPID REACTION FORCE

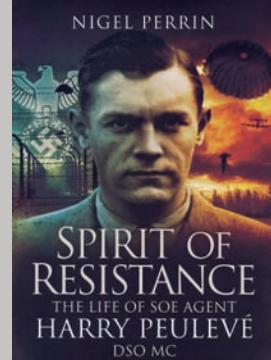
TIM RIPLEY



16 Air Assault Brigade by Tim Ripley

SINCE its formation in 1999, 16 Air Assault Brigade has played a leading role in the majority of conflicts involving the British Army. Lavishly illustrated with more than 200 colour photographs and maps, the book details ops in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq. **Ripley** has made the most of unrestricted access to the brigade and its commanders by producing an unrivalled insight into the rapid reaction force. Without doubt the most impressive open source book I've seen on an existing formation.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



Spirit of Resistance by Nigel Perrin

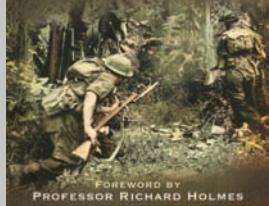
THE story of Special Operations Executive agent Harry Peulevè is both interesting and at times incredible and the author has done a good job of telling the tale. The book weaves a moving account of the agent's life from childhood to capture and beyond. However, one cannot help but notice that this appears to be another Pen and Sword title for which it is difficult to imagine a substantial readership. A niche book that may appeal to a minority but will have little interest for the majority.

Maj Neil Powell, AGC

FIGHTING THROUGH TO KOHIMA

A MEMOIR OF WAR IN INDIA & BURMA

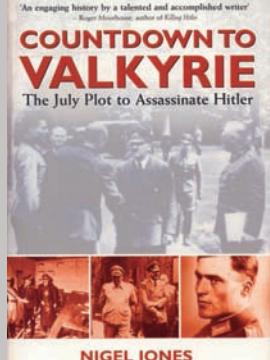
MICHAEL LOWRY



Fighting through to Kohima by Michael Lowry

A VERY personal memoir of a former officer in The Queen's Royal Regiment (a forerunner to PWRR), this title vividly brings to life the historically significant experiences of the author's unit; from action in Pakistan to victory against the Japanese in Burma under the command of Viscount Slim. **Lowry** makes good use of letters and diary entries from the period to flesh out his account. Those with a little prior knowledge of the Far East campaigns of the Second World War will find this a great read.

**LCpl Chris MacCallum,
Int Corps**



Countdown to Valkyrie by Nigel Jones

IN addition to Col Claus von Stauffenberg's attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler on July 20, 1944, *Countdown to Valkyrie* documents other lesser-known plots by the German resistance movement to take the Fuhrer's life. The conspirators' stories are followed from their decisions to join the resistance through to the usually brutal ends they met at the hands of the Nazis. **Jones** delivers this account in an interesting and easy to read way without getting bogged down in too much detail. A book that will keep your interest from start to finish.

Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH

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SOLDIER SPORT



Blockbusters
Soldiers star in
Asian epic taking
Army by storm

Kings of kabaddi: Hoping to make an impression on the international stage are (clockwise from front) Sgt Scott Burrell (APTC), SSgt John Craig (APTC) and SSgt Kev Haley (APTC)

Picture: Graeme Main

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

ANY lingering doubts about kabaddi's validity as a serious sport were expelled just seconds into the Army's recent match against an England representative side.

With the crowd at Aldershot's Army School of Physical Training still settling into their seats, SSgt John Craig (APTC) crossed into enemy territory to attempt to tag one of the seven national team athletes on the court.

The senior soldier got his man and turned to run back into his own half, but his escape was unceremoniously ended as he was tackled to the ground before disappearing under the immense weight of the opposition.

The pace, power and strategy on show in the opening moments was typical of the athletic ability demonstrated throughout the Army's two matches and although both bouts ended in defeat, team captain Sgt Scott Burrell (APTC) was pleased with his side's effort.

"I always go out hoping for a win, but even though we lost we did a lot better than we perhaps thought we would," Sgt Burrell told *SoldierSport*. "We were up against some very skilful players who have represented England and it has been useful for us to see where our strengths and weaknesses lie.

"It can be difficult at first because if you haven't been exposed to the sport you are not going to be as quick at reading situations and applying pressure. There is no doubt that our major strength is our defence. We are solid and work as a team and that has shown today."

Traditionally big business in its native India, kabaddi is quickly attracting new fans across the globe thanks to its fast-paced action, big hits and ease of play.

International teams are springing up throughout Europe and it was only February's inclement British weather that stopped the Italian squad taking part at Aldershot.

Luckily for the Army, England team manager Ashok Das has close ties with the Service and was happy for his players to step in.

Das was responsible for introducing kabaddi to the military in 2004 after realising that a lot of the attributes needed to succeed at the sport are ingrained in Britain's professional soldiers.

"I originally approached the Army and asked if they were interested in trying kabaddi," said Das. "I sent a DVD to show the rules and the history of the sport and to also show that kabaddi uses a lot of the same skills that soldiers use in the battlefield.

"The Army has done very well here. They are playing against top players who have represented England and were only four points behind them in the first game."

Despite being in its relative infancy, the Army kabaddi team has already made a name for itself internationally. Several players joined up with the national squad for a tournament in Italy in 2007 and the Service side also toured India in the same year, taking on several experienced teams in front of five-figure crowds.

Burrell was a dedicated rugby player from a young age and it was his passion for getting stuck in that drew him to the Indian sport.

The NCO believes that the experience of competing against kabaddi's top players has helped galvanise his squad's growing reputation and he hopes more soldiers will get involved in the future.

"At the top level, players can get in and out very

quickly and that makes all the difference. You can't help but learn from it," he said. "I have played with a lot of the guys on the England team so I know how good they are and it's helpful for us to play against them.

"This is a sport that any squaddie can embrace. It's got aggression, tactics, teamwork – everything that soldiers are trained to have. I've always been involved in contact sports and kabaddi sounded like a good challenge.

"I've played rugby from a young age and I found kabaddi very easy to pick up, although it is hard to stop myself from trying to rugby tackle people. Because you defend in chains it's not effective to try a tackle like that."

With kabaddi scheduled to be a demonstration sport at next year's Commonwealth Games in Delhi, there is every chance that the British Army's contingent could find themselves competing on the global stage.

Away from the court, Das also hopes that the sport will forge new links between the Armed Forces and Britain's Asian communities.

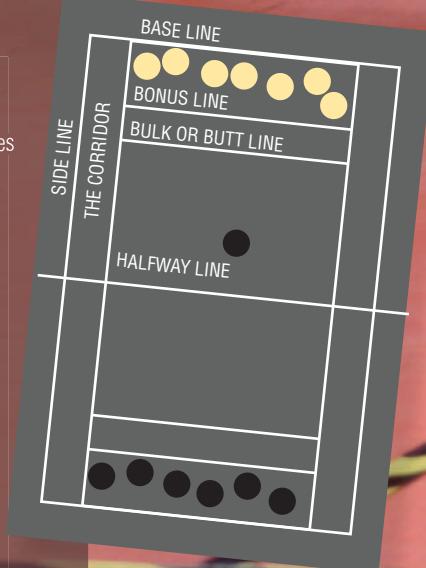
"Kabaddi is good for the Army as a sport and as a means of integration," said the England Kabaddi Federation president. "It is very popular with a lot of communities and by playing it, the Army can get closer to a lot of people.

"It is also very cheap. There is no expensive equipment like you need for cricket or hockey and it is also the only sport where you do yoga as you play.

"Ultimately for England, our wish is to become world champions. India are a very strong team but I believe we have a chance." ■

THE RULES

- Teams contain 12 players with seven on the court at any time
- Matches are made up of two 20-minute halves
- The attacking team sends a raider into the opposition half with the aim of tagging as many opposition players as possible before returning to his own area
- Raiders have 30 seconds for each attack and have to hold their breath throughout by chanting "kabaddi" repeatedly
- Defenders must form a chain – players breaking the link are sent off
- If the raider is wrestled to the ground before returning to his half, he is out and the defending team scores a point. If he makes it back, the attacking team gets the point and any tagged players are sent off





All wrapped up: SSgt John Craig (APTC) shows no mercy in tackling an England kabaddi squad player to the floor during the Army's recent demonstration of the sport at Aldershot

TAG TEAM

Army athletes lead the way as Indian favourite kabaddi stakes its claim to a place in Britain's sporting set-up



FACT FILE



LEWIS MOODY

Age 30

Caps 53

Club Leicester
Tigers

Position Flanker

Did you know...

Extreme sports fan Moody enjoys wakeboarding and ice driving

In the Mood

World Cup-winning Mad Dog backs Britain's front-liners

Interview: Stephen Tyler

WITH the clock ticking ever closer towards the end of extra time in 2003's tense Rugby World Cup final, millions of English eyes focused on Johnny Wilkinson as he launched a last-gasp drop goal attempt at the Australian posts.

As had been the case throughout the tournament, the Newcastle Falcons man's aim did not falter. The ball sailed over for the winning three points and Wilkinson was widely proclaimed as the star of his country's first major team sport success for nearly 40 years.

But as true as the kick was, the fly-half would never have had the chance to unleash the effort had it not been for the power and determination of flanker Lewis Moody.

On as a substitute for Richard Hill, Moody's immense leap at the back of the line-out secured possession for England and started the well-

rehearsed phase of play which ended with Wilkinson's successful kick.

"It was such a tense, close match between us and the Aussies but I always felt we had the upper hand," Moody told *SoldierSport*. "As soon as I stepped off the bench and on to the field I knew I had to make my mark on the game, but even in the final minutes of extra time there was nothing between us in the scoreline."

"All the players knew exactly what we had to do. We'd practised these sorts of plays a hundred times in preparation for the tournament, but the pressure was still on."

"As I won the line-out I knew we were in the exact position for Wilko to kick a drop goal and as I watched the ball go through the posts I just felt this huge rush – there's nothing that can compare to it."

"All those years of hard work and training had come together in one moment and I will never forget it for as long as I live."



Safe hands: Lewis Moody passes under pressure from Australia's George Gregan at the 2007 Rugby World Cup

Picture: Getty Images

Moody's journey from promising newcomer to England regular hit the fast-lane after the Ascot-born player made his international debut against Canada in June 2001.

With first-choice stars Neil Back and Richard Hill Down Under with the British and Irish Lions, Moody won three caps on a tour of North America and scored his first England try against the USA in San Francisco.

With his star in the ascendancy, Moody even managed to dislodge friend-of-the-Forces and former *Soldier* interviewee Laurence Dallaglio from the national team's starting line-up in the 2002/03 season, scoring a try against New Zealand before a series of injuries kept him out of action until the World Cup warm-up games.

Despite his distinguished career on the playing field, Moody admits that he would have been just as happy had he followed his alternative aspiration and joined the British Army.

"Had my rugby career not taken off, going into the Army would have been the only option for me," he said.

"Going through school I had a real interest in joining and would have definitely pursued this avenue had I not

become a professional rugby player.

"I really admire how dedicated the British Forces are to our country and this is how I commit to my rugby. It's my life – I eat, dream and sleep it in the same way the Army guys must have to. The lifestyle would have suited how I live – train hard, work hard. Simple."

Weighing in at more than 16-and-a-half stone and standing six feet and four inches tall, Moody's presence on the pitch is matched by a do-or-die playing style which often sees him taking big hits in the front-line of matches.

The Leicester Tigers man's reckless attitude to personal safety has earned him the nickname Mad Dog, although his moniker with his teammates is more mundane.

"I've no idea [where the name Mad Dog came from]," he laughed. "To be honest I think it came from the press, but it's not a nickname I ever get called around the club unless somebody is taking the mick out of me, which they find highly amusing. Around the club I'm Moodoss."

Since bursting onto the scene at the tender age of 18, Moody has taken more than his fair share of knocks.

But the all-action man's military-style dedication to training has helped him

I know how it feels to be away from home, but it's appreciated

SPORT SHORTS

LEWIS Moody will join tens of thousands of fans at the Bournemouth Sevens International Rugby and Music Festival when the event hits the south coast this May Bank Holiday.

After a successful inauguration in 2008, this year's tournament has attracted 132 teams, making it the largest sevens festival in world rugby.

Moody's former England and Leicester Tigers teammate Austin Healey will also be in attendance at the event, which takes place over the weekend of May 22-24.

"Sevens rugby is a faster, more exciting game to play and watch compared to traditional 15s rugby.

"With Bournemouth Sevens now becoming the largest festival in the world, I have no doubt that this year's tournament will surpass those of Dubai and Hong Kong in terms of size and quality rugby. It's great for English rugby to be hosting an event of this magnitude," said Moody.

● For more information, visit www.bournemouthsevens.com or call 01202 302855. Tickets can be purchased online at www.ticketmaster.co.uk or www.bic.co.uk



bounce back time and time again and he refuses to shy away from danger on the field in the pursuit of victory.

"They say playing in an international game is like being run over at 70mph and my body is witness to that, but you shouldn't put the hits in unless you can take them so I don't complain," he continued. "All I want to be doing is playing, but you always have to let your body recover so that when you come back, you are fighting fit."

Away from attempting to propel Leicester Tigers to glory in the Guinness Premiership and Heineken Cup, Moody is dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces and will be attending the Bournemouth Sevens competition in May (see above).

And for a man who so nearly signed up to serve Queen and country, it is unsurprising to hear he is full of admiration for today's soldiers.

"I would like to wish all the soldiers who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan at the moment all the best," he added. "You're doing an amazing job and the country is so proud of your dedication and commitment."

"I know how it feels to be away from home, but you're doing your bit for your country and it's appreciated by so many people back home. Keep up the good job." ■

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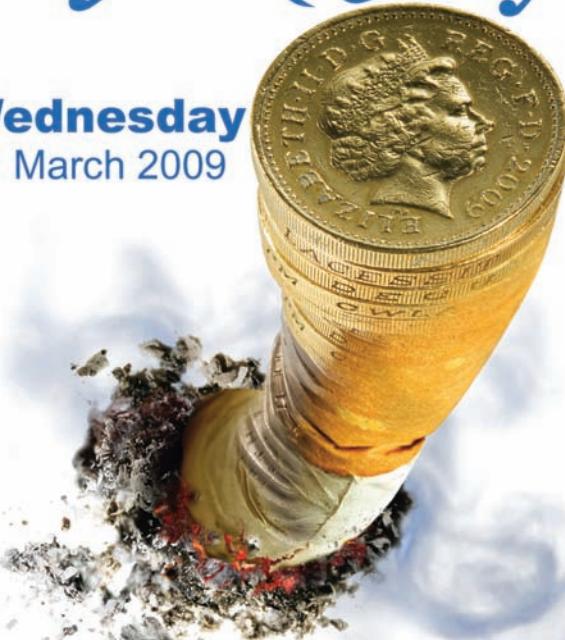
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SPORT SHORTS

ARMY windsurfers will take on the cream of the military crop when the first Inter-Services wave sailing competition gets under way later this month in north Wales.

The event runs from Monday, March 23 until Friday, March 27 and will cater for advanced and novice sailors.

For further details or to request an entry form, contact Jon Metcalfe on 07768 988258 or email asawsm@btconnect.com

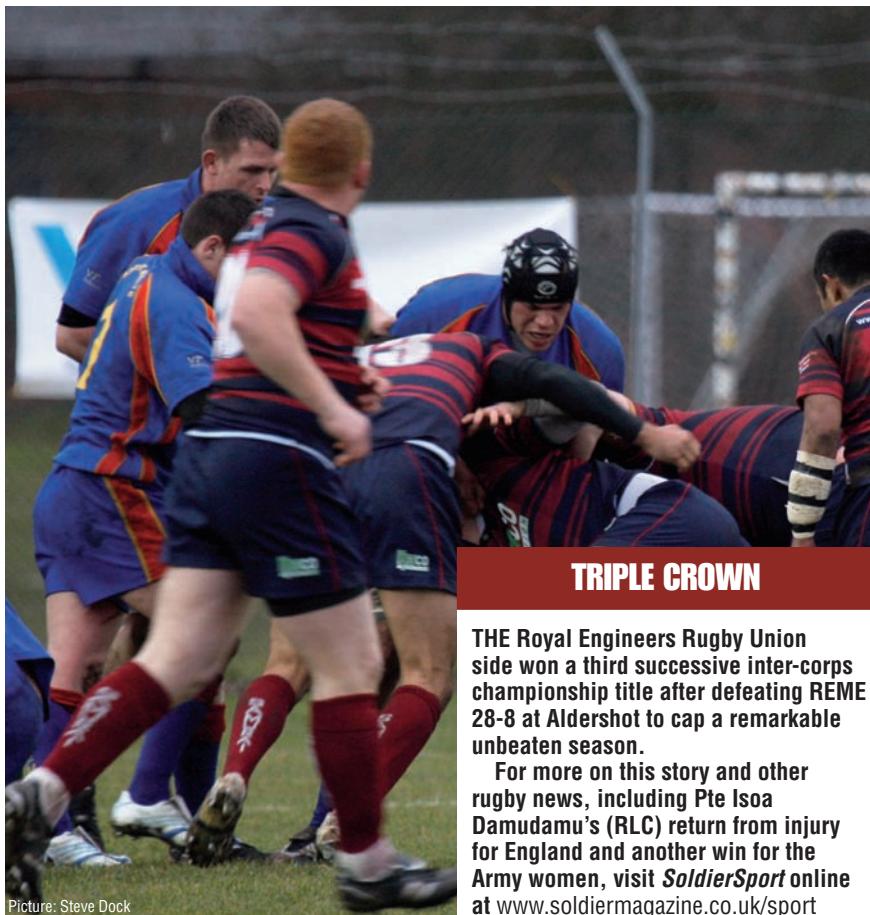
AN improved RAF squad proved too hot to handle for the Army's ice-men on the cresta toboggan run at this year's Inter-Services championships.

The airmen raced to victory over the 1.6km course at St Moritz.

THE Army women's cricket team is looking for new players to attend two selection and trial days.

Cricketers of all abilities are invited to attend Dummer Indoor Cricket Centre on Thursday, April 30 or Aldershot's Army Cricket Ground on Friday, May 1.

For further details contact Maj Ruth MacGill on 94329 4711 or email ruthmacgill@googlemail.com



TRIPLE CROWN

THE Royal Engineers Rugby Union side won a third successive inter-corps championship title after defeating REME 28-8 at Aldershot to cap a remarkable unbeaten season.

For more on this story and other rugby news, including Pte Isoa Damudamu's (RLC) return from injury for England and another win for the Army women, visit *SoldierSport* online at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/sport

Unsworth banks on bouncebackability

Interview: Matthew Simms

FRONT-line fighter Pte Neil "Amir" Unsworth is hoping to bounce back from the first loss of his professional boxing career when he goes head-to-head with Gavin Deacon at Chester's Northgate Arena on March 7.

The Warrington warrior, who is a full-time soldier with the 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, saw his run of seven successive victories end when he lost on points to Paul Holborn last November. But the 28-year-old recruiter remains confident that he can make amends in this month's elimination bout for the Midlands area title.

"It [the Holborn fight] was my first title shot and I learnt a lot from the experience," the light-welterweight told *SoldierSport* from his Nottingham training camp. "I know exactly where I went wrong and how I need to improve for the next fight."

Unsworth, who spent two years

competing alongside Rfn Ross "The Boss" Burkinshaw (3 Rifles) and England star Pte Martin Stead (RLC) in the Army boxing team, conceded that he joined the Forces because of his love for the sport.

"I couldn't get any fights in my local area, so I joined the Army and went straight onto the boxing team," he said. "I boxed 25 times, winning an individual title and finishing runner-up in the Amateur Boxing Association championships."

"I had only had ten fights before joining, but I was in with England nationals straight away. These lads were better boxers so I developed a professional style."

After failing to be selected for the Army's Inter-Services squad, Unsworth linked up with his current trainer, former super-featherweight world champion Carl Greaves. It was on Greaves' advice that Unsworth decided to turn professional in June 2007.

Having hit the ground running with seven wins in his first eight professional bouts,

Unsworth is confident he can fulfil his dream of winning a British title.

"Like any fighter would say, I want that Lonsdale belt. I want the British title. That really would be the icing on the cake for me. It would be an amazing honour."

With the elimination bout on the horizon, Pte Unsworth has been relieved of his military duties and is currently training full-time in Newark, where he hopes to regain some of the sharpness he feels was missing during the Holborn fight last time out.

"I have been doing a lot of weight training but in my last fight the sharpness just wasn't there," he said. "It's important that I get my sharpness back for this next fight."

Although Unsworth expects to be seven pounds lighter than Deacon, the Army man remains hopeful of overcoming the deficit and returning to winning ways.

"I'm giving away a lot of weight and he will come and have a good fight with me, but that's exactly what I want," he added. ■

FIXTURES

BASKETBALL

March 16-20 – Army cup finals (Grantham/ Aldershot).

BOXING

March 24-25 – Combined Services senior championships (Portsmouth).

FOOTBALL

March 5 – Army women v Royal Air Force (Aldershot); 8 – Crusaders v East Cheam (Sandhurst); 10 – Army U23 v Royal Navy (Aldershot); 11 – Army v Royal Navy (Portsmouth); 14 – Crusaders v RMAS (Aldershot); 17 – Army U23 v RAF (RAF Cosford); 18 – Army v Royal Air Force (Aldershot); 19 – Army women v Royal Navy (Portsmouth); 21 – Crusaders veterans v BBC veterans (New Malden).

GOLF

March 27-29 – Brent Knoll Bowl (Burnham).

HOCKEY

March 1 – Army women v Woking (Aldershot); 4 – Army veterans v Reading (Reading); 4-5 – Army v Civil Service (Portsmouth); Army v Police (Portsmouth); 11 – Army women v Aldershot and Farnham (Aldershot); 12 – Army women v Civil Service (Aldershot); 14 – Army v RMAS (Sandhurst); 17-19 – Inter-Services championships (Portsmouth).

MARTIAL ARTS

March 21 – Army open championships (Aldershot).

REAL TENNIS

March 14 – Army v Newmarket (Newmarket); 15 – Army v Cambridge (Cambridge); 28 – Army v Hardwick House (Hardwick House).

ROWING

March 7 – Women's head of the river (London); 8 – Hammersmith head (London); 19 – Kingston head (Kingston).

RUGBY LEAGUE

March 8 – Army v Featherstone Rovers (Featherstone).

RUGBY UNION

March 18 – Army v Cardiff Blues (Cardiff); 25 – Army v Bath (Bath).

SAILING

March 7-8 – Warsash One (Solent); 14-15 – Warsash Two (Solent); 21-22 – Warsash Three (Solent).

SHOOTING

March 2 – Army Wappenschaw (Bisley); 14 – Army target pistol championships (Bisley); 15-16 – Army target shooting club open meeting (Bisley).

TABLE TENNIS

March 3-4 – Army championships (Aldershot).

TENNIS

March 4 – Women's inter-corps league (Aldershot); 11 – Inter-corps indoor tournament (Aldershot); 12 – Army veterans v Oxfordshire veterans (Aldershot).

WATER POLO

March 4-8 – Combined Services Willie Mellors tournament (Aldershot).

WINTER SPORTS

March 1-6 – Army bobsleigh and skeleton championships (Italy); 8-15 – Inter-Services bobsleigh and skeleton championships (Italy).



Picture: LA(Phot) Owen King

Air time: Sgt Ben Shropshire (R Anglian) in full flight during his successful slopestyle run at Meribel

Eyes on the prize

Boxer Burkinshaw sets 2009 British title target

Interview: Stephen Tyler

SHEFFIELD-BASED bantamweight Rfn Ross "The Boss" Burkinshaw has set his sights on winning a British championship belt within the next year ahead of his first fight of 2009.

The 3 Rifles soldier, who was due to square off against Stuart McFadyen at Barnsley's Metrodome Leisure Complex as this issue went to press, told *SoldierSport* that he was in "great condition" after returning from a dislocated shoulder suffered in February 2008.

And after sending Mike Holloway to the canvas to win his comeback fight by knockout last October, Burkinshaw is confident that the next 12 months will see him move into the sport's elite.

"Going for a British title belt is always at the back of my mind and I know that if I win this fight [against McFadyen] then I will be able to press on," he said.

"It's my ultimate aim and it was what I was going for last year before my injury. Now I have had that setback I am going to

be a British champion by the end of 2009.

"After that I want to step up and win the belt outright with three defences then progress the old-fashioned way by winning Commonwealth, European and world titles."

With a professional record of seven bouts, five wins, one draw and one defeat – suffered after the referee stopped his fight against Abdul Mougharbel because of his injured shoulder – Burkinshaw has already shown plenty of potential.

With the help of trainer Glyn Rhodes, the former Amateur Boxing Association national finalist made his weight for his latest fight six weeks ahead of schedule.

And with his usual entourage of two colleagues from The Rifles accompanying him to the ring in Barnsley, Burkinshaw is keen to repay the support he has received from his regiment with another win.

"I have got a good team behind me and The Rifles have backed me 100 per cent," he said. "As a soldier, I always keep fit and it's the regimental training plan that gets me into great condition." ■

White stuff

Army's snow warriors sweep to victory during winter sports encounter

ARMY athletes reasserted their position at the peak of winter sports competition with a comfortable victory at the Inter-Services ski and snowboard championships in France.

Both the men's and women's squads outperformed the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy to claim the team event crowns during a high-octane week of racing at Meribel.

The championships also hosted the inaugural entry of the Combined Services Disabled Ski Team, which grew out of an adaptive skiing expedition held in Austria in 2008.

With RAF champion Flt Lt Roger Cruickshank in formidable form ahead of the tournament, the Army men's team had to rely on its strength-in-depth to overcome the airmen.

The RAF officer raced to victory in the downhill, super G, giant slalom and combined slalom races, but was pushed all the way by the Army's alpine

champion Lt Matt Shepherd (1 LSR) and a supporting cast including Capt Nick Poett (Scots DG), Cpl Mike Atkinson (REME) and Sgt Dougie MacPherson (1 LSR).

Women's team captain Maj Nikki Porter (RADC) got the defence of her 2007 downhill title off to a good start by clocking the fastest first run on day one of the tournament, but a fall on the second run ended her hopes of claiming another title.

Luckily for the Army, Cpl Anabelle Franey (REME) produced a scintillating display to claim first place, with Capt Rachael Cooper (RA) finishing joint second with the RAF's Flt Lt Caitlin Wroe.

Porter made up for her downhill disappointment by demolishing her opponents in the super G race. The officer's finishing time was nearly seven seconds faster than second-placed Cooper, while Maj Mel Hilton (HQ 2 Div) completed an Army clean-sweep

after her time proved to be the third best on the day.

The super combined race – a new event set over a short slalom course – again saw Cruickshank and Shepherd take the top two places in the men's competition, while Porter produced a further winning performance in the women's giant slalom.

The snowboard competition got under way with the parallel giant slalom discipline and the Army came out on top in the men's and women's events thanks to LCpl Key Clarke (REME) – who earned a call-up into the GB snowboarding development squad – and LCpl Sarah Marriott (AMS).

Capt Dani Stone (RE) won the women's boarder cross, with Lt Si Nicholson (REME) and Clarke finishing second and third in the men's.

A successful tournament was wrapped up when Stone and SSgt Ben Shropshire (R Anglian) provided further wins in the slopestyle competition. ■

FOOTBALL UPDATE

Centre stage

RIFLEMAN Santosh Shrestha (1 RGR) is set to become the first Gurkha soldier to represent the Army at football after earning a call up to this month's Inter-Services squad.

Shrestha will travel back to England from Brunei Garrison to bolster the first team's midfield for the fixtures against the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

The tough-tackling midfielder is no stranger to top-level football. Before signing up for the Army, Shrestha played professionally in his native Nepal, helping the Three Stars Club win the country's first division title in 2004.

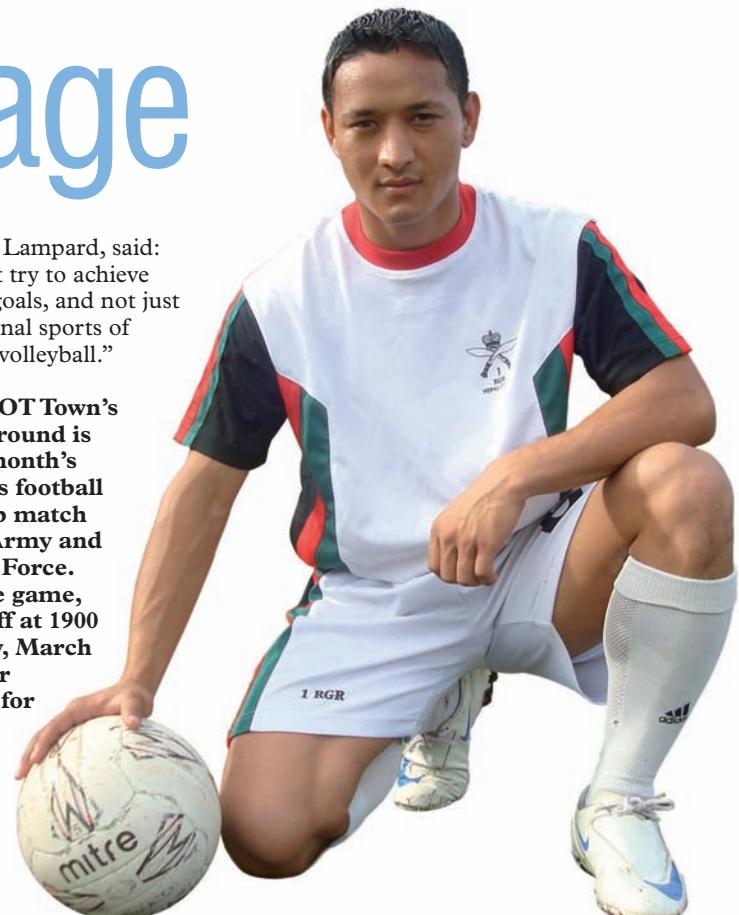
The 22-year-old player has also turned out at international level in the Asian Football Confederation Youth Championships.

The Chelsea fan, whose favourite

player is Frank Lampard, said: "Gurkhas must try to achieve their sporting goals, and not just in their traditional sports of basketball and volleyball."

• **ALDERSHOT** Town's Recreation Ground is hosting this month's Inter-Services football championship match between the Army and the Royal Air Force.

Entry to the game, which kicks off at 1900 on Wednesday, March 18, costs £5 for adults and £1 for concessions with all proceeds going to charity. ■



Fully equipped

We asked soldiers preparing for deployment to Afghanistan with 19 Light Brigade whether they had confidence in the Army's latest kit

Cpl Ben Kinnear, RE

The kit is so good now that you get that warm fuzzy feeling when you use it on tour. My unit uses the medium wheel tractor, which now has more protection and will withstand small arms and rocket-propelled grenades. The crew cabin has all-round protection and the tyres are solid.



Lt Stephen Hudson, QGE

A lot of new equipment has arrived in recent years and it gives us great confidence. For example there have been changes to the SA80 weapon with a new grip. Add in new armoured vehicles, such as the Mastiff, Viking and Panther, and you get the feeling that you are being properly supported.



Tpr Gergs Gentry, 2 RTR

We've been training to use the Viking armoured vehicle. It is very different to anything else I have driven, it's very manoeuvrable, quite fast and deep water doesn't present a problem. Our kit is very good, and it has been great to see the advances in medical equipment.



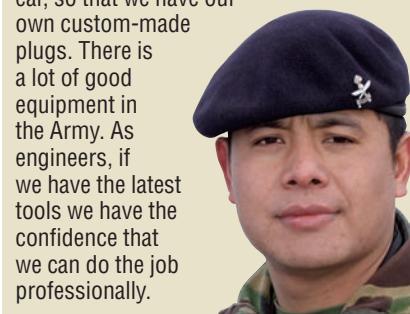
Lt Col Rob Thomson, CO 2 Rifles

I am very pleased with how well-equipped we are for theatre – it will help us do our jobs better. It is also great that soldiers can voice their ideas for new kit. If a rifleman in Sangin, Helmand province, has an idea for new equipment, we can feed it back. The new day sack came about as a direct result of this great system.



Cpl Sanjay Thapa, QGE

One of the best upgrades we have is the new ear defender. Everyone in the brigade can have a mould done of their ear, so that we have our own custom-made plugs. There is a lot of good equipment in the Army. As engineers, if we have the latest tools we have the confidence that we can do the job professionally.



Pte Isabel Taggart, RLC

I'm serving with the Territorial Army and was mobilised at Chilwell in November last year. I have great confidence in our kit, particularly the new grip on the SA80 weapon which is great for me as a shorter person. The Osprey body armour also offers very good protection.



Sgt Steven Wright, RLC

I have just finished the course to become a commander and driver of the Panther vehicle. This is a new piece of kit and has a fantastic capability. It is very good cross-country, can be used in a variety of roles and is extremely reliable. We used it on Salisbury Plain during our brigade mission rehearsal exercise.



Cpl Nick Johnson, RLC

I'm serving with 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment and we are well-equipped to do our job. We're not going out to Afghanistan with any new kit, but what we have is now much lighter so it can be carried more easily. We're certainly very confident in the personal equipment that we have. I don't have any worries on that front.



Tpr Wolfie Howlin, 2 RTR

To be honest there is not a lot to complain about where kit is concerned these days. There was a time on Op Telic in Iraq when we didn't have the right boots, but that's now been rectified. Although it would be great if our body armour was lighter, it is important that it offers a good level of protection.



Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Steve Dock

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