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IRON MEN

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FREE STUFF . . . relive the battles of West Ham United's feared Inter City Firm by commandeering a signed copy of *Cass* (Page 47), pick up a ton in reddiess (Page 59) and win a copy of Ken Wharton's timely history of the Troubles, *A Long Long War* (Page 79).



Cover picture (left): Pte Luke Cole's transformation from forklift truck engineer to war hero is the stuff of comic books. See Pages 17-21 Picture: Graeme Main
Background image: Power-up – Recruits are pushed to their limits during the pre-Parachute Regiment selection course. See Pages 35-37 Picture: Graeme Main



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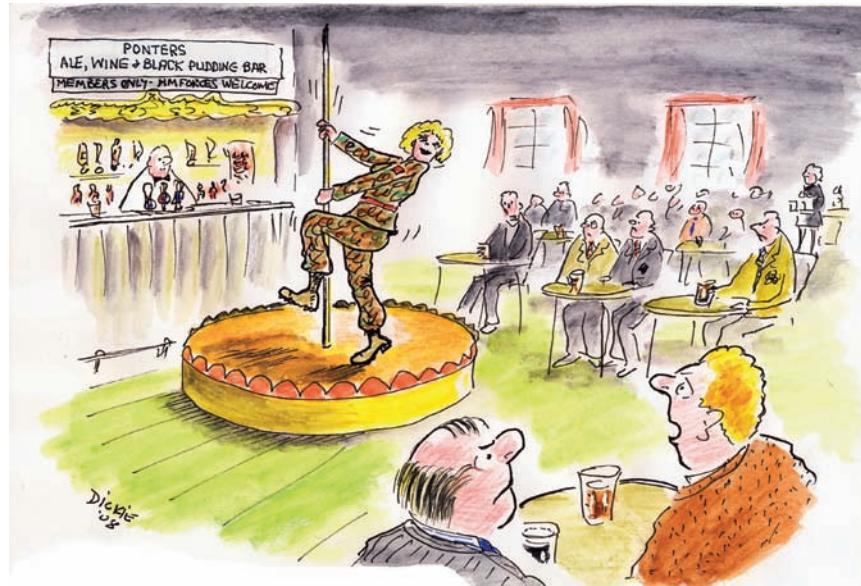
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"It's not my fault I invite you on the day that Sandra wears her uniform to work."

● TA 100 Voluntary Uniform-to-Work day – July 16

Op Banner not Bruce Banner

THE story behind the man on our cover could have been lifted from the pages of a *Marvel* comic – an unassuming, mild-mannered personality with a secret double life.

As a civilian vehicle mechanic, Luke Cole worked a standard nine-to-five job. His absence was barely noticed by most people when he quietly left town for a few months. But unknown to all but those closest to him, the Territorial Army private was fighting in Afghanistan for his country, his friends and family, and, ultimately, his life.

What makes the story of Cole's Military Cross-winning actions all the more astonishing is that he could have remained in the safe civilian job he chose. But in the finest traditions of the TA, he volunteered to serve.

Like the alter-egos of comic book super-heroes, Reservists are camouflaged in their civilian surroundings. But in a special event to mark their 100th anniversary, TA troops are being encouraged to wear their combats to work on July 16 to provide their colleagues and clients with a glimpse of their military characters (www.ta100.co.uk). In this issue we celebrate the reserve of first choice and salute the extraordinary double lives of these men and women (Pages 17-21).

The media may be focusing on ops in Afghanistan and Iraq, but this month we revisit one of the theatres in which the modern TA very much came of age. Kosovo has been a feature of British military life for nearly ten years, although it has been

FIRST SIGHT

relegated to a footnote of the endless column inches dedicated to the battles for Helmand and Basra. However, the call-up of 2 Rifles has again put the spotlight on a country that remains volatile and has divided opinion with its declaration of independence (Pages 27-29). The Rifles' return serves as a stark reminder that we should not forget those deployed in less fashionable regions, nor underestimate the value of their work. Over the past decade the ugly images of ethnic cleansing have been averted because of their continued presence.

Similarly, the long-running campaign in Northern Ireland was eclipsed in the news as the decades of Op Banner went by. It is easy to forget that soldiers were still dying in the province while their comrades fought in both the Falklands and Gulf. One year after time was called on the Army's longest-running op, we chart the enormous progress made towards a peace that has enabled a fully deployable garrison to be established (Pages 43-45).

So while Bruce Banner and alter-ego Hulk lead the super-hero invasion of cinema screens this summer, just remember that you need look no further than Ops Banner, Occulus, Herrick and Telic for your dose of boy's own adventure and tales of heroism. ■

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Afghan assignment: British soldiers from HQ ARRC received wide acclaim after deploying to Kabul and the surrounding regions during their 2006 tour

Picture: Mike Weston

Stand by for action

Nato force will always be ready whenever duty calls, says senior officer

BRITISH soldiers serving with the Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps could be pressed into action before their scheduled return to operations in three years' time.

In an interview with *Soldier*, the new Nato force commander, Lt Gen Richard Shirreff, declined to rule out a sooner-than-expected overseas commitment and pledged his troops would be ready whenever they were required.

The multi-national soldiers remain on alert as one of seven High Readiness Land HQs and could move anywhere at short notice, he added.

Personnel had also been involved in an ongoing "rigorous training programme" to gear up for command roles in demanding environments such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Speaking at the six-month point in his new command, Lt Gen Shirreff stressed he was keen to build on a reputation for delivering success in difficult theatres.

His predecessor, Gen Sir David Richards, was at the helm of the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan two years ago and the HQ had earlier overseen ops in the Balkans.

Lt Gen Shirreff added: "We exist to deploy and are constantly seeking ways we can train ourselves to support Nato when needed."

"We are not currently forecasted to deploy to Isaf before 2011 but operations are our lifeblood and I do not rule out an earlier deployment."

Lt Gen Shirreff said he would be proud to lead HQ ARRC through a forthcoming six-month stint as the Nato Response Force, during which it had to be ready to

deploy in five days and sustain a mission for at least a month. At the same time preparations will be under way for HQ ARRC to leave Rheindahlen in Germany for its new UK base at Innsworth, Gloucestershire, in two years' time.

Lt Gen Shirreff stressed the move would not impact on operational capability. He added: "There will be no reduction in our commitment to Nato."

"The site at Innsworth is well suited to our requirements."

More troops head for Herrick

AN additional 230 soldiers are poised to join the UK operation in Afghanistan after Defence Secretary Des Browne announced a "rebalancing" of UK forces.

Mr Browne told the House of Commons that the security situation in theatre had improved in the past year but he stressed: "I am not underestimating how much remains to be done."

"Counter-insurgency campaigns are ultimately about winning the support of the local population. With the diminishing

relevance of the Taliban's campaign and the increasing delivery of development, I am in little doubt that we are winning."

"I have approved the removal of around 400 posts from the Afghan Operational Establishment Table. These were no longer required due to reorganisation."

"At the same time we have identified a requirement for 630 new posts, creating a net increase in our forces of some 230 personnel to around 8,030 by the spring of 2009," Mr Browne added.

UNDER Big Ben

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

Senior MP reveals a chink in the armour

A QUARTER of the Army's Warrior vehicle fleet has either been destroyed or is out of commission because of maintenance, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth has told the Commons.

Responding to a question from MP Nick Harvey, Mr Ainsworth revealed that 26 per cent of the 793-strong Warrior line-up was not fit for purpose. In addition, 40 per cent of the 1,200 Scimitar CVR(T) vehicles were unavailable, although Challenger 2 main battle tank and Saxon numbers were almost up at full strength.

Mr Ainsworth confirmed that the out-of-service figures included vehicles undergoing major repairs, awaiting disposal and those destroyed on operations.

Heli lift: A project to make eight Chinook helicopters currently in storage ready for ops is progressing on time and on budget. The heavy lift specialist aircraft, which were bought in 2001 but have not been flown because of airworthiness concerns, are being adapted to allow them to be used in Afghanistan. Minister for Defence Equipment and Support Baroness Taylor added: "The reversion project will allow the delivery of more Chinooks to theatre in the shortest time."

Building blocks: The Royal Engineers have been involved in more than 200 reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan since 2006, according to Mr Ainsworth. The Armed Forces Minister said Afghan companies had been involved in the initiatives, which promoted "employment and livelihoods" for local people.

Their name liveth: A special commemorative event to mark the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War is being planned by the MoD. Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg said the event was likely to be focused around the wreath-laying at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

Knight time

Clampdown continues as new Telic tour begins

ROCKET and mortar attacks against the British HQ in Basra have continued to decline in the wake of a series of operations to clamp down on rogue militias.

The first indirect fire incident for a month was reported at the Contingency Operating Base as the 7th Armoured Brigade – the Desert Rats – arrived in theatre for Op Telic 12 in late May.

And commanders are now confident that the ongoing Operation Charge of the Knights action, which is being led by the Iraqi Army and police, is denying insurgents freedom of movement in Basra and giving them less opportunities to attack.

Capt Liam Wilson, spokesman for 7 Brigade, said the security situation in the region had "greatly improved" and that troops were fired up for their six months on operations.

He also paid tribute to the work of the outgoing 4th Mechanized Brigade for the significant progress its units had made during their Telic tour.

He added: "Operation Charge of the Knights is still ongoing and the situation out here is one of continued progress – the militias' freedom of movement has been removed.

"But there are still a number of areas in which the Iraqi Army wish to conduct

follow up operations, and they have the support of British mentors."

Troops from The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, the 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and the 9th/12th Royal Lancers were involved in these Military Transition Teams, said Capt Wilson.

He pointed out that a number of American soldiers, who were normally based in Baghdad, had also been mentoring Iraqi forces in Basra, maintaining the momentum of current operations against troublemakers.

While Capt Wilson admitted that British troops were enduring austere conditions while working with the Iraqi Army, he said that morale remained extremely high.

He added: "The success of Operation Charge of the Knights has brought optimism on the ground. There is a busy operational tempo and the guys are very happy in what they are doing."

Already veterans of Iraq, 7 Brigade's units were last on tour in Basra during 2005 and 2006.

Their help to Iraqi counterparts in improving security during the next six months will be vital, particularly in the lead up to provincial elections scheduled for the autumn.

Weapon caches smashed

IRAQI security forces have been celebrating after the seizure of a sizeable haul of weapons following a series of tip-offs from people in Basra.

The troops, who are being mentored by British soldiers, swooped on a house in the Al Sa'l area of the city, netting around 450kg of explosives and several lethal roadside bombs.

Earlier in a series of raids, the Iraqi Army's 14th Division removed scores of weapons, including 20 hand grenades, 70 rockets and a stash of rocket-propelled grenades, from properties in Basra and the neighbouring town of Az Zubayr.

Colleagues from the Iraqi Police joined in the action, finding mortar and artillery shells loaded onto a truck.

Army spokesman Capt Chris Ford was satisfied with the outcome of the action. He added: "This operation was planned by the Iraqi Army. While the UK Military Transition Teams were present, there was no requirement for them to be involved."

"This is enormously gratifying as it shows that the division we are mentoring is able to take its operations right from the planning stage all the way through to a successful execution."

"Every one of those operations brings more security – and Basra closer to its bright future."

Weapons hauls have been one of the key targets of the Iraqi-led Operation Charge of the Knights.

As this issue went to press, more than 4,000 mortar bombs, 600 rockets and 1,500 small arms had been seized since the beginning of the operation in March.

British personnel in southern Iraq have been instrumental in helping to destroy the captured ordnance.

Soldier last month reported how six tonnes of illegal weapons, which had been stored at the Shatt al Arab Hotel base after being confiscated by the Iraqis, were destroyed in a series of controlled explosions at a remote desert location.



Picture: Steve Dolk

Making tracks: Toolled-up troops are packing a bigger punch after taking delivery of the 500th upgraded Bulldog troop carrier to roll off the production lines. The vehicle, pictured above,

is hugely popular with soldiers in Iraq, where it has been offering impressive levels of firepower and protection on operations. Nearly 1,000 Bulldogs will eventually be delivered to the

Army. The vehicle is an uprated version of the tried and tested but ageing FV432 and features an improved powertrain, greater firepower and upgraded protective armour.

Iraq 'transformed'

British Forces have helped vastly improve security in Basra, says Browne

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne has praised the Iraqi security forces and their British military mentors for helping Basra to become "a transformed city".

Speaking after visiting personnel from the 4th Mechanized Brigade at the end of their Op Telic tour, the Defence Secretary was confident that progress was being made in theatre.

He was taken to the Basra Operations Centre at the Shatt al Arab Hotel before strolling through the previously hazardous Al Janinah area of the city, where he met and spoke to several of the local residents and military commanders.

Mr Browne told reporters: "As I walked through the streets, chatting to people, it was clear to everyone that Basra is a transformed city. I felt an enormous sense of pride in what the Iraqi forces have achieved with our help.

"I sat in a Basra street café and had a cup of tea with Gen Mohammed Juwad Huwaidi, commander of the Iraqi forces in Basra," he added. "All around us were

the signs of a city returning to normality – shopkeepers working away, women walking around wearing head scarves and children playing on their bikes."

Mr Browne stressed that he had "seen the highs and lows" of Basra in the past

two years but admitted he was pleased with the Iraqi Army's new confidence and ability.

The Defence Secretary emphasised: "Our focus now must be building on this progress."

Families to be honoured

LOVED ones of soldiers killed in the line of duty are to be honoured with a new national award.

Following a recommendation from the Chiefs of Staff, bereaved families will receive a memorial scroll and a special decoration which can be worn.

A team is working on the design of the scroll and the emblem. The criteria for the award will be announced before the end of the year.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, Chief of the Defence Staff, said it was important to recognise the families of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice.

He added: "Our Armed Forces demonstrate bravery, commitment and professionalism on a daily basis and we must continue to show our appreciation.

"It is a sad, but unavoidable reality that some of our brave Service personnel pay the ultimate sacrifice. I believe the time is right to recommend a new award for the families of those who die on operations."

Memorial scrolls were issued to families of soldiers killed in the two World Wars and the Korean campaign. The concept of an emblem is new for the UK but similar schemes are already in place in Canada and New Zealand.

Summer of anguish

Five British soldiers killed in contacts with resurgent Taliban fighters

RESOLUTE soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, have been pressing ahead with their mission in southern Afghanistan in the wake of a black month that claimed the lives of five much-respected comrades.

Pte Nathan Cuthbertson, Pte Daniel Gamble and Pte Charles Murray died following a suicide strike near Forward Operating Base Inkerman in the Upper Sangin Valley on June 8. All three soldiers had been serving with 4 Platoon, B Company, 2 Para.

Less than a week later, on June 12, LCpl James Bateman and Pte Jeff Doherty died during an exchange of fire with Taliban fighters north of Forward Operating Base Gibraltar. Both soldiers were serving with 8 Platoon, C (Bruneval) Company.

Pte Cuthbertson, 19, had decided to join the regiment while at the Army Foundation College at Harrogate in 2005. He had passed the technically demanding Infantry Assault Engineers' course and had been excelling in his role as a machine-gunner after deploying to southern Afghanistan.

His colleague, Pte Murray, had also



● LCpl James Bateman



● Pte Jeff Doherty



● Pte Charles Murray



● Pte Daniel Gamble



● Pte Cuthbertson

started his career at Harrogate. He was known as Dave to his friends, and commanders had identified him as a gifted soldier and rising star. Born in Dumfries, the 19-year-old rifleman and assault engineer had shown technical competency and professionalism in Afghanistan and was known for putting others first.

A Pashto linguist, Pte Daniel Gamble joined the battalion in 2006 and had done well in his communications role during his demanding tour. The 22-year-old, from East Sussex, was one of ten soldiers selected for the challenging 40-week language course.

LCpl Bateman, who was known to his friends as Jay, had joined the Paras in 2001. The married NCO, who was 29 and from Middlesex, had completed operational tours of Northern Ireland and Iraq. Dedicated to his wife, he was remembered as a professional soldier and gifted sportsman.

Pte Doherty, who had just turned 20 when he was killed, was remembered as a strong soldier who lived life to the full. Known as "Doc", the Coventry-born soldier joined the battalion in 2006.

Lt Col Joe O'Sullivan, commanding officer of 2 Para, paid tribute to the five soldiers who, he said, had shown bravery and commitment in the face of the enemy. Of Pte Cuthbertson, Pte Gamble and Pte Murray, he said: "They died doing their duty and doing their best, taking care with a potential threat but also realising the importance of those around them. We will take time to think about them, and we salute them."

Of LCpl Bateman and Pte Doherty he added: "The commitment to their friends and the steadfast courage they showed in the battle is in the finest tradition of the regiment and admired by us all.

"They died doing what they had been asked to do, operating in a difficult country against a dangerous enemy."

First woman falls in Helmand

SHE was known as a tenacious, reliable and utterly professional soldier.

On operations in southern Afghanistan, Cpl Sarah Bryant of the Intelligence Corps had been singled out by superiors for her confidence and exceptional trade knowledge and had been pre-selected for promotion on her first attempt.

To her soldier husband, she was a hero, who had died doing the job she loved. Knowing the risks, she had pressed ahead to carry out her vital work.

The first woman soldier to die on operations in Afghanistan, Cpl Bryant had been on a patrol with the Security Sector Reform Battle-group when the vehicle in which she was travelling was destroyed in a mine strike near Lashkar Gar on June 17.

The 26-year-old NCO died alongside Cpl Sean Reeve, 28, LCpl Richard Larkin, 39, and 31-year-old Paul Stout. No further

details about their roles or military careers have been released. One other soldier was wounded in the explosion.

Cpl Bryant joined the Army in 2002 and had already served on operations in Iraq. Based at Chicksands in Bedfordshire, she deployed to Helmand in March as a target audience analyst with 152 Delta Psychological Operations Effects Team. She was well respected for her abilities by her colleagues and superiors while her intelligence, flair and passion for Army life won her many friends.

Her commanding officer, Lt Col Jim Suggit, said: "Sarah had the brightest future



● Cpl Sarah Bryant

both in her career – where she had been pre-selected for promotion – and personal life. She had a courage, passion and flair for the role she was undertaking, engaging with the people of Helmand province and trying to give them hope and confidence that they might eventually enjoy peace, progress and prosperity."

Lt Col Suggit added: "We mourn her, we salute her and remember the sparkle she brought to us all."

News of the fatalities in Helmand province shocked Defence Secretary Des Browne. But he pledged that the battle to bring peace and stability would continue.

Mr Browne said: "I was incredibly saddened to hear of the tragic losses. They have made the ultimate sacrifice, laying down their lives alongside those of their comrades. We will ensure that their losses are not in vain."

Troops drop in on Taliban

Apache gunships provide top cover as coalition task force batters enemy

INSURGENTS in Afghanistan found themselves on the receiving end of a lethal airborne assault when their positions were dealt a fatal blow.

Enemy fighters were put on the back foot after a mass helicopter landing, covered by Apache gunships, heralded a sustained attack near Musa Qala.

As the helicopters prowled overhead, hundreds of British and Danish soldiers, along with counterparts from the Afghan National Army, pushed forward. They were supported by Warrior and Mastiff troop carriers and robust back-up from Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and mortars.

Senior officers were confident that the massive action – codenamed Operation Eagle's Eye – had caught the enemy off guard. The Taliban had responded to the assault by setting off improvised explosive devices and launching mortar rounds.

A British military spokesman said that the action had been a success, and had hit enemy troops hard. He confirmed that soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and the 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland had joined Afghan Army counterparts in a push to clear a settlement south of Musa Qala.

As part of the same action, personnel from 2 and 3 Para, along with Afghan and Danish soldiers, advanced into the Upper Gereshk Valley. The soldiers then moved through the area, clearing the Taliban and holding a series of meetings with Afghan elders to explain their mission.

The spokesman said the Taliban had become less enthusiastic about attacking coalition soldiers, having taken a significant pounding. He added: "The enemy don't try to take us on in a conventional way. They now use more mortar fire and roadside bombs. They've taken a hammering in the last few years and cannot touch us in terms of military capability."

Operation Eagle's Eye is the latest high profile action to be carried out by 16 Air Assault Brigade, currently midway through its Helmand tour.

Elsewhere in theatre British soldiers teamed up with colleagues from the United States Marines to disrupt Taliban activity in the volatile Garmsir area of Helmand province. The two forces pushed south of the settlement in a move to extend the Afghan government's influence towards the Pakistan border and improve security.

Despite meeting fierce Taliban resistance, the American personnel from the US 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit managed to make significant progress after spearheading the assault.



Eagle swoop: An RAF Chinook helicopter carries soldiers from 2 Para into action in Helmand province

Helicopter heartache

PILOTS and crews with the Army Air Corps have spoken of their shock and sadness after a helicopter crash claimed the lives of two valued comrades.

Instructor WO2 Vince Hussell and his student Lt Mark Reynolds were killed when their aircraft crashed on exercise in the South West of England on May 29.

WO2 Hussell, who was serving with 2 (Training) Regiment AAC, had been flying with Lt Reynolds as he went through the final stages of his pilot course at Middle Wallop when the accident happened.

Lt Reynolds, who was 24 and from Nottingham, had completed an operational tour of Iraq while attached to The Queen's Dragoon Guards after graduating from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The engineering graduate and keen sportsman had been due to convert to the Gazelle and had set his sights on flying the Apache.

WO2 Hussell was a veteran pilot who had logged more than 2,000 hours of experi-

ence. Married and with three sons, he was a devoted family man. The 36-year-old, who was from Marton-le-Moor near Ripon, had completed two tours as an Apache pilot in Afghanistan and had also flown in Northern Ireland during his 20 years of service in the Army Air Corps.

Lt Col Mike Cubbin, commanding officer of 2 Regt AAC, described WO2 Hussell as a professional instructor who was popular with his fellow crews. He added: "We have sadly lost a great pilot. Vince was a quiet, private man."

"He was a popular member of the team and we will miss him. Our thoughts are with his friends and family."

Of Lt Reynolds, Lt Col Cubbin said: "He was a bright and charming officer with a promising future."

"He had been doing particularly well on this phase of training and was looking forward to gaining his Army pilot's wings. He will be missed dearly."

● ARMY bomb disposal experts have recalled the intense moments when an explosive dropped by the Luftwaffe more than 60 years ago threatened to wreak havoc on London's East End. Sappers from the Saffron Walden-based 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD) rushed to the scene close to Bromley-by-Bow tube station after a suspect device was found by workmen preparing the ground for the 2012 London Olympics.

The team spent five days making the area safe before carrying out a controlled explosion on the 1,000lb bomb. Three tube lines and a railway track had to be closed while the work took place. Maj Matt Davies, Royal Engineers, was delighted with the way his team had cleared the ordnance. Maj Davies said: "I was really impressed with how hard the boys worked on site. Despite the long hours there was no grumbling and they were very professional. I was also very pleased with the huge support shown by the public."

● **THE opportunity to take part in one of the world's toughest challenges will be open to the public for the first time later this year in a move to raise money for two major charities. The Paras' 10 event, run by the instructors of Pegasus Company, will allow competitors to try their hand at the infamous ten-mile P Company selection course on September 14 at Catterick Garrison. For a fee of £20, entrants can pitch their skills against some of the British Army's fittest. And those seeking an even tougher test can take on the P Company challenge negotiating the same route carrying a bergen weighing 35lb and wearing military boots. All race proceeds will go to the Airborne Forces Charity and Help for Heroes campaign. To find out more or to make a donation visit www.paras10.com**

● *SOLDIER* has maintained its astonishing record of success in national competitions with a writing award. Cliff Caswell's retrospective on the 25th anniversary of the Falklands War, published in June last year, won the best event reporting class at the British Association of Communicators in Business ceremony in Brighton. His report, following visits to the Falklands and Argentina, was described by the judges as "an outstanding piece of journalism". There were also awards of excellence for *Soldier* photographers Mike Weston and Graeme Main. Lorraine McBride of *Defence Focus*, won the award for best feature writer for the second year running and the striking picture of a mortar attack in Afghanistan by PO Sean Clee, took the best news photo category.

Promote your Armed Forces

Package aims to bolster public pride in Services

PUBLIC respect for the military is in danger of being eroded unless new measures are taken to raise awareness among civilians, according to a report submitted to the Government by an MP tasked by the Prime Minister.

In his National Recognition for the Armed Forces study, Quentin Davies listed 40 recommendations to promote the Services, including enhancing relationships with the media and giving youngsters more opportunity to join cadet schemes.

Mr Davies also felt that senior officers should have more freedom to talk to journalists and that reporters should be given better access to high-profile military operations.

He believed that there should be more Combined Cadet Forces schemes for comprehensive pupils, pointing out that nearly all the current 6,400 CCF units currently established were either in independent or grammar schools.

Mr Davies suggested that moves to improve visibility of Armed Forces personnel should be implemented, with specific legislation to prevent discrimination against troops and more opportunities to wear uniform in public where possible. And he urged the Government to consider resurrecting the Royal Tournament.

"We have concluded that our Armed Forces enjoy immense respect and gratitude," said Mr Davies in his introduction to the report.

"We have also concluded, however, that the foundation of familiarity and understanding on which that support is based has not only been eroded, but is likely to continue to erode unless measures are taken."

The findings, which drew on evidence from 300 personnel from all three Services as well as journalists and local government leaders, were welcomed by politicians and senior officers.

Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth said: "Our Service personnel continue to demonstrate the tremendous bravery and courage that makes them the best in the world."

"This report provides firm foundations to ensure that their work is better understood and recognised by the nation they serve."

Gen Timothy Granville-Chapman, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, was also positive at the findings. He said: "The report complements the work going on in the Services, is comprehensive and makes firm recommendations that my fellow Chiefs of Staff will find useful in harnessing public recognition and understanding of what we do."

Soldiers' seaside welcome

TROOPS heading to England's north-east coast for a spot of R&R are being given a warm reception.

Businesses in Scarborough have launched an initiative to make Service personnel feel at home with a discount scheme at shops and attractions.

More than 300 businesses, including theatres, restaurants, holiday camps and a train operator, have already signed up to the Heroes Welcome package.

Soldiers and veterans can take advantage of the preferential rates by showing their Service or British Legion ID cards at participating outlets.

The special scheme was launched by the South Bay Traders in association with the *Scarborough Evening News*.

With Catterick Garrison just 65 miles

away, the seaside town is already a popular attraction for military personnel and their families.

Project coordinator John Senior said the Heroes Welcome initiative had already been given a royal thumbs-up.

He added: "Prince Charles gave his full approval to the scheme and hopes that it will become a permanent fixture."

"The scheme is designed to offer a range of discounts and upgrades to veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces when they visit the town and area."

The initiative has been praised by the Army Families Federation. Chief executive Julie McCarthy said: "More towns should think about a similar scheme because it makes a real difference to soldiers and their families."



Troubled times past: 2nd Lt James Dean and Rfn Peter Edge man a street barricade at the start of the British Army's 38-year Operation Banner campaign

Picture: Imperial War Museum

Sacrifices saluted

Special event will remember the personnel who fell in Northern Ireland

THE professionalism of the British soldiers who served during the Troubles in Northern Ireland is to be celebrated at a special service of commemoration in London.

The event, which takes place at St Paul's Cathedral on September 10, will give thanks to those who took part in Op Banner between 1969 and 2007 – in particular the 6,100 wounded and 763 who gave their lives.

The event comes a year after the end of the operation and nearly four decades after it was launched in 1969.

Troop numbers in the province have now been scaled down and the remaining soldiers are deployable on operations.

Around 2,000 tickets are available for the St Paul's service. Veterans and MoD civil servants who served in Northern Ireland, as well as family members of those who died during the years of violence, are invited to attend.

In promoting the event, Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg paid tribute to the thousands of personnel who had worked to bring peace.

In addition to the soldiers who were lost, hundreds of civilians in Northern Ireland were killed during the Troubles while others died in IRA attacks on the British mainland.

Mr Twigg said: "Operation Banner lasted for 38 years, with several generations of Servicemen and women taking

part, often in challenging circumstances. We should not forget the loss of so many personnel and the thousands who were wounded. The service at St Paul's will be an opportunity for us to pay tribute."

Further information about the event is available at www.veterans-uk.info

● Full Circle – Pages 43-45

Veterans reflect on Bosnia

SPECIAL guests including Princess Michael of Kent and Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth joined veterans and their families at a ceremony to remember the troops who helped bring stability back to the former Yugoslavia.

The service, at the Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire, paid tribute to the 50 members of the Services who gave their lives to restore peace to Bosnia during a harrowing 15-year campaign, which lasted from 1992 to 2007.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, spoke of the many "re-

markable individuals" of the British Armed Forces, who had seen the country through its darkest and most troubled days of civil war and confrontation.

Gen Dannatt said: "Our contribution was vital, and part of a unified international effort which resulted in the negotiation of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 and set the political and military framework for that country ever since."

"Like many here I served in Bosnia Herzegovina during the difficult days of the UN mission. For many of us, the Balkans dominated a decade."



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Picture: Graeme Main

Campaign controversy: The Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal is being taken on parade by many ex-soldiers despite the official line that it should not be worn

Medal row rumbles

Association lobbies Government to endorse wearing of Malayan award

PROUD veterans who served on operations in the Far East half a century ago are increasing the pressure on politicians in Westminster for permission to wear a special award.

Presented by the Malaysian Government, the coveted Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medal (PJM) is being issued to personnel who served during the volatile Malayan Emergency period between 1957 and

1966. But despite being given authority to receive the award by the Queen, former soldiers are not officially allowed to mount it alongside their other campaign medals because of the policy governing the wearing of foreign decorations.

The ruling has prompted outrage among veterans, who point out that comrades from Australia and New Zealand have already been granted permission to wear

the medal for ceremonial events. Feelings were running high at the dedication of a new standard for the Surrey branch of the Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association, at the Royal Military Academy.

Scores of veterans ignored official guidance to leave their PJMs at home, and were unrepentant in their decision to wear it during the church parade.

Association national chairman Allyn Rees said that ex-soldiers were not governed by military regulations and many chose to don the PJM with pride for ceremonial occasions.

He told *Soldier*: "As far as I am concerned, most veterans of this campaign are no longer serving and no longer governed by the Queen's Regulations.

"We therefore wear the PJM with dignity and pride and we are extremely grateful to the Malaysian Government for their kind gesture."

Vice chairman John McAulay insisted that veterans would continue their campaign for the right to legitimately wear the medal.

He added: "As veterans we can wear what we like, but we are concerned that personnel who are still serving are not allowed to do so."

Veterans call for police review

FORMER soldiers of a British campaign in the Middle East have called for their fallen comrades from the Palestine Police to be remembered at the new Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire.

They are appealing for the names of the dead to be inscribed on the monument, which is at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, in commemoration of the sacrifices the law enforcers made in the pursuit of peace.

Nearly 800 British men and women gave their lives in the Palestine campaign, which was waged from 1945-48.

At a ceremony commemorating the 60th

anniversary of the withdrawal, veterans drew attention to the fact that the police had suffered in the years of violence, during which British Forces personnel were caught in the middle of a bloody face-off between Jewish and Arab militants.

Alan Stott, a former member of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles, was adamant that the Palestine Police deserved to be recognised.

He told *Soldier*: "They were a grand bunch of chaps and were in the thick of the action with the rest of us."

"I have total admiration for them, and what they did," he added.

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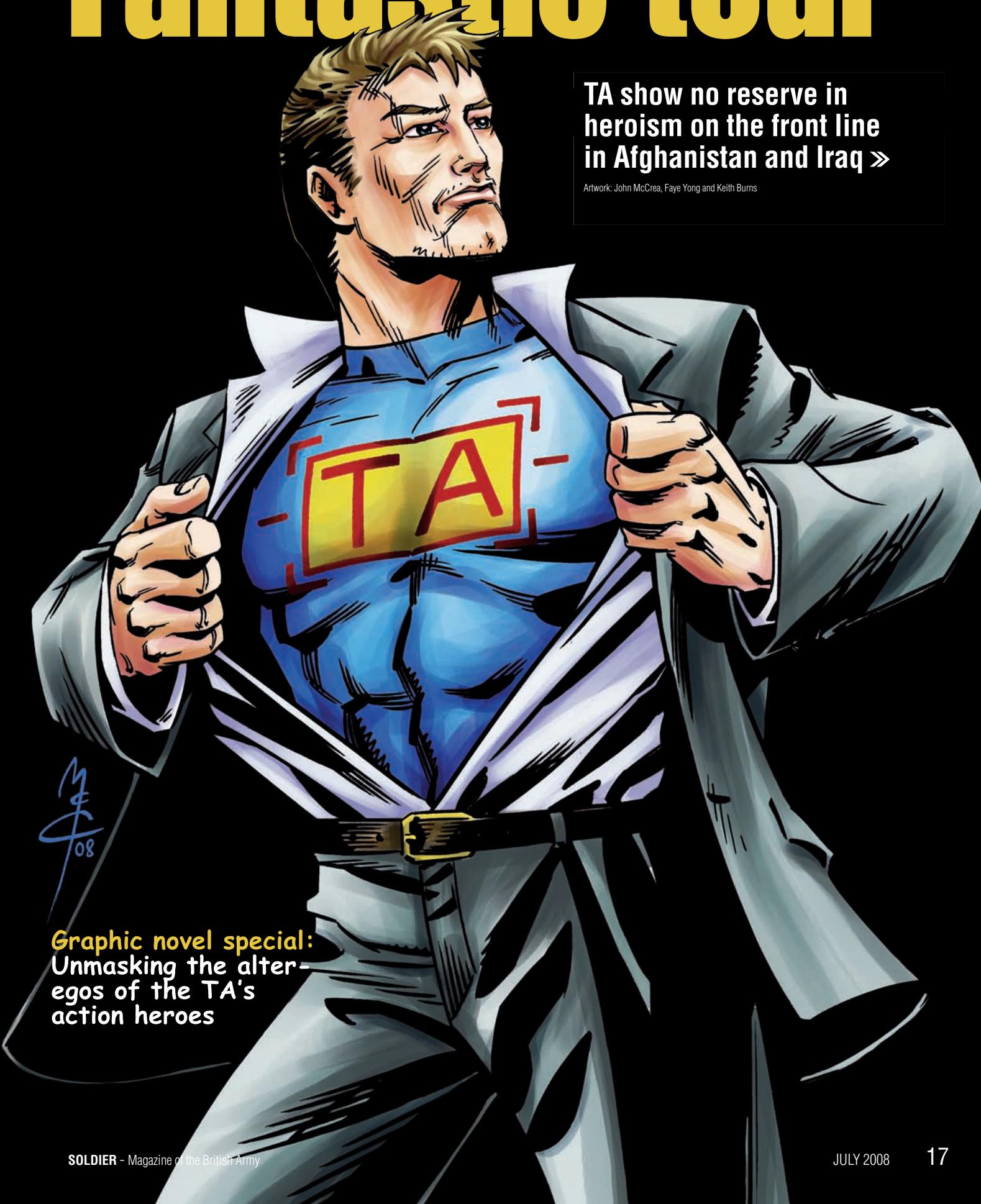
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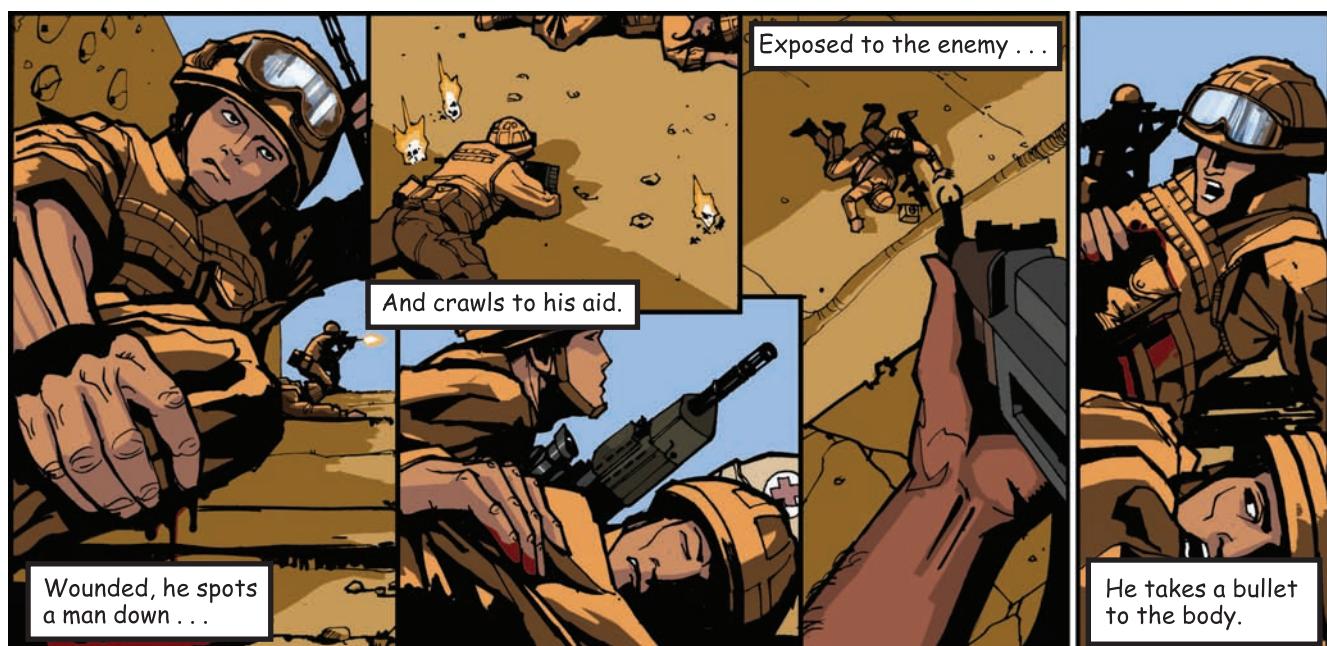


Graphic novel special:
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egos of the TA's
action heroes



Fixing forklift trucks was the forte of mild-mannered mechanic Luke Cole, before his life was transformed in the high heat of a Helmand summer ...

One July night he was on patrol with the mighty Mercians. Suddenly ...



Wounded, he spots a man down ...

Exposed to the enemy ...

And crawls to his aid.

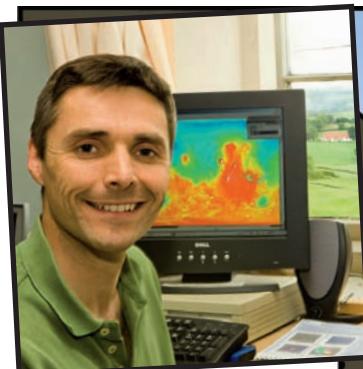
He takes a bullet to the body.



Battered and bloody he goes for his gun ...

And gives Terry the good news.

His heroism under fire wins him the Military Cross.



NASA boffin Marko Bulmer spends his day staring into space ...

But on tour in Iraq, The Royal Mercian and Lancastrian Yeomanry major found himself staring down the barrel of a gun.



When a routine visit to an Iraqi cop shop went Pete Tong.



As temperatures rise the police welcome is frosty ...



The police chief tells Bulmer that his good cops have gone bad.



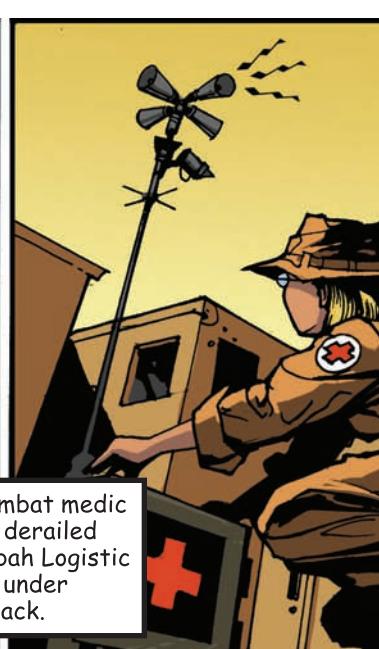
Betrayed Brits broker safe passage and escape without a single shot fired.



Charmed chartered surveyor Jessica Beattie has her career on track with Transport for London ...



But the combat medic was nearly derailed when Shaibah Logistic Base came under mortar attack.



Cheating death when the round landed where she had stood seconds before.



City slicker Adam Cocks is no stranger to taking big risks but the HAC trooper found the stakes much higher in Helmand.



Shell shocked, he carries his comrade clear ...



And loads him on to the trailing wagon.



They race towards safety, but what were the odds ...



Of lightning striking twice?



Wounded but alive, Cocks and his pal are finally dealt a winning hand.



As a commercial diver, Andy Mattinson is often exposed to the murky underworld ...



But in Iraq the TA gunner found the pond life was armed. One slippery customer had got a taste for baiting the Brits.



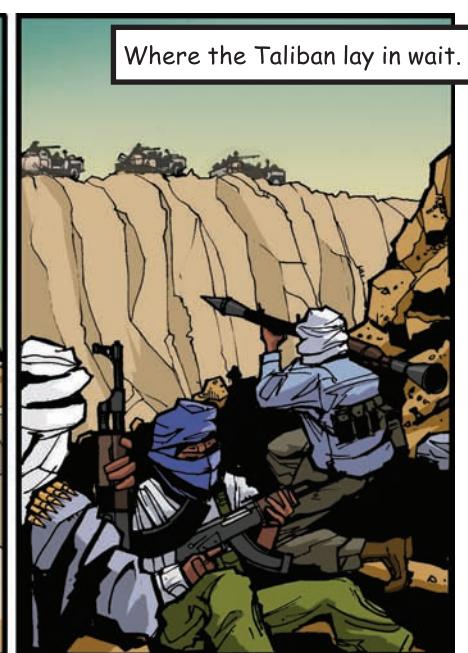
Hooked, the rocketeer is warned to go swim in other waters.



Plain-living Izzy Zakaria crafts air frames but has designs on a life of adventure with the TA ...



Which is exactly what the HAC trooper got during a long-distance patrol into the heart of the Afghan badlands ...



Where the Taliban lay in wait.



Incoming!



With his patrol unscathed Izzy takes off on the heavy cal, downing the bandits.



As a radioactive waste manager, Jon Dolphin is adept at evading hazardous situations ...

A knack which the 7 Rifles patrol commander took with him to the powder keg town of Musa Qala - where he and his charges miraculously escaped detonating a ticking time bomb found beneath their well-trodden path.





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Soldier sense

Army medic-turned-psychic tells troops to heed life-saving hunches

Interview: Karen Thomas

If the supernatural is just a load of mumbo jumbo, why do *The X-Files* and *Heroes* have millions of viewers glued to their TVs?

Fascination for FBI agents Mulder and Scully delving into the unexplainable feeds a voracious appetite for what might lie beyond the five tangible senses. Sceptics of the sixth psychic sense stand no chance against the hordes tuning into *Heroes* – humans with evolved DNA that bestows a multitude of world-saving super powers.

'I've had many experiences where it saved my life'

But according to psychic and former soldier Jock Brocas, everyone has a super power that is just waiting to be tapped into, including those in military uniform. He described a soldier's innate instinct

to sense danger, citing an incident in Afghanistan when a patrol leader's "bad feeling" about a compound saved his men from being ambushed.

"If we have this natural intuitive ability then we can actually use this in the fight against terrorism, violence, rape and all levels of negativity that we face in the world," the martial arts expert told *Soldier*, adding that he was aware of his ability when he joined up for five years' service with the Royal Army Medical

Corps in 1990 but never let on.

"I have a great passion for it and I've had many

experiences where it saved my life. I've always been able to see auras and I used to see spirits and old soldiers in barracks but in the Army it's not something that you talk about."

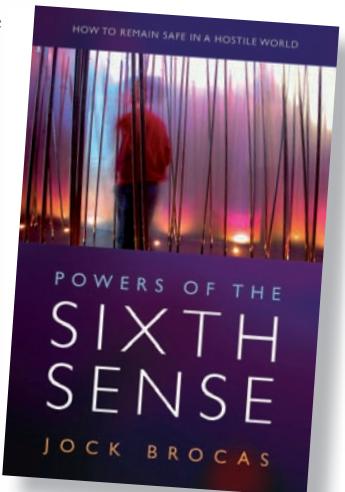
Brocas has devoted 26 years to following the ancient martial art of Bujinkan Ninjutsu – a way of life for spiritual and physical well-being. His expertise is combined with his Army experiences and subsequent work in the security industry for his first book, *Powers of the Sixth Sense*. Yet Brocas holds a healthy scepticism for psychic impostors.

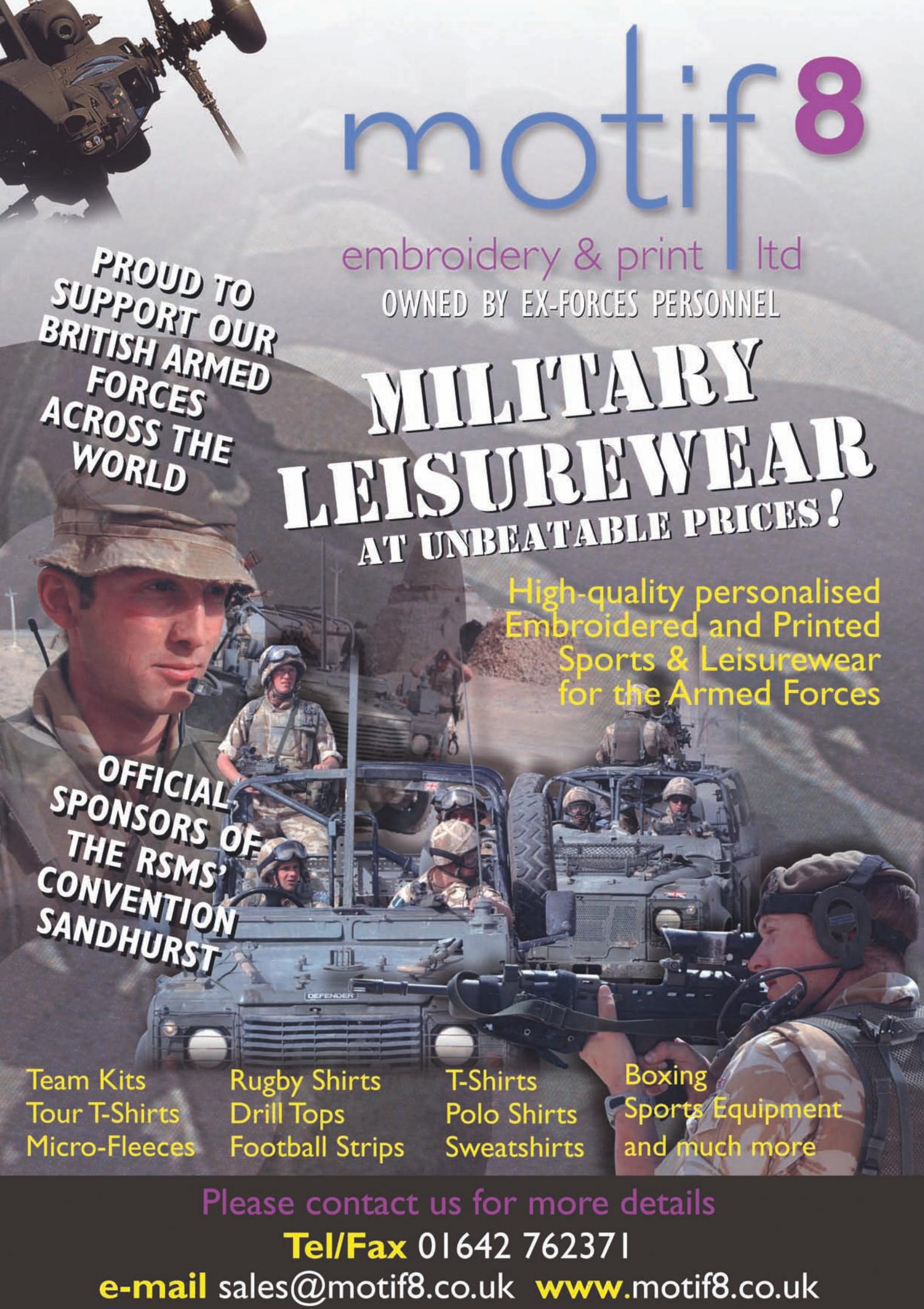
"The people who claim to be psychics but won't even go and pick their own toilet paper unless they've talked to their guide, they're nuts. People do get overly superstitious and that's not what it's all about. But once you learn to develop this intuition we all have, you will know the difference between a real intuitive feeling and what is a lot of rubbish coming from your conscious mind or ego."

The Scottish psychic instructs students in the traditional arts of the ninja and samurai that focus the mind, body and spirit as a whole entity. His first lessons are on accepting a human's inborn sixth sense and

his advice to soldiers searching for their psychic intuition is to use a quiet time to tune into the mind and visualise a peaceful place.

"First of all they need to learn what their intuition is because there's no point asking someone if they get any psychic vibrations or visions in the mind because they won't understand it. I would say to them, learn to heed and understand their intuitions, and to start to benefit from that. Soldiers in this day and age are modern-day warriors so maybe it's time they started to encompass the mind, body and spirit." ■





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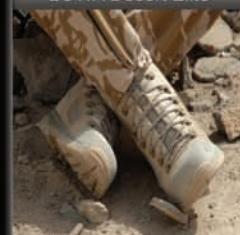
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Rifles return

Nato tasking takes Brits back to the Balkans »



Familiar territory: Cpl Stephen McMullan, 2 Rifles, returns to the roads he patrolled in 1999 with the Irish Guards

Report: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Mike Weston

WHEN Cpl Stephen McMullan first patrolled the streets of Kosovo a decade ago, he saw bodies on the roadside and fires raging through the blackened shells of destroyed houses.

In the wake of a Nato bombing campaign designed to stop the brutal repression of ethnic Albanians by Serb security forces, it was a province in chaos – violence, death and looting were a reality of life.

Fast-forward ten years and Cpl McMullan is back on the same streets and relieved that the situation is stable, if tense. But while the war-ravaged villages have been replaced with neat orange brick homes, the potential for trouble remains. Kosovo has been under the stewardship of the UN since Nato's intervention to stop the civil war in 1999. With the spectre of ethnic cleansing raising its ugly head in the wake of the Bosnian civil war, Nato reacted with a series of air attacks against targets within the province and Serbia itself. But as the peacekeepers arrived, many Serbs fled, as they themselves became the targets of retribution.

After an unsettled decade, Kosovo declared independence from its Serbian motherland in February, prompting fresh concerns that

ethnic tensions could flare again in this volatile Balkans flashpoint. Despite being relegated to the margins by military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, this long-running mission still refuses to be consigned to history.

Having traded the Royal Irish cap badge he wore in 1999 to become a member of the 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, Cpl McMullan is now part of the Nato Reserve Force that helps maintain the fragile peace between ethnic Albanians and the minority Serbs. British infantrymen have deployed to Kosovo at

the request of

the commander of Kfor – the Nato force responsible for the delivery of a safe and secure environment – to reinforce military support in the region.

"It is different here to ten years ago," Cpl McMullan said. "In 1999 we were completing foot and vehicle patrols to prevent ethnic cleansing and protect both the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. It was tense and a lot of people were murdered on our patch. I witnessed Serbian soldiers rumbling through towns on tanks which were stacked high with belongings that were not their own.

"In contrast, it is much quieter now and I have noticed there are fewer Serbs around. Our role is about winning the hearts and minds of the local population, but we also conduct random vehicle checkpoints and search cars."

It might be relatively quiet now, but Kosovo has always had a volatile undercurrent. As part of a company based at the Devic Monastery, Cpl McMullan has been protecting a group of Serb nuns forced to flee during the war after Albanian extremists torched their home.

He and his colleagues have learned how quickly the situation can deteriorate. Not long after they deployed, troublemakers turned on the peacekeepers, forcing the British troops to use all their experience



to defuse the tension. Speaking to *Soldier* from a Nato base situated between the capital Pristina and the ethnic flashpoint of Mitrovica, Lt Col Rob Thomson, commanding officer of 2 Rifles, said his soldiers had found themselves under attack.

"We've had one heart-stopping incident," the CO said. "Teenagers walked up to two of my soldiers while they were on patrol and attempted to throw a grenade at them."

"One of the troops was quick to push the youth to the floor, pick up the grenade and throw it down the hill."

"We later found out that the device was hollow but I was fearlessly proud of the restraint our man showed."

Despite the attack, Lt Col Thomson emphasised that his soldiers remained completely impartial and would work to protect both sides from inter-ethnic violence. In addition to defending the rebuilt monastery, the 2 Rifles soldiers have been responsible for security in

two large towns, as well as protecting enclaves of Albanian Kosovars living in the mountainous areas close to the Serbian border.

'Teenagers walked up to two of my soldiers while they were on patrol and attempted to throw a grenade at them'

Describing the situation in Kosovo as "tense but stable for the time being" Lt Col Thomson said his troops were ready for immediate action should they be required. "In many ways it is a pre-emptive, rather than a reactive, deployment," he admitted. "We are here to deter violence and protect all of the people in Kosovo. We are four companies strong and quite powerful in terms of capability."

For the soldiers on the ground, however, working with local people has been a rewarding experience. B Company platoon commander 2nd Lt Mike Elliott

explained that some areas could be volatile, but added: "The people are very grateful as we give them the reassurance that we can protect them. At times, we are told about crimes or alleged mistreatment of funds and we pass this information on to the appropriate bodies, mainly the Kosovo Police Service."

Although Kosovo has come a long way since 1999, all eyes are now on the new government and what the future holds.

"There was unease and what we have done is bring a level of reassurance that is worthwhile," he concluded.

"We have force elements in place that will be able to react to the unexpected, rather than rushing from the UK into an unfamiliar environment."

Kosovo is enjoying a fragile peace after years of turmoil, and the Rifles are doing all they can to ensure it stays that way. ■



1998 – Serb forces begin a brutal onslaught, forcing civilians from their homes. Nato gives Milosevic an ultimatum to stop the repression of Kosovar Albanians.

March, 1999 – Peace talks fail and Nato launches 78 days of air strikes against Yugoslavia. Albanian refugees claim there have been massacres as hundreds of thousands flee to neighbouring countries.

June, 1999 – Milosevic agrees to withdraw troops and Nato calls off air strikes. UN sets up the Kosovo Peace Implementation Force (Kfor) and Nato troops arrive. Serb civilians flee revenge attacks.

March, 2004 – 19 people are killed in the worst clashes between Serbs and Albanians since 1999.

February, 2008 – Kosovo declares independence. Serbia claims the declaration is illegal.

KOSOVO: Key events



1389 – The battle of Kosovo during which the Serbs lose heroically to the Ottoman Turks on the Field of Blackbirds. Many Christian Serbs leave the region as the religious and ethnic balance tips towards the Muslims and Albanians.

1989 – On the 600th anniversary of the Serb defeat President Slobodan Milosevic abandons rights of autonomy laid down in the 1974 constitution. He warns that Serbs will never concede control of the province.

1990 – Ethnic Albanian leaders declare Kosovo's independence from Serbia and Belgrade disbands the Kosovo government.



Providing reassurance: Rfn Lee Hulbert looks out over Kosutono, a small Albanian enclave near the border with Serbia. In the distance, 2 Rifles wait in vehicles in case of any trouble

Concrete support

21 Engineer Regiment sappers called on to help rebuild broken city

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Graeme Main

As enduring as the foundations they build, 21 Engineer Regiment sappers were on hand when soldiers were called to respond to changes in the Op Telic 11 tempo.

The tour proved as unpredictable for the engineers as it did for everyone else working at the Contingency Operating Base (COB) in Basra. Halfway through, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) tackled the wave of fighting that engulfed the province, requesting the support of the British Army in their successful bid to restore peace. But the sappers had the right formula for mixing up their widely varying tasks.

The COB got improved protection from insurgent attacks as the Great Wall of Basra and five super sangers went up. Iraqi bases in Basra and on the Iranian border also received some special sapper treatment, as did the Iraqis themselves

when they were trained in combat engineering and mine awareness skills. Roads around the city and province were repaired by the engineers, keeping vital routes open for British troops.

The workload taken on by Sgt Rob Williamson, 73 Armd Engr Sqn, reflected on a tour that demanded many different sets of the engineer's specialist skills. He assessed the safety of bridges, approved locations for forward operating bases and was embedded with the Scots Guards battle-group on strike operations.

"They did the striking and my job was to give them the explosive method of entry into buildings. I've trained with my team to get them to a good enough standard to break down a door if they needed to.

"I have probably had the best tour in the regiment. I've been on the ground, into Basra with the battle-group and managed to do my job.

"It's taken my infantry perspective to a whole new level." ■



Getting out and about

CLEARING a route of debris caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) and making the road useable was just one of the tasks assigned to 73 Armd Engr Sqn. At very short notice, the sappers were called on to repair a badly damaged culvert on a vital convoy route. Less than a day later, they had fixed it so an articulated lorry could rumble across it.

In Basra, they got stuck into building showers and latrines for the Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) working with the Iraqi Army. On the Iranian border, sappers-turned-chippies made desks and carried out repair and maintenance work for the Iraqi officers based at the crossing points. Back home they stepped in for the infantry and provided force protection for the COB.

SSgt Nobby Hall praised the effort his sappers had put into being soldiers, combat engineers and tradesmen.

"If the lads are stuck doing a mundane but necessary job morale goes down, but when an operation goes out everyone wants to get on board. They have done really well as they have been working out of their trades."



Super sangers and super Iraqis

SAPPERS of 4 Armd Engr Sqn turned their hand to mentoring Iraqi Army engineers while putting their backs into building five super sangers. The sturdy towers provide a 24-hour watch over the COB, as the engineers supervise their Iraqi counterparts. The British sappers helped rebuild forts and camps sited around Basra and trained the Iraqi 14th Division Engineer Regiment trainers in combat engineering and mine awareness.

Sgt Joe Corrigan thought himself lucky to be chosen to impart life-saving knowledge

on the deadly munitions, many of which were buried during the Iran-Iraq war.

"For two hours each day I'd go to an Iraqi Army camp and train them in mine awareness. They had very little knowledge of mines, which surprised me, and I think they found the training very beneficial," he explained to *Soldier*. "I worked with the instructors who would pass on the training. They were eager and enthusiastic to learn and became very good at the drills on how to extract themselves from minefields. It made me feel dead proud."





Great Wall of Basra

THE wall was built by 7 HQ Squadron sappers to increase security of the COB and offer a degree of force protection. It cost \$6 million (about £3 million), all of which was ploughed into the local economy through hiring Iraqi contractors and sourcing the materials within country.

Vital statistics:

- 18 weeks' building time
- 11.5km perimeter
- 6,500 'T' wall blocks
- 12 feet high
- 5 feet wide

Cpl Fitzy Fitzell and his team worked with the same Iraqi contractors for four months. As well as constructing an engineering feat, they built a strong rapport with their colleagues.

He said: "The Iraqis are self-sufficient and know what they're doing. When we finished one camp section, two of them brought in a dinner of traditional Iraqi fare. We sat down with them and ate it all. Although we have to accept the fact that building the wall might take longer, we are boosting the Iraqi economy."

Clockwise from main picture, Concrete collaboration: Spt Tony Sivo works with Iraqi contractors on the Great Wall

Explosive partnership: Sappers train Iraqi trainers in the arts of mine awareness and detecting unexploded ordnance

Super-size me: Sappers stand tall as monuments to the engineers' skill as they provide 24-hour COB watch

Get stuck in: Donned in full combat, the sappers clear a route of debris after a roadside bomb attack



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On the pull

Vehicle recovery a walk in the park for Army's 32-tonne metal monster

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

RESCUING the heaviest military wheeled vehicles will become light work with the upcoming deployment of a fleet of 32-tonne recovery trucks.

From next month, 288 of the mammoth rigs will be available in Iraq and Afghanistan to go to the aid of stricken vehicles.

The roll-out follows a year of extensive trials by the combat service support trials and development unit (CSS TDU), at Aldershot, and 2iC Capt John Sibley, REME, is confident the trucks will make a big difference at the sharp end of operations.

"We have put this through its paces and everyone has been delighted with how it performed," explained Capt Sibley. "It's a massive step and change in technology."

Developed by MAN Truck and Bus UK, the recovery giants will replace the existing Foden fleet and are a key part of a £1.3billion, 7,285 support vehicle upgrade programme.

The imposing size and weight of the trucks masks a surprisingly nimble 440BHP engine capable of tackling tricky terrain without too much trouble.

At the scene of a stranded vehicle,

the crew can deploy a powerful crane capable of lifting up to 13 tonnes at a distance of 2.5 metres.

If the vehicles are unable to move under their own steam, the recovery trucks can step into the breach by towing up to 44 tonnes of stranded roadside metal.

"The recovery vehicles are incredibly fast considering their size," said Capt Sibley. "They move across the ground so much quicker than the Foden and that will come into its own in situations like a convoy."

Taking the wheel of one of the gargantuan trucks in theatre poses a different challenge to driving one in the UK, but troops can be reassured that the vehicles are designed with the rigours of operations in mind.

Intelligent self-levelling suspension and eight driven wheels make light work of all but the toughest conditions, while the real-time diagnostics will help the crew solve problems as they occur.

The threat posed by explosions and small-arms fire has been addressed with the provision of an appliqué armour pack which can be fitted when required. All the vehicles have a Bowman radio communication system capability.

Aside from mechanical improvements, much thought has been given to the design of the cabs to improve

working conditions for those on board.

Air-conditioning will help keep temperatures down during the imposing heat of the Afghan or Iraqi summers and other additions include GPS navigation and a water heating system.

"The guys now have a much more comfortable cab than they have had in the past," concluded Capt Sibley. "There's a lot of gear that would be standard in a family car." ■

FACT FILE:

Engine: 440BHP, 10.5ltr, six-cylinder common rail turbo diesel

Emissions: Compliant with European legislation

Weight: 32 tonnes

Crane capability: 15 tonnes at 2.3m

Tow capability: 44 tonnes

Main winch: 25 tonnes

Extras: Self-levelling suspension, appliqué armour pack, Bowman radio

Fuel: Diesel or aviation fuel

In-Service date: August 2008



Lift-off: Rescuing crashed trucks from ditches is a breeze thanks to the 32-tonne recovery vehicle's formidable power

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Iron men

Troops power-up on pre-parachute selection course »



Head for heights: Commissioned candidate, 2nd Lt Christopher Smith, The Parachute Regiment, heaves himself to the top of the trainasium – designed to test and overcome a fear of heights



Report: Heidi Mines

Pictures: Graeme Main

As one soldier's head hits the ground, another is violently sick. Dragging their exhausted, soaking bodies to their feet, they carry on – the fear of failure far greater than any physical agony.

This is P Company, short for Pegasus Company, one of the hardest and most challenging selection processes in the military. Open to both sexes and all ranks, anyone can have a go.

However, having won battle honours in every major conflict in which it has fought, The Parachute Regiment is zealous in upholding its fearsome reputation. Many fail this test, undone by injury or pounded into submission by mental stress. The prize for those who pass is the right to wear the maroon beret.

Speaking from the Infantry Training Battalion in Catterick, North Yorkshire, OC P Company Maj Sam McGrath told *Soldier* that although the P Company programme is exhausting, it is designed to hammer troops into shape for battle.

"For many, P Company is the first thing they will have tackled in the military that they are not 100 per cent sure they are going to pass," he said.

"In order to select the qualities needed,

we have to get people into a position where they are stressed and tired so their real character qualities come to the fore.

"However, passing P Company gives people the realisation they can overcome something that they didn't think they were capable of doing – and this is valuable when they find themselves in a firefight or living in a trench."

Those who tackle The Parachute Regiment's gritty selection regime are exposed to eight tests designed to find out what they are really made of. The challenges include a demanding eight-mile tab, endurance march and steeplechase.

Each of the trials replicates an obstacle that a paratrooper will face in conflict. The log race simulates carrying ammunition to the front line and the trainasium – a giant climbing obstacle – quickly reveals whether candidates can overcome their fear of heights and go on to jump from an aircraft.

One of the most controversial tests is milling, where opponents of similar height and weight punch it out in a controlled

environment. It is included to encourage potential paras to remain focused in the battlefield environment.

Soldier spoke to Pte Sam Lake, a Para hopeful who was preparing for his 15th week of training and about to embark on P Company. The former professional footballer with Premiership club West

Ham United admitted he was nervous about the physical test ahead.

"I have always wanted to strive for the best and Parachute Regiment selection was something that would push me to my limit," said the 20-year-old. "My brother is in The Royal Anglian Regiment and I wanted to be better than him."

"I'm apprehensive about P Company but I am ready, and want it out of the way."

Despite the daunting trial ahead, Pte Lake was well aware of why the tough regime was essential. All four battalions have deployed to Afghanistan – a first in modern times – and the tempo of ops means selecting the right soldiers is vital.

Instructor Sgt Ryan Swindale stressed that the demands on the regiment meant

I have always wanted to strive for the best and Parachute Regiment selection was something that would push me to my limit'



P Company had to be one of the most demanding military selection processes in the British Army.

"It has to be of the traditional standard so that when you see the maroon beret you know what someone has been through and that you can rely on them."

Sgt Swindale was speaking as the P Company candidates lined up on a bench, waiting their turn to see the duty medic for injuries picked up doing the harsh programme. Patched up, they all returned for more – overcoming pain is part of this test.

Although the selection process is brutal and relatively unchanged since Winston Churchill's call for the first airborne forces in 1940, it attracts the most committed. More than 60 per cent of participants pass the course and most of those who achieve the maroon beret go on to be awarded their coveted wings.

Maj McGrath explained that the process produces men who go on to become some of Britain's finest soldiers. "I think P Company speaks for itself in the fact that only a small proportion of the Army has passed it and yet they make up more than 50 per cent of our most élite forces." ■



Main picture, Stretched to the limit:
P Company instructor Sgt Ryan Swindale steers candidates through the stretcher race, designed to simulate moving a casualty from the front line

Above, Maintain the aim: Spr Chris Branston-Davis, RE, during the build-up phase, which is designed to fatigue and exhaust to determine if an individual has what it takes to be a para



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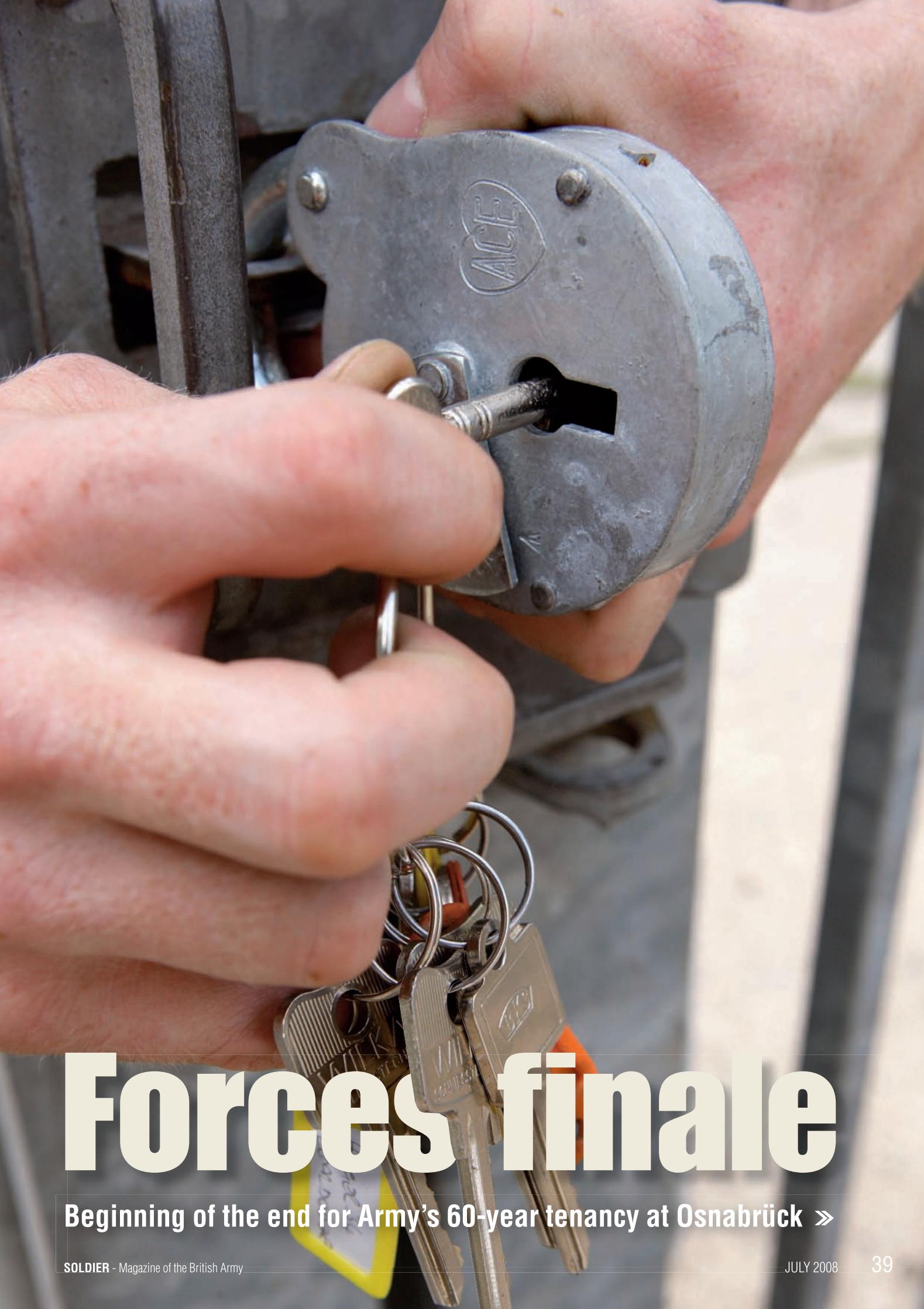


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Forces finale

Beginning of the end for Army's 60-year tenancy at Osnabrück »

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE gates to the first German garrison captured by the British Army as the allies advanced on Berlin in 1945 will begin shutting this month, marking the end of 63 years in Osnabrück.

British troops start a journey home that began when the 4th Armoured Division muscled into the town at the end of the Second World War. Their actions helped topple the Third Reich, founded a long period of British forces based in the towns of Osnabrück and Münster, and revealed two officers destined for eminent careers.

Willie Whitelaw (later 1st Viscount Whitelaw and a Conservative politician), and Robert Runcie, who was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, served with the 3rd Battalion, Scots Guards. Both had won the Military Cross for exceptional bravery and both stormed Osnabrück Garrison, wresting it from the demoralised defenders.

Lt Col Willie Swinton, CO of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards based in Münster, grew up in the town when his father, later Maj Gen Sir John Swinton commanded the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards. He recalled the first-hand accounts regaled by his family's German housekeeper of British tanks rumbling into the garrison.

"The Luftwaffe took out a couple of Scots Guards' tanks by the river so they had to go round by the zoo and it was Robert Runcie who had to recce the site. But by the time the guards were storming across to the officers' mess, the Germans had given up," he told *Soldier*, adding that the enduring historical bond with the garrison made it hard to leave.

"It will be a defining moment when we move from here to Catterick as a battalion. It will break an unbroken link between Münster and the footguards and will be a very sad day, as we have been here since 1945 when the garrison was captured. The move is going to be good, but we are going to miss this place."

After helping to rebuild post-war Germany, the British remained as part of Nato during the Cold War. Now, as British Forces Germany are re-housed into three super-garrisons – Gütersloh, which will subsume Münster's barracks, Bergen-Hohne and Paderborn – Osnabrück's barracks are being emptied. The German authorities are preparing to revamp the buildings to meet the local community's needs.

The drawing down of the five barracks and 1,350 married quarters began last November when the 4th Mechanized Brigade resident in Osnabrück deployed to Iraq.

The small rear party juggled supporting the forward troops with



clearing schools and medical centres and helping families pack up for the move beginning this summer and concluding next spring.

Col (Retd) Peter Davies, drawdown project officer, confirmed that 1,800 military personnel and 1,250 spouses and children will move in July and August. Up to 30 families will leave daily, with convoys of removal trucks squeezing down narrow roads to get to the quarters.

"It amounts to a massive operation and you can't send a family to Catterick until the Catterick family has been moved out.

"So there's a massive chain that needs to be coordinated," said Col Davies of the logistics of closing down the garrison that became recognised as the British

Pictures clockwise from main,
First catch: The officers' mess,
Osnabrück Garrison

Boxed in: WO1 (SMI) Mark Gresty,
APTC, gets packing for the move

Café culture: The city centre offers a
relaxing atmosphere for families

Rathaus: Osnabrück's Town Hall

Scoff house: The 1 SG junior ranks'
dining hall

Army's largest outside Aldershot.

"I'm very sad, as I started out here in 1972 when I was first commissioned. A lot of people served here and a lot of children were schooled here so, in many ways, it's the end of an era."

As British troops officially wave goodbye to six decades in the town on

July 19, the 500 locally employed civilians who work for the garrison have until next March to find new work. The garrison labour support unit (GLSU) was busy trying to transfer employees, of which 30 per cent are former British soldiers, to other German bases.

"There are still people in Osnabrück who don't believe the garrison will close. It has taken time to sink in because we have people

'I served 24 years in the Army and it will be strange not to have soldiers in Osnabrück'



Thoughts on living and working in Germany and returning to the UK

Gdsm Iain Spence, SG

You can easily travel to France so I have been there for a weekend. I want to go to Berlin as my dad was in the Scots Guards and we used to live near there. I'm excited about going to Catterick as it's closer to my home in Edinburgh. The Z-type accommodation is better, as everyone gets a single room.



Gemma Barr married to Sgt Chris Barr, R Signals

Osnabrück is a really nice city and the people are friendly. The cost of living is a huge advantage. I'm not looking forward to moving to Catterick and UK prices are a major factor. We're settled and happy here and then we have to move, but that's the way of the Army.



Lt Rob Newnham, RA

Osnabrück is awesome and I love it. It's something a bit different and the mess life is great, as people can't go home at the weekend, so we all go off together. Moving to Topcliffe will be fine and you have to move where the Army tells you to. But I think the camp life will be different and the mess life will decline as people will be away at the weekends.



who have worked here for 35 years so the closure for them creates quite a dramatic situation," explained Volker Loewen, civil personnel officer in the GLSU. He said the early announcement of the closure had given the team time to help their employees train for formal qualifications and secure alternative work. He was also concerned about the impact on Osnabrück's economy when the troops leave for the UK.

"It will be quite a loss when the British go. It is a difficult point because the community is looking forward to getting all the land back but I don't think they have an idea of what the garrison closing will mean to them."

Packing up more than 60 years of history unearthed a few surprises squirreled away in cellars and attics in Quebec Barracks, the first to be cleared out. Spare parts for Chieftain Tanks and ledgers recording furniture issued in 1949 were unearthed

by Chris Mackey, the garrison accounts manager and a former soldier posted to Germany with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment.

"I served 24 years in the Army and it will be strange not to have soldiers in Osnabrück. The drawdown is going smoothly because it's been well planned and everybody has been given good direction from the garrison and from the UK.

"We've kept ourselves clean and tidy and been good tenants." ■



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Full circle

One year after the end of Operation Banner, Northern Ireland relishes its return to normality »

Sign of the times: The Belfast Wheel demonstrates the province's progress since the successful conclusion of Britain's longest-running military commitment

Picture: Steve Dock





Left, Mean streets: A soldier stands guard on a Belfast road at the height of the Troubles

Main picture, Stark contrast: The same street thriving following the end of Op Banner

Right, All change: Images of Belfast past and present

Pictures: Sgt Will Craig RLC and DPO (NI)



Report: Stephen Tyler

TOWERING over the centre of a vibrant European capital, the Belfast Wheel stands as a glowing testimony to the success of Britain's longest-running military commitment.

The sight of the giant attraction in a city remembered by a generation of soldiers more for its turmoil than its tourism reflects the optimism and progress that has engulfed Northern Ireland since Operation Banner reached its conclusion last July after 38 hard-fought years.

As many as 25,700 troops were deployed across the water during the peak of the Troubles, but as the political situation thawed so too did the need for manpower and just ten out of an original 105 military bases remained in use at the operation's end.

But far from cutting its ties with a province it had worked so hard to bring peace to, the Army is instead making giant strides in building bridges with the very communities it spent decades locked in a bloody battle with.

"We have all been surprised by the pace of normalisation," explained Northern Ireland civil secretary Vincent Devine, the province's most senior civil servant. "All the changes we hoped to make we have achieved early and without problems and I think that is because the people here are sick and tired of violence and the economic impact that it has."

"I'm always overwhelmed when I go out and meet the local people at the sense of waste they feel over the last 30 years and the strong desire they have to put it behind them."

"Now they are putting their family lives before their politics."

Looking at the lives of troops stationed in Northern Ireland today lends weight to the argument that the situation there has reached an unprecedented level of normality.

Heading outside the wire without a weapon 20 years ago was unheard of, but soldiers based in the province today

think nothing of heading into Belfast for a night on the town, venturing into the lush surrounding countryside or even driving south across the border into the Republic of Ireland.

Likewise, transport links to the capital and beyond have flourished and several budget airlines operate between Belfast and the mainland to make travelling between England and Northern Ireland much easier.

The improvements have not gone unappreciated by soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, who began their move into Palace Barracks in Holywood, in March.

After a spell in Hounslow, many of the Mercians treated the trip across the Irish Sea with trepidation because of the perceived distance from their Midland home towns, but it has not taken long for the new-and-improved Northern Ireland to win them over.

"For the people that had been here during Op Banner, the situation is so different," said Cpl Marc Bloor, who served in the province on three previous occasions.

"There are still areas you don't go to and some of the younger lads can come here after going to Afghanistan thinking that they're indestructible which isn't the right attitude, but if you use your common sense then there is no danger."

"It's a stable environment for us to be in. We try to look for the positives in every situation and there are a lot of them here."

The Army's presence in Northern Ireland will grow to around 5,000 personnel this summer when the final elements of 19 (Light) Brigade arrive to join 38 (Irish) Brigade, which draws most of its strength from a thriving Territorial Army contingent.

Regular troops will be stationed at Palace Barracks, Headquarter Northern Ireland's (HQNI) Thiepval Barracks at Lisburn, Abercorn Barracks at Ballykinler or at RAF Aldergrove. Training areas at Ballykinler and Magilligan in Londonderry have been adapted to provide theatre-

specific training opportunities. New accommodation blocks are currently being built across the province to modernise Op Banner's campaign infrastructure and Maj Gen Chris Brown, General Officer Commanding HQNI, told *Soldier* that the work reflects the Army's long-term commitment there.

"We are seeing more acceptance in all elements of society and I think that in ten years time there will be much greater integration between us and the local community," he said.

"The British Army is no longer here to support the police, it is here to prepare to deploy overseas and the vast majority of people here have sympathy with that."

"People now have a sense of ownership in the communities and have too much to lose by going back to violence," he added.

For all of the positive steps being taken between the military and all sections of Northern Ireland's diverse communities, soldiers serving in the province still have to take precautions and use common sense to avoid trouble.

Certain areas remain out of bounds, but traditional enemies at the top of the political tree are doing their best to break down any remaining barriers by leading by example.

"There is a Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Belfast who invited me to stand alongside him at a commemoration of the Battle of the Somme," added Maj Gen Brown.

"That sort of thing is happening everywhere and we are increasingly welcome in areas where we were once treated with at best antipathy and, on some occasions, outright hostility."

"Northern Ireland used to be a posting of choice and that was lost over the last 38 years."

"I'm under no illusions that it will become that again overnight, but we are making good progress."

Op Banner cost the lives of 763 Service personnel and left thousands more injured, but veterans of the conflict can feel rightly proud of the peace they helped bring to the streets of Northern Ireland. ■

● Banner blogs – Page 90





Claret, blues and bubbly

Ex-hooligan and Forces fan talks about commanding West Ham's cockney rebels and forging a new career after war on the terraces

Interview: Cliff Caswell

Picture: Steve Dock

To his foster parents and legion of friends, Cass Pennant was the best man you could know – loyal to the point that he would risk everything to defend you in the line of fire.

But for those who found themselves in his bad books, the very appearance of this human tank of a football hooligan was enough to inspire fear in the hardest of foes. In the thick of stadium violence in the 1970s and 80s, Pennant's reputation made him the scourge of opponents, police and politicians alike.

But, after two spells in prison, surviving a stabbing, being shot three times and beaten within an inch of his life, the former leader of West Ham's Inter City Firm (ICF) discovered the pen is truly mightier than the sword.

Renouncing his violent past, he has become a successful writer with a string of acclaimed books to his name. His autobiography, *Cass*, has just been made into a film and he is in demand as a speaker from universities to prisons. Still a faithful Hammers fan, he is also a huge supporter of the Armed Forces.

"There has always been a strong backing for the military from the terraces and from the football websites," the 50-year-old said. "So there should be – soldiers are our boys and belong in the real world. History will decide whether the politics behind Iraq or Afghanistan were right, but we should always support our soldiers. Every person, every government department and politician, whether Liberal, Labour or Conservative, should be behind them and proud to show it."

While Pennant has never donned a uniform, he has seen some serious action in his life. Given up for adoption by his natural mother and fostered by an elderly couple, Doll and Cecil Chambers, he had to learn to handle himself after becoming a target for racist attacks while growing

up in London's East End. Football – and West Ham United – became an escape and a regular part of the youngster's social scene, but he was drawn into the fights between rival fans that plagued English football in the 1970s and 80s.

After he became leader of the ICF – named after the Inter City trains the fans used to travel to away games – his notoriety attracted interest from rival gangs and the authorities.

"One of the things that really hit home during those years of violence was the fact that we were dubbed mindless thugs and scum of the earth," Pennant recalled.

"The stereotype of the ICF was that we were far right, which was not the case; nor were we skinheads or boozers and our culture was anti-drugs. When the Falklands War came along in 1982, because of our ages some people started comparing us with the soldiers who were fighting in the South Atlantic. Here you had two distinct groups of young males on two different paths – one serving a purpose that suited the government of the time, and the other that was completely negative to it."

As the battle raged for the Falklands, Pennant's forays were frequently landing him in trouble. With the courts under pressure to make an example of hooligans, he found himself behind bars on two occasions as a result of contacts with rival firms. But it was during his long spells inside that he discovered he enjoyed reading and writing.

Having taken his first steps in putting pen to paper about his experiences fighting on the terraces, he set about changing his life on his release.

He turned his attention to the London club scene and forged a reputation as an effective and professional leader of a firm of door staff. But the past caught up with him when he was recognised by an old opponent and gunned down.

Left fighting for his life in hospital, Pennant miraculously clawed his way back to full physical health only to find that his nightmare was just beginning. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder soon became obvious and he admitted that he had huge sympathy with troops suffering from the condition.

"I had been asked if I wanted to see a quack while I was still in hospital," Pennant said. "But I assumed that this meant people in white coats so I discharged myself. In the end I had to go and see somebody simply to keep my own family together. It worked and I'm sure that many soldiers will also have found that, while you find it difficult to share your experiences with the people closest to you, it is possible to tell a stranger."

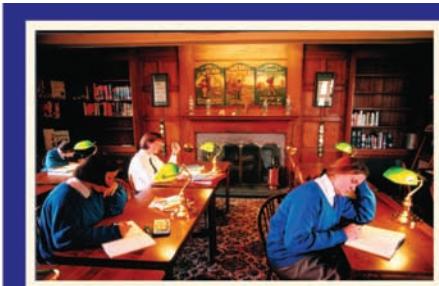
'We were dubbed mindless thugs and scum of the earth'

Fully recovered, Pennant rediscovered his writing talents, immersing himself in telling his story. Forming his own publishing company, Pennant Books, he has since enjoyed huge success in his work, which hit a new high with the release of *Cass* (Page 73).

The ex-hooligan has also been receiving acclaim as a public speaker and has won special praise for visiting inmates in jail to explain how writing changed his life.

"When I was locked up there was a man who kept throwing books at me, but back then I felt it was unmanly to read," Pennant added. "I remember him educating me that reading was the only time in prison that you could be free. He was right. A book is not only powerful, it can be a life-changing experience." ■

We have three signed copies of Cass's autobiography to give away. To stand a chance of winning one, tell us at which ground West Ham United play their home matches? Answers by post or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk). Usual rules apply. Closing date is July 31.



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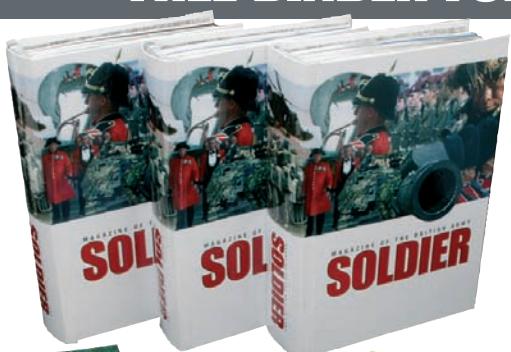
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TALKBACK

Front-line cool takes grip

WITH regard to the Annoyed RSM and the toy monkey business (Talkback, recent issues), at least the Coldstreamers appear to have shaved and look uniformly professional, unlike Prince Harry and his crew.

The look and state of those who have endured the privations of service "down range" in Afghanistan has, regrettably, given rise among many of those in theatre to a genre of boys trying to be men. Yes, the dress state of some British troops away from the front line is pretty appalling and, like the issue DPM *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* shorts, often a source of embarrassment.

PS...

READING Cpl David Taylor's letter (May) on how the Army's compassionate cell got him home from Basra reminded me of being flown home because of the impending death of my father during the Malaya conflict 50 years ago. I was on patrol in thick jungle when I was told a helicopter would pick me up at a clearing. I was flown back to base, driven to Singapore and put on a Qantas flight to London, where I was issued with a warrant at Goodge St Station. I was home in South Wales in just five days. After the funeral I was given four weeks' compassionate leave then flown back to Malaya. – Bryan Bees, ex-South Wales Borderers.

PRIZE LETTER

Even some of the Army and Royal Air Force personnel living in the relative luxury of Kandahar Air Field have those who try to look like dodgy extras dressed by the local Army surplus store in a cross between *Life on Mars* and the *Wild Geese*, with Gene

Hunt's sideburns and sports bra pistol holsters.

Why do they do it? Or more depressingly, as the RSM alluded, why do officers and SNCOs tolerate it? I don't know, but Afghanistan has its fair share of Walter Mitty wannabes.

But as with trying to find out why soldiers buy food when the cookhouse is open and free, or spend money on kit, the replica of which is on issue, you are wasting your time. The answer is elusive.

As explained by a senior staff officer of the incoming HQ 16 Air Assault Brigade, the boys just want to look a bit



"It's just that my girlfriend sent me an electric razor for my birthday."

"ally". There is probably a syndrome to explain it – military grunge? There were even those who returned from R and R unshaven and with long hair. I guess they just want to blend in again quickly.

It's excruciating, weird, even dysfunctional, and certainly poor operational discipline, but the chain of command lets them get away with it and if it makes them feel better about themselves, part of the team and at one with the desert, then why not?

Being the product of a harder age, the regimental sergeant major and I may not recognise it, but we probably need to move on. After all, these boys and girls are all we've got, and the vast majority are doing a terrific job in trying circumstances whatever they look like.

Moreover, they have stood up to the plate and put selflessness before self. And that's what really matters. – Lt Col (UKA) R S Combe, SO1 J7 FD.

Please could I have time to keep fit?

REGARDING the letter "I have to pay to use the gym" (March), I also pay to use a gym as I work in London and live out of town. My local gym is not open when I leave for work at 0600 or get home at 2000.

I notice the reply states: "Army personnel are expected to maintain fitness levels even when posted to non-military or isolated units."

This sounds to me like it is part of my contract to keep fit. I work in a very busy Army Careers and Information Office from 0830 to 1700, with ten minutes for lunch, and have to train in my own free time to keep my levels of fitness up.

If the Army expects us to keep fit they should provide time for us to do so. – Sgt S Lovell, ACIO Strand.

Brief is best

YOUR letters provide a real insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas . . . but please keep them brief. Emails (mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk) MUST include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). Anonymous letters go in the bin. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command. Our postal address is on Page 5.

Log on to www.soldiermagazine.co.uk for more of your letters

Laundered money?

HAVING heard rumours about tax relief for laundry expenses I asked the tax office if there was any truth in them and was surprised to learn that members of HM Forces are entitled to two allowances – Work Clothing Allowance and Flat Rate Expenses.

What's more, we are entitled to backdate claims for seven years. Knowing this was worth around £950 (about £140 a year), I wrote to the Revenue at the end of March and also called to check again that we were entitled. We were.

Later I was told by a different operator that I wasn't entitled to anything and advised by yet another that the issue was pending a decision by the MoD, as soldiers are provided with laundry facilities. Are we?

A call to the QM's department and the cleaning manager suggested we are, and that all I need to do is drop my dirty uniform off on either a Tuesday or a Thursday and I will get it back nice and clean a week later.

Call me old-fashioned, but that means if I wear uniform on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday I will have three sets of dirty uniform and



QM's idea . . . it fills a need, it's cheap and it's a nice little earner for the PRI."

nothing clean, so I go to work in my underwear and drop off the laundry on the Thursday. On Friday, and for the following three working days I have nothing to wear until I get my clean uniform back on Thursday.

It would appear that HMRC are waiting for a decision from the MoD as to whether or not we are actually entitled to anything. Why?

My tax matters are between me and the tax man. If the MoD has any role

to play, surely it is to confirm to HMRC that it does not provide me with a workable laundry facility, and that I am entitled to claim.

This does not begin to account for haircuts, shaving and so on, because apparently they are not solely for work use. Really? Strange, because if I grew my hair I would soon have Queen's Regs pointed out to me. Please advise? – **SSgt, name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: You have received conflicting advice, most of which is wrong. Tax relief for laundry is a myth. The rules under which employees can receive tax relief for costs they incur are very strict.

HMRC has made it clear to the MoD that there is no tax relief for laundry, shoe polish or haircuts. These are regarded as personal expenses whether one is in the Forces or not.

A Defence Information Notice is due to be published on this subject in the near future. Regrettably, the current regulations (JSP 886) do not stipulate the turnaround time for a laundry service.

May I suggest that if it really is unworkable, you approach your QM to see if the contract could be improved.

Uniform grant was old news

THE letter (May) about a civil servant paying a Territorial Army officer a uniform grant and then having to get the officer to repay £1,744 jumped out at me because the topic of uniform grants for TA officers was discussed by our unit recently.

PS...

THERE is a lot of help for soldiers in Germany wanting to buy tax-free cars or cheap parts but I struggled to find the cheapest place to buy motorbike parts.

I set up BFG Motorcyclists in Yahoo and via it you can raise motorbike issues or sell gear. You can add photos and there is a calendar of events. The link is <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/BFGMOTORCYCLING/> or people can email me direct at geordiedunbar@yahoo.co.uk or call me on (mil) 94868 3876. – Cpl James Dunbar, 628 Signal Troop.

We concluded that, in line with the new JSP 752, the grant was only to be paid to Regular officers and that the Reserve Forces would receive a minimal annual uniform upkeep grant.

The figure of £378 referred to was the last updated rate of the initial outfit allowance for TA officers paid in accordance with Chapter 15 of the old Regulations for Army Allowances and Charges, which has been superseded by

JSP, so it is astonishing that this advice was passed to the unit by the SPS chain of command.

We have, as an aside, approached our local SPS Branch stating that we are bemused by the fact that the new regulation did not include the initial outfit allowance, but we don't hold much hope of getting it reinstated. – **WO2 (SQMS) Bob Vickers, RAOWO, 204 Hosp.**

Fuel allowance has fallen behind

LAST August payment of HDT (Residence to Place of Duty) was reduced by 1p a mile in recognition that car servicing costs and the price of fuel had reduced (during some undetermined period).

Since then fuel prices have shot through the roof.

When are we likely to see a rise in HDT to properly reflect these increases, or is this another case of the MoD being quick to take away but slow to take action when the issue is no longer beneficial to the MoD? – **Lt Col M**

S Handscomb, Quartermaster, 23 Engineer Regiment.

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: I have answered several letters on this subject in past issues. MMA (and therefore HDT) rates are calculated annually using external data from the AA and taking into account other costs such as insurance, road tax and car value depreciation.

Much of this external data is only reviewed annually. Having said all that, you will note that the rates increased by 13 per cent to 28.3p a mile from April 1.

Next it'll be booties for this 'booty'

IREAD in the minutes of a recent dress committee meeting that women do not want to wear the issue maternity wear. Having just received mine, I see why.

While I have no objection to green woollen trousers despite not resembling any other uniform currently worn, I suggest men be issued shirts using their inside leg measurement, which will be as accurate as ordering trousers by chest size as I was required to do.

I do, however, object to wearing shirts in Royal Marines colours. The vast majority of the Army wears beige shirts in barrack dress and so should I.

The clothing store tried to convince me that Army officers wear stone-coloured shirts. Having only recently been issued No 2 dress shirts, I can assure them that this is not the case.

So what are my choices? Wear civilian clothing at my own expense (luckily I have a line management that will allow this) or dress as a Marine with Army beige rank slides against a stone-coloured shirt? Why does the Army not have its own maternity wear? – **Name and address supplied.**

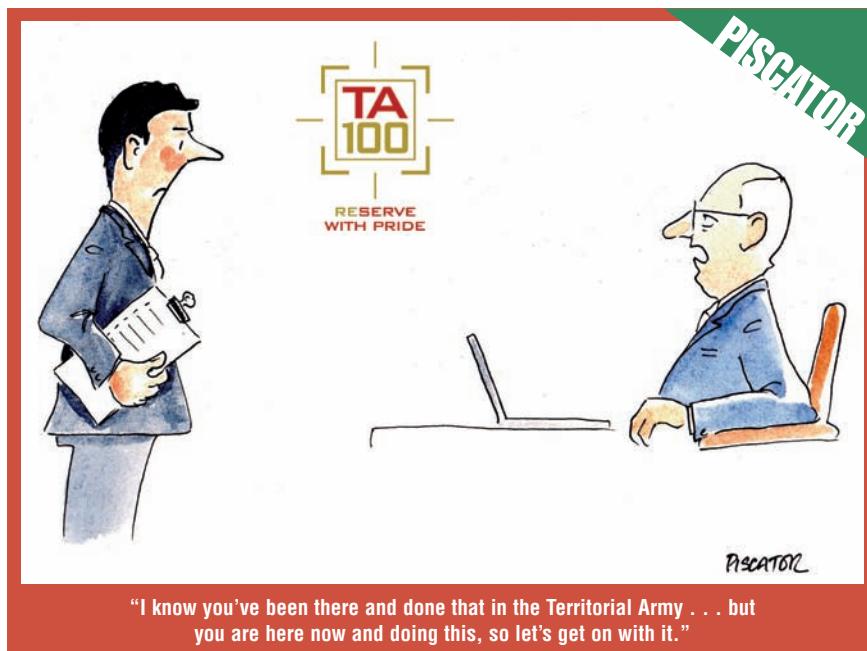
Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Fair point, but maternity wear is a tri-Service issue. Therefore issued maternity clothing includes stone-coloured shirts (labelled S/SL/RM), and stone-coloured dresses (labelled Army/RM). As indicated in the dress committee minutes, we have recognised that something needs to be done in this area, and it is being looked at.

When size matters

MY first quarter was a semi in Aldershot for which I paid £192 a month. I moved to a terrace house in Preston and my charge is the same.

Neighbours pay £126 and have been told they are paying for four bedrooms even though they are in a three-bed house. My house is exactly the same – three-bedroom – so why is it a grade two type C, at £192+ a month while a four-bed is grade three type D at £126+ a month? – **LCpl J J Robb, 5 GS Medical Regiment.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: In simple terms, the rent you pay is determined by the size of your quarter and its condition. So the rent for a small type C grade two is higher than that for a large type D grade three because the grade three house is in poorer condition than the grade two house.



"I know you've been there and done that in the Territorial Army . . . but you are here now and doing this, so let's get on with it."



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New arrival means we need larger MQ

I AM due to move to Catterick in August so filled out a housing form before my husband went to Iraq. We later discovered I was pregnant.

I have a four-year-old girl and am due to give birth to a boy. We have been allocated a two-bedroom house in Catterick and are worried that we will not have room for a newborn baby and a four-year-old. I asked the welfare officer if we could change but was told it would make no difference.

Many other families here with only one – or no – child have been allocated three bedrooms, so why do I only get two? – **Mrs G Wright, Catterick.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Service Families Accommodation (SFA) entitlement is driven by family size and unborn children. You are entitled to a type C house with three bedrooms. However, where these are in short supply, it may be

necessary for families with two children under five to occupy a type B house with only two bedrooms.

This may have happened to you in Catterick, where houses are in short supply. However, on the assumption that during your posting to Catterick your elder child will turn five, you have a strong case for insisting on your entitlement to a type C. Ask your unit welfare officer to contact my staff on 94344 8220, or ring them direct on 01980 618220.

● **THE article on Palestine ("End of days", June) by Cliff Caswell and Steve Dock was excellent. There was a myriad memories, stories and anecdotes flying around on the day of the 60th anniversary and your article captured the essence perfectly.** – Tony Costello (ex-3 Para, Nahariya, Oct 1947), The Parachute Regimental Association, Hull Branch.



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Get on your bike, MoD

BIKE to Work is a Government initiative to encourage all of us to cycle to work and which the MoD has, so far quite dismally, failed to adopt despite pressure from the Services cycling organisations.

It offers the employee the benefit of significant discounts (as much as 49 per cent) on bicycle purchase through a salary sacrifice scheme. The employer (MoD), in return, gets a healthy, happy and invigorated employee and the knowledge that there are real benefits to the environment.

Why has the MoD failed to adopt this initiative? It makes absolutely no sense to me. Besides, I need a new bike so would like to benefit from the discount. – **Maj Stuart Whitticase, EDP Programme Manager, Brunei Garrison.**

I RECENTLY discovered that the Government has set up a scheme so employees can take advantage of tax exemptions to buy a bicycle and safety equipment to use for journeys to and from work.



"Full marks to Whitticombe, eh Jenkins? It's economic, engenders team spirit and, best of all, leaves minimal carbon footprint."

The scheme costs nothing to the employer and the employee can save around 33 per cent on the cost of equipment from new.

It sounds like a fantastic scheme for those who wish to do their bit for the environment, save a fortune on commuting and burn off a few calories. I want to know if the scheme is operated by the MoD but have drawn a blank. – **Capt P Griffiths, QM, 34 (N) Signal Regiment.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Thank you for your letter regarding the Cycle to Work scheme, which allows employers to provide tax-free loans of up to £1,000 to cover the purchase of bicycles and safety-related cycling equipment for use when commuting to work.

At present, Service personnel do not have access to a Cycle to Work scheme. One of the prerequisites is for payments to be made to employees through a salary sacrifice mechanism, which has some tax and National Insurance contribution advantages for individuals.

Existing pay systems, and JPA, do not have this facility at present. It is intended to introduce salary sacrifice to JPA after full roll-out, but the priority to do so is for a Childcare Voucher Scheme, which offers higher potential savings to a larger group of Service personnel and their families than does the Cycle to Work scheme.

The MoD is considering whether to introduce other salary sacrifice schemes, such as the Cycle to Work scheme, as part of ongoing remuneration work. Once a decision has been made on the issue, personnel will be informed accordingly.

Service doesn't count for this medal

I GATHER from various publications on honours and awards that personnel serving on Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) or Non-Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS) contracts are ineligible for the award of the Queen's Volunteer Reserve Medal (QVRM).

Given the high numbers of TA personnel serving on these contracts, does this not strike you as being unfair?

I understand that it is possible for a Regular soldier to count service with the TA (NRPS, for example) as qualifying service for the award of the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. Can you confirm this? Are there any moves to rectify this anomaly? – **Name and address supplied.**

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, Medal Office, responds: This is a very detailed area of the regulations. The following is a summary:

QVRM: As you are aware this is a very prestigious award and only 13 are awarded annually to Reserve Forces who undertake their voluntary enforcement obligation to call-out and embodiment.

What this means is that although FTRS and NRPS personnel are employed under the Reserve Forces Act, they are under no obligation to call-out so are unlikely to be selected for the award.

LS and GC: The criteria for the award of this medal are that a person must have

served 15 years' reckonable service. When my staff assess for the award they are able to determine reckonable and non-reckonable service from personal records – reckonable is the same as embodiment or mobilised.

Therefore reckonable service is Regular service and non-reckonable is reservist service. A TA person who serves on operational tours with the TA will have this time recorded as reckonable service. Thus if he subsequently joins the Regular forces he will be allowed to have his reckonable service added to his Regular reckonable service to count towards his 15 years.

The main issue here is that he or she cannot have time counted twice, once for the LS and GC and again for VRSM. Most reservists who complete an operational tour are content to count the tour of duty as the training requirement for the year and thereby qualify for the annual bounty.

FTRS and NRPS personnel are under no such obligation to be called up and so it is very unlikely they will accrue reckonable service, and therefore will not accrue time towards the LS and GC medal. I recognise there are always exceptions to the rule, however as stated, it will depend on accruing reckonable service time.

Volunteer Reserve Service Medal (VRSM): On the other hand, both FTRS and NRPS service counts towards the award of the VRSM. Again time cannot be counted twice.

PS...

REFERENCE previous letters in these pages about the award of a Cold War medal, the Canadian forces have a medal for service in Germany – the Special Service Medal with Nato bar – which is awarded for a minimum of six months' service.

After the Remembrance Sunday parade last year I sat in a Royal Canadian Legion canteen next to a younger Canadian who was wearing the SSM with a Nato bar. He told me he had served only eight months in Germany before the Canadian Brigade returned to Canada.

I served in BAOR three times for a total of more than 11 years and have nothing to show for it. The Canadian medal had to be approved by the Queen, so why can't one be approved for British forces? – John Reynolds, Medicine Hat, Canada.

● "Veterans medal lacks visibility" – turn to Page 55 for more readers' views on the award of a UK defence medal

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A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Iraq.	A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Afghanistan.			
A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Iraq.	A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Iraq.	The official logo of the Combined Forces Command for Afghanistan in 2006.	A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Afghanistan.	A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Iraq.
A cartoon illustration of a British soldier in a desert setting with a map of Iraq.				

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Counselling services not in demand

I WRITE regarding the support – or lack of it – for Servicemen and women returning from operational theatres.

I am a qualified counsellor within easy reach of Aldershot Garrison and other military establishments and offer home counselling for people unable to get out. I have heard serving and ex-Service personnel comment about the length of waiting lists for counselling support and was told one involved an 18-month delay.

In the past six months I have been told by Combat Stress that my services could not be used and had no response from SSAFA Forces Help (South).

I come from a military background, have been CRB-cleared many times as I

have worked for MoD and the Criminal Justice Department, and have personal insight into Army life.

I am experienced in working with people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, life issues and many more problems but my genuine attempt to offer to help soldiers via counselling feels like it is being turned down at every attempt.

Yet so many former Servicemen seem to end up homeless and “self-medication” with alcohol and drugs. I’d like to “do my bit”, so where do I start?

– Una Hanson (homecounselling@hotmail.co.uk), Yateley, Hants.

Col Beverly Bergman, AD Health Policy, replies:

Advance could help those living abroad

I OWN and live in my own home in Germany and have done so for the past four years, apart from a seven-month posting to the UK during that time. When I was posted I was told I was no longer allowed to have my main wage paid into a German bank account, which made it difficult for me to pay my mortgage on time.

I believe that since the introduction of JPA, this issue has been resolved – too late for me, but great for others in the same situation.

But if this issue has been resolved, why not others? I would like to take advantage of Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP) to refurbish part of my house but have been told I cannot because LSAP is available only to people who live in their own property in the UK. With so many troops overseas

and more and more buying abroad, isn’t this a tad unfair? – Cpl J G Dieterle, 26 Regiment RA LAD.

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: *The chief reason for limiting LSAP to a UK property is that a second charge has to be placed on the property and this is not possible if the mortgage lender is not bound by UK law. This is to protect the MoD in cases where repayment is defaulted and the house might have to be repossessed.*

I agree with you that the current regulations governing LSAP are unnecessarily cumbersome and not particularly helpful. To that end, a review of LSAP is being conducted, including the ability to use it for extensions to existing properties, but I do not believe that any of the changes being examined would fund refurbishment or redecoration.

Case for the older soldier

I HAVE read that the British Army is critically undermanned due to poor recruitment and retention. Perhaps the powers-that-be should have thought about this after the Falklands war, when a number of Servicemen and women left once they had “been to war”.

If they had acted early, they might have changed the rules so that soldiers were not released at their 22-year point but could stay on until their 55th birthday. It would have taken off some of the pressures the Services are feeling now. I have been in the Australian Army

for nearly three years after completing my 22. Although the opportunities to deploy are less likely, I can and will deploy if required and may do so until I reach 60. Not that I want to deploy at that age, but I will have the option.

We too, are having difficulty recruiting young men and women, but what we are doing right is keeping the experienced personnel around so that we have some form of continuity.

A lesson learned perhaps? – WO2 K Hamilton, Queensland University Regiment, Australia.

All Regular serving personnel are eligible for mental health support from the Defence Mental Health Service, which aims to see all non-urgent cases within a maximum of 20 working days, with urgent cases being seen sooner. Any counselling which may be required is provided as part of this service.

The service is also available to recently demobilised Reserve personnel. Vacancies for civilian staff arising within military mental health teams are advertised in appropriate professional journals. Mental health provision for all other ex-Service personnel is the responsibility of the NHS.

The writer may wish to approach her local NHS Primary Care Trust to investigate whether her services could be best utilised.

Veterans badge lacks visibility

THE letter “Badge unites veterans” (April) from WO1 Spence Parry in response to Tony Morland does not merit even an outer signalled from the butts on a firing range.

He misses the point and churns out some well-practised rhetoric. National Defence Medal campaigners want a medal to wear on parade in recognition of their loyal and steadfast service.

The lapel badge is not a replacement for a medal because its intended use is quite different. Also, it lacks the visibility and respect of a medal.

The failure of the MoD to recognise the validity of a National Defence Medal will encourage even more of the deplorable “bling” merchants. – Charles Lovelace, ex-Lt HSF.

MY information is that the Queen approved an Australian Defence Medal, similar to the National Defence Medal suggested by Tony Morland (Feb).

I know dedicated former officers and NCOs who have no medals to show for their service. I urge readers to bend the ears of their MPs and ex-Service bodies as well as writing, as I have done, to the Veterans’ Minister at the House of Commons. – Tom Wareing, Redditch.

I SERVED from 1948 to 1953 and wear my veterans badge with pride, but I must update WO1 Parry (April). I am a standard bearer for the Royal British Legion, Skegness branch. The RBL ceremonial handbook states that the veterans badge should not be worn by a standard bearer when in uniform. Needless to say I must abide by this rule, which I do not agree with. – George Kavanagh, Skegness.



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Thank you, but . . .

We welcome the report's good intentions, but will it serve its purpose?

YOU have to admire the Government's use of time and money in commissioning the National Recognition Study – or do you? Was it just another demonstration of their lack of understanding of the real issues at hand with today's Armed Forces?

I read in Hansard on May 19 that the Government was immediately going to accept and implement a number of the study's recommendations: encouragement on the wider use of uniforms in public, the creation of a British Armed Forces and Veterans Day, more systematic arrangements for homecoming parades and ceremonies for the award of campaign medals and veterans' badges – and an examination of the options to strengthen cadet forces and other education-related measures.

While we welcome the good intentions behind the study, I wonder whether any of its recommendations would actually serve to recognise the great sacrifices made by soldiers and their families.

Take parades. Units value this opportunity to put on a positive display of the Armed Forces, and parades can be a good recruiting tool.

But from the families' perspective, it would seem that this recommendation asks the soldiers to spend even less time at home with their loved ones – and not just for the duration of the parade, but also during the time spent on endless



A personal view from
Mel Pullan, Director
of Communications
of the Army Families
Federation

rehearsals and kit preparation.

An additional bank holiday might seem ideal. However, do we really think that people enjoying an extra day at home will be thinking about the sacrifices that the Armed Forces have made on their behalf?

And what about the poor soldier who has to do yet another guard duty while his family are at home? This seems to be asking more of the soldier and his family rather than recognising them.

We should also think about the cost to industry of awarding another day of holiday. According to the deputy Director-General of the Confederation of

British Industry, offering staff an extra bank holiday would cost the economy up to £6 billion. Surely any initiative in recognition of soldiers that was going to cost £6 billion would be far better spent on welfare, kit and accommodation.

I personally think that Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, had a far better idea about how to recognise the soldier and his family: pay them a decent wage.

According to a story in the *Independent*, an Army briefing paper has warned that increasing numbers of troops are being forced to leave the Service because they cannot afford to bring up a family on

their wages. While this does not seem surprising, it is nonetheless shaming that those making huge sacrifices on behalf of the Government are being paid a pittance, especially when our MPs are able to make large expense claims to run second homes in London.

Wouldn't financial savings and better understanding of Service life be achieved if they had to live in Service families accommodation (SFA)?

All of this seems really quite inadequate during a week in which more soldiers have given their lives for what Des Browne described as the noble cause of the 21st century.

'Let's have fair pay for our soldiers, not parades, uniforms in public and an extra bank holiday'

Listening to his interview on Radio 4 last month on my way to work I knew I could expect phone calls from the media asking for the families' views on what he had said. I wonder what they expected me to say.

Families are incredibly proud of their serving soldiers and are supportive of their careers. However, there has to be a payback for the sacrifices made by everyone in the military community; recognition means fair pay, decent accommodation and watertight welfare – not parades, uniforms in public and an extra bank holiday.

I should be encouraged that Gordon Brown said recently that the Government would do "everything in our power" to improve conditions for the Armed Forces, but I'm not going to hold my breath. ■

Want to know more about the Army Families Federation? Log on to www.aff.org.uk

The column that offers you a confidential way to tackle debt – and it won't cost you a penny

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Credit Action Director Chris Tapp will be pleased to answer, in confidence, specific questions addressed to the Editor.



The credit web

WHEN the network in our office occasionally goes down, emails no longer arrive and we can't use Google for research or the BBC website for news, something close to panic

sets in as people realise that without the internet they are floundering.

We have become reliant on it in a remarkably short time. Millions regularly shop online. Although the high street struggled last year, £14.7 billion was spent online – 35 per cent up on the previous year. There are great bargains to be had and you are less likely to buy things on a whim.

With all the benefits the internet offers though, we should also be aware of the risks. It is great for advertisers, and credit advertisers in particular use its huge reach to attract customers. Adverts for high-cost loans and credit cards are as common on the net as they are on daytime TV.

You could end up getting stung by very

high costs, a bad deal and no way out. Online can be a great way to research how products work but, if you need to borrow, make sure you are properly informed before you click. Sites such as www.moneybasics.co.uk or www.moneysavingexpert.com are a great place to start.

Credit Action has campaigned on this issue as many online ads, particularly on popular sites such as Google and Facebook, were not complying with credit advertising regulations. Go to www.creditaction.org.uk for more information.

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NO. 800

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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TOEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 800**, *Soldier*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by July 31.

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 September issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

May competition (No 798): First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **W02 (RQMS) T Richards**, Recruiting Group Scotland, Stirling. Runners-up **Cpl R G Beech**, QARANC, Op Telic 11 and **SSgt W Dixon**, 204 (NI) Fd Hosp (V), each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: crane hook; cap badge; split pin; hole in belt; wheel chock; figure on bridge float; No 10 in circle; rope cleat; CSM badge; fish bait.

freeze frame

Winner of our May competition (inset)

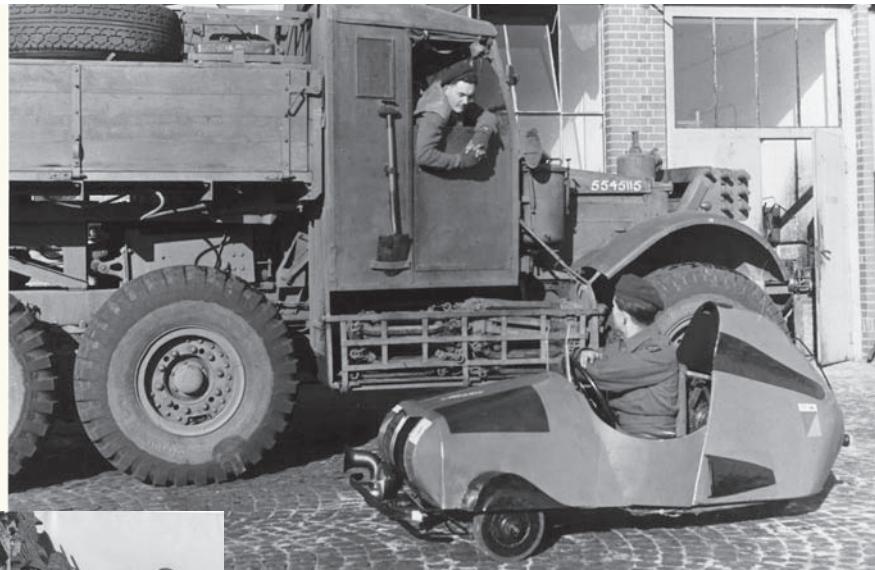
OUR May prize goes to **W02 G E McLorie**, Medical Branch, HQ London District, for his suggestion: "The team were positive they had found the Regimental Skunk".

We also liked "I can't see us winning *Britain's Got Talent* with this act" from **LCpl O'Brien, MPGS**, of RAF Linton-on-Ouse; and "The auctioneer on *Homes Under*

The Hammer certainly had his work cut out with this property" from **P Clarke** of Wokingham.

Another entry to catch our eye was "The Defence housing team were prepared for their annual inspection of quarters in Catterick" sent in by **J Dickinson**, 4 Yorks.

Bad smells were at the heart of most replies, including "Army destroys wartime stocks of ripe Camembert cheese" from **Simon Harrison** of Ludgershall; "It's not fair . . .



Bdr Winless wondered if fitting even bigger wheels to his bobsleigh would shave more precious seconds off his next run at St Moritz

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our January 1948 issue and send it to us by July 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Steven Pressfield's *Killing Rommel*, his latest "historical fiction" which features an élite British military unit on a deadly mission (Doubleday, £12.99).

this is the fourth time we've been spammed for thunder-box retrieval detail" from **Vince Scott**, Sqn Admin Officer, 299 Para Squadron RE, Wakefield; and "The recruits had not yet grasped the concept of washing their

own kit" submitted by **Ian Goodwin-Reeves**, Admin Officer, 150 Recovery Company REME, Redhill, Surrey. **Lt Col G E Davies**, APA(G) offered: "Right, lads, that's the last of the Biscuits Brown. Who's got the PE4?".

Web watch

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www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows

www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families.

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www.armysafety.mod.uk

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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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Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 020 8590 1124. www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

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

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 020 74639249

Forces Pension Society: 020 78209988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

MoD Medal Office: Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group): 07962 023654, 01803 311527, www.mutualsupport.org.uk email welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk; fax 01482 808731

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 7235021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association)

Falklands conflict veterans: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 020 7403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA): 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas) Medical Assessment Programme: 0800 169 5401

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

WRVS (24-hr answer service): 02920 739016; general enquiries 02920 739016

Reunions

Royal Pioneer Corps: Reunion at 23 Pioneer Regt RLC, St David's Barracks, Bicester on July 4-6. Ring Norman Brown on 01869 360694 or email pioneers@rpca.fsnet.co.uk

Royal Green Jackets: Reunion on July 12 at Sir John Moore Barracks, ATR Winchester, for all past and present riflemen. Ladies please attend. Details from Maj (Retd) Roy Stanger, WDSU Worthy Down, ring 01962 887916 or email ocspsvcs-wdsu@dcppa-wd.mod.uk

53 (Louisburgh) Battery RA: Reunion on July 25-27 of past and present members of 53 Bty at Marne Barracks, Catterick for the whole family. Details and tickets from 2nd Lt Ffreuer Whitaker on 94731 5746 or 01748 875746.

12 Regiment RA: Reunion on Aug 30 at Jubilee Barracks, St Helens, starting at 1400. Details on website at www.12regtra.com or call Maj Dai Ransom on 01744 697830.

Royal West Kent Regt: Reunion at Maidstone, Sept 14. Ring Brian Bartlett on 01322 346053.

Royal Horse Artillery: AGM and reunion on Oct 4-5 at Victory Services Club and St John Wood Barracks, London, for past and present members of any RHA unit. Details from Maj (Retd) R J Whiteway, HQ Dulmen Station, BFPO 44 or email rhaassn@hotmail.co.uk

152 (Ulster) Ambulance/Transport Regiment RLC(V): Reunion at Palace Barracks, Holywood, Co Down, N Ireland on Oct 11. Contact Paul Cowan on 07841 376997 or email cowanp2@hotmail.com

Royal Army Dental Corps: Reunion weekend with dinner in Wigan on Oct 11. Calling all former ADC, RADC, QARANC dental, Regulars, Territorials or National Service. Details from Brian Sims on 01332 515653 or email 34@simsb.plus.com

1 General Service Regiment RLC: Reunion for 43 and 2 Squadrons or anyone else from 1995-2000 on Oct 11. Details from Sgt B J Wright by email beejwright@hotmail.co.uk

Appointments

Brigadiers: K D Abraham, late RA, to be Joint Capabilities, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, July; P J Allison, late RTR, to be Chief G7 (Trg and Development), HQ ARRC, July; A B McLeod, late RLC, to be Deputy Chief of Staff Support, HQ Nato Rapid Reaction Corps, Sept; N G Smith, late QRH, Director Academic Operations, Nato, June; I M Copeland, late RLC, to be Director Defence Supply Chain Operations and Movements, Dec; D P Meyer, late R Signals, Director of Command and Battlespace Management, July; N A W Pope, late R Signals, Director Equipment Plan, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Eqpt Capability), Sept; J A Bowden, late RE, Director Estates Development, Defence Estates, April 09.

Searchline

Babtie Squadron RAMC 1978: Dave Copp seeks former members of the squad who did their basic training at Keogh Barracks. He is interested to know where mates ended up with a view to possible reunion. Call 0191 258 2477 or email dcopp@fasmal.net

Maj Shaharyar Khan is looking for **Brig (Retd) Desmond P O'Reilly**, British Indian Army in the early 1950s or family members. After retirement he settled in Karachi before moving to Australia. Email shaharyar-khan@hotmail.com

Former US Marine who documents the stories of Second World War military veterans is keen to hear from ex-British Army personnel. Email Peter Minix at pdmnm@msn.com

Vanessa Buckner is trying to trace her natural father, **Peter Stradling**, who was born in 1910 and in 1946 held the rank of captain in the British Army. Call 01908 234066 or email nmessie0907@hotmail.com

Where are you **Lingard (George) Richards?** Originally from Barbados and served in C Company, 1 Para in Aden in 1967. Believed to have moved to Birmingham. Friend **Iain Reid** wishes to make contact. Call 01333 422001.

On behalf of the **Anglo-Italian Family History Society**, Isabel Wilson seeks any information relating to Italian POWs and internee camps in England during the Second World War. Memories, stories, names, conditions of work, concerts, toys made and photographs (which will be copied and returned). Write to Isabel Wilson, 24 Sherwood Avenue, Parkstone, Poole, Dorset, BH14 8DL.

Petra Hein is trying to trace her natural grandfather. Cpl **George Mountfort** or **Mountberg**, served with the 5th Enniskillen Dragoon Guards stationed in Münster, around 1945-1947. Reply to Petra Hein, Gaustav-Tweer-Weg 7, 48167 Münster, Germany, or email mail_fuer_mich@yahoo.de

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-answers 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** with the event you are interested in attending.

July: 1, Southall; 2, Deptford; 15, Colchester; 16, Cambridge; 17, Loughborough. **August:** No presentations. **September:** 23, Telford; 24, Worcester; 25, Kidderminster.



Fifty not out: QOGLR troops have seen service across the globe, including tours of Cyprus with the UN

Loggies' half century

PROUD soldiers from the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (QOGLR) are this month beginning a spectacular celebration of their five decades of Crown service.

Serving and former soldiers are turning out in force for a special event in Aldershot on July 4 and 5, when there will be parties, parades, fireworks and flypasts in what promises to be one of the most memorable commemorations the town has seen for some time.

More than 1,600 guests are expected to attend the exclusive regimental families event at Normandy Barracks, where the action gets under way with a cocktail party. Special guests will include a delegation of veterans who are flying in from Nepal and senior officers who have served in or alongside the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Attractions will include a flypast by Merlin helicopters of 28 Squadron RAF, displays of cultural dancing and a firework extravaganza in the evening.

A DVD which charts the roots of the QOGLR from its formation as the Gurkha

Army Service Corps in Singapore to its current home within 10 Transport Regiment is being launched to coincide with the anniversary celebrations.

It will include film footage of the numerous operations in which the logisticians have served, which include Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Tony Duncan, commander of the QOGLR, revealed that several other events were planned to mark the golden anniversary, including commemorations in Nepal. He paid tribute to his troops and members of the regimental association for their efforts in raising funds for the celebrations and for everyone who had pulled together to organise the events.

Lt Col Duncan said: "We are looking forward to the commemorations, particularly as the modern Gurkha soldier can now bring his family to live with him in the UK. We are also very pleased that, in Nepal, extra funds have been made available this year to give to ex-Service pensioners who have returned to their home country." ■

every taste, bars, food and fireworks, is hoping to raise more than £100,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund. Visit www.army.mod.uk/music/rhythm_ii.htm for more information and ticketing details.

September 13: TA 100 Act of Remembrance, Armed Forces Memorial, Lichfield.

■ Email diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Defence diary

Until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story – A free exhibition built, written and contributed to by soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade to tell the story of their experiences fighting in Afghanistan. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 7300717.

July 16: TA 100 Voluntary Uniform-to-Work day.

September 10: A commemorative service to mark the end of operations in Northern Ireland will take place at St Paul's Cathedral, London. The service will pay tribute to the 763 personnel killed in Northern Ireland, and the 300,000 who have served in the province since 1969. Ticketing details to be confirmed.

September 12: Rhythm Force, Kneller Hall, Twickenham – This year's Corps of Army Music open air concert, featuring bands to cater for

Competitions

Why We Fight DVD: WO2 G McLorie, Horse Guards, London; R McLeod, London; M O Shea, Middlesex. **Answer:** Donald Rumsfeld.

Sega Bass fishing game: WO1 G Evans, 143 (WM) Bde; Maj K Fisher, BFPO 11; Mrs L Yates, HQ 2 (SE) Bde; Master J Mansell, Birmingham. Cpl S Duncan, 62 Wksp Gp, Chilwell.

Answer: Jaws.

British Army Badges



By Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges

Cap badge

THE Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry is the senior Yeomanry regiment and consists of A Squadron, The Royal Yeomanry and B Squadron, The Royal Wessex Yeomanry. The regiment's Prince of Wales's badge dates to 1863 when the regiment provided an escort to His Royal Highness and was granted the honorary title "Prince of Wales's Own".



Formation sign

HQ 6th Division was formed to direct the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) Regional Command South in Afghanistan in July 2007. The divisional badge was produced by Tolley Badges in 2008 when the HQ moved to York and was originally selected for the 6th Division by Maj Gen C Ross before the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and worn until about 1920. The badge was readopted during the Second World War by 29th Independent Brigade Group, worn from 1940 to 1943. The badge was adopted for a third time in 1950 by 29th Infantry Brigade which fought in Korea and later at Suez.



Specialist badge

SOLDIERS of the SAS wear a regimental parachute badge awarded in perpetuity after specialist training. Col David Sterling is said to have considered the wings, originally known as Sabre Wings, to be more important than the cap badge as the true indicator of an SAS soldier.



Tactical recognition flash

THE Geneva Red Cross arm badge is worn by all personnel working with medical units. Army Medical Services do not wear individual TRFs although the QARANC adopted in 2006 a TRF based on the design of the stable belt.



THESE excerpts appear in **British Army Badges** by Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges, available from Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, tel 01380 723371. Email robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk



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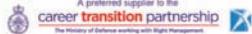
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Katie, 5'6", with long, dark wavy hair and blue/green sparkling eyes. Slim to medium with GSOH and a happy personality/nature. Enjoys taking walks, bike rides in the countryside, reading, cooking, having cosy nights in with a meal and a few drinks. Works full time, own home and car, seeking pen pals, any age group. P056

Jo (22), 5'6", fairly slim bubbly blonde. Enjoys keeping fit, running, socialising and meeting new people. Seeking male pen pals, 22-30 serving overseas. P057

Professional, single female, 40 years old, slim build with brown hair and blue eyes. Enjoys running, cycling, walking, the gym, travelling, socialising with friends and family. Seeking genuine pen pals, any age group. P058

Jodi (31), 5'7", slim blonde with brown hair and green eyes. Bubbly, chatty, out going and from Essex. Works as a model (as a hobby), enjoys the gym, cooking, shopping, going out with the girls, quiet nights in, crazy nights out All-in-all a typical girl. A serving police officer seeking pen pals, 29-35, will reply to all letters. P059

Dave (mid-50s), ugly, hardly any teeth but good-looking. Enjoys the countryside and animals. A very genuine bloke seeks like-minded active hirsute male pen pals. Genuine replies only please, 25-45. P060

Karon (40), blonde, size 10 with blue eyes. Enjoys music, the theatre, the countryside, walks and being happy. Seeking genuine male soldier pen pals, single only, 30-45. P061

Kay (50s), enjoys psychic evenings, the seaside and animal healing. Caring, happy disposition. Seeking pen friends, who are feeling alone, sad and giving up. Don't write to me for genuine friendship. P062

Beth (43), 5.7", slim brunette with brown eyes. Divorced mum with GSOH and own teeth. Enjoys her kids, the outdoors, food, wine, rock music, films, football, sport and good company. Seeking pen pals 40+ with similar interests. P063

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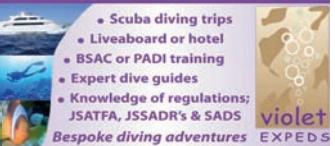


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Haunting images: Filmmaker Alex Gibney, above, was appalled by some of the techniques used by the US when interrogating their enemy combatants in Iraq, right, and Afghanistan



Captive audience

Journalist documents the dark side of America's quest to defeat axis of evil

Interview: Cliff Caswell

It was a journey into the seedy underbelly of America's War on Terror. Probing the murky world of extracting information from suspected illegal combatants captured during conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, journalist Alex Gibney was sucked into dark corridors of dubious interrogation techniques.

Sleep deprivation, beatings and parading prisoners naked were among the practices in apparent common use by guards in the detention centres of today's front lines. Gibney's findings are laid bare in his powerful new documentary, *Taxi to the Dark Side*, which paints a disturbing picture of the work of US intelligence.

Using an Afghan taxi driver who died of horrific injuries while in American custody as a starting point, the documentary features testimonies from across the military and political spectrum, and ultimately questions whether the contentious techniques

used to extract information from suspects amount to torture.

"This whole thing was such a dark area that most people didn't know much about it," Gibney told *Soldier* in an interview shortly before the release of the film last month. "But I did not want to prove that I knew more about the subject than anyone else, rather that I wanted to learn with them along the way."

"I started to talk to serving and retired military personnel as well as journalists and legal people to get a better understanding of the issues and wanted everyone watching the documentary to come with me and do the same."

Taxi to the Dark Side is certainly as disturbing as it is an articulate piece of filmmaking. Viewers are subjected to some harrowing images, including the familiar abuse pictures taken at Iraq's now infamous Abu Ghraib prison.

But the film probes deeper into the world of suspect detention, arguing a case that dubious interrogation

practices have become endemic in the system. The director illustrates the point by using accounts from former US-held detainees, including British prisoners incarcerated at Camp X-Ray in Cuba, who claimed they were subjected to stress positions, stripping, hooding and intimidation by dog handlers.

For Gibney, investigating allegations of the heavy-handed treatment of detainees had a deeply personal dimension as his father was responsible for questioning prisoners in the Pacific campaign during the Second World War.

Frank Gibney had joined the US Navy Languages School before being deployed to Hawaii and Okinawa, where he interrogated captured Japanese troops. But although his father faced an enemy infamous for its brutality and renowned for a merciless disregard for life, his filmmaker son believed that US interrogations in the 1940s had been humane. "The propaganda of the 1940s in America and Britain was that the Japanese were fanatics and it was well



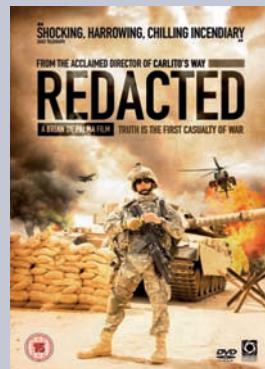
known they had flown aircraft on suicide missions," he said.

"However, torturing prisoners was not something that came into my father's experience, and that was important in my research. He got some good information from these guys by treating them as human beings. There must have been pressure to use torture, but I think there was a belief at the time that we were fighting for higher values."

The attitudes of the Second World War were in stark contrast to Gibney's findings on techniques used in the war on terror, in which interrogators believed they could get results with more heavy-handed tactics. The director also asserted there was a "political utility" in using these techniques. "I mean this in the sense that you will get back exactly what the interrogator wants to hear," Gibney said.

"Politicians can go out with a wink and nod and say they will get back at the people who are lethal to us."

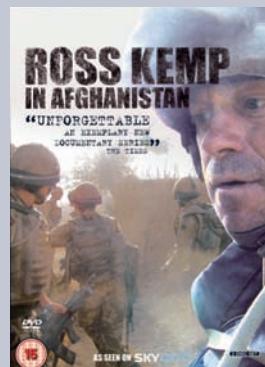
The director concluded he had been horrified by some of the evidence he had uncovered. "Making the documentary did have a profound effect on me," Gibney admitted. "Looking over the images that we had over a period of time not only desensitised us, they haunted us in ways that were actually corrosive to our psyche." ■



Redacted, out to own on DVD from July 21

DIRECTED by Brian De Palma (*Scarface*, *The Untouchables*) this controversial offering portrays the rape and murder of an Iraqi girl and her family by US Marines in Al Mahmudiyah in 2006. Told through a mixture of media (such as amateur footage from soldiers, CCTV, and internet feeds), the moral issues the film highlights are well explored as are its characters. Overall, *Redacted* is a good watch despite De Palma's heavy political agenda.

LCpl Chris MacCallum, 242 MI Section, Int Corps



Ross Kemp in Afghanistan, out now

HAVING showcased the courage of troops on ops, this BAFTA-winning series is now helping to raise funds for its stars. Sian Moxsom, director of fundraising for the Army Benevolent Fund, explains: "A donation will be made to the ABF with every sale of the DVD. This documentary has been very effective in highlighting the experiences of the average soldier, and gives a good insight into what they endure on a daily basis. All donations will help to support soldiers and their families, such as those shown in the series, if they find themselves in need in the future."



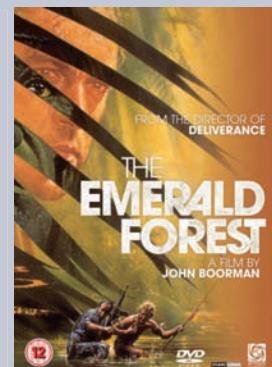
Elite Squad, in cinemas August 8

RIO de Janeiro meets Reservoir Dogs in Jose Padilha's slick but brutal take on the war between drug-trafficking militias and Brazil's élite BOPE (State Police Special Ops Battalion) force. And like any good **Tarantino** offering, Padilha somehow manages to intersperse humour with homicide. Following the fledgling careers of two of the force's newest recruits, the lighter moments come in the form of some P Company-style beatings. Subtitle cynics fear not – the pace of the action is such that you'll forget you don't speak Portuguese.



Cass, in cinemas July 11

FOOTBALL hooligans have made something of a name for themselves on screen in recent years. Already we've had the dire adaptation of **John King's** *The Football Factory* and the even less convincing *Rise of the Footsoldier*. Thankfully *Cass* – an autobiographical account of former hooligan Cass Pennant – is a league apart. The movie follows the life of Pennant, through his troubled childhood as a black teenager in London's East End, to his time as leader of West Ham's notorious Inter City Firm, and to his ultimate renunciation of violence. *Cass* is well scripted, soundly filmed and brilliantly captures the flavour of the brutal 1980s era.



Emerald Forest, out to own on DVD from July 14

ECO warriors rejoice. This movie from **John Boorman** (*Point Blank*) tells the story of a father's search for a son abducted by the invisible people – a tribe that resides deep within the Amazonian jungle. Discovering his offspring has grown into a fully-fledged tribesman brings relief, but convincing him to return to civilisation proves fruitless. Only when the need arises to rescue the tribes' women from local contract workers does the family reunite. Even with the Kyoto Accord fresh in the mind, I'd give this one a miss.

WO2 Andy Draper, AGC



Diary of the Dead, out on DVD/Blu-ray now

GEORGE A Romero's latest zombie flick makes its DVD debut following a cinema run earlier in the year. And the movie should continue to please horror fans in this two-disc special edition. Extras include a series of commentaries plus interviews with the director, cast and a series of featurettes. *Diary of the Dead* is an unashamed B-movie, revolving around a group of students facing the nightmare scenario of the dead coming back to life and attacking the living. Disastrous as this may sound as a concept, however, Romero (*Dawn of the Dead*) carries it off in style.



Heart of darkness: Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2* puts players in the middle of two sides immersed in a brutal civil war



Africa bites back

Fighting rages on in the latest instalment of Ubisoft first-person actioner

Preview: Cliff Caswell

FAR CRY's original outing on the latest generation of consoles holds a special place in *Soldier's* video games hall of fame for two very different reasons.

On one count, the title showed the very best of the first-person shooter genre, pitting players against a vast army of mercenaries with little more than their wits to survive. It was one of the most played games ever to arrive at the magazine.

On the other hand, *Far Cry*'s awesomely addictive qualities sucked up many hours of the day and night, putting the reviewer's relationships with family and friends under considerable strain and attracting only half-joking threats of divorce.

Now it seems that the same reviewer could yet find himself in front of his console and in a similar predicament with the sequel, which is due to be released in the autumn.

And, having been given an exclusive preview of the game, *Soldier* can say with confidence that it looks even more impressive than the original.

In the first game, *Far Cry: Instincts*, players took on the character of Jack Carver, a former US Navy Seal who, after finding himself marooned on a tropical island, is pursued by a heavily-armed gang of mercenaries.

He is captured by his foes and subjected to an unusual experiment which results in him developing some impressive animal-like fighting and tracking abilities.

Far Cry 2, however, marks a significant departure from *Instincts*, dispensing with both Carver and the island and putting players in an all-new setting in sub-Saharan Africa.

Immersed in a richly detailed landscape, players assume the role of a mercenary who is tasked with locating an arms dealer fuelling a civil war by selling weapons to both sides.

"This dealer is called the Jackal and

he has been profiting from this conflict, but, ultimately, he is not the end boss," said Clint Hocking, creative director on the title at Ubisoft's Montreal studio. "The guys involved in the fighting are constantly at each other's throats, and the whole conflict is being perpetuated by parties unknown and unnamed.

"Unlike *Far Cry: Instincts*, there are no mystical qualities or super-powers in this game – it is realistic and we have done a huge amount of work developing the characters that appear in the story."

Hocking's claims are certainly supported by the latest example of the game, which captures the dominant scenery of savannah grasslands in outstanding detail. Ubisoft's artists visited southern Africa to see the flora and fauna for themselves.

The environment is fully dynamic – day turns to night over a four-hour period while some extraordinary weather effects add a further dimension to an enormous playing area of 50 square kilometres.



Players have the opportunity to prosecute missions in any way they see fit in this open environment, building their own story depending on who they meet and choose as allies during the game.

"There is always the potential for chaos in *Far Cry 2* and there is a great deal of value in exploring," explained Hocking. "You have to make decisions based on who you care about and they are making decisions about whether you should live or die."

"The player assumes a character that they can build themselves on and the relationships they forge will either pay off or backfire."

And judging from the demo version, relationships certainly have the potential to backfire in spectacular fashion.

Combat in the *Far Cry* world has an explosive quality, which allows players to enter into all-out gun battles or use cover – including the darkness of night – to stealthily dispose of opponents.

They can also use the weather to their advantage, starting fires that will spread according to the wind direction, and make home-made bombs to batter enemy checkpoints.

All in all, *Far Cry 2* looks to be a huge improvement on an impressive original. Family life may be under threat again. ■



Brothers in Arms, Xbox 360, PS3 & PC

ALTHOUGH this release has been delayed by several months, the latest build of *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway* is looking as if it will be well worth the wait. The game, which was extensively previewed by *Soldier* last year, is now scheduled for release in August and is looking to be a contender for one of the most impressive military titles of the year. Set during the ill-fated Operation Market Garden in 1944, players are tasked with commanding American troops through some dark times.



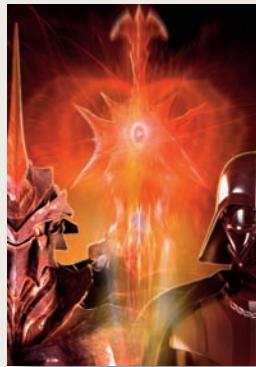
Prince of Persia, Xbox 360, PS3, DS & PC

AFTER an acclaimed run on previous consoles, the Middle Eastern warrior is soon to make a debut on the Xbox 360 and PS3. With a new prince and refreshed cast of characters, the latest title pits players against an evil god whose minions are threatening to take over the world. The prince is teamed with a female ally, Elika, who assists him on the mission. *Prince of Persia* is an acquired taste but fans will not be disappointed if the early demo versions of the game are anything to judge.



Shaun White, Wii, Xbox 360 & PS3

VIDEO game developers have been quick to seize on the new Wii Balance Board, and all the indications are that it has the potential to offer a new experience to players. This is certainly the case with *Shaun White Snowboarding*, in which you can use the board to attempt gravity-defying tricks. While the Wii incarnation is graphically less impressive than the Xbox 360 version it partners, the game offers a potentially more accurate snowboarding simulation and should prove a particular hit at parties.



SoulCalibur IV, PS3 & Xbox 360

FEATURING familiar faces, this weapon-based fighting game returns in fine form on the latest consoles. Players this time have the opportunity to step into the boots of Dark Lord Darth Vader to play online on the PS3 or as the hardened Jedi Master Yoda on Xbox 360. New features of the title include critical strike attacks, allowing players to execute some pretty tasty finishing moves. The release date for *SoulCalibur* was unconfirmed as this issue went to press, although it is understood that the game will hit stores this summer.



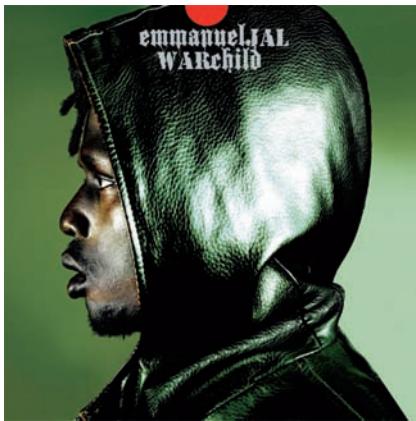
TNA Impact, Xbox 360, PS3 & Wii

THQ'S *World Wrestling Entertainment* series has a serious contender with this entry. Midway's latest title features 25 wrestlers with whom players can battle it out both in single and multiplayer modes. Game options include Tag Team, Ultimate X and Fatal Four Way, and players have moves with which to devastate the opposition and force them into submission. A story mode allows gamers to create their own characters, complete with costume and special abilities. *TNA Impact* is due for release in September.



The Incredible Hulk, Xbox 360, PS3, Wii & DS

THE appetite for all things superhero shows no signs of slowing down in the movie and video game worlds. The Hulk is the latest Marvel character to transform from silver screen to console, and the official game will no doubt be on the shopping list of comic book fans. Assuming the role of the not-so-jolly green giant, players get to rage through the open world environment of New York, taking down buildings, vehicles and bad guys in any way they see fit. Movie tie-ins are traditionally a mixed bag but this looks as if it may be a decent offering.



Violent music: Sudanese child soldier Emmanuel Jal believes he survived the civil war so that he could tell his story through his music



Toy soldier

Sudan civil war survivor-turned-rapper records Darfur atrocities

Interview: Karen Thomas

EMMANUEL Jal was a battle-hardened warrior who completed several tours of duty during his five years of military service.

But while most soldiers leaving the Services after such a stint would be well into adulthood, he was still just a 12-year-old boy.

Snatched from his home by the Sudan People's Liberation Army, rebels fighting for south Sudan's independence, the seven-year-old had survived unspeakable violence only to face more horrific abuse. His mother was beaten and his aunt raped in front of him.

Jal was taken to a training camp and brutalised to remove all feelings except hatred. Rebel leaders slapped and kicked their charges as they instructed them in guerrilla tactics. Food was

scarce and the children hunted for their next meal or raided villages, taking food by force. With nothing to lose, they became fearless cannon fodder.

"We were told it was a war in which we were protecting our dignity, land and freedom of worship. Most of us had witnessed our villages being burned down, our cattle killed, our mothers and sisters being raped and shot in the face," Jal told *Soldier*, adding that he had no parents to turn to and was beaten if he cried, as the rebels turned him into a cold-blooded killer for Africa's longest civil war. "I wanted to kill as many Arabs or Muslims as possible and that's what was driving us."

Five years after he was seized, Jal escaped the rebel clutches with 400 other child soldiers. He was among the "lucky" 16 who made it to a refugee camp. But the civil war raged on, evolving into the humanitarian

catastrophe now known as Darfur.

Unlike many children who still carry AK-47s on the world's killing fields, Jal's story has a happy ending. A British aid worker smuggled the teenager into Kenya and later adopted him. The youngster slowly found a new meaning to his life through music. Hip-hop and rap liberated his feelings and expressed his personal pain. The 13 tracks on his new album, *WARchild*, tell not only his story but depict the ongoing bloodshed and carnage in Darfur with graphic lyrics. *Forced to Sin* recounts Jal's personal diary, as *Vagina* compares the physical and emotional damage inflicted on girls and women during widespread sexual violence to the rape of Africa.

Mixing smooth African melodies with the harsh words makes Jal's messages compelling. The album's release was timed with the rapper's campaign to highlight Olympic host China's role



This Is Alphabeat (Alphabeat)

MANY people will already be aware of this Copenhagen pop sextet's single *Fascination* so the group has already attracted some attention. This is typical of the fluctuating nature of the charts right now and they seem to be the flavour of the month. I certainly hope it doesn't stay that way because this album sounds like a product of Eurovision made entirely by the **Brady Bunch** and **Jackson 5**. Their music is pure cheesy pop, but not in a good way – it is just annoying. If you are not into this group already, stay well away.

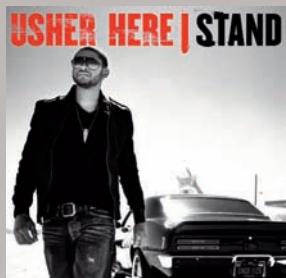
**Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt,
5 Regt, RA**



Emergency (Pigeon Detectives)

The Pigeon Detectives had huge amounts of success last year with masses of Radio 1 airplay, appearances at most of the summer festivals and a platinum-selling debut album, *Wait For Me*. While a decent follow-up was never going to be easy, *Emergency* produces their unique and frenzied brand of guitar-fed indie pop with opening track *This is an Emergency*, just what you would expect from these guys. Were it not for this and two or three other decent tracks it would be just an OK album, but it is impressive and well worth a listen.

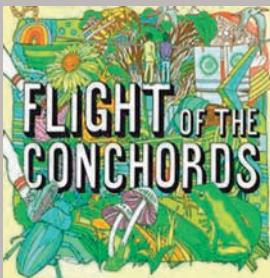
**Cpl Ray Kalaker,
RETDU (B)**



Here I Stand (Usher)

THIS is the multi-million selling R&B vocalist's first release for four years. In that time he has cemented a steady relationship with the birth of his first son, and this is reflected in the grown-up nature of lyrics that are presented as an open diary. The music across the 19 tracks has a subtlety that is only fully comprehended after repeated listens when tracks like *Trading Places*, *Moving Mountains* and *Appetite* begin to reveal themselves. Maybe a touch too relaxed for some, this collection shows a mature and contented artist and father being himself.

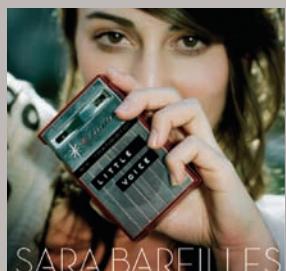
Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC



Flight of the Conchords (Flight of the Conchords)

WHEN I first listened to the CD I had a real fear it wouldn't live up to the New Zealand duo's self-titled TV programme. What if the visual funnies that lyrical comedians **Jermaine McKenzie** and **Bret Clement** got up to in their quest for stardom on New York telly just didn't work on audio? But I needn't have worried. Fans of the rib-tickling show have got to buy this 15-track album. What other band would get away with lyrics such as '*would you please remove these cutlerys from ma' knees*', when describing a guy who's been stabbed in the leg with a fork? Genius.

WO1 David Greaves, REME



Little Voice (Sara Bareilles)

YOU would have had to have been living in a cave for the last few months not to have heard **Sara Bareilles's** debut single *Love Song*. That track has been dominating radio play. Although the songs on her second studio album are generally more upbeat, Bareilles strikes me as an America version of **Nerina Pallot**, as her piano playing and vocals on some of the tracks are startlingly similar. The remainder of *Little Voice* has her trademark melodic piano-driven pop with the occasional ballad thrown in for good measure. If you enjoyed *Love Song* you won't be disappointed.

**Cpl Tom Robinson,
151 Tpt Regt, RLC**



We Started Nothing (The Ting Tings)

KATIE White and Jules de Martino, the duo known as **The Ting Tings**, have produced a gem of a debut album. Great British pop music is the ethos behind the band and they really deliver. The sheer quality shines through as *Great DJ* slides effortlessly into the number one chart single, *That's Not My Name*, which rightly took the UK by storm. The infectious riff of *Shut Up And Let Me Go* demands to be listened to with the volume turned up loud. Do yourself a massive favour and buy this brilliant album now or you'll regret it forever.

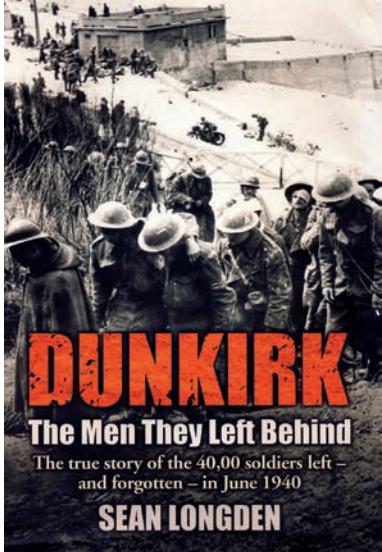
**SSgt Mo Morris,
3 LSR Regt, RLC**

in prolonging Darfuri suffering by supporting the government and buying southern Sudan's oil. The former child soldier is concerned people are forgetting the horrors of Rwanda in 1994 and becoming complacent about the daily atrocities still going on in his homeland. Yet despite the West's lethargy in stopping what has been called genocide in Darfur, the rapper is inspired by life in Britain.

"Here people have a freedom of speech and you can say what you want. We don't have rights like that. If you say anything bad about Sudan's president, you're asking to die."

Now nearly 30, Jal wants his music to inspire his campaign for peace and reconciliation between warring ethnic and religious groups. And he wants youngsters to make the most of their lives.

"The only thing that sometimes makes me feel bad is that I lost my childhood. I didn't have fun or the chance to play soccer. I didn't play video games, and as the kids here were playing these games, I was playing with real guns," he explained. "I have to live with what I have now and I make up for it through my music. When I'm on stage I dance and have fun and it looks like I'm a child. If you watch my show you'll think that I'm a small kid because I dance so happily." ■



Road to captivity: A column of British POWs near Calais in June 1940, their faces displaying their misery and uncertainty. Nearly 40,000 experienced these long marches



Without hope

Shocking experiences of 40,000 troops who missed the Dunkirk boat

Dunkirk: The Men They Left Behind by Sean Longden (Constable & Robinson, 443pp, £20).

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

THE evacuation of more than 300,000 British, French and Belgian troops from Dunkirk in May 1940 has acquired legendary status. The Miracle of Dunkirk has almost come to be regarded as a victory.

Churchill clearly understood the realities of Britain's military status and wanted his fellow countrymen to grasp the stark prospects facing them. "We must be very careful not to assign this the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won on evacuations," he warned.

The German view was less restrained: "For us Germans the word 'Dunkirchen' will stand for all time for victory in the greatest battle of annihilation in history. But, for the British and French who were there, it will remind them for the rest of their lives of a defeat that was heavier than any army had ever suffered before."

The author takes his cue from the latter and has done his best to ignore the established view of Operation Dynamo and the events leading to the collapse of the allied armies in May 1940. While the focus was on the forthcoming Battle of Britain and the potential invasion of England, few thought of those being marched into captivity.

Elements of the opening chapters suggest a lack of understanding of the British Expeditionary Force's (BEF) defensive strategy. The author does not explain its use of stop lines and strong points

in sufficient detail. In particular, his use of emotive veteran accounts of the occupation and defence of the Mont des Cats are presented in isolation. Comparison with the successful defence of a similar feature such as the town of Cassel by the 2nd Gosters, would have given a more balanced view.

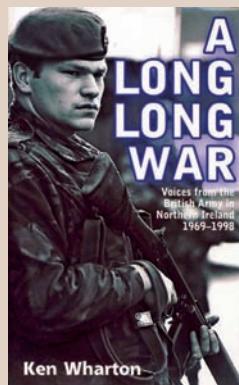
There were no alternatives available to the BEF commanders and in fact the tactics employed by the rearguard units were successful. Without their stubborn defence and sacrifice the port and beaches of Dunkirk would surely have been overrun much sooner, preventing any meaningful evacuation.

Elsewhere I found the book engaging. There is much previously ignored and unpopular history woven into its chapters. The fate of 40,000 troops who fought on for some weeks after Dunkirk is rarely acknowledged and the author has significantly redressed the balance.

Previously unpublished accounts from veterans who survived the withdrawal of 51st Highland Division to

Soldier ordering service

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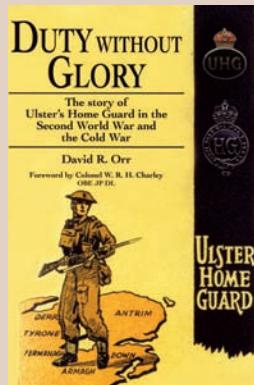
A Long Long War by Ken Wharton

KEN Wharton's timely oral history of the Troubles – unlikely to be his last – follows neatly on the first anniversary of the end of Operation Banner. This is not the author's interpretation of the 38-year long military campaign to keep the peace in Northern Ireland, it is the soldier's story – direct from the horse's mouth. Hundreds of men, women and officers talked candidly to him about their service in the Province, and their recollections add a significant chapter to the history of sectarian hatred and violent death that scarred the Province during the British Army's involvement from late 1969 until July last year. Deployed just a 30-minute flight away from mainland UK, 300,000 soldiers were involved in a war against terrorism that claimed the lives of 763 of their colleagues and maimed more than 6,000. Thousands of civilians were killed and injured in the process. Service in the Province affected an entire generation of Servicemen and women and gave the British Army unique, valuable and hard-won experience that was to serve it well on military peacekeeping duties around the globe. *Soldier* readers may buy the book at a discounted £20 (plus £2.75 p&p) direct from Helion & Co (0121 705 3393, books@helion.co.uk).

To have a chance of winning one of three copies signed by the author, tell us on a postcard or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) marked "Long war" the name of Northern Ireland's First Minister. Closing date is July 31. Usual rules apply.

Helion & Co, 526pp, £25

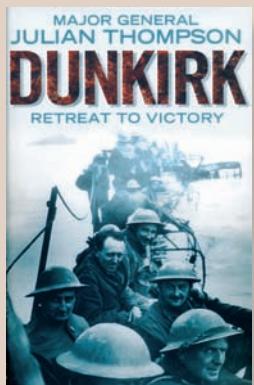
For more reviews, go to
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Duty Without Glory by David R. Orr

AS it says on the cover, this is the history of Ulster's Home Guard in the Second World War and the Cold War, told here for the first time in great detail. Ulster's militia was raised as an extension of the constabulary under the Stormont Government, making it different in several respects to the rest of Great Britain's Home Guard. The author dipped into Stormont and police files as well as contemporary newspapers to find his story.

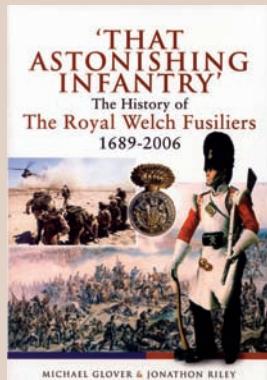
Redcoat Publishing, 320pp, £25



Dunkirk: Retreat to Victory by Maj Gen Julian Thompson

I THOUGHT all that could be written about Dunkirk had already been published, but not so, writes **Maj Mike Peters**. This new book from a recent military leader clearly draws on his own experience of operational command to look at the British effort to stem the German invasion of Belgium and France. His account is not fixated on the events of the evacuation itself and good maps, photos and personal accounts capture the pace of the events that overwhelmed the BEF.

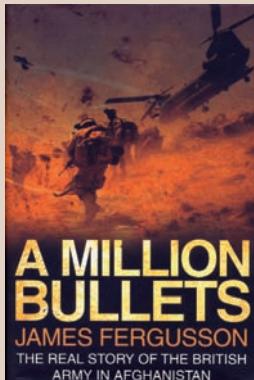
Pan Macmillan, 327pp, £20



That Astonishing Infantry by Michael Glover and Jonathon Riley

NINETEEN eventful years have passed since this history of The Royal Welch Fusiliers was first published, so the new edition had a lot of catching up to do. The Balkans, Northern Ireland and Iraq – and the cessation of 317 years of independent existence – complete the story of a regiment raised in 1689 and absorbed in 2006 into The Royal Welsh. The appendices include battle honours, VC winners, Colonels, customs and traditions.

Pen & Sword, 320pp, £25



A Million Bullets by James Fergusson

THE then Defence Secretary, John Reid, famously made a wildly optimistic remark that Op Herrick 4 in Helmand, Afghanistan, could be accomplished without a shot being fired. But intelligence had grossly underestimated the number of Taliban waiting for the paratroopers of 16 Air Assault Brigade, who were soon fighting for their lives in the most intense combat operation experienced by the British Army for 50 years. The author is a freelance journalist.

Bantam Press, 358pp, £16.99

St Valery and the futile fight to hold that small port make compelling reading. The experiences of the men of The Light Division during their equally desperate struggle to hold Calais are also covered in detail. Both divisions were marooned without hope of evacuation.

It is the experiences of those troops who were not evacuated that really captured my interest. Their gritty, emotional and shocking accounts convey the anger, frustration and fear of those who, literally, missed the boat.

The atrocities by SS troops at Esquelbecq and Le Paradis are covered in adequate detail but far more intriguing is the less well documented mistreatment of British POWs and wounded by German military personnel of all branches, German civilians and even French medics. Their maltreatment on the long march into Germany was not confined to Waffen SS units.

If you want an exhaustive history of the campaign this is not it, but it is a well written account of the fate of tens of thousands of troops at a time when the British Army was at its lowest ebb. It has changed my understanding of life for British POWs in the Second World War. ■

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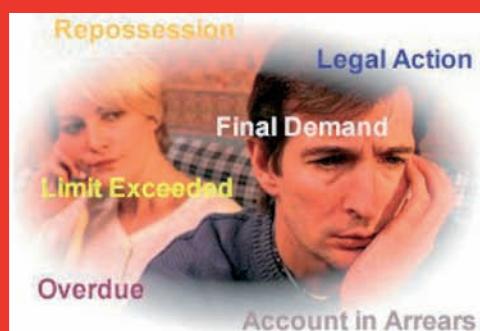
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OUT OF PUCK

Blades blunted by Navy's Kings

Crushed ice: The battle for possession leads to a pile-up against the boards between the Army and Royal Navy ice hockey teams at the Inter-Services championships at Ice Sheffield

Picture: Graeme Main



Blades sharpen up

Ice-cool hockey players' dedication puts the skates on Army improvement

In an age of pampered professional sports stars, the Army Blades ice hockey team are cut from a refreshingly different cloth.

Instead of the morning training and afternoon recovery sessions favoured by those at the top, military players are forced to wait until the rinks are free before they can perfect their game, often resulting in 0200 finishes.

Having to burn the midnight oil just to get the chance to train might be enough to drive away the weak-willed, but the dedication of a growing army of hockey aficionados is helping to sharpen the skills of the Blades.

"The team this year is very good indeed," the Army Ice Hockey Association's Maj Tim Gillies (REME)

told *SoldierSport*. "Ice hockey brings out all of the characteristics we want from our soldiers – controlled aggression, courage, teamwork and dedication.

"The UK doesn't have a massive amount of skating rinks and that means we always have to fit our practises around the public.

"Our guys often aren't able to get onto the ice until midnight, but they keep doing it because they are so focused on improving."

The progress was evident last month as the Blades finished runners-up on goal difference to the Royal Navy in the Inter-Services tournament at the state-of-the-art Ice Sheffield facility.

Lining up alongside experienced Service players were OCdt Nathan

Chronik, a Canadian who played at university level in his home country, and OCdt Daniel Flett, a former Great Britain youth international.

The pair, who are in their second term as part of Burma Company at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, were given special dispensation to travel north for the competition.

Flett (25) is a skilful winger who made a telling impact on the side despite not having picked up a stick in anger since going to university.

"It's nice to get back into it," said the cadet. "The skating part has not been too bad, but my handling has dropped.

"It's good to see ice hockey growing in the Army because it's an exciting, fast and furious sport."



Main picture, Ice cool: Cpl John Maguire (REME) stays strong in a race for the puck against the Royal Navy Destroyers

Above right, Speed merchant: REME Stallion Cfn Mike DeKeyser turns on the afterburners in the recreational team championship

Bottom right, Sticking with it: OCdt Daniel Flett (RMAS) leaves the Royal Navy Kings trailing in his wake at the Inter-Services championships



Hailing from South Alberta, goalkeeper Chronik played as many as six times a week as a youngster.

The opportunities to hit the rink diminished when he moved to England to commence officer training, so the 25-year-old welcomed the chance to lace up his skates for the Blades.

Despite his hockey pedigree, Chronik said he has had to readjust to the British game because of its subtle differences to its Canadian counterpart.

"I noticed straight away that the game here is much less aggressive than it is back home," he said.

"That's not a bad thing and it's good that the sport is getting more popular because it is forcing the standard up."

Running alongside the main Inter-Services matches at Ice Sheffield was an inter-corps face-off featuring 11 teams from the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, making it the biggest ice hockey tournament in Britain.

The inter-corps games served as a

perfect proving ground for up-and-coming players and, unlike the Inter-Services competition, the matches were non-contact to allow the teams more time on the puck.

But even with the slower pace, in a sport that requires excellent handling, a keen positional sense and, of course, the ability to skate, surely it takes months of

practice to provide even a passable impression of a hockey player?

"Not at all," said Gillies. "Within one session the guys we get are on the ice and chasing the puck around. Things develop very quickly from there and it only takes three or four sessions for them to really get the hang of it."

"Skating is a bit like skiing in that it's really quite straightforward once you get the balance."

"Some field hockey players find it easy to transfer their skills across onto the ice, but we also get guys still in training who find out about ice hockey and want to give it a go."

"We get people from all kinds of backgrounds and physically they are of different builds, but the key to success is having the dedication to training."

Those looking for proof that newcomers can make quick progress need look no further than Blades player Pte Chris Pfeiderer (RLC).

The logie had a brief flirtation with ice hockey when he was 12, but only took up the sport in earnest after returning from operations in Afghanistan last year and teaching himself how to skate.

In the six months that have followed, Pfeiderer has developed rapidly and made his Blades debut against the Royal Navy at Sheffield, scoring one goal in an exciting 3-3 draw.

"I thought I played well in that game and it was good to score," he said. "I was pleased to get into the team because I basically had to build my skills up from scratch, but it was definitely worth it to get to play."

● **To find out more about Army ice hockey, email tim.gillies@rwsg.mod.uk** ■

No way back

Army fall just short against Britain's top amateur Rugby League stars

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

ASPIRITED comeback proved too little, too late as the Army's Rugby League squad fell to defeat against the nation's best amateur players.

Fresh from a record-equalling foray into the Carnegie Challenge Cup's third round, the Reds went into the Skanska Cup semi-final against the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA) at Aldershot full of confidence.

But after conceding a try straight from the kick-off, the Army had to chase the game and failed to get their noses in front, eventually losing 36-28.

First team coach Capt Rich Naivalurua (REME) singled out individual mistakes as the key factor behind the loss, but was happy with his side's overall performance against such distinguished opponents.

"We made too many basic errors and gave away some soft tries, but we were definitely in the ascendency in the second half.

"I was disappointed with the result, but the fact we feel we threw away

'We made too many basic errors and gave away some soft tries'

victory against the best amateur players in Britain is indicative of where we are as a team."

Many of the crowd were still settling into their seats when BARLA took the lead. Indecision in the Army defensive ranks from the kick-off allowed Chris Walker to charge through for a try.

Unflappable Army stalwart Cpl Lee Innes (RE) kept Red heads calm and it was his precise kick from a well-earned penalty that got the Army off the mark.

The home side began to rack up a good spell of possession, but breaking through the amateur side's defensive line proved to be more of a challenge than holding onto the ball and failure to unleash the speed merchants out wide created a one-dimensional Army attack.

With ball in hand for the first prolonged period of the match, BARLA showed a greater willingness to switch tactics and a flowing move allowed Kyle Amor to score his side's second try.

Innes sent over a magnificent kick following a BARLA transgression to keep the Army within touching distance and things got even better for the Service side after 26 minutes.

When Cpl Paul Greenwood (RE) was cynically taken out off the ball just metres from the BARLA try line, Pte Gareth Lodge (Para) spotted his opportunity and took a quick tap kick before steaming over for four points. Innes again scored from an acute angle to close the score to 12-10.

Sensing their military opponents were beginning to turn the screw, BARLA gathered themselves and provided an emphatic end to the half as two tries, a conversion and a penalty kick opened up a 24-10 lead going into the break.

Fijian star LCpl Eugene Viljoen (RE) charged down a loose clearance for a breakaway score midway through the final 40 minutes, but the resurgent Reds let the advantage slip away by conceding two tries to Eugene Swift and Trevor Penrose.

Trailing 34-18 with 15 minutes to play, the match looked to be a lost cause for the Reds, but LCpl Mark Donnelly (RE) gave his team hope by providing the finish to a good flowing move.

Veteran Sgt Sean Fanning (RAMC) scored in the corner to bring the Army within a converted try of tying the game, but a last-minute Ryan Robb penalty sounded the death knell to the Reds' hopes of a dramatic win. ■



Seru in demand

Flying winger earns national league contract

SUPER sapper Ben Seru's impressive performances in this year's Challenge Cup have earnt him a contract with national league two side Oldham.

The 30-year-old attracted the northern team's attention with a sparkling display when the two sides squared off at Aldershot in March as the Army equalled its best-ever run in the competition.

The dual-code winger scored two tries, had a third disallowed and made a sensational points-saving tackle during the match, which the Reds lost 56-10, and Oldham coach Steve Deakin was quick to offer Seru an 18-month contract running until November 2009.

"I enjoyed that game a lot," the Fijian said. "Oldham were too good for us, but

it was great to score my first try from close to our try line. Now I can't wait to start scoring tries for Oldham instead of against them."

Seru provided an assured performance off the bench in his first appearance in an Oldham shirt as the team's reserves slipped to a 36-30 defeat at Widnes Vikings.

The Army man made his full debut in June as he started the Challenge Cup sixth round tie against Wakefield Trinity Wildcats, but a knee injury sustained in the opening seconds of the game forced him off the pitch on 17 minutes.

Deakin said: "This is a hugely exciting signing for us and we are grateful to the Army for their help in making it happen."



Hard to beat: Cpl Ben Taylor (REME) resists the challenges of two BARLA players as the Army Rugby League side lose despite a spirited display at Aldershot

Heroes heading for HQ

Rugby stars to take charge at Twickenham for Services' charity match

ENGLISH and Welsh rugby legends are set to renew their rivalry when two select sides clash in a fundraising match aiming to raise £1m for Help for Heroes.

An International Select XV, managed by proud Welshmen Ieuan Evans and Scott Gibbs, will tackle a Help for Heroes XV run by Phil de Glanville and featuring captain Lawrence Dallaglio, at the home of English rugby on September 20.

The team line-ups are still being finalised, but both sides expect to be able to field a talented mix of Guinness Premiership, National Division One, Magners League and overseas stars.

The Armed Forces will also play their part by providing six players for the

match, which was dreamt up by *Times* journalist Mark Souster.

"I'm sure there are millions of people like myself who feel that we owe a huge debt to the brave Servicemen and women who serve in areas of conflict like Iraq and Afghanistan," said Souster.

The game's money-raising aspirations have been given a massive boost by the Rugby Football Union which is providing the famous venue and management support for free.

All funds raised from the match will be pumped into the Joint Services Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court in Surrey.

"Injuries and death are an inevitable but very sad fact of war and it's essential that those who are hurt are given the

best possible care and rehabilitation," continued Souster. "The medical staff at Headley Court already do a fantastic job and all the revenue raised from the game will help them provide even better facilities and care for injured troops and military staff."

In addition to the main event, further match day entertainment will be provided by marching bands, youth coaching clinics, military displays and a music concert.

Tickets cost from £20 for adults, £10 for juniors and £50 for families and are available online through www.ticketmaster.co.uk or by telephone on 0844 847 2492.

Visit www.helpforheroesrugby.org.uk for more information. ■

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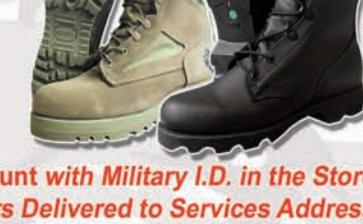


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Smash hits

Red revolution spikes interest in court contest

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Steve Dock

VOLLEYBALL'S quest to convince the Great British public that it is a serious sport has not been helped by its portrayal in Hollywood.

Where football can bask in the triumphant glow of the star-studded Second World War film *Escape to Victory*, volleyball's reputation was almost irreparably damaged by the homoerotic match-up between Tom Cruise and Val Kilmer in 1986 blockbuster *Top Gun*.

That particular beach-based debacle may have reinforced the sport's position on the back burner in Britain, but for those in the know volleyball is as fast-paced and action-packed as any of its rivals.

Drawing on the game's huge popularity elsewhere in the world, the Army Volleyball Union (AVU) has recruited seasoned campaigners from across the Commonwealth as well as home-grown newcomers as it tries to spike the sport's undeserved reputation.

Army coach Sgt Chris Teoh (RLC) told *SoldierSport* that the only thing restricting his team's growth is a lack of competitive action.

"There is no doubt that we are getting stronger and the current team is certainly the best we have been able to field in recent years," he said.

"In the past, our opponents have put out their substitutes against us, but now we are facing their first teams.

"Our problem is that we aren't getting to play in enough events to help us continue our improvement.

"It has taken us years to achieve what would have taken months with the right amount of competition."

Among the stars on the Army's roster is Royal Engineer LCpl Jerry Sutherland. The skilful sapper played at university in Cuba and is a former Jamaican youth international, having represented his country up to the under 20 age group.

Since moving to England, Sutherland admits that volleyball's status as a minority sport has made it difficult for him to continue his development.

"The problem with the sport here is that it is nowhere near as big as it is in the rest of the world," said Sutherland,

'The current team is certainly the best we have been able to field in recent years'

who plays for Reading in the country's top civilian league. "If you play in Europe or America, volleyball is on the same level as cricket and football are here and the top players can earn a lot of money."

As anyone who has watched a game will attest, volleyball zips along at a frantic pace as players throw themselves around to keep the ball from hitting the floor.

Despite being played on a relatively small court with teams of six, top players need to be supremely fit to keep up with play. Former Fijian international and Army team member LCpl Vili Silatolu (RLC) has played Rugby League to a high level and insists that volleyball requires a greater level of endurance.

Sutherland agreed, adding: "It's a lot more explosive and you don't get the breaks in play to walk around and catch your breath like you can get in other sports. It's a challenging game that I think a lot of people would enjoy if they gave it a go."

"I play in the middle so I have to be fit because of the amount of jumping.

"I'm in the air every five seconds and on top of that I have to make sure I'm aware of the play and of what my specific role is."

Rangy centre Sutherland said that success on the court can only be achieved if each player pulls together to form a well-oiled single unit.

Each person fills a specific role in the team and spends hours practising specific plays so that they know where to stand and what to do in any attacking or defending situation.

"There's a lot of planning and preparation involved," continued Sutherland. "There is no single skill that someone can have and immediately be head-and-shoulders above everyone else.

"Instead, there are a lot of roles and you need each person to be good in different areas. You can be the most powerful player in the world, but you won't get anywhere if you cannot master your training."

Hammer time: LCpl Jerry Sutherland (RE) powers the ball over the net during a training session at Aldershot



FIXTURES

ANGLING

July 9-11 – Army boat championships (Rhyl); Combined Services boat championships (Rhyl).

ATHLETICS

July 2 – Army finals (Tidworth); 16 – Inter-Services championships (HMS Temeraire).

CANOEING

July 5-6 – Canoe polo tournament (Hull); National sprint championships (Nottingham); 18-20 – National championships (Nottingham); 19-20 – Army sprint championships (Hereford).

CRICKET

July 1 – Army U25 v Royal Navy U25 (Aldershot); 2 – Army U25 v Royal Air Force U25 (Aldershot); 6 – Combined Services v Duke of Norfolk XI (Arundel); 8 – Combined Services v MCC (Portsmouth); Combined Services U25 v Free Foresters (Oxford); 9 – Combined Services training (Portsmouth); 10-11 – Combined Services v ECB Schools (Portsmouth); 12 – Army v Orpington (Aldershot); 14 – Army women v RAF women (Portsmouth); 16 – Royal Navy women v Army women (Portsmouth); 21 – Army v Free Foresters (Aldershot); 22 – Army v Stock Exchange (Aldershot); 23 – Army v Hampshire (Aldershot); 29 – Army v Royal Navy centenary match (Lords).

CYCLING

July 5-6 – National team time trial championships (central district); 6 – Southern cross-country (Alton); 20 – National 100-mile championships (South Wales); 23 – Army road race championships (Upavon); 26-27 – National 24-hour time trial championships (Liverpool).

DIVING

July 1 – Army championships (Aldershot); 5-7 – Inter-Services championships (Aldershot).

GOLF

July 6-9 – Army matchplay championships (Saunton); 10-11 – Inter-corps championships (Saunton); 15 – Army women v Goring & Streetly (Goring and Streetly); 22-23 – Army women v British Police women (TBC); 27 – Army v Territorial Army (Tidworth); 28 – Army women v Tynley Park women (Tynley Park).

MARTIAL ARTS

July 12 – Inter-Services championships (Portsmouth).

MODERN PENTATHLON

July 21-22 – Army championships (Sandhurst); 28-29 – British open championships (Millfield).

POLO

July 13 – AGC cup (Sandhurst).

POWERLIFTING

July 19-20 – Combined Services single lift championships (RAF Cosford).

ROWING

July 2-6 – Henley Royal Regatta (Henley); 11-13 – Henley veterans' regatta (Henley).

SAILING

July 13-19 – Cork Week (Solent); 25-27 – RORC Channel race (Channel).

SHOOTING

July 22 – Inter-Services short range target rifle match (Bisley); 24 – Inter-Services long range target rifle match (Bisley); 25 – Combined Services v home countries target rifle match (Bisley).

Mat-adors

Historic double for Service stars at judo contest

Picture: Graeme Main

COMBINED Services judo players rewrote the record books with a double medal-winning performance at the national team championships in Kendal.

Both teams headed to the Lake District brimming with confidence after spending a tough two weeks training with world-class coaches at Team Bath's centre of excellence.

The hard work paid off as the Services players overcame the odds to secure third place finishes in their respective competitions, the first time that both teams have left the championships with a medal.

Team coach Capt Phil McGregor (APTC) said: "I am absolutely over the moon with these results. I had a feeling we could pull a medal out of the bag and by the end of our time in Bath I knew it was possible."

Although their preparation had the military players in excellent physical shape, both teams were immediately at a disadvantage over their rivals as they were unable to field competitors in every weight division.

The lack of numbers meant that the men's team started each match 1-0 down and things did not look good as they lost their first two ties 4-3 and 6-1.

Scotland provided the opposition for match three and despite falling 2-0 behind, Ghanaian Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) and LCpl John Morris (1 Lancs) soon levelled the scores.

The Royal Navy's Lt Mark Shaw put the Combined Services ahead for the first time with victory in the under 100kg category and Mne Chris Sherrington's winning performance at over 100kg wrapped up a deserved first point for the team.

A second win against a physical southern area team followed and only the Police side stood between the Combined Services and a first medal since 2001.

An injury to Shaw meant SSgt Sean Smithson (RE) competed in the under 100kg category and the sapper did not disappoint as he won to leave the score at 3-3 going into the final match.

Sherrington again made light work of his opponent and the Combined Services achieved third place, finishing just one point off the silver medal.

The women's shortage of players left them two points down at the start of each match and two narrow defeats against the North West and Scotland looked to have killed off any hopes.

A round of excellent performances in match three secured a 4-3 victory and team captain Cpl Stephanie Hart (RLC) knew that a high-scoring win in the final match could be enough to claim a medal.

Facing a strong southern area team, the Combined Services women excelled to produce a comfortable 6-1 win and match the men's achievement by claiming third place.

● **Find out more about the team in next month's *SoldierSport*.** ■

Making waves

ENTRIES are being invited for a week of high-octane racing at the Army wakeboard and water-skiing championships in September.

The tournaments take to the water at WMSki, at South Cerney, from Monday, September 8, until Friday, September 12.

Waterskiers will train for the first four days and compete on the Friday, while wakeboarders will be split into novice, intermediate and advanced cable and boat categories.

Cable training begins on September 8 with the competition the following day and the boat contest runs on September 12 following two warm-up days.

The top performers in each category will qualify to compete at the Inter-Services championships, which are scheduled to be held at South Cerney on Monday, September 15, and Tuesday, September 16.

Entry costs around £80 per person and competitors in either discipline do not need to have any previous experience as expert riders will be on hand to provide tuition.

● For more information or to register for the competition contact Lt Col Ian Marlow on 96218 2845, Capt Kerry Gospel on 94214 5438 or Sgt Mark Tillett on 94475 2301. ■



Throw down: Nigerian international Cpl Abbas Salihu (RLC) gets the better of Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (1 RTR) during training at Team Bath's centre of excellence

● THE Paddy Doyle record-breaking machine rumbled on as the former para smashed four more strength and fitness records.

The 43-year-old battled with a chest infection to set the new world bests at the Stamina Boxing and Martial Arts Centre, in Birmingham.

Wearing a 40lb backpack and working to a one-hour time limit, Doyle completed 1,619 step-ups before powering through 663 back-of-hand press-ups and 901 shuttle sprints over 30 feet.

Doyle then set a seven-hour world endurance strength record.

His exploits took the fitness guru's total haul of career strength, speed and stamina bests to 168, 74 of which are world records.

SPORT SHORTS

● PLACES in Army football teams will be up for grabs at three trials being held this year.

The men's squad will be decided at Aldershot during the week beginning Monday, September 22, with the women's trials taking place at Deepcut from Monday, October 6 and the under 23s kicking off at Aldershot from Monday, October 13.

To apply for a trial, contact Maj Steve Jackson at 2ic-atchq@pirbright.atr.mod.uk or 94211 8389 for the men's team, Cpl Mags McAtee at margaretmcateer@fsmail.net or 9491 30505 for the women's team or Maj Dave Manners at david.manners220@land.mod.uk or 94222 2813 for the under 23 side.

FIXTURES

SWIMMING

July 5-7 – Inter-Services championships (Aldershot); 7-8 – Combined Services v British Police v Civil Service (Aldershot); 19-27 – Inter-corps cross channel relay (Channel).

TENNIS

July 2 – ALTL summer league (Aldershot); 10 – Army inter-unit cup semi-finals (Aldershot); 11 – Army inter-unit cup final (Aldershot); 12-16 – Army championships (Aldershot); 21-25 – Inter-Services training (Raynes Park); 26 – Army v British Police (Imber Court); 28-29 – Inter-Services championships (Wimbledon).

WINDSURFING

July 14-18 – Army championships (Hayling).

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to fixtures@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Banner blogs

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

We asked troops stationed at Holywood Palace Barracks how they were adapting to life in post-Operation Banner Northern Ireland

Cpl Daniel Boyd, 2 Mercian

I was here in 2003 but it is totally different now. It's strange walking around outside the camp when you are not in a team and carrying a weapon. I'm really enjoying myself and I really enjoy the nightlife. I go out most weekends and I personally think Belfast is better than London.



Sgt Kelly Sharratt, AGC (SPS)

I have been coming and going to Northern Ireland since 2002 and it has never been as open. You can get out and about to see the country much more. A lot of the older guys who served here at the sharp end are surprised at how it is now. Palace Barracks is good because we are so close to Belfast.



Sgt Ian Hartshorn, 2 Mercian

It feels strange to go out of camp and not be in a situation where you need to have a pistol. I was in South Armagh in 2003 and it's different now because there isn't the expectation that something is going to happen. A lot of people died along the way, but it proves that if you stick at a job then you can get it to work.



LCpl Curtis Wilson, 2 Mercian

Before we moved to Hounslow I was told the accommodation would be really good but it wasn't, so I am happy that what we have here is so much better. The facilities at Palace Barracks are really good. The only downside of being here is that it's across the water and it can be expensive to get home.



2nd Lt Jem McIlveen, 2 Mercian

This is my first posting and I've been impressed with the facilities. The people are very friendly and there's a very optimistic atmosphere around Belfast. It's a good place for the guys to train and it's easy to send them to the mainland if they need to go on courses.



Pte Liam Dodds, 2 Mercian

When we were in Chester and London the facilities were poor, but here we have almost everything we need. The city is close, but we've got a good bar so I mostly stay here. I know someone who was based here during Op Banner and he told me it was pretty rough back then, but that's not the case anymore.



Pte Robin McDermott, 2 Mercian

The nicest thing for me is that the accommodation is so much better than it was in Hounslow. The facilities are good and it's also really easy if we want to go out into the city. I was expecting things to be fairly quiet over here and we haven't had too much trouble when we've gone out other than some bouncers being a bit awkward.



Pte Daniel Laydon, 2 Mercian

The obvious difference is how good these barracks are. We had to get used to the conditions in London and take it on the chin, so it's good to have things like the astro-turf pitch and a decent shop on camp. The locals don't usually give us any trouble when we go out and it's also easy to get home because the airport is only a few minutes down the road.



LCpl Brett Wilmott, 2 Mercian

I am really enjoying it here so far. You can tell straightaway that the people and the local community are much more relaxed. There are still areas that you don't go, but on the whole we are free to roam. I'm getting married in August and I'm not hesitating to bring my wife over here. I think that shows that the job we did during Op Banner has been successful.



Interviews: Stephen Tyler Pictures: Steve Dock

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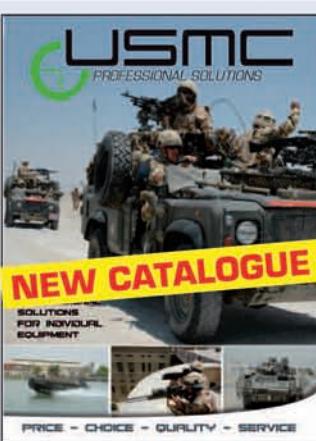
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