

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

HISTORY MAKER

Kat Matthews talks
Ironman triathlon
glory and breaking
that sub-eight barrier



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When you combine anti-tank units with tanks you have a lethal combination

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Stepping up



THIS summer Maj Gen Sharon Nesmith will become the first female deputy chief of the general staff in a move that the officer herself described as "speaking volumes" about the opportunities that are now open to Servicewomen.

The appointment is a high-profile example of the gender equality the Army is striving for and this is being increasingly reflected in its sporting circles, where women are now finding themselves on the same grand stages as their male counterparts.

In June we reported on a fine debut for the Army women's rugby union side at Twickenham, and this month we focus on the UK Armed Forces cricket team gracing the hallowed turf of Lord's for the first time (page 72) – and they did not look out of place.

Another officer achieving a notable first is Capt Kat Matthews (RAMC), who has become the first female athlete to complete the full Ironman distance in less than eight hours (page 64).

In a phenomenal display of physical endurance, she shattered the target time by almost half-an-hour – just four weeks after finishing second at the World Championships.

Opportunities are now equating to high performance, and it will be interesting to see what comes next.

Richard Long • Sports Editor

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Picture: Graeme Main

Shutting the door on the CO

Why Service complaints no longer go via the boss

AGGRIEVED personnel who make a Service complaint no longer submit the paperwork via the commanding officer.

The change, which came into effect last month, is one of several improvements being made to address low levels of confidence in the system.

Previously, COs would act as the so-called "specified officer" – the person who decides whether such matters are able to proceed.

But now all completed paperwork is instead sent to a "centralised admissibility team" in the Army Complaints Secretariat, who log the details immediately and establish whether the case can go any further.

It is believed this will give more consistency to decisions.

"We hope this will increase troops' confidence in the system and its independence," said Maj Sue Drysdale (RE) from the secretariat.

"And it addresses the fact we didn't have a standardised approach before."

"Some personnel may also have doubted that their complaint would be taken seriously – especially in cases that lay blame with the unit."

The overhaul follows the latest annual Service Complaints Ombudsman report (*Soldier*, June) – which found that troops had

low levels of trust in the Army's "inefficient" grievance system.

Lengthy delays were also another top concern.

"We are still encouraging people to resolve things informally and at a local level first if at all possible," Maj Drysdale added.

But with other improvements being introduced by a transformation team set up to overhaul things, it is hoped efficiency levels will continue to steadily rise as was already the case in some areas.

The deadline for appeals has been reduced from six to two weeks. And these are now only permitted in specific instances, such as when new evidence comes to light that would be likely to change the outcome of a case.

Other alterations on the horizon include plans to move to digital complaint forms.

Read the new **JSP 831** for more about the changes. Contact details for the centralised admissibility team can be found in part two, annex Q. And advice on resolving disputes more informally can be found in **JSP 763**. ■

“
We hope this
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”

IN NUMBERS:

24

Weeks the Army aims to resolve all Service complaints within. In 2021 44 per cent of cases hit that target

SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

VETERANS commemorating the 40th anniversary of the South Atlantic campaign received some very special thanks – from the territory's children.

Secondary and junior pupils on the islands recorded messages of gratitude to personnel involved in freeing the outpost from Argentine occupation in 1982.

Picture: British Forces South Atlantic Islands



They were widely shared in the lead up to Liberation Day on June 14 – as well as across social media platforms.

Emma Walker – history teacher at the Falkland Islands Community Secondary School – said: "I knew the students would express their ideas well, but I was thoroughly impressed with their comments and hope the video is well received by veterans."

2. UK HIGHLAND HIKE

Picture: Cpl Nathan Tamaku, RLC



WOUNDED veterans from around the world have completed a gruelling endurance event in the Scottish Highlands – with support from resident British troops.

The Allied Forces Foundation brings together injured ex-Service personnel from various nations to boost their recovery through physical challenges – such as the recent Cateran Yomp, a 54-mile, 24-hour trek across Perthshire in support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Predominantly a US-UK collaboration, this year's team also hailed from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France and Poland.

Throughout the visit they were assisted by 7th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and 51st Infantry Brigade.

3. ESTONIA MEDALS MARK END OF WATCH

LEADERS from the Royal Tank Regiment Battlegroup made history after receiving Estonian medals in recognition of their extended service on Op Cabrit.

Commanding Officer Lt Col Simon Worth and WO1 Mike Richardson – the regimental sergeant major – became the first personnel on the Nato mission to receive the Silver and Bronze Crosses for Merit respectively.

Meanwhile troops from the battlegroup were handed special recognition awards from 12



Armoured Brigade Combat Team Commander, Brig Mike Cornwell.

Their tenure on the alliance's eastern flank was extended from six months to nine following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The soldiers finally returned home last month, to be relieved by the 2 Rifles Battlegroup as the Agile Task Force, the name

given to the additional formation deployed to Estonia in support of the Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup, currently headed up by The Royal Welsh.

"We depart Estonia proud of our contribution and convinced of the importance of this mission – it has been an enormous privilege," said Lt Col Worth.

4. GERMANY MONUMENT MAKEOVER

A MEMORIAL to 38 Belgian personnel killed in a plane crash on Sennelager Training Area in 1963 has been meticulously refurbished by two Royal Engineers.

Sappers Ben James and Josefa Rika cleaned and repainted the stone column near the site where the Fairchild C-119 crashed – having been hit by a mortar round as it flew over an active range while approaching RAF Gütersloh.

The two soldiers volunteered for the task during Exercise Eagle Baumeister, which saw their unit, 53 Field Squadron, 39 Engineer Regiment, completing various infrastructure upgrades in and around the Sennelager area.

A wreath-laying to mark the 59th anniversary of the tragedy was due to take place at the memorial as this issue went to press.

Picture: Sgt Talitha Woodhouse, RAMC

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

- 2. UK
- 3. ESTONIA
- 4. GERMANY
- 6. FRANCE
- 7. UKRAINE
- 5. SWITZERLAND

King's Royal
Hussars on track
in Poland
– page 30

Brief the team now:



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8. BRUNEI ROYAL SALUTE

THE Sultan of Brunei has bid 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles farewell as they prepare to return to the UK after five years and join 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team.

With their usual three-year stint in country unexpectedly extended by the coronavirus pandemic, the troops are set to swap places with sister formation, 1st Battalion, in the coming weeks.

During their time in Borneo they have completed multiple jungle training packages, worked closely with The Royal Brunei Armed Forces and have supported the government's efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19.



8. BRUNEI



5. SWITZERLAND VET WANTS TO RIDE HIS BICYCLE

A QUEEN superfan and former Coldstream Guardsman cycled 330 miles across Germany and Switzerland in aid of military causes.

Richard Smith pedalled from Musicland Studios in Munich to the Freddie Mercury statue in Montreux (pictured), raising £3,000 for SSAFA in the process.

Medically discharged due to injury, he struggled to adjust to civilian life and took on the challenge to draw attention to the high number of veterans battling poor mental health.

6. FRANCE SAPPER SAVOIR FAIRE

A TWO-WEEK visit to western France gave sappers from 5 Armoured Engineer Squadron valuable experience of training alongside partner nations.

Exercise Zulu Gravier saw them conducting obstacle crossings, demolitions and an assault on a village in support of 4th Company, 13e Regiment du Genie, while their Belgian counterparts teamed up successfully with the formation's 3rd Company.

The package culminated with an open day at Valdahon Camp and a parade to commemorate the Battle of Bir Hakeim during the Second World War.

Officer Commanding Maj Andy Bayley described the visit as an "excellent opportunity to not only work with Nato allies but for 22 Engineer Regiment to deploy sappers into Europe."



7. UKRAINE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL

A FORMER gunner has delivered £1m-worth of life-saving medical aid to Ukraine.

Ryan Yates – previously of 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery – made a total of 17 dangerous trips to the region with Veteran's Army, a charity he set up initially to provide counselling and support to ex-Service personnel.

Having switched focus to the humanitarian mission in Eastern Europe, he is now appealing for donations to help finance continuation of the work.

"Funds are running low and I'd hate to be in a position where we can't go on," he said. "There's still so much to be done, which is why I'm asking for help from absolutely everyone." Donate via veteransarmy.co.uk



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CGS sets the bar high for soldiers

THE Army's new top dog has wasted no time in making himself heard.

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, took command last month but has already captured the attention of the mainstream media.

An internal message to troops and civil servants posted on Defence Connect was unequivocal in relaying his view of Russia and what the British Armed Forces should do about the threat from Vladimir Putin's regime.

Gen Sanders declared that the invasion of Ukraine had reinforced the requirement to deter such aggression with the threat of force.

"There is now a burning imperative to forge an Army capable of fighting alongside our Allies and defeating Russia in battle," he wrote. "We are the generation that must prepare the Army to fight in Europe once again."

The senior officer has so far proved equally unflinching on the domestic front, too, quickly withdrawing 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment from a scheduled deployment to the



Balkans with Nato's Strategic Response Force.

His decision followed video footage which was circulated on social media which showed some of the unit's troops having sex with a woman inside Merville Barracks in Colchester.

The Service personnel involved were also removed from the battalion's next rotation as the Air Manoeuvre Battlegroup.

While no crimes were committed, the top officer said he believed the footage "contravened the Army's values and standards" and had damaged its reputation.

He said the decision was based on that incident along with other disciplinary issues with personnel – including some from 3 Para – that had come to light in North Macedonia during Exercise Swift Response.

"These measures will allow a battalion with remarkable fighting spirit and a magnificent history to reflect on where it has fallen short of what we all expect of our Army," he commented.

Sapper's 78-year search for civilian

A SECOND World War sapper who gave up his tea to a hungry French child after the D-Day invasion says he is still hopeful of finding her again.

Reg Pye, who was serving with 224 Field Company, Royal Engineers, had been about to tuck into a slice of bread and jam after his convoy was held up near Normandy when he saw the teenager staring at him.

Realising she was desperately in need of something to eat, he parted with his grub – which she gratefully took and hurried away.

But the next morning, the sapper awoke to find a picture of her with a message of thanks on the back – while his mess tin had been half-filled with milk.

Now having returned to France on a visit organised by the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans, the 98-year-old shared his story with fellow ex-combatants and said he longed to tell the girl how much her gesture had meant to him.

Her note on the photo (shown) identified her as Huguette Geoffroy, 14, from the settlement of Orne.

The veteran said: "The very brief encounter will stay with me forever – in the bleakest of times this bit of



human interaction made a huge mark.

"I went back to Normandy about 50 years after to trace her but wasn't successful – I would love to tell her how much I treasure that memory."

Charity volunteer Paul Cook – who accompanied the former personnel on the trip to France – said the party had been deeply moved by the story.

Appealing to anyone who might be able to help with finding Huguette, he added: "We would love to see his wish come true to meet her or her family."

Email dickgoodwin@taxicharity.org.uk with any information. ■

“
It will stay
with me
forever
”



LAURENTIN IN THE LEAD

THE 1st (UK) Division is being led by a French general for the second time.

Brig Gen Jean Laurentin (pictured above left) assumed command from Maj Gen Charlie Collins and will remain in post until a permanent replacement arrives in September.

The Frenchman is stepping up from his role as the formation's deputy commander, mirroring the temporary appointment of Brig Gen Hervé Bizeul in similar circumstances six years ago – a first for the British Army.

Under the Lancaster House agreement of 2010, the French and British governments agreed to closer defence cooperation.

There are a number of exchange officers on both sides of the Channel enhancing military interoperability.



Picture: Cpl Danny Houghton, RLC

Pitting presentations

AIRBORNE soldiers have been presented with medals in recognition of their contribution to Op Pitting, the mission to evacuate British and foreign civilians from Afghanistan as the Taliban took control of the country in August 2021.

A parade was held for Headquarters 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron and 16 Military Intelligence Company.

Many personnel returned early from summer leave to deploy and worked alongside Joint Force Headquarters to evacuate more than 15,000 people, as well as distribute 250,000 litres of bottled water, 25,000 bottles of baby formula and 9,000 nappies.

Soldiers on their first deployment were presented the Operational Service Medal (OSM) with an Op Pitting clasp, while those who had previously served in the country and already received the OSM were given the clasp.



WAGONER CHAMPIONS

■ TROOPS from 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment pulled in the silverware after an impressive showing at a competition with its roots in the First World War.

Ex Wagoner Challenge saw teams compete in challenges based around driving horse-drawn loads.

Other tests included zapping mock rats – the scourge of the trenches – and tug-of-war.

Organised by the Wagoner's Special Reserve Museum and 6 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, the event saw eight-strong groups compete at Sledmere House in East Riding.



DRINK APP, PLEASE

■ VETERANS have tested a new smartphone app that helps users cut back on booze.

The *Drinks:Ration* tool was trialled by more than 120 former Service personnel, who were found to have consumed an average of 28 fewer units of alcohol per week compared to a control group.

Find it on Apple iOS and Google Play.



ON THE CHARGE

Female cricketers make history at Lord's – page 72



BattleLab's electric dreams

Projects aim to boost Army operations around the world

“We're looking at purchasing e-bikes”



STAFF at the recently launched Defence BattleLab are already thinking outside the box to get more new technologies into the hands of military personnel and hopefully accelerate their introduction to front-line operations.

Cpl Bryan Munce (Para, pictured left), one of eight tri-Service personnel currently working at the facility with academics and private sector boffins, told *Soldier* that an exciting schedule of projects was in the pipeline.

“One that I'm working on aims to use defence sports as a vessel for innovation,” he said. “We're looking at purchasing e-bikes to trial through defence Enduro racing events.

“These bikes have been used by the Army already in places like Africa and Ukraine but we want to go further in exploring their potential in the field and to collect more data.

“Projects like this will also help create a cultural change regarding introducing electric propulsion into the defence community.”

Cpl Munce is heading up another electrification project which will see Army Land Rovers converted to electric power by leading commercial firms

operating in the sector.

“If it gets the green light, I'll be assessing full electric conversions of Landies against fossil fuel and hybrid equivalents and analysing the pros and cons of each in a military context, including the possibilities of bi-directional charging, where the vehicles charge the troops' other devices,” he continued.

“We'll be putting this out to tender soon hopefully, and I've been speaking with leading commercial outfits such as Jankel, who make military vehicles, and Everrati, who are famous for doing full electric conversions to iconic performance cars like the Porsche 911 as well as Land Rovers.”

The Defence BattleLab went online earlier this year after a soft launch last summer, and has hosted numerous hackathons, defence technology showcases and workshops for emerging technologies, including advanced systems for controlling multiple autonomous vehicles.

The £5.7m site includes large workshops and offices with meeting and conferencing facilities.

Private companies can bid for space there to work with defence employees.

DAD'S THE WORD

■ THE Army has been praised for helping dads in uniform after it came highly commended in the Best for Fathers category at the Working Families Best Practice Awards.

The Service was praised for flexibility, scooping a similar prize for mums last year.



■ WELL-DRILLED troops from the Royal Logistic Corps put on a display of precision and professionalism to take the top slot in this year's British Army All-Arms Pace Sticking Competition. The event, at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, saw teams show off their skills with intricate parade-square moves over 20 minutes which were marked to the centimetre and second. The venue's band took the runner-up slot.



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FIELD ARMY STANDING ORDER 3003 UPDATES

The Army Future Force is set to become more agile, more integrated, and more expeditionary, ready for the next challenge and not the last. This evolution highlights the necessity for continuous adaptation and being ready for change.

FASO 3003 V3 seeks to direct the Field Army's operational and training lessons process. Principal updates include:

- **Local Lessons Log (L3s):** Clearer direction reinforcing the purpose and content of L3s.
- **Lessons Capture:** Clearer direction on how to identify and exploit issues identified from operations and all training across the Field Army.
- **Learning Loops:** Reinforcing your understanding of lesson ownership, quick-loop resolution, and the lesson escalation process.

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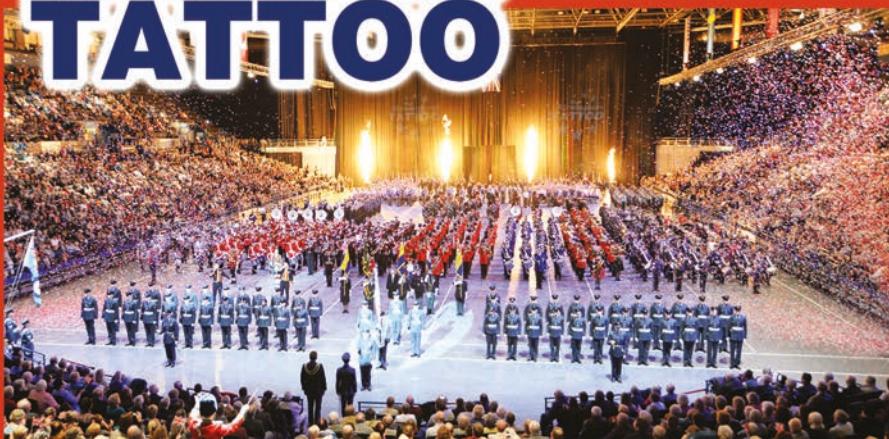
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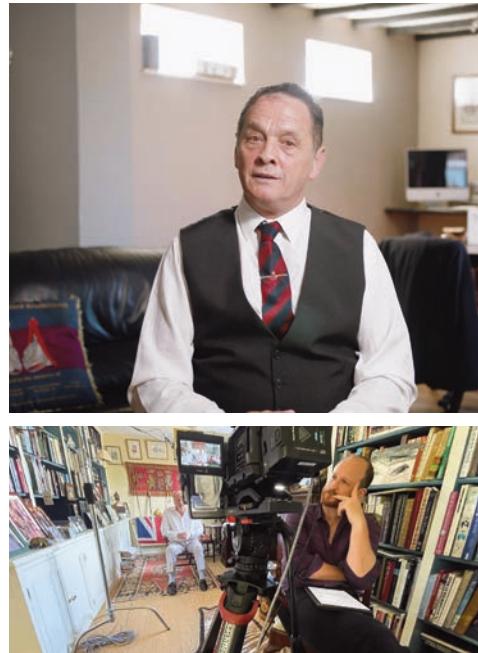


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The film shines a light on the Household Cavalry Regiment's experiences



Troops relive terror, 40 years on

A CROWDFUNDING initiative has been launched to help finish a documentary film about the troops caught up in one of the UK's worst terrorist atrocities.

In it veterans of the Household Cavalry Regiment speak out for the first time about the Hyde Park bomb – recalling the moment the Provisional IRA device claimed the lives of four comrades and eight horses.

The attack – which happened 40 years ago this month – injured several others and was carried out as troops were on their way to change guard at Buckingham Palace.

Funds are now needed to put the final touches to the feature and promote it to broadcasters. More than half of the £8,000 target had been raised as this issue went to press.

Director Mauricio Gris (shown above with camera) admitted he was surprised the events of July 20, 1982 had not been told in detail before.

"At the time the horses were the focus," the former cavalryman pointed out. "I wanted to capture the human

side of this tragedy and explore what it means to those involved today."

Among the former personnel interviewed for the project was Steve Sullivan (above right), who said the explosion still lived with him.

The device – detonated by remote control – sprayed nails and other pieces of shrapnel into the 15-strong group of soldiers and their mounts.

"It was like having every little bit of oxygen drawn from your body – the feeling you get before you pass out," he recalled of the blast. "And then it is an emptiness, the life sucked out of you – an awful feeling, horrible."

Brig (Retd) Andrew Parker-Bowles (above left), the regiment's CO at the time, shared the sentiment, adding he had often wondered if there was anything more he could have done.

"It was probably the saddest moment of my military career," he admitted. "The public reacted in a wonderful way but it didn't bring the dead soldiers back."

Visit [crowdfunder.co.uk/hydeparkbombing](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/hydeparkbombing)

“

At the time the horses were the focus

”

CASH HIKE FOR KIDS



Picture: Shutterstock

THE Army Dependents' Trust – a charity that provides cash to families of soldiers and officers who die on or off duty – has increased the size of its grants from £15,000 to £20,000.

The membership cost remains unchanged at £8.75 per year.

Anyone wanting to find out more should speak to their regimental admin office.

MUSLIMS MUSE ON LIFE

■ PERSONNEL of all faiths should "thrive, not just survive," in the military, according to the outgoing Armed Forces Muslim Association champion.

Maj Gen Duncan Capps was speaking at the organisation's annual conference, where members received updates on policy and discussed experiences of service.

Among the concerns highlighted were issues around halal food, with troops describing a lack of confidence in the labelling of dishes, fears of cross contamination and limited choice in messing facilities.

Wider problems such as visa difficulties for Commonwealth soldiers were also raised.

In addition, delegates heard from Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, about efforts to reduce unacceptable behaviour.

Maj Gen Capps said that while there was more work to do, such initiatives would set the conditions for all minorities to thrive in the military.

"I've never seen such a genuine commitment across the chain of command to change things, led from the top," he added.

The senior officer, who leaves the Army in August, will be succeeded by Air Marshal Sammy Sampson (RAF).



Picture: Matt Allen

THIS MEANS WARCOP



ARMED FORCES WEEK SALUTES THE SERVICES

■ FLAGS were raised across the UK as soldiers and civies came together to mark Armed Forces Day. The event is held on the last Saturday of every June to honour the contribution of military personnel. This year's spectacle featured the usual variety of military parades, music performances and aerial flypasts – with Scarborough playing host to the national showcase. A select few troops were also invited to a special reception at 10 Downing Street, where Defence Secretary Ben Wallace thanked them for their contribution.

■ RECCE troops familiarise themselves with the Jackal 2 vehicle ahead of a deployment to Poland this summer. The Royal Lancers hit Warcop to prepare for Op Cabrit, where 120 soldiers will work alongside US forces. Learn more about battlegroup preparations for Eastern Europe on page 30.



TANKIES MAKE HISTORY

■ AN ALL-VOLUNTEER tankie group has rumbled into history after becoming the first full crew from the Army's Armoured Reserve Regiment to deploy in 80 years.

The Royal Wessex Yeomanry quartet – including (from left) loader LCpl John Livingstone, commander Cpl Michael Farley, driver LCpl George Dwight and gunner LCpl George Wrigman – headed for the Baltics with the Royal Tank Regiment as part of Operation Cabrit in Estonia.

It is believed they were the first Reservists to serve together in this way since their precursors advanced on Rome during the later stages of the Second World War Italian campaign.

The NCOs – part of Nato's enhanced forward presence – said they were proud to have achieved the significant military milestone.

Cpl Farley, who has since returned from theatre, added: "This is not something the armoured Reserves have had the chance to do for a long time – it felt good to be given the opportunity."



CALLING ALL PARENTS

■ PARENTS have been reminded to tell their children's headteachers about a government pot of cash available for schools with Service pupils on the roll.

The Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding Fund this year has £3 million to award under its Education Support Fund, and UK state and free schools as well as academies are eligible to apply.

Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of the negative impact military life has on schooling and how the cash could help.

The closing date for bids is September 30, 2022 – search for the Education Support Fund application pack at gov.uk for more information.

Time for a smarter way to train

Director Reserves believes things need to change if volunteer personnel are to step up...

ONE of the themes of the recent Army Reserve Conference at Shrivenham was that a smaller Regular Army, persistently engaged overseas will need a more productive Reserve force to support it.

But according to Director Reserves, Maj Gen Simon Graham, these personnel will not be required to train for longer than they already do. Their training just needs to be smarter.

"We are looking at this in detail; there is only so much time volunteer Reservists can give if they are also holding down full-time jobs," he told *Soldier*.

"It's important we make Reserve service accessible to them. Whatever training they do must be reasonably achievable in the time they can give.

"We will take care of the rest if or when the Army is mobilised for warfighting.

View from the
GROUND



Soldier grilled Maj Gen Simon Graham on his training overhaul...

"What personnel train for and how, when and where they train is in the spotlight. Our plan is to take it capability by capability, unit by unit and look at what Reservists need to do in peacetime – and, importantly, what they don't need to do.

"Training them as though they are Regulars is a non-starter. That said, there are some trades where it might make sense to put them through with Regulars – provided they can commit the time.

"Rather than death by a thousand cuts to qualify over several years, do it in one go. Or do it between leaving college and starting full-time employment. Do it between jobs."

Maj Gen Graham believes Reserve retention is undermined by overburdening personnel with unrealistic and never-ending training demands.

"This reset is a must because our soldiers need a schedule they can manage properly, to keep the offer attractive," he said. "It's more vital than ever that we keep our best people." ■

Why are you only now looking at this?

The Integrated Review was, in effect, a huge demand signal for the Reserve – something it has not really had since the end of the Cold War. That is expressed in warfighting outputs that we can now organise for.

Can you explain?

Previously, the Reserve was required to provide mass to warfighting which, when you think about it, doesn't give much away. What were our Reserve units to do specifically? Without knowing their purpose, what should they train for? If you don't know where you want to go, any road will do. Sure, the Reserve made a heroic contribution to Ops Telic and Herrick but it was never a core purpose. Under Future Soldier we've been told to produce 24,000 Reservists ready to deploy; each one of them has a specific warfighting role, and each one of them needs to know what it is. Whether individuals, teams, crews, platoons, sub-units or whole units, we can now say

precisely what their purpose is and what they must train for.

How will that work in practice?

Future Soldier has allocated specific roles. For example, 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery is now the only gun regiment for 4 Light Brigade – previously it had no specified output. And The Royal Wessex Yeomanry must now have 24 formed Challenger crews qualified and ready to go. On top of that, Reservists will continue to support Regular units on operations such as Cabrit and Tosca. And there is UK resilience, but this will involve relatively few, relatively infrequently and for short periods. The training burden will be low.

Why has the Reserve been given the lead on homeland operations?

Two reasons. Firstly, the arithmetic makes it necessary. Fewer Regulars increasingly committed overseas creates a gap at home. Secondly, and

much more importantly, using Reservists has advantages. They generally have a better understanding of how things work along the civil-military interface, as well as local knowledge – and they are always well motivated to help out in their own communities.

How will you ensure enough Reservists are available to deal with an emergency?

We'll soon have a new app that will allow Reservists to swipe in or out to show us who is available, and we can use the same app to mobilise them too. It's called *Fast – The Force Availability Sensing Tool* and is being trialled at the moment.

When will the Reserve assume this role?

The timeline is really sharp – we have to be ready in 2023. The UK standby battalion will start transferring from Regular to Reserve from next April and is due to be 100 per cent Reserve by April 2025.



WIN
a family festival ticket – worth £430!



LAST month's spine line clues may have been recognised by the sport fans among our readers.

Inspired by our coverage of the Army women playing their first Inter-Services match at Twickenham, (Bdr Beth) Dainton, (Sgt Louise) Dodd, (Pte Courtney) Pursglove and (Lt Sally) Stott were all try scorers who helped the team defeat the Royal Navy.

This month, we have teamed up with Gone Wild Festival 2022 (gonewildfestival.com) to offer one reader a family weekend camping ticket to the Devon-based event between August 25 and 28 – worth £430!

The prize (travel not included) allows two adults and two under-18s entry to the whole event, with a great line-up this year including The Darkness, Reef and Sophie Ellis-Bextor, plus numerous kids activities from kayaking to climbing and circus skills.

To be in with a chance of winning this superb summer prize tell us what links the words on the spine of this issue.

Answers, including phone number, to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by July 29.

Winners will be notified during the first week of August.

Soldier readers are also being offered a kids-go-free discount to the festival, which gives a free child ticket for every full-price adult ticket purchased. To redeem visit gonewildfestival.com/soldier-magazine



SPINE LINE COMPETITION



ZAMBIAN ZEAL



TROOPS from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards have been helping the African country of Zambia to tackle poachers and the illegal wildlife trade. Around 35 personnel travelled to the Kafue National Park (pictured) to deliver the counter-poaching instructors' course and the conservation data analysis course, after the country's authorities requested support. They also took part in joint patrols alongside local rangers. Zambia is home to a significant elephant population and several rare and endangered species. Pictures: Shutterstock and Sgt Chris Morgan, WG

Responding in a crisis

Europeans unite for two-week exercise to hone their planning skills

BRITISH personnel have linked up with their counterparts from across Europe and beyond in a major test of multinational operational planning.

Staged simultaneously between Shrivenham's Defence Academy (shown) and equivalent staff colleges in Germany, Spain and Italy, the training saw participants working to a West African-based crisis response scenario within the framework of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

Some 500 troops were involved in the two-week package – known as the Combined Joint European Exercise (CJEX) – including exchange officers from the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, the US, Sweden and Finland.

Maj Ashley Neve (Para), one of the UK students at the Bundeswehr's Führungsakademie in Hamburg, said events in Ukraine had underlined the importance of seamless cooperation between allies.



"Exercises like this reinforce the fact that we are stronger together and the increased threat in Eastern Europe adds impetus to the need to iron out any issues when operating alongside other nations," he explained.

"It requires us to remain flexible and reach some compromises, while also giving us the opportunity to practise working with other cultures to achieve the best results."

For Maj Neve and fellow British representative Maj Rob McCubbin (RAMC), the CJEX was the culmination of two years' study in Germany – equivalent to both the intermediate and advanced levels of the Command and Staff College courses at the UK's Defence Academy.

"It's great to do what we would otherwise learn at Shrivenham in a completely different country, language and military environment," explained Maj McCubbin. "The Bundeswehr has a different mindset and that cultural perspective is a challenging but really rich experience." ■

“
It requires us to remain flexible
”

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Op Shader shift

TROOPS deployed to Iraq have been counting the cash raised for a mental health good cause after embarking on a demanding PT challenge. Sgt Lee Wright (shown) of Stafford-based 22 Signal Regiment led the charge for Mind, which saw personnel run a mile on the hour over a day and night. The event, at Forward Operating Base Union III in Baghdad, raised £3,000 for the organisation. The NCO said he was delighted with the sum, adding: "I wanted to inspire others to seek help and let them know there are people who can help point them in the right direction."

Head medicine

A SOLDIER has fought back against mental health challenges to complete a gruelling physical test for charity. Cpl Natalya Platonova (AGC (RMP)) hit the headlines after winning Channel 4 reality show *The Circle* last year. She walked 115 miles from Oxford to Buckingham Palace chained to a three-kilo medicine ball. She said: "My body may have been broken but my mind has rebuilt itself."

Amount raised:
£10,000
For ABF and Combat Stress



Above: Some of the 2022 results from the Armed Forces continuous attitude survey

“
My mind has rebuilt itself
”

Not all smiles for troops post-Covid

ATTITUDES towards pay, allowances and senior leaders may have worsened over the last year – according to the 2022 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey – but there is probably good reason for this.

Those behind the study warn that the outlook of soldiers appears to have gone downhill fast because the previous questionnaire saw an unexpected upturn in results.

"The figures can at first sight look quite disappointing," said Paula

Lanchbury, a senior occupational psychologist in the Personnel Directorate who helps with Service research. "But the year before we were in the midst of lockdown two, and people's attitudes were very different so we need to consider that.

"Troops were possibly more grateful to have a secure job and pay, and were busy with Op Rescript."

She said the figures – some of which are shown above – had in many cases returned to pre-Covid levels.

HIMALAYAN HEIGHTS



TROOPS and civvies turned out in force to take on a strenuous test based on Gurkha selection. The Doko Challenge South saw 84 contenders converge on Wimbledon Common to tackle a 5km course carrying a traditional Nepalese basket weighing five, ten or 15 kilos – all aiming to beat a target time of 46min, while raising more than £10,000 for the Gurkha Welfare Trust.



Ground view

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

SUMMER is upon us and the welcome prospect of leave is fast approaching – but my schedule shows little sign of slowing down as I come to the end of my first year in post.

Establishing the new NCO Academy, plans for which my predecessor Gav Paton set in motion a little while ago, has been top of the priority list.

You'll probably already know that we have been making steady progress with this project.

A team has been set up in Andover to understand what the initiative would look like in the British Army. They have engaged with the NCO community online, through working groups and interviews.

There is a lot to consider, from what we want it to achieve, to how we achieve that and where it will be.

But we can also learn from allies with their own education hubs in place.

Take the United States, for example. I recently had a flying visit to their NCO Academy at Fort Bliss in Texas, which is this year marking its 50th anniversary.

Over that time, it has provided some outstanding opportunities for soldiers progressing through the ranks.

Notably, there is an emphasis on through-life education for troops, giving them choice over the courses that will most benefit their career path. There is also a strong component of online learning – which sets the base for training in person – with degree-level qualifications available for the most committed.

Additionally, the academy provides great opportunities for exchange placements, with personnel from other countries able to impart experience.

The United Kingdom is strongly represented here. While I was stateside, WO1 Sarah Cox (RLC), who is the future command sergeant major of Home Command, came out top on the sergeant major academy course, deservedly taking the award for best international student.

I'm going to be visiting other militaries who have similar initiatives already in place in the run-up to the launch of our learning hub. My next port of call will be the Dutch Army, which uses a very different model to our American counterparts.

I'll keep you posted – so watch this space for more updates.

It is critical that we keep learning from each other.

It's critical we keep learning

“ ”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What's on your travel playlist?

A The Prodigy, Linkin Park and 2000s hip-hop tunes are my favourites



Slogging in Scotland

LAST month I wrote about some of the unfair labels being given to our young people – and how I have personally seen our soldiers dispelling them.

I now have more evidence to back up my case after completing the Cateran Yomp – a 54-mile trek through the Cairngorm Mountains north of the border.

During the event, which raises money for ABF the Soldiers' Charity, I met and teamed up with an 18-year-old man who was clearly being tested.

Yet, walking alongside me, and with some encouragement, he pushed himself to and eventually well beyond the limits he set himself.

His feet were literally raw with the effort he put in.

This was an individual without any military experience, yet he clearly shows the quality and determination of our youth as well as their hunger for success.

If we support each other, too, we can exceed expectations

NEW MAN AT THE TOP

■ YOU have probably noticed that the Army has a new chief of the general staff in Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, who recently succeeded Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith.

Gen Sanders brings a wealth of experience in a number of senior roles, including command on operations and in strategy.

He values his people hugely. I'm very much looking forward to working with him and know you will join me in wishing him all the best in the new role.

Thanks, too, to his predecessor – and good luck for the future.



THE BIG PICTURE

St James's Park, London

Splashes of colour

■ A SPECTACULAR evening of military music and pageantry was topped off with a colourful firework display for the crowds at Horse Guards Parade last month.

The Massed Bands and Bugles of The Rifles sounded retreat at sunset against the backdrop of St James's Park.

The event saw author James Holland narrate the story behind the evolution of the regiment from its origin in the Peninsular War, with Napoleonic re-enactors helping to bring some of the musical story to life.

The English National Opera and The Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas were among others to take part in the evening, which also saw the official launch of The Rifleman's Association.

Pictures: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC





WED TO WED



CORE capability

PTI shares four-minute routine
for building abs of steel

► PHYSICAL training instructor Pte Rome Wilkinson (Mercian) believes in quality over quantity when it comes to his personal fitness regime.

The 28-year-old alternates daily between the following two, four-minute sequences, which he says has enabled him to bust out insane moves like this front lever with an added twist...

DAY 1

1 50 wall crunches:

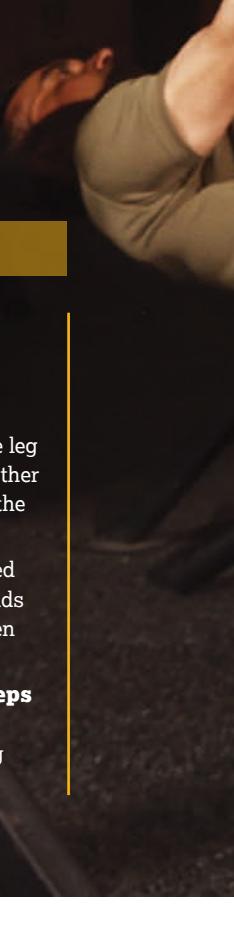
- Lying on your back, with knees at a 90-degree angle and feet flat on the wall, do **five crunches**
- Extend one leg halfway up the wall and do another **five crunches**, then **five** with leg fully straight
- Repeat on the way back down so you are doing 25 crunches in total, before switching to the other leg

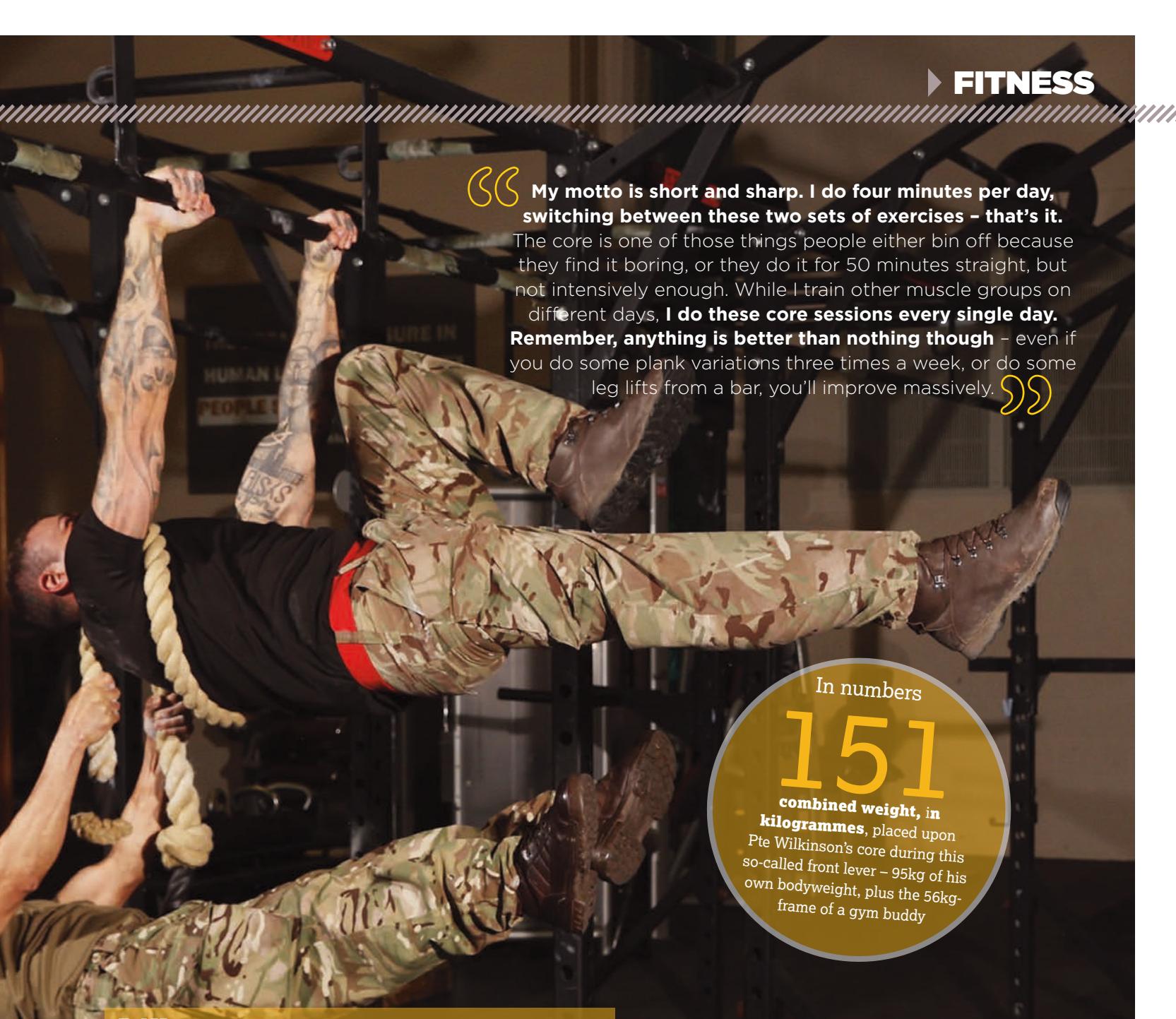
2 30 elbow- to-knee crunches:

- Lying on your back, cross one leg over the other with your ankle resting on your knee
- Crunch up, bringing your elbow to the opposite knee **15 times**
- Repeat on other side

3 60 time under tension reps:

- Lie on your back with one leg straight in the air and the other hovering six inches above the ground
- Keeping your core engaged throughout, reach your hands up your shin **12 times**, then switch legs
- Now repeat this for **ten reps** on both sides, followed by **eight reps** without resting in between





33

My motto is short and sharp. I do four minutes per day, switching between these two sets of exercises – that's it.

The core is one of those things people either bin off because they find it boring, or they do it for 50 minutes straight, but not intensively enough. While I train other muscle groups on different days, **I do these core sessions every single day.**

Remember, anything is better than nothing though – even if you do some plank variations three times a week, or do some leg lifts from a bar, you'll improve massively. 33

In numbers

151

combined weight, in

kilogrammes, placed upon

Pte Wilkinson's core during this so-called front lever – 95kg of his own bodyweight, plus the 56kg-frame of a gym buddy

DAY 2

1 60 oblique crunches:

On a GHD machine, lie on your side and crunch up for **three sets of ten** on each side. If you don't have any equipment, you can do this one on the floor

2 Weighted crunches:

Using a cable machine, kneel down, facing away from the apparatus and grasping the rope either side of your neck. Hinge forward from the waist, crunching slowly towards the floor **15 times**, squeezing your abs at the bottom.

Alternatively, complete the same number of hanging leg raises with a dumbbell between your knees



Profile

Name: Pte Rome Wilkinson

Age: 28

Role: PTI at 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment

Military career: Having fulfilled an ambition to serve in Afghanistan, Pte Wilkinson was set to sign off but decided instead to stay on as a physical training instructor and focus on all things fitness



FITNESS

Two more fitness mantras...

BC I don't obsess about

personal bests. Treating it too seriously takes the fun out of it for me – I mainly want to look good in the summer. Instead of focusing on lifting the heaviest weight possible I work on good form and the number of reps or sets I'm doing.



BC I don't believe in dieting.

Some people weigh out all their food, but I basically train so I can eat what I want. My diet is pretty clean, though – lots of chicken, rice, avocados and salads, the usual – and I don't drink, apart from on special occasions. However, if I pig out for a day or two, I don't worry too much – I'll just get back on track the next day.



● In September, Pte Wilkinson will take on a **three-stage casualty evacuation challenge** on **Boscombe Beach** in aid of **Combat Stress**.

Together with colleagues he will carry a stretcher on a ten-mile run, before loading the dummy into a boat and swimming one kilometre and finally dragging it over the same distance in a commando crawl.

Having previously box-jumped 8,849m – the equivalent height of Mount Everest – and completed a marathon while pulling a Land Rover, he is no stranger to gruelling feats of endurance.

"I know it sounds stupid but I just love being in absolute rag, surrounded by lovely people – it's a really nice feeling," he explains.

"I had my own problems years ago, so I have a massive urge to do my part and help others facing mental health issues. A lot of people are struggling."

To donate and follow his charity efforts visit [justgiving.com/fundraising/rome-wilkinson](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rome-wilkinson)



Anything



Gough and one of her regular customers, Teddy the Shih Tzu

is paw-sible

Why this ex-Servicewoman swapped comms for canine grooming



► LOCKDOWN prompted a rethink of priorities for lots of people – but for former captain Verity Gough (ex-R Signals) it led to a particularly surprising change in profession.

With pet salons closed like every other business, she picked up the clippers and gave her two West Highland terriers, Baxter and Eddie, a DIY trim.

Despite mixed results initially, she shelved plans to move into the civilian comms industry and retrained as a dog groomer, later launching her business Forest Canine Grooming.

The 43-year-old explained: “I was on my resettlement and was going for jobs in comms, but then lockdown happened.

“My Westies were due a trim the next day, so I thought I’d give it a go – I ordered some clippers off the internet, watched some YouTube videos... and it went disastrously.

“But I thought to myself, ‘actually, if I learn to do this properly, I could potentially do this as a career’, so I booked myself onto a six-week course.”

Armed with her new qualifications and having used her Army gratuity to buy a purpose-built garden pod – complete with canine grooming station – Gough’s new venture was up and running by October 2020.

And thanks to the pandemic prompting a surge in pet ownership, it couldn’t have come at a better time.

“Everyone bought dogs, so it wasn’t hard to find customers – in fact I had to turn people away,” she continued.

“Apart from the accounts, which I leave to a professional, I do everything myself in terms of the business side.

“I’m good at process and I knew how to build a website from my time in the Signals.

“And because I’m a bit older and have experience, I’m not fazed by difficult clients.

“I’ve got a lot of regulars now, including two dogs that were placed among the best in their breeds at Crufts.”

While Gough admits being her own boss took some getting used to after 22 years in uniform, she has no regrets about walking away from everything she knew.

“I could have carried on in comms and it would have been easy, but I needed a new challenge and a new skill,” she added.

“And this is so rewarding – I like building a rapport with the clients and their dogs. I also offer puppy packages to introduce young dogs to grooming, as well as desensitisation training for dogs who are nervous about it – I really enjoy that.”

Reflecting on what her message for fellow Service-leavers would be, she said: “Just do it – don’t be scared.

“It’s exciting to do something completely different.” ■

Top tip for Service leavers:
“Don’t be afraid to try something new”

PROFILE

Name: Verity Gough

Age: 43

Military career: 22 years in the Royal Signals, rising to the rank of captain and serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Falkland Islands

Favourite dog breed: West Highland Terrier



YOU are NOT here

Ended up at the wrong grid?

Army nav guru explains where you might have gone off track

► NO one likes being “geographically embarrassed”, but with the rise of GPS and smartphones, troops’ conventional map-reading skills have suffered.

That’s why the Service has rejigged its approach to the subject and introduced the land navigation advisers’ course (*Soldier*, June), aimed at building a cohort of experts to oversee policy and training at unit level.

Here, Royal Engineers geographic technician and lead instructor on the two-week package, WO1 Ollie Teasdale, describes three common errors and how to regain your bearings.

1

You haven't applied the basics

Everyone in the Army should know the acronym **DDCraps** from what used to be Matt 5 – now the individual training requirement. It stands for **direction, distance, conventional signs, relief, alignment, proximity, shape** (see panel). People pay lip service to this but it really does work if you stick rigidly to it.

2

You've made assumptions

Often people convince themselves they are somewhere because they’ve looked at one element of DDCraps that does match up and used that as proof they are correct. But, if you don’t actually know where you are in the first place, you won’t know where you are going.





How to fix it

Work through these steps logically and cross reference them to build up a body of evidence that you are in a given location. Different ones will be more relevant at different times. Then, make doubly sure by trying to disprove that you are where you think you are. If you can't disprove it, you know you are in the right place.

DISTANCE – on the map **measure how far things are from your position** and **see if it corresponds on the ground**

DIRECTION – similarly, **check if the direction of a feature from your position matches up**

CONVENTIONAL SIGNS – make sure you know what the **symbols on the map** mean

RELIEF – look at the **contours of the map** and **build up an image of what the ground** should look like

ALIGNMENT – use any **linear features that you think you should be able to see** – for example pylons or a ridgeline – to help confirm direction

PROXIMITY – **check that the locations of things on the ground** in relation to each other correspond with the map

SHAPE – does the **shape of things you can see, for example a building or body of water**, match what's on the map?



3

You've let your skills get rusty

Previously, **we used to naturally navigate all the time**. If you wanted to drive somewhere you'd get your road atlas out; if you were in a town and needed to find something you would have to look at a street map. But now that you can put a postcode into a phone or a dot on a map in a military system, people tend to walk with their head down looking at a screen. **I would encourage personnel to do things without GPS wherever possible** and be constantly aware of their surroundings. **Train hard, fight easy** as the saying goes.

- The land navigation advisers' course is run 11 times per year in and around the Royal School of Military Survey in Hermitage. Read 2022DIN07-033



Solo support

New app delivers fitness boost for those facing training alone

► IF YOU are struggling for ideas or motivation when it comes to phys during time away from unit and PT sessions, help is now at hand.

Designed for those on courses, postings, leave, overseas operations or exercises, the *My Army Fitness* app gives personnel the flexibility to continue to train using the Army physical training system.

Using individual performance data, its algorithm provides a bespoke personal programme and a number of user training options to follow – such as “step by step” or “just train” for the more experienced.

Users will be able to track their gains by recording performance as they go, meaning they can see improvements across all areas.

And for the more competitive, there is the option to test physical prowess against fellow Service personnel, or yourself, by taking part in a series of monthly challenges.

Here is a look at the app and the process soldiers can expect to face as they strive to make gains... ■



Getting started

The following data is needed to join up, some of which is used to provide a more tailored programme for soldiers:

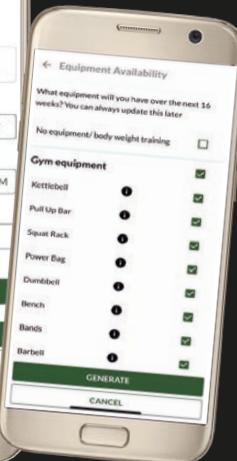
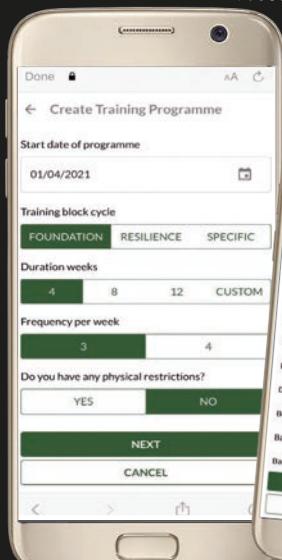
- **Basic personal information**
- **Soldier conditioning review results (optional)**. This allows personnel to take ownership of their individual fitness
- **Baseline testing (five rep max will be conducted to determine estimated one rep max weight) in deadlift, back squat and push press**
- **Resting heart rate**. This is optional, however, if added will provide the user with a heart rate range to run between



Tailored training

Using the data added, soldiers can create and customise a programme to suit their training environment, adjusting factors such as:

- **the number of weeks they want the programme to run for**
- **the number of sessions they can complete in one week**
- **any physical limitations or restrictions they may have**
- **gym access or, if not, they can simply annotate the equipment that is available and the exercise selection will change**
- **bodyweight-only exercises, which will be presented if no equipment is accessible to train with**



Expert guidance

All exercises presented within the programme will be accompanied by a video or photograph, complete with coaching cues, to ensure they are being performed correctly and safely



- **LOOK out for the *My Army Fitness* icon, which can be found in your My Series on the Defence Gateway homepage**



- **THE app is set to go live in late July. For more information scan the QR code which links to a live and updated info page**



Is your lunch ultra-processed?

What
this means
and why it
could be
bad news

► WHEN it comes to weighing up what food is bad for your health, sugar and fat hog the nutritional limelight. But experts are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of processed foods – and identifying the culprits can be tricky.

Here is how to classify your scoff according to the level of industry involved... and why this might be a better way to root out the worst offenders. ■

Check the label...

If the ingredients listed in your food include things you wouldn't find in your cupboard at home, there's a good chance it's ultra-processed

Why is this so bad?

Public health experts are becoming increasingly concerned about the amount of food we consume in this category.

It is lacking in dietary fibre and minerals, and often high in saturated fat, salt and sugar. Items like this are being blamed for poor health and a range of conditions such as cardiovascular disease.

Ultra-processed food

These sorts of foods go through a series of industrial processes, and contain ingredients not used in home cooking, such as additives, colours and flavours. Chicken nuggets, pizzas, frozen chips, cereals, kids yoghurts and many ready meals fall into this category.

Minimally or unprocessed food

Natural foods – fresh and frozen – such as meat, fruit, vegetables, seeds and milk.

Processed culinary ingredients

Items used to cook and flavour meals, such as sugar or oils, which have been processed (eg extraction from plants).



Processed food

Things that include a modest amount of processing to preserve or enhance their flavour, or create a new food, but which have not been tampered with in a substantial way – for example, cheese or tinned tomatoes.



Troops rethink
tactics and
terrain ahead
of deployment
to Estonia

ON THE WALL

Words: Steven Muncey Pictures: Daniel Harrison, Cpl Adam Wakefield, RLC



OR Nato members, the importance of this year's Exercise Defender Europe is all-too obvious.

Events in Ukraine mean commanders across the alliance are making the most of every opportunity they get to build operational readiness and interoperability between their respective armed forces.

No wonder, then, that the package contained an extensive programme of serials and manoeuvres staged across nine European countries that directly involved 11 nations and more than 13,000 personnel.

The US alone shipped in excess of 20,000 pieces of kit across the Atlantic.

And for the 1,000 or so Brits who deployed to Poland as part of The King's Royal Hussars Battlegroup, it provided an opportunity not just to test interoperability – a squadron of Danish Leopard tanks joined two KRH Challenger 2 squadrons to spearhead the formation – but new tactics and procedures too.

TWO GOALS

"For us, Defender was mainly about achieving two significant goals," battlegroup commander Lt Col Will Hodgkinson (KRH) told *Soldier*.

"The first was to assess whether we could prepare a force of this size, project it and then assemble it at the point of need with »



“the correct people and spares to perform our tasks.”

Operating effectively at reach is one of the Service’s main priorities under the Future Soldier plan and it is the rationale behind the creation of the new regional hubs.

Many of the battlegroup’s assets, including most of the Challengers and Warriors, were transported overland from storage depots in Sennelager and Monchengladbach, with the remainder being shipped into Gdansk via Marchwood.

“It feels like the investments the MoD have made in Germany, in making that a genuine centre for our European activity, is really starting to pay dividends,” added Lt Col Hodgkinson.

“That facility meant we could generate well over half the battlegroup by bringing assets from Germany into Poland.

“As a result, we had all the equipment we required, including lots of heavy armour, assembled in Poland in the right place and at the right time.”

The battlegroup’s second major objective was to complete preparations for its deployment on Op Cabrit in September.

It’s no coincidence that the area reserved for their manoeuvres – the Polish military training ground at Drawsko Pomorskie – bears a striking resemblance to much of the terrain found in Estonia, where dense forests of pine, spruce and birch cover more than half the country and also dominate the border areas the country shares with Russia.

“Most of our previous preparations were conducted on Salisbury Plain, which has big open spaces and is fantastic for mastering the basics,” continued Lt Col Hodgkinson.

“But what you get at Drawsko is wood blocks with interspersed areas of open ground and that’s hugely complicated for armoured formations.





“The crews have had to fight for every metre and use their brains during every manoeuvre because there are threats everywhere in dense forest. You must be so much more cautious and more deliberate in your actions.

“Our battle-winning tactic normally is based on our speed relative to the enemy. Our objective is to out-think and out-manoeuvre them at a pace they are not expecting.

“But in complex terrain the only way to survive is to send personnel ahead to clear the ground in front of you rather than the armour clearing the ground for the infantry.”

EYE-OPENING TERRAIN

If not exactly a culture shock, the experience of working through mile-upon-mile of dense forest proved to be at least an eye-opener for most of the personnel.

“Switching our focus from fighting on open ground, where we are normally quite dispersed, to moving in a convoy along narrow forest trails, was tough,” said Challenger driver LCpl Charles Lawrence (KRH).

“Going down tracks makes us quite vulnerable to attack and the movement of the tank’s barrel can be restricted.

“I’ve been in the regiment for three years and this is the first time I’ve experienced operating like this and so closely with other capabilities such as the combat engineers.

“We’ve been working on different tactics, using a Chally up front accompanied by Warriors, Foxhounds or Mastiffs containing anti-tank teams and light infantry who can dismount and conduct recce sorties or clear the wood block ahead of the main convoy.”

With Op Cabrit looming, none of the personnel had any doubt about the relevance and value of the training on offer.

“We’ve had to change what we are used to but there’s no doubt we’ll continue to evolve things for Estonia,” explained Lt Sam Trowbridge (KRH).

“It’s been so valuable being here – for example, rather than have almost everyone looking forward we had only the first two tanks doing that, with those behind scanning the flanks.

“Then we had to work out what to do if the two tanks up front are damaged by enemy contact – how do we clear the path to keep moving, so there’s been lots of combat support and combat service support factors to consider.

“Rather than driving down the centre of a track we try and stagger the vehicles to the flanks to allow recovery assets to move down the line.”

Even highly experienced soldiers were challenged by the unusual demands of this environment.

KIT AND TACTICS

Sgt Andy Bates (KRH) said it was only the second time he’d trained in such dense forest during his 19-year career with the regiment – and the learning curve had been steep.

“It was really different and extremely beneficial for us,” he added. “We do Fibua (fighting in built-up areas) and Fiwas (fighting in woods and forest) stuff in the UK, but it doesn’t have the same complexities as this.

“The main lesson for us has been the importance of situational awareness and good comms. It is everything in this landscape.

“A lot of the contacts here are at 500 metres or less and the »

» lack of visibility in these forests has emphasised the importance of getting eyes on the enemy.

"In one serial our recce personnel located two enemy tanks travelling through forest and because their reporting was so good, we managed to drive round the back of them and close to within 300 metres without seeing them at all – or them seeing us – and then we 'killed' them in a surprise attack from the rear."

With terrain that is anything but tank-friendly, the Challenger crews also experimented with equipment to find an edge.

This included adapting capabilities such as thermal imaging sights normally used to hunt down targets across wide open plains at night.

"Tactics are very different in forest and we have to stay ultra-vigilant," said gun loader LCpl Rhys Snell (KRH). "We practised using our thermal kit to locate enemy forces lurking in the woods.

"It's very effective and you can even use it when you're enveloped by dust clouds that other vehicles in the convoy have kicked up."

Other innovations that were assessed included the use of quad bikes to scout well ahead and out to the flanks of the main convoy.

"We've been exploring what they can do as they are quick and relatively quiet compared to a Warrior or CVRT," said Sgt Bates.

"But the downside is they are vulnerable because they

IN NUMBERS

11

NATO MILITARIES TAKING PART IN TRAINING

9

EUROPEAN NATIONS HOSTED EX DEFENDER



660

DISTANCE IN KILOMETRES FROM SENNELAGER TO DRAWSKO POMORSKIE

200+

VEHICLES IN KRH BG





have no armour or sighting systems, so they were captured on occasions by The Queen's Royal Hussars, who acted as Opfor.

"The quads are certainly very versatile and add something because they can move through tight spaces that other platforms simply can't.

"We are still working out how to get the best out of them but that's been one of the many benefits of the exercise."

MESSING WITH THE FORMULA

The soldiers' aggressive approach to adapting could also be seen in the make-up of the battlegroup itself.

Recognising the different challenges facing armoured forces in countries such as Estonia, the formation departed from the standard formula.

"We often have two armoured squadrons and two infantry companies, but we altered the balance for this package," explained Sgt Bates.

"For years we've been tied to the doctrine where tanks go in first to clear the ground and then infantry take on the enemy troops.

"However, the enemy wouldn't be dug into positions here because of the forested landscape and we had enemy armour to deal with. As a result, we have three armoured squadrons – one Danish – and an anti-tank company dismounting from Mastiffs."

According to Lt Col Hodgkinson, the structure was set up to perform a bespoke set of missions that were mainly defensive in their nature.

"When you combine anti-tank units with tanks you have a lethal combination for defensive capability – which is almost entirely the nature of our mission in Estonia," he added.

"The personnel had an amazing time trying different tactics because it was so different from what they're used to.

"Working through and solving lots of problems was enjoyable for everyone, not to mention extremely valuable.

"We had five meaningful days of kinetic training, but in terms of the quantity of learning they've been so useful they're probably worth 15 days somewhere else."

They say if you fail to prepare then prepare to fail, but that adage certainly can't be levelled at the KRH Battlegroup during this exercise.

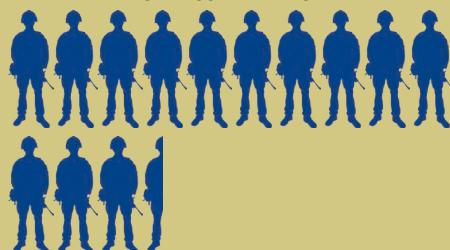
The training was meticulous and focused. And with mission-specific preparations of such quality already in the bag, these personnel have every reason to look forward to a highly successful deployment on Op Cabrit in September. ■

3

TRAINING AREAS IN POLAND USED FOR EX DEFENDER

13,400

NATO PERSONNEL INVOLVED



20,000

PIECES OF MILITARY KIT SHIPPED BY THE US ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DISCLOSURE SCHEME (DVDS)

WHAT IT IS

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS, also known as Clare's Law) enables the police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abuse or violence.

WHO CAN DO IT

Anyone who is concerned they could be in a relationship with a person who has been violent in the past can make an application. Anyone who has contact with a potential victim - such as a parent, neighbour or friend.

MAKING A DVDS REQUEST

Speak to your local police service on 101, attend your local civilian police station, or attend your nearest Service Police station.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



MASTERS & COMMANDERS



Infanteers learn leadership lessons for an uncertain world

Words: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Graeme Main

COMMANDERS

“
The aim is to
put students
under maximum
pressure
”





» **T**HE Welsh mountains are brought majestically to life as the midsummer sunlight cascades across the training area – but in the darkness of the buildings it takes time for the soldiers' eyes to adjust to the gloom.

Clambering through the windows and doorways of the houses in Cellini urban training village, the new environment is suddenly dank and claustrophobic. Soft soles of boots creep across stairwells and corridors to the next room and another clearance. The young second lieutenants embarking on Exercise Dragon's Fist are tense as they face fighting at its most direct and personal.

The periods of quiet are punctured by frenzied activity as the troops systematically carry out drills to rid the buildings of the mock enemy. Magazines of simmunition – paintball-like rounds – are expended as they attack defensive positions. In these enclosed spaces, combat is brief and victors are rapidly decided. Any mistakes are punished in seconds.

But learning from errors is key to honing the British Army's future sharp-end leaders on the platoon commanders' battle course. Here at Sennybridge Training Area and in the classrooms at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon, these officers must quickly build on the core leadership skills they learnt at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

"It is a demanding undertaking for our students, pretty much from the moment they first arrive," Capt Danny Spray (R Anglian) – who is second-in-command of the training package – tells *Soldier*.

"While they tend to enjoy the urban serials, using simmunition teaches them some basic realities very quickly – notably about staying behind cover and having strong fire support in place when they carry out a breach."

Preparing for conventional warfighting – against a well-matched enemy force – has always been a cornerstone of military training. But following years where the focus was counter-insurgency ops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the scenario now has a real-life resonance.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has laid bare the grim potential for nation state aggression. In a few months the attack has transformed Western political and military thinking, galvanising Nato countries into a robust defensive posture and prompting the alliance's largest exercises in decades.

The students at Brecon will soon be at the sharp end of command in this uncertain world – where the likes of peacekeeping actions and humanitarian deployments also prevail – and thorough preparation is key if they are to lead from the front effectively.

The course teaches a host of skills, including operating in different environments and alongside assets including armour, drones and air support.

And the learning curve is certainly steep – anyone signing up will face ten weeks on the platoon commanders' course and a further month honing live-firing skills. The conclusion of this training heralds a validation of all they have learnt on a demanding final training exercise.

"The aim throughout is to put the students under the maximum amount of pressure while developing their ability to »



“
The training
here is a
step up
”





» think quickly," adds Capt Spray.

"We are looking to enhance the realism of the course, including combined arms assets that infantry work with – we're hoping to soon have both real armour and aircraft available when they enter the concluding serials."

Despite the changing world, Maj Charlie James (Rifles) – who is on the team coordinating wider training at Brecon – stresses that the course must remain generic enough to encompass the spectrum of personal leadership skills.

Mission-specific disciplines would be addressed when soldiers were ramping up for ops and undergoing their pre-deployment rehearsals.

"We have always focused on conventional warfighting with the platoon commander's battle course," Maj James continues. "The aim is to give them the foundation they need."

Some 50 students from a range of cap badges are on the latest package and have found themselves tested in tough conditions. But while the training is demanding, 2Lt Toby Hudson (WG) points out it is satisfying to tick off achievements along the way.

"Brecon definitely has a reputation and you don't expect it to be easy," the 23-year-old adds. "The training here is a step up – the emphasis is doing everything to the highest standards.

"The physical demands are certainly hard, but I'm with some really good people here, gaining in confidence and learning new skills all the time."

Preparing the next generation of leaders is certainly crucial. With the world continuing to change – and with it the nature of warfare – commanders stepping up must have the skill sets to deal with any eventuality.

In this respect, Brecon continues to be a key proving ground for those at the spear tip of the Army. With experienced instructors guiding them, the infantrymen who will prosecute future ops will be prepared for any baptism of fire. ■

AT A GLANCE: PLATOON COMMANDERS' BATTLE COURSE



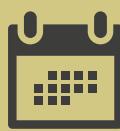
INFANTRY BATTLE SCHOOL,
BRECON



50-80 STUDENTS ON
EACH COURSE



REQUIRED FOR
ALL INFANTRY
OFFICERS;
OTHER CAP
BADGES ALSO
ACCOMMODATED



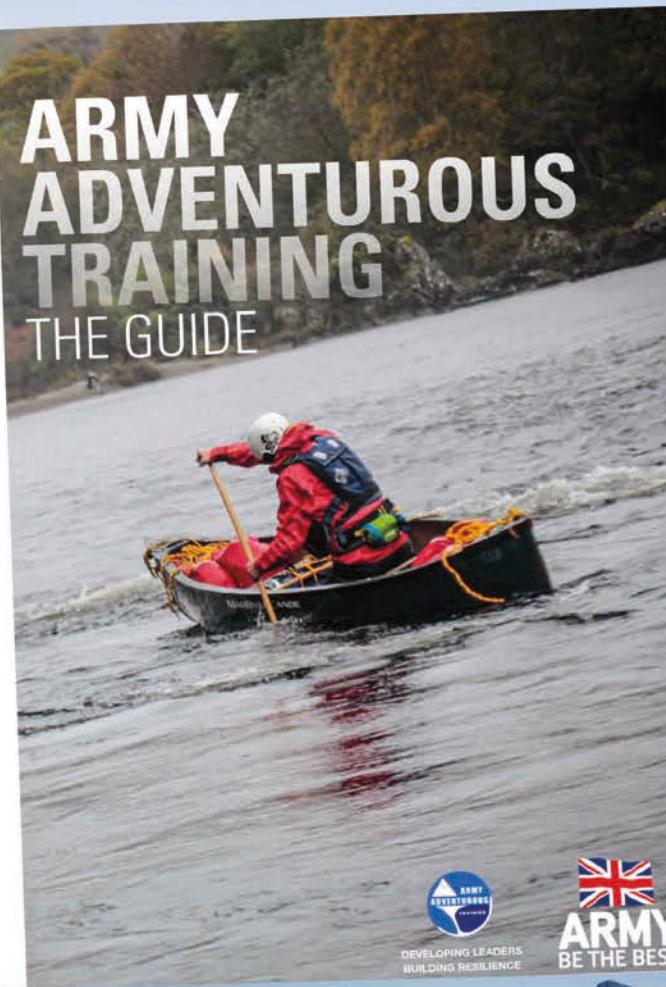
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BE THE BEST

ADR010238



'IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VICTIM'

How the military legal
system stands alongside
sexual assault
survivors in the fight
for justice...



”

THE CRIME

EXPERIENCING a sexual assault of any kind is distressing enough – self-blame, fear, shame and anger are among the common reactions described by survivors.

But the tight-knit and hierarchical nature of Army life can further complicate the decision on whether to report a crime, with anxiety over ostracization and career implications high on the list of concerns.

One Servicewoman who spoke to *Soldier* for this article knows this all too well.



Now in her twenties, and not identified for legal reasons, she had been fresh out of training when she was attacked by a lance corporal after a social event.

The situation left her questioning herself and her future in an organisation she had wanted to join ever since she was 12 years old.

“I hadn’t been in the unit long and it was my initiation drinks, which isn’t a thing anymore but used to be massive,” she recalls.

“I got drunk with everyone – too drunk, really. I had just turned 18 so I wasn’t in a place where I should have been drinking that much.

“When I went back to my accommodation one of the males I worked with followed me and sexually assaulted me.

“The next day I reported it to the chain of command and was told ‘these things happen, maybe next time don’t get so drunk’.

“So I internalised that and thought it was my fault and didn’t go to the police.

“I thought this was obviously just the way things were and that it had been

Victim support

Some of the measures that can be used to make the legal process less stressful...

During the investigation

- a dedicated **sexual liaison officer** to support and update throughout the process
- bringing a **trusted friend** or partner to interviews
- choosing the gender** of their interviewer
- use of markers on the files of both victim and offender to **ensure they aren't posted to the same location**
- the **legal right to anonymity**, even within their chain of command

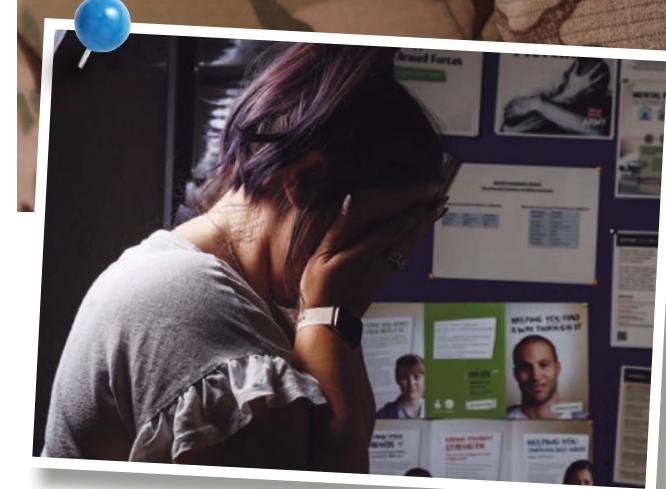
At court

- chance to **visit the court** ahead of the trial
- giving evidence from behind a screen**, separate room or via the video recorded during their initial interview. A policy will also soon be introduced to allow victims to be cross-examined via written questions instead of in court
- the option of a **closed court room**, preventing members of the public from attending

“

When I went back he followed me and sexually assaulted me

”



a mistake to join the Army. I decided to keep my head down until I could sign off.”

The Servicewoman struggled on for almost a year before the situation came to a conclusion.

A colleague had reported the same lance corporal for harassment, sparking off an investigation.

What followed was a stressful 14-month waiting game as the legal proceedings played out, eventually ending in dismissal and a jail sentence for the Serviceman concerned.

As difficult as the process was (page 47) the victim – who is now a corporal – says she has no regrets over reporting the crime.

“There were definitely points along the way where I didn’t know if I’d made the right decision,” she explains. “There was a lot of nervousness and waiting, but I had a lot of support from the Royal Military Police’s Special Investigation Branch (SIB) and the Army Welfare Service.

“I wouldn’t change things, though, because he had to leave the military and go to prison, so he can’t harm other female soldiers.

“That’s important to me.”



BUILDING A CASE

WHILE this junior NCO's experiences are rare, they are not rare enough. In 2021 Service police initiated more than 200 investigations into sexual offences.

Meanwhile, other victims choose not to report attacks in the first place – partly due to the daunting nature of the legal process.

This is something the system has been working hard to overcome in recent years, with a raft of measures designed to minimise further trauma.

Capt Tristan Manning (pictured far left), rape and serious sexual offences lead for 1st Military Police Brigade, says the changes mirror those made to policing nationally in the wake of Jimmy Savile's crimes and the #MeToo campaign.

"It's about changing the focus from investigating the victim to investigating the suspect and safeguarding the victim," he explains.

"They are going through a trauma that those who haven't experienced it will never understand.

"We are there to serve them throughout the court martial process by building the best case possible, updating them regularly and signposting them to the many sources of support available inside and outside the British Army.

"Our personnel are specifically selected for the individual skills and passion they bring to their roles at every stage."

Trained to the same level as their civilian

counterparts, soldiers from the SIB investigate a wide range of complex crimes including those of a sexual nature.

They can include rape, sexual assaults, child offences, indecent images, controlling and coercive behaviour and domestic abuse.

Given the distress of such crimes, establishing trust with victims is key for this branch's personnel.

SSgt Chris Belk, an investigator with Catterick-based 33 Section, explains: "It's about building a rapport and making them feel comfortable.

"I sit down with them, explain their options and what's going to happen.

"Once they formally report a crime, I am duty-bound to investigate, so I need to be sure that it's what they really want.

"Sometimes they might take the information away and make a decision later. Even if they don't make a complaint, we can point them towards the support available.

"Often, they feel like the offence is trivial. They say, 'it wasn't much', but we tell them they are there for a reason – if something's happened to them, it's not acceptable and needs investigating."

Those who decide to proceed will undergo what is known as an "achieving best evidence" interview.

To put victims at ease, these take place in specially designed facilities and investigators go about their duties in plain clothes and unmarked cars. ▶

To report a crime

contact your local military or civilian police station.

You can call the Service Police Confidential Crime Line anonymously on

0800 085 0658

Alternatively, the Service Police Crime Bureau can be reached on **02392 285 170** or **02392 285 180**



» "Often the suite is just in a standalone building on a side street – you wouldn't even know what it was used for," says Sgt Andy Woodridge (pictured below), a sexual offences liaison officer.

"There's a kitchen set up, and a couple of interview rooms and waiting rooms. The whole purpose is to make the survivor as relaxed as possible while they are talking about a highly traumatic event, rather than being on edge in a police station with people in stab vests and all that."

"The interview is video recorded and the purpose of that is not just to prevent us having to go back and forth with written statements but also to ensure evidence is captured while the experience is fresh – as the footage will most likely be played in court."

"We do have to probe during the interview, but at any point if they need a break we will stop."

Should a victim not feel ready to press charges straight away, investigators will keep initial reports on file so that a record exists if they wish to do so months – or even years – further down the line.

They may also be encouraged to attend a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, which as well as offering confidential medical and practical support to survivors, has facilities to store samples and potential DNA evidence.



Q&A

A sexual assault survivor shares her experience of the Army legal system. Read her full story at the start of this feature...

What were your concerns about reporting what happened to you?

I feared the repercussions – that I wouldn't be believed and that it would tarnish my career. But it was pointed out to me that if I said nothing, he could continue to serve alongside other women.

What happened when you did?

I spoke to my boss; it was reported to the Royal Military Police and they called in the SIB. Two ladies in civilian clothing had a conversation with me and asked me if I wanted to do a

THE LEGAL PROCESS

RIGHT from the start of an investigation, military police work closely with lawyers from the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA), who will eventually decide whether there is enough evidence to proceed with a trial.

Within days of a complaint the two sides will meet to discuss case building and lines of enquiry.

Mirroring efforts in the civilian world to make the process more victim-focused, the SPA established a dedicated rape, sexual offences and domestic abuse section nine months ago.

Its legal adviser, Helena Burman, explains it was set up in recognition of the theme that links all sexually motivated crimes.

"Having a specialist team makes sense because the common thread through all that offending is power," she says.

"It's part of lots of really good work to try and make the victim's experience as good as it can be, which in turn helps stop them dropping out of the system."

"They wait a long time for closure so it's really important to keep them on board by bringing in support from third sector organisations and joint working between prosecutors and police at the earliest stages."

An advantage is that military trials take place much more quickly – within a year on average, compared to more than two-and-a-half in the civilian system.

Once a case meets the so-called "evidential sufficiency" test, and there is a realistic prospect of conviction, the victim

formal interview, which I said I would. They also talked me through what would happen at every stage.

What did that involve?

It was arranged a couple of days later at a facility where there was a nice cosy room with cameras. I was expecting it to be like on TV, where it's just a bare room and you sit opposite the police at a desk. First, I did a mini-interview, where they ran me through the questions they would ask so there weren't any surprises when it came to the real thing. The biggest element was understanding how in-depth the questions were – they need every ounce of detail.

What was the next step?

They took my phone because there were messages that could be used as

will have their day in court.

And while several things have been introduced to reduce the stress of this (page 44), it remains an unnerving prospect – especially for those who choose to give evidence.

Although most TV portrayals of court are unrealistic, one element that arguably isn't is the intimidating prospect of cross-examination.

"There's no doubt that sometimes the defence can be quite aggressive," explains Graham Coombes, the team's managing prosecutor.

"But we prepare the victim as to how to answer the questions and tell them if something is suggested to them that they don't agree with, they should make that clear and say what happened.

"The prosecution will step in if they feel the questioning is oppressive and if the claimant becomes upset the court will take a break."

OUTCOMES

DESPITE the best efforts of investigators and prosecutors, the stark fact remains that in the Service justice system – as in civilian life – conviction rates in sexual assault cases are depressingly low.

In 2021, 15 rape trials were brought to court martial with guilty verdicts in just six. And this figure does not include the cases that never got that far.

It is something victims are made aware of, but naturally a "not guilty" verdict can come as a crushing disappointment for all concerned.

"In such cases we tell them it's not that the court didn't believe them, it's just that the standard of proof

is very high," continues Coombes.

"There only has to be a slight element of doubt for the jury to acquit.

"On the other hand, if the verdict is guilty, it's very gratifying seeing their relief. It can be quite life changing for them."

Those convicted face a variety of sentences ranging from detention at the Military Correctional Training Centre Colchester to dismissal from the Service and prison, as well as being added to the sex offenders register, potentially for life.

While too few victims currently see their attackers punished, Burman has seen signs of a sea change – citing an increase in reports from bystanders as one example.

The MoD's recently announced zero tolerance policy on sexual offences and inappropriate behaviours is another signal of intent.

"I've seen a real shift," she concludes. "There is a problem with sexual offending in the military, just as there is in the whole of society, but what is recognised now is that success is not about denying it happens – but about how we deal with it when it does." ■

Special Investigation Branch (SIB)

What is it?

The part of the Royal Military Police that deals with serious or complex cases requiring more specially trained personnel. Its work spans the UK and overseas bases, and includes drugs offences, fraud and serious physical assaults. Some minor crimes can also be given "special investigation" status due to their sensitivity or other circumstances.

evidence, but I got it back within a couple of days. They also interviewed the individual involved but at different times and days to me, so I didn't see him. There was a lot of back and forth, but a male sergeant would call regularly and update me.

What was the outcome?

Eventually I was told there was enough evidence to take the perpetrator to court. He was dismissed from the Army and sent to prison.

How did you feel about that?

It was hard but I was glad justice had been done.

How long did it all take?

About 16 months. The incident happened in

the summer, I fully reported it the following summer. They finished the interviews, and then the court case didn't start until the October.

How were things at work in the meantime?

The suspect was removed from my unit pending investigation. I had a lot of support from the Army Welfare Service, so I didn't feel the brunt of it.

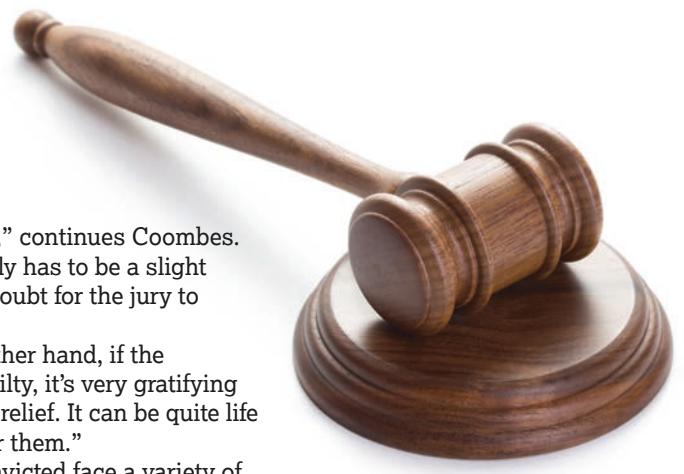
How did you find giving evidence in court?

That was one of the most difficult parts – along with the initial interview. I was made very aware what it would be like and that his solicitor would try and make me look like an unreliable witness. That's their

whole job; it's nothing personal and I totally understood. But when you're on the stand and everyone's looking at you and they are poking holes in one of the most traumatic things that can happen, that was hard. I could have chosen not to speak and for the video of my interview to be played instead, however, I wanted the best chance of being believed and to look people in the eye and tell them what had happened.

What is life like now?

I'm about to start a new role in the Army and am going to stay as long as I enjoy it. I do think the military has changed, but there are still areas that need to be improved so anything that helps stamp out sexual assault and harassment is definitely a positive thing.



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Travel costs are the priority

THE comments from Army Families Federation chief Collette Musgrave about the cost of living and the level of allowances on page 15 of the June 2022 edition were very informative, but I feel the Service should be prioritising Get You Home Travel (GYH(T)) that contributes towards the cost of commuting from your duty station to a qualifying residence.

The rate for 2022 is the same as last year's, even though from May 2021 to May 2022 petrol prices rose by nearly 28 per cent and those for diesel by a staggering 36 per cent.

The average UK price for the latter is approaching the £2 per litre mark at the time of writing.

With the cost of fuel increasing at higher-than-average rates I would hope the MoD's travel-related allowances are being reviewed as a matter of urgency
– WO2 James Ross, RLC

Col Louise Green, Army Pay Colonel, replies: Cost of living challenges are being felt across all walks of life, and the Armed Forces are one of the few organisations that provide support to commuting.

The aim of GYH(T) is to reduce the impact of separation on our soldiers by contributing towards their costs.

The allowance helps those who have decided to settle their spouse and family in a home away from their duty station. It doesn't support travel to visiting friends or family who do not live at the residence.

While it would be great to expand this, we have to place boundaries and limits to ensure allowances remain affordable.

The Home to Duty Travel (HDT) allowance provides a contribution towards the costs incurred when travelling between a residence and a place of duty when they are within 50 miles of each other.

The rates and methodology for these allowances are kept under review and the most recent study was less than two years ago.

Evidence from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Department for Transport and independent motoring organisations are considered; fuel costs are important for determining rates but they are not the only factor. Affordability is also a consideration.

As we become an increasingly adaptable workforce after the pandemic, several new policies have been introduced to provide greater choice and benefit to our people.

Firstly, in order to support flexible working, individuals who have an agreed alternative arrangement with their chain of command may claim HDT beyond the 50-mile limit.

Regulars and certain Reserve personnel are eligible and to further support this policy, the HDT (manual) rate has been increased to a flat 25p (it currently tapers to 13.75p per mile at 23 miles).

The HDT (pedal cycle) allowance rate has also been increased from 15p to 20p per mile and the personal contribution, whether from public or private accommodation, reduced to one mile.

Food and accommodation charges will be announced in line with the pay award later this year.

“
I hope
they are
being
reviewed
”

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

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Twitter @soldiermagazine

RANGER RAGE

● I HAVE no issue with the role and outputs of the new Ranger Regiment, but I don't think the Army's leaders appreciate how we in The Royal Irish Regiment feel about the naming of this new formation.

They could have chosen anything. It was an opportunity to be original – they literally had a blank page.

But instead they decided to select a name that has been strongly associated with our unit, and been part of every piece of our branding, since anyone can remember.

I've been in the regiment for 26 years and I'm very proud of our Ranger ethos. Every rank considers themselves a Ranger and our private soldiers' formal rank is Ranger.

So why did the senior officers who were responsible for this decision not take into account other regiments' history, culture and traditions?

I suspect if these troops had been called Paras, Kingsmen or Riflemen it wouldn't have passed muster.

– WO2 John Harding (R Irish)

Lt Col Richard Eaton (RDG), Chief of Staff, Campaigns and Internal Communications, Army Headquarters, replies: I hope you'll be reassured to learn the Army has directed the term “Ranger” should not be used for private soldiers in the Ranger Regiment to preserve that distinction for members of The Royal Irish Regiment.

Rangers have a long association with our Service and the new regiment draws its name from an elite unit that fought in 18th century colonial North America, using irregular tactics.

We share this heritage with the US Army's 75th Ranger Regiment, which can trace its lineage back to the same group.

In addition, our Ranger Regiment draws on the traditions of British Army units honed for unconventional operations, such as the Raiding Support Regiment, V-Force, and the Chindits.

There were four further British Army regiments that incorporated 'ranger' into their titles: Central London Rangers; The Connaught Rangers; The Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry and, of course, The Royal Irish Rangers.

“They don't appreciate how we feel”

Busting Rasta myths

I HAVE been watching the series *Commando: Britain's Ocean Warriors* on the BBC and, like a lot of people I'm sure, was taken by Capt Kidane Cousland's story.

No one can take his achievements away from him and I think he is remarkable and should be celebrated.

However, I am uncomfortable that the officer's profile on the BBC website starts off with “I'm a Rasta...”

I do not have a full understanding of Rastafarianism but what I have managed to find out about the faith online makes me feel very uncomfortable.

As a woman and an LGBTQIA+ ally, I find it disturbing that, on the surface, it appears not to share the values of the British Army and what we try to foster.

From the articles I have read, the religion seems to be openly anti-gay/ LGBTQIA+ and women are considered subservient to men.

For example, on blackhistorymonth.org.uk there is an article called *Rastafari Culture* which states: “Most Rastas believe that females are not equal to men. They believe that a good woman must always respect men and do what they ask. This is very contrary to much of their other beliefs about people being equal. Rasta men often beat their wives for being lazy.”

Also, on bbc.co.uk there is a piece called *The role of women in Rastafari* that says the religion has certain rules that apply only to women but which are not often followed strictly today because “women tend to have more freedom in modern Rastafarian society”.

These diktats include females not being allowed to be leaders or to wear makeup, dress in promiscuous clothing, and that they should be considered subordinate to men.

How does this sit with the British Army? I would like to be corrected if I am wrong and get to understand a lot more about Rastafarianism.

Perhaps, as with Christianity, Judaism and Islam, there are different forms of this religion. – **Name and address supplied**



Capt Kidane Cousland (RA), Chair, Defence Rastafari Network, replies: Thank you for having the interest and inclination to learn something new about Rastafari, which is a generally well known but often poorly understood faith.

Typical generalisations are that to be a Rasta you must have dreadlocks, be black, smoke “weed”, be anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-women.

None of this is true. If it were, it would clearly be incompatible with Service life.

If the stereotypes of marijuana use alone were true then all Rastas in the Army would fail the controlled drugs test – both on entry and annually. Clearly, this does not happen, and never has.

Rastafari's main religious text and historical theology centres around Judaism and Christianity melded with African and Caribbean spirituality. This blend of spiritualism was galvanised by Marcus Garvey's black improvement ideology in the 1930s, which railed against the popular narrative of black racial inferiority. This biological racism was generated as the counter movement to the abolition of the slave trade.

With a message of empowerment, self-determination and equality, Garvey's ideas gained huge popularity among the black population of Jamaica.

His famous prophecy; “Look to Africa, when a black king shall be crowned for the day of



Capt Cousland at the unveiling of the African and Caribbean War Memorial

“deliverance is near” set the religious foundations for Rastafari and identified Ras Tafari Makonnen, soon to be Emperor Haile Selassie the first of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), as the redeeming second coming of the son of god (Jah in the Rastafari faith).

Emperor Selassie’s teachings and message of “equality without regards to race” lie at the core of Rastafari belief to this day.

The practices of Rastas vary from person to person and between mansions (sects). However, commonalities centre around the taking of a vow to Jah – “I and I” is a Rasta saying which partly means we are all connected in Jah therefore we are all divine.

So Rastafari is a faith founded on the notion of equality for all people and is not a movement which mandates or cultivates a culture of homophobia and misogyny.

Like all major religions, Rastafari is not without its fringe and radical elements, but the actions of a few do not represent the whole.

The words of Emperor Selassie do not support any kind of persecution and are explicit on the subject of gender equality: “In the history of the human race, those periods which later appeared as great have been the periods when the men and the women belonging to them had transcended the differences that divided them and had recognised, in their membership in the human race, a common bond.”

Emperor Selassie also highlights the potential perversion of religion: “We must stop confusing religion and spirituality. Religion is a set of rules, regulations and rituals created by humans which were supposed to help people grow spiritually. Due to human imperfection religion has become corrupt, political, divisive, a tool for power struggle. Spirituality is not theology or ideology.”

For this very reason many Rastas use the term Rastafari and not Rastafarianism because the “ism” implies a religion not a way of life – one that centres on dignity and equality for all.

These values are intimately supportive of the British Army’s values and standards and show respect and tolerance for others.

The show *Commando: Britain’s Ocean Warriors* focuses on one of the 570 Rasta personnel in the British Army who stand testament to the falseness of negative stereotypes about the faith.

I am featured in the show and I’m a mixed-race man from a working class background. I have four siblings, all of whom are Rasta and one of them is a woman and one is openly gay.

This is not remarkable but just another living example of the diversity within Rastafari.

Allowing us to serve free of prejudice and misleading stereotypes can add great value to the Army’s fighting power.

The Defence Rastafari Network (DRN) seeks to erode unhelpful stereotypes and unconscious bias that can marginalise, trivialise and demotivate Rastas.

To mitigate for the existence of these stereotypes, the DRN seeks to connect its 700 members across defence and maximise their potential through mentorship and empowerment.

Finally, the DRN exists to act as a point of contact for the chain of command at every level, providing Rastafari-specific advice, education and informing policy which impacts on Rasta Service personnel.

If you would like to continue the conversation, please join the DRN as an ally by searching for the Defence Rastafari Network on Defence Connect or on the MoD home page and scanning the QR code.

Rasta or not, the DRN is here to support you and your team so that we can make UK defence even more inclusive, resilient and effective.



OCdt Brian Fahy (centre) on Mount Pleasant with fellow Reservists

NOT THE FIRST

ON the *Global Sitrep* spread of the June edition you reported that Reservists from 4th Battalion, The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment, have formed the first Reserve-led Roulement Infantry Company to be deployed to the Falkland Islands.

Well done to them, but I regret to say they are not the first Reservist company to undertake this role.

Back in 1995 I was in The London Regiment and had the good fortune to be part of a Territorial Army company formed from Reservists in London, the North West, Scotland and Wales, that went to the Falkland Islands.

The tour pre-dated the Reserve Forces Act 1996, so we all had to be temporarily taken into the Regular Army for the duration – which may be where the confusion with your claim stems from.

As the Welsh Guards were the supporting Regular Army unit, we all became Welsh Guardsmen, on paper anyway. I still have a red book and discharge certificate in which I am referred to as a “Guardsman”.

They were brilliant, providing a superb pre-deployment training package and excellent live-firing ranges in theatre.

We were there from March until July, after which the company returned to the UK and stood down.

It was supposed to pave the way for further deployments of TA infantry in formed sub-units, but that was put on the back burner until 2003, when they were mobilised for Op Telic.

In 2004 I had the great privilege to command The London Regiment’s Cambrai Company on Op Telic 3. Without doubt, the lessons I learned from that Falklands tour shaped my approach to company command in Iraq. – Lt Col Brian Fahy, IG

“
The actions of a few don’t represent the whole
”

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

SaluteMyJob has launched a cyber career jumpstart programme with funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to get members of the Armed Forces community into work placements and employment across the UK. To find out more visit salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways

The Open University's Disabled Veterans' Scholarship Fund is open for applications. The initiative offers 50 free study places to former personnel with a disability or injury resulting from their military service – including mental health conditions. Courses are available at under- and postgraduate level with support to forge new careers on civvy street. Visit open.ac.uk for more information.



COMPETITIONS

May 2022 HOAY winner: Ruari Barbour-Smith, London.

Spinelines winner: Lt Col RT Jones, Warminster.



SEARCHLINE

2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment will be amalgamated and removed from the line in September 2022, under the Integrated Review. Past and present mess members are requested to contact regimental HQ ASAP to arrange collection of leaving presentation items. Contact QM Maj Jase Peach on 07500 065898.



WELFARE


Your one-stop-shop for calling in support

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

whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help.

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families. 0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or mil 96770 4656
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 783 0334

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life

balance. This includes alternative working arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regular personnel can find out how flexible service impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988
forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can help talk through your options and give you clear advice on how to take back control 0808 808 4000
nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

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

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information

07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation afvbc.net

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123
samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080
britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone to talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. Charities and organisations that can also provide support include

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @army mail.mod.uk email address work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393

mind.org

NHS
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Samaritans
116 123
samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond
A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans
0333 900 1028
theripplepond.org

Togetherall
A safe, online community where people

support each other anonymously to improve mental health
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn
Safety and support for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking
02394 216 816
aurorand.org.uk

ManKind
Support for male victims of domestic abuse

01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate
UK provider of relationship support
relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The Royal Green Jackets Regimental Association annual veterans day is at Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester on July 9. Partners are also welcome to attend. Contact Maj (Retd) Roy Stanger on

01962 869482 or roy.stanger60th@hotmail.co.uk

23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades Association lunch and reunion dinner, Coventry on July 22-24. Contact Roy Hatch on 07730 977989

Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies, The Wessex Regiment's 75th reunion lunch on September 24 at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Contact Jim Cooper on 02392 816165 or email rhwstxstar@yahoo.com

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU? No. 963



TEN details have been changed in this picture of historical re-enactors at the Massed Bands and Bugles of The Rifles Sounding Retreat at Horse Guards Parade. Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 963, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your contact details, including email address, by July 29.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



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The winner's name will appear in the September issue. All the usual competition rules apply. Enertor is also offering *Soldier* readers 15 per cent off any order from their website (enertor.com) with the discount code Army15 until December 31 (excludes bundle packs).

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RAC 22-4	12 Jun - 24 Jun 22	Application deadline: 12 May 22
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RAC 22-5	11 Sep - 22 Sep 22	Application deadline: 11 Aug 22
RAC 22-6	2 Oct - 13 Oct 22	Application deadline: 2 Sep 22
AARC 22-3	23 Oct - 1 Dec 22	Application deadline: 13 Oct 22



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REVIEWS



PICK OF THE MONTH:

Chaos Gate: Daemonhunters

Assault troop unit has a management vacancy...

SCI-FI war gaming is a popular PC pastime these days – inspired by movies such as *Aliens*, four decades of computer-based conflicts have seen players take on extra-terrestrial species that are as malevolent as they are sophisticated.

Most recently the genre has been defined by the likes of the *XCom* titles, where mankind must battle for survival as the Earth is invaded – and various incarnations of Games Workshop's *Warhammer 40,000* series.

And it is in the second universe



P59

MUSIC

P60

BOOKS

GAMES



that the latest outing to cross *Soldier*'s desk takes place. *Chaos Gate: Daemonhunters* sees players take charge of an elite Space Marine outfit ordered to clear foes from planets in a war against the forces of Nurgle.

Requiring strategic as well as tactical acumen, this campaign is prosecuted from the vessel Edict, where the principal asset is personnel that are built like tanks and possess an armoured regiment's lethality to match.

Yet with near-peer enemies exhibiting a similar killing power, the on-board arsenal and rock-hard reputation will only carry these galactic grunts so far – level-headed leadership is critical to prosecuting the fight.

And thus the core of the game revolves around ship, as well as personnel, management – generally keeping both vessel and front-line troops fit to fight. Missions on the ground are squad-based excursions into cities infested with a range of *Warhammer* nasties including Nurgle daemons and cultists where turn-based combat – a la *XCom* – is the order of the day.

Movement and offensive strikes are governed by action points, which dictate the available options of the troops under contact. Players can use everything from traditional small arms to grenades and supernatural psychic strikes. Tried

and tested hand-to-hand combat is available as a last resort.

Mission preparation also allows squads to be heavily customised with a range of deployable specialists. They include health-restoring apothecaries as well as a teleporting executioner class known as Interceptors.

It's an involved outing but this makes eliminating the opposition an all-the-more satisfying experience. While *XCom* has clearly been an inspiration for the title in terms of its presentation and mechanics, *Daemonhunters* takes the genre forward with its depth and gameplay.

The squad-based combat in particular has been well thought through, with a solid system for determining damage and rewarding good decision making.

Warhammer's fantasy universe is also well recreated with an array of foes to test the most hardened of commanders. Thankfully, however, there is also a range of difficulty settings to dial the challenge level up or down.

All in all, this is well worth a look – strategy fans will not be disappointed and there is plenty of battle on offer for many hours of downtime fun. ■

VERDICT:

Take command and start purging



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER
AND DAVID McDougall, CIVVY



GAMES RELEASES

Attentat 1942

For Switch



AMID the fanfare of military gaming blockbusters based on the Second World War it is often easy to overlook the smaller-scale, and often more original, projects dedicated to the 1939-45 conflict. And there have been some gems – with *Attentat 1942* among the recent cases in point. Produced by Charles University and the Czech Academy of the Sciences, the title tasks players with finding out the truth behind their fictional family's role in the real-life events surrounding the assassination of the brutal senior SS officer Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. Through a series of interactive interviews and mini-games, the title effectively acts as a platform for gamers to learn more about the true story of a savage and particularly dark period in history – and the lasting effect it had on the lives of survivors. Highly recommended.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

Pac-Man Museum+

For Switch, PC, PS4, X0



LEGEND has it that the face of video gaming changed – literally – when developer Toru Iwatani tore a slice from his pizza and saw the iconic Pac-Man staring back at him. Some four decades

later, having chomped his way through mazes and monsters in various incarnations, this comprehensive compendium of the character's titles has been released by Namco. Creatively presented in a three-dimensional arcade, players can sample the full gambit of retro games spanning the generations. All still hold up well today, while the package provides a fascinating insight into the animated mouth's place as an entertainment icon in modern culture.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



PICK OF THE MONTH:

Add a Little You

Former Serviceman finds his feet in the world of country music

» HAVING reached the final knockout stages of *The Voice* in 2016, ex-soldier David Barnes had ambitions of an exciting new career as a chart-topping singer.

But as viewers of the talent show treadmill are all too aware, once the cameras stop rolling life in the spotlight can be hard to sustain.

Barnes admitted as much when he spoke to *Soldier* about his efforts since, explaining that he came close to turning his back on the industry as the realities of lockdown hit home.

However, he held firm to emerge the other side and is now embarking on a new musical direction as a country artist, with some early successes already to his name.

Performing as Preston D Barnes, he saw debut single *Add a Little You* reach number two in the iTunes Country Chart, with follow-up offering *Poison* peaking at number five.

His next effort, *Way Back When* is released this month, when he also takes to the stage at the Newark Showground for the country music festival, Fan Fest.

“*The Voice* is very much geared towards pop music,” Barnes, who served for 22 years in the Royal Corps of Army Music, explained. “After that I was picked up by Sonic Boom Records and we’ve been in the studio trying to find a niche that works.

“I’ve liked country music since I was a kid and it was something I wanted to try. I had the chance to work with some incredible songwriters from the USA and we now have six singles that are ready to be released this year.

“It’s been crazy, and I wasn’t expecting any of this to happen. When you produce original music, you have no idea if people are going to like it, so it is very much a case of fingers crossed.”

With his initial singles being well received, the former Serviceman – who retired at the rank of staff sergeant – is hoping to release a full album next year. He also aspires to play shows at the home of country music, Nashville, and record in person with collaborator Steve Dorff.

“He has written for the likes of Whitney

Houston and Celine Dion – massive artists,” Barnes continued.

“My producer worked with him a long time ago; he gave us some songs and he likes what we are doing. Hopefully we can get out to his studio next year and record some more.

“I still can’t believe that everything is going so well. It has taken a long time and a lot of people who go on shows like *The Voice* give up if nothing happens within a couple of years.

“There were times when I came close to calling it a day and when lockdown hit I had no work for the best part of two years.

“It is a hard industry, but things started to pick up and I have been lucky to work with the people I have. I’ve always wanted to make original music that fans could enjoy, and my efforts are now proving worthwhile.” ■

Follow @prestondbarnesofficial on Facebook and Instagram, @preston_dbarnes on Twitter or visit prestondbarnes.com for more. His singles are available via iTunes and other streaming platforms.

INTERVIEW: RICHARD LONG, SOLDIER

VERDICT:
A change in direction that pays off in style
★★★★★



BOOKS



Alex Gardiner

"Alex knows what he's writing about. He's been there and done it." Tim Roughton, Head of Books

The
DEVIL'S
MAGISTRATE

HIS PAST IS ALWAYS PRESENT

"A vivid portrayal of a man whose past obliges him to find a way through the private terrors and violent secrets of his past."
The author clearly knows his subject.
Simon Beau, RFA 1st former 1st Sea Lord & General

● *The Devil's Magistrate*
by Alex Gardiner
(ex-RGJ, pictured) is
out now in paperback,
published by Nine Elms
Books and priced £8.99

VERDICT:

Rattles along at a
relentless pace – perfect
downtime distraction



Main image: Shutterstock

BOOK RELEASES

PICK OF THE MONTH:

The Devil's Magistrate

Ex-soldier's breakout novel has summer reading sorted

► WHETHER soaking up the sun poolside or whiling away a long-haul flight, the well-seasoned traveller will have a page-turner close at hand.

And if it's fast-paced action that floats your boat, this debut thriller by Alex Gardiner might be just the ticket.

The Devil's Magistrate flits between Gloucestershire, Northern Ireland and Libya as a terrorist plot envelops a sleeper agent who had hoped his past was behind him – endangering his family in the process.

As well as featuring all the ingredients of a good yarn, the novel has the ring of authenticity thanks to the author's time in various hotspots, first with The Royal Green Jackets, then later the UK and Omani Special Forces.

Soldier asked the former major for the lowdown...

Describe the book in three words.

Humanitarian. Intense. Redemption. It has a humanitarian thread running all the way through in that a father will do anything to rescue his child. Intense, in that people are exposed to extremes and have to perform. And redemption because you can always be forgiven for your past sins.

How long has it been in the making?

Years. I had the idea through my various travels in the Middle East and multiple tours of Northern Ireland. I absorbed influences and impressions from all of that. So, I'm writing from a certain amount of experience, but although you are meant to enjoy this as a story, I've often found that fact is still stranger than fiction.

How did you come up with the characters?

I based the main character, Hash, on people I had met, in particular an Arab general I'm still in very close contact with. I've told him about it,

but he thinks I'm joking. There's also an Irish character who is based on a former troop staff sergeant of mine – who was absolutely terrifying. These are guys who certainly do not mess about.

When did you leave the Services?

In 1990. Then I went to the Omani Army for five years, before being called back by the British Army for Kosovo. "We need a fat major," they said, and I replied, "I'm your man." Then I was embedded with 16 Air Assault Brigade as a reporter for an Arab TV station in the Second Gulf War. I've also freelanced in dodgy, high-risk security in Afghanistan. I was always "feeding the beast" as they call it in the Special Forces.

What do you read?

I love military biographies of all sorts. Eye-witness accounts always get my attention. In terms of fiction, it would be Bernard Cornwell's American Civil War books, George MacDonald Fraser – best known for the *Flashman* series – Evelyn Waugh and last but not least, Lee Child.

How did you find your own writing voice?

I try to keep things concise and unfrilly. I had some very good advice from a senior editor who critiqued my early work and said to keep it short and not too flowery.

Do you have a process?

I try and be disciplined – I would love to be more so, but it's fairly ad-hoc. Early mornings are best, although I have three dogs and they get restless and distract me. But when I'm on a roll, time just flies.

Is this going to be a series?

My editor said she got so carried away with the characters that she thinks it should be. So, I'm working on it – it's in concept form.

What do you want readers to take from the book?

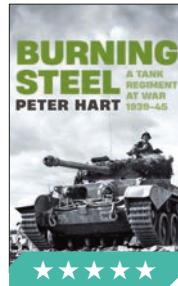
I just want everyone to enjoy the story – there's no great message or anything. And if I can enrich someone's holiday reading I'll be really chuffed.

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER

BURNING STEEL

Burning Steel

by Peter Hart



THE 2nd Fife and Forfar Yeomanry were mobilised in 1939 on the outbreak of the Second World War, spent the first three years training and finally went into battle in the Sherman Tank. Their story is told using recollections from

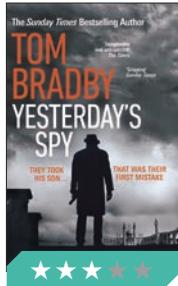
those who survived – often a grim and desolate tale as casualties mount. The fear of being burned alive in their vehicles haunted every crew member, regardless of rank. They faced a hard slog through Normandy, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, learning along the way that tanks should not move without supporting infantry and vice versa. This is an excellent book, which should be read by anyone interested in the campaign in north-west Europe.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

Yesterday's Spy

Yesterday's Spy

by Tom Bradby



RETIRED spy, Harry, finds himself in a tangled web of CIA agents, local law enforcement and MI6 in 1950s Tehran, while searching for his only son. As events take a sinister

turn he and his future daughter-in-law end up on the run from international oil companies vying for power. Fortunately, previous training and contacts serve him well against those who would do him ill. Deceit, back-alley bribery, murder and assassinations fill the plot and keep it fast-paced. Not quite John le Carre but not a bad read at all.

Scott Roberts, ex-Rifles

Red Burning Sky

Red Burning Sky

by Tom Young



IN the latter part of 1944, some 500 US airmen shot down over Yugoslavia were hidden and helped by locals. A plan was put together to airlift them out from under the noses of the Germans. This very readable fictionalised account of events shows the bravery of the Chetnik resistance and the pilots who flew in to pick up their downed comrades.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

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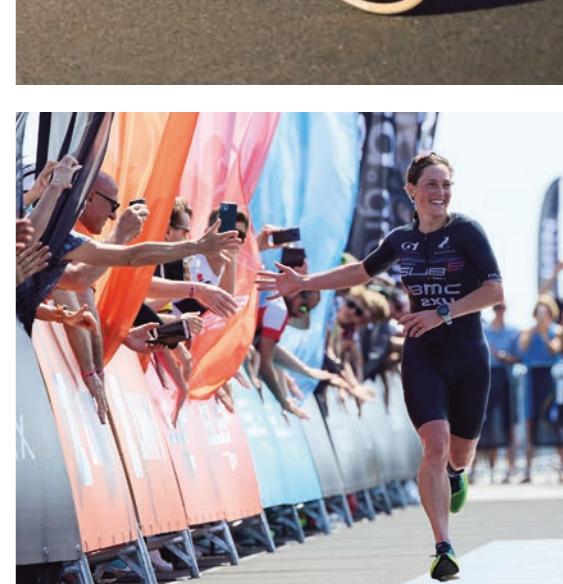
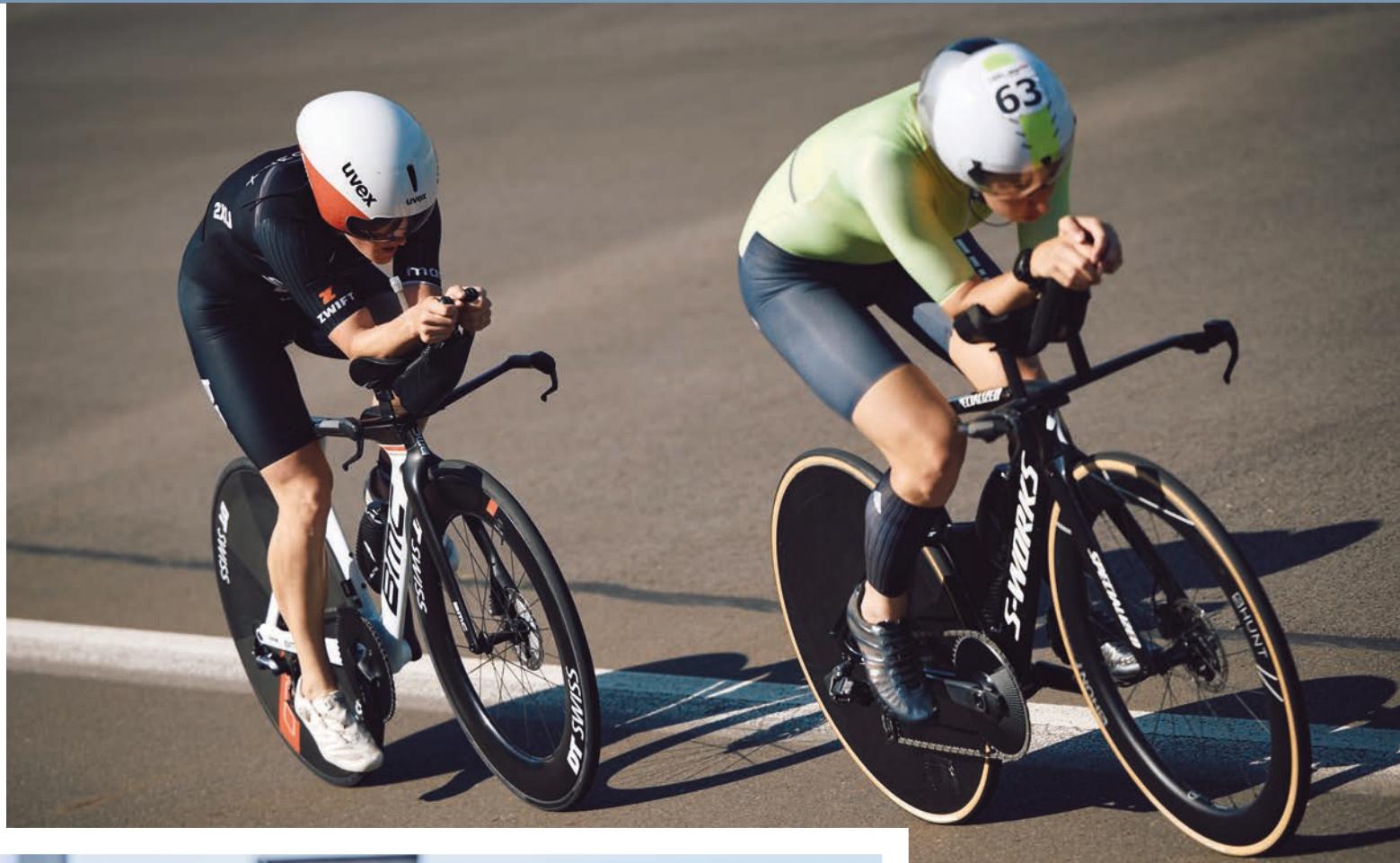
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SOLDIER SPORT



HISTORIC MOMENT »

THE UK Armed Forces women's cricket team enjoyed a day to remember on their debut outing at Lord's. A strong Army contingent – including LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) – helped the side to a comfortable win over Marylebone Cricket Club. Read more on page 72...



BREAKING NEW GROUND

MATTHEWS PRAISES TEAM APPROACH AS FRESH IRONMAN BOUNDARIES ARE SET

TRIATHLON star Capt Kat Matthews (RAMC) added another accolade to her growing haul as she became the first female athlete to break the eight-hour barrier over the full Ironman distance.

Reflecting on her incredible physical feat, the officer told *SoldierSport* her effort of 7hr 31min 54sec was a “real team achievement” as she shattered the target time set in the ground-breaking Sub8 project in Germany.

Aided by cutting-edge technology, an elite team of pacesetters and a flat, fast course, the 31-year-old overcame Swiss rival Nicola Spirig in a race that was staged just four weeks after she finished second on her debut at the World Championships in St George, Utah.

“This was about breaking barriers and seeing if going under eight hours was physically possible,” Matthews added when discussing the thinking behind the event.

“My target was 7hr 31min; I was hoping to do the cycle stage in four hours, but it was 3hr 50min, and I was aiming for 2hr 45min in the run and clocked 2hr 46min. So that target was always realistic.

“The commentators were saying they didn’t think 7hr 30min was possible, but it all came down to the girls we had with us.

“In the swim they really bought into the idea they were working for me, and the cyclists absolutely pushed themselves.

“A lot of people thought I would be drafting at the back, but my heart rate on the bike was exactly the same as it was in St George – I had to work

just as hard. We were an hour quicker, but the intensity was the same.

“I am so pleased, but this is not a personal success. It was a team effort and hopefully we have inspired those who were watching us.”

Matthews was a relatively late call-up for the challenge, meaning she had just eight weeks to prepare either side of her considerable effort at the World Championships.

Fortunately, she had already earmarked potential athletes for her team and when she issued a plea for help, they were happy to oblige.

“We knew who we wanted,” she explained. “For example, I’d raced against the cyclists in the national time trials, so we took the top riders from there. They also had experience of racing in team time trials, which was perfect for this.

“We were picking people I knew wanted to be there as part of a team. They were ecstatic to be asked, but I was the one who was grateful to them.”

Aided by pacesetters India Lee and Sarah-Jane Walker, Matthews exited the 2.4-mile swim with a seven-second lead over her rival and went on to stretch her advantage to four minutes at the end of the 112-mile cycle stage.

However, Spirig came roaring back in the run – a full marathon – and when she passed the soldier with ten miles to go, she looked set to claim victory.

But Matthews refused to be beaten and a final burst saw her retake the lead, before going on to make history.

“It was a controlled race,” she continued. “I knew what my



**I KNEW
HOW
MUCH
ENERGY
I HAD IN
ME”**

capacity was and how much emotional energy I had in me.

“I gave so much in St George and knew I could not do that again. Nicola started so fast in the run and 2hr 45min was the best I thought I could do.

“When she came past, I thought ‘wow, she has had an incredible race and I have done my best’. However, she had gone out too fast.

“The strategy for the run was to do two sets of five laps as comfortably as possible. The pain would come in the last four laps, but I felt fine and pushed on. My pace did not drop, but hers did significantly.”

Matthews will launch another World Championships bid in Kona, Hawaii, later this year and while that is her primary focus, she has found time to reflect on her Sub8 achievement and consider whether she could have gone even faster.

She said: “Now I’ve been in professional triathlon for a couple of years I’ve started to look at races as just another performance. I think ‘that was great, what can I do next?’”

“In elite sport you are never completely happy – you relish the success but are motivated to go again.

“We have already discussed how we could make things faster on the bike, perhaps by having a bigger person in front to get more draft.

“With a different build-up, and having not competed in St George, I may have been quicker but on the day, that is all I had.” ■



ROKO'S FAREWELL

FLYING winger LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) has said a fond farewell to Bath Rugby after ten years at the club.

The 34-year-old scored 73 tries in 191 appearances for the Somerset-based outfit and also earned international recognition with England.

He received a standing ovation during a lap of honour after his final game at The Rec, in which Bath defeated London Irish 27-24.

"Ever since I stepped foot in the club it just felt right," the soldier said. "It felt like home, where you can just be yourself."

"We started off as friends and now we are family. I said to the boys 'this is my tribe, this is my clan, this is my family'.

"Bath means so much to me and it's always going to be my home from home."



Bolakoro's qualifiers call

ARMY star Cpl Dee Bolakoro (RE) has been included in the Fiji squad for this month's Oceania Netball World Cup qualifiers.

The defensive player helped the Reds to the Inter-Services title earlier this year and will be on court in Suva, Fiji, from July 16 to 23.



Pictures: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

OFF-ROAD RACERS REACH FINAL STRAIGHT



"THE KEY IS TO GET PEOPLE ON BOARD"

THE Army Mountain Bike Cross-Country Series was due to reach its conclusion as this issue went to press, with riders tackling the challenging terrain at Woodbury Common in Devon.

With four rounds already complete, the competition has continued to play an important role in attracting newcomers to the sport as the races have averaged more than 100 soldiers across the season.

Organiser WO1 James Cooper (REME), who received an MBE for his services to Army cycling in the Queen's Birthday Honours, said the numbers represented an increase on last year and participation levels could be linked to the effort to stage legs at venues across the country, with Catterick proving particularly popular.

"We have seen personnel from there travelling down south to compete in the other rounds," he told *SoldierSport*.

"We have been getting up and down the country and there has been a real effort to improve the locations. Catterick (pictured)

got a huge thumbs-up and they want us to go back next year."

Pte Beckie Houston (AGC (SPS)) has led the way in the women's field, while 2Lt Benjamin Potter (Bristol UOTC) impressed in the junior ranks.

They will be looking to maintain their form when they go head-to-head with more experienced rivals at this month's Army Championships in Exeter and while Cooper is keen to see them succeed, he stressed the main aim of the series is to boost numbers across the categories.

"It will be interesting to see how they do," he added.

"The Army team will take people from this series for the Inter-Services, which highlights the fact there are some elite athletes in the field."

"That is a success story, but for every 100 soldiers we have through the door only two or three will be at that level. The key thing for us is getting people on board."

"This is very much a springboard – if you do well, Army selection will come." ■

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REDS CEMENT TOP SPOT AS LORD'S BATTLE RESUMES

THE Army's cricketers made a welcome return to Lord's after three years away as convincing victories over their Forces rivals saw them lift the Inter-Services Twenty20 trophy.

Batting first in both fixtures, the soldiers set imposing totals that their bowlers were able to defend with relative ease as the competition returned to the home of the English game for the first time since the Covid pandemic.

Having made a tentative start in their clash with the Royal Navy, the Reds upped the tempo courtesy of Cpl Varun Bali (AGC (SPS)) – who smashed 19 runs off PO Carl Woolnough's second over of the morning.

But after finding his rhythm he swiftly departed when he was caught on the boundary off AB Ben Johnston for 21. Fellow opener LCpl Liam Fletcher (REME) then perished in the same over as the Army slipped to 30-2.

However, LCpl Tade Carmichael (RLC) and Sgt Graham Wiseman (RA) steadied the ship and after a cautious start to their partnership, struck a flurry of boundaries in an impressive 103-run stand.

With a solid platform to build from Wiseman was caught in the deep as he attempted to launch a six down the ground, before Carmichael fell for 62 in the same manner an over later.

Wickets then tumbled at regular intervals as the momentum rapidly dropped – the soldiers slipping from 133-2 to 159-8 with just two balls left.

Skipper Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) gave them some much-needed impetus as he dispatched the remaining deliveries for successive sixes and they looked well set at 171-8.

The score assumed even greater significance when paceman Cpl Connor Hodgson (RAC) ripped through the Senior

Service's top order to reduce them to 14-3.

The spinners were then able to capitalise and tidy spells from WO2 Urie Hill (RLC, 2-24) and Boynton (1-22) kept the scoring in check.

The only resistance came in the shape of LET Jack Watson, who struck 69 from 52 balls, but the lack of support saw the Navy limp to 128-9 at the close.

The pattern was repeated against the Royal Air Force, who claimed the scalp of Bali with the second delivery of the match before being punished at the hands of Carmichael.

This time, the hard-hitting left-hander found an ally in Fletcher – who struck three sixes on his way to 36 before holing out off the bowling of Sgt Ash Watson.

Wiseman again looked in good form until an attempted switch hit brought about his downfall and Carmichael (pictured above) followed after a rapid-fire 74.

INTER-SERVICES T20 FINAL: ARMY

168/7

RAF

106



Hill remained to push the total to 168-7 and it was a score that looked under threat as the RAF started well in reply.

Openers Cpl Ross Diver and SAC Tom Shorthouse raced to 42 without loss inside the fifth over.

However, the introduction of Boynton proved crucial as he immediately claimed the wicket of Shorthouse and went on to record figures of 4-27 to swing the tide firmly in his side's favour.

Sgt Denson Narayan (RLC, 3-12, pictured below) and SSgt Ross Dearden (RE, 2-18) maintained the spin stranglehold as the airmen were dismissed for just 106 in the 19th over.

Despite playing a starring role in the win, Boynton insisted it was the collective effort that was vital to the overall success.

"This team is absolutely brilliant," he told *SoldierSport*. "They are so talented, and I am glad we got it done on the day.

"Tade Carmichael is a phenomenal player. He should never have joined the Army; he should have been a professional.

"I thought we were a bit short against the RAF, but our bowlers came back and won us the game.

"Urie Hill and Varun Bali will not be here next season and I must thank them for their service. Our development team won their Inter-Services this season and we are in a great place for the future." ■



CRICKET IN NUMBERS

RUNS
IN TWO
INNINGS
FROM
PLAYER
OF THE
TOURNAMENT
LCPL TADE
CARMICHAEL

136

WICKETS FOR
SKIPPER SGT
JAY BOYNTON
- THE ARMY'S
LEADING
WICKET-
TAKER ON
THE DAY

5

THE REDS'
BIGGEST
PARTNERSHIP
- BETWEEN
CARMICHAEL
AND SGT
GRAHAM
WISEMAN

103

WINNING
MARGIN, IN
RUNS, AS
THE RAF
DEFEATED
THE NAVY
IN THE
CONTEST'S
OPENING
MATCH

3



GEARED UP FOR THE GAMES

THE Army will be represented on sport's elite stage later this month as a select group of personnel begin their quest for honours at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Judo players Cpl Sarah Hawkes (AGC (RMP)) and LCpl Victor Ahiavor (RRF) have been named in the Northern Ireland and Ghana squads respectively, the latter having previously fought at the 2014 Games in Glasgow (pictured above).

Cpl Arnold Rogers (RG) will compete for Gibraltar in the marathon, while LCpl Meg Reid (RLC) steps into the boxing ring for Scotland.

Hawkes spoke to *SoldierSport* earlier this year about the challenges of staying in peak condition after she missed almost 20 months of action on the mat during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fortunately, she hit the qualifying mark at the Dakar African Open and is relishing

the opportunity ahead.

"It is so special for me as it means I get to represent my home country," the +78kg player said. "Everyone goes in wanting to win the gold medal and that will be my mindset."

Rogers will be Gibraltar's sole athlete on the track and the soldier was keen to thank those who have supported him on his journey when his place was confirmed.

He added: "I cannot wait to race and see how much further I can push my personal best."

Reid has fought at three World Championships but Birmingham will be her first multi-discipline competition.

"I'm very excited to be part of Team Scotland," she said.

"Winning a medal is the only goal. It will be tough, and we'll have to see what the draw is, but I'm confident I can mix with the best."

The list was accurate at the time of going to press, with further team announcements still to come. ■

SPORT SHORTS



Reds foil French foes

A COMEBACK victory over the French Navy in Cherbourg saw the Army women round off the 2021/22 season in style.

Fresh from their triumph over the Royal Navy at Twickenham – a result that saw them crowned Inter-Services champions – a much-changed Reds outfit found themselves trailing 17-10 at half-time and were down by two points with just ten minutes remaining.

However, a late surge saw the soldiers run out 34-22 winners, with Maj Chantelle Miller (AGC (RMP), pictured) among the scorers.



Dainton's dual role

ARMY forward Bdr Beth Dainton (RA) became a dual-code international when she lined up for the Wales rugby league team during their home clash with England.

The Harlequins ace, who has won eight caps with her country's rugby union squad, has starred for the Service in both forms of the game in recent seasons but her latest appearance on the elite stage ended in disappointment as Wales slipped to a 32-6 defeat.

However, she was part of the squad that defeated Italy 60-0 a week later.

FESTIVAL SERVES UP BOOST



THE Army Tennis Association (ATA) has taken further steps to grow the sport at grass-roots level by reintroducing its annual ladies' festival.

Aimed at novice players, the day-long event – the first to be staged since 2019 – featured a morning of coaching followed by afternoon matches.

Held in the build-up to the Inter-Unit and Army Championships, it was one of the first sessions to be hosted at the Service's new-look tennis centre in Aldershot, which boasts ten fully refurbished outside courts.

ATA secretary Lt Col (ret'd) Ian Haigs told *SoldierSport*: "We are really struggling at grass-roots level.

"We had absolute beginners who have not picked up a racket for ten to 15 years – by the end they were all playing some good tennis.

"I think people assume they are not at the standard to play in our competitions, but that is not the case. We have a novice category within the Army Championships that is exactly for these players.

"It's all about offering access to those who enjoy the sport."

Haigs was keen to stress tennis is very much an all-year round sport, with indoor winter competitions coming to the fore when the weather changes. "We are open to anyone who is interested – not just Army standard players," he added.

For details on how to get involved email ihaigs@ascb.uk.com

**"IT'S
ABOUT
ACCESS
FOR
THOSE
WHO
ENJOY
TENNIS"**



THE Service boxing season drew to a close as fighters from across the weight divisions took to the ring for the Individual Championships (pictured). The Army team also had success at the Haringey Box Cup as LCpl Terri Stuart (REME) won the 63kg elite female category, with Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC) and Cfn Eddie Drayton (REME) taking silver medals.

MONTH IN SPORT

July's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services Athletics
WHEN: July 6
WHERE: RAF Cosford
NEED TO KNOW: Athletes from all three Services head to Shropshire to mount their bid for track and field glory. It will be the first Forces showdown to be staged since 2019

Services head to Shropshire to mount their bid for track and field glory. It will be the first Forces showdown to be staged since 2019



WHAT: Inter-Services Diving, Water Polo and Swimming Championships
WHEN: July 12 to 15
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: Army swimmers will hope to shine after the Inter-Corps clash in March. The men's water polo team will be ones to watch following a successful British League season



WHAT: Inter-Services 40-over Cricket
WHEN: July 25 to 27
WHERE: Portsmouth
NEED TO KNOW: The Twenty20 showdown was

being played as this issue went to press. The Army dominated both forms in 2021 and will be looking for more of the same this time round



Pictures: Chris Coope

GRID IRON STARS RAISE THE TEMPO



"WE ARE THE BIGGEST SET-UP"

MOMENTUM is continuing to build in the Army American football scene with plans for a first Inter-Services tournament now in place.

The discipline was formally recognised by the Army Sport Control Board last year and regular training sessions are being staged each month as the player pool looks to build experience ahead of their first official match.

The soldiers will train alongside their rivals from the Royal Navy at HMS Temeraire this month and a five-day camp – featuring personnel from all three Services – will then follow in Aldershot in late August.

"It is massive, and we're growing bigger every month," head coach WO2 Abe Day (RA) told *SoldierSport*.

"We had a big response, with close to 400 people registering an interest, and now have around 100 people – including coaches – attending

each session.

"There's a mix of experience, from those who have played for Great Britain and as semi-professionals across Europe to individuals who compete in local leagues."

"We also have six civilian coaches, as well as those in the military, so we are going from strength to strength."

Day said the immediate focus is on training but revealed the team will make their debut as they take on the Yorkshire Rams in March. The Forces showdown will then follow in September next year.

"We are the biggest set-up but the Royal Air Force have more than 100 players involved and the Royal Navy have similar levels of interest," the NCO added. "It should be a good competition."

For more details on how to get involved visit the Army American Football Association social media channels or join the Army American Football group on Defence Connect. ■



SOLDIERS AT THE FORE ON HISTORIC DAY AT LORD'S

A STRONG Army presence played a pivotal role in a historic day at Lord's as the UK Armed Forces women took to the middle at the iconic venue for the first time.

The military outfit claimed a six-wicket victory over Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) as they stepped onto the big stage in style, and it was the soldiers who delivered with bat and ball in a comfortable win.

Batting first, the MCC made steady progress courtesy of openers Chloe Hill and Gemma Porter but with the scoring rate kept firmly in check an imposing total never looked on the cards.

Army stalwart Sgt Amanda Potgieter (REME, pictured right) secured a notable milestone as she took UKAF's first wicket when Hill was caught by Lt Lou Worsfold (RN) for 22.

The same fielder then caught Porter for 33 off the bowling of Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS))

before she helped run out Nikki Chaudhuri for just one.

Worsfold capped a fine individual effort in the field when she bowled the dangerous Finty Trussler for 29 in the penultimate over. The MCC then closed their innings on 115/4.

The run chase was looking like a formality as openers LCpl Georgie Cant and Cpl Gabie Clark (both Int Corps) raced to 50-0 at the end of the powerplay.

However, Danni Warren had other ideas and three wickets in her second over brought her side back into the contest.

Firstly, she trapped Cant (main picture) leg before for 32 and then Clark offered a simple catch from a mistimed shot through the leg side. Further damage was inflicted as skipper Lt Connie Cant (RA) was bowled first ball.

Potgieter fell three overs later and, with the score at 61-4, UKAF looked in trouble.

But Vaggers (33 not out) and

Lt Georgina Dean (REME, 20 not out) regained the initiative and a stand of 55 saw them home with eight deliveries to spare.

"I thought it was an outstanding performance in the field," skipper Cant told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"We restricted them to a reasonable score which meant we could go out to bat without any real pressure.

"There were a few nerves around the team coming into the game, but I could not have asked for more – I am delighted."

Cant said being invited to play at Lord's was a fitting reward for the recent developments in the women's game, particularly within the Army.

"The sport is growing hugely, and this will really help," she added. "We have shown that we are just as credible as the men's teams. The women's game is improving, and it will continue to do so." ■





SEVENS IN HEAVEN

THE UK Armed Forces celebrated a successful outing at the World Military Sevens in France.

With ten Army players featuring in their 12-strong squad, the men's outfit – captained by LCpl Pita Ratukadreu (Yorks) – enjoyed a stunning run to the final, where they defeated the hosts.

They downed Georgia 29-5 in their opening match, a result that was followed by a 45-0 triumph over the Netherlands and a 29-5 success against Australia.

However, UKAF's biggest test came against South Korea in the semi-finals, where they overturned a 12-0 deficit to win 14-12, with Gnr Virimi Seru (RA) among the scorers.

The team capped a memorable weekend with a 24-10 victory over France in the final.

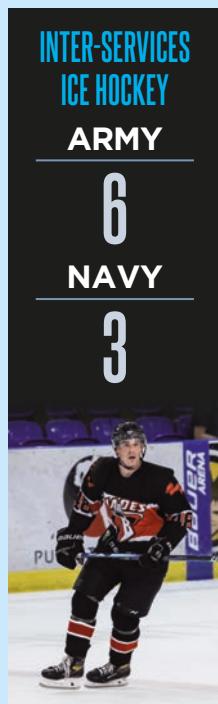
Group wins against Spain, Uzbekistan and Australia saw the UKAF women – led by SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)) – assume a strong position early on.

Despite losing to France, they progressed to the semi-finals, where tries from Capt Fiondi Parker (REME), Mullen and Pte Courtney Pursglove (RLC) helped them beat Australia 26-5.

However, France proved too strong in the final as they slipped to a 24-12 defeat.



BLADES CUT THROUGH RIVAL CHALLENGE



BACK-to-back wins over their military rivals saw the Army Blades lift the silverware at the Inter-Services Ice Hockey Championships.

The soldiers avenged their loss to the Royal Navy Destroyers in 2019 with a 6-3 triumph in their opening match and their fine form continued as a 6-0 victory over the Royal Air Force Aces saw them crowned champions.

The success represented a welcome return to action for the Army Ice Hockey Association, whose secretary, Maj Chris Pfleiderer (RLC), told *SoldierSport* that expectations were not particularly high given the Covid-related disruptions in recent years.

"We knew we had a good group of players, but we had to bring everything together with a limited amount of training," he added. "I am proud of what we achieved, and we now have a great platform to build on."

"Hopefully we can get back to the domination we had between 2012 and 2018, when we won six times in a row."

Pfleiderer, who is also a player on the team, said the

pairing of new head coach Cpl Timo Lindgren (REME) and captain SSgt Alex Naylor (RLC) was pivotal to the Army's positive performances.

"They have really driven things forward," he continued. "They gave the instructions, and the players implemented that on the ice."

"We relied on the experience we have in the team; they were a little rusty, but they have a good background in the sport to call upon."

Despite the relative lack of recent activity, Army ice hockey remains in good health with all corps teams represented in the accompanying Tri-Service Championships, in which the Royal Marines won the plate final and the Royal Navy Kings the main cup final.

"We are lucky to have links to the workshops at Batus," Pfleiderer explained. "People play out there and continue when they come back."

"The six corps teams we have are well established but, that said, we are always looking for new talent to come through the ranks." ■

Final Word



Mayan Storm in Belize last year is my highlight so far. The jungle survival package was really good and the AT was great. I did abseiling from nearly 300m up a cliff right in the middle of the jungle. I'll never forget it.

Cpl Jacob Porter, AGC (SPS)



African Thorn in South Africa in 2009 remains my favourite ever. It was a dismounted package in the Kalahari Desert testing recce skills and live firing. It was very different to what we normally do and the AT afterwards was great – hill walking and white-water rafting, capped by a safari.

Sgt Andy Bates, KRH

Interviews: Steve Muncey
Pictures: Cpl Adam Wakefield RLC



Exercise Spring Storm in Estonia in 2019 is the best one I've ever been on. I was in our recce troop using CVRTs back then and we did a lot of dismounted work, which I loved. Scouting ahead looking for enemy forces was fun and kept me busy.

LCpl Rhys Snell, KRH



The build-up training in Otterburn for Exercise Defender was the most fun I've had. We tabbed around with kit and did loads of our main combat engineering tasks including medium girder overbridge and abatis.

Spr Ethan Reynolds, RE



Canada in 2013. My commander got creative tactics-wise; we played dead near our vehicles with weapons hidden under us and took out the opfor patrols when they approached. The weather was great too and we had a massive AT package.

Cpl Adam Fletcher, KRH

I like playing the enemy for anti-tank cadres equipped with Javelin, which we do on a regular basis on Salisbury Plain. For some reason I find it really enjoyable to be up against teams who are trying to kill you!

LCpl Charles Lawrence, KRH



Happy days

We asked members of The King's Royal Hussars Battlegroup on Ex Defender Europe about their most enjoyable exercise to date...

The Arctic warfare instructors' course with the Royal Marines in Norway. The dip into the frozen lake is something else, and the small shot of rum they give you afterwards as a reward tastes incredible.

Lt Sam Trowbridge, KRH





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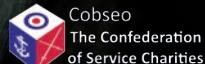
WE HELP WITH HOUSING

We're the Army's national charity. Every day, we're here for veterans like Paul, who was made homeless during the pandemic. He now has a new home and is working as a professional photographer.

PAUL
ROYAL ENGINEERS

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