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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

SOLDIER

MAY 2007 £2.50

DEEP SOUTH

Falklands revisited

EUROPEAN UNION

Old adversaries team up



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ARMY

SOLDIER

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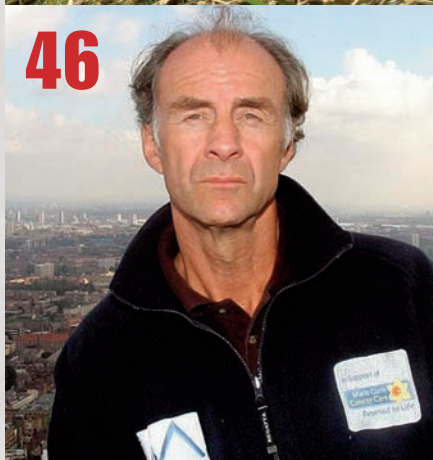
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Cover picture (left): Pte James Smith, C Company, 1 PWRR, maintains a watchful eye during Exercise Hard Dragon. See Pages 17-19

Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Shock and awe – the mushroom cloud which billowed over the Pacific Ocean after the UK detonated its first hydrogen bomb in 1957. See Pages 33-35 Picture: NF Grantham



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"We just can't win, Fred . . . they must be pushed for causes."

● Fire Island – Pages 33-35

Road death was 'due to Service'

THE death of a senior NCO in a road traffic accident while deployed abroad on an exercise was deemed not to be "due to Service" by the agency which administers military pension and compensation schemes and his widow's claim for compensation was declined.

As the official response to a letter on the subject (see Page 49) makes crystal clear, the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency made a mistake and came to the wrong judgement.

The dead sergeant's widow is to receive a letter of apology and the agency has been asked to double check that no similar mistakes have been made.

There are tried and trusted procedures for ensuring soldiers' dependants are properly compensated when the unthinkable happens, but, as the Army's Director of Personal Services, Brig Jamie Gordon, points out in his response, there is also an individual responsibility involved.

It is important that at a time of high operational tempo and increased danger – a state of affairs highlighted all too starkly by the reports of fatalities in our Update pages – every Serviceman and woman should think about the benefits offered by the Army Dependants' Trust, adequate life insurance

FIRST SIGHT

and the importance of making a will.

In this column last month we referred to reports that injured soldiers were waiting for compensation. The agency offers one-to-one support throughout the UK and its confidential helpline is 0800 169 2277.

'Mistake over claim by dead NCO's widow'

OUR staff have always been willing to put themselves on the line to get a story but it is not often they get themselves arrested and deported.

But that's what happened to reporter Cliff Caswell and photographer Graeme Main when they flew on assignment to Qatar to see 47 Air Despatch Squadron on operations.

Unfortunately their paperwork was inadequate and the authorities detained them briefly before ushering them onto the next flight home. Undaunted, Caswell and Main used the brief time they had at Aludied military airport to interview and photograph as many air despatchers as they could. Look out for their story in a forthcoming issue. ■



Picture: Cpl Paul Jarvis, RLC

Terrorist target: A Challenger 2, Britain's formidable main battle tank, was attacked and left disabled by an improvised explosive device west of Basra city

Armour pierced

Britain's battle-winning tank stopped in its tracks by insurgent explosion

CONCERN is mounting over the sophistication of terrorist attacks in Iraq after the latest roadside bomb badly damaged a Challenger 2 tank and seriously injured the driver.

The explosion, which happened west of Basra city, left the vehicle unable to move. It is now later recovered, and is now being dispatched back to the UK for repairs. It the first time that terrorists have managed to disable a Challenger 2, which is the best protected and most heavily armed vehicle available to British troops in theatre.

The blast followed an improvised explosive device (IED) ambush on the same stretch of road earlier in April, which killed four British soldiers and destroyed their Warrior armoured personnel carrier (see Pages 12-13). While accepting that there was concern over the attacks, however, commanders in Iraq would not be drawn on whether it was a sign that the IEDs used by terrorists were becoming more sophisticated.

Army spokesman Lt Col Kevin Stratford-Wright, Royal Engineers, declined to comment on the types of bombs being used by the insurgents. He also refused to discuss media speculation that more powerful explosively formed

projectiles, or "shaped charges", were now in the hands of terrorists.

Lt Col Stratford-Wright told *Soldier*: "If you were to look at the IED threat across Iraq, you would probably find that it has been sophisticated for a number of years.

"There is debate in the newspapers about weapon systems being used against British troops and linking them to a certain country of manufacture," he said. "But all that is media speculation – certainly we have never confirmed or denied the use of explosively formed projectiles."

While he declined to comment on the device used against the Challenger 2, Lt Col Stratford-Wright admitted the attack was the first time the terrorists had disabled a British tank.

He also confirmed that the driver had suffered serious injuries to his legs and one other crewman had been slightly hurt in the ambush. He highlighted that

Challenger 2s were a common sight in Iraq and were frequently out on patrol with other armoured assets.

The senior officer added: "When the Force Reserves go out, they normally take Challenger 2 tanks with them. Obviously there are not as many of them in theatre as there are other vehicles, but they are always a part of the team."

He was also keen to point out that spirits among soldiers in Iraq remained high despite the recent spate of IED attacks and the deaths of friends and colleagues. "Morale is remarkably robust, even though there is always shock and sadness when troops are killed.

"But as an organisation it is business as usual," he said. "I think that fact is testament to the high quality of leadership that we have in theatre as well as the resolution of the young people who are serving."

● **CALLING all Northern Ireland veterans. Soldiers who served in Northern Ireland during the Troubles are invited to put pen to paper and submit their recollections of operational service for possible publication when the magazine marks the end of Operation Banner this summer.**

Submissions should be posted to **Andrea Webb at *Soldier*** (usual address) or by email to awebb@soldiermagazine.co.uk

All correspondence MUST include rank, name, unit and dates of Northern Ireland deployment(s) though we won't publish them if you ask us not to.



What the Press has been saying

● **THE US is to extend the tour of duty for its troops in Afghanistan and Iraq from 12 to 15 months with immediate effect, to boost its capabilities in two wars which have stretched the American military close to breaking point.** – *The Independent*

● **BRITAIN'S former Army chief will be allowed to make almost £1 million from his memoirs. The MoD said that their ban on soldiers selling their stories would not include Gen Sir Mike Jackson.** – *News of the World*

● **GERMAN Army recruits were told to imagine that they were firing machine guns at hostile black people in the Bronx during a training exercise. The video, leaked on the internet, shows three African-American men stepping out of a van and yelling insults. An instructor then orders a soldier to shoot them while shouting obscenities.** – *The Times*

● **BRITISH military police are using a new tactic to win the hearts and minds of young Iraqis – Kwik Cricket. The basic form of the game developed by the England and Wales Cricket Board has been introduced to Basra school kids.** – *Daily Star*

● **Capt Chloe Madden, 27, has become the first woman to guard the Queen. The Army Air Corps helicopter pilot is in charge at Buckingham Palace for two months.** – *The Sun*

● **A CITY accountant is swapping the Square Mile for Afghanistan after his Territorial Army unit was called up. Anthony Ball, a 34-year-old lieutenant, who works for City Index, is one of 90 members of the TA's London Regiment who are being deployed to Helmand province.** – *Evening Standard*

● **A BRITISH officer murdered by the Nazis in Rome and until now honoured only as "The Unknown Englishman" has been identified after more than 60 years. Second World War veterans and local historians in Rome who have sought to identify the officer for more than a decade have named him as Capt John Armstrong.** – *The Times*

● **CAMPAIGNERS want to honour a remarkable but often forgotten black Briton by erecting a statue in his honour on the white cliffs of Dover. Walter Tull was the first black officer in the Army to lead white troops into battle. He died a hero on the Western Front.** – *Daily Telegraph*

Law looming

MoD presses for info on Pretoria mercenary bill

SOUTH African soldiers may be offered a fast-track to British citizenship in the wake of new legislation from Pretoria that could ban them serving in foreign forces.

In a statement, the MoD admitted that "contingency plans" were being drawn up should Pretoria's proposals become law – and that the Home Office had agreed in principle to the move.

The Department also revealed that senior officials were pressing for meetings with South African counterparts to discuss the implications of the bill, which passed through parliament in Pretoria last November and is awaiting final approval.

In their current form, the Prohibition of Mercenary Activities regulations would mean the 1,000-or-so South Africans in the Army having to apply for permission from their government to continue their service. But it is understood that both single and dual citizens would have six months' grace to do this.

However the MoD said a meeting between the British Defence Attaché in Pretoria and South African defence chiefs had taken place, which was described as "an important step".

It was also hoped that high-level discussions between British and South

African ministers would take place soon, potentially as early as this month.

The MoD statement added: "Many aspects of the proposed legislation have still not been finalised and are not known. Therefore the very nature of the legislation, and its impact on South African Service personnel could shift significantly. Work is currently being undertaken by the MoD and the Army to formulate contingency plans should the bill be enacted.

"Additionally the Home Office has agreed in principle to South African Service personnel applying for fast-track naturalisation in the event of the bill becoming law," said the statement.

"The Army's desired end state remains to secure the enduring employment of all South African personnel without caveat, veto or restriction on our operational effectiveness."

The MoD stressed that all South African troops should carry on as usual until further notice and put any questions to their chain of command. The Army's employment branch in Upavon is also available to advise and enquiries should be directed to Maj Melanie Rayner on 01980 615350 or manning.army@btconnect.com

Maysan milestone

BRITAIN has completed the handover of security enforcement in southern Iraq's Maysan Province to Iraqi authorities in a move hailed as a "milestone" by Defence Secretary Des Browne.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki announced the handover after receiving positive feedback from a thorough assessment of the area's security and police forces.

Maysan, once described as the "Wild West" of Iraq, joins Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces in being delivered back to Iraqi rule, with Basra expected to follow later this year.

"I congratulate the Iraqis on what they have achieved in a relatively short period," said Mr Browne.

"The progress made in transferring responsibility of these provinces demonstrates the sheer hard work and dedication of the Iraqis, the UK Forces and our coalition partners in Iraq."

Although British Forces withdrew from a permanent base in Maysan last August, troops have continued to patrol the province's eastern border with Iran and will now provide training and mentoring support for

the Iraqi Security Forces. Mr Browne added that Britain would continue to play a part in addressing any security issues that remain in all three provinces taken back under Iraqi control.

He said: "Iraqi authorities now have the ability to deal with the vast majority of circumstances they are likely to face. The next few months are a crucial test of their new capabilities."

The formal handover of Maysan took place at Camp Sparrowhawk, an Iraqi Army base near the provincial capital of Al Amarah. Maj Gen Jonathan Shaw, General Officer Commanding Multinational Division South East, who was present at the ceremony, said: "This is a moment for optimism. I am optimistic because the support of multinational forces will continue to facilitate the people of Iraq on the road to self-reliance.

"And I am optimistic because the example of Al Muthanna, Dhi Qar, Najaf and now Maysan will demonstrate to the rest of Iraq what can be achieved.

"This is a testament to what is possible when the people of Iraq work together."



Robust response: A Challenger 2 heads out to back-up a British strike mission against bomb-makers operating in and around Basra city Picture: Cpl Andy Benson

Brits rattle bombers

Telic troops deliver swift and deadly strike against terrorist gangs in Basra

THE steadfast resolve of British soldiers delivered justice for lost comrades when they smashed a terror gang planting roadside bombs in Basra.

Operation Rattlesnake, which was launched just days after four soldiers were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack against their Warrior, targeted bombers intent on hitting more coalition troops and civilians.

It dealt a swift and deadly strike against two gangs setting roadside bombs under the cover of darkness in the Hyall Shuala district of the city.

Supported by Challenger 2 tanks, soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment led the assault on an area close to the scene where their colleagues had been killed just days earlier. The strike, backed by 40 Regiment, Royal Artillery and soldiers equipped with Javelin from the 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, left at least eight bombers dead.

Those killed have not been directly linked to those responsible for the explosion that killed 2nd Lt Joanna York Dyer, Kgn Adam Smith, Cpl Kris O'Neill and Pte Eleanor Dlugosz at the beginning of April (see Pages 12-13). But the two gangs were clearly seen placing devices and running out command wires that would have been used to launch the same type of attack in the same area.

Army spokesman Capt Gary Hedges confirmed Op Rattlesnake's success had

lifted the spirits of troops mourning friends and colleagues. He told *Soldier*: "It was a huge boost to morale to remove two deadly IED gangs laying further explosives that would have caused more loss of life.

"This swift and well-executed operation was a testament to the professionalism of everyone involved who got on

with the job after the tragic losses they had suffered."

British commanders warned that coalition troops would continue to strike against rogue militia seeking to kill soldiers and civilians. Operations are expected to become increasingly Iraqi-led as security in Basra is handed over to local forces in the coming months.

Pressing issue

A COMPREHENSIVE review is to probe rules governing how the Forces deal with broadcasters and the press in the wake of the recent payment-for-stories controversy.

Speaking in the Commons, Defence Secretary Des Browne said an MoD team would examine whether current regulations were satisfactory for the modern media environment.

Mr Browne was addressing MPs after taking personal responsibility for allowing Royal Navy personnel held captive by Iran to sell their stories, a decision that was quickly reversed after widespread criticism. He said: "This review is not a witch-hunt. Rather, it will seek to identify the lessons and make recommendations on how to manage the complex issues involved.

"It will make recommendations on how to balance our duty to support our people with

our duty of transparency, our duty to protect the reputation of the Services and our duty to protect our personnel in a demanding media environment."

Mr Browne revealed that the review would be headed up by an independent figure with "wide media experience" and two senior MoD staff. The Defence Secretary said that an inquiry focusing on the events leading to the capture of the sailors and marines in the Gulf would also be conducted. It was expected that both reviews would be completed by the end of this month.

Mr Browne said: "I have acted to ensure we learn the lessons of the whole episode in a matter of full Parliamentary scrutiny.

"As we go through that process, we should remember the most important point, which is that we have got our people back safe and on our terms."

UNDER Big Ben

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

Peers press for Cyprus upgrade

MORE needs to be done to improve living conditions for British troops stationed in Cyprus, Defence Procurement Minister Lord Drayson has agreed. Responding to concerns about the state of the Ledra Palace Hotel, where troops have been living for some time, Lord Drayson agreed that standards were "totally unsatisfactory".

He pledged that the Government would continue to put pressure on the Cypriot authorities, who are responsible for maintaining the building, for action to be taken.

Lord Drayson told peers in the House of Lords: "I understand that this situation has existed for several years. It is not good enough and representations have been significantly increased. We expect improvements to be made."

Transport aircraft: Work is continuing to fit defensive measures to more aircraft in the RAF TriStar fleet, Lord Drayson has confirmed.

In a written answer to a question from Lord Astor of Hever, he confirmed that all aircraft flying on the air bridge to Afghanistan had the defensive kit and others were being modified to carry it. All C-130 Hercules aircraft flying into Iraq also had the relevant equipment, Lord Drayson stressed.

Divorces: The number of soldiers whose marriages broke up fell slightly last year compared with 2005. Responding to a question from MP Mark Pritchard, Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg confirmed that there were 900 divorces among Army personnel in 2006, down on the 1,040 the previous year.

Balkans: There are currently no plans to reduce British troop numbers in Kosovo, Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram said in a written answer. He said that the 175-strong contingent providing intelligence support to Kfor would remain at the same strength and in the same role for the foreseeable future.

Herrick hero

Vikings mourn death of a 'superlative soldier'

TROOPS in Afghanistan have been remembering a gifted and much-respected comrade who died during a ferocious engagement with heavily armed Taliban fighters.

Pte Chris Gray, of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, had been conducting a routine clearance patrol with A Company Group in the town of Nowzad, Helmand province, on April 13 when the soldiers came under fire.

While comrades were pinned down by rounds from rifles, heavy machine guns, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, Pte Gray's platoon had been moving to outflank the enemy when he was shot.

The 19-year-old was taken to the British hospital at Camp Bastion but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Leicester-born Pte Gray joined the Army in March last year, signing up with 1 R Anglian after completing his training. He had forged a strong

reputation in the battalion and his CO, Lt Col Stuart Carver, said the young soldier would be sorely missed.

He added: "It came as no surprise to those who knew him that he died courageously in combat, selflessly striving to relieve comrades in extreme danger. Our sympathy and thoughts are with his family and friends at this very difficult time."

The CO's sentiments were shared by Pte Gray's company commander, Maj Dom Biddick, who described him as a "superlative soldier with real leadership potential".

"A close friend to many, he had an infectious sense of humour and a degree of optimism that many of his more cynical peers found

baffling," Maj Biddick added.

His best friend, Pte Matt Duffy, also paid tribute.

"Chris was an awesome soldier and a better mate," he said. "He loved the job and died doing what he loved."



● Pte Chris Gray

Spade work begins

Commandos relieved by 12 Mechanized Brigade

THE ace of spades flag of 12 Mechanized Brigade is flying over British bases in southern Afghanistan after the Army moved to take over the reins from the previous Royal Marines-led deployment.

As this issue went to press, 3 Commando Brigade was completing its tour, and personnel were widely commended by senior officers for the progress made during their six months in theatre.

The new deployment includes the Brigade HQ and Signal Squadron plus soldiers from The Light Dragoons; the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards; the 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment and the 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment.

The troops are being joined by sappers from 26 Engineer Regiment and gunners of 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery. Personnel from 2 Signal Regiment, 4 Logistic Support Regiment RLC and 4 General Support Medical Regiment are also deploying, with troop numbers in southern Afghanistan expected to approach 6,000 by the end of the summer.

Having taken the reins from Brig Jerry Thomas, 12 Mechanized Brigade Com-

mander Brig John Lorimer said: "Every one of us knows that the next six months are going to be tough, but we have trained hard, are well equipped and I know we are ready for the challenges ahead."

He added: "Those returning home to the UK should feel confident that we will carry on their good work to help strengthen the security of the country, in support of the Afghan government."

Politicians are also pleased with the progress being made in theatre. Defence Secretary Des Browne said the presence of British Forces was bolstering reconstruction efforts.

Mr Browne was speaking during a recent visit to troops at Kajaki Dam in northern Helmand province. The facility is being restored to provide electricity for two million people. He said: "It fills me with pride when I see the tremendous work the military have done."

"But military operations are just one part of the solution – it is in places like Kajaki that the international community can bring its resources to bear to make real and lasting improvements to the lives of ordinary Afghans."



Picture: Col Adrian Harlan RLC

Sangin strike: British troops played a major role in a multinational operation to remove a hard core of Taliban and foreign fighters from a town in Helmand

Brought to heel

Insurgents killed in Sangin as Taliban feel the force of Operation Achilles

TROOPS from an increasingly confident Afghan Army have been preparing to assume responsibility for a key area in Helmand province after a major British-led offensive.

UK personnel moved to smash Taliban positions in the town of Sangin as part of a multinational offensive codenamed Op Achilles. Senior officers were satisfied with the success of the mission, and have confirmed that Afghan troops will gradually assume responsibility for the area in the weeks ahead.

UK Task Force spokesman Lt Col Charlie Mayo said multinational personnel would mentor their local counterparts as they took on the challenging and crucial task. He added: "It is critical for the long-term success of this operation that the local people support the government of Afghanistan and its own security forces."

British troops from the 42 Commando Royal Marines-led battle-group were reinforced on Op Achilles by US, Dutch, Estonian and Canadian colleagues.

The 1,000-strong force was backed up by air support including Apache attack helicopters as the troops pressed forward to weed out Taliban fighters.

Commanders believe that a "significant number" of insurgents were killed during the mission while a huge weapons cache was also unearthed. It was confirmed that some multinational soldiers suffered minor injuries.

"Prior to the operation we informed the local population of our intentions through the governor of Helmand and also by radio broadcasts, letters and word of mouth," Lt Col Mayo said.

"We asked the people of Sangin to stay away from the fighting so that we could defeat the Taliban quickly. This operation was not directed against the ordinary

people of Sangin but against the hard core of Taliban and foreign fighters who have forced the people to live under a regime of intimidation and cruelty."

Brig Jerry Thomas, the outgoing commander of the UK Task Force in Helmand, was also pleased with the operation, during which he claimed "significant gains" had been made.

"The aim of the operation was to clear the Taliban from the Sangin area and to re-establish the authority of the government of Afghanistan," he added.

● Tales from two fronts – Pages 44-45

Yeomanry put in driving seat

EXPERT Territorial Army drivers have been keeping operations in Afghanistan and Iraq on track by loading armoured reconnaissance vehicles onto flights.

The soldiers, from A Squadron, The Royal Wessex Yeomanry in Bovington, steered Scimitars onto huge Antonov aircraft at Brize Norton and Lyneham.

Typically delivered six-at-a-time, the vehicles were kept in a holding bay before

the TA drivers took them into the waiting aircrafts' vast cargo bays.

The 120 troops from the Yeomanry form the only armoured replacement squadron in the Army. They can drive the full range of fighting vehicles, including the Challenger 2 tank and AS90 self-propelled gun.

Tpr Wayne Dennis, who was involved in the loading process, said: "I have really enjoyed getting involved so early."

April of anguish

Terrorist actions claim lives of six soldiers during a black month in Basra

DEVASTATED soldiers in Basra have been remembering four professional and much-respected colleagues who were killed in a roadside bomb attack.

Pte Eleanor Dlugosz, Kgn Adam Smith, Cpl Kris O'Neill and 2nd Lt Joanna Yorke Dyer all died when the improvised explosive device exploded underneath their Warrior armoured vehicle in the early hours of April 5.

The quartet had been on a patrol out to the west of Basra when the bomb was detonated. An Iraqi civilian interpreter also died in the explosion.

Remembered as enthusiastic and charming, 2nd Lt Yorke Dyer joined the Intelligence Corps last year after passing out of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The 24-year-old Oxford graduate had been attached to the 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, to gain operational experience in Iraq before completing her Young Officer Training.

A personal friend of Prince William, with whom she trained at Sandhurst, 2nd Lt Yorke Dyer was closely involved



● Pte Eleanor Dlugosz



● Kgn Adam Smith



● Cpl Kris O'Neill



● 2nd Lt Yorke Dyer

in planning and conducting ground operations alongside soldiers.

Kgn Adam Smith, who was 19 and originally from the Isle of Man, had joined the Army in 2004, enlisting in The King's Regiment after finishing his basic training.

He deployed to Iraq in November after being selected to join the Reconnaissance Platoon of 2 Lincs and was noted for his courageous attitude.

Battalion CO Lt Col Mark Kenyon said the loss of two gifted and popular indi-

viduals had been keenly felt. His thoughts were with their families and friends.

The CO said of 2nd Lt Yorke Dyer: "From a very early stage it was evident that Jo was a talented and energetic officer who was determined to make the most of her deployment. Her enthusiasm was boundless and her contribution to our operations, even within a few short weeks, was invaluable. We quickly came to think of her as one of us."

Of Kgn Smith, Lt Col Kenyon added: "He showed all the qualities of a recon-

Lancers mourn duo

WARM tributes have been paid to two experienced soldiers, who were killed on patrol in Maysan Province as this issue went to press.

Cpl Ben Leaning and Tpr Kristen Turton, both of The Queen's Royal Lancers, died when their Scimitar armoured reconnaissance vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb.

The two soldiers had been providing protection for a convoy when the device exploded on April 19. Three other troops were injured in the blast and all casualties were evacuated to Tallil airbase in Dhi Qar province.

Cpl Leaning, who was 24 and from Scunthorpe, joined the Army in January 1999. He had served during the war in Iraq in 2003 as well as on operations in the Balkans.

Recognised as a gifted soldier and natural leader, he became a crew commander and signals instructor before deploying to Iraq on Op Telic 9 last autumn. Known as Bill to his friends, the qualified physical training instructor



● Cpl Ben Leaning



● Tpr Kristen Turton

was a popular and much-respected member of the regiment.

Tpr Turton, who was from Grimsby, signed up for the QRL in 2003. The married 27-year-old was a trained sharpshooter and assault pioneer, specialising in demolitions, and was well respected by regimental colleagues for his abilities.

The soldiers' commanding officer, Lt Col Richard Nixon-Eckersall, said that both men would be sorely missed.

Lt Col Nixon-Eckersall described Tpr Turton as an "exceptional soldier" who had a bright future ahead of him.

He added: "Selfless and committed, Tpr Turton strived for perfection in everything he did and quickly made an impression as a future NCO."

"Our thoughts are with his wife Sharon and all his family. His loss will be keenly felt across the battle-group."

Of Cpl Leaning, Lt Col Nixon-Eckersall said the NCO's professionalism and concern for others set him apart. The CO said: "He was tough, fit, intelligent and compassionate."

"He truly cared for those he worked with and was never found to be wanting in any task."

"He had already made a name for himself at the regiment as one to watch for the future."

"Cpl Leaning was the first to volunteer for any course or task and I have no doubt he would have volunteered to lead the patrol that so tragically saw him killed. His death is a huge loss."

for Telic troops

naissance soldier – dependable, determined and a real team player. He was a popular and respected member of this team and this battle-group.”

Pte Dlugosz and Cpl O'Neill, who were both serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps as part of the Close Support Medical Squadron, were also remembered as highly capable and professional soldiers.

Pte Dlugosz, who was 19 and from Southampton, had been closely involved with infantry patrols into Basra as a Class 1 medic.

Bright and highly capable, she had aspirations to complete her A Levels and train as a medical laboratory technician.

Cpl O'Neill was remembered as a confident and experienced medic with a calm and unflappable nature.

He worked long hours to make sure his troops were properly looked after.

The 27-year-old father-of-two, who had deployed to Iraq from Catterick in January to serve with the Close Support Medical Squadron, had recently been teaching first aid to the Iraqi police.

Lt Col Martin Toney, the CO of both soldiers, said: “Cpl O'Neill was a reflective and utterly dependable soldier who used his maturity and common sense to great effect. He would turn his hand to all sorts of things and was a key player in the unit.”

Of Pte Dlugosz, Lt Col Toney said: “She was one of those soldiers who, despite a degree of shyness and natural reticence, always surprised with her guts and determination.”

● An “exemplary combat leader” lost his life in a collision involving two Puma helicopters in Iraq, the MoD confirmed as this issue of *Soldier* went to press.

CSgt Mark Powell of The Parachute Regiment died alongside Sgt Mark McLaren of 230 Squadron, Royal Air Force Aldergrove, in the accident.

The 37-year-old Welsh-born NCO was described in an MoD statement as a selfless soldier “never shirking danger, effort or hard service in pursuit of his mission”. It continued: “His loss is tragic and keenly felt by all, but his example to others will be sure to endure and inspire us all for years to come.

CSgt Powell was an exemplary combat leader, soldier, father, husband, friend and Briton, dedicated to his family, men, mission and country.”

No further details on the NCO have been released.



● CSgt Mark Powell

‘Courage, loyalty and selfless commitment’

THE commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, has paid tribute to a teenage soldier who died as he attempted to save friends from sniper fire in southern Iraq.

Rfn Aaron Lincoln, who at 18 is one of the youngest to be killed on Op Telic, had been on patrol close to Basra Palace when he was shot and mortally wounded on April 2.

In remembering his contribution, CO Lt Col JCW Maciejewski said the rifleman had been dedicated to his battalion and had given all for his friends.

The young soldier, who was from Durham, completed his basic training at Catterick last July and deployed to Iraq just after he had turned 18 in January. He had been attempting to locate a gunman who had wounded a colleague when he died.

Lt Col Maciejewski added: “In a society that seems obsessed with self, money and celebrity, Rfn Lincoln’s short life amounted to something much more profound. He lived for service to his country and his mates. He lived a life of courage, loyalty and selfless commitment to others.

“Ultimately he sacrificed his life for his friends.”

The CO said that the bat-



● Kgn Danny Wilson

alion was deeply saddened by his loss, but was acutely aware of the pain that Rfn Lincoln’s family and loved ones were going through.

He added: “In the grief we are all feeling, we know that Aaron Lincoln lived by values of substance in stark contrast to a world that has, in many aspects, embraced what is trivial.”

Rfn Lincoln’s death came in a dreadful 24 hours for British troops in Basra. The previous day Kgn Danny Wilson, of the 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment, was killed by a terrorist gunman in the same area.

Kgn Wilson, who was 28 and married with a son, had dismounted from his Warrior armoured vehicle to check for improvised explosive devices when he came under fire.

Remembered as a popular and much-respected personality, Kgn Wilson joined the Territorial Army in the Lancastrian and Cumbrian Volunteers before signing up for The King’s Own Royal Border Regiment in 2005.

He had served with the battalion in Iraq last year before volunteering for a further tour with 2 Lincs. He deployed as part of Chindit Company in March.

Kgn Wilson’s CO, Lt Col Mark Kenyon, said: “Danny Wilson was the sort of kingsman whom it is a pleasure to serve alongside – selfless, committed and always ready to look on the bright side. Our thoughts are very much with his family.”

Fallen hero: Rfn Aaron Lincoln



Farewell to Ballymena

SOLDIERS and community leaders stood in quiet reflection as the flag was lowered at the Northern Ireland Training Regiment and Depot Royal Irish for the last time.

The event at St Patrick's Barracks in Ballymena marked the first step of a gradual military drawdown in the town, which will culminate in the closure of the barracks itself next March. During the ceremony, Ballymena's mayor, James Alexander, said that the troops had played a key role in community life during six decades in the town. He added: "There has always been a close bond between the borough council and St Patrick's Barracks. We will miss the boys."

The closure of the Northern Ireland Training Regiment means training for 1 R Irish, a General Service battalion based in Inverness, will now take place at Catterick.

Charity call

AN ENTERPRISING Territorial Army officer has been promoting his green credentials in business – and raising money for Army causes in the process.

Capt Rob Fox, who served with the Media Ops Group (Volunteers) during Op Telic 1, heads a mobile phone recycling company, which is offering to donate £3 to The Parachute Regimental Association for every transaction.

Envirofone.com, which is based in Macclesfield, Cheshire, runs a website that provides its users with the opportunity to sell their old mobile phones. The handsets are then refurbished, repacked and sold on to developing countries.

But by keying in Envirofone.com/para, the company will stump up £3 for charity for every mobile bought, which will go towards special projects for veterans. Capt Fox told *Soldier*: "I'd be more than happy to hear from any other good Forces' causes if they want to get in touch."

Tartan army

PROUD soldiers from north of the border are to get their traditional uniform made on their doorstep by a company with years of experience in the business.

The MoD has announced that Glenisla Kilts of Motherwell has been awarded the main contract to supply traditional attire to The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Under the £1.2 million deal, the company will provide the regiment with about 5,000 kilts over four years.

In a further contract, Argyll Bagpipes and Kilts will provide the pipers of Scottish and Irish regiments with their traditional attire and musical instruments while Leeds-based Turner Virr & Co are making 5,000 pairs of trews.



Picture: Cpl Mike Fletcher RLC

Incoming: Eight more Chinooks are to be made available to commanders during the next two years

New arrivals

Extra air support expected to touch down in 2008

HARD-pressed commanders are to be given an air support boost with the arrival of more than a dozen transport helicopters, the Government has announced.

In a £230 million package, the MoD is taking delivery of six new Merlins, which will be available within the next 12 months, as well as converting eight Chinook Mark 3s to make them deployment-ready in two years.

Ministry chiefs believe the aircraft will give commanders and their soldiers a crucial edge, particularly in volatile areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Defence Secretary Des Browne said the move was "the best possible outcome" for the Joint Helicopter Force, adding that air support was a crucial asset. He said: "This package will deliver 14 additional military helicopters into new operational roles, with the first available for operations within a year.

"Battlefield support helicopters are one of the most crucial capabilities for

military commanders. I am determined that we have enough if we need to send more to operations in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere."

The new Merlins were originally bought by Denmark, but are being handed to the UK after a deal between the two nations and manufacturer AugustaWestland.

The six aircraft will be fitted with the latest upgrades, including advanced rotor blades to beef up speed, range and lift, in a package worth around £175 million. The new additions will boost the 22-strong Merlin fleet already in service.

The Chinooks were ordered in 1995 for special ops and delivered six years ago, but have since been unavailable because of technical problems.

Work to convert them into a battlefield support role will cost up to £60 million. However it is believed that the conversions will provide a significant enhancement in capability when they become available for deployment in 2008.

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

GHOSTLY soldier silhouettes steal silently upon the enemy's tightly coiled lair, bracing themselves for the ferocious fire about to be unleashed on the edge of a forest vaguely lit by starlight.

Undeterred, the troops move quietly towards a small clearing and the gates of a village, beyond which their foe has concealed itself within the civilian streets and dwellings.

The soldiers' whispered commands carry the tongues of English and German as the military opponents of more than 60 years ago join forces to defeat a common terrorist enemy. An explosion breaks the still night and flares illuminate the intense faces of two nations' troops surging forward to engage the rattle of enemy rifles.

Men from the 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment assault the main hill overlooking the settlement, swiftly overwhelming one enemy position only to be immediately fired upon from several others. Their German comrades, 212 Panzer Grenadier Regiment officer cadets, draw fire away from the Tigers but take casualties from rogue bullets ricocheting out of a derelict house.

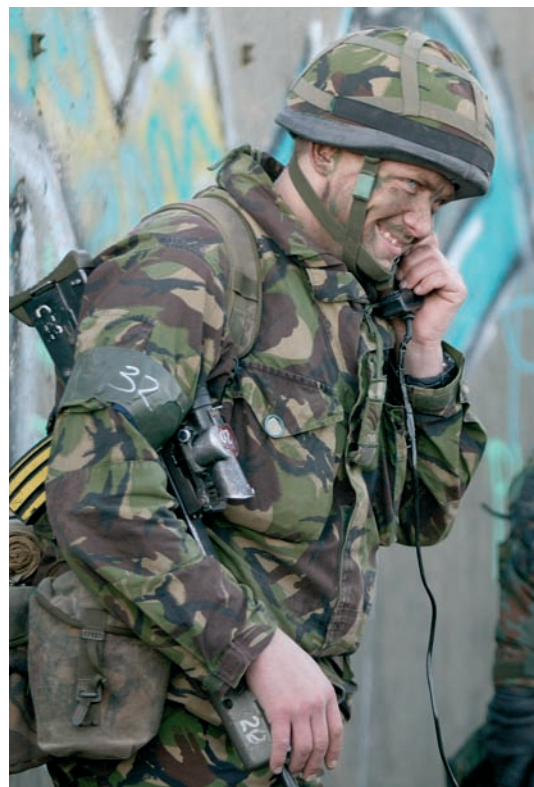
The Telic 8 heroes spring their hard-learned operational tactics on the terrorists, crashing hard, fast and aggressively into the house to silence the enemy fire. The cadets stand slightly open-mouthed at the Brits' methods, which contrast starkly with their own slow, thorough and safety-conscious house clearance procedures.

But learning about the tactical differences when fighting in a built-up

area (FIBUA) was the prime objective of three-day Exercise Hard Dragon, which took place in north Germany. A platoon from 1 PWRR was invited to bring its recent experience of battling to secure peace in southern Iraq to the training of German officer cadets. The British contingent also offered the chance to improve the cadets' English, an essential requirement for their promotion to officer status.

1st Lt Thorsten Nagelschmidt told *Soldier* the British presence was crucial to instructing the German Army's upcoming leaders.

"Hard Dragon gave the cadets peace support operations training that reflected a real situation. Practising with the British allowed them to get to know what happens on real missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo where English is also the lead language. This exercise





showed their excellent cooperation when fighting together.”

The knowledge and experience of German soldiers taking up arms in anger dwindles at the same rate as our Second World War veterans pass into history. But the impetus to include a 21st century German force into multi-national theatres is growing. Heading up Hard Dragon, Capt Matthias Greune was pleased to integrate a British platoon littered with soldiers awarded honours, including the Military Cross, for their gallantry while serving on Op Telic.

“British tactics are grounded in Iraq where, as long as you are fast, you are a difficult target and you put the enemy under pressure. This method is a good

“British tactics are grounded in Iraq where, as long as you are fast, you are a difficult target and you put the enemy under pressure”

one but it is hard to learn,” Capt Greune said, responding to the difference in speed and aggression between his and 1 PWRR’s soldiers when searching and securing a residential area.

“It’s easy to work with the British because they have the same mission command structure and it has been a big opportunity for us to train with them and use their experiences from Iraq.”

Leading the 1 PWRR platoon, Lt Will Gordon was pleased the performance of his troops matched the professionalism of their German counterparts, especially as they had swapped their Warriors for a light infantry role.

“The lads did very well considering the limited time to prepare and not really knowing what to expect from the exercise. But from their personal skills and drills up to platoon commander communications, they drew on their experiences in Iraq and knew where they sat in the bigger picture,” he said.

Although the exercise emphasised the different tactical approaches to search-and-cordon, there were other surprises in store.

Training with the German Army, which included helicopter support, arms and explosive search dogs, and bomb disposal experts, took the 1 PWRR platoon onto civilian roads for drills in vehicle checkpoints (VCPs). It was the first time Cpl “Gadders” Gadsby had flagged down the Mercedes and BMWs of commuters returning home after work.

“We are quite clued-up on VCPs from our time in Iraq but we don’t do FIBUA training like this and certainly not on a German main road,” he explained, adding that the exercise was more akin to the British operational training and advisory group (OPTAG) preparations before deploying to theatre.

“But, unlike the Germans, we don’t get the kit we will be using, such as

night-vision goggles, until we get to theatre. Training with the operational kit would make life a lot easier.”

Despite the differences, exercising with a foreign force got the thumbs-up from both 1 PWRR and the German cadets. Knowing how each other works will be invaluable if called to fight together on future operations where their adversaries will feel double the smoke and fire of a multi-national force founded on the spirit of cooperation. ■

Above clockwise, Under fire: The Tigers wait to pounce on their prey; **In sight:** LCpl Chris Marley defends a captured dwelling; **Fighting friends:** Cpl Sean Robson, who won a Military Cross for actions in Iraq, assesses the enemy position with his German counterpart; **Look out:** A German officer cadet stays vigilant for enemy fire after his reconnaissance patrol is ambushed; **Cooperation:** 1st Lt Thorsten Nagelschmidt, 212 Panzer Grenadier Regiment, talks tactics with Lt Will Young, 1 PWRR



A photograph of a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark blue raincoat, sitting inside a shelter. The shelter is constructed from stacked metal crates, some of which have labels like 'TOS NORMAL IN CASE' and '2 CART TO LOGS'. The man is looking towards the camera. The background shows the interior of the shelter with wooden beams and a green tarp.

Home from home: Maj (Retd) John Francis
re-discovers his shelter on Mount Kent

Falklands revisited

British veterans hit the jackpot in a search
for the lost battlefields of their youth »

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Steve Jary

HOVERING over the jagged peaks of the Falkland Islands, Wg Cdr Andy Lawless of the Royal Air Force could easily be flying back in time.

Even after two decades of absence, the area is still familiar. Mount Kent, a remote location from where British artillery blasted Argentine troops, is today's target. Thankfully it is safer than when he flew there 25 years ago.

The veteran officer's voice dominates the radio. "I remember this ridge," he reports to the crew. "This is it – it's down there. Can we land here?"

The Sea King pilot makes a slow turn, looking for a landing site free of the rocks strewn across the slope. Then he descends gingerly, fighting the raging crosswind.

In the cockpit, John Francis, a retired major with the Royal Artillery, peers out of the windows through the gloom and instantly recognises his hillside camp. During the Falklands War, when he was a battery sergeant major, Wg Cdr Lawless flew him here.

Now the two veterans are meeting for the first time since the operation that nearly claimed both their lives.

As a young RAF flight lieutenant, Wg Cdr Lawless was the pilot of the

only available Chinook during the 1982 conflict. After dropping off John Francis and his colleagues at a landing zone where fighting was still taking place, his helicopter slammed into a water pool as he moved to dodge the sights of an Argentine missile system.

There is an eerie quiet as the Sea King disappears and the full impact of Mount Kent is suddenly felt. Nothing has been moved – the battlefield is exactly as it was left when the British troops quit the location. The place is as filled with memories as it is with the wreckage of war.

Spent artillery shell casings are strewn around the grass.

Empty mess tins are everywhere. Even the shelters built by the troops are intact. Maj Francis climbs into his former Falklands home and finds it still dry.

"To be honest I'm gobsmacked," remarks Wg Cdr Lawless, clearly stunned at the stark scene. "This battle could have been yesterday. I remember these ammunition boxes piling up as more and more shells were fired."

The extraordinary story of the Mount Kent danger zone began during the middle phase of the war after the

British landings at San Carlos Water. On May 30, 1982, the then Sgt Maj Francis was serving with 7 (Sphinx) Commando Battery in support of the Royal Marines when he embarked on the Chinook destined for the hillside close to Port Stanley.

Two field guns were loaded on the aircraft and a third was slung underneath. It was a squeeze but there were no other

options. The cargo ship *Atlantic Conveyor*, which had been carrying helicopters to the front, had been hit and sunk by an Exocet missile. The Chinook was the only transport for the troops.

The low-level, white-knuckle ride culminated in an equally harrowing

descent, when the soldiers saw British soldiers opening fire on Argentine positions with mortars. The enemy were clearly still at close quarters.

"I was so intent on getting the guns into action that I didn't really think about what else was going on," says Maj Francis. "You really didn't have the time to concentrate on anything other than what you were doing."

"After they had dropped us, Andy and the Chinook crew took off and left – another three guns came up onto

'At one stage I remember we were firing continuously for three hours – it was vicious stuff'



Mount Kent the following day.”

However for Wg Cdr Lawless, the adventure was far from over. “I knew things were going to be interesting,” he recalls. “As it turned out they were very dangerous.

“After taking off we ran into a snowstorm and couldn’t pull up because the Argentines had a Roland air defence system nearby and we knew it was watching us,” the officer says. “That was when we hit the water.”

The crew immediately carried out their ditching drills, getting rid of one of the helicopter’s doors before realising that they’d had a lucky escape. With the aircraft still in working order, they were able to take off safely.

As the RAF crew pulled out, John Francis was busy getting the guns ready for action and it was not long before his troops were attacking enemy positions. “After getting established, the first fire mission was on nearby Moody Brook the following day,” he says. “We heard that none of the Argentine soldiers got up and, for the first time, I realised the damage we were doing.”

But not all rounds were outgoing. Every so often the Argentines would counter-attack, which initially surprised the soldiers. “They didn’t have any observers on the hill, but they still

attacked us with artillery,” says Maj Francis. “It was a shock – I didn’t realise they had a gun that could hit us.”

The gunners would remain on Mount Kent for the next two weeks, conducting fire missions in support of all the major battles in the hills around Stanley. As the Falklands winter approached its zenith, temperatures plunged and a relentless wind battered the emplacement.

“Thankfully working kept you warm,” Maj Francis recalls. “At one stage I remember we were firing continuously for three hours – it was vicious stuff.”

From the spent shell casings scattered on the hill, the bitterness of the fighting is clear. While long abandoned, this battlefield is a time capsule, left exactly as it was after the Argentine surrender on June 14.

For these veterans, however, this place is more than a piece of military archaeology. This is a place where they made history, where they played their part in an event of huge significance and where their lives were changed.

“I came to this mountain with boys,” says Maj Francis as the Sea King descends to return the veterans to the modern world. “But I left with men who had a different attitude. And I’m immensely proud of what they did.” ■



Above: Remembering together: Maj (Retd) John Francis and Wg Cdr Andy Lawless on the hillside where their paths crossed 25 years ago

Main picture: Stark reminder: The extraordinary landscapes of the Falkland Islands are a poignant backdrop for visiting veterans as they return to the battlefields of the past



Oceans apart

May 1982: As diplomacy fails, British warships close on the Falklands

Report: Cliff Caswell

THIS month 25 years ago Argentine troops on the Falklands felt the full force of the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force in the shape of a massive tri-Service task force.

May would be when the tide would turn, when enemy targets would be systematically pounded from the skies, a cruiser would be controversially sunk and the landing zones established by the Army and Royal Marines.

But there would be losses too. Critically, five British ships were destroyed and a new terror would haunt the task force – the Exocet missile.

The month opened with the daring Black Buck raids by Vulcan bombers, which were launched from Ascension Island. In a record-breaking mission, the aircraft flew an 8,000-mile round trip to attack the runway at Port Stanley.

In a second thrust, Sea Harriers carried out their own strike on the base as well as opening fire on other enemy targets elsewhere on the islands.

On May 2, the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* was torpedoed and sunk by the British submarine HMS *Conqueror*, with much loss of life. The action sparked heated debate among MPs in Parliament.

In defending the decision to attack, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher maintained that the ship posed a threat and sinking her was the right move.

In an exchange with Leader of the Opposition, Michael Foot, she said the *Belgrano*, which was escorted by two destroyers, carried “very heavy armaments”. Mrs Thatcher added:

“May I make it perfectly clear that the worry I live with hourly is that attacking Argentine forces, either naval or air, may sink some of our ships. Our first duty is to our own forces, who are there on our orders and with our support. We must look after their safety.

“That cruiser and the destroyers posed a very obvious threat to the men in our task force. Had we left it any later it would have been too late and I might have come to the House with news that some of our ships had been sunk.”

As the battles at sea intensified, the Harriers were constantly in action against enemy ground targets and downing scores of aircraft. The Argentine government had been issued with a new warning that any of its military ships or aircraft venturing more than 12 miles from their home coast would be treated as hostile, and the British pilots quickly and clearly demonstrated that they meant business.

On May 9, a pair of Sea Harriers attacked and sunk the Argentine trawler *Narwal*, which had been shadowing the task force, while, at sea, HMS *Alacrity* sent an enemy stores vessel in Falkland Sound to the bottom.

But the Prime Minister’s personal nightmare came true just two days after the *Belgrano* was sunk. HMS *Sheffield* was struck by an Argentine Exocet missile and later sank. The weapon would prove deadly in the weeks ahead, claiming the transport ship *Atlantic Conveyor* on May 25, which was carrying

troop transport helicopters and other military support kit.

HMS *Coventry* was also destroyed on the same day, while HMS *Ardent* was lost on May 21 and HMS *Antelope* was fatally crippled two days later.

The losses, however, did not prevent the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade from establishing a beachhead at San Carlos, which would give the British Forces a crucial foothold on the islands.

The Army gained ground rapidly following the landings. On May 28 troops from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, went into action and reclaimed the settlement of Goose Green. During the fighting the battalion CO, Lt Col H Jones, was killed leading an attack on enemy positions. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

A month of gains culminated with 3 Para recapturing Teal Inlet

while Royal Marines began an advance towards the capital and the mountains around Port Stanley. Taking Mount Kent and Mount Challenger would be crucial in the final battle for the capital.

The war was entering its final weeks, but they would prove to be a bitter time for all. With the worsening winter weather, the battles for the mountains were particularly harrowing. In addition the Army would suffer its worst loss in the campaign in an attack by Argentine aircraft on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram*. ■

‘Our first duty is to our own forces, who are there on our orders and with our support. We must look after their safety’

FALKLANDS TIMELINE

May 1
First Vulcan and Sea Harrier attacks on Falklands

May 2
Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* sunk

May 4
HMS *Sheffield* fatally damaged by Exocet missile

May 7
Argentina warned that warships or military aircraft more than 12 miles from their home coast would be regarded as hostile

May 9
Argentine trawler *Narwal* sunk by Sea Harriers

May 14-15
British raid on Pebble Island destroys 11 Argentine aircraft

May 11
HMS *Alacrity* sinks Argentine stores ship *Cabo de los Estados* in Falkland Sound





We're back: A Sea King ferries Rapier missiles to one of the air batteries high above the Port San Carlos beachhead

Pictures: Paul Haley, *Soldier Magazine*

May 21

Beachhead established at San Carlos; HMS *Ardent* lost; 15 Argentine aircraft destroyed

May 23

HMS *Antelope* fatally damaged; ten Argentine aircraft destroyed

May 24

Some 18 Argentine aircraft downed

May 25

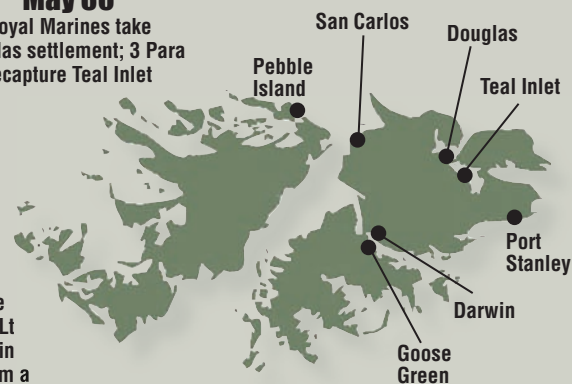
HMS *Coventry* lost; *Atlantic Conveyor* fatally damaged by Exocet missile

May 28

Darwin and Goose Green recaptured; Lt Col H Jones killed in action which wins him a posthumous VC

May 30

Royal Marines take Douglas settlement; 3 Para recapture Teal Inlet



Picture: PA





"Trust me, Senior . . . now would be a very bad time to start your demonstration!"



"The captain was just remarking on your bravery for taking this flight to Buenos Aires when all your mates went Tristar to Mount Pleasant . . ."



"Lost again boss? No change there then!"

Heading South

Chuckle with Chip

For copies of Chip cartoons or caricatures,
email chip@chipwoodcartoons.com



"DADDY!"



"She not only remembered me . . . but reminded me, she wouldn't serve me then either!"

Fit to fight

Pumped-up training programme for Army's PlayStation generation »

Game on: The Army is trialling an enhanced physical development programme to help the least fit infantry recruits get into the best shape possible before embarking on Phase One training



Report: Andrea Webb
Pictures: Mike Weston

RECOGNISING that today's potential soldiers often spend more time on PlayStations than playing fields before joining up, the Army has devised a physical development programme to help the least fit infantry recruits get into shape before they start Phase One training.

A Soldier Preconditioning Course (SPC), developed by the Army Recruiting and Training Division (ARTD) in association with a team of top sport scientists, physical trainers, and rehabilitation professionals, is being trialled at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

This pre-basic training programme specifically targets those recruits who have passed Army selection but whose one-and-a-half-mile run times fall into the lowest 20 per cent of their respective entry groups.

Scientific studies have shown that the least aerobically fit recruits are almost three times more likely to be medically discharged because of injury than those in the top 20 per cent.

With a deliberate emphasis on "pre-habilitation rather than rehabilitation", the course aims to rapidly accelerate recruits' physical fitness and robustness through a progressive three-week programme in preparation for their Combat Infantryman's Course (CIC).

"We are developing young men to go to infantry battalions where physical robustness and fitness is key," Capt (Master at Arms) Ken Carter, APTC, who runs the SPC at Catterick, told *Soldier*. "These individuals have come from civilian life where the importance of physical activity is promoted less than in previous generations."

"This course helps move these young men from the slightly more sedentary lifestyles they have come from into an Army environment which requires its individuals to be fit enough to perform their tasks. The rigours of current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan prove that quite succinctly."

The programme – the first of its kind in the British Army – operates through Fox Platoon (aptly named after Jim Fox, the boy soldier turned pentathlete, who led the Great Britain team to gold at the 1976 Olympic Games).

Comprising three sessions of physical activity each day with appropriate periods of recovery in between, the course also teaches recruits how to remain healthy and avoid injury, develop basic life skills to help them cope with military training and gives them an introduction to Army life and the opportunity to work as part of a team.

Explaining the rationale behind the course's creation, Maj Martin Colclough, APTC, the resident physical training specialist at the ARTD, said: "The Army medically discharges 1,000 people each year – 600 of these are as a direct result of training related injuries."

"We discovered a highly relevant study from the Singaporean Armed Forces, which demonstrated that a four-to-six-week pre-training conditioning course managed to reduce medical discharge rates in initial training by an impressive 55 per cent."

"And after considerable research we decided to design our own course."

"Most of what they do on our course has an aerobic fitness training component to it," he added.

"There's lots of swimming, cycling, circuit training but not very much running. These low impact, moderately intense activities are improving the recruits' aerobic fitness quite considerably in a relatively short period of time."

"On top of that we are also improving their general strength and local muscular endurance."

"This course gives them a physiological leg-up so that when they start their initial infantry training they will be somewhere in the middle rather than at the back of the group."

All members of Fox Platoon are informed at their respective recruit selection centres if they need to attend the course and all are paid as recruits throughout.

Each individual undertakes a physical fitness test (a mile-and-a-half run, press-ups and sit-ups) at the beginning and end of the programme and the results are sent off for statistical analysis.

Although the SPC is only halfway through its ten-course trial, anecdotal feedback from infantry training staff at Catterick has been extremely positive, indicating significant improvements in endurance exercise, performance, upper body and trunk strength, and noticeable weight loss.

According to Fox Platoon instructor Sgt Stephen Dawson, 1 Scots, the course is having the desired effect.

"Physical training in schools isn't what it used to be and many of the recruits have never been pushed like this before," he said.

"Some of these guys will stop well before they have reached their limits so we use heart rate monitors in lessons to show them whether they are working to their full potential or not."

"The course is definitely working and the results are impressive."

"The recruits are leaving us fitter, more determined and more confident than when they first arrived." ■

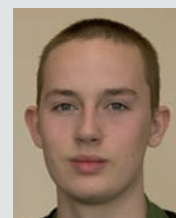
‘The recruits are leaving us fitter, more determined and more confident than when they first arrived’

Pedal to the metal: Fox Platoon recruits and their instructors power their way through a spinning class during the three-week Soldier Preconditioning Course being trialled at the Infantry Training Centre (Catterick)

SPC recruits give their Fox feedback

Rfn Alex Smith, Rifles

I thought this would give me the opportunity to build on my fitness, get a head start in adjusting to Army life, and give me a chance to make friends before starting the Combat Infantryman's Course. I feel a lot fitter, stronger and more confident in myself.





Rfn Quren Cook, Rifles

I would say my fitness levels were pretty poor. My stamina has gone through the roof and my strength has improved. I did a five-and-a-half-mile run the other day – I had never run that far in my life before.



Rfn Emmanuel Forson, Rifles

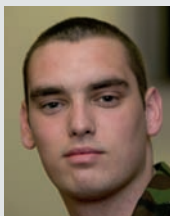
This course has taken me by storm. When we got here it was really intense – doing three sessions a day. At the beginning I didn't understand why we had to go through all this but now I see the value.



Pte Michael Hannah, Scots

My standard of fitness beforehand was abysmal and I made quite a bit of an improvement. I weighed more than 14 stone before and 21 weeks later I'm down to just under 11.

Pte Danny Kerr, Para
I lost more than a stone in the three weeks and I got my run time down by more than a minute. Because of my performance on this course I was allowed to transfer into the Paras.



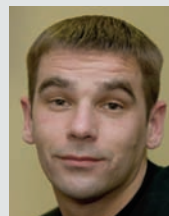
Pte Grant Logan, Scots

I needed to boost my fitness and I jumped at the chance to do this. They definitely put you through your paces but it's worth it. I could feel the improvement after the first week.



Pte John McEwan, Scots

I was labouring in civvie street and training was the last thing I wanted to do at the end of the day. Thanks to this course I am much fitter and I have an idea what the Army is about.





Doomsday weapon: British personnel watch as a mushroom cloud billows over the ocean
Picture: NF Grantham

Fire island

Troops recall their shock and awe 50 years after the UK detonated its first hydrogen bomb high above the Pacific »

Report: Cliff Caswell

It was a moment in time that would be burned into soldiers' memories for the rest of their lives.

At the precise instant of the hydrogen bomb's detonation, when all the forces that lie at the core of the universe were unleashed, they felt the full might of a divine power as it roared across the Pacific with a flash that seared skin and a blast that smashed all in its path.

With their eyes covered, and their backs to the bomb, the troops had never felt or heard anything that compared with this ultimate weapon of mass

destruction. As if being X-rayed, personnel could see the skeletons of their hands through closed eyes as they experienced a flash 24 times brighter than the sun.

"After the detonation, it was as if a baker had opened his oven door," said Doug Hern, a former Royal Navy serviceman, as he reflected on the first hydrogen bomb he

saw detonated on Christmas Island. "The explosion lasted for ages, the mushroom cloud billowing into a mosaic of greys and blacks before it became a smoky ball.

"The conflict of all the elements was extraordinary – you had an explosion, a bright light and the heat, yet there was an ice cap on top of that cloud.

"After the H-bomb detonation I had the realisation that I did not want to see any more of this," he added. "It was five years before I stopped having nightmares."

Doug's memories of the moment his life

changed forever have faded little despite the passing of 50 years. In May 1957, under the codename Grapple, the British conducted their first atmospheric nuclear tests on Christmas Island, experimenting with a force that could wipe out the world many times over. The image of the mushroom cloud became symbolic of both the UK's entry into the thermonuclear era and the spectre of Armageddon that came to define the decades of the Cold War.

For the close-knit group of men who lived through these blasts, however, life would never be quite the same again. Exposure to the all-consuming weapons that would have been at the front line of World War Three had a profound effect on their outlook on the universe. Some found themselves awestruck by the power. Others believed the radioactive environment was responsible for a severe deterioration in

their health – and that of their subsequent children.

But on the landmark anniversary, there is a huge sense of pride and comradeship among the men of the British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association.

Having seen sights that few have ever experienced, theirs is an exclusive club of personnel who lived through an extraordinary era in history.

Coping with the basic living

conditions on Christmas Island was a challenge in itself. Some 9,000 miles away from the UK, a journey that took

more than five days by air in the 1950s, the white coral atoll just 30 miles long was home to troops for more than a year. Temperatures could range from around 80C with a humidity that left clothes sticking to the skin.

"As it was such a small island, you really got to know each other well out there," said David Neale, a former

National Serviceman with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. "When I joined up I had told my superiors that I wanted an overseas posting and have never had any regrets about being there.

"But I suppose none of us had any idea what to expect, so we were probably more cautious than worried about what was involved," he recalled. "They detonated three hydrogen bombs and two less powerful atom bombs while I was on the

island. We'd never seen anything like it before.

"You couldn't look at the actual explosion because you were facing away but it was a hell of an experience. We were so close – the cloud looked just a few miles away."

The experience of seeing thermonuclear explosions had a similar impact on Roland Adams, who was serving with the Royal Engineers. Like his comrades, he was awestruck by the unearthly power of the H-bomb.

After being called up for National Service in 1957, he arrived on Christmas Island in April the following year, five days before the UK's biggest nuclear bomb to date was tested. The three-megaton device was shocking and spectacular.

"We were told that if we did not look away and cover our eyes, the flash would blind us for life," Roland said. "The heat was like somebody putting a blow lamp on the back of your neck and that was the most frightening thing.

"The bomb was so horrific that I couldn't see any government or politician actually using it. It was a deterrent and I remember thinking that we were right to have it."

For some other veterans, however, the billowing mushroom cloud had a huge effect on the mind. After seeing

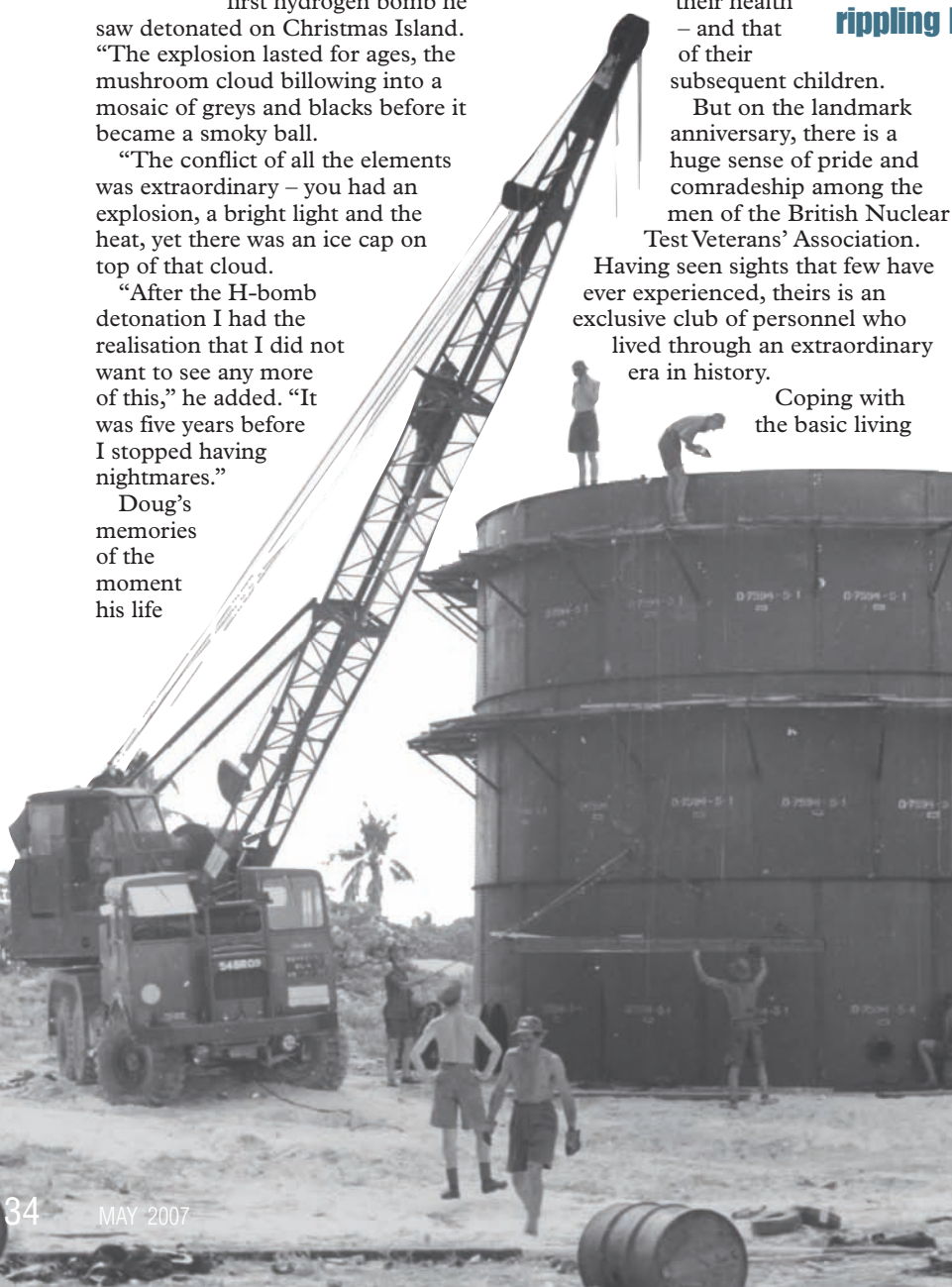


● David Neale

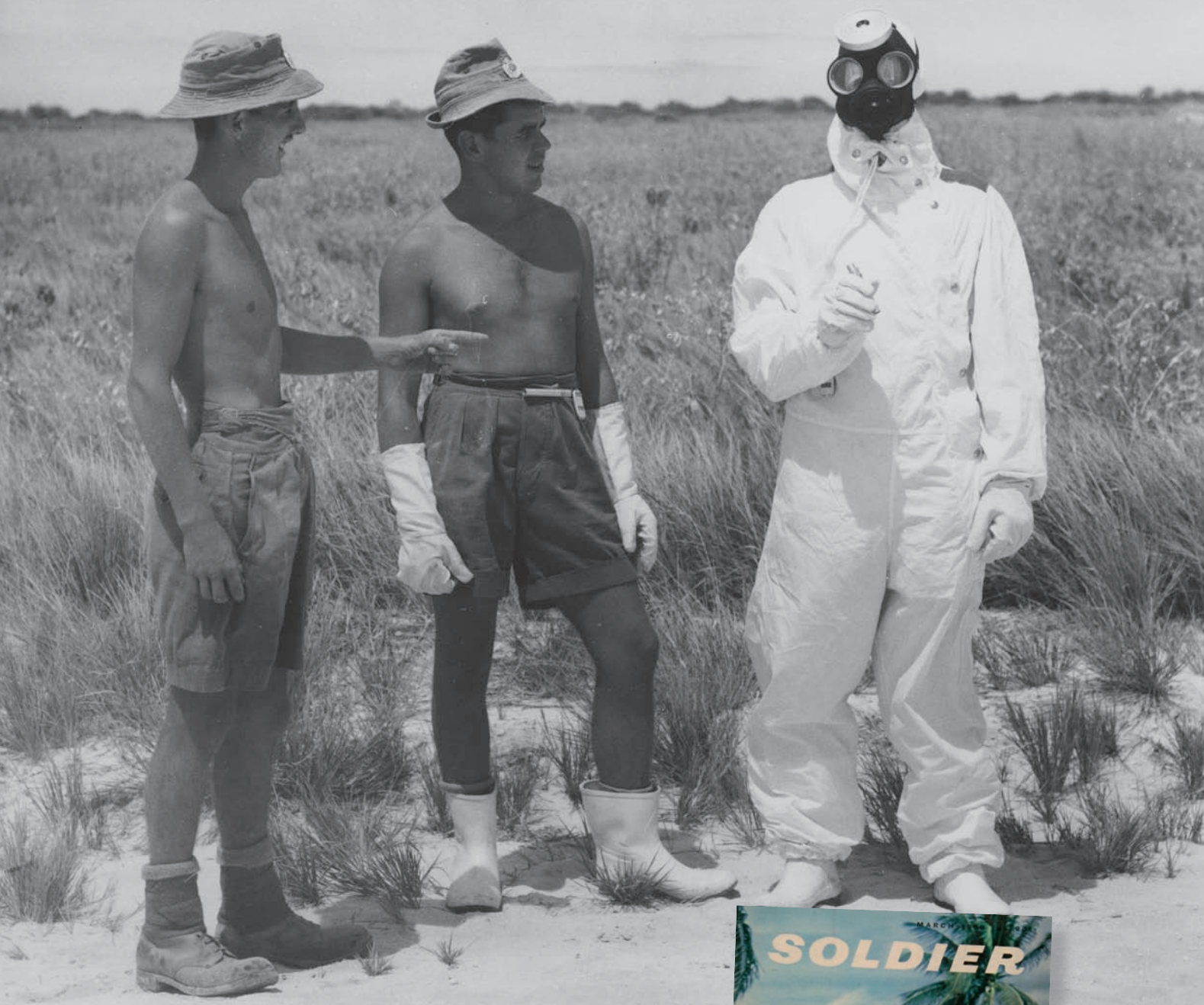
"You could actually see the sound coming towards you because the whole sky was rippling like a pond"



● Doug Hern



● Roland Adams



the ultimate destructive force at work, everything else in the world seemed to pale into insignificance.

This was the experience of Keith Holmes, a civilian contractor with a firm that provided navigational aids, who was sent to the Pacific during the UK's nuclear tests. He admitted being utterly stunned with what confronted him.

"I didn't realise seeing the explosion would have such an effect – even though I had travelled the world it was years before I began to notice nature again," he said. "After I had seen the bomb, nothing impressed me for a long time."

"The heat and the noise were incredible – you could actually see the sound coming towards you because the whole sky was rippling like a pond."

The H-bomb was the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. The spectacle that astonished and horrified the personnel on Christmas Island had the potential to wipe out cities at a stroke, cause millions of casualties and throw Europe back into the Stone Age. These instruments of Armageddon could obliterate the world.

Yet, it could be argued, the development of nuclear weapons ultimately prevented the Cold War from turning hot. With the stakes so high, political and military ambitions were kept in check, a stalemate which preserved the peace until the end of the Cold War.

But whatever the legacy of these weapons, the men of Christmas Island and the British Pacific tests have a unique place in history. They played a front-line role in Britain's nuclear deterrent, working alongside the most dangerous forces man has ever created – and that, in itself, is worthy of high recognition. ■

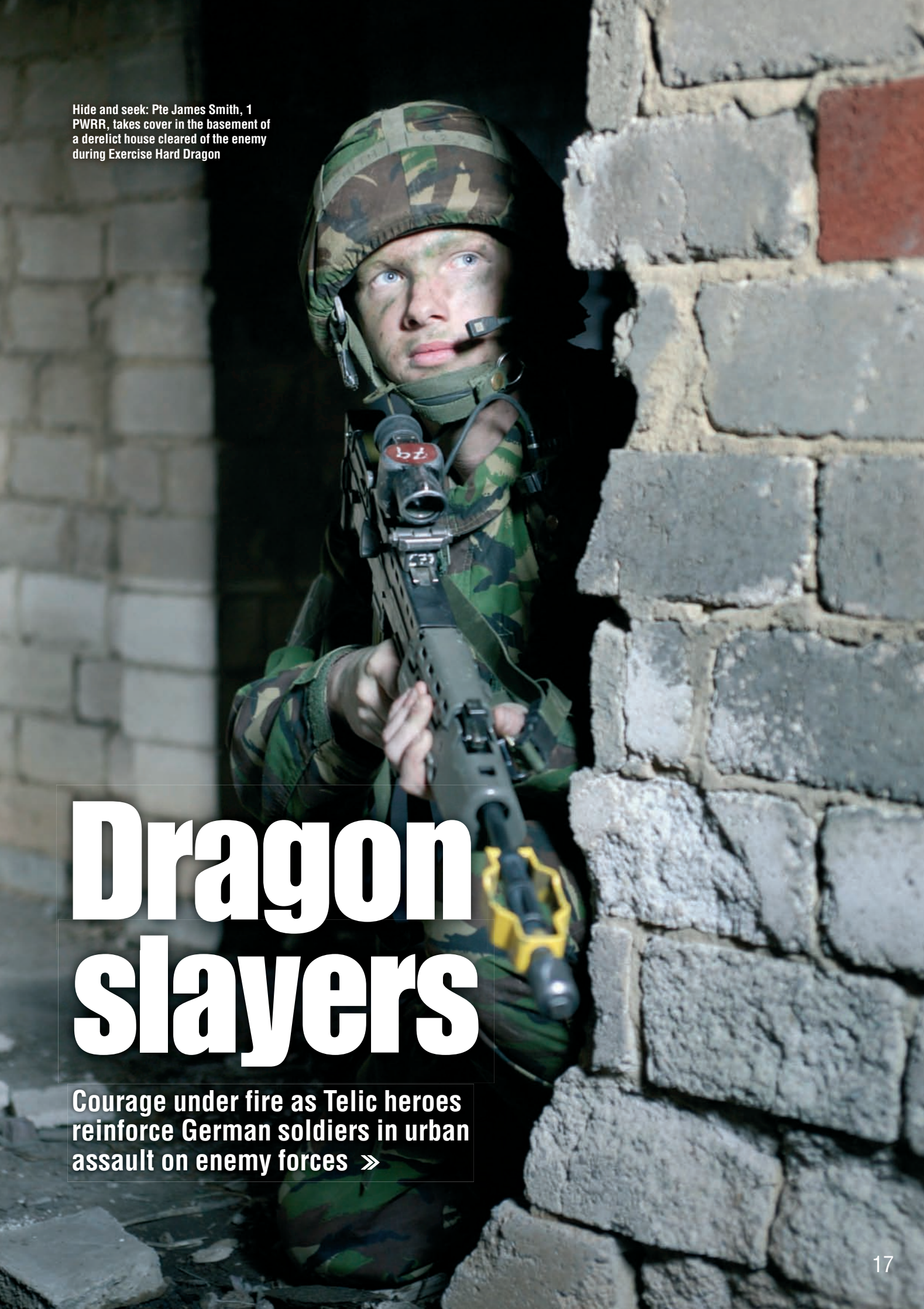
Sappers at work: below left; Royal Engineers built 55 miles of roadway, an airfield, offices and accommodation, laboratories, a hospital, a fuel storage depot and a refrigeration plant
Above: Soldiers try on protective clothing
Right: LCpl W Anderson, RE, on the cover of *Soldier Magazine* featuring the Army on H-bomb Island, March, 1959

Pictures: *Soldier* archive and Mike Weston



See the Army on H-bomb Island online

<http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/flashback/index>



Hide and seek: Pte James Smith, 1 PWRR, takes cover in the basement of a derelict house cleared of the enemy during Exercise Hard Dragon

Dragon slayers

Courage under fire as Telic heroes reinforce German soldiers in urban assault on enemy forces »

In the cooler

Thermal vest could bring cold relief to baked front-line desert troops

Report: Karen Thomas

DECKED out in full desert combat gear, weighed down with several kilos of webbing, lungs slowly roasting in 50-degree heat and still another couple of hours patrolling to go.

But it was not an infantryman facing the prospect of several months battling the onslaught of Iraq and Afghanistan's merciless summer sun.

Instead a human guinea pig, who had volunteered to trial a new piece of kit destined for troops working in extreme heat, was showing signs of irritability after just four hours of being casseroleed in simulated desert temperatures.

As reported in *Soldier* (February), there is a greater awareness of climate-related injuries and extreme heat seriously impairing judgment and ultimately resulting in death.

Now scientists at the University of Portsmouth are testing a new high-tech thermal vest that will keep soldiers comfortable, enabling them to perform arduous tasks more effectively and for longer periods in high temperatures.

Equipment used to cool down astronauts and pilots is being modified and adapted to the needs of troops. Creating a microclimate around just the human body, as opposed to air-conditioning a space shuttle or fighter jet, was proved effective in the 1970s. Air, liquid, ice and wax have all been used to draw and absorb heat from the

static body of a fighter pilot to lower core temperatures. But developing an individual cooling system, which does not need a power supply and is lightweight, for a single mobile unit such as an infantryman has been more challenging.

Soldiers in battle exercise strenuously and their layers of combat clothing impede the body's natural cooling process of sweating.

Portsmouth University researchers realised that assisting the sweating process by creating the cool microclimate next to human skin was the way forward.

And the thermal vest is looking like the best fit.

Trials are continuing in climate chambers that recreate Iraq's temperatures and volunteers don exactly the same kit and loads as a foot soldier on Op Telic, as well as the vest. These volunteers, selected against a desired fitness and age profile required by the Army, then perform demanding activities such as quick pacing on an inclined treadmill.

Professor Mike Tipton, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, told *Soldier*

little could be revealed about the new garment because a US-based military contractor owns the patent.

"The tests involve air-cooled vests that increase the amount of evaporative cooling going on in the microclimate."

"The effects of systems that work with the body's natural processes are felt more quickly but the kit must match the demands of the situation," he said, adding that other factors must be assessed before the vest can be manufactured for use on desert front lines.

"Every piece of equipment has a cost-benefit. For example, how does this vest improve health, comfort and movement against the logistical problems of perhaps needing a power supply?"

Nevertheless, the vests are expected to make it into a soldier's front-line wardrobe within the next two years. ■

Equipment used to cool down astronauts and pilots is being modified and adapted to the needs of troops



Taking the heat out of the battle: Soldiers operating in desert environments could soon be issued with high-tech thermal vests

Frontline back-up

Support weapons have a new priority
as infantry become the powerhouse
of British expeditionary operations »

Silent and deadly: Sniping
is among the suite of battle-
winning skills taught at the
Support Weapons School – and
one which is rapidly attracting
massive interest from soldiers

Aiming high:
Machine-gunners
learn their lethal
trade on rigorous
and demanding
courses at Brecon,
South Wales



Report: Cliff Caswell
Main picture: Graeme Main

AS British soldiers advanced on Taliban positions in Afghanistan's Helmand province, the streak of the rocket in the skies above was a huge confidence boost.

The Javelin missile accelerated slowly, blasting through the air over their heads before plunging into the target with a dull thud. Ultra-accurate and highly lethal, the enemy could do nothing but watch as it slammed into their position.

Elsewhere, more traditional weapons were being put to use. Snipers were silently observing Taliban fighters while machine-gunners tore into the opposition with frightening ferocity and mortars ripped into terrorist emplacements.

It was an awesome display of force. "I remember very well our attack in Musa Qualeh last summer," recalled one member of The Parachute Regiment. "We were assaulting compounds when the Javelin missile was fired from the high grounds. We were able to watch it all the way to the target."

Having been sidelined in the Army's peacekeeping roles of the 1990s, support weapons have taken on a new importance in current theatres such as Afghanistan, where the modern infantryman is bearing the brunt of 1914-style combat. However a new breed

of expert soldiers are swiftly arriving online courtesy of the training provided by the Army's Support Weapons School.

Taking advantage of the best instructors and resources on offer, the courses, which take place on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire and at Brecon, Wales, are dedicated to putting these military support skills firmly back on the map.

"For many years after the end of the Cold War we were involved in peace enforcement and peace-making duties," said Maj Marcus Braithwaite-Exley,

Scots, OC of Direct Fire Division at Brecon's Support Weapons School. "But in Afghanistan the role of support arms has been brought back into sharp focus.

"It is important for the guys that they are backed by specialist weapons

operators. We have great assets in snipers, anti-tank rockets, mortars and machine guns."

Lt Col Richard Latham, 1 R Anglian and CO of the Support Weapons School, shared the view that these skills – and the kit – were now more vital than ever.

"We are using support weapons systems on current operations with a degree of intensity we have not seen for years," he said. "In Afghanistan we are engaging the Taliban at ranges of between 50 metres and two kilometres."

With this in mind *Soldier* paid a visit to the Support Weapons School to see a new generation of specialists being put through their paces with the latest kit. ■

'We are using support weapon systems on current operations with a degree of intensity we have not seen for years'



Javelin

THE latest and most hi-tech of support weapons, Javelin was designed to prey on armour. But it has proved invaluable against Taliban positions in Afghanistan. More than 60 missiles have been fired in theatre and lessons learned from Op Herrick are now being passed on to soldiers heading out on tour.

"The system has proved to be of very high value against targets such as bunkers," said Maj Dom Sweny, PWRR, chief instructor of the Anti-Tank Division at the Support Weapons School. "You can fire two rounds a minute and strike targets outside the reach of machine guns."

The missile, which is paired with a thermal-imaging sight, impressed troops firing it for the first time on Salisbury Plain. "The system is unbelievable," said LSgt Martin Grant, Gren Gds. "I'm deploying to Afghanistan shortly – using the weapon in theatre will be great."



Snipers

A NEW emphasis has been placed on sniping in the shape of a recently refreshed training course. And there is a further boost for the deadly discipline with the promise of a new weapon due to come into service in next year.

Would-be snipers can now expect a rigorous eight-week package in Brecon. Anyone applying must be physically fit, have good powers of observation, strong navigation skills and already be highly capable with a weapon.

The new rifle arriving in 2008 under the Sniper System Improvement programme is currently undergoing trials and is expected to give snipers a lethal edge on the battlefield. Army marksmen currently use the L96 7.62 rifle.

Maj Braithwaite-Exley said other state-of-the-art equipment coming on line would include a laser range-finder, so snipers would not have to just rely on their brains to tell them how far away the target was.



Machine guns

ANOTHER by-product of the First World War trenches, the withering fire of the machine gun has been a prized asset in Afghanistan's close-quarter battles.

Soldiers can lay down hundreds of rounds with their .50 calibre weapons as well as their General Purpose Machine Guns in sustained fire mode.

But they will soon have more lethality in their armoury in the shape of the Grenade Machine Gun, which will deliver an enormous punch.

The thermal-imaging sights, used with the Javelin missile, have also proved a valuable asset to machine-gunners. Without the need for tracer rounds, soldiers can conceal their position more easily and strike the enemy unseen.

Would be machine-gunners embarking on courses in Brecon must be fit and prove themselves adept at carrying heavy equipment over long distances.



Mortars

A NEW 60mm mortar will soon provide an impressive addition to the current line-up, fitting between the 51mm and 81mm weapons already in service.

According to Maj Will Tower, chief instructor of the Support Weapons School's Mortar Division, the new 60mm kit will be pressed into service in Afghanistan.

He said that the latest weapon would give commanders more flexibility to provide every type of firepower that troops needed on the ground.

Maj Tower said: "The mortar is a system that is coming back into vogue. The 60mm weapon can be taken on patrol and used to hit the enemy where it hurts."

A massive asset to current Army operations, mortar fire has proved to be invaluable, particularly in southern Afghanistan, where many thousands of rounds have been fired against Taliban fighters.

House calls

MPs experience life under fire during a visit to British soldiers in Basra

FOUR Members of Parliament – two Labour and two Conservatives – visited southern Iraq recently to experience life in the field with British troops, **writes John Elliott.**

They were there under the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme (AFPS), which is designed specifically for that purpose as fewer and fewer MPs have any personal experience of the Services or the people who man them.

Among the units they visited were The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, The Yorkshire Regiment, The Royal Green Jackets (now The Rifles), The Staffordshire Regiment, The Queen's Royal Lancers, elements of the Royal Engineers, the divisional and brigade HQs and many attached individuals.

They were accompanied by Maj Peter Stitt RRF, who is on the staff of the Directorate of the General Staff. ■

Chris Bryant MP (Lab) Rhondda

SEEING the Shatt al Arab Hotel, Basra Palace and the Old State Building at close quarters, as well as meeting troops on a brief respite from Maysan province, gave a real insight into the complexities of what we are asking British troops to cope with.

The professionalism and courage of our troops almost goes without saying but what really struck me was the determination of people to solve whatever problem was thrown in their way. It's easy to hold forth about the Armed Forces but much better to fight for the Army to always get the resources it



Mark Pritchard MP (Con) The Wrekin, Shropshire

THE professionalism and bravery of all the Armed Forces personnel I met in Iraq was highly impressive. The UK continues to be served by thousands of brave men and women – of whom our country can be rightly proud.

One of the main commitments I made to those I met, including Commonwealth soldiers, is that I would make representations to Defence Ministers about welfare and equipment issues. Since my return, I have tabled more than ten Parliamentary Questions – and will continue to do so. The Government has agreed to change postal rules for Commonwealth soldiers, long overdue.



Rob Fleelo MP (Lab) Stoke-on-Trent South

I SOON learned that morale was best with those who were "giving some back" rather than being at base taking indirect fire.

The guys on patrol, seizing insurgents and taking on the enemy, were very much up for it and

enjoying the job they had trained hard for.

Conditions were mixed. Ablutions were at best average and the Shatt al Arab Hotel was portaloo-city. The dust was horrible but the QRL say the mud was worse.

The tented accommodation, even with the hardening and personal shelters, is not ideal but having been mortared at 0345 I realise there's no such thing as secure. British soldiers and the nation can be proud of what's been achieved and it was a privilege to be there with them.

Edward Garnier MP (Con), below right, Harborough, Oadby and Wigston

WE learn that another soldier has been killed in Basra and it may well be that I met him – it is not just an item on the news but the loss of a young life, a tragedy for his family and for his comrades and I cannot exaggerate my admiration for these young men and women. I met soldiers as young as 18 risking their lives day and night

and having to live in conditions that would disgrace a British prison, but they do so without complaint.

Rockets land on their bases every day and night. There were times when I had to put on my helmet and flak jacket and hit the deck as rockets came in but I felt confident that our soldiers would give as good as they got and better.

Maj Peter Stitt, RRF, who escorted the MPs to Basra

THE visit proved the value of the AFPS. The MPs saw the realities of Army life on operations, including indirect fire attacks.

They were impressed by the warm reception they received and the professional approach of all. After four days with 19 Light Brigade there is no doubt that the AFPS members had a much clearer idea of the character and quality of the British Army.

Escorting officer: Lt Jim Doig AGC and Edward Garnier MP during the AFPS visit



On the edge

Heights make him dizzy, but expeditioner extraordinaire climbs the Eiger

Interview: John Elliott

Main picture: Eyevine/Ian Parnell

HIS expeditions are the stuff of legends, his personal fortitude in the face of life-threatening fate mind-boggling, but the question just had to be put to Sir Ranulph Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes as he prepared for his latest challenge.

How does a 63-year-old man who has a heart condition, suffers from vertigo and is minus fingertips on his left hand (they were amputated, partly by himself, after he was frostbitten during an historic polar trek) intend to climb the terrifyingly sheer 3,970m North Face of the Eiger?

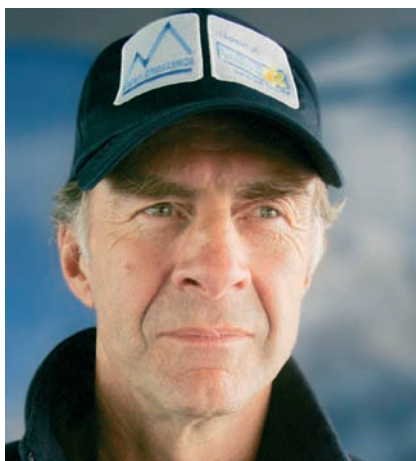
By not looking down and planning carefully is a fair summary of his answer, allied to a punishing fitness regime and the support of top UK climber Kenton Cool and mountain photographer Ian Parnell. And it all paid off handsomely when his incredible four-day climb was completed by mid-morning on March 17.

With an ice axe in each hand – one has a narrowed shaft to accommodate his reduced grip – he reckons he's as good as the next bloke on the slippery stuff, but rock is a different challenge. If there is a difficult hold on his wrong side he's in trouble, so a company in Wales made Sir Ran a Captain Hook-like steel hook which he can push into small cracks to give himself a tenuous grip.

He set out to raise megabucks for the Marie Curie Cancer Care charity fresh from honouring his pledge to collect £2 million for the British Heart Foundation by way of an attempt on Everest in 2005.

He didn't quite make it (severe chest pains 300m from the summit put paid to that) but he still raised the money and earlier this year cut the ribbon on the Healthy Hearts Appeal scanner and research unit at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital.

How do you survive an angina attack on top of the world's tallest mountain? By sucking on glyceryl trinitrate pills (six instead of just the one!) and getting on with it. But then Sir Ran's heart



deserves to be found a place in the Science Museum.

This is a man who ran seven marathons on seven continents in seven days just months after surgeons split his chest open to do an emergency double bypass. He had spent three days in a coma after 11 attempts to “jump start” him with a defibrillator.

In 1962 Ran Fiennes commissioned (from Mons Cadet School – he failed his A levels so couldn't go to Sandhurst) into the Royal Scots Greys, the regiment his father had died commanding in the Second World War.

In Cold War Germany he instructed skiing and canoeing “to try to escape from tank training” and his subsequent secondment to the Special Air Service ended prematurely when he blew up a dam on a film set and was returned to his regiment. Not long afterwards he went on loan service to Oman and spent two-and-a-half years fighting for the current Sultan's father in the Dhofar War – “a wonderful experience”, he says.

Back in civvy street Ran enlisted in the Territorial Army and again joined the SAS, eventually leaving as a captain in 1985. To his eternal gratitude, it was the Special Forces which sponsored his and Charles Burton's ground-breaking 52,000-mile Transglobe expedition on the polar axis, a surface journey never completed by anyone else, before or since.

If you want to know more about Sir

Ranulph's extraordinary expeditions, Google his name and see what comes up on the internet – or better still read some of his many terrific books.

Not for nothing does the *Guinness Book of Records* call him the world's greatest living explorer. The Prince of Wales, on the other hand, described him 20 years ago as “mad but marvellous” after yet another polar triumph (the furthest north unsupported record).

Another fact for you to digest – in 1970 he was short-listed to replace George Lazenby as James Bond, reaching the final six from 200 hopefuls before producer Cubby Broccoli decided he “had a farmer's face” and gave the job to Roger Moore.

And what does he think of the British Army's current operations abroad?

Sir Ran believes the Prime Minister did a “fantastic job” by daring to send troops, on humanitarian grounds, to civil-war hot spots Sierra Leone and Kosovo. “If as a Brit you now go to Sierra Leone, you will be hailed as a great friend of that country.” The same applied to Kosovo.

“Mr Blair is a great friend of the Army and did exactly the right thing in both cases and I seriously believe that was his motive for going into Iraq and I admire him hugely for staying there despite all the unpopularity he has gained as a result.

“I think the British Army is doing a wonderful, wonderful job there and in Afghanistan thanks to Tony Blair holding out against the huge unpopularity as a result.” ■

SIR Ranulph Fiennes hopes that his successful assault on the North Face of one of Europe's scariest mountains will produce a cool £1.5 million for the Marie Curie Delivering Choice Programme.

“Climbing the Eiger will be truly challenging,” he said before he set out, “but with every step that our three-man team takes, I'll know that our efforts will be making a real and tangible difference to the lives of terminally ill people, their families and carers across the UK. I have watched my own nearest and dearest die of a terminal illness and I understand the huge difference to a patient's morale and sense of well-being when they have the choice to spend their last days in the security of their own home.”

Donations to the Sir Ranulph Eiger Challenge can be made via www.justgiving.com/eigerchallenge or by calling 0800 716 146 and you can follow his online diary at www.myspace.com/ranulphfiennes

‘Not for nothing does the Guinness Book of Records call him the world's greatest living explorer’



High achievement: Sir Ran and Kenton Cool near the summit of the Eiger

No credit for this

I WANT to express my disgust at the unrealistic resettlement sum of £534. I know soldiers can use their Enhanced Learning Credit (ELC) and Standard Learning Credit (SLC) to enhance it when resettling, but they can use their ELC at any time and should not have to save it up to supplement their resettlement grant. Besides, not all civilian establishments accept the ELC.

The grant of £534 breaks down to £24.27 a year should an individual serve for 22 years. How can we expect soldiers to transit successfully into civilian life on such an unrealistic amount? For an organisation that prides itself on investing in people it's derisory.

The grant must be overdue a review.
– WO1 M James, Windsor.

Maj Peter Cottrell, Ops SP, DETS(A), replies:

The Individual Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) are intended to help during the final two years of a soldier's career. As part of the Army's comprehensive approach to whole life development, resettlement is viewed as part of a process ongoing throughout a soldier's career, not just at the end of it.

IRTC is not the only source of funding available to help towards a second career.

A soldier can claim SLC to the tune of £175 every year to help towards the cost of qualifications, which in a 22-year career equates to £3,850 of financial support.

In addition ELC gives soldiers access to three payments of £1,000 (£3,000 in all) towards gaining qualifications from accredited training providers.

With planning and preparation soldiers with one eye on their second career can draw down more than £7,000 of support over a 22-year career. They can also access travel and subsistence allowances while undertaking resettlement activities.

There is a comprehensive programme of short university courses, providing, at no cost to the individual, development opportunities to Service personnel. During their resettlement phase, personnel have free access to the Career Transition Partnership consultants, as well as support from the Regular Forces Employment Agency for life.

All of this adds up to a significant investment in individuals by the Army throughout the course of a full career – a level of provision which very few other employers are able to emulate.

Regarding WO1 James's final point, the IRTC was set up in the late 1980s, since when there have been several reviews of, and changes to, the way that resettlement is administered. A tri-Service review of resettlement was carried out in 2001, and the tri-Service Directorate of Resettlement is currently examining closely the whole issue.



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The ABF's prestigious fundraising award, the Carrington Drum, will be presented in June to the unit that has raised the most or come up with the most original fundraising idea. Each year your unit will have the opportunity to win the solid silver drum, which will come to represent what the Army as a whole does for its charity. For further details, visit www.armybenfund.org/carrington.html

Call 0845 2414820 or visit www.armybenfund.org

'Late' claims

I SERVE in the United Kingdom and can go to college in the evenings. In December 2005, I had all the forms signed and sanctioned so I could attend a course.

I had to pay for it, then recoup the money when the course was complete.

The course finished on March 22 last year and I submitted the paperwork in April, after I received the certificate, to reclaim my money from the Standard Learning Credits (SLC) I am entitled to each year.

Then I was told I could not claim again for the next year because it went through after April 1.

Why, when the forms were authorised before this date do the funds come out of the next financial year's budget?

I was told that if I had submitted the pass certificate earlier I might have got away with being able to claim again this year. Some flexibility would be appreciated. Having authorised my course why did those who control the purse strings not budget for it? – **Name and address provided.**

Maj Peter Cottrell, Ops SP, DETS(A), replies:

SLC is an educational allowance of up to £175 that can be claimed once every year and the DIN (2006DIN06-130) states in para 12 that "the refund is to be made on completion of the course . . . on production of evidence of satisfactory attendance throughout or of a certificate of completion from the institute concerned".

If a course finished on March 31, it would not be possible to submit the paperwork for payment in the same financial year and the payment would have to be made in the following financial year.

In this case the soldier was poorly advised and awaited the arrival of his certificate rather than presenting proof of course completion to his AEC. If he had done the latter the claim would have been submitted in time. As a one off, HQ DETS(A) will allow this SLC, without prejudice to any subsequent claim. The soldier in question should contact me at HQ DETS(A) on 01980 618711.

Remember that SLC is not an entitlement and the DIN should be read before any application is submitted.

Eyes and ops

Try harder to retain good guys

LIKE many serving soldiers I am short-sighted, which means I have to wear glasses or contact lenses.

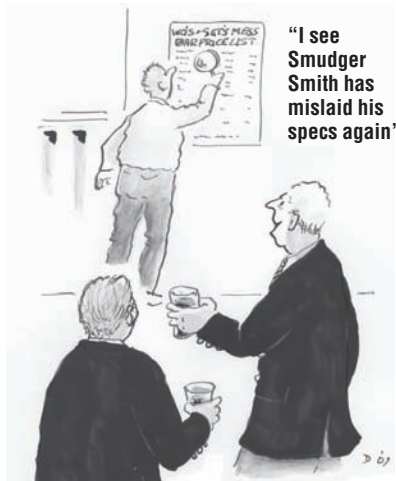
When deployed I have to take extra pairs of spectacles, contact lenses and the solutions to clean them. I am sure many people in the Forces would like to know whether we are allowed to get laser eye treatment to rectify our eyes.

Can someone please provide clear advice on this matter? – **SSgt D R Smith, Op Telic.**

Defence Medical Services Department replies: Thank you for your letter. Joint Service Publication 346 Chapter 4, published on the Defence Medical Services intranet site, currently contains the policy on Refractive Error Corrective Surgery.

The surgery may be considered suitable for serving personnel for surgical correction of myopia or hypermetropia on an individual basis. However, intrusive surgery for personnel is not to be carried out privately without consultation with a defence ophthalmologist.

These procedures are not approved for applicants to certain specialist employment groups (eg aviation, diving, airborne etc) unless specifically approved by the single Service employing authorities for these special duty personnel.



It should be emphasised to any individual contemplating these procedures that there is a risk of deterioration in visual function following such procedures.

Unless approved as necessary for Service reasons, all private surgical and aftercare costs, together with the consequences of any post-operative adverse complications, or failure to comply with the above criteria, will be borne by the individual. This may result in a change in medical grade or discharge. If in doubt speak to your unit medical officer or chain of command for more advice.

HAVING seen high-calibre individuals leave my unit, I'm surprised more effort was not made to retain their services.

Most signed off because they were disillusioned with the Army and with this unit's poor man management.

The RSM, who is also our "retention officer", told each of them the same thing: "You have obviously considered the options so here are your papers."

Not much effort to "retain" there, then. All garrisons should have a retention officer who is not part of the unit so failings can be highlighted and not covered up – which would give us a better shot at retaining the quality people who are now quitting the Army. – **Name and address supplied.**

Maj Trudi S Bailey, DETS(A), replies: Units have a Regimental Career Management Officer (RCMO) with a remit to help retain and, if appropriate, give advice about transfer opportunities for those who express a desire to leave the Army. There are also Individual Education and Resettlement Officers (IEROs) at Army Education Centres who can be accessed at any time during a career to discuss personal development and future career options.

The IEROs are not in any unit's chain of command and can advise on transfers, staying options and leaving.

What normality?

I AM serving in Ballykelly Station and my wife and children are living in married quarters.

Thanks to the return to normality in Northern Ireland, I was told that our rent would rise in April to the same as that of postings on the mainland.

If this is the case, will the fence around the quarters be removed? Will the postman be able to deliver to my door? Will I be able to shop where I like? Normal? I think not. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies:

Normalisation means that the current abatement of charges for SFA will cease on July 31 and charges will rise to the same level as those paid in GB with effect from August 1 (not April 1).

The security perimeter fence around Ballykelly is not unique to Northern Ireland – there are many locations in the rest of the UK where married quarters are

inside security fences. I live behind the wire and my wife enjoys some of the frustrations you highlight.

NI also has a specific allowance package – NIRS, NI journeys and NI long weekends – that recognises it is different to the rest of the UK, including the security restrictions that affect soldiers and their families.

HQNI is also working with Royal Mail to enable delivery of mail inside the wire.

Finally, while Ballykelly is not well served by local shops, Londonderry city centre is in bounds between 0800 and 1800 daily (though there are security guidelines).

Using the Naafi

READING Sgt Weddell's problems of using the Cyprus Naafi (April edition) even though he had an ID card infuriated me.

If he was an American serving soldier he could use US Army facilities throughout the world (including the tax-free PX in Germany), even after leaving the service. – **Name and address supplied.**

Asleep on the job

I REFER to "You dozy lot" (April). Just how dozy are you and your staff to think your readers are dozy? Are you falling asleep on the job? This article would make a good bedtime story. Nice try, but we're not caught out. – **Alec Coleman, Wickford, Essex.**

PS...

I WAS interested in the letter "My warrant was a let-down" (Feb). I received my warrant in 1968. It is a work of art with red embossed writing and has pride of place in my study. I think the chap who signed it was named Healy [later Lord Denis Healy], who at least was an ex-soldier. – Len Danby, former WO, Royal Air Force.

More letters at **TALKBACK** online
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/mail_archive/index.htm

Too old for TA at 40

I RECENTLY left the Army after 22 years of exemplary service in the rank of acting WO2.

Two of my many appointments were as a Permanent Staff Instructor (PSI) to Territorial Army units.

I served with many good TA soldiers, some of whom were well into their 50s.

But when I applied to join the TA in the North of England I was told I was too old at 40.

I am as fit as I ever was and more so than most TA personnel I have served with. I am an instructor in a wide range of activities and have a wealth of technical and operational experience. In addition, the Army invested lots of money training me to Bowman systems manager level.

I am also willing to go on operational tours, so it seems strange that the TA



"Ignore him, Cedric, that one's been pestering us all week"

can't find a job for me. – **Name and address supplied.**

Maj John Varley, Land Pers PS TA, replies: As

far as current regulations are concerned you are over age for enlistment into most arms and services in the TA. However, under the terms of Annex C to Chapter 5 of TA Regulations, the upper age limit for enlistment may be waived on the authority of the divisional or district commander or the commander of a TA/CVHQ.

You should write to the commanding officer of a local TA unit of your former corps, enclosing a CV outlining your former service and qualifications, and ask if the CO would be willing to sponsor you as a special enlistment.

Regardless of your former experience and qualifications, you should be aware that a TA unit may only enlist you if a suitable vacancy exists. The CO also has to consider whether the introduction of an ex-Regular SNCO would adversely affect the career aspirations of serving TA SNCOs and WOs.

Good conduct and undetected crime

I JOINED the Army in September 1977 and am now on the Long Service List. Not being a recipient of the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, I have followed this topic with interest.

I have not given up hope of wearing the medal on my uniform, but am at a disadvantage because when I enlisted I was not aware I would be given a medal if I kept a clean conduct sheet.

Somebody must just have forgotten to tell me.

I wonder what a solicitor today would make of a charge of "assault to an unknown person". It would be interesting, perhaps under the Freedom of Information Act, to find out how many serving personnel who have completed 15 years undetected crime have not received the medal.

It is amusing that so many officers (Aug 2005) and senior ranks who do not hold the medal seem to have had such successful careers. I have met several warrant officers with rap sheets who have received the medal at the request of their commanding officers – or have I been misinformed?

It was also interesting to read the article (Sept 2005) on the lowering of standards from 18 to 15 years and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, which does allow personnel to live down their convictions.

I have read and re-read Queen's Regulations but am still at a loss to know, if when leaving the Army, I will receive my LS and GC Medal.

Maybe it is time to consider a change of eligibility. Let's put the past behind us and wear our medals with pride. Just don't get me started on the bling debate (March). – **WO2 W M (Ski) Okopskyj, Senior Recruiter, Workington.**

I didn't get full 5% rise

I WAS commissioned as a Late Entry (LE) officer after 21 years in the ranks and told that I would receive a minimum five per cent pay increase over and above that earned in my previous rank. But when I received my pay statement my increase of five per cent fell between two pay levels and I reverted to the lower amount, an increase of 4.55 per cent. What are the rules? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: The aspect of the PS10 letter you refer to was misleading – it did not give the full facts. You were misinformed, for which I am sorry.

What the letter should have explained is that under the Army Pay Warrant, on commissioning, an LE officer's pay will

normally commence on the LE officers' pay spine at an Increment Level (IL) appropriate for the length of service they completed as an Other Rank (OR).

However, to ensure there is a tangible uplift in pay on LE commissioning, a check calculation is done by taking the soldier's OR pay immediately prior to commissioning and adding five per cent.

If this figure is above the IL associated with the length of service, it is rounded up or down to the nearest IL.

You were rounded down and hence received a raise of 4.55 per cent. From April 1, in accordance with new JPA regulations (JSP 754), the check calculation will always be rounded up to the next higher IL. We will correct and re-issue the LE officer's Pay and Pension letter.

More letters at **TALKBACK** online

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/mail_archive/index.htm

READ more contributions to the bling debate on our website:

AS one of your correspondents put it "bling is a bit of an insult". I think the way the UK has awarded gongs to Service personnel has always been mean and unfair, so if someone wishes to purchase commemorative gongs, why not? – Norman Horton.

WITH all this nonsense about bling medals, is it not time this country recognised what soldiers go through when in action and issue a War Wound Medal to those unfortunate enough to be injured, especially as there are now so many of them? – Jack Kneller.

A Ps of my mind

Forward planning is essential if our housing stock is to be improved

THE old Army adage of the seven Ps – prior planning and preparation prevent a p*** poor performance – has been at the forefront of my mind this month, particularly during the recent media frenzy about the decision to make an exception for the Service personnel detained by the Iranians to sell their stories to the media.

How refreshing it was to hear a Government Minister admit that he had “made a mistake”. But I do wonder why decisions are made which are subsequently changed because of media pressure and popular opinion.

THE need for forward planning was emphasised in many of the recommendations in the recent National Audit Office’s report on *Managing the Defence Estate*, including those relating to Service Families Accommodation (SFA).

The report stated, damningly, that, **“unless more resources can be found, a significant number of Service personnel and their families are likely to be housed in poor quality accommodation for 20 years or more”**.

It went on to say that Defence Estates (DE) doesn’t actually know how long it will take to upgrade the majority of SFA to Standard 1 for Condition, or how much it will cost, until a detailed assessment of the condition of the housing stock is completed.

This key task is currently underway; hopefully the shortage of DE quantity surveyors – which (according to the

report) is partly because DE isn’t paying competitive rates to recruit and retain them – will not delay the completion of this survey which is vital in planning for essential improvements.

AS usual it all boils down to money and it can’t have helped DE that the new seven-year maintenance contract with MODern Housing Solutions for SFA – which is worth around £580 million – had so many teething problems that an additional £20 million had to be injected in its first year.

The Army Families Federation is still receiving reports of how the new system is failing families and, although things have improved considerably since the start of the contract, this is of little comfort to those experiencing problems now.

AFF continues to monitor this issue and to press for changes where necessary.

PLANS are all well and good but they’re only useful if they are well resourced and flexible enough to adapt to changing situations.

The Armed Forces’ Pay Review Body report drew attention to the fact that high levels of operational commitments continue to exceed current Defence Planning Assumptions. It stated that the Armed Forces were resourced to sustain one “medium scale” and two “small scale” operations but that it had operated above this level for the last five years.

Because of these commitments

soldiers now work an average of 47 hours a week, which is only one hour less than the maximum recommended by the EU Working Time Directive and nearly ten more than the average full-time UK civilian worker.

The report also said that nearly 15 per cent of soldiers were in breach of Harmony Guidelines, which state they should have no more than 415 days of involuntary separation over a 30-month period. All this has a marked effect on the quality of life for soldiers’ families.

I LOOK forward to the Conservative Party’s Armed Forces Families Manifesto, which intends to ensure that policies are in place to “improve the lives of personnel and their families”, particularly after Liam Fox, the Shadow Defence Minister, said: “The Government has an obligation to ensure

our Forces and their families are given a decent quality of life. While personnel are away on operations the last thing they want to have to worry about is the state of accommodation for their families back home.”

What are the odds that it

will agree to ring fence the estimated £750 million to bring all SFA up to Grade 1 for Condition or that it will suggest the setting up of a new sub-committee to assess what is needed? I think we know the answer to that one.

I leave you with another quote from the Shadow Defence Minister which I hope will not come back to haunt him after his party’s manifesto is published: “The Armed Forces are crying out for action, not just warm words.” ■



A personal view from Catharine Moss, Editor of the AFF Families Journal

“Nearly 15 per cent of soldiers were in breach of Harmony Guidelines”

Keith’s column offers you a confidential way to tackle debt – and it won’t cost you a penny

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

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



Small print

MANY people find they have drifted into debt without realising it, let alone knowing why.

Not long ago lenders were able to get away with adverts offering credit on terms that

seemed too good to be true. Their promotional interest rates were misleading and applied to a fraction of their customers.

Then there were the offers of free credit – often with tough conditions attached. Fortunately consumer and political pressure mounted and regulations have been brought in which mean lenders’ adverts have to be much more transparent.

But it is not all good news. Because of the debt epidemic [more than 5,300 new people are seeking help every day] a range of organisations have sprung up. Many are genuine; others less so.

Several large providers of Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVA) have been reprimanded by the Advertising Standards

Authority for stating that clients could get more than 75 per cent of their debts written off when the numbers were much smaller.

Don’t let this warning put you off asking for help. You can get free debt help and support on 0800 1381111 or from Citizens Advice.

If you would prefer to pay for advice going down the IVA route may be the right thing to do. Just make sure you know all your options before you decide on the best way forward.

As the adverts of the debt counsellors and IVA providers become more transparent this will be much easier to do – thankfully.

**0800 1381111 or
www.creditaction.org.uk**

NO. 786

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

WIN £100



TEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 786, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by May 31.

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

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

March competition (No 784): First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **B Milner, Erdington, Birmingham**. **LCpl M R Fakalogologo**, 23 AES Sqn, 28 Engr Regt, Hameln and **LCpl R R Komaiyasa**, 11 GS Sqn, 12 LSR RLC, Gütersloh each win a £25 gift voucher. The ten differences were: Monkey's foot; rivet on gun carriage; guard on tower; sergeant's stripes; elephant's tail; elephant driver's whip; wheel spoke; left hand medal on soldier's chest; badge on drum; soldier's belt.



Winner of our March competition (inset)

THERE were several excellent contenders for the March prize, but in the end CSgt Si Reeves RM, Specialist Training Division at the Defence School of Transport, got the nod for his caption: "The cutbacks in budgets meant Jedi Knights had to share one light sabre and direction finder between four".

We also chuckled at "I told him we should have gone to Specsavers" from Keith Chapman of Glasgow, and "Flaws in the Army's attempt to reduce its carbon emissions by cutting the number of tanks only became apparent when the RTR deployed on operations" from Carl Kurstein of Welwyn Garden City.

Maj R A James in Bielefeld also picked up on the RTR theme with "It was no use – the tankies had camouflaged their tank so well even the officer couldn't find it". Cynical SSgt R Hall, in MoD Main Building, suggested



"Troops would travel for miles in an effort to find the nearest JPA terminal", while SSgt M Turner of 33 Fd Sqn, 25 Engr Regt, had similar thoughts with "I know the JPA terminal for the regiment is around



The White Helmets couldn't understand why their fan base eroded after Health and Safety officers forced them to switch to four-wheel vehicles

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our December 1960 issue and send it to us by May 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *The Eagle in the Sand*, Simon Scarrow's new historical adventure set on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. (Headline, £17.99.)

here somewhere". Best of the rest was "I know we are late for the officers' baton race, chaps, but I'm having problems locating the stadium" from SSgt C Kitto, MT NRPS, 562 Tpt Sqn RLC (V), Southall.

Bulletin board

Defence directory

Army Benevolent Fund: 020 7591 2000

Army Welfare Information Service: 01722 436569/436461; www.army.mod.uk/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gt.net

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

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

Family Escort Service: 020 74639249

Forces Pension Society: 020 78209988

Gulf Veterans Association: 0191 2301065

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

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

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group): 01666 824709

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700) 01482 808730; 24-hour helpline 01482 833812; www.ngvfa.com

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0207 321 2011; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 717202/718484; www.rbli.co.uk

Ex-Service Homes Referral Agency (ESHRA): 0207 8394466; www.eshra.com

St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 7235021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association) Falklands conflict veterans: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

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

Veterans' Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

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

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

Reunions

CC961 2 Platoon: The Foxy Ladies reunion, May 6. Contact Spanner on 07799 625941 or email annadelves@gmail.com

Infantry Boys Bn and Infantry Junior Leaders Bn: First reunion (since Oswestry closed in 1975) to be held on May 19 at Oswestry Rugby Club, Park Hall, Oswestry. Juniors, staff invited. Call Mike Day on 07967 785310 or 01259 743713.

RAMC Operating Theatre Technician/ODP: Reunion to be held May 19, any era Regular, Reserve or National Service welcome including partners. Contact Ken Hannah on 01733 453462 or email ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk

669 Squadron AAC: Coyote Dinner for former 669 Squadron members, May 27 at Wattisham. Email Michael Pimm at michaelpimm@hotmail.co.uk or ring 07830 130884.

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment: Reunion at Worcester Rugby Club from 1200, Jun 3. Drumhead service and march-past. Contact Maj (Retd) Mike Green, RHQ, WFR, Norton Barracks, Worcester WR5 2PA.

C (251 Sunderland) Medical Squadron (formerly 251 Fd Amb): Third reunion on Jun 16 at TA Centre, Dykelands Road, Seaburn, Sunderland SR6 8DP, starts 1830. Ex-members welcome. Contact Graeme New on 07769 948685 or graemenew@btinternet.com

Falklands 25th anniversary: Parade, church service and march-past at Sheerness on Jun 24. If you have a standard to parade or wish to attend, contact Brian Lyons, SSAFA Forces Help, 7 Lynmouth Drive, Minster-on-Sea ME12 2HS or email sheppy.div@ssafa.org.uk

Medical Support Unit, HQ Hereford Garrison: Past and present reunion, Jun 30. Ring Andy on 01432 357311 ext 2918, quote "MSU Reunion".

Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment: Annual pilgrimage to Crich on Jul 2. Remembrance service starts at 1500, gates close at 1430. Contact Maj (Retd) M J Green, RHQ, WFR, Norton Barracks, Worcester WR5 2PA.

Royal Pioneer Corps: Association reunion on Jul 6-8, Bisceter. Contact Norman Brown on 01969 360694 or email pioneers@rpca.fsnet.co.uk

144 Para Medical Squadron/23 Para Field Ambulance: Annual reunion past-and-present dinner will be held at the TA Centre, Hornsey, London, Jul 7. Contact Capt Roy Hatch on 0208 341 3664 or 07730 977989.

723 (CS) Kings Squad RM 1959-60: Fourth reunion to be held at Chesterfield, Derby, Jul 8 at 2000. Contact Taff Prichard on 02920 790233.

10 Regt RCT: Reunion in Sept in Preston/Blackpool area. For details email Stephen Sutton stephensutton_2@hotmail.com

Searchline

Does anyone know **William Alfred Jewell** RM, 44th Commando, 3rd Bn RM from 1940 to 1946? Contact Nicki Pool by email at nicki@njpassociates.com

In August 1946 the town of Riccione (Rimini) in Northern Italy awarded its freedom to two British Army officers, **Col J Y Calwell** and **Capt Cleaves RE**. The town council is trying to trace them, their relatives or heirs to invite them to Italy to attend a ceremony in their honour. Contact Mr Renzo Bagli by email at cultura@comune.riccione.rn.it

A researcher is trying to trace the life and career of his uncle, **A/Capt David Gavin Balls**. He served with 1 Independent Company, Norway and 2 Special Service Battalion, 1940-41; 9 Army Commando from 1941-44 and was OC 3 Troop, 9 Commando when he was killed in action in Italy. Contact Neil Livingstone by email at neil_livingstone@yahoo.co.uk

Did you serve in Germany between 1945 and 1949?

A German documentary is being made covering the relationships between the German population and the British Forces. If you have memories of this time and would like to share them contact Mr K Moore, 5 Kings, 2 T Force OCA (Leipzig), The Granary, Church Road, Bacton NR12 0JP.

A new **Commando Veterans Association** has formed and is currently seeking lost comrades. The CVA have taken over the good work that had been www.commandoveterans.org

Lloyd Davis is trying to trace veterans who served with his father **Sgt Ewart William (George) Davis REME**, 1941-1947 with 408 Gt Coy, 674 Gt Coy, 591 and 584 Coy in Iraq. Contact Mr Davis on 01296 331755 or email sublloyd@gotads1.co.uk

Does anyone know **Phillip Michael Briggs**, possibly known as **Cullum McCloud**? His mother is seeking his whereabouts. Is he still in the Army? Contact Mrs Lynn Briggs on 0161 861 9504.

The Indian village of **Naini Tal** is trying to trace the relatives of **Capt F C Ravenscroft**. He was the station staff officer from 1939-46. Naini Tal village still remembers him and would like to convey their wishes to his relatives. Contact Dr B C Pandey by email at bcpandy0@sifyu.com

Competitions

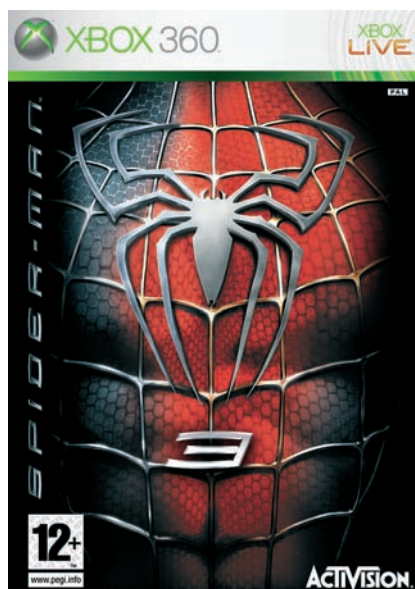
Sniper Elite Playstation 2 game winners: Spr S A Garbett, 39 Engr Regt, Waterbeach; Mr G Tait, St Boswells, Melrose.

Spear of Destiny Book winners: G Drew, Sedbury, chepstow; Maj Quince, BFPO 655; SSgt I Barraclogh, BFPO 38; D Montgomery, Ballyclare, County Antrim; Ms S Jackson, Great Barford, Bedfordshire.

Capcom S-Okami, Playstation 2 game and T-shirt winners: M F Ward, Stoke, Coventry; G W Seatter, Wealdstone, Middx; R E Smith, Preston, Lancs.

Games

M A Y R E V I E W



King of swing: Advanced previews of Spider-Man's latest all-action video game outing were highly promising



Surfing the web

Arachnid superhero sticks up for freedom in latest console movie tie-in

Report: David Hedley and Cliff Caswell

SWINGING back into action to coincide with this month's blockbuster-to-be, Activision has rolled out the video game incarnation of *Spider-Man 3* in a blaze of publicity on the Xbox 360.

Following hot on the heels of the two previous gaming success story, players now have the chance to don the Lycra once again and swing around the streets of Manhattan in a bid to zap villains and curb crime.

But this time life does not end in the urban jungle. Unlike previous titles in the series, Spidey's first outing on the new generation of consoles allows players to venture deep below ground to a labyrinth of sewers and subway tunnels. These depths are host to some of Marvel's grimmest villains as well as presenting hazards such as toxic waste, oncoming trains and steep drops.

From the advanced previews shown to *Soldier*, initial gaming impressions

of *Spider-Man 3* are highly favourable, with plenty going on to hold the interest. Graphics and sound are first rate, while would-be superheroes have the opportunity to play the game on their own terms, either as a free-roaming crime fighter or in missions to advance their progress.

There are around ten different storylines accompanying the game's main plot, which closely mirrors that of the movie. Other interesting touches include interactive cinematic cut scenes, which continue the action while sections of the game are loading.

These usually take the form of fight sequences in which the player has to match a series of key presses displayed on the screen. It is a simple approach but it avoids the tedium of breaks in play and provides more control over the hero, who is voiced, as in the film, by actor Toby Maguire.

The environments are beautifully constructed too. The city is a vast, sprawling metropolis with towering

buildings and streets teeming with pedestrians and traffic. Players have total freedom of movement to venture up the peaks of the skyscrapers or dive to the bustling roads below.

As in the comics and movies, however, Spidey tends to have a love-hate relationship with the media and the general public and how the player behaves around town affects how the hero is received on his rounds.

The overall result is a satisfying blend of beat-em-up and platform gaming action. *Spider-Man 3* is challenging for hardcore gamers while providing entertainment for more casual individuals, who can wander around the city in the style of *Just Cause*, *Saints Row* and *Grand Theft Auto*, albeit with much less violence and significantly more finesse.

The combat system feels complicated to begin with and takes time to master, but once this is achieved there is a range of moves that will satisfy any player looking to teach both the common-or-



garden bank robbers, as well as the robust super villains, a lesson they won't forget.

The more outrageous moves include using Spidey's web to string up a criminal by all four limbs, leaving him hanging from streetlights for the police to arrest. Or, if your style is more direct, you can perform a long combo to ensure your enemy swiftly tumbles to his doom.

Life gets even more interesting in the later stages of the game with a new level of trouble – and opportunity – for the hero.

Through no fault of his own, Spidey is mysteriously bestowed with some bizarre alien capabilities. These make him both stronger and faster and, as those familiar with the comic will know, his dark side comes to the fore.

The newly-enhanced Spider-Man is clad in a menacing black suit, giving him a range of extra abilities and enabling him to work on an even grander scale.

With all the novelties of a comic book-turned-console actioner, die-hard fans will appreciate the intricate details of the Marvel universe woven into the game while there is plenty of interest for those with even a passing interest in the web-spinning superhero. Spidey is certainly worth a look. ■



300 March to Glory, PSP

BASED on the latest film and graphic novel of the same name, *300 March to Glory* makes the transition to video game form with aplomb. Essentially an ancient warrior beat-em-up, players step into the sandals of a Spartan commander with a mission to eliminate a legion of darkness. There's plenty of sword and spear action, and skill and timing is needed to take out enemies who will fight back viciously. Some outstanding graphic novel-style cut scenes add to the overall atmosphere and flavour of the game. This one will fill a fair few hours.



UEFA Champions League 2006-2007, Xbox 360

THE latest to enter the burgeoning football games market, *UEFA Champions League* puts players in control of the cream of European clubs. And it does not disappoint in the slightest. EA Sports has produced another winner with superb graphics, slick playability and some fitting music for the Euro footie scene. Some thoughtful touches include an intelligent commentary, something sorely lacking in video game soccer, plus crowd noise and chants that reflect the teams on the pitch. A definite winner.



Silent Hunter 4: Wolves of the Pacific, PC

SUBMARINE simulations have fired the imagination ever since the release of Microprose's *Silent Service* in the mid-1980s. Now French software publisher Ubisoft has seized the initiative with *Silent Hunter 4: Wolves of the Pacific*. This beautifully packaged collectors' edition of an acclaimed title includes a recognition manual with technical specs on the vessels featured in the game plus a CD of the original soundtrack. Those with a passion for sinking vast tonnages of enemy shipping should be kept amused with this for a while.



Resistance: Fall of Man, PS3

THE launch of the long-awaited PS3 might have received acres of space in the press but how it will fare against the Xbox 360 is still in question. And if it continues to spawn games as run-of-the-mill as *Resistance: Fall of Man*, the question could continue for some time yet. A futuristic blaster in the style of *Call of Duty*, the title looks great and gameplay is suitably slick. But for those expecting miracles from the new technology, there is nothing here that has not been done as well, if not better, elsewhere.



WIN: Stalker PC game

THE contaminated area around the Chernobyl nuclear power station is the setting for this first-person shooter, which was previewed by *Soldier* in March. This month we have teamed up with software publisher THQ in a competition to offer three copies of the game. To stand a chance of winning, simply tell us in which year the infamous Chernobyl disaster happened. Was it a) 1966, b) 1976, or c) 1986? Write your answer on the back of a postcard and send it to the address at the front of the magazine. Usual rules apply. Closing date is May 31.



Call of Duty: Roads to Victory, PSP

ACTIVISION'S hugely successful *Call of Duty* franchise makes a decent debut on Sony's handheld console. If you have not yet had your fill of Second World War action, there's more here with three campaigns and a plethora of missions to deal with. The game is well presented all round but, as seems to be the case generally with first-person shooters on the PSP, the controls are fiddly and can be difficult to master. Having a gun that locks on to your enemies helps mitigate the problems but this is a game that is best suited to full-size consoles.



Second hit, above: The new album promises more refined and varied tracks performed with greater confidence

Pause for thought, right: Maximo Park put life's little dramas into perspective against Iraq and Afghanistan's conflicts



Maximo effect

Fivesome throw off indie label with harder edge live rock

Interview: Richard Lenton

IT'S not easy to imagine Morrissey's lyrical prowess and poetic genius interfused with the rough-and-ready sound of American grunge rockers Nirvana, but that's exactly the musical combination that Newcastle's finest musical exports, Maximo Park, are striving for.

Like so many other up-and-coming British guitar bands, the Maximos were quickly lumped into the category marked "indie" following their critically-acclaimed debut album *A Certain Trigger* in 2005. However, it's not a label that the band are particularly comfortable with.

Originally an avant-garde four-piece who performed without a lead vocalist, the band were given a shot in the arm by the arrival of front man Paul Smith in 2003, and subsequently developed a cult following with a series of robust live performances. But, while the success

of their debut album, which spawned four top 20 singles, saw them handed a support slot to the Kaiser Chiefs on the *NME Rock & Roll Riot* tour, the band felt that their harder edged live sound hadn't quite manifested itself on their studio offering.

Enter famed producer Gil Norton, who had previously honed the sound of both the Foo Fighters and the Pixies, to work on the Maximos' newly-released second album, *Our Earthly Pleasures*.

New single *Our Velocity* is already shifting quickly, and the boys, who performed in front of 100,000 people on the Scandinavian leg of the Rolling Stones tour last year, are delighted with the results of the partnership.

"Gil came to us with a huge reputation," said drummer Tom English. "He's very good at getting big sounds out of small bands. We sometimes feel that we are a bit indie, or people certainly put us in that category, but we are a rock band and we wanted

to reflect that in the sound, which is much sturdier. It's a bigger, heavier sound which was totally deliberate."

Despite their determination to distance themselves from the indie masses, English is keen to point out that "rock" doesn't necessarily mean a throwback to 80s bands such as Simple Minds and U2.

"A lot of bands go for that big guitar sound typified by the Edge (U2 guitarist), but then you're quickly sounding like a stadium rock band," he added. "Stadium shows make it very easy to switch off from the lyrics. We want the power of the music to enhance the lyrics and not detract from them."

"We've always loved that American grunge sound, but we're also into the wit of the Smiths and want to combine that lyrical depth with a big sound."

When the Stone Roses attempted to follow up their eponymous self-titled debut album, it took more than five years for the disc to hit the streets. And



in more recent times the Strokes struggled to recapture the moment on *Room on Fire* following their much-vaunted first record, *Is This It*.

So how did the Maximos, who were named after a park in Havana, cope with the pressures of making that difficult second album?

"We put a lot more preparation into it this time," said English.

"The songwriting is refined but more varied. We now feel confident doing piano-led songs for instance.

"On your first record you're not writing an album – you're just putting songs together. This time around we wrote a collection of songs for an album rather than just writing songs as they came to us."

Our Velocity has been identified as a political song about somebody fighting for their country and wondering how they found themselves in such a position.

However, it has a broader meaning according to English.

"There are huge things going on yet we have our own little moral issues and our own lives to lead," he said. "You think 'why am I so torn with my own dramas when there's conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan?'."

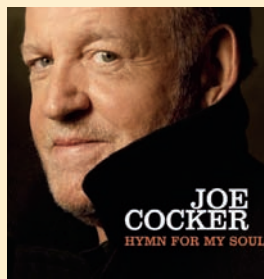
"It's hard to weigh up your own priorities and justify the emotional energy you put into your own issues when things like that are happening." ■



Téo & Téa (Jean Michel Jarre)

MONSIEUR Jarre is perhaps better known for his immense stage shows involving lasers and fireworks, and creating a visual display to his brand of electronic music. For those unfamiliar with the Frenchman, whose father is the legendary Maurice Jarre, he pioneered all things synthesised and New Age in the late Seventies, firmly planting himself as the prime root of modern electronica. This album is not too bad and is a mixture of **Daft Punk** and **Air**. Fans of either or both will find *Téo & Téa* agreeable.

Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt, 5 Regt RA



Hymn For My Soul (Joe Cocker)

THIS was not the **Joe Cocker** I expected to hear. Over time he has mellowed and developed more of a gospel and soul sound with his own and backing vocals. It's not the man who sang with **Tina Turner** as he now has more of a smooth **James Brown** style. *Hymn For My Soul* is excellent and although I enjoyed it, I would play it as background music rather than put it on to absorb. But the CD does create the right mood when you have friends around and are drinking, or as a good after-hours album.

Lt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



Closer Than Veins (Outlandish)

THE multicultural trio deliver their third slice of organic hip hop and R&B. Devoid of gangster posturing and clichés, the message **Outlandish** convey is thoughtful and sceptically astute. Musically, there's an array of genres from Latin guitar to jazz piano, which never gets monotonous over 16 worthy tracks. The mood is predominantly down tempo and there are some fine vocal duos and Latino rapping for the budding linguists among you to decipher. Some bands are mere imitators but this lot set the standards as originators.

Cpl Charlie Lloyd, RLC



Thanks For The Memories (Fall Out Boy)

SINCE exploding onto the music scene last year with *Sugar We're Going Down*, **Fall Out Boy** have been putting themselves out there on both sides of the Atlantic with radio sessions, TV slots and live gigs. Taken from their third 2007 album *Infinity On High*, *Thanks For The Memories* follows the suit of previous releases with high-pitched vocal harmonies, power pop chords and a killer hook chorus. Not everyone's idea of great music but the CD sales prove there must be something in it.

Cpl Tom Robinson, 151 Tpt Regt, RLC



The Wildhearts (The Wildhearts)

NOW touring the UK after gigging in Japan and the US, **The Wildhearts** have yet to achieve major success despite being an influential band in the mid-1990s. The album from the Newcastle-upon-Tyne foursome is a weird one – it's very heavy but also punky. On some tracks the band sound like **Korn** but, on others like **Good Charlotte**. I'm not saying it's bad but it's like listening to a compilation tape where some of the tracks are very good but others are a bit on the iffy side.

Pte Chris Annear, MPGS



Book of Lightning (The Waterboys)

THE first track from **The Waterboys'** new album may appear a little less than inspiring but the best songs are saved until the end. *Book of Lightning* has a somewhat folksy feel to it with its contemporary use of the electric fiddle on tracks such as *Everybody Takes A Tumble* (probably the best track on the album). Other tracks such as *Love Will Shoot You Down* offer a rock element. Overall it's a passionate reminder of what made **The Waterboys** such an iconic band more than two decades ago.

Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU (B)

SOLDIERSPORT



Dirty job: SSgt Jack Johns (RLC) is hoping to nurture the next generation of Army enduro riders after hanging up his helmet

Picture: Graeme Main

ON HIS BIKE
Rider quits
world stage

Saddle sore

Career crashes take their toll on the body of Army's elite enduro rider

Interview: Andy Simms
Pictures: Graeme Main

NURSING a list of injuries that would leave even Jonny Wilkinson and Darren Anderton feeling queasy has convinced seven-times world enduro silver medallist SSgt Jack Johns (RLC) to slam the brakes on his international racing career.

Having suffered multiple breaks, a dislocated shoulder, a torn cruciate ligament and ruptured discs in his spine, the 38-year-old has paid the physical price for his decade of dominance in the saddle as the Army's top enduro rider.

But Johns insists that the aches, pains and hours spent under the surgeon's knife have been worth it.

"My list of injuries is endless, but not unexpected after nearly 15 years of riding at the level I have been," explained the RLC's talismanic rider, who was introduced to the sport after returning from a tour of Bosnia in 1993 and was crowned Armed Forces novice champion later that year.

"My knees might be shot but what I've achieved and the self-satisfaction I've had from racing has been tremendous and something I certainly wouldn't swap.

"Racing has taken me all over the world – it has been amazing."

However, his battle scars represent more than just motorcycle trophies and travel. They have also secured his standing as a dual international sportsman.

"In 1997 I had two bad accidents and a build up of scar tissue, so my physiotherapist recommended that I take up a martial art to help with my stretching," said Johns. "I picked taekwondo, went along to the British championships and finished second.

"I then stepped across to kick-boxing, and I'm currently the European 65-70kg champion."

Although the toll taken on his body by motorcycling could now prevent him achieving further glory in the ring, the second dan remains adamant that he has no regrets about his vigorous pursuit of honours on two wheels.

"I only began with the martial arts to help my motorcycling career," he said. "It improved my cornering and it just so happened that I was quite good at it.

"Besides, all I ever wanted to do as a boy was join the Army and that's what I did," he added.

"It's the Army that's given me the sporting chances I've had. If I hadn't joined who knows how I would have progressed or whether I would have even tried either sport."

But despite his pragmatic attitude, Johns, whose exit from the elite stage comes just months after winning silver at the 2006 World Enduro championships in New Zealand on his Yamaha UK-sponsored 125cc bike, conceded that quitting the international scene was not an easy decision to take.

"It's quite sad to think that after appearing at ten world championships – the Olympics of motorcycling – I will never experience that level of competition again," he said. "But the body does not last forever and it's time to take a step down."

While Johns' decision may free up a place on the winners' podium at this November's world championships in Chile, the loggie does not intend to offer up any such respite to his Service and domestic rivals.

A fact underlined by his victory in an opening round of the Armed Forces championships last month.

"I'm not ready to put my bike down just yet," stressed the twice-crowned Armed Forces champion.

"I'm still going to compete in the British championships and I plan to pick and choose the events I enter."

However, the 2000 British 250cc 4-stroke champion is aware that

he won't be able to ride on indefinitely and has already moved to ensure his future in the sport is preserved.

"I'm like a footballer who ends up being a manager, I still want to play but know that those days have all but come to an end," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I've stepped into a team management role for this year's world championships in Chile.

"I'm hoping that my experience will give some of the younger lads a big push and I'm putting my motivation into getting some new Army blood to the top of the sport."

And, encouraged by his own track record, the physical training instructor has a clear idea of what it takes to compete at the highest level.

"If you're dedicated and determined then there's nothing stopping anyone from being where they want to be," he said. "Although there is plenty of skill involved in riding, a lot of my own success is down to hard work.

"I've trained a lot and live for bikes. Every weekend, rain or shine, I used to race and every night I'd be in the gym keeping on top of my fitness.

"It's a physically demanding sport and you can't take short cuts."

● **Team RLC are on the look out for new riders. Anyone with experience of motocross or enduro riding should contact team manager Capt Jay Frost on 01666 508800. For more information visit www.team-rlc.co.uk** ■

'I'm like a footballer who ends up being a manager, I still want to play but know that those days have all but come to an end'





Mud lark: Former British enduro champion SSgt Jack Johns (RLC) warms up for this season's Armed Forces championships at Honda Park in Belgium

Loggies' clean sweep

STRAIGHT-shooting loggies cleaned up on court after taking home all three titles on offer at this year's Army basketball cup finals in Grantham.

A 30-point haul from LCpl Devon James helped 6 Regiment RLC claim a 68-57 victory over 35 Engineer Regiment in the major units final. The loggies had knocked out defending champions 16 Regt RA on their way to the final and their fitness and team play helped

them edge ahead of 35 Engr Regt in the closing stages of the game.

LCpl Roshane Murray (35 Engr Regt) battled his way to 28 points but was unable to drag his side back into the match.

Experience proved to be the deciding factor in a keenly contested all-loggy women's final between 27 Regiment RLC and 9 Regiment RLC.

Former Army player Maj Anna Kimber (27 Regt RLC) racked up

a total of 21 points and the Most Valuable Player (MVP) award as her side triumphed 31-16.

A perfect weekend for the loggies was completed when DMC Kinton brushed aside the challenge of ATR Litchfield to claim the minor units trophy with a 63-26 win.

Army and Combined Service cap Cpl "Steady" Eddie Perkins (DMC Kinton) was the difference between the two teams as he sunk 40 points in an MVP performance.

The joy of six?

All-conquering Reds set sights on Inter-Services record

Interview: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

TWO teams determined to play fast, flowing and attractive rugby will make this year's Inter-Services showpiece fixture one to remember, according to WO2 Andy Price (WG).

The Army's head coach leads his side into the Twickenham showdown with the Royal Navy on May 5 determined to win the silverware for an unprecedented sixth consecutive time.

And with a new coaching set-up in charge of the Reds' fierce rivals, Price is hopeful that fans both inside the stadium and watching live on television will be treated to a more open game of rugby than last year's 9-3 Army victory, which was played out in wet conditions.

"I think it's fair to say that in the past the Navy have, in my opinion, come to Twickenham to play negative rugby," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I have watched them a few times this year and what is encouraging is that under their new coach they are playing good, attractive, honest rugby which is exactly what we try to do.

"Last year was probably not the best spectacle for people and the weather and the referee had a lot to do with that.

"I hope this year with a dry ball and a nice day, you will see two teams that want to win the game by playing fast, decent football."

Despite his side's desire to adopt a



Winning mentality: Army head coach Andy Price

fast and expansive style, Price insists that his driving motivation is to beat the dark blues at any cost – even if that means battering through the middle of the Navy's defence rather than sprinting around it.

"When I took this role I thought it was important that I told the players

and staff my philosophy on rugby, and that isn't to play attractive rugby.

"My philosophy is simply to win, and if that's by three points to nil then we will take it," he said.

"The reason we play the style of rugby we do is because we have the people capable of playing it.

"By the same token, we have five different styles of play that the players are comfortable with and we can use whichever suits us."

The squad's preparations for the Babcock Trophy game began in earnest with a 14-0 defeat against a star-studded Barbarians at the start of April in a match organised to celebrate the centenary of Army Rugby.

Price and his men then took advantage of the excellent facilities and hospitality on offer in British Army (Germany) by travelling to Rheindahlen for a one-week training camp ahead of their match against the Royal Air Force (due to be played at Aldershot as this issue went to press).

Only a cruciate ligament injury to hooker 2nd Lt Alex Whittaker (2 Yorks) prevents Price from having a full compliment of players to choose from.

He told *SoldierSport* that team cohesion among the remaining 30 players is high and he expects his men to engage in "constructive competition" to secure a place in the starting XV.

And with senior player Sgt Steve Trethewey (REME) just back from a

ATHLETICS: Inter-Services cross country championships, senior men's – 1, Army (LCpl Chepkwony, Sgt Lowe, Sgt Forshaw, Maj Crossland, Sgt Watkins and Cpl Conlon); 2, Royal Air Force; 3, Royal Navy. **Women's** – 1, Army (Sgt Morris, Cpl Menzies, Sgt Haniver and Sgt Morgan); 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Junior men's** – 1, Army (Cfn Williams, Pte Heathcote, Pte Carter and Spr Cavanagh); 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Veteran men's** – 1, RN; 2, RAF; 3, Army (Capt Young, Col Herring, Maj Dooley and Maj Brisco).

Army cross country championships. Team standings, junior men's – 1, A & SH S Scots; 2, 26 Regt RA; 3, SEAE. **Women's** – 1, RMAS; 2, 3 RSME; 3, 14 Sig Regt. **Minor units** – 1, ATR Bassingbourn; 2, 42 Engr Regt; 3, 216 Sig Sqn. **Major units** – 1, SEME; 2, RMAS; 3, 1 RGR.

Army half-marathon championships, men's – 1, LCpl Chepkwony (14 Sig Regt); 2, Maj Weetman (MOD); 3, WO1 Stoddart (RMAS). **Women's** – 1, Cpl Menzies (DMSTC); 2, Sgt Haniver (1 CSMR); 3, Capt Brown (MDHU). **Team standings, senior men's** – 1, 21 Sig Regt; 2, RMAS; 3, 25 Trg Sup Regt RLC). **Women's** – 1, DMSTC; 2, 1 CSMR; 3, 1 CSMR

BASKETBALL: Army Cup, women's final – 27 Regiment RLC beat 9 Regiment RLC 31-16. **Minor units final** – DMC Kineton beat ATR Litchfield 63-26. **Major units final** – 6 Regiment RLC beat 35 Engineer Regiment 68-57.

BOBSLEIGH: Inter-Services bobsleigh championships, men's – 1, RN; 2, Army 1 (Cpl Scarisbrick and LSgt Deen); 3, Army 2 (Sgt Hillman and Pte Randle). **Women's** – 1, Army 1 (Cpl Davies and LCpl Walker); 2, RAF; 3, Army 2 (Sgt Collins and Maj Carter). **Team standings, men's** – 1, Army; 2, RN; 3, RAF. **Women's** – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN.

FOOTBALL: Massey Trophy – RA 8 (LBdr Cunningham (3), LBdr Williams (3), Bdr Thomas and Gnr Pollitt) AMS 1 (LCpl Parsons); RE 3 (Spr Frazer (2) and LCpl Prince) Infantry 0; AGC 0 AAC 0; REME 2 (Cpl Riley (2)) RLC 2 (Cpl Ayres and Cpl Spires); CAMUS 0 Int Corps 10 (LCpl Reid (5), Sgt Routh (3), Sgt Head and LCpl Forbes); RAC 1 APTC 3 (SSgt Kitchen, SSgt Clarke and Sgt Haley); RLC 4 (Cpl Spires, Cpl Sharif, LCpl Douglas and Cpl Brough)

AMS 2 (LCpl Parsons (2)); Infantry 3 (LCpl Storrie, Cpl Shanks and Cpl Wood) REME 3 (Cpl Morrison, Sgt Lynch and Cfn Finnegan); AGC 1 (LCpl Regis) Int Corps 2 (LCpl Reid and Sgt Head); Int Corps 2 (Sgt Routh and Cpl Horsley) RAC 2 (Evans and Halea); AAC 1 (Cpl Johnson) APTC 2 (SSgt Collins); RAC 0 AGC 8 (Sgt Moore (2), Sgt Grant (2), LCpl Stone (2), Cpl Clougherty and LCpl Slater); REME 4 (Cfn Mackenzie (3) and Sgt Lynch) INF 1 (Gdsn Culbertson); Int Corps 2 (LCpl Reid and LCpl Bateman) AAC 1 (ATpr Johnson); RLC 2 R Sigs 0; INF 5 (Pte Carter, Cpl Bowers, Pte King and LCpl Beaton) AMS 1 (Cpl McKewan).

HOCKEY: BA(G) Cup. Major units final – 5 Rifles 3 (Maj Head (2) and 2nd Lt Packer) 9/12 Lancers 0. **Minor units final** – SHAPE 5 (Sqn Ldr Phelps (3), Sgt Paterson and WO2 Smith) 5 Regt RMP 2 (Cpl Horsman).

SKIING: RLC championships, RLC Cup winners – The Scottish Transport Regiment RLC (V). **Nordic novice champion** – Lt Arthur Pugh (2 LSR). **Alpine junior champion** – Pte Luke Arujo (12 LSR).



High five: Army skipper Sgt Mal Roberts (RLC) powers his way through a strong Navy defence en route to a record fifth consecutive Inter-Services title

troublesome tour in Afghanistan and five players deploying as soon as the rugby season ends, Price said his men are keen to secure the Inter-Services bragging rights on behalf of British soldiers currently away on operations.

"As a unit we will be concentrating on the job in hand, but in the back of our minds are friends on operations.

"There is nothing higher for a soldier than to represent the other 99,000 people in the Army so it's all about us doing justice for them.

"There are also the people who elevate us to the position we are in – family, friends and mentors.

"It's pretty humbling when you think of the sacrifices they make and that's why sat behind us in the stands will be all of the wives and girlfriends.

"At the end of the day we are all proud of the fact that we are soldiers with a full-time job, not just rugby people. The Navy game will finish on

Saturday afternoon and on Monday morning we will be back in green kit doing our day jobs."

Despite having the weight of Army expectation bearing down on his shoulders, pragmatic Price will be one of the calmest people in a partisan crowd at 3pm on May 5.

"I think I will have mixed emotions on the day, although I don't think it will be nerves," he explained.

"That's not generally something that's in my personality.

"Besides, there is nothing to be nervous about because we have got the ammunition to do

a job on the Royal Navy."

● To book your seats for this year's Army v Navy clash at Twickenham call the ticket hotline on 01252 334415 or visit www.armynavymatch.org.uk

THE Thames Water Premiership Cup is heading to the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh for the first time

after a powerful performance from their pack proved too much for 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC.

The Welsh raced into a 12-point lead at Aldershot, with all of the points coming from the unerring boot of Army fly half LCpl James Balfrey after his side's forwards forced a series of errors from the opposition defence.

The match was far from one-sided, however, and Army number 8 LCpl Joe Kava used his massive presence and speed to score two tries for the loggies, one of which was converted to leave the match tied at 12-12.

Sniffing victory, the loggies laid siege to the opposition try line only to be thwarted by some courageous work from the Welsh pack.

The Welsh held firm and a clearing kick from Balfrey freed right winger Capt Richard Moger to score under the posts.

Balfrey converted before adding a further three points to wrap up a deserved 22-12 victory. ■

"My philosophy is simply to win, and if that's by three points to nil then we will take it"



Power punch: Pte Warren Nixon (3 Para), right, counters an attack from Pte Darren McLevy (5 Scots) on his way to a third-round stoppage at Roman Barracks

Scots on the rocks

Paras crowned kings of the ring after opponent's second successive finals defeat

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

BOXERS from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment claimed the crown of Army champions after overpowering habitual runners-up 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland during a tempestuous confrontation at Colchester.

A packed Roman Barracks gym witnessed the Para pugilists pushed to the penultimate bout of the championships before finally shaking off their Scottish counterparts 6-3.

It was the second year in a row that 5 Scots have fallen at the final hurdle and although coach Sgt Danny Lafferty said 3 Para deserved their win, he felt his side had been let down by some questionable refereeing decisions.

"My boys performed well and I would say we were beaten by the better team on the night," Sgt Lafferty told

SoldierSport. "There were a couple of bad decisions, especially one in the welterweight second string bout which should never have been stopped in the second round."

Walkovers in the evening's first two fights left both sides level at 1-1 before a punch had been thrown in anger.

Para lightweight Pte Warren Nixon gave his team the first lead of the night by forcing a stoppage in the third against Pte Darren McLevy, before Pte Shaun Dick restored parity for the Scots with a first-round victory in his light welterweight contest against Pte Steve Bowell.

Vociferous support from a large section of the 1,000-strong crowd inspired back-to-back 3 Para wins from welterweight second string Pte Richard Williams and middleweight Pte Lee

O'Hara, leaving the team 4-2 up and just one bout away from securing the championship title.

The light heavyweight contest became a must-win encounter for 5 Scots, and LCpl Bob Davidson duly obliged by edging out LCpl Terry Byrne on a majority decision following a three-

round war of attrition.

But the stay of execution was short-lived and 3 Para wrapped up the title in explosive style when Pte Anthony Flynn and Pte Davey Webb both

stopped their opponents in the first round to secure an overall 6-3 victory.

Reflecting on a second final defeat, Sgt Lafferty said 5 Scots would not be entering next year's championships, although he plans to put together a new-look nine-man team to make a fresh assault on the title in 2009. ■

'My boys performed well and I would say we were beaten by the better team'

ANGLING

May 31 – Inter-Services championships (Tring).

ARCHERY

May 29 – Inter-Services v St Dunstan's (Ovingdean).

ATHLETICS

May 2 – Royal Engineers 10km championships (Denison Barracks, Hermitage); 16 – REME championships (Tidworth); 16 – Army road relay championships (Sandhurst); 19 – TA cross country championships (Sennybridge); 24-25 – Inter-Services heptathlon and decathlon (RAF Cosford).

June 6 – Army individual championships (Tidworth).

CANOEING

May 31-June 3 – Army and Land Command slalom championships (Llandysul).

June 2-3 – Army slalom championships.

CRICKET

May 20 – Army XI v Free Foresters (Aldershot); 30 – Army XI v Hampshire (Aldershot).

June 4 – Army XI v Sussex (Aldershot); 5 – Army XI v Stock Exchange (Aldershot); 8 – Army Ladies Twenty20 v Weymouth (Weymouth); 10 – Army Ladies v Bath Ladies (Bath).

CYCLING

May 13 – Merida MTB marathon series (Penrith); 20 – National 10-mile time trial championships (Midlands).

FOOTBALL

May 3 – BA(G) six-a-side championships (Gutersloh); 10 – Army six-a-side championships (Aldershot); 12 – South west championship final (Aldershot); 20 – Crusaders Vets v Guernsey Vets (RMAS, ko 1400); 24-25 – BA(G) inter-corps festival (Gutersloh).

GOLF

May 18 – Army Women v Trevoise GC (Trevoise); 21-23 – Army open championships (Royal Liverpool Golf Club).

HOCKEY

May 3 – Tri-services cup (Portsmouth); 11-13 – BA(G) Leigh Trophy (Rheindahlen).

JUDO

June 9 – Inter-Services judo championships; 16 – National judo team championships.

KICKBOXING

May 13-20 – WPKA world championships (Greece).

LAWN TENNIS

May 12 – Army men v Waverley (Aldershot); 19 – Army men v Bassett B (Bassett); 26 – Army women v Roehampton (Roehampton).

ORIENTEERING

May 2 – ML(S) event (West Walk); 9 – 4/5 Div team championships (Petworth Park); 14-18 – AOA skills course (Longmoor); 16 – 4/5 Div relay championships (Great Windsor Park); 22-24 – Army team championships/sprint championships (Brecon and Sennybridge); 30 – ML(S) event (Mytchett).

PARAGLIDING

May 4-7 – British paragliding cup round one (Snowdonia); 12-13 – British clubs challenge round three (Yorkshire Dales).

continued opposite . . .

Net cadets

Lacrosse team sign up for sport's golden period

Picture: Maj Hugo Clark

THE manager of the Royal Military Academy's lacrosse team is hoping his Sandhurst side's growing popularity will spark a golden period for the sport in the Army.

Maj Hugo Clark (Scots) admits he knew little about lacrosse when he took charge of the academy's squad in January 2006, but he now leads his players into 12 competitive matches a year, most recently suffering a 10-2 defeat against a skilful tri-Services side.

Maj Clark told *SoldierSport* that he believes the increasing profile of lacrosse in the Army could convince more graduates who have played the game at university level to continue their involvement by signing up for officer training.

"We have come a long way in a very short space of time and the cadets are keen to build on the improvement," he added.

"More and more officers are commissioning who have experience of playing men's rules lacrosse and the number of players is growing in line with the expansion of the sport across the United Kingdom.

"Lacrosse reflects the ideals of the Army and places a strong emphasis on thinking calmly under pressure.

"I used to have no interest in it, but I became more and more enthusiastic as time went on and a lot of what I have

been trying to do recently is to get the idea of lacrosse into the wider Army."

The sport was invented by native North Americans. It is played to a professional level in the United States and is Canada's national summer sport.

Players carry netted poles in which they have to catch a fast-moving rubber ball before either passing or taking a shot on goal.

Competitors also don full body armour before taking to the field as the men's game is a full-contact sport in which checking – striking an opponent's body or pole – is a fundamental and bruising part of play.

But although the frenetic pace and power permitted by the rules may make it seem like organised chaos to the casual observer, Maj Clark insists that success depends as much on brains as it does brawn.

He added: "Lacrosse

is not just a sport you can hack and slash your way through. A sport that demands the catching of a ball in a net on the end of a pole while on the move is heavy on skill, more so if you are aware that the opposing defender doesn't have to wait until you have caught the ball before flattening you.

"We have gradually realised that in lacrosse, skills and tactics will outmatch the most aggressive side

"Against the tri-Services team, we have at least shown that we are now heading in the right direction." ■

'We have gradually realised that in lacrosse, skills and tactics will outmatch the most aggressive side'

Golden ticket

ARMY personnel looking to play a part in the 2012 London Olympic Games could achieve their dream ticket by training as hockey umpires.

A shortage of qualified match officials has hit Army hockey in recent years despite the game being one of the Armed Forces' major synopsis sports.

But with complete newcomers able to progress to an international standard of umpiring in as little as five years, Servicemen and women are being urged to start training now to be in with a chance of taking

centre stage at the 2012 games.

"If you want to be involved in sport and perhaps have found that you are not a gifted player then Services hockey umpiring or officiating offers you that chance and we are keen to hear from you," Combined Services Hockey Association chairman Col Mark Banham explained.

For more information visit England Hockey's website at www.englishhockey.co.uk or contact the Army Hockey Association at hockeysailing@ascb.uk.com



On the attack: Sandhurst OCdt Ken Ritchie works his way towards goal against the tri-Services' team

Surridge stump up

ARMY cricketers have been bowled over by a generous sponsorship deal which will see them playing in new kit for the next five years.

As well as supplying gear for the Army team, specialist firm Surridge is also providing personal sponsorship for team captain Cpl Danny Webb (Int Corps) and backing this summer's inaugural Inter-Corps Twenty20 competition.

Army manager Maj Kirk Steel said: "This is a fantastic deal for Danny, the Army squad and all cricketers in the Army."

Anyone interested in playing for

the Army should contact Maj Simon Frost at aca@ascb.uk.com

● Twelve teams will compete in the Surridge Inter-Corps Twenty20 competition from June 6 to 8.

The tournament has been split into three leagues of four teams, with matches being played in Aldershot, at RMA Sandhurst and at Deepcut.

Among those vying for the first Army Twenty20 crown are top seeds Infantry Cricket Club, second favourites the Royal Signals and an invitation XI from the Army Cricket Association.

SPORTDIARY

continued . . .

POLO

June 2 – Hackett inter-regiment championships first round (various).

ROWING

May 7 – Wallingford regatta (Dorset).

June 1 – Senior men Army sprint regatta (Dorset); 17 – Joint services regatta (Peterborough).

RUGBY LEAGUE

May 23 – Combined Services v Great Britain Students (Dewsbury).

June 13 – Army v Prison Service (Wakefield).

RUGBY UNION

May 1-4 – Div rugby sevens competition; 5 – Army v Royal Navy (Twickenham); 9 – Rosslyn Park floodlit sevens; 10 – 4 Div rugby 10s competition; 13 – Ledbury sevens.

SAILING

May 4 – Cowes to St Vaast race; 5 – Cerventes Trophy; 14-18 – Army offshore regatta (Solent); 25 – Cowes to Deauville; 26 – Myth of Malham race; 31 – Army Sailing Association Seaview regatta (Isle of Wight).

SHOOTING

May 12 – Inter-Services Army target rifle pentagonal match (Bisley); 19 – Inter-Services target pistol championships (Bisley); 20 – Combined Services v Great Britain target pistol match (Bisley).

June 3 – Army target rifle v Anglo Scots, Irish and English; 9 – Inter-services clay target match (Blackwood).

SWIMMING

May 2 – Northern Ireland swimming championships (Lisburn); 16 – BA(G) individual championships (Rheindahlen); 23 – Northern area inter-unit championships (Catterick); 23-24 – Southern area inter-unit championships (Aldershot).

June 6 – BA(G) team championships (Rheindahlen); 13 – Army individual championships (Aldershot); 14 – Army single event relay and inter-unit team championships (Aldershot); 15 – Army water polo championship finals (Aldershot); 25 – Inter-Services open water championships (Lake Bala, Wales).

TAEKWONDO

May 19 – WTF taekwondo Inter-Services championships (Poole).

June 3 – Combined Services taekwondo southern counties championships.

TRIATHLON

May 2 – 2 Div championships (AFC Harrogate); 23 – Army sprint triathlon championships (Cotswolds Water Park).

TUG OF WAR

May 16 – REME championships (Tidworth); 19 – Devon County Show (Exeter); 24 – Morrison Cup (Blandford).

VOLLEYBALL

May 19-20 – Crown Services championships (Glasgow).

WINDSURFING

June 6 – Inter-corps series event (Hayling).

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to fixtures@soldiarmagazine.co.uk

Joining forces

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

We asked British and German soldiers taking part in Exercise Hard Dragon what they thought about their European cousins' FIBUA tactics

Pte Andrew Little, 1 PWRR

Joint training is a good idea especially as most operations are multi-national. The Germans looked after us well and their food was a lot better than our own. Some of their lads came over for a chat although language was a bit of a problem as my German is not up to much more than ordering a beer.



Pte Daniel Cooper, 1 PWRR

I've enjoyed myself and learnt a lot from the exercise. The Germans do things a bit slower than us. Our attacks roll straight through as two-man teams. We shout a lot and get the job done fast so the enemy can't get away. But it's good to chat with soldiers from a different army.



OCdt Daniel Ahnert, Panzer Grenadiers

I think the teamwork between the British guys is exceptional but I would have liked more combined work as it would have helped to improve my English. I watched the British working very fast, but they can't see everything so it's not really safe. We enter a house safely first and then slowly search each room.



Lt Will Gordon, 1 PWRR

The Germans are very professional and of course they do things differently. Their planning seemed very rigid and didn't account for all eventualities so when things didn't go according to plan, they came a bit unstuck. But it's beneficial to train together because we will work more effectively when on joint operations.



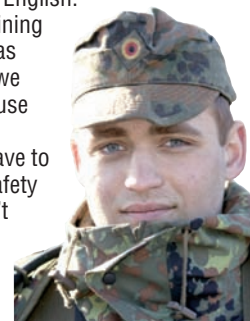
Pte Thomas Parfitt, 1 PWRR

It's the first time I've trained with foreign forces and it's been interesting to watch how the Germans operate. They are much more safety conscious while we tend to go in guns blazing, but I'd say this shock effect works better in Iraq. I think we would have to learn more about each others' strengths and weaknesses before working together in theatre.



OCdt Dan Wojtzik, Panzer Grenadiers

It's good to practice together for future joint operations although there was not much free time to speak with the British soldiers and improve my English. I enjoyed the training even though I was "shot" because we didn't clear a house properly. We are slower but we have to be sure of our safety because we don't have the same manpower and back-up.



OCdt Robert Beyer, Panzer Grenadiers

It was interesting to see another army fight in urban terrain and I really enjoyed training with the British. They use quite different tactics to us and I was surprised that they are much more aggressive. When we moved to reinforce the British we forgot to clear a building behind us and got shot at – we learnt a lot from that.



Cpl "Gadders" Gadsby, 1 PWRR

The training has been something new and different so I've really enjoyed it. The Germans are incredibly quiet when making an assault and use a lot of hand signals. I slowed down the drills and men a bit, getting them to stop and check behind the doors like the Germans. The food is served at a different time but it's good and I enjoyed my first taste of sauerkraut.



Pte Lee Barber, 1 PWRR

It's a good idea to train together so we can learn from our different experiences. I find the German drills slow but thorough and they train on civilian streets, which we're not used to. They are more safety conscious around civilians but we can still assess public safety when moving quickly.



Interviews: Karen Thomas Pictures: Steve Dock

Coming up . . . in SOLDIER

Tumbledown retold: 25 years on, British and Argentine veterans reflect on the fight for the Falklands and a former officer meets the men whose mortars nearly killed him