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WALK ON THE WILD SIDE**



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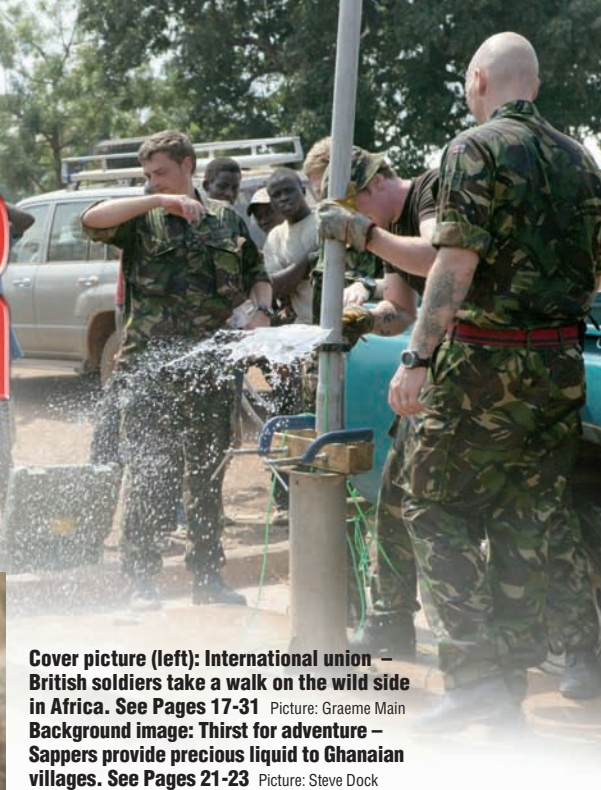
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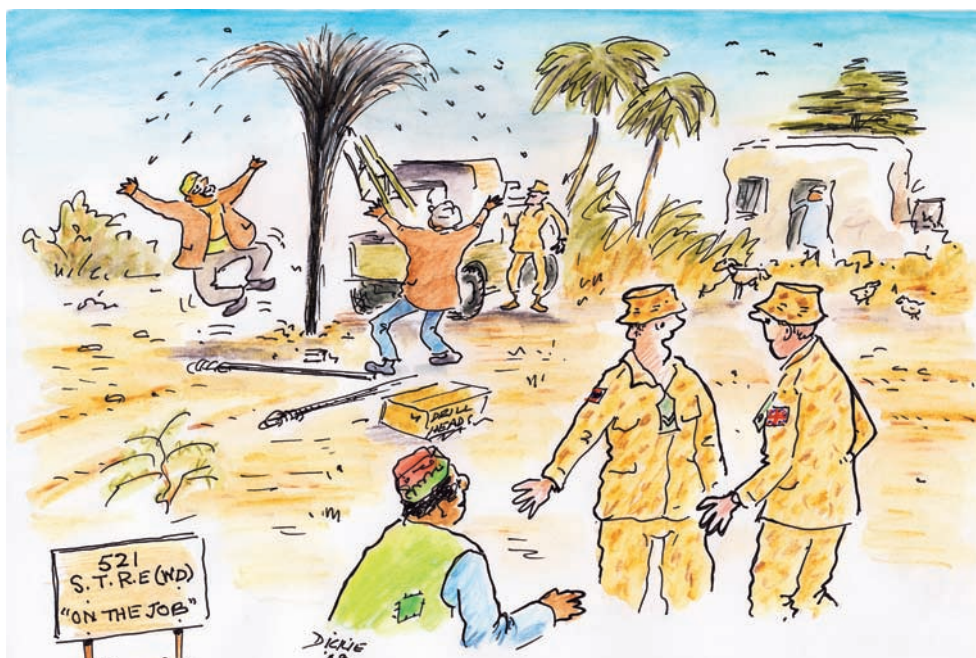
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"The headman says 'never mind the water, boss . . . we've struck oil!'"

● Liquid gold – Pages 21-23

Putting peace on Africa's agenda

AFRICA might corner the world's market in death and destruction but it has, ironically, spawned a dazzling array of Nobel Peace Prize winners.

The pebbles thrown by Albert Lutuli, Desmond Tutu, F W De Klerk, Nelson Mandela, Kofi Annan and Wangari Maathai caused tsunami-sized ripples of change across their homelands. Not bad for a continent once described by Tony Blair as a stain on the world's conscience.

But perhaps that's why the British Army tips its beret to the dogged determination of the under-resourced African underdog. Tapping into the rich traditions of turning brutality into democracy – not to mention a remarkable reputation for peacekeeping – has proved irresistible for our soldiers.

Quietly skimming a few pebbles of their own, small teams of Brits, with a veritable wealth of expertise in peace support operations, move behind the peacekeeping scenes. They back the African endeavour to find its own solutions in building a tranquil landscape for conflicts raging in hot spots such as Darfur.

In South Africa, a British Peace Support Team is helping the Rainbow Nation complete its remarkable transformation from a country troubled by oppression and internal strife to a post-apartheid peacekeeping powerhouse

FIRST SIGHT

(see Pages 17-19). The British contingent in Pretoria may be small in number, but it has played a major role in placing South Africa at the epicentre of the tremors of peace shaking Sudan's Darfur, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Also in the premier league of global peacekeeping is Ghana. As a stable democracy, it calms the rumblings from neighbours Ivory Coast and Liberia. The first British

colony on the continent to gain independence, Ghana invited our Armed Forces back. The British Military Advisory and Training Team West Africa shares our expertise in peace support with the

Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre (Pages 30-31). Aptly named after Ghana's most famous son, its acclaimed courses draw military, police and civilians from all corners of Africa.

With our soldiers at war in Afghanistan, keeping the lid on potential trouble in Africa may not seem the most pressing of concerns, but the British bid to promote peace and democracy on the continent is another key battle in the fight against global terrorism. ■

'Not bad for a continent once described by Tony Blair as a stain on the world's conscience'

BASRAH, IRAQ, 2004.

DURING A ROUTINE CONVOY TO KUWAIT, A VEHICLE HAS A MAJOR BLOW-OUT.

TA SOLDIER, JASON SYLVESTRE IS THROWN FROM THE VEHICLE AS IT ROLLS, SUFFERING SERIOUS INJURIES.

HE IS RUSHED TO HOSPITAL IN KUWAIT.

THEN FLOWN BACK HOME FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND AN OPERATION.

BUT HE IS LEFT WITH SEVERE WALKING DIFFICULTIES. LIVING IN A TENTH FLOOR FLAT BECOMES AN EXCRUCIATING NIGHTMARE.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS MEAN JASON AND HIS PARTNER ARE TRAPPED IN THEIR FLAT-DESPERATE FOR HELP.

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Stick the boots in

General calls on Nato to commit more troops to front line of war on terror

A FORMER commander of the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan has warned that victory over the Taliban can only be achieved if more pairs of boots are deployed on the ground.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, Lt Gen Sir David Richards suggested that his US successor in Kabul, Gen Dan McNeil, does not have sufficient troops to both take and hold ground from the enemy, and that Nato's Combined Joint Statement of Requirement (CJSOR) to Afghanistan – to provide security and stability – was not being met.

"It is the key conundrum – you can take ground but not hold it afterwards," said Lt Gen Richards, who commanded Isaf between May 2006 and February 2007 in his role as commander of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). "Back come the Taliban like a tide and all that good work, and all the potential that lies within it, can be for nothing and soldiers' lives can be lost for nothing."

"It is very important we have sufficient troops, but that does not mean they have to be British. Nato as an organisation needs to commit more troops to meet the basic minimum requirement."

Speaking following a lecture on his experiences of command in East Timor, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan at the opening of the British-funded Peace Mission Training Centre in Pretoria, South Africa, Lt Gen Richards said the challenges of operating in Afghanistan raised questions over whether the structure of Nato forces was best suited to tackling the Taliban and the type of conflict most likely to be encountered in the future.

"This is a debate we all need to have," said Lt Gen Richards, who is to become Commander-in-Chief Land Forces this month. "Our armies tend to be structured for short duration war fighting operations and maybe we now need to rethink that in the light of experience and pad out certain skills – more infantry, more engineers, more ISTAR [Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance] more medics and more military police, those sort of things – to enable us to more efficiently endure the sort of operation we are involved in in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Despite stating that Nato was not yet fulfilling its CJSOR, the former Isaf chief was adamant that the British presence on Afghan soil was justified and that coalition soldiers were fighting for a worthy cause. Having earlier defined the Nato mission in Afghanistan as "a good war" in his speech to senior South African National Defence Force



Voice of experience: Former Isaf commander Lt Gen Sir David Richards, pictured during a press conference in Kabul, believes greater troop numbers are needed to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan

officers and dignitaries, Lt Gen Richards stressed that the deployment of British forces was vital to the future security of both Afghanistan and the UK.

"The Afghan people want and deserve our help," he said. "They went through hell and back over 30 years; we promised them all sorts of things and we need to deliver on their expectations."

"From a more selfish, British perspective, I do believe, like the Government will tell you, that this is the front line of the war against terror."

If Afghanistan was to revert to what it was in 2000–2001 we are all at risk. There is a nuclear-armed Pakistan next door: would it [a return to power of the Taliban] bring that into the equation?

"In both a moral as well as in a practical sense, Afghanistan is a just war, as sensible a war as ever there can be one, and the people of Britain can be terribly proud of the outstanding soldiers, marines, sailors and airmen who form together the fantastic team that is serving this country so well."

Picture: AP/Musadeq Sadeq

UNDER BigBen

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

Afghan mission stays on course

MOVES to consolidate the successes and gains made in Afghanistan have been announced by Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Updating Parliament on the Nato mission's progress, the PM revealed a £450 million aid package for reconstruction and pledged more British mentors for the fledgling Afghan army and police.

Mr Brown also paid tribute to British troops for the contribution they were making.

He added: "At all times we will support the dedication, professionalism and courage of our Armed Forces, who are doing everything in their power to defeat terrorism and lay the foundations of a stable and secure future."

Worldwide recruiting: The number of Commonwealth recruits in the Army is "about right", according to Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg. Responding to a question on whether a cap should be put on numbers of troops drawn from these countries to reduce dependence on them, he said: "It is important that we continue to recruit from the Commonwealth and we welcome and value the contribution of Armed Forces personnel from those countries."

Quick reactions: British troops are on standby to respond to any potential trouble in Bosnia or Kosovo, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth has confirmed. He added that UK soldiers had now assumed the highest readiness battalion of Nato's Pan-Balkan Operational Reserve Force. The troops were on four days' notice to move, and would be standing by from January 1.

Veteran recognition: More than half a million of the special veterans' badges have been issued to former members of the Armed Forces, Mr Twigg told colleagues during a debate in the Commons. He added that "a number of other" veteran support initiatives were under way.

Iraq troops will remain

Browne defends position amid criticism from MPs

B RITISH troops will continue to provide strong training support to Iraqi counterparts despite an imminent drawdown, Defence Secretary Des Browne has insisted.

In a statement, Mr Browne stressed that conditions in Basra were steadily improving, but emphasised that the UK remained committed to fulfilling its obligations in theatre.

The 2,500 troops remaining in southern Iraq from April this year would be fully equipped to both defend themselves and continue training Iraqi security forces, he said.

The Defence Secretary was speaking after a report from a group of MPs claimed that violence in southern Iraq was "continuing to undermine the development of a civil society".

Members of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee reported that attacks against Iraqi civilians were continuing, even though British troops were being targeted less.

They were also concerned at the lack of progress in training the Iraqi police, an organisation which was still home to "murderous, corrupt and militia-infiltrated elements", according to the MPs' report.

Committee chairman James Arbuthnot questioned the role of the 2,500 British troops remaining in Iraq from the spring, and how their number was decided upon.

Mr Arbuthnot added: "A full withdrawal from Iraq will only be possible if the Iraqis are equipped to handle their security effectively – this work is not yet complete."

But the Defence Secretary insisted that the British Forces contingent remaining in theatre would be committed to training their increasingly capable Iraqi counterparts.

Security forces in Basra, which was due to be returned to Provincial Iraqi Control as this issue went to press, had "grown in confidence in the past year," he said.

Mr Browne stressed: "Under the leadership of Generals Mohan and Jalil, they have proved able to handle the occasional incidents swiftly and effectively. But as the committee recognises, the Iraqi forces are not the finished article yet and now is not the time to lessen our resolve."

"We will continue until the Iraqis themselves are confident that they no longer need our assistance."

Casevac numbers soar

H A R D - p r e s s e d aeromedical teams have reported one of their busiest years for casualty evacuations, with more injured troops having to be flown home in 2007 than during Op Telic 1 in 2003.

Figures published by the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) in October showed last year's evacuation statistics were already far higher than 2006.

Nearly 1,100 personnel were pulled out from military deployments around the world, compared with just over 1,000 in 2006. The high operational tempo was given as the reason for the increase.

In July 2007, just over 170 casualties were evacuated back to the UK – more than in March 2003, the busiest month of the war in Iraq, when 130 troops were flown home.

June was also a hectic month, with 140

evacuations and, after what appeared to be a reduction of casualties in September, numbers soared again in October.

Casualties from Afghanistan or Iraq are usually flown to Birmingham airport and met by aeromed teams from the RCDM based at Selly Oak Hospital.

The aeromedical evacuation liaison officer at the RCDM, Sqn Ldr Kenny Duffy, RAF, said: "We have increased the number of our aeromedical teams and have ensured those posts are protected so that the team is fully manned at all times."

"There has been an increase in operational tempo and as a result there has been a higher number of casualties evacuated by air," he added.

● Hospital fit for heroes – Pages 34-35



Picture: Cpl Steve Follows RAF

Young courage: Soldiers from 4 Rifles impressed both their peers and commanders alike for their performance during a hazardous tour of southern Iraq

Demanding debut

Novice riflemen displayed experience beyond their years, says RSM

THE regimental sergeant major of one of the Army's newest super-regiments has paid tribute to the quality of his young soldiers after a testing tour in southern Iraq.

Speaking on their return to the UK, WO1 Jon Allen, of the 4th Battalion, The Rifles, was full of praise for his troops who found themselves under contact just weeks after finishing their training.

The RSM said they had repeatedly performed with distinction while under attack from terrorists at the volatile Basra Palace and that their actions had saved the lives of wounded comrades.

WO1 Allen told *Soldier*: "It amazed me to see the resilience of the young 18-year-old guys who were just six weeks out of the depot. They behaved as if they had six years of experience."

"They reacted well to being under contact and carrying out medical evacuations – particularly as they are not experienced soldiers."

WO1 Allen also recalled the moments of sadness when friends were killed in contact with the enemy, but stressed that his riflemen kept focused on their job. Five members of the battalion were lost and more than 60 injured during the deployment. He said: "Whenever there

was a death, we had a farewell service in the palace, all dressed in our helmets and body armour, which finished with the *Last Post*.

"The coffin would be placed on a helicopter and we would watch the aircraft leave – then, two hours later, the guys would be ready to go out again."

The RSM said there had been a ferocious level of contact in the early stages of their tour, during which

troops found themselves attacked with improvised explosive devices, rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire.

Lt Col Patrick Sanders, commanding officer of 4 Rifles, was also delighted with his troops' performance.

He said: "They have made great sacrifices but have responded to it with enormous strength and resilience, maintaining their sense of humour throughout the mission."

PM praises troops in Basra

PRIME Minister Gordon Brown paid tribute to soldiers serving in southern Iraq as troops prepared to scale down their presence in Basra.

Addressing personnel at the Contingency Operating Base (COB) outside the city, the PM praised the soldiers for their professionalism "every day, every week and every month".

Announcing the imminent transfer of security in Basra to provincial Iraq control, and the scaling back of troop numbers in theatre to just 2,500 by the spring, he emphasised that the British people were proud of their Armed Forces.

During his unannounced visit to Iraq, which took place as this issue went to press, Mr Brown told the soldiers: "You have shown great courage and great bravery."

"The great venture that started, with all the difficulties we had to face, has caused casualties. I pay tribute to those who have lost their lives, to those who have been injured and their families."

"We have now managed to get Iraq into a far better position."

The PM concluded: "The reason why security is so much better here and why there is progress is because of what you have achieved."

Helmand heartache

British fatalities hamper festivities for troops in southern Afghan province

ROBUST operations to oust Taliban fighters and promote reconstruction in southern Afghanistan tragically claimed the lives of two valued soldiers just before Christmas.

Reservist Tpr Jack Sadler, of The Honourable Artillery Company, died after being caught in an explosion north of Sangin in Helmand province on December 4. Two others were wounded in the blast, which happened during a tactical patrol.

Sgt Lee Johnson, serving with the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, was killed when a mine detonated during an action to recapture the town of Musa Qaleh from the Taliban four days later (see Page 11).

A colleague travelling in his vehicle was seriously injured.

A gifted war studies graduate of the University of London, Tpr Sadler joined the HAC in 2005 and later passed the arduous Surveillance and Target Acquisitions Patrols Course. The Devon-born 21-year-old volunteered for a tour of duty in Afghanistan after completing his university degree.

He was posted to 4/73 Special Observation Battery in Helmand, where he quickly established himself and proved highly capable during demanding patrols. Tpr Sadler, who was a member of his University Officers' Training Corps, told friends that he was intending to pursue a full-time military career on his return from Afghanistan.



● Sgt Lee Johnson



● Tpr Jack Sadler

Lt Col Alastair Caie, commanding officer of the HAC, said the young reservist had shown great courage and would be sorely missed by his colleagues. The CO added: "His decision to volunteer for mobilised service at such an early stage of his career was typical of his commitment to the regiment and Reserve Forces."

Sgt Johnson was a veteran soldier, having joined the Army in 1990. He had completed five tours of Northern Ireland, two of Afghanistan and one in the former Yugoslavia. The NCO, who was 33 and from Stockton-on-Tees, had also served in Germany and Belize after signing up with the 1st Battalion, The Green Howards.

A keen sportsman, he represented the battalion at boxing and the Army at judo. Remembered as a soldier who led by example, he had been responsible for training and mentoring the Afghan National Army on his latest tour.

Engaged with two children, Sgt

Johnson had been due to marry his fiancée in August 2008.

Lt Col Simon Downey, CO of 2 Yorks, described Sgt Johnson as a "huge personality and supreme soldier" and said his thoughts were with the NCO's family and friends.

"Wherever he went, whatever he did, he made a difference and always with that great style of his," Lt Col Downey added. "His loss robs the battalion of one of its great lights – a comrade regarded with tremendous affection and respect."

● **TROOPS serving with the 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, remembered colleagues who fell in Afghanistan during a special service in London. The soldiers, who returned from theatre late last year, packed Westminster Abbey to reflect on the nine colleagues they lost during their tour.**

The Dean of Westminster, Dr John Hill, paid tribute to the troops during the service and later told reporters: "This service was an opportunity to commend to God those who have died in recent conflict and to pray for the difficult work the Army undertakes for the sake of peace and justice."

Formerly The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, 2 Mercian was granted permission to use Westminster Abbey as it is currently serving as London's public duties battalion.

Iraq heroes die on home soil

Road traffic accident claims lives of Telic veterans on return from theatre

A **YOUNG** soldier who died on his way to celebrate his return from operations with his girlfriend had been home from Iraq for just a few hours, it has been confirmed.

LCpl Paul Knight, who was 20, died with his 22-year-old best friend, LCpl Nathan Long, when their car was involved in a collision outside Bulford Camp on November 21.

Both men, who were members of the 4th Battalion, The Rifles, were pronounced dead at the scene. The driver of another vehicle was treated for minor injuries.

The tragedy was a devastating blow to returning troops from the battalion, who were commended for their bravery during some of the heaviest fighting of the Iraq campaign.

LCpl Knight, whose family live in Croydon, joined the Army aged 17 and was



● LCpl Nathan Long



● LCpl Paul Knight

quickly promoted. His leadership qualities were confirmed during his battalion's testing tour of Iraq.

A Gloucester resident, LCpl Long had returned from theatre six weeks before the accident. The former member of The Royal

Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Light Infantry had already been on exercise in Canada and on operations in southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Patrick Sanders, CO of 4 Rifles, said troops had been left devastated by the deaths of the two NCOs, adding that his thoughts were with the bereaved families and friends.

Lt Col Sanders said of LCpl Knight: "He was tough, demanding, quick-thinking and bold. We have lost one of the brightest stars. We cannot replace him and will never forget him."

Of LCpl Long, the CO added: "Nathan was indispensable – he constantly looked for ways to do things better next time and presented his views forcefully."

Taliban stronghold smashed by troops

Terrorist fighters routed as Nato and Afghan forces launch Helmand action

BATTLE-hardened British troops played a key role in a huge multi-national operation that toppled the Taliban's last remaining stronghold in southern Afghanistan.

Hundreds of soldiers from 52 Infantry Brigade moved to prevent terrorist reinforcements entering the enemy-occupied town of Musa Qaleh and provide a diversion from the main assault.

With the British troops in position, a series of helicopters delivered a hammer blow from the skies, landing United States and Afghan National Army units on the outskirts of the Taliban territory.

The American soldiers fought their way into the town before Afghan counterparts poured in to secure the strategic settlement.

Commanders said the assault had proceeded as planned and, as this issue went to press, Afghan troops were celebrating after raising their country's flag over the town in Helmand province.

It is believed that significant numbers of Taliban were killed during the fighting and a huge haul of opium was seized.

The 52 Brigade spokesman, Lt Col Richard Eaton, RDG, told *Soldier* around 3,000 UK personnel had been involved in the operation to take the town, which had been snatched by the Taliban in early 2007.

Lt Col Eaton added: "The British role involved preventing Taliban reinforcements getting into Musa Qaleh and stopping the enemy from getting out.

"A certain amount of diversionary activity was carried out and an Afghan Army mentoring team from the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, also went forward."

In addition, soldiers from the Right Flank, Scots Guards, B Squadron, The King's Royal Hussars and the Royal Marines were among those involved in the attack. They were supported by a huge logistic effort

The last stage of the action, launched on December 7, was carried out by Afghan troops, who were given the ultimate responsibility of driving the enemy from the town.

"The final phase, to use an analogy, was that the house was surrounded by a combination of British, American and Afghan forces," said Lt Col Eaton.



Liberation day: Victorious Afghan troops raise their flag after defeating the Taliban in Musa Qaleh

"American forces kicked down the door and Afghan forces went through and liberated Musa Qaleh."

Lt Col Eaton said that soldiers had needed to remain cautious after entering the town, pointing out that ambushes and booby traps had been a serious risk.

He emphasised that the settlement would be "properly garrisoned" and secured by both British and Afghan troops to prevent Taliban fighters gaining any future foothold in the area.

The officer concluded: "We are confident that the Taliban have now been ejected from Musa Qaleh.

"There may be some who have decided to stay but they have put aside their weapons and tried to blend back into the population. Now that the town is secure, messages are going out to the local people that it is safe to return. The troops observing Musa Qaleh have seen the lights go on for the first time since they have been in the area."

IN BRIEF

● PROUD gunners were applying the final layers of polish on their boots as they prepared to look their best for a parade in the forecourt of Buckingham Palace.

Members of 12 Minden Battery, Royal Artillery, were due to succeed colleagues from 10 Battery, part of 12 Regiment, in the Changing of the Guard as this issue went to press.

It is the first time two artillery units have handed over to each other. The role is normally carried out by the Guards regiments but all are committed to operations or training. Capt Ed Senneck, spokesman for 12 Minden Battery, said the gunners were proud to step into the breach. He added: "The troops are very excited to be carrying out duties normally reserved for the Household Cavalry Division."

● MEMBERS of Parliament have been urged to visit operational theatres to give them a better appreciation of military life.

The Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme aims to increase MPs' understanding of the Services.

It has been widely praised by MPs, including former Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram who said the scheme provided "an insight and feel for what military life is like".

Mr Ingram was speaking to *Soldier* during an event at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, hosted by the scheme's founder Sir Neil Thorne.

● A band of British soldiers has won a prestigious prize for their reconstruction work in the lawless Uzbini Valley, northeast Afghanistan.

The Firmin Sword of Peace was awarded to the Support Battalion to HQ ARRC, which took command of Isaf in Kabul in 2006. The battalion expanded its original role of force protection to work with local police and elders.

CO Lt Col Richard Winstanley tasked his troops to relocate the police station, expand the schools and build a clinic. He said: "This is a collective award for a bunch of men and women who I am immensely proud of."

● THE National Army Museum has launched a £300,000 fundraising campaign to keep a portrait of a British military hero in the country.

The Chelsea-based museum was outbid for a painting of Battle of Quebec commander Gen James Wolfe, but the collector who bought the portrait was stopped from exporting it by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

Wolfe was fatally wounded as he led troops up the Heights of Abraham to overwhelm the French forces in an audacious and successful attack.

Troops being lost to drugs

Survey identifies four-fold hike in cocaine users

SHOCK figures show that Army commanders are losing the equivalent of a battalion of soldiers every year because of drug abuse.

A study carried out by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) found that the number testing positive for illegal substances had rocketed by more than 50 per cent, from 517 cases in 2003 to nearly 780 in 2006.

More worryingly, there had also been a four-fold increase in soldiers taking cocaine, with 50 per cent of those testing positive for substance abuse in 2006 found to have the Class A drug in their system.

Professor Sheila Bird, who carried out the research, accepted that the hike could be as a result of changes in the testing regime, such as pulling in soldiers after leave or weekends, or because of better detection procedures.

However, the Government has declined to release data about how the system worked on cost grounds.

If there had been no alternatives to the test system since 2003, Prof Bird maintained that the figures should give cause for concern and warned they could be the tip of the iceberg.

"The cocaine test positive rates in 2006 and 2007 could mask a two to three times higher sporadic cocaine user

rate, if infrequent use is primarily at weekends and testing is not specifically targeted at Mondays," she added.

Christianne Tipping, defence management analyst from RUSI, accepted that drug abuse in the Army involved "relatively few" soldiers.

But she questioned whether the hard line approach of the MoD – which usually led to the swift expulsion of substance abusers – was the right way forward in the light of recruitment and retention issues.

She added: "Compulsory drugs testing exists to deter rather than to catch every single person who might engage in occasional drug use.

"However, there could be a need to look at a more pragmatic management strategy so that recruitment difficulties in certain trades are not compounded by the high discharge rates resulting from drugs offences.

"The MoD needs to be sure that its zero tolerance approach still constitutes the best way of managing the problem of drug abuse in the Armed Forces."

An Army spokesman confirmed the RUSI figures were accurate. But less than one per cent of soldiers had tested positive for illegal drugs, compared to seven per cent of civilians who admitted taking illegal substances, he added.

Furry friends get heroes' burial

ANIMALS that helped save the lives of British troops and civilians have been remembered at a ceremony to mark the restoration of a special graveyard.

The Ilford Animal Cemetery in East London is the final resting place of a dozen recipients of the PDSA Dickin Medal, a gong that has been awarded to dogs, pigeons and even a ship's cat.

Now the graveyard has been spruced up with a £50,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund's People's Millions. And the ceremony marking the restoration work, which was due to take place as this issue went to press, was set to include a parade by troops that had served alongside hero animals plus a pigeon flypast.

Dubbed the animal's VC, the Dickin Medal has been awarded more than 60 times since its foundation by Maria Dickin

at the height of the Second World War.

Recipients include a dog that shielded his human comrades from a grenade blast, a pigeon which saved a village from being bombed and three dogs that helped in the horrific aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Most recently the award was given to a Labrador called Sadie for her exploits in southern Afghanistan.

PDSA director general Marilyn Rydstrom paid tribute to animals that had acted bravely in times of crisis.

"Many lives were saved as a result of the courage and dedication to duty of animals buried at Ilford," she said. "Sadly over the years the animal graves at the cemetery had weathered and broken."

Rydstrom said she was grateful for the grant to restore the graveyard.



Top dog: The Mastiff armoured patrol vehicle has boosted British capability and terrorised Taliban fighters since its debut in Helmand province last year

Special delivery

Extra troop carriers and more helicopters will bolster Op Herrick efforts

BATTLING British soldiers on operations in Afghanistan have been pledged a wealth of new equipment in a bid to make it easier to move personnel and stores around theatre.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that the Government would order 150 new armoured troop carriers, as well as deploying more Sea King helicopters to Helmand.

The new vehicles, which will be called Ridgback, will cost around £150 million and will be funded from the Treasury Reserve. The MoD confirmed that “commercially sensitive” negotiations had been under way with equipment manufacturers, but declined to comment further on the issue.

The Ridgback announcement follows last year’s deployment of Vector and Mastiff to Afghanistan. The pair have proved highly effective on ops.

It has also been confirmed that the Royal Air Force will soon have a sixth C-17 Globemaster to join its transport fleet following a £130 million deal with US aviation firm Boeing.

The aircraft, which can carry three Warrior armoured vehicles, 13 Land Rovers, a Chinook or three Apache

gunships, will arrive at Brize Norton in the summer.

Defence Equipment and Support Minister Baroness Taylor said the extra lift capability would be a huge asset to ongoing British military operations around the world.

She added: “The aircraft will greatly increase our ability to transport both troops and equipment.

“Our existing C-17s have already

proved their worth, supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and providing humanitarian aid.”

Defence Secretary Des Browne believed the introduction of new kit – particularly the Ridgback vehicles and extra Sea Kings – would help further progress in Afghanistan. He added: “This is excellent news and will increase the numbers of helicopters and the range of protected vehicles.”

Enhanced lottery pays out

TWICE as many people will scoop cash prizes following the relaunch of the Army Sports Lottery.

In the biggest overhaul in the draw’s 14-year history, the number of winners has doubled from ten to 20, with one person taking home a £10,000 jackpot and 19 others winning between £100 and £5,000 every week.

The revamp comes after the introduction of a random number generator, which ensures that one person wins each prize rather than having to share with others. Two super draws, before Christmas and summer

leave, will feature increased jackpots.

Speaking during the first draw of the new lottery, which saw LCpl Michael Moores, Royal Engineers, win a special £20,000 top prize, Army Sports Control Board chairman Gen Christopher Elliot said he hoped the new system would entice more players.

Since its inception in 1993, the Army Sports Lottery has raised more than £13.5 million and paid £7 million in prizes.

Grants totalling more than £4 million have allowed Army teams to tour the world and helped elite sportsmen and women to step up their training.

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Picture: Cpl Ralph Merry RAF

Heavy metal: Lt Dave Wilton gets to grips with his battery of drums shortly before the Basra City Rollers' live performance at the Contingency Operating Base

Musical theatre

Combat rockers unite as soldiers out on ops get a barrage of live music

A GIFTED quintet of musicians in Iraq have been hitting the right notes for charity after a one-off gig at their base netted nearly £1,000.

The group of four military policemen and a singing Army chef delighted fans at the Contingency Operating Base

when they blasted out a set that included a play list of rock classics.

Armed with top-of-the-line kit donated by the likes of Fender Guitars, Premier Percussion and Peavey Electronics, they gave a rousing performance in aid of the Help for Heroes charity.

The idea of forming the band came from military policeman and drummer Lt Dave Wilton, of 158 Provost Company RMP, who thought soldiers would appreciate a dose of morale-boosting tunes. Scouring the camp for talent, he found three eager RMP soldiers serving alongside him – guitarists Cpl Ben Leeves and LCpl Phil Smith, and bass player LCpl Scott Carney – who were later joined by RLC cook Cpl Paul Maidment.

The group didn't have any instruments, but a few calls to music contacts soon solved that minor problem and they cracked on with rehearsals.

The band was given a rapturous welcome on stage, and the appreciative audience dug deep to raise funds for Help for Heroes. The charity, which has been well publicised in the national media, is aiming to raise cash for the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court in Surrey.

Returning troops get VIP treatment

A CROSS party delegation of MPs welcomed back troops of 12 Mechanized Brigade from Afghanistan.

Up to 70 soldiers who served in Helmand province were given a warm reception at Westminster, where they were shown around both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

The special event was organised by the All Parliamentary Group, which keeps MPs and peers up-to-date on the latest developments in the British Army.

Defence Secretary Des Browne ad-

dressed the military party along with Hemel Hempstead MP Mike Penning, a former soldier with the Grenadier Guards, which is part of 12 Mech Bde.

The visiting officers and soldiers were delighted with the welcome they received, and also paid tribute to the kindness of the wider civilian community.

Maj Simon Siskin, Gren Gds, summed up the feelings of the soldiers.

"Individual units are immensely proud, and their contributions have been recognised at the highest levels," he said.

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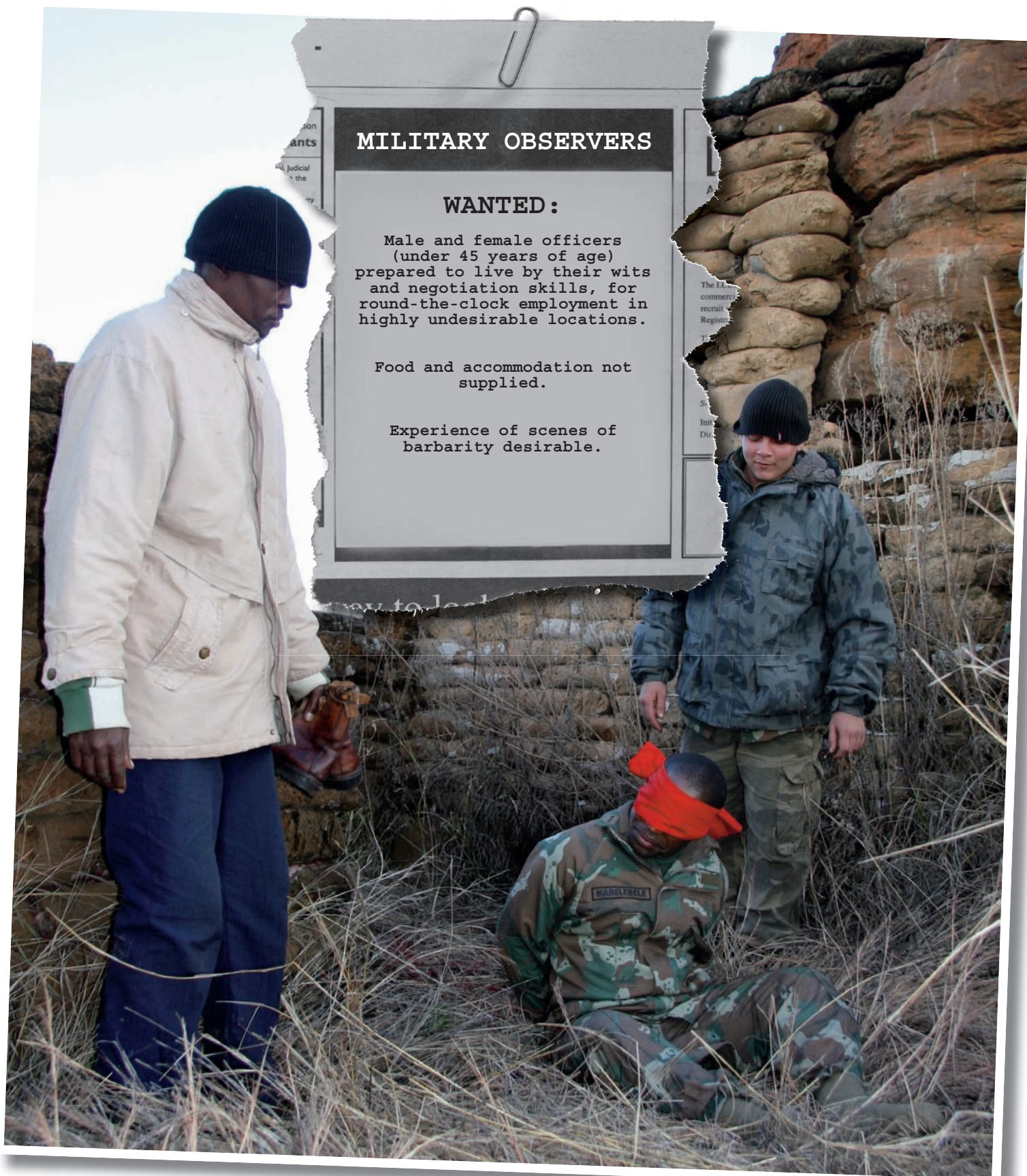
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Risky business

British help to preserve lives of peacekeeping missions' unsung heroes »



Main picture, Live rehearsal: Students on the military observers' course put their theory to the test after arriving on the scene of a simulated ambush

Above right, Survival skills: WO2 Richie Hinit (BPST (SA)) delivers a briefing on navigation

Below right, Crash course: With Land Rovers the most common form of transport available to military observers, all personnel are drilled in the art of off-road driving

Report: Andy Simms
Pictures: BPST (SA) and Graeme Main

THE job of a military observer in Africa's war-stricken regions of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur is not without significant risk.

Uniformed, but unarmed and without the military support of their parent armies, the eyes and ears of the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) are expected to live cheek by jowl with warring neighbours.

Exposed to a culture of systematic violence, kidnappings, murder and rape – a favoured weapon of war in Africa – the military observer regularly has to look danger square in the eye. Some pay for the experience with their lives.

In Burundi, a country emerging from a 12-year civil war and ranked as one of the world's poorest nations, two military observers were captured, butchered and eaten by rebels.

Peacekeepers have also met brutal deaths in the DRC, a nation at the centre of Africa's "world war", with the

names of military observers among the four million people killed there over the past six years.

Fortunately, the risks of the "milob" role are recognised by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), which has a battalion-strength of peacekeepers deployed in each of Burundi, DRC and Darfur.

Already ranked among Africa's premier peacekeepers, the SANDF turned to the British Peace Support Team (South Africa) (BPST (SA)) in the spring of 2006 for assistance in its quest to preserve the lives, and enhance the effectiveness, of its military observers.

With the aim of better preparing SANDF personnel for UN and AU peace support operations, the British Army contingent set about securing funding for a Peace Mission Training Centre (PMTTC) in South Africa's administrative capital, Pretoria.

Eighteen months, a British investment of 13 million rand [around £950,000] and sizeable contributions from the USA, Canada and South Africa later, the centre – formerly a military gymnasium – officially opened its doors for business.

Boasting a 120-seater auditorium, hi-tech syndicate rooms and a library, the PMTTC will deliver nine peacekeeping courses to more than 400 students over the next 12 months alone.

Among the extensive syllabus drawn up by the BPST (SA) is a four-week military

observers' course, which will provide its graduates with the knowledge and know-how to be effective and survive in the field.

"The life of a military observer can be particularly tough," Lt Col Dickie Danby, RE, a member of the ten-strong BPST (SA) contingent, told *Soldier*. "They have to operate unarmed in austere conditions, are

‘Anything we can do to provide greater peace and stability through education will have a huge pay-off’



largely unsupported by the military and, often without the aid of local interpreters, have to find their own food and accommodation. As the eyes and ears for a force commander they have to win the trust of the locals and live by their wits and negotiation skills.”

Drawing on the British Army’s extensive knowledge of peace support operations, the military observers’ programme includes training in navigation, 4x4 driving at South Africa’s “world-class” Gerotek test centre, extensive theatre briefings and a series of role-playing exercises aimed at taking the students out of their comfort zone in preparation for the realities of what they may encounter.

The skills taught are vital to both operating in Africa’s hot spots and ensuring the military observers return safely from their year-long tours.

While most of the instruction is delivered by SANDF training staff, WO2 Richie Hinitt, Mercians, is tasked with drilling home the importance of navigation. The BPST (SA) training warrant officer said: “We get people of

all ranks, ages and from all walks of life on the course – some of whom have not touched a map for years.

“Our aim is to get their navigation up to standard and hopefully beyond, which is not normally a problem as the troops tend to be very responsive and are keen to learn from us.

“Navigation is a vital skill set for them to take away because if they can’t read a map or use a GPS then they are going to be in trouble. They need to be able to travel round and be able to share their location if something happens on the ground. Basic navigation could mean the difference between life and death.”

However, Lt Col Danby was quick to stress that the aim and subsequent impact of the course extended far beyond the self-preservation of peacekeeping observers.

“Training military observers can have a significant impact on the ground – they are key posts and can make a real difference. They know more than most what is going on in an area and can diffuse issues before they become major problems because they

know the local populace and all parties to the agreement.”

He added: “The dead of these conflicts do not tend to be young men – young men can run. When militia attack a village it is the women, children and old who are killed or have limbs chopped off. Africa is a continent with a huge lot of conflict in it and anything we can do to provide greater peace and stability through education will have a huge pay-off.”

A sentiment echoed by BPST (SA) commander Col Jeff Sims, late RA, whose team have already been heavily involved in the training of 80 military observers. “Although we only have a small footprint [in South Africa], we have a very large effect and clearly job satisfaction is very high.”

Col Sims’s team have every right to feel proud. While British soldiers are not charged with policing the peace in Africa, through the Peace Military Training Centre and their wider work, the BPST (SA) are delivering a very tangible contribution to alleviating the killing and suffering on the continent. ■



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**Gold digger: Cpl "Mac"
McKone, 521 STRE (WD),
keeps an accurate record
at each borehole site**



Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

GUINEA worm parasites lurk in natural ponds waiting to be thirstily gulped down by anyone baking in a dusty 35C African heat.

Once inside the body, the worm takes about a year to grow to a metre in length before it breaks through the skin of the lower leg. There's no treatment so the victim must endure a painful couple of months gently twisting the worm around a stick until it's completely removed.

Ghana, once known as the Gold Coast, has the second worst Guinea worm infection rate in the world with more than 95 per cent of cases found in its rural north.

Only clean water stops the parasites spreading and unfortunately it is a scarce commodity for the tiny scattered villages of Tolon-Kumbungu district, which recorded 361 Guinea worm infections last October alone.

Ex-Royal Engineer and St Dunstaner David Stuttard considered how he might apply his soldiering to build safe water

pumps for these communities.

Blinded by diabetes after serving more than 20 years in the Territorial Army, he called up former colleagues to ask if they would drill for the hard-to-reach but precious liquid taken for granted in the UK.

David petitioned, charmed and persuaded the top brass that the West African state was ideal territory to get the 521 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (Water Development) (STRE (WD)) ready for theatre. Three years on and Exercise Water Endeavour in Ghana's outback prepares the STRE (WD) for work in Iraq and Afghanistan, alongside Ghanaian Army engineers training for their peacekeeping missions abroad.

"When the sappers realised what it was all about, especially with the kind of deployment to operations they're doing nowadays, they knew as well as I did that it would be great training," he told *Soldier* under the shade of a lonely tree surrounded by hordes of curious children.

"And it's a fabulous way of finishing an exercise, leaving people with clean, fresh water and better health."

Based in the King's Village, a mission station 25km from the town of Tamale, the engineers spread out in small teams across a vast scrubland punctuated by numerous small settlements.

They battle the unforgiving African sun and Harmattan winds blowing sand from the parched Sahara desert, bouncing their 4x4 vehicles across vague tracks running through the bush.

The whole spectrum of combat engineering, from sapper to specialist, is applied during the exercise. The local water



infrastructure is similar to that found in Afghanistan and the extreme heat and dust, out-of-date maps of the area, isolation and lack of resources strenuously test soldiering abilities.

Capt Paul Golding confirmed the eight-week exercise developed the leadership, management and project planning skills of each member of the 12-strong British team.

"Once construction starts, one or two engineers use the interpreters and Ghanaian soldiers along with a workforce of up to 30 locals.

"That puts a lance corporal very much on the ground and responsible for managing a completely diverse site in terms of workers, resources and time. And the locals get clean water so, in all my years in the Army, this exercise was by far the easiest to justify morally."

The water specialists mix their knowledge and expertise with the latest technology to hunt down sites likely to harbour natural underground reservoirs. Then they drill. If clean water is struck, they construct a hand-pumped well for the village and pit-latrines so residents don't contaminate their only source of fresh water.

Hunched over his high-tech resistivity equipment, which detects the presence of water, Cpl Leo Martin said: "This training is very similar to being in Afghanistan, as we are working hard in a hot climate and have to think about the best ways to work in the intense heat.

"Being here also helps strengthen your communication skills and how you handle people from different cultures, telling them about resistivity and how it can help their village."

Exercise Water Endeavour also

sharpened the specialists' technical skills and knowledge. Cpl "Mac" McKone was working alongside a Ghanaian civilian driller.

They had bored down more than 70 metres on two sites that

had tested positive for water but neither had yielded the liquid goods. "It's given us a better understanding of drilling in a hot climate," he said. "It makes you aware of all the difficulties because the geography and hydro-geology information is very thin on the ground, just like Iraq and Afghanistan."

For the residents, the novelty of having British soldiers working in

their village never seemed to wear off. With a huge grin, Sulemana Abdul-Rah, Kuli village chief, said his people couldn't "express their joy" at having a safe water supply for the first time.

"We have never seen British soldiers here so history is being made and we are privileged to witness them being here in our lifetime. They work so hard, which encourages us to work hard, and we hope they will come every year." ■

'It's a fabulous way of finishing an exercise, leaving people with clean, fresh water and better health'



Main picture, Heave ho: Using the team vehicle, a make-shift pulley system extracts a damaged rising mains pipe in the village of Kusibo

Left, Life changing technology: Water pumps have brought the prospect of better health to villages in the northern region of Ghana

Above, Cool it: LCpl Stan McLean, 521 STRE (WD), and Sgt Steffan Mather, RAMC, standing, cover and dampen a newly-laid concrete latrine platform

Blind ambition

St Dunstaner tames African outback after three decades as TA engineer

Report: Karen Thomas

Picture: Steve Dock

DIABETES robbed David Stuttard of his sight and half his foot but he refused to let it force him into the life of a blind amputee totally dependent on others.

Yet even the able-bodied might balk at taking on the unforgiving bush land of northern Ghana, the battleground where the St Dunstaner chose to wage his campaign for independence. But David holds the secret to taming the Dark Continent's last frontiers – he's daring, charming and has a naughty sense of humour.

The ex-sapper's path to self-reliance took him to the sun-scorched rural settlements of Tolon-Kumbungu district, which have no clean water or electricity. Numbered among the estimated one billion people worldwide who do not have access to safe water, the villagers are regularly infected with painful and debilitating Guinea worms.

Falling back on his Army engineering skills, David's first 2005 project solicited help from his former sapper comrades to drill for fresh clean water. Two years later and the full-on Exercise Water Endeavour prepares 521 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (Water Development) for deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan.

The former late-entry officer credits St Dunstan's, the charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women, for giving him a shove in Ghana's direction when he lost his sight in 2003. Retired as a TA captain, David didn't know he had diabetes until it burst the blood vessels in his eyes, causing immediate and irreversible blindness.

"The whole thing about St Dunstan's is they help you get your independence back. I believe people with poor or no eyesight should try to be independent.

"Everything else tends to follow, maybe not quite so easily, but you do get there," David told *Soldier*, going on to compare life in a West African village to the comforts of home.

"These people ask for nothing and it's just great to give them something, which to us is so small. At home we play hell when no water comes out of the tap but here they don't even have taps to turn on, so what the sappers have done is just tremendous.

"And people tell me that the Ghanaians are always smiling – they

don't do that back home, do they?"

Influenced by a cousin enjoying life with the TA, Manchester-born David joined 42 Division Engineers as a teenager in 1962. He diligently worked his way up through the ranks while running a clothes firm in north Staffordshire. His final TA post was as a permanent staff officer at 125 Field Support Squadron.

There were two events in David's long career that proved significant when he started

applying his military skills to helping people in a developing country. The first was meeting an up-and-coming young troop officer in the 1970s. The second was organising the military aid to the civil community (MACC) tasks.

As a warrant officer with 75 Engineer Regiment and a father of three, David was coordinating MACC tasks on long weekends and annual camps with the Forestry Commission in the north of Scotland. "Most of the work I did

up in Scotland was a great asset to the type of work

I'm doing now, so I'm not doing anything new, I'm just using the knowledge I had prior to being blind. It just shows people that losing your sight doesn't mean



Elder statesman: David, wearing the ceremonial coat presented to him by the women of Kusibo, is surrounded by the village's children

you can't continue, slightly differently, doing things you had knowledge of before."

After their successful first attempt to drill for water in 2005, David banged on the door of the young troop officer, who was, by now, Gen Sir Kevin O'Donoghue, Chief Royal Engineer. Even with only half a foot to put in the door, the St Dunstaner persuaded the top brass to back his triple-winner strategy and give him advice on expanding the project into a comprehensive training package.

Exercise Water Endeavour provides recognised pre-deployment preparation for 521 STE (WD), as a result of which

more than 20,000 Tolon-Kumbungu district villagers now drink clean water.

As Ghanaians celebrated 50 years of independence, David celebrated his independence by being made a village chief.

"There were hundreds of people around with a band playing and bells jingling, so it was quite a commotion. They sat me under this tree in a white plastic chair in the middle of nowhere and said they had

decided to make me an elder of their village for the work that I'd started.

"The ladies presented me with a gown the elders wear, which they made themselves. The inside is lined with sacking from flour given by countries supplying food

aid, showing how these people don't waste anything.

"And the really funny part was when they said it was usual for the elder to dance. Can you imagine me with not the best feet dancing? I was never a good dancer when I had whole feet but I was dancing round my white cane – apparently it was a sight for sore eyes." ■

DAVID funds his trips to Ghana himself. Inspired to start his own charity, **My Ubique**, named in honour of the RE motto, he wants more people to get involved with sharing their time, ideas, cash and expertise in making life easier for the rural poor of northern Ghana.

To find out more go to www.myubique.org.uk, contact David directly at david.stuttard@ntlworld.com, or telephone 01782 512450.

"Losing your sight doesn't mean you can't continue, slightly differently, doing things you had knowledge of before"



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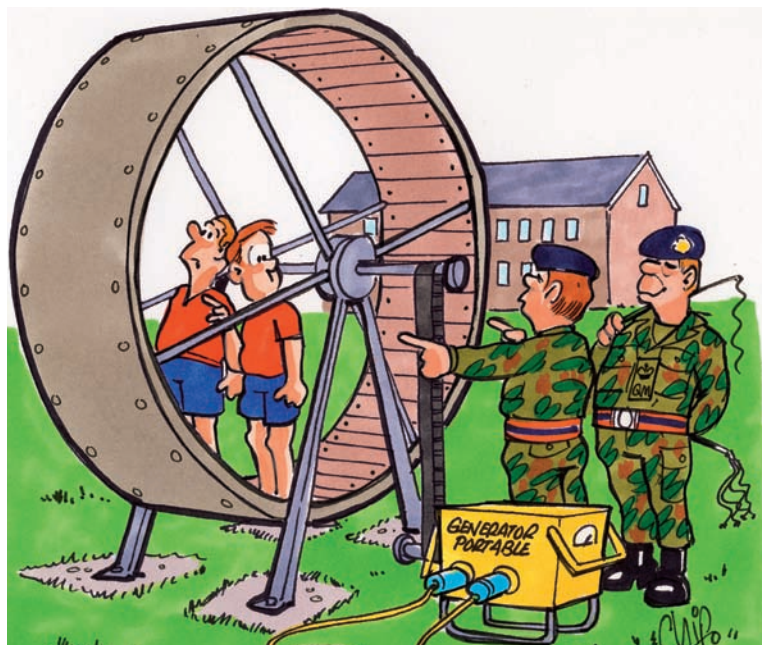


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Tricks of the trade: LCpl Stan McLean, 521 STRE (WD), takes a break from drilling to entertain a group of children in Kuli, northern Ghana

Picture: Steve Dock

Ghana gold-diggers

Sappers on Ex Water Endeavour give impressions of working in Africa



Cpl "Mac" McKone, 521 STRE (WD)

It's my first time here and it's hot. It's difficult to describe that feeling of being somewhere really vast. The villagers are

very friendly and try to chat with you. It's very basic living and you are well off if you have a push bike.

Capt Paul Golding, 521 STRE (WD)

It's my first time in Africa but it is very similar to other places I've worked with the Army. I've had the opportunity to practise combat engineering such as bricklaying and water drilling in a challenging climate and location.



LCpl Terry Glazebrook, 521 STRE (WD)

It's been good to mix my trade with combat engineering and good to do a chilled-out tour as we're always on ops. It's quite hard if you are working in the villages without an interpreter but you just use the good old hand signals.



Cpl Leo Martin, 521 STRE (WD)

It's my first time away with the Army where I can see the culture – in theatre you get shot at. I like the simplicity of the way the villagers live their lives and it makes you realise how overly materialistic the western world is.

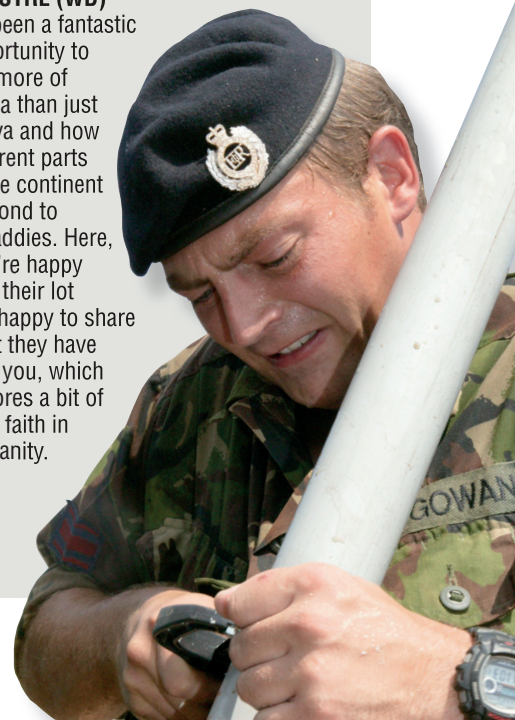
Spr Henry Forson, 530 Engr Regt

I'm Ghanaian and have been to rural areas where most villages have some water, but Tolon-Kumbungu has not even been touched. The standard of living is poor so it's very satisfying to work here and I think I've paid my dues.



Sgt Jim McGowan, 521 STRE (WD)

It's been a fantastic opportunity to see more of Africa than just Kenya and how different parts of the continent respond to squaddies. Here, they're happy with their lot and happy to share what they have with you, which restores a bit of your faith in humanity.



LCpl Stan McLean, 521 STRE (WD)

It's been an eye-opener. You realise you take things for granted in the UK, but here a little bit of professional knowledge goes an exceptionally long way.



LCpl "Bob" Hope, 521 STRE (WD)

It's been a life-changing experience, realising what I have compared to what these villagers have. We lay a latrine block and then they do it, so we can watch over them and explain what to do.





Chiefs of peace

Global peacekeeping hub in Ghana enlists British Army guidance

Report: Karen Thomas

UN soldiers on a mission to stabilise the West African state of Upper Freonia faced a double whammy – negotiating with a trigger-happy warlord while appeasing demanding journalists hungry for the story.

Rebel troops had snatched a British aid worker and their leader would only consider her release if the world's media documented his benevolence. The UN press officers (POs) had the unenviable task of escorting the journalists into the lion's den.

Angering the warlord with their questions, the media quickly became a target and a volley of gunfire scattered the UN troops, reporters and POs. The

hostage got hit, the press got more of a story than they bargained for and the POs were still stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Although set in a fictional failing state, this scenario reflected the realities of keeping the peace in some of the world's hottest spots. But this media course is just one of a comprehensive range offered by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) to prepare military, police and civilians for the expected and unexpected when they deploy overseas.

It's not by chance the KAIPTC is sited in Ghana and named after one of the world's foremost peacekeepers, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Celebrating their 50th

anniversary of independence, the 60 million people of this small West African nation bask in a long history of global peacekeeping.

Ghana contributes 40 per cent of its armed forces to UN, African Union (AU) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) missions in troubled lands such as Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. With civilians still targeted in places such as Sudan's Darfur region, the demand for professional and effective international intervention increases.

The UK was one of the first partners to recognise and then realise the potential of establishing a peacekeeping training centre in Ghana, and it



Media hot spot: Students, soldiers and simulated press journalists rush into a scenario involving a rioting crowd at the KAIPTC Picture: Steve Dock

continues to be a prominent contributor of funding and resources. Opened in 2004, the KAIPTC is now considered the leading peacekeeping light on the continent, drawing international students from all over Africa.

One of the resources is Col George McGarr, KAIPTC Executive Director and part of the British Advisory and Military Training Team (BMATT) for West Africa. He told *Soldier* it was essential to support Ghana in continuing to keep the global peace at a time when terrorism knows no boundaries. "The UK has an interest in ensuring peace and stability on the African continent.

"We are here as a partner in capacity building and sharing our peace support operations expertise in areas which the Africans have identified as needing help with," he explained, emphasising how the BMATT role had shifted away from hands-on training to implementing systems that enable the KAIPTC to function more effectively.

"We are here sharing our peace support operations expertise in areas which the Africans have identified as needing help with"

Staffed by high-calibre professionals, the centre is now focusing on using the latest technology and support structures to deliver sustainable peacekeeping training. Drawing up a five-year strategy that includes monitoring and evaluation of courses and students, and a business plan, is part of the BMATT capacity building programme for the KAIPTC.

Cmdr Alan Horsley, RN, liaises with donors, coordinates the training programme and assists with the design of some courses, including the media ops package. He was keen to capture feedback on the training and to keep instruction student-oriented and responsive to ever-changing peacekeeping needs.

"I conduct follow-up visits to some of the missions to identify what their training requirements are. I can then assess whether our courses meet their needs and whether some of their staff can assist with facilitating those courses."

Students on the media ops course

told *Soldier* they greatly appreciated the dynamic serials on handling the press in stressful circumstances. Col Charles Richter-Addo, Ghanaian training officer for the ECOWAS Standby Force, said he expected the course to be "good, but not so good".

"We asked for the course and it's fantastic. It comes from experts in the field pointing out the real life aspects. It could be delivered in a folder but that would never be the same."

Just four years old, the KAIPTC is already pushing its boundaries. The internationally-recognised research facilities, housed in the conflict prevention, management and resolution department, will drive the innovations on the way peacekeepers operate in the field.

Despite presenting itself with a monumental task, Col McGarr was confident the KAIPTC was securing a future on the peacekeeping world's centre stage. "It's an elephant and you can only eat an elephant in bite-sized chunks but we have reached another level. The KAIPTC had been a project but now we can operationalise it and expand our links with other centres in Africa and beyond." ■



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First for health

Unsung medical heroes quietly get soldiers back on their fighting feet

PUBLICITY surrounding the conscientious work of the medical teams and hospitals which care for soldiers wounded on operations is finally being given oxygen, writes Karen Thomas.

Combat medics use the “golden hour” to save a bomb blast victim and field hospitals perform emergency surgery. Selly Oak Hospital stabilises the patient and Headley Court gets them back on their feet.

The 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, is leading the way in ensuring the permanently wounded continue in a fulfilling and active Army career (see December issue), and the scars of public stigmatisation are gradually fading.

Yet one group of healthcare professionals, who play an enormous role in keeping the Army fighting fit, have been largely overlooked.

The primary healthcare (PHC) team, including GPs and physiotherapists, might lack the drama of combat medics braving enemy fire but represent a vital link in the chain of care.

Pte Craig Gordon, 1 R Anglian, deployed to Helmand in Afghanistan on Op Herrick 6. He was wounded in the stomach and shoulder while fighting on the front line but, with the help of his mates, he limped onto the Chinook that casevaced him to Camp Bastion.

“The pain relief and healthcare over there was brilliant,” Pte Gordon told *Soldier* during his rehabilitation at the Pirbright PHC centre after being discharged from Selly Oak Hospital.

“Here, I’ve had physiotherapy, had my staples removed and an infection has healed. The physiotherapist ensures I have free movement in my side and shoulder by rubbing tight and tense scar tissue. I’m told everything they’re going to do and if I’ve not understood, they are more than happy to help me understand.”

The Army Primary Healthcare Service (APHCS) has to ensure soldiers are fighting fit for operations – “fitter faster” – by preventing injury and illness. But it is also crucial in the final recovery stages of trauma and injuries incurred in theatre.

The service has an active role in catching soldiers discharged from hospital and completing their rehabilitation back to full health. After extensive restructuring, the service is now more patient-focused with concentrated efforts in staff development to provide technically and professionally excellent facilities.

Brig Timothy Finnegan, RAMC, confirmed that soldiers would be treated from a holistic perspective, in the same way that the NHS approaches patient care. “We put ourselves in the patient’s shoes from when we make a diagnosis to completing therapy – the whole business of treating you as a person,” he told *Soldier*, adding that the voice of grass roots soldiers and what is happening to them in the unit was of paramount importance.

“The physical fitness of young men affects their career but the PHC team is now much more tuned to the balance between work and health.” ■



APHCS delivers:

- General practice services
- Health improvement
- Occupational health
- Prescribing and dispensing
- Rehabilitation
- Community mental health

Report: Mervyn Wynne Jones
Pictures: Stuart Bingham

RECOVERING in the S4 trauma and orthopaedic ward at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, LSgt Adam Ball of the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards is a focused and resilient man.

Eight weeks earlier, he had lost a leg in combat with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Praising the clinical and welfare support he had received – and delaying a lunchtime excursion with two of the hospital's military liaison officers so he could speak to me – the 22-year-old NCO was upbeat . . . and mobile again.

"Just stay positive and let them get on with their job because, believe me, it really does work. I cannot fault it. They've got your best interests at heart and you know you're in good hands. The military nurses have a real sense of what you've been through, obviously, and the NHS nurses are excellent too."

The admiration is mutual. Just going to a pub so soon after a grievous injury reflects the remarkable fitness and mental attitude of troops returning injured from Iraq and Afghanistan. Heartening, too, are the many tales heard in Selly Oak of public support for those hurt on ops.

WO2 Dave Schofield, 2 Yorks, a military liaison officer at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) on the Selly Oak Hospital site, recalled taking a group of injured soldiers from the ward to a nearby pub and of a fellow customer stepping-in to settle the bill.

"Things like that, by no means a one-off, make you realise there are lots of people who really do care about the welfare of these guys," he said.

An elderly patient on the same ward, an old soldier, told his family he wanted donations at his funeral to be given to the hospital's military welfare fund. In due course they were gratefully received.

The RCDM, created in 2001, provides medical support to Service personnel deployed on ops. It does so by training military medical personnel, by researching the best possible methods of treating the wounded in the field and back at home and by providing a clinical

Hospital FIT FOR heroes

Badly wounded guardsman says casualties can have faith in Selly Oak's superb staff

division and staff for a ward managed by the military at Selly Oak Hospital.

Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, told the BBC: "There is nowhere better in the country, nowhere more expert at polytrauma medicine, than the hospital at Selly Oak."

Ward S4 has 39 military nurses who, with matron-led NHS counterparts, deliver round-the-clock care to non-combat and operational military casualties. Kept in close proximity whenever possible, injured soldiers have access to a complete range of surgical specialisms at five Birmingham hospitals.

Maj Christine Birkby, senior military nurse, said: "We try as best we can, depending on clinical need, to cohort patients together on the ward. Overall, it is working well and everyone is integrating."

She admitted it could be distressing to see badly injured soldiers arriving at the hospital, but there was a real buzz when they visited during their rehabilitation phase and told staff "it's all down to you".

"The downside can be reading the

often ill-informed stuff that the press recycle about this place. There's no doubt that it affects us all morale-wise. Nowhere's perfect, but the quality of care here is second-to-none."

NHS matron Marie Hale agreed. "It's soul-destroying," she said. "I don't buy newspapers any more. We've learned a lot together, both civilian and military. There's no doubt there were difficulties and challenges at first and perhaps a clash of cultures, but it's about looking forward now."

"What would I say to a soldier wondering whether he might be here one day? I would reassure him that we fully understand his journey, that the entire clinical team understands the extraordinary circumstances of his point of injury, that we deliver the highest quality care, and that he is at the very centre of everything we do."

Maj Andy Main RLC, who is in charge of the military liaison officers, said: "The lows are when you see our lads come in, but the highs are when you see them recover. It's unbelievable, and it can get quite emotional. In more than two decades in the Army, this is far and away the best job I've had."

LSgt Ball, whose regiment keeps in regular touch while he recovers from his injury, said: "It's a big shock to the system. One minute you're war-fighting, and the next you're a casualty. I'm a positive man though and, despite the bad days and a few nightmares, I look ahead. I've seen a mate with a similar injury and I see how well he's getting on with life; it gives me confidence for the future." ■

Right, Road to recovery: LSgt Adam Ball, who lost a leg in combat with the Taliban, at Selly Oak
Left, Top team: RCDM Commandant-designate Col Chris Parker, NHS Matron Marie Hale and senior military nurse Maj Christine Birkby





Patients now our best advocates

RCDM Commandant-designate Col Chris Parker said: "Day after day you see hospital trust staff going out of their way to ensure the best possible care for our Service patients but also helping us to create a military environment around these patients in which both they and their families can feel as comfortable as possible.

"It is a very positive partnership and one that I am confident will develop and endure over the decades to come.

"There have been some problems; not to acknowledge that would be a disservice to some patients and families who have felt their experience here to have been less than satisfactory. However, we have learned from those experiences and many of our patients are now our best advocates. I feel that a corner has been turned but we cannot and will not take our eye off the ball.

"We are also on the cusp of seeing Birmingham realise its ambition – of which we will be part – of opening a brand-new, state-of-the-art hospital, one of the biggest and most modern in Europe."

Whale of an idea

Sapper 'chopper' will help medics save lives

Report: Heidi Mines
Picture: Mike Weston

SAPPERS designed the Royal Albert Hall and Pentonville Prison and so the construction of a helicopter in their time off was a walk in the park for a squadron of modern-day Royal Engineers.

Weighing in at 6.5 tonnes and 11.3 metres long, the Chinook simulator took a handful of soldiers from 15 Field Support Squadron, 38 Engineer Regiment, six months to build.

The idea was born over a pint in a pub during a conversation between a medic and Maj Paul Youngman, OC 15 Sqn.

The medic said there was a need to practise casualty drills on a Chinook while the engineer officer was keen to utilise the skills of his men.

Maj Youngman was aware that Claro Barracks at Ripon had the space and tools and a suitable workshop.

"The concept was thought up with the simple idea to help save lives," he said.

"We had the conversation last June and by December the project was finished."

Chinooks are used extensively in Afghanistan to transport troops and equipment. The twin-rotor aircraft also plays a vital role in saving the lives of badly wounded soldiers.

Often the first mode of transport in a long chain to evacuate a casualty, the Chinook is the obvious choice because of its capacity to hold 24 stretchers.

At a time when the number of aero-medical extractions on operations is the highest for years

– and increasing – the chance for medics to rehearse their casevac drills is all the more important. Treating a casualty on board a vibrating and deafeningly noisy Chinook in flight is a real challenge.

But with an already stretched joint helicopter force, opportunities for medics to train with an actual aircraft were limited – until now.

The design and construction of the mock-up chopper was overseen by WO2 (QMSI) Bob Munson, whose team worked at weekends to ensure it was ready on time.

No minor detail was overlooked by the sapper team. He explained: "The seats are simulated by wooden blocks which can be removed.

"I did look into using the same seating system you find in a Chinook but they are very scarce even for the rotary force."

The simulator is perfect in all the important details, from the electronic ramp to the number of rivets and tie-downs on the floor.

Included is a sound system that blasts out 85 decibels to recreate the relentless noise that confronts medics in real conditions.

As WO2 Munson walks around the hulk of steel – already nicknamed the "beached whale" – it is clear that he is proud of what he and his team have achieved.

The mock-up is still missing a couple of items, though.

"Originally the criteria was for an articulated simulator that would move from side to side and large fans to simulate a downdraft, but there simply wasn't enough time," he said.

'Treating a casualty on board a vibrating and deafeningly noisy Chinook in flight is a real challenge'

The simulator is now at Strensall Barracks, near York, ready for medics to get stuck in.

Maj Youngman added: "HQ Land Command is considering the possibility of several more being built. I am really pleased with what we have achieved here." ■



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— W02 British infantry serving with US Forces



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



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Picture: Mike Weston

Touch and go

Aircrews rehearse quick-response supply drops for Army back-up

Report: Cliff Caswell

IT was a situation that would make the hair of most civilian pilots stand on end – descending over an uninviting expanse of water with no trace of a runway in sight.

The monstrous shadow of the C-130 Hercules was testament to how low we were flying; on the approaching coast there were homes and gardens, vague at first then suddenly closer and more intimate with each passing second.

Yet the crew remained unflappable as they put their aircraft into a left-hand bank to line up with the beach, the undercarriage whining into position.

Altitude reports tripped off in calm, measured tones as the Hercules straightened out to line up with two orange markers on the sand – the threshold of a surreal runway near the surf and the unloading point for the simulated soldiers and kit stored in the cargo hold.

This might have been an exercise, but it was a serious display of capability. Touching down on the shores of Pembrey Sands, South Wales, proved troops could be delivered to

unconventional locations. In three serials, the crews rehearsed off-loading equipment in a benign environment before cranking up the pressure to deal with a simulated threat zone and, finally, upping the tempo to a high-intensity scenario.

“It is a huge responsibility for us when we are carrying fellow military people,” said Wg Cdr Fraser Spence, OC Ops Wing at RAF Lyneham.

“When a job comes up it is our role to support the Army. Although we don’t do massive amounts of this type of flying, we obviously have to be able to do it should we be called upon to do so.”

The senior officer’s comments were endorsed by load master Flt Sgt Niall Hanson. “We take our responsibility to the troops very seriously,” he said.

“At the end of the day we are one of their assets and we work for them.”

As well as actually flying the sorties, coordinating with the soldiers in the aircraft, and getting them out quickly and safely, are key areas for crews.

Wg Cdr Greg Cook, 47 Squadron

RAF, stressed that training to operate with the Army was crucial.

“This is one of the reasons we are landing on this beach – the more you can make a situation look familiar, the easier it becomes,” he added.

Back on the sand, the crews were certainly showing their mettle. In a series of circuits and landings, they managed to put the aircraft down between the marker posts, unload their cargo, and get airborne again in double-quick time. They would return again to repeat the exercise at night, ensuring they had the capability to deliver troops in all conditions.

The crews need to be proficient. Operating thousands of miles from home in developing countries and hostile conditions has become a way of life for British Forces and making sure troops get into position safely is vital.

Four decades after its introduction, the C-130 is more in demand than at any time in its service.

Knowing how to use it to the limits of its capability could be crucial in future operations. ■

‘We take our responsibility to the troops very seriously’

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Sentinel of the sky

Watchkeeper, the British Army's all-seeing eye, set for take-off in 2010

Report: Cliff Caswell

THE countdown is under way to the arrival of a cutting-edge Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which will give commanders the intelligence edge on the battlefield.

Jointly built by Thales and Elbit Systems, the Watchkeeper aircraft will prowls the skies above operational theatres from 2010, keeping close tabs on any enemy.

Packed with sophisticated sensor equipment, the UAV can fly in all weathers anywhere in the world.

It can remain in flight for more than 15 hours at a time, giving commanders around-the-clock coverage.

The final design of the kit has now been confirmed after a review of the project by the MoD.

A full-scale model was shown at the Defence Systems and Equipment International exhibition at London's Docklands, where it became a talking point among visitors.

Troops from 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery, who will be the first to deploy the system, have been working closely with Thales on the project. The soldiers are highly experienced, having already worked with a full suite of unmanned aircraft on operations.

Based on the Hermes 450 UAV platform, which is already providing back-up to British Forces in Afghanistan, Watchkeeper has an Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capability. It can carry a laser target designator as well as advanced sensors.

The aircraft is linked in with the wider military info network, meaning any data gleaned from sorties can be fed back quickly to commanders needing an up-to-the-minute picture of the battlefield.

Despite the complex on-board equipment, the Watchkeeper is said to be relatively simple to fly. A crew of two command the UAV from a ground control station, with one member responsible for steering the aircraft and the other monitoring the surveillance kit.

Formal pilot training is not required – take-offs and landings are carried out automatically – and the aircraft is simple to maintain with easy access to key systems.

Bosses at Thales reckon the £700 million Watchkeeper project, which is one of the largest unmanned aircraft programmes in Europe, will give military chiefs a battle-winning asset.

Commanders will be able to track enemy activity without having to deploy troops to dangerous areas, and the aircraft will be capable of loitering above a battle area to keep a close eye on the situation while a target is attacked.

Thales Aerospace managing director Richard Deakin is confident that the kit will deliver in every respect and prove to be a cost-effective addition to the ranks of the British Army. Deakin

added: "The finalisation of the air vehicle is a major milestone in the programme. Watchkeeper is a unique system that will form a key part of the UK's network-enabled capability – a competent and reliable UAV carrying

advanced sensors, linked to a network of command, control, exploitation and dissemination elements."

Alex Dorrian, chief executive officer of Thales UK, was equally enthusiastic.

He said: "The Watchkeeper system will provide the UK with a powerful asset, capable of operating in theatres around the world and in all weather conditions.

"This is an exciting glimpse into the future of aerospace technology and we are proud to be leading such a cutting-edge programme." ■

'Watchkeeper is an exciting glimpse into the future of aerospace'

Basra debut

Popular journalist recalls her baptism of fire during operations in Iraq

Interview: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: BBC

IT was a broadcast that underlined the ever-present danger to troops in the Middle East.

Reporting from her first assignment in a conflict zone, BBC journalist Kate Silverton had been delivering a piece to camera in Basra when mortar bombs began falling not too far away.

"We heard a thud in the distance," the BBC *Breakfast* and *News 24* presenter recalled. "The lance corporal with me whispered 'mortar' but I did not hear him properly as we were in the tank park with engines running.

"But then he yelled and we dived in different directions. I managed to slide on my knees and under a lorry, still holding my microphone and still trying to stay on air.

"The soldiers shouted at me to join them behind a Warrior. Then they teased me for running in a full circle before sliding beneath the truck and we all laughed. That's why I like working with the military. We share the same sense of humour."

Already a familiar face in the media, Kate won the respect of troops and commanders alike for her stint in Basra over Christmas 2006, when she covered an operation against insurgents infiltrating the Iraqi police.

She has continued to forge a strong reputation for her coverage of military issues by interviewing veterans at the Falklands War commemorations and

proving her fitness in a show about extreme kayaking.

Getting out and about with the Army was the culmination of a lifelong dream for Essex-born Kate, who became a member of Durham University Officers' Training Corps while studying for her degree in psychology.

The self-confessed "tomboy of the family" had proved herself to be an adventurous youngster, developing a teenage passion for pistol shooting.

"I would have loved to have signed up with the infantry," the 37-year-old, who also studied elements of Arabic and Middle East history for her degree, recalled. "But I wanted to be a war correspondent as a little girl and, two years before university, I spent time in Africa and worked on a kibbutz.

"In addition I went on an Operation Raleigh, where a lot of the leaders were former military personnel, and many of my friends went on to join the Forces."

After finishing her university course, however, it was the lure of the city that attracted Kate rather than a career as a reporter. "I went to work in corporate finance, which wasn't particularly suited to me, or I to it," she admitted.

"I knew that if I didn't try to become a journalist, it would never happen – but from the moment I stepped into a newsroom, it felt like home."

Having moved to Newcastle and

established herself as a local reporter, Kate served as a newsreader for Tyne Tees Television before returning to London where she was snapped up by BBC *News 24*.

The journalist, whose father was a National Serviceman in the Royal Army Service Corps, finally realised her dream of becoming a war reporter after persistently asking her bosses if she

could be embedded with British troops in southern Iraq.

"I had been asking if I could get out to Basra and I think they called my bluff when they replied that I could go over Christmas," Kate

laughed. "I was delighted although I had obvious reservations. But for me, it is not that you should not get scared, it is about how you overcome your fear."

Having arrived in Basra, Kate and her crew were taken out on patrol.

She also joined an operation, which culminated in the demolition of the infamous Jameat prison.

Despite the white-knuckle ride, Kate recalled that she had felt in safe hands with the troops.

"I was impressed with absolutely everyone that I met – they were determined to see the job through to the end," she said. "As I watched the soldiers bed down in Qatar or set up base in Basra Palace I thought the public should see more of this. It completely dispels any myth of the young soldier complaining."

Exhilarated by her Iraq experience, Kate is keen to head out to Afghanistan. She has also been dabbling with extreme sports, capturing the imagination of soldiers in her *Ultimate White Water* show.

Kate, who competed in the 2006 London Triathlon, climbed and kayaked around the UK coastline in a test of her courage and her strength.

Having received several letters from soldiers astonished at the challenge, Kate returned the compliment by voicing her respect for the way they carried out their role in theatre.

"Regardless of what people might think about the political situation that keeps them there, one has to admire these young people who are living and working in extraordinary circumstances," she added. ■

'I was impressed with absolutely everyone that I met – they were determined to see the job through to the end'



Kate Silverton – MY ARMY

News face: Kate in familiar territory in the BBC News 24 studio

Below left, War reporter: On assignment with British soldiers in Iraq



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From weekend warriors to front-line fighters: The TA's two faces – on exercise in the UK during the Cold War and on active service in Afghanistan



Army centurions

First Reserves celebrate 100 years of service to Queen and country

Report: Cliff Caswell

ONCE they were the option of last resort, unkindly dubbed by some as weekend warriors and a part-time force rarely committed to action alongside their Regular colleagues.

But in the high-intensity battles of Afghanistan, the volatile streets of Iraq and peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, the troops of the Territorial Army have very much come of age.

Now it is near-impossible to distinguish volunteers from the rest of their military counterparts. They are a vital part of ops and have won the respect of fellow soldiers and the public for their courage and professionalism in the field. On all fronts, 2008 is a fitting time for the TA to celebrate its centenary year.

Parliament amalgamated the mounted yeomanry and volunteers into the modern TA in 1907, with its first units stood up the following year.

The force was mobilised during the First and Second World Wars, when its troops fought shoulder-to-shoulder with their Regular counterparts and were key to both victories.

But the volunteers were neglected during the Cold War, becoming under-manned and poorly equipped. While the TA was bolstered following a

review in the early 1970s, it was never regarded as a credible force either by the government or the Regular Army.

It was not until the late 1990s that the TA came into its own as the British military became increasingly committed to overseas missions.

With peacekeeping in the Balkans, as well as high-intensity operations in the wake of the September 11 attacks on the United States, the volunteers very much became the Army's reserve of first choice.

Nearly 7,000 volunteers were deployed during the 2003 fighting in Iraq while the Territorial Army continues to contribute 1,200 soldiers every year to support missions in the Balkans, southern Afghanistan and Iraq.

Under the banner of the One Army concept, the troops are well-trained, well-equipped and welcomed for the vital contribution they make to operational success. They are also celebrated for the unique skills they bring with them from their civilian jobs.

"To be honest, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a Territorial and a Regular these days," said WO2 Richard Cutland, a member of the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment and

senior recruiter in East London. "We have a lot of respect for what they do."

"In our office at Ilford we have a TA recruiter for three days a week – we have seen a huge increase in volunteers coming through the door." WO2 Cutland added: "I worked with the TA during the last Gulf War and you would not have known the difference between them and the Regulars."

His sentiments were shared by Brig James Everard, Commander of the 20th Armoured Brigade, who led soldiers on a six-month tour of southern Iraq in 2006. He said: "Our experience of the TA on Op Telic 8 is we could not have done it without them."

But the senior officer pointed out that a good relationship between the two entities needed continual development, particularly with the rapid operational tempo set to continue. He believed the Regular Army needed to nurture the volunteers and bring them into the fold, and that the TA also needed to play their part in integration.

"On their side, they must demonstrate a commitment to the common cause – once that partnership has been addressed, then success is guaranteed," Brig Everard added. ■



The Fall Guy

Soldier-turned-stuntman
Steve Truglia set to tackle
skydiving's final frontier



Interview: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Scott McIntyre

WHEN stuntman and former Territorial Army soldier Steve Truglia steps out to attempt the ultimate skydive, he will be confronted with a sight only astronauts have seen.

Clad in the spacesuit keeping him alive in an airless stratosphere at 120,000ft – three times as high as commercial airlines routinely fly – he will be standing at the gateway to space, topped by a black sky and an infinite starscape.

Far below will be the dark blue of the atmosphere where the curvature of the earth will be clearly visible. And when he throws himself towards it in a free-fall destined to last seven minutes, he expects to break the sound barrier on the way down.

It promises to be one of the most risky adventures ever undertaken. If Steve's helium balloon makes it through stratospheric winds of hundreds of miles an hour during the four-and-a-half hour ascent, he will be dependent on technology to keep him alive. At this altitude, there is little room for error.

But the veteran soldier, who served most of the 1980s in the TA and Royal Marines Reserve, has the right background for the test. He has undertaken more than 1,000 military and civilian jumps, including specialist high altitude work.

"One of the problems in attempting to break the world record is that there is no air to skydive in at 120,000ft," said the qualified Army physical training instructor, who lives in East London.

"According to the scientists, this could send you into a spin – and you could spin at up to 5,000 revolutions per minute.

"Another big problem with attempting the world record is the wind – at around 80,000ft you encounter the Gulf Stream – and that could tear the balloon."

Despite the challenges and the dangerous environment he will be operating in, Steve is relishing the opportunity to challenge the current 102,800ft world record, set by decorated US Air Force officer Joseph Kittinger, which has stood since 1960.

The stunt coordinator, who was involved in the production of *Saving Private Ryan* and a number of James Bond movies, is launching his claim to the stratosphere this year by hurling himself out of a balloon at 52,000ft over East Anglia. If successful, he will break the current European record and begin preparations for the world record jump, which is likely to take place over Canada if he can secure the thousands of pounds he needs in sponsorship to undertake the adventure.

"Obviously jumping from these altitudes is dangerous, but modern equipment is good and I'm a risk assessor by nature," Steve smiled. "It also suits my personality – it's like an extreme version of the old military balloon jumps.

"I've recently been training hard in the gym because the attempts are going to be physically uncomfortable. I'm expecting to put in around 200 jumps before the real thing as well as doing some full dress rehearsals."

Even jumping from 52,000ft will expose Steve to significant physical demands. Backed by an experienced support team, he will be wearing a special pressure jacket, which will squeeze his chest every time he draws a breath and help him exhale.

"I'm going to be on oxygen for two hours before the balloon takes off, and there is going to be quite a lot of mental stress involved," he said. "It is going to take about 90 minutes to get to the right height, and then three or four minutes of free-fall. I should achieve speeds of up to 300mph, although it could be faster if I'm head down. I'll be using my GPS kit and compass to get to the landing zone."

Steve admitted some nerves about the forthcoming challenges

and was also full of praise for the current world record holder, whose achievements as part of the US military's Project Excelsior have been unsurpassed for 40 years.

"Kittinger was testing the effects of high altitude bail-out over Talarosa in

New Mexico and actually carried out three jumps, one of which is the current record," he said. "Every time I see the footage of his jump it makes me nervous.

"You have to get up to that height and then be able to physically step off the edge. The temperature up there is -100C and we don't know what the effects of breaking the sound barrier will be on the human body. Seven minutes of free-fall is a long time."

Despite the known risks, the perils of the unknown and the demands of high-altitude skydiving on his body, Steve believes that his years of military training and discipline will set him on the road to success.

"I can categorically say that I would never have been attempting these records, nor worked as a stunt coordinator, had I not served in the TA," said Steve. "Nearly all the professional skills I have learned have come from my time in the Army.

"From my parachuting, to my arctic warfare course and medical training, soldiering gave me the best days of my life. I served with a highly motivated group of people and the job more than lived up to my expectations.

"It was a lot of fun." ■

'We do not know what the effects of breaking the sound barrier will be on the human body'

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TALKBACK

Brief is best

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

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

Give girls clothes that fit

FOR months the girls in our AGC detachment have been whingeing about the state of our military uniforms and wondering if the Army will ever move with the times and make clothing that fits the body of a woman by taking into account our hips and boobs.

As we were issued our Iraq clothing we laughed at the sizes and the extra material that hangs over one's crotch area, and the size of the zip, which tends to be longer than our lower frame.

Is it too much to ask that one day female members of the Army may be tailored for? The police, ambulance and fire services manage to do so.

And yes we do realise stockings and skirts are not appropriate for our Iraq tour. – **Female members of the AGC Detachment, 1 Scots.**

PRIZE LETTER

Brig David Martin, D Log Commodities, DE & S, responds: I am very grateful

to the female SNCO for her very clear description of her ill-fitting clothing. I hadn't realised that it was so challenging to provide clothing for the female anatomy. Clearly we need to do better.

I am inviting her to ring my Defence Clothing IPT and we will arrange a visit for her to Caversfield. That will provide an opportunity for her to exchange ideas on how we can address the problems she identifies with both the IPT and our main supplier.



"I'm afraid, Sergeant, your new form-fitting combats are attracting unwelcome criticism from the local clerics."

PS...

I READ with interest the reply to Cpl C Gibson's letter ("Paying for food I don't eat", Oct). I quote: "Where the Army offers single personnel in barracks food and accommodation, rather like a bed and breakfast, if you choose not to take the food element you still have to pay the entire bill."

If soldiers' accommodation is really like B & B, why do we have to pay for TV licences as individuals and not as a group? There have been many improvements during the past 20 years, but more can be done to make life easier for soldiers. Pay As You Dine is a good example of improvement, but like many new ideas it takes time to bed in. – Cpl J Mulherine, Op Telic 11.

Troopers aren't answer if you have a family car

WHY can we no longer claim Motor Mileage Allowance (MMA) on posting?

I have been posted from Germany and tried to claim MMA through the new JPA system, but was told we are no longer allowed to do so because a trooping flight is available.

Surely the Army understands that the majority of soldiers have cars which they have to drive back home, with all their family, luggage and sometimes even pets, so why is the Army not helping with this cost?

Using trooping flights to move a family on posting just doesn't work.

What are you supposed to do with

your own transport? – **WO2 D Brown, 4 Bn REME.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds: I agree that the system does not seem to reflect reality. Moving on posting is duty travel and should be taken by the most economical route, which in the case of Germany is the trooper. A proportion of your local overseas allowance (LOA) rate is predicated on the assumption that you will sell and buy a car on posting.

Having said that, we are looking into this issue with a view to finding ways of meeting everyone's aspirations, while still maintaining the trooper service.

Five pages of your letters and emails on issues of the day

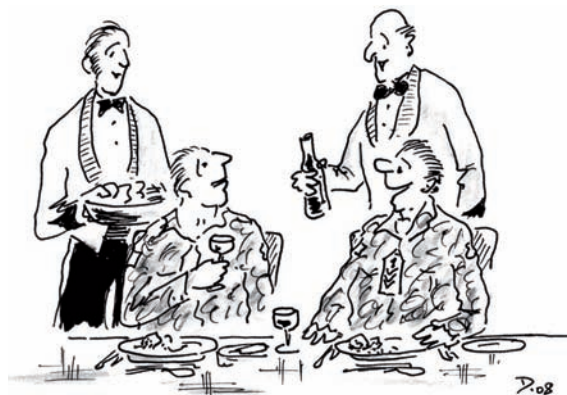
PAYD doesn't tick my box

I HAVE been a member of three WOs' and sergeants' messes and have seen the decimation of meal times due to Pay As You Dine.

While I believe PAYD works well for junior NCOs, it is genuinely sub-standard for the mess. It has created an environment in which civilian management does not care about quality of food and continually finds ways to save money, restricting what you are entitled to.

How much does a meal cost? £1.70-ish with extra messing? Think again. If you have no money in your wallet you use your bank card (which costs £1.25 in the regimental cash line, if it isn't out of order). Failing that, you have to spend a minimum amount to obtain cash-back (if the shop is open).

Clutching your newly acquired £10 note you head to the mess to be told there is no chance of getting a core meal because they have been instructed



"Your letter to *Soldier* seems to have had some effect."

not to make any extra for people who haven't pre-booked.

So you go for the other options. Now you hear that this will be cooked to order, will cost extra, and that there's no chance of a hot dessert. Soup is a no-go and the only realistic meal you're going to get within an hour is sausage and chips.

You sit next to your friends who are equally not pleased – it turns out there

is no dessert for them because they forgot to tick the box even though they have paid for it.

Part of the perks of joining the mess was getting away from cookhouse food, but now we just get treated like we're hardly worth the effort. Folk have been driven to their rooms so thank goodness for the microwave. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: I am sorry to hear that you are not receiving the standard of service you expect. PAYD can and has delivered the service required.

Can I suggest you address this issue through your Supervising Officer (normally the QM) and Messing Committee. The Supervising Officer should hold a weekly meeting with the contractor and attend a monthly meeting chaired by the SO2 Contract Authorising Officer.

If contractors fail to meet their contractual obligations, financial penalties, referred to as Service Credits, can be imposed on them.

Did you ask the right people?

I NOTICED with interest the selection of people asked for their opinions of Pay As You Dine (Vox pop, Dec).

They included two married SNCOs, a young officer currently enjoying the "eat-for-free when you are on duty" clause and a JNCO who only uses the cookhouse for the same reason.

I don't believe this is an accurate cross section of the personnel affected by the PAYD scheme. For example, as

far as I am aware no one has asked what married unaccompanied soldiers think of the 30-plus per cent increase in their food charge.

PAYD recently went live in the tri-unit camp in which I am based. Despite a large number of people being away on exercise we are still having to queue outside the cookhouse, to be herded inside in small groups like cattle and, after collecting our food, having the very real pleasure of watching it go cold

while we queue up to pay for it.

On the plus side the newly hung pictures and pointless leather sofas are very nice and the new children's playground outside the cookhouse really enhances the dining experience.

As for people who think PAYD is saving them money and is a good thing, remember the old saying "When you have them by the whatsits, their hearts and mind will surely follow". – **Name and address supplied.**

PS...

I KEEP hearing people in the media say I am not grateful for the work being done on my behalf by Servicemen and women.

I am a 62-year-old with no connection to the military but I have been profoundly grateful since childhood for the freedoms I enjoy and I have always been aware of the sacrifices thousands of unknown (to me) men and women of the Armed Forces have made since 1914 to protect and defend my life, liberty and freedom. – Brian O'Ready, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

Confused by smoking ban

AS a single soldier I am confused by the MoD policy on smoking in single living accommodation (SLA).

I live in the old style accommodation, not the new Z-type, which I can fully understand being smoking-free.

MoD policy states that SLA is classed as private accommodation as we pay monthly rent, but we have just found out that the garrison commander has decreed that the smoking ban will extend to SLA.

The soldiers who live in the SLA had already agreed that all communal areas should be smoke-free but now we find

we can't even smoke in our own rooms.

This ruling does not apply to those in married quarters within the wire on the camp. I think some clarification of the MoD rules is needed. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), responds: MoD policy is set out in 2007DIN 07-007. There is a complete ban in the workplace, but commanders have the discretion to prohibit, or not, smoking in SLA where it forms part of their establishment.

Your garrison commander has decided to ban smoking in your SLA.

Food story was pure propaganda

I HAVE never read so many stories in *Soldier* about military caterers (Nov issue) and I've also never thought of the magazine as a propaganda tool.

The feature "Hot potato" [on Pay As You Dine (PAYD)] does nothing but tell us what great things civilian companies are doing. Why? Profit, that's why. They are not doing it for nothing.

PAYD is a cost-cutting exercise.

I agree that soldiers should not pay for what they are not eating, but let's put it into perspective. I don't work in a PAYD kitchen yet, but it's only a matter of time. My soldiers can help themselves, within reason. Under PAYD they will get what they pay for. To satisfy their appetites they'll spend more for more portions – these firms don't give food away. Under PAYD they will eventually pay a lot more.

You raised the prospect of soldiers running out of money by the end of the month and chefs facing skill fade. The reality is that it's all about money.

A fellow corporal says there is not much choice on the menu, but the value for money is fantastic. Am I missing something? A senior NCO is quoted as saying we've been given the chance to get to grips with commercial catering and to take civvy qualifications. I'm sure DFSS in Aldershot already offers military chefs civilian qualifications. I know they do because I've got some.

As for the letter headlined "Chefs' bleak future" (Talkback), I can only agree with someone who has the experience and, like me, is deeply concerned for our jobs and way of life.

Were the soldiers quoted in Vox pop ("Sound bites") the only ones asked about PAYD? Not one person has told me they prefer it to the old system, let alone nine. Someone has cleverly used *Soldier* for blatant propaganda.

When I joined in 1991, I was told I was a soldier first and a tradesman second. I still believe this, but who am I kidding? We used to be the only army in the world with its own professional catering corps, now we're going the same way as the Americans. The death of the military chef is on the way. Napoleon would disapprove. – **Name and address provided.**

Our pages reflect views official and unofficial, including yours. The criticisms of PAYD you and others have made have received a lot more space than the stories we have researched from MoD sources. We hope that is balanced coverage. – Editor



"The light at the end of the tunnel, mate. That's what they're on about all the time."



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My low-level hiccup? No bounty for months

I READ with interest the article in June's edition headlined "JPA hits the ground running".

The "low-level hiccups" mentioned have meant some of us have not been paid in four months and still haven't received training bounties due in April.

My unit still hasn't got computers for gaining access to JPA. We can't use the old system to log details of courses attended for pay and we can't use the new system because we don't have it.

I complained and received around £200, which meant I could pay a few bills and attend a course.

Do the people responsible realise they are messing up the finances of hundreds of people who work part-time outside the Territorial Army to ensure they can spend long hours within the TA keeping units running smoothly?

I can't afford to spend any more time working with the TA unless I am paid in full at the end of each month, because

currently they are a bad debt and not to be trusted.

I look forward to someone taking this sorry state of affairs to an industrial tribunal. In my unit I estimate between us we are owed more than £90,000. This isn't small change and it is costing us interest we should be earning in our bank accounts. – **JNCO, 3 PWRR (name supplied).**

Col Danny McCulloch, DSPS(A), replies: *I apologise to the JNCO for the delay he has experienced in getting his bounty, which has now been paid to him. The initial attempt failed due to incorrect dates being input. Regarding any other pay problems experienced by him and his colleagues, his unit administrators are not aware of any issues but stand by to assist where they can.*

● MORE of your letters on the subject of JPA appear on Page 53 and also on our website – www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



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Posting put me in debt

I WAS posted to Germany last January and, as usual, nothing went smoothly with the move. My furniture turned up two weeks after I started work and had I not taken leave it would have been a month after I started.

For some reason no address could be given three months earlier even though the flat I was allocated had been empty for some time before my move-in.

The sub-standard removals firm used by the Army meant that in addition to breakages, some items didn't actually arrive from my old quarter in the UK.

I have been in my flat for six months but have not paid a day's rent despite trips to the station staff office and the

regimental HQ office. Neither have I paid any utility bills and somehow even my contribution in lieu of council tax (CILOCT) is not correct. Now I'm in debt to the Army because I owe six month's quarter and utilities charges.

I've been a single father since 2002 and still Glasgow can't get that right. It is hard juggling work with a six-year-old, and when I give 100 per cent to the Army I don't expect these problems.

I am a tanker driver-operator and if I filled up with the wrong fuel I'd be charged. How do clerks get away with incompetence? – **Cpl McMahon, 2 LSR.**

Col Danny McCulloch, DSPS(A), replies: I regret

the delay in actioning Cpl McMahon's quartering charges and the considerable inconvenience that this has caused. The charges were input for the first time to his pay account in August and deductions for the arrears started in October.

Unfortunately his move took place during the JPA cut-over period, between January and March 2007. At that time there was a freeze on putting information of this kind into JPA and direction was given to Defence Estates (SSO) to input the housing form (K1325), on quarter occupation, from April 1. This clearly did not happen, thus the unacceptable delay. I am now looking at why this delay occurred to ensure that it can be avoided in the future.

My pay's £400 short a month

I AM a pilot based in Germany and in January I was taken off high band pay and placed on the low band.

I am around £400 short each month as Glasgow takes back what they think I owe them. I believe I'm owed about £5,000. My admin staff have tried to get this sorted to the best of their ability, but get no answers from Glasgow. At one point Glasgow thought I was AGC.

I return to Iraq this month and am disgusted that pay takes so long to be sorted. In civvy street those responsible

would be sacked. I know of at least four other soldiers with pay issues. I've been trying to rectify this problem for ten months. – **Sgt KWright, 1 AAC.**

Col Jeremy Taylor, SPVA Assistant Director Military Services, responds: It would appear that in preparation for the Army transition to JPA, amendments were made to Sgt Wright's records which resulted in a deduction of pay in February 2007 for the period covering March 31, 2006 to January 31, 2007.

This effectively moved him back from higher to lower pay so on transition to JPA 1 he showed as Sgt Lower Level 2. His trade of AAC soldier supports only the lower rates of pay.

Under normal circumstances JPA Form E021 would be submitted by his unit, which would allow the trade to be changed. Sgt Wright's unit has been contacted to establish what action was taken to rectify the problem. They will now raise JPA Form E021 to place him in the correct trade,

which will give him the higher rate of pay backdated to April.

They will also action payment from the date of promotion, March 31, 2006, to March 31, 2007, which covers the legacy Army pay system period.

This was obviously a legacy Army pay system issue which was carried over to the JPA system, which thankfully has now been corrected, ensuring Sgt Wright was paid at the end of October and also that he received all backdated arrears due to him.

Scotland's other tank regiment

WITH reference to "Amazing return" (Nov), congratulations to The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on their recent release, but they are one of two Scottish tank regiments, the other, of course, being the 1st Royal Tank Regiment. – **WO1 D A Simpson, Netheravon.**

More letters at TALKBACK online

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

- I was posted during JPA transition and have not had a single correct pay statement since.
- My substitution pay wasn't paid because it was incorrectly input on JPA.
- I would like to thank you for your part in trying to sort out my pay problems. If only it ended there.

Separated from my allowance

WHO else is getting sick of unit admin offices using JPA as an excuse for every pay-related glitch? I have still had no satisfactory answer to the following query about Longer Separation Allowance (LSA).

In March and April I was away for seven weeks on a course, during which I was entitled to LSA. I was told it would be in my bank along with my normal pay. It wasn't. My admin office said that due to the old system being switched off and problems with JPA, my claim was being sent manually.

Since then I have been on a two-week exercise in Poland and a two-week

exercise in Sennelager, entitling me to 28 days' LSA. That has been paid, but there's still no sign of the LSA for March and April. – **Name and address supplied.**

Col Danny McCulloch, DSPS(A), replies: I'm sorry for the inconvenience caused to the NCO by the late payment of his LSA. I'm afraid this may sound like a well-worn excuse but the payment due in April coincided with the roll-out of JPA and, despite the best efforts of his unit, it failed to materialise. The payments have now been made and I would like to thank the NCO for sticking with it over this difficult time.

PS...

I READ a letter (Sept) from a female student nurse hoping to join the Territorial Army. She complained about the lack of photographs depicting Servicewomen compared to the number depicting men.

She went on to state that of those photos, one (a cartoon) depicted a "semi-naked" nurse and another a female on a game show. May I suggest the lady in question either waits until she is in the Services before she judges us, or that she decides on a different career? – **Capt G N Laing, OC SIB Cyprus.**

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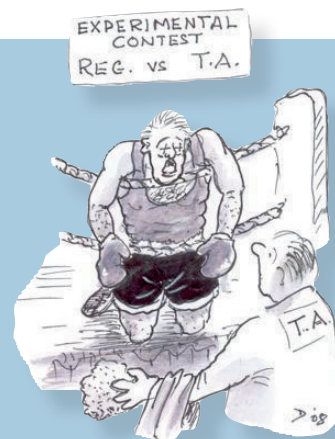
Regular sport should be good for all

AS a Territorial Army soldier I asked about entering the Army individual boxing championships but was told that due to Army Sports and Games Regulations, TA soldiers are not allowed to enter Regular Army competitions.

One of the things that attracted me to the TA was the sporting opportunities the Army has to offer. Considering the "One Army" recruiting campaign, it appears this is only true when it suits them. The exclusion is unfair and

another issue that divides Regular and TA soldiers. – **Name and address supplied.**

Col Chris Harris, Secretary, Army Sport Control Board, replies: Under current regulations the TA may not take part in Regular Army sporting competitions, nor can their Regular counterparts take part in TA competitions. However, a review of Army Sport Policy is under way and will look at TA participation in the future.



"I think we'd best leave things as they are, Sarge"

Less well off under VEng

THE Versatile Engagement (VEng) is new and offers soldiers extra time to serve Queen and country. It brings the Army in line with the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, which have been offering extra service to their personnel for a long time.

But with extra service comes extra risk of injury or worse. The Army has compensated for this by introducing Pay 2000 with the pay bands for each rank and a reasonable pension scheme.

Because VEng will effectively extend all soldiers' careers by two years and selected operational pinch-point trades by two to 14 years, soldiers will reach the pinnacle of their respective pay bands sooner than was intended when Pay 2000 was introduced.

Will additional pay bands be introduced to compensate for this? Soldiers about to reach VEng (Long Career) need to consider their earning potential in civvy street plus their pension over that of an extended career.

Having analysed this, I have come to the conclusion that if a soldier can

earn his equivalent pay as a civilian he will be financially better off getting out at the earliest opportunity rather than doing VEng. So what are the incentives for VEng? – **WO1 A Simpson, HQ UKSC(G), Rheindahlen.**

Maj Julia Parke-Robinson, Soldier Policy, DM(A), responds: The Versatile Engagement introduced on January 1, 2008 provides a flexible, cost-effective and efficient career structure for soldiers that meets the operational and effective needs of the Army and the individual. It seeks to make better use of experienced soldiers beyond the 22-year point and is broadly similar to the Navy's recent Flexible Career Structure and the RAF's Length of Service model.

On selection for and subsequent transfer to a VEng Full or Long Career, the soldier's service will be extended from 22 to 24 or 30 years.

The soldier will benefit from guaranteed longer service and further opportunities for promotion and possible commissioning.

From November, soldiers will be considered for promotion if they have 12

months' residual service (calculated from the start of the promotion year) rather than 24.

The Army is moving from a 22-year to a 24-year career structure, which will slow down the average rates of promotion in a fully manned Army. By how much and between what ranks will depend on Arms and Service Director (A and SD) manning and how the relevant A and SD manages its cap badge career structures.

There is no intention to introduce extra pay levels with VEng. A soldier would need to be promoted to WO1 by their 16th year of service to run out of pay increments before the end of a VEng full career but would still receive the annual pay rise in line with inflation.

In addition to the guaranteed job security and the opportunity for promotion, the individual on VEng will accrue extra service contributing towards pension.

Comparing equivalent pay can only be accurately achieved against a firm offer of civilian employment. Individuals must remember to compare all elements of terms and conditions of service rather than gross pay alone.

No allowance for this move

MY son, who is at SEME Bordon, got married last June and was allocated a married quarter.

He was told he was entitled to have his family's effects moved from rented accommodation in Rotherham to his quarter, but would have to give two weeks' notice. As he did not want to be separated from his wife and child for longer than necessary he hired a van.

When he tried to claim disturbance allowance (DA) he was told he did not qualify. I read the regulation and it says that there is an entitlement if there is a change of accommodation entitlement. He was also told he is not entitled to claim back the cost of the van hire and

diesel for moving his effects himself. – **SSgt Young, 35 Fd Sqn RE, Chilwell.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: It appears that your son was incorrectly advised. You may not be aware that it is only when the Army requires your son and his family to move that it funds the removals and pays the appropriate rate of DA. However unfair it might seem, the move you describe does not fall within the qualifying criteria as it is a change in his personal circumstances.

There is no entitlement to removals (either undertaken via contract or a refund of van hire charges), or associated payment of disturbance allowance in these circumstances.

PS...

YOUR story "Remember" (Nov) did not include Palestine 1945-48 in the list of conflicts. Newspapers and TV seem to exclude us although 789 soldiers and 119 British Palestine Police died in the campaign. – F H Jennings, ex-2nd Battalion, Royal Lincolnshire Regiment, Birmingham.

Our feature to mark the 90th anniversary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission did not attempt to list all post-1945 conflicts. If it had, it would certainly have included Palestine. – **Editor**

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One hell of a year

And there was little good news in the latest families' attitude survey . . .

LAST year was a hell of a year for the Services in one way and another. We lost a lot of friends in Iraq and Afghanistan and many more were seriously or very seriously injured.

If the media is anything to go by it was also the year when the Army declared that the Military Covenant was on shaky ground and when recruitment and retention became a key worry for the MoD; at the beginning of 2007 the Army was undermanned by 2,370 and by October this figure had risen to around 3,600.

It was also a year of turbulence for Army families as we coped with many changes in Service policy which impinged on our lives. Changes such as the introduction of Joint Personnel Administration and the move to Housing Information Centres to manage our accommodation – some have been easier to accept than others, but not all have gone smoothly.

All this was rounded up at the end of the year by no fewer than five former Defence chiefs denouncing the Government's treatment of the Forces.

A recent proposal, drawn up by the Treasury, to slice up to £15 billion from the Defence budget over the next ten years, coming as it did months after the much-touted announcement that an additional £7.7 billion would be spent on defence over the next three years, won't engender a warm, cosy feeling

about the Government in the breasts of soldiers and their families.

It seems doubly galling when you hear that our double-hatted Defence Secretary's salary is paid solely from the MoD budget rather than being shared with the Scotland Office.

I know there have been improvements; particularly good news is the introduction this month of the long-awaited Childcare Voucher Scheme, which could mean savings of more than £1,000 for soldiers who use it.

Another excellent improvement is the introduction of a Service Complaints Commissioner.

However, a high proportion of families I speak to have become very jaded about life in the Army and this feeling is reinforced by the results of the recent Army families' Continuous Attitude Survey (CAS).

The report's findings hold little good news for the Government as we are significantly less satisfied with Service life than we were in the previous report; around 45 per cent of soldiers' spouses said they would feel happier if their soldier left the Army – an increase of eight per cent since May 2006.

Regarding operational tours, 54 per cent of us thought that our soldiers were being deployed too frequently (this was mirrored by soldiers and

officers in their CAS) and 58 per cent said that six-month tours were too long (although, disconcertingly, more than 70 per cent of our serving spouses thought they were the right length).

Dental care was again raised as a huge problem, with 50 per cent of families being unable to access or register with a National Health Service dentist on their last move.

It was also very disappointing to see that, when they were posted, only 34 per cent of families who were on a waiting list or receiving specialist medical treatment were given priority at their new location.

So, as we move into 2008, I really hope that this will be the year that the Government decides to stop the British Army from fading away. Fingers crossed that the planned *Cross-Government Strategy for Supporting Service Personnel, their Families and Veterans* –

due to be published this spring – gets the policy ball rolling. Many of the issues which affect our lives go well beyond the remit of the MoD, so if this new strategy works it will be a fantastic step forward.

However, you know there's going to be a "but" and I found it when I heard Bob Ainsworth, the Armed Forces Minister, say that to achieve this, "we need the entire Government working together in a comprehensive and co-ordinated way". Ah well, it was a nice idea while it lasted. ■



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

'Many of the issues which affect our lives go well beyond the remit of the MoD'

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

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

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



It's gone ...

YOU leave the house in the morning with £20 in your pocket and head off, **writes Chris Tapp**. That evening you pop into the shop on the way home to pick up bread and

milk. As you stand in the queue you fiddle in your pocket for loose change to find you've only got about £1.50 when you could've sworn you still had a fiver.

The reality is that cash doesn't leak out of a mysterious hole in our pocket, rather it finds its way out as we pick up a paper, buy lunch, a coffee, jump on the bus, pop into the pub with friends or take a cab home.

It's not just with the pennies in our pockets that the missing money phenomenon is apparent. At the end of the month, when we think our bank balance should be healthy our statement can show it to be looking rather bare.

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SERVICES

www.stft.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

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www.baff.org.uk

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www.YellowRibbon.org.uk

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www.ukforcegirls.co.uk

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www.baor-locations.com


Website of the British Army of the Rhine and its locations.

www.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, both serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

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www.nivets.org.uk

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

www.blesma.org

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

www.ngvfa.com

The National Gulf Veterans and Families Association website.

www.erskine.org.uk

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

www.ssafa.org.uk

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association Forces Help.

www.army.mod.uk/aws

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

info@tnauk.org.uk

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www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.armysafety.mod.uk

Website of HQ Land Command's chief environment and safety officer.



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MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

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

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com


King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster

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Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

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

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

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

Family Escort Service: 020 74639249

Forces Pension Society: 020 78209988

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): 07962 023654, www.mutualsupport.org.uk email welfaresupport@mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

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

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

Reunions

Queen's Royal Lancers: Reunion dinner at Telford, Shropshire, on Jan 26. Attached members also welcome. Further details from billcook@fivegables.fsnet.co.uk

Royal Horse Artillery: 61st reunion dinner will take place in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, on Mar 8. Attendance open to all past and present members of any RHA unit; ladies encouraged to attend. Contact Maj (Retd) R J Whiteway, HQ Dulmen Station, BFPO 44, tel 0049 2594 784438 or email rhaasn@hotmail.co.uk

C1 Platoons (Malaya and Singapore) or 8 and 9 Int Companies: Singapore Dawnwatchers 40th anniversary reunion at the Hilton Hotel, Cologne, April 4-5. For details, email Dave Wakelam at davenspam47@t-online.de; Nik Collett at jack@arcor.de or Mick Conway at conwaym39@tiscali.co.uk

MRS Dhekelia: 30th anniversary to include a formal dinner and dedication of a stained glass window in St Barnabus Garrison Church. Celebration planned for June 21-22. All former unit personnel are welcome to attend. Contact Maj Liz Fox, Matron, MRS Dhekelia, BFPO 58 or email elizabeth.fox@cyp.mod.uk

The King's School Combined Cadet Force: Past and present dinner will be held at the school on Sept 6. Email Capt Alan Joseph at alan.poseph@kingschester.co.uk

Roadshows

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow.

The event starts with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and culminates with a finger buffet. Military personnel will be on hand to answer all your questions about the British Army.

Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

January: 14, Yeovil; 15, Exeter; 17, Isles of Scilly; 29 Penrith; 30, Blackburn; 31, Preston.

Help for authors

ANECDOTES, stories sought by author researching book about cooks, bakers, butchers and cooking in the heat of battle. Looking for men and women who are performing or have performed such heroic duties on the front line and who have funny, horrible, depressing or uplifting personal stories about the inescapable duty of providing pleasure and sustenance to others, no matter how they felt at the time. If you have a story please email glynnchristian@hotmail.com

Searchline

Gaby Staffhorst is trying to contact **Dean Christian Taylor**, a friend she last saw two years ago in Höhne. In 1989/90 he was a private with **1 Armoured Field Ambulance**, based at Höhne Camp. He came from Grantham, Lincs. Contact Gail Ramsay at Celle HIVE, Community Centre, Trenchard Barracks, BFPO 30 or email celle@hive-bfg.co.uk

National Serviceman 1953 wishes to locate **Eric Noble** and **Rob Roberts**, both drivers (RASC), who were stationed in Berlin Olympic Stadium. Also **Maj Reynolds**, **Maj Hallet** and **Lt C Brown**. Contact Daniel Williamson, Shortlands, Chandlers Lane, Allcannings, nr Devizes, Wilts SN10 3PG.

Does anyone recall or know the whereabouts of **Sgt T (Edward) Lancaster, PTI**, who served with The Sherwood Foresters around 1939. A Lt Collins wrote a book about him which was serialised in a newspaper. Sgt Lancaster was related to the Hollywood film star **Burt Lancaster**. Write to Roy Hale, 2 Kings Lane, Newton Regis, Tamworth, Staffs B79 0NN.

Mess closure: Anyone who donated items to the Duchess of Kent's Officers' Mess in Catterick Garrison is urged to reclaim them due to the closure of the mess, scheduled for the autumn. Any items unclaimed by the end of March will be disposed of in an appropriate manner. All enquiries should be directed to the Mess Manager on 01748 873123.

Defence diary

January 1-until further notice: Helmand: The Soldiers' Story – A free exhibition built, written and contributed to by soldiers of 16 Air Assault Brigade to tell the story of their experiences fighting in Afghanistan. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 7300717.

1-until March 30: Weapons of mass communications – Exhibition of war posters, Imperial War Museum London.

February 2, 3, 9 and 10: Battle bowlers, whiz bangs and lucky bleeders – Handle artefacts from the First World War. Free admission, Imperial War Museum London.

9-15: Life in the trenches – Interactive drama and handling session looking at recruitment and training. Imperial War Museum London.

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Competitions

Aqua Sphere's Seal XP goggles: Winners: Lt Col P Cairns, BFPO 47; Maj A Hislop, 22 Engr Regt, Op Telic 10; R Greaves, MoD St Athan, Wales; Sgt J Kilbride, HQ 51 Bde, Stirling.



Keeley up for keeps

Your chance to take home a Forces Sweetheart

SOLDIER has teamed up with video games giant Electronic Arts to mark the PlayStation 3 release of one of the best military titles seen in recent years.

To celebrate the launch of *Medal of Honour Airborne*, we have five copies of the game and exclusive signed posters of model Keeley Hazell to give away. Keeley, a former *Soldier* interviewee, was a special guest at an event to promote the first-person shooter, where she showed her credentials as a Forces Sweetheart during a photo shoot.

Based on real campaigns of the Second World War, the latest chapter of the acclaimed *Medal of Honour* series (see our run down of the best games of 2007 on Page 75) puts players in the boots of a US paratrooper.

Each mission starts in the back of a



C-47 transport aircraft, before you jump into theatre and steer your parachute to the landing zone.

The development team have created a sense of freedom in the game play, allowing players to move around battlefields and choose the objectives they want to tackle.

Graphics and sound are spot on, with the different operational areas in Europe well drawn. Kit and weapons of the period are also accurately modelled.

To stand a chance of winning a PS3 copy and signed poster, simply answer this question. In which year

did the USA enter the Second World War? Was it a) 1939, b) 1945 or c) 1941?

Send your answer to the address at the front of the magazine by January 31.

British Army Badges

By Lt Col (Retd) Robin Hodges

Cap badge

WELBECK College is the MoD-funded sixth form college, established in 1953. Pupils selected for a commission into the Army study for A levels at Welbeck, then enter the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme and finally train for a commission at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.



Formation sign

THE halberd badge was chosen for 102 Logistic Brigade in 1999. The halberd appears in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah as the embodiment of strength, success and restoration. The dual capability of the halberd as weapon and hand tool represents the combination of artisan and technical skills combined with war-fighting skills. The badge is also symbolic of the spirit of the Crusader and was the badge of 78th Division from 1942.



Specialist badge

DURING the Battle of Salamanca in 1812, Lieutenant Pearce of the 2nd Battalion, 44th Foot, captured the Eagle of the 62ème Régiment d'infanterie de ligne. The 44th Foot were granted the eagle as a badge which was passed down to the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, and in 1992 to the whole regiment, worn on the left sleeve in Number 2 Dress.



Tactical recognition flash

ARMY dog handlers in Northern Ireland have been identified since 1971 by a small red enamel and gilt paw badge, worn above and to the left of their cap badge. With the wider use of helmets on operations the unit was given permission to wear an identifying badge on the upper right arm in 1998.



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



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Phillip (40) 5'9", former air cadet who wishes to correspond. Enjoys aviation, books and things relating to the Armed Forces. Seeking pen pals, any age group. P001

Kim (41), 5'6", size 18 blonde with blue eyes. Enjoys listening to music, the theatre, horse riding, the cinema, watching TV and basically enjoying life. Her dad was in the Royal Marines and she was born in the Navy barracks and loves the Army life. Seeking pen pals, 40+. P002

Pippa (37), 5'6", blonde with blue eyes. Enjoys reading, writing, traveling and music. Qualified holistic therapist, an ex-Army wife and mum of four. Hoping to do an OU course, Salisbury Area. Seeking pen pals, 32-45. P003

Emma, 5'5", blonde with green eyes. Enjoys going out with friends and taking her dogs walking. Seeking pen pals, any age group. P004

Karen (33), long dark hair, slim, sun tanned with blue eyes. Enjoys shopping, football and loves designer clothes. Outgoing with a GSOH, seeking pen pals, 24-35. P005

Jo (32), 5'5", athletic build with very long blonde hair and green eyes. Very dedicated to her horses which she spends a lot of time with training, competing and looking after. Loves all sport, especially football, reading, cooking, going out and being at home. Studying for a degree, down to earth, country girl, honest, loyal and GSOH, seeking pen pals, any age group. P006

Andrea (40), slim attractive blonde, medium height with no children. Enjoys films, music, comedy, socialising, travel, wining and dining, conversation and military history. Feeling a little lonely and in need of friends, TLC required, seeking pen pals, any age group. P007

Debbie (37), young looking, bright, down to earth, recently divorced mum looking for male pen pals. Enjoys having fun, making the most out of life whether it is going out with friends or staying in, going on long walks with her dogs. P008

Victoria (35), 5'1", small build with long brown hair. Enjoys shopping, clubbing, her children and her dog breeding business. Divorced with grown up children, seeking pen pals, 30+. P009

Jayde (17), 5'7", slim blonde. Enjoys shopping, clubbing and friends. Fun, out going person seeking pen pals, 17-20. P010

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Movies

JANUARY REVIEW



Military support: Charlize Theron is joined on screen in *In The Valley of Elah* by soldiers who served in Iraq



Iraq aftershock

Oscar-winning beauty faces up to ugliness of war with soldier-actors

CHARLIZE Theron is no stranger to gritty roles in graphic films and in *In The Valley of Elah* the Hollywood actress confronts some harsh realities faced by US soldiers returning from Iraq.

As police detective Emily Sanders, the South African beauty reluctantly teams up with a war veteran whose son goes missing hours after completing his tour of duty.

Tinseltown's legendary Tommy Lee Jones brings gravitas to the film playing the distraught father forced to rethink his long-held beliefs as he searches for the truth behind his son's disappearance.

Told through a solid murder-mystery storyline illustrated with flashbacks about the missing soldier, the film is a thought-provoking drama inspired by true events.

As the pieces of the puzzle begin to fit together, Detective Sanders finds herself embroiled in a fight with the military top brass to keep control of the investigation.

In The Valley of Elah skillfully projects the soldiers' exclusive camaraderie and the psychological traumas that can haunt them long after the last rifle shots have been fired.

The film's title refers to the place where a biblical David overcame impossible odds to defeat Goliath. Battling against the odds to return home safely from Iraq, US troops then face the spectre of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Director and fellow Academy Award winner Paul Haggis (*Crash*) boldly cast soldiers who had served in Iraq. Their acting debut left Theron "blown away".

Unable to tell them apart from the professional actors, the blonde bombshell said she was "fascinated and intrigued" by what her co-stars had experienced in a theatre of war.

"It was so incredibly helpful to have them around just to stay on the road of truth. They were amazing actors because all of this was just so fresh for them. This work was about the truth of their lives

and I think that really helped [them]."

Theron, who won an Oscar for her chilling portrayal of serial killer Aileen Wuornos in *Monster*, celebrated her recent American citizenship by making this all-American film. Yet she drew on the troubles of her native country to reflect on the debate about Iraq, which continues to boil on both sides on the Atlantic.

"I'm interested in what the newspapers have to say but I also believe in independent press so I'm always kind of looking at it from both sides.

"When you go into a war it's pretty impossible to not run into people in your life and talk about it. In general, there is a debate going on in this country and I'm interested in what other people have to say.

"It doesn't necessarily come from a South African point of view. I think it just comes from a human point of view."

Theron admitted she was "very intimidated" by the prospect of



performing alongside Lee Jones. Acting on the advice of former co-star Frances McDormand, the naturalised American broke the ice with the notoriously cranky actor by giving him a hug. It did the trick, with Lee Jones taking the actress under his wing.

Although Theron voiced her own concerns about the care of soldiers returning from conflict, she stressed the film's overriding message was about what happens to people fighting a conflict rather than a political diatribe.

"I didn't feel it was pro-war or against war. I felt it was just the truth about the realities of war.

"We are sending these very young kids over there to do something that very few of us would do. I have a great respect for that.

"But they're coming back here and we can't expect them to fit back into society and be normal functioning citizens.

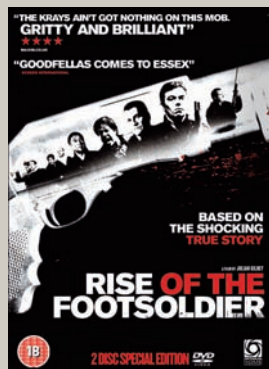
"We have to give them the right tools and we're not. That touched me because I've met people who have gone over there and fought – to come back and not be looked after, I think that's very ungrateful. We can't do that. This story really happened and that to me was heartbreaking." ■

***In The Valley of Elah* goes on general cinema release on January 25.**



The Bucket List, in cinemas January 11

ROB Reiner's touching, no-holds-barred boys' own adventure is something of a paradox – a comedy about dying. Yet this tale of two cancer sufferers composing and then completing a "bucket list" – a collection of all the things they wanted to do, see and experience before they kick the bucket – is genuinely funny thanks to the casting of two of Hollywood's biggest hitters. **Morgan Freeman**, who plays Carter Chambers, a hard-working family man, is the perfect foil to **Jack Nicholson's** brash and filthy-rich Edward Cole. Humour with heart.



Rise of the Footsoldier, DVD

BASED on a true story, this tale charts the blighted career of hooligan Carlton Leach, from his riotous beginnings with West Ham's Inter City Firm to his connections with the East End underworld. If you manage to get past the incessant violence, dubious acting and frequent use of four-letter expletives, it remains difficult for anyone who isn't a gangster to empathise with the characters in the story, or care about their fate. Anyone resisting the urge to switch off early will find a couple of bonus features, including an interview with the real life Leach.



I Am Legend, in cinemas now

ZOMBIE films have been hot property in Hollywood recently and this **Will Smith** effort is among the best. Smith stars as a scientist left alone in New York City after a cancer cure transforms into a deadly virus, killing billions and turning the rest into murderous mutants. The action ratchets up slowly as Smith navigates the deserted Big Apple capturing the infected and trying to cure them using his own immune blood. But an explosive final half makes *I Am Legend*, which bears more than a passing resemblance to *28 Days Later*, a must-see for horror lovers.



Lucas & Walliams: The Early Days, DVD

THIS unofficial DVD provides a rare glimpse into the careers of **Matt Lucas** and **David Walliams** before *Little Britain* made them household names. Presented by *Shooting Stars* writer **Ian Coyle**, the 25-minute special features footage of Walliams as a creepy pub landlord and Lucas as a slightly less convincing Mr T from *The A-Team*. Lucas's wacky aristocrat Sir Bernard Chumley also gets an airing, but overall the footage doesn't follow any particular order and, as a result, feels like a cobbled-together selection of out-takes.



The Golden Compass, in cinemas now

THE first of **Philip Pullman's** *His Dark Materials* series to make it to the big screen, *The Golden Compass* has been the much-hyped movie of the festive season. But, on this occasion, the end product lives up to its billing. Set in a land populated by dark rulers, witches and talking polar bears, the plot follows an orphan who embarks on a quest to free captive friends from the forces of darkness. A wealth of acting talent underpins the film, with strong performances from **Nicole Kidman**, **Sir Ian McKellen** and **Daniel Craig**.



The Tick, DVD

IF you smile as you recall the animated likes of Dangermouse and his disaster-prone sidekick Penfold, then you might be in luck, **writes Andrew Schofield**. *The Tick* captures the same tongue-in-cheek humour but with a deliciously sarcastic edge. Sadly, the praise stops there. The Tick's sidekick, Arthur, is more competent than poor old Penfold, making the storylines far less absorbing. And animation freaks should not expect to be captivated by the old school graphics. *The Tick* is entertaining but it belies the cult status it seems to have achieved elsewhere. Dangermouse would kick his butt anytime.

Games

JANUARY REVIEW



Well pitched: *Fifa Street 3* is aimed at both casual sports fans and hardened followers of the beautiful game



Street party rocks

Electronic Arts nets a winner with latest incarnation of urban footie offering

Preview: Cliff Caswell

FOOTBALL has been through many different incarnations in videogame form – and most recently realism has become the watchword of publishers and designers.

Whether it is squaring up to the super-political world of management or learning complicated control movements to coax your players to attempt diving headers, it seems that mastering life on the pitch is far less simple than it used to be.

But this is a state of play that the development team behind the latest *Fifa Street* instalment from EA Sports has gone all out to avoid.

In bringing the well-established game to the new generation of consoles, the developers introduced simple controls and are hoping for a broad appeal.

Set against the backdrop of the world's major cities, as well as more unusual locations such as beaches and oil rigs, the game is essentially

a competitive five-a-side kickabout between the world's top players.

Unlike its *Fifa 08* stablemate, where pinpoint passing, effective team management and sound tactics are the key to success, the street incarnation is about tricks, pace and nailing the opposition in style.

"From day one we had what we called the six-beer rule," laughed associate producer Justin Sheffield in an interview at EA's British base in Chertsey, Surrey. "We wanted players to be able to understand and master the controls after drinking six beers – and I can confirm that this was something that we tested ourselves."

"We also wanted to create a title that people could come back to and play for five or ten minutes at any time, so the game is set up in that way."

The sentiment was shared by producer Joe Nickolls, who wanted the game to appeal to a broader fan base rather than diehard footie supporters alone. "If you look at *Fifa 08*, it is all

about building your team over a period of time – it's a football simulation," he pointed out.

"But with our title you have fun by seeing how cool you can be. It is more of an action sports game."

"Lots of people want to play a football title but they don't want to have a vertical learning curve, which can be quite overwhelming."

Soldier sampled late-build versions of both the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 incarnations of *Fifa Street* and found them to be a huge improvement over their predecessors.

The action is unfailingly slick, the cartoonish graphics add to the atmosphere of the game and the soundtrack perfectly captures the laid-back atmosphere of a casual five-a-side kickabout in the park.

The option of building players from scratch has thankfully been dispensed with and only the cream of international stars populate the field.

Overall the game has a much tighter



feel than *Fifa Street 2* and there is a greater range of tricks and more moves available to get the better of opponents.

The improvements are largely down to a thorough overhaul of the game's basic workings.

After some soul searching about the weaker points of the original two titles, the design team decided to introduce the proven engine from the successful EA Sports *NBA Street* offering.

The team then mixed in the AI from the EA *Fifa* series. The new package proved a winner, giving players much more control over the action plus plenty of pace and a more determined opposition.

"This has been a great project to work on and we have had so much fun doing it," said Nickolls. "You have to play the game to understand what we have done with it. We are optimistic that reviews will be much better than the previous titles."

There is certainly huge promise with *Fifa Street 3*. The development team has clearly looked long and hard at what it is offering and has changed the pitch accordingly.

If it lives up to its billing, it will be hard to kick *Fifa Street 3* into touch in a hurry. This one will get the competitive spirit flowing in post-pub console kickabouts. ■

EDITOR'S CHOICE – PICK OF 2007



Command & Conquer 3, Xbox 360

ONE of the most popular real-time strategy series of all time made an explosive debut on the next generation of consoles in this new episode dubbed *Tiberium Wars*. Revisiting the conflict between the Global Defence Initiative and the Brotherhood of Nod, players are once again charged with overseeing a variety of missions around the globe. Graphics and sound are first-rate and the gameplay suitably slick. Electronic Arts has produced another outstanding *Command & Conquer* title, maintaining the brand's already excellent track record.



Medal of Honor Airborne, Xbox 360

THE video gaming obsession with the Second World War has been wearing thin, with burgeoning racks of titles based on the conflict. However, the latest instalment in the *Medal of Honor* story is a winner in every respect and brings a new twist to the first-person shooter genre. Players start each mission in the air, drifting slowly down to enemy territory. On landing, they have the option of which objectives to tackle first, and how to best subdue the opposition. Combat drops include the thick of the action at D-Day and Arnhem while a well-written story will keep you coming back for more.



Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Xbox 360

ACCLAIMED developer Infinity Ward returned to work its magic on the well-established *Call of Duty* franchise, propelling it out of the Second World War and into a fictional conflict of the near future. Players get to take on a hardened enemy on battlefields from the Middle East to Russia and are armed with an arsenal including the new Javelin missile. Graphics, animation and sound are astonishing, while a compelling storyline keeps the action zipping along at a fair pace. First-person shooters do not come any better than this.



Assassin's Creed, Xbox 360 & PS3

ONE of the most eagerly awaited titles of 2007, *Assassin's Creed* more than lived up to expectations by offering a true next-generation gaming experience. Players enter the richly detailed world of the Middle East during the Crusades and have an overall mission to stop the war by taking out those responsible for starting it. *Assassin's Creed* allows gamers the choice of how they prosecute their missions plus a tremendous sense of freedom throughout. Definitely one for the collection.



Halo 3, Xbox 360

THE game that launched the original version of Microsoft's Xbox returns for the first outing on the 360 and does not disappoint in the slightest. Suited and booted as before, Master Chief is back in familiar form but now sports a host of new weapons to wipe out his enemies from the enigmatic alien Covenant. There are plenty of environments in which to do battle, ranging from snow-covered mountains to spacecraft, all of which are drawn in breathtaking detail. Some impressive multiplayer options are the icing on the cake.



Sega Rally, Xbox 360 & PSP

ANYONE old enough to remember the arcade hit of the 1990s will undoubtedly feel a strong sense of nostalgia with this remixed version. A superb reworking for the next generation of consoles, Sega has brought the rally up to date with the latest graphics and sound while maintaining the same sense of fun that made the original so entertaining. The title also transfers well to the PSP – the capabilities of the small console are used well and several game modes give players plenty of longevity. *Sega Rally* is the pick of the crop of driving games to be released in recent years.



Invited: Vocal beauty Bailey Tzuke teamed up with the lads for *Uninvited*, the top ten hit taken from the Freemasons' album *Unmixed*

Life's a beach: Freemasons Russell Smalls and James Wiltshire reflect on their winning remixing music formula on Brighton seafront



Open secret

Freemasons invite budding DJs into élite mixed-up dance society

Interview: Karen Thomas

DOES anyone remember what Shakira and Beyoncé's *Beautiful Liar* sounded like before the genius of the Freemasons masterfully remixed it into a number one cracker? Exactly.

Radio stations across the UK hastily binned the downbeat original and played the funk-up dance track until the plastic wore thin and our bums got cramp. It set a hugely successful trend with the likes of Kylie and Fatboy Slim clamouring for Russell Smalls and James Wiltshire – aka Freemasons – to sprinkle some of their chart-topping mixing magic.

Mega-anthem *Uninvited* featuring Bailey Tzuke slickly followed *Beautiful Liar* into the top ten, and the brilliant production duo earned a Grammy nomination for their remix of Beyoncé's *Déjà Vu*, a monster hit in its own right.

But the Brighton-based lads still

can't believe the success of their unique musical formula. "We had a crazy meeting up the pub with our record company and manager, as we'd got a track on the latest Kylie album. We'd just been asked to submit tracks for the new albums from Beyoncé and Donna Summer, and we had to turn down Britney Spears because we didn't have time. Then we all had to pinch ourselves because it's all a bit crazy," Wiltshire told *Soldier*.

Joining forces in 2005 and taking the name of their local watering hole, the pair has an illustrious DJ and dance music heritage. A 16-year-old Wiltshire found his creative feet playing the synthesisers in his music teacher's recording studio. Smalls started his career at just 13, mixing the sounds at Peacehaven Football Club.

He went on to form one half of house production outfit Phats and Smalls of massive hit *Turn Around* fame. They

sold more than 2.5 million singles worldwide. Wiltshire, who joined them under the alias Jimmy Gomez, revealed his time served in the recording studios was not the only key ingredient to remixing tracks into banging tunes.

"The management actually come to us and say, 'could you do this?' Deciding on whether to remix depends very much on the quality of the song. We have a couple of little methods of testing – whether the vocals are going to work at higher speed and if we think we can come up with any music ideas for it. Then we're off and running."

Wiltshire added that how the artist sings is crucial to the pair taking on a track for dance transformation.

"I think it's always helped us that artists have listened to the releases we've already done. What we tend to do, especially with singers, is to always keep the vocal intact. Sometimes we spend a phenomenal amount of time using the



software to ensure the vocals sound great. For example, Beyoncé's got a heavy natural vibrato and when you speed that up it can sound a bit munchkin."

The Freemasons' reputation, built on their technical expertise and ears for music, is now so highly regarded they have to turn down more remixing requests than they can accept.

But now it's your turn. For all those aspiring DJs out there, the Freemasons have released *Unmixed*, an artist-only special edition of their debut album, *Shakedown*. It's your chance to create your remix of a Freemasons' track using files of 150 acapellas and production samples, which are compatible with Mac and PC computers.

It's the first time the production effects and vocals have been made available to the public. The idea, close to the Freemasons' heart, came from the pair's recognition that DJs not only spin the turntable but innovate the latest music too. Wiltshire knew how useful it would be to have samples "banged on" the album too.

"We've been inspired by and had technical help from other DJs. We just thought that if someone does want to have a go at remixing our stuff, *Unmixed* has tracks people know. It's just good all round really." ■

REVIEWERS' CHOICE – PICK OF 2007



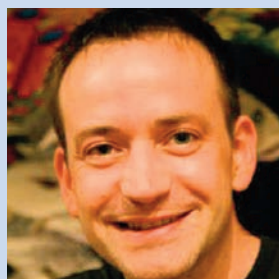
MY personal highlight from 2007 was *The Saturday Sessions*. Taken from **Dermot O'Leary's** Radio 2 show and delivered on a double CD, artists performed live versions of their work as well as some awesome covers. And there were some exquisite performances from truly talented unknowns with the covers ranging from **ABBA** to **Status Quo**. Looking ahead, I'd be curious to find out if any of **The Eagles'** old magic has survived the last few decades in the form of their new album, and I'm hoping for a follow-up from **Nerina Pallot** after her debut, *Fires*, left me wanting more.

Cpl Tom Robinson,
151 Tpt Regt, RLC



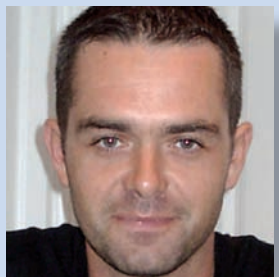
MY choice for the best album of 2007 would have to be *Ribbed Music For A Jilted Generation* by the **Sohodolls**. Not many will know of them and they probably won't appeal to many tastes, but their music has impressed a few DJs, including Radio 1's **Zane Lowe**. Rumour has it that **The Killers** will be releasing an album next year – definitely one to look out for. After their highly successful *Hot Fuss* and last year's *Sam's Town*, this band have certainly produced the musical goods and seem to be among the very few who have any talent and a firm grounding.

Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt,
5 Regt RA



REUNION was a major theme in last year's music scene. Ageing boy band **Take That** reformed without **Robbie Williams** and played London's O2 arena to massive media acclaim. **The Spice Girls** got ready to hit the charts and it will be interesting to see if they can emulate **Take That's** success. For me the highlight for 2008 will be **Led Zeppelin's** reunion and tour. From truly one of the greatest bands of all time, it promises to be a major musical event with a great deal of nostalgia for those of us who loved their music first time around.

Pte Pat Jordan,
RAMC



LAST year saw excellent albums from bands like **The Hours**, **Hard-Fi**, **Athlete** and the infectious sound of **Reverend And The Makers**. Rap and R&B saw **Joe** return with a strong set and there was more mystical lyricism from the criminally overlooked **Killah Priest**. World music was well represented by the haunting desert blues of **Tinariwen** and **Up Bustle And Out** dropped their tenth and finest offering of continental flavours. My hot tip for next year are Camden crew **N-Dubz** with their debut of UK hip hop. Probably not everybody's cup of tea but I'd stand by them all.

Cpl Charlie Lloyd,
RLC



LAST year was an excellent vintage with some great albums released, many of which have been a long time coming. The pick of the bunch really had to be **The Editors' An End Has A Start**. We saw the welcome return of **Kosheen**, along with new material from some great names such as **Faithless** and **Underworld**. My hopes for 2008 include **Underworld** reunited with **Karl Hyde** for a series of gigs across the globe. Not to mention future tour dates from **Faithless** and a reformed **Portishead** releasing new material to complement their ATP gig held in Minehead.

Lt Jim Berry,
1 R Irish

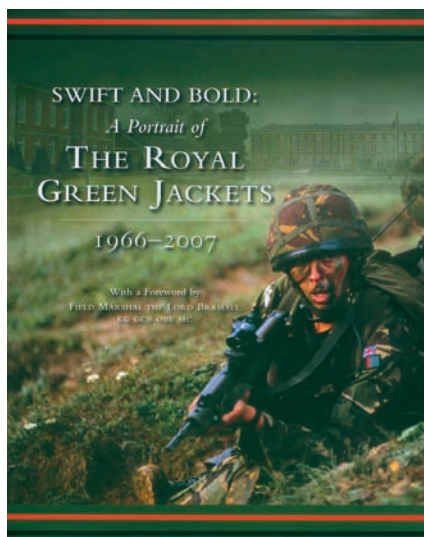


IT was another great year for live music in 2007. **Muse** staged a sell-out show at the new Wembley Stadium and **The Rolling Stones** performed at a festival for the first time in 30 years on the Isle of Wight. Lesser-known artists such as **The Pigeon Detectives** and **Reverend And The Makers** took off in a big way but **Arcade Fire** at Reading was the best live act of 2007. **The Foo Fighters** at Wembley Stadium will be the main highlight of 2008 and, if the rumours are true, a **Led Zeppelin** tour will also be one not to be missed.

Cpl Ray Kalaker,
RETDU(B)

Books

JANUARY REVIEW



In the firing line: Soldiers of 1 RGJ experienced a violent Christmas during their time at Basra Palace a year ago. The first to use the upgraded Bulldog on operations, they quickly learned to appreciate its additional armour.



Mobile mayhem

History repeated itself when a new regiment emerged amid violence

Swift and Bold: A Portrait of The Royal Green Jackets 1966-2007, edited by Maj Gen Andrew Pringle. Third Millennium Publishing, £35.

Review: Chris Horrocks

CHRISTMAS and New Year, 2006-7, was one of the more violent to have been endured by the 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets.

The unit's battle-group had embarked on a perilously eventful tour to southern Iraq the previous October.

By the start of February, in true British Army tradition, the soldiers of 1 RGJ were parading at Basra Palace to the sound of bugles and the click of cameras, while keeping a sensitive ear cocked for the whistle of incoming fire. To an observer

this may have appeared bizarre, given the surrounding mayhem, but the occasion was deeply significant in the regiment's distinguished 41-year history – the day it voluntarily merged with others to form a new, larger organisation.

There was also a sense of history repeating itself. The RGJ's 1st and 2nd Battalions evolved into the 2nd and 4th Battalions of The Rifles while fighting for the security of southern Iraq – just as in 1966 the RGJ had come into being at a time when all three battalions were on counter-insurgency operations in Borneo.

The run-up to the February 1 parade is described in a series of vivid "Letters from the Front" to his regimental journal by Maj Alex Baring of A Company, extracts from which appear in this immaculately produced, large-format volume.

In December he had written of the menacing atmosphere in such hotspots as Al Qibla, where a cunningly feral enemy

used mobile phones and flocks of pigeons to flag up the positions of patrols.

It was "one of the more violent Christmases any of us have experienced," he wrote two hours before midnight on New Year's Eve. RGJ soldiers had spent the early hours of Christmas morning supporting a Basra City North battle-group operation which flattened the old headquarters building of the corrupt and murderous Special Crimes Unit.

"The insurgents didn't like that at all and have been trying hard to hit back at us," he recorded. "The day before yesterday they killed a sergeant from The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment with a roadside bomb close to Chindit Company's base at the Old State Building; a sickeningly loud explosion that rang across the city and shocked us all."

The opportunity for the British-led forces to strike back came later that night, when a building was targeted and a "small" demolition charge placed.

"We were able to enter the building through the gaping hole in the wall and,

Soldier ordering service

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to our great satisfaction, apprehend two suitably stunned and unpleasant looking men who just happened to be in possession of a range of weapons, military equipment, mobile phones and satellite photography of our bases.

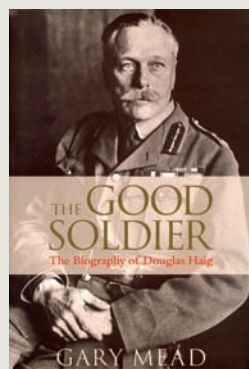
"Cheeky buggers. Their phones were all ringing furiously, but too late for them; how sad."

As editor Maj Gen Andrew Pringle indicates, this is not so much a detailed history as a richly illustrated portrait. Fd Marshal Lord Bramall, one of the first COs of the RGJ, says in a foreword: "Never can a single regiment have acquired and maintained such a distinguished reputation in such a short time."

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But back to Maj Baring's description of that Basra Palace ceremony. "Bugles played," he wrote. "Camera crews and photographers like wasps on a trifle (they really have no manners). Predictably some bright spark managed to imitate the whistle of an incoming mortar round as we stood to attention on the helicopter pad. But the joke's an old one, so no one moved." ■

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

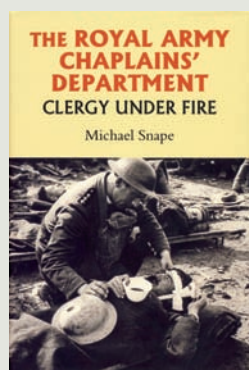


The Good Soldier

by Gary Mead

DOUGLAS Haig is the most controversial commander in British history, portrayed as a callous butcher or bungler who sacrificed the young lions of the BEF in pointless attrition, writes **Maj Mike Peters**. This is not a revisionist history written to counter-balance that negative perception of Haig, but it goes a long way to explaining the man he was and the Army and society that shaped him. Recommended if you seek the whole picture.

Atlantic Books,
 509pp, £30

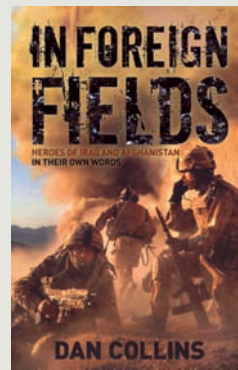


The Royal Army Chaplains' Department, 1796-1953

by Michael Snape

"CLERGY Under Fire", the subtitle of this densely detailed and academic examination of the first 150 years of British Army chaplains, refers not so much to their actual presence on the battlefield to comfort and minister to weary troops as to their challenging, difficult and sometimes controversial role as men of God tasked with providing moral and spiritual guidance to soldiers bent on the destruction of the nation's enemies.

Boydell, 480pp, £50

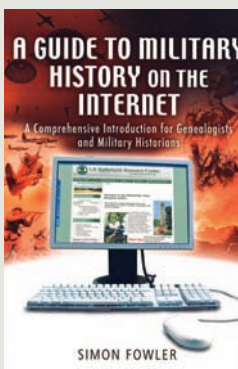


In Foreign Fields

by Dan Collins

MODESTY and courage go hand-in-hand if these personal accounts of heroism are a measure. Most of the 25 medal-winners interviewed claim they were just doing their job alongside colleagues equally or more deserving of an MC or CGC. In their own words they give matter-of-fact flesh to the bare bones of citations (most already published in *Soldier*) which describe cool heads and exceptional valour under fire. SSAFA will get five per cent of the cover price. An outstanding read.

Monday Books,
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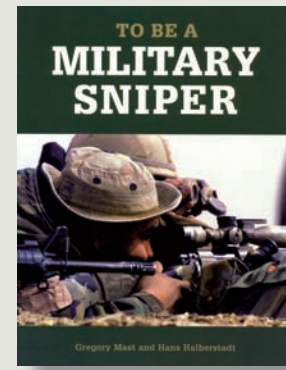


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Death or Glory

edited by Steve Holland

THERE'S nothing quite like a comic book hero, which is why the genre sold by the tens of millions to pre-television generations of children and adults. This collection of a dozen of the best comic books published by Battle Picture Library is packed with tales of rugged and hard-pressed British and Commonwealth soldiers dishing it out to square-headed Huns yelling stuff like "Donner und Blitzen! Englanders!" with lots of exclamation marks. Nostalgic stuff.

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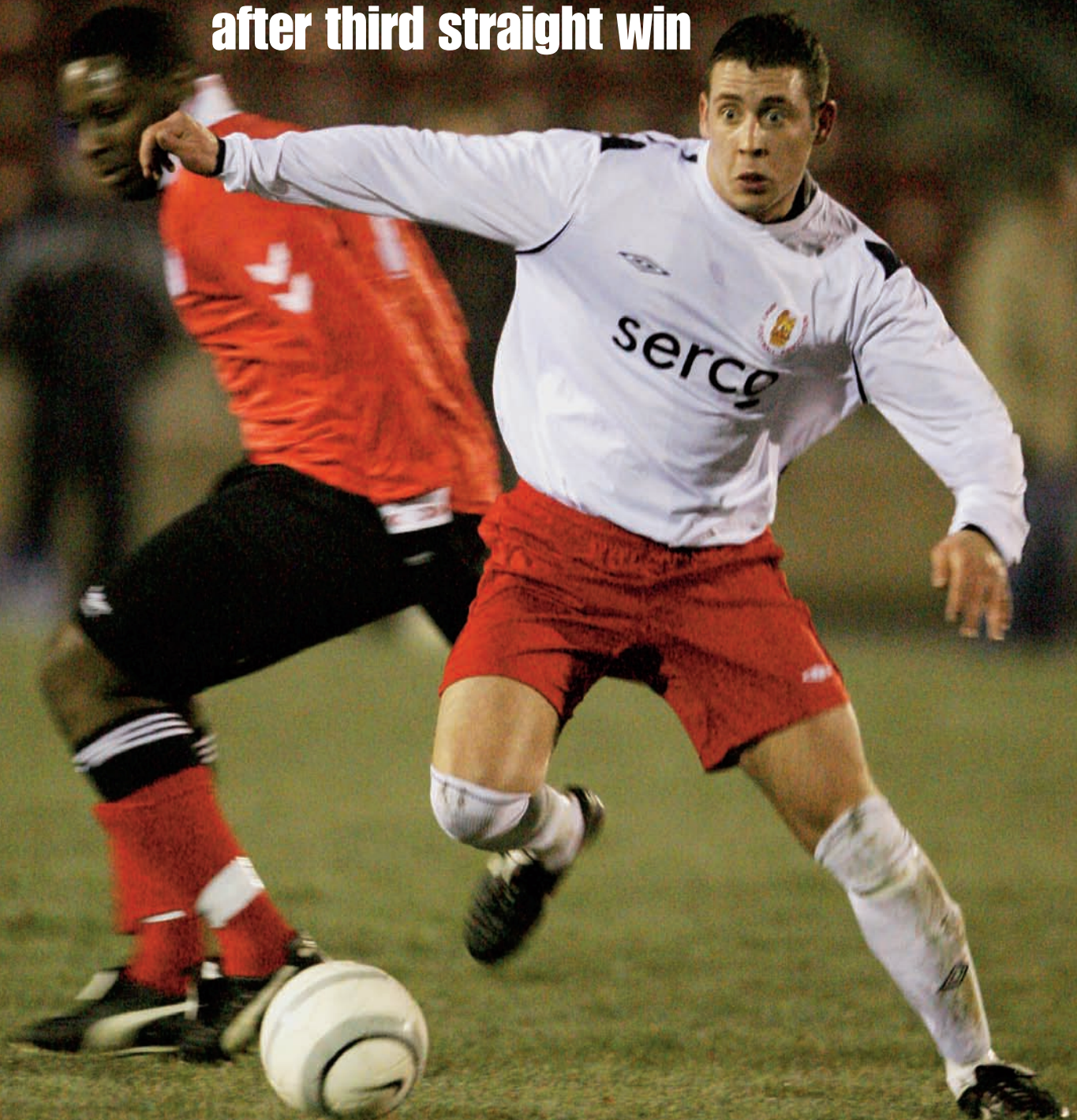
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**Reds on brink of title
after third straight win**

Super striker: Sig Danny McGee's pace and power was too much for London Football Association as the Army battled to a 2-1 win
Picture: Graeme Main





In the thick of it: LCpl Stu Pickup (R Signals) holds off a defender as he tries to extend the Army's lead following two goals from LCpl Colin Thomas (AGC)

The iceman cometh

Brilliant brace from red-hot Thomas maintains footballers' perfect start

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

ICE-COOL substitute LCpl Colin Thomas (AGC) scored twice as the Army beat the London Football Association to record its third successive Southern Counties League win in freezing conditions at Aldershot.

Thomas kept his composure to volley home a deflected LCpl Stu Pickup (R Signals) shot in the game's final quarter and an emphatic second moments later made the points safe before London scored a late consolation from the penalty spot.

Only a string of fine saves and some poor control in key areas kept the score down as the Army fired in 24 shots during the 90 minutes.

The result leaves the Reds top of the league after three of their four games and, depending on other results, the trophy could be in the Army's hands before their final match against Sussex in February.

Manager Maj Steve Jackson praised his young side for overcoming the

difficult conditions to wear down London's dogged defence.

"I was pleased that as soon as the whistle went for the second half we were on top of our game and getting the shots in," he explained. "It isn't easy to do that when the weather is as bad as it was but I thought we concentrated well."

"They tried to use their pace but we stood firm and I thought Colin took his goals well."

Cpl Keith Emmerson (RMP) and LCpl Danny Haley (R Signals) started brightly and provided plenty of ammunition for strikers Pickup and Sig Danny McGee, but the Royal Signals pair struggled to control the ball as it zipped off the frozen pitch.

With only a succession of half-chances to show for his endeavour, Pickup nearly provided a perfect end to the first half when he flicked a ball around his marker only to see his shot cleared off the line.

The Army provided a welcome antidote to the falling temperature during the opening exchanges of the second half as McGee's shot was saved

and an effort by LCpl Paul Douglas (RLC) hit the bar.

Emmerson's trickery earned him a chance, but his shot was deflected wide as the Reds further turned the screw. Haley was then unlucky not to score past the back-peddalling keeper after his similarly enterprising run earned him a snap shot from 25 yards.

The breakthrough finally came when a parried Pickup shot fell to substitute Thomas and the AGC man finished with confidence from six yards.

His second followed soon after and the home side hit the bar before a correctly-given penalty reduced London's arrears to one goal.

Although the result was not as emphatic as the Army deserved, Jackson was happy with the performance and hopes the current squad can live up to the standards set by their predecessors.

"Last year we had a team that had played together for three years, but we have lost 16 of those players," he said. "We now have a brand new team that I hope will stay together for the next three years."

Jo holds court

TeamBath star plays her part for England at netball's premier tournament

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Phil Searle

CCOURT commander 2nd Lt Jo Binns asserted her position as one of England's finest netballing prospects after taking her place in the national team that narrowly missed out on a world championship medal.

Binns helped England qualify from its group at the New Zealand tournament with a 100 per cent record before the team eventually fell to an agonising one-point defeat to Jamaica in the third place play-off.

But despite the disappointment of missing out on a place on the podium, Binns is happy to have made so much sporting progress in a hectic year which also saw the Army athlete complete a degree in sport and exercise at the University of Bath.

"I was always ultimately aiming to make the world championships, but because they came in the same year as my finals I was very busy," the 23-year-old told *SoldierSport*. "It was really good to find out I was included."

"Although I went to the World Youth Championships in Florida in 2005, this was my first major senior tournament and I was delighted with my form."

"One thing that really helped was that over the past two years I have been part of the senior squad and have been able to get a lot of experience that way."

England went into the eight-day world championships full of confidence after recording test series wins over Jamaica and South Africa and beating New Zealand for the first time in more than 30 years.

The team's inspired form continued in the first game of the tournament and Binns played a pivotal role at both wing attack and centre as England hammered Barbados 87-34.

Head coach Marg Caldwell shuffled her pack for the remaining group games and Binns had to settle for a place on the bench as England scored 99 points in a runaway win over Malaysia before beating South Africa 62-32.

The TeamBath player was drafted back into the starting line-up for the quarter final against Malawi and a comfortable 81-37 win set up a semi-final against Australia which ended in a 33-51 reverse. England's tournament

ended with a battling 52-53 defeat against Jamaica.

Binns, who holds a Territorial Army commission and spent the 2005-06 academic year on a placement with 92 Squadron, 9 Supply Regiment, RLC, in Hullavington, said the third-place play-off loss was especially disappointing as England overcame a shaky start to pull themselves back into the tie.

"It was a shame because we had come back from ten points down in the last five minutes only to lose in the dying seconds of the game," she said. "We just made too many mistakes and it made the comeback too difficult."

"I knew it would be tight between Australia, New Zealand, England and Jamaica. New Zealand had the pressure of being at home because it's such a well-supported sport over there."

"Australia and New Zealand both performed exceptionally well and it was a bit of a shock to see just how much they had improved since the last time we played them."

Since making her international debut during England's tour to Fiji in June 2006, Binns has become a regular member of the national squad as well as a key component of the TeamBath squad which has won two consecutive Super League titles.

Her rapid rise into netball's elite has coincided with an explosion in the sport's popularity. Tickets for England internationals are hot property and Super League games are televised by Sky Sports.

But although the level of media exposure the game is currently receiving in Britain is at an all-time high, Binns said she was taken aback at the amount of interest it garners in New Zealand and Australia.

"It wasn't just the fact I was playing at a world championship, it was incredible having such big crowds and seeing the level of media coverage."

"What we learned off-court is just as important as what we learned on it and that will stand us in good stead for quite

a few more world championships."

With a first world championship appearance under her belt, Binns is dedicating the coming months to TeamBath as the talented side bids to win a third consecutive Super League title.

The team suffered a drop in form after losing six of its players during the New Zealand championships, but has climbed into fourth position in the league table.

And with the country's netballers getting more opportunities to play on the big stage at club level, she believes England will continue to challenge for international honours.

"The standard of our performance has increased massively since we started playing at a high level on a regular basis," said Binns, who praised the support of Bristol University Officers' Training Corps. "You can see it from our results and it can only be a good thing for the future." ■

'It was an incredible feeling having such big crowds and seeing the level of media coverage'





Stick shift: Capt Nic Berry (R Signals) led by example as an inexperienced Army team retained the Inter-Services indoor hockey title with two stunning victories

International ambition

Swiss success catapults pentathlete Unwin onto world stage in Olympic year

Report: Stephen Tyler

MODERN pentathlete Capt Charlie Unwin capped a memorable 2007 by adding a first international victory to his British Championship crown.

Unwin's victory in the Swiss Open was achieved thanks to a perfectly judged run and comes just months after he became the first Army athlete in 13 years to claim Britain's top title.

Speaking before taking a well-earned Christmas break, Unwin (1 RHA) told *SoldierSport*: "It was a world ranking international so there were a lot of countries represented.

"I knew I was in good form and could perform at the top of my ability, but to come out on top in an international was a pleasant surprise.

"I had been feeling very strong in my training and preparation so it was just a case of keeping my focus."

The competition started well for Unwin with a win in his favoured shooting discipline. Solid swimming, fencing and riding performances kept him in touch with the leaders and he went into the final run in second place.

The Army athlete had to finish ahead of experienced French pair Thomas Charanton and Bruno Merle in the foot race to take home the title and he did not disappoint.



Capt Charlie Unwin

"Shooting is my strongest event and I performed quite solidly in that, but because of my position the run was quite tactical," he continued.

"I knew I had to run well to get the win and I stuck on the shoulders of the guys in front. It was all about experience and knowing who was around me and I got it right.

"When I was standing on the podium it was just an awesome feeling. There were a couple of thousand spectators watching the competition and it made all the training worthwhile."

With every international competition offering top-placed athletes points towards Olympic qualification, there is a slim chance that Unwin could now make a late charge for the Beijing Games this summer.

But although he admits to relishing the opportunity to become an Olympian, the British champion said he is more concerned with becoming consistent on the international stage.

"I need to capitalise on the points that I got by performing well at the Great Britain selection series events," the England star concluded.

"It's all very well having the points but unless I can get selected for Britain it will be wasted because I won't be able to accumulate many more.

"I would like to be in the position next season where I can challenge at the major championships, and of course that includes the Olympics.

"I know they are there but I would like to see how high I can get and to perform well enough to make it into the top competitions." ■

Stick women

Indoor title defence is a walk in the park for classy women as males falter

Report: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

EXHILARATING attacking play from an inexperienced women's team ensured the Army had a home champion at the Inter-Services indoor hockey tournament.

Driven by the pace and guile of new cap OCdt Emma Lee-Smith, the women trounced the Royal Air Force 11-0 and the Royal Navy 10-1 to retain the title at Aldershot.

A brace of one-point defeats against their Service rivals left the senior men bringing up the rear in their competition, while a narrow loss to the airmen consigned the under 23 squad to second spot.

Women's team manager Maj Fiona Frost (AGC (SPS)) praised her youthful squad for the style with which they brushed aside their opponents.

"We have always had a strong indoor squad, but our coach [WO2 Camps

Campling (AGC (SPS))] decided not to play this year and we had one or two youngsters in the team," explained Frost. "When you take into account losing players through operational commitments, it meant we were missing a few people.

"We played the games at a high tempo like we always try to because if you play at a high tempo and with control then it is a lot easier to make the ball work for you. That worked well for us."

The high scores in both of the victories were fair reflections on the Army's dominance in an attack ably led by Lee-Smith.

The Sandhurst student, who plays Premier Division outdoor hockey for Ipswich and is hotly tipped to break into the England team, punished her opponents with some effective finishing from short corners.

"Because Ipswich might get into Europe, we have decided that Emma

should concentrate on playing for them rather than for us," continued Frost.

"She is rather special and her ball control is very impressive, but the best way of scoring goals is the ability to drag flick the ball, which she can do."

Despite the standout performances from Lee-Smith, Frost reiterated her endorsement of every member of the championship-retaining squad.

Four of the six starters in the demolition of the RAF were new to Inter-Services hockey and Frost said that was a result of the women's strong coaching set-up.

"We do have a very good way of bringing youngsters on," she said.

"While we may have to say to them that they won't get to play Inter-Services hockey for two or three years, they all know that when they are good enough they will play.

"It's nice to see them progress because it's good for the players and for the sport in general." ■

Rifleman's resolution

Burkinshaw vows to make 2008 a year to remember by lining up title fight

RIFLEMAN Ross "The Boss" Burkinshaw has set himself a tough target for the coming year after stretching his unbeaten professional record to five fights.

The Boss ended 2007 by drawing with Bradford's Shaun Docherty in a close bout in Doncaster that the Army man insists should have been called in his favour.

Although the Sheffield native has never suffered from a shortage of confidence, he told *Soldiersport* he is more assured than ever that he will have a British title belt around his waist in a year's time.

"As far as I'm concerned I won the Docherty fight," said Ross, who hopes to challenge recently-crowned British super-flyweight champion Chris Edwards for his first national title this year. "I got put down in the third round, but it wasn't a proper knockout. I only touched down with my knee and I was straight back up.

"After that I knew I had some

work to do, so I got my head down and I was sure I had done enough to win.

"At the time it felt like being beaten, but my manager told me not to be disappointed because I'm still unbeaten in five fights.

"I hope to have a fight this month to keep myself sharp and then go for the super-flyweight title in February or March."

Burkinshaw took a well-deserved break from this three-times-a-day training schedule to fly to Las Vegas before Christmas to watch Ricky Hatton's brave defeat to American Floyd Mayweather.

Although the Army boxer currently plies his trade on a slightly less grand stage than the Hitman, he does share the Mancunian's dietician and has gained some first-hand professional advice after watching Hatton train.

"He's amazing because he's just so powerful, even when he's on the bags," continued The Boss. "He told

me about his diet and what he eats. He trains hard and I could see he was in excellent condition for the Mayweather fight."

Away from the ring, Burkinshaw continues to help with Army recruitment and has started giving talks at inner-city schools about his career in and out of the ring.

While his star is rising at a rapid rate in sporting circles, Burkinshaw retains an unassuming air and hopes the everyman quality he shares with fighters such as Hatton and Joe Calzaghe makes his message more relevant to the young people he speaks to.

"I'm able to get on and do my training, but I still do a lot of recruiting work with things like going around schools to talk about my career in boxing and in the Army," he added. "The kids know I'm on their level and are willing to listen to what I have to say because they can see I have got to where I am from being a normal lad." ■

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Wave riders: Cpl Lea Herod (PWRR) and LCpl Simon Horsfield (Rifles) battle their way to a debut 14th place finish at the world catamaran championships

Soldiers set sail

Changeable weather no barrier to success at catamaran championships

Report: Stephen Tyler

TWO Germany-based soldiers sailed to a top third finish after becoming the first men to represent Britain at the world catamaran championships.

Cpl Lea Herod (PWRR) and LCpl Simon Horsfield (Rifles) had just 12 hours of experience racing TopCat-class catamarans before heading to Greece for the competition.

But the experienced dinghy sailors acquitted themselves admirably to finish 14th out of the 40 teams in the resort of Kyllini.

Speaking after returning to the pair's base at Möhnesee Sail Training Centre, in Germany, Horsfield said: "Sailing that class of catamaran was pretty much a new concept to us.

"I'm quite a competitive person and had been hoping to get into the top ten, but I was happy to get close to it."

Herod and Horsfield were in a fleet which had to cope with extremely variable weather during the competition. The first of the seven races got under way in a light breeze, but by the seventh contest a gale force wind picked up and the final three races had to be cancelled.

Despite securing a finishing position that more experienced sailors would have been proud of, the British soldiers' participation in the world championships only came about when they were spotted at an Anglo-German regatta at Möhnesee in June.

The owner of TopCat in Germany was so impressed with the newcomers' talent that he supplied them with a brand new racing catamaran so that Britain could be represented at the sport's most prestigious tournament.

Andreas Schwerla, president of the International TopCat Class Association (ITCA), said: "It's great that there was a

competitive British team amongst the 90 teams at the worlds this year."

With a first international competition successfully under their belts, the Germany-based contenders are now putting in extra training ahead of their planned entry into next year's European Championships in Austria.

Horsfield told *SoldierSport* that he believes a lack of competitive experience is all that is holding him and teammate Herod back from a place at the very top of the sport.

"Some of the guys we were sailing against have been racing these catamarans since they were invented ten to 15 years ago," he said.

"We had only done one race and I think we are at a good standard, but we now need to get some more practice. It's that little bit of experience and finesse at the right moments that will make the difference." ■

SPORTSHORTS

POLO PLAYERS WANTED

ONE of the Army's newest representative women's teams is on the lookout for players ahead of its inaugural season.

The Army women's polo team plays its first matches in 2008 after an Adjutant General's Corps side proved the sports popularity by attracting 25 players of all ranks in its first year.

Founder member Maj Gillian Shaw (AGC (SPS)) watched her team take part in several matches, including the prestigious Captains' and Subalterns' tournament at Tidworth, and is keen for more women from the Army to give the sport a go.

"Polo has traditionally been a predominantly male sport, but this is a new opportunity for women to compete equally," she told *SoldierSport*.

"It's also the best way to learn to ride because the polo ponies are so well schooled and it only takes a couple of hours before people are able to canter."

In addition to the first matches for the new Army team, 2008 will also see the ProShield International-sponsored AGC team hosting its own tournament and Shaw hopes that other regiments will follow her lead and set up their own teams.

● Anyone interested in joining the AGC or Army women's polo teams should contact Shaw by email at agcpolo@hotmail.co.uk ■

Lion tamers

England amateurs no match for resurgent Reds

Report: Stephen Tyler

Picture: Graeme Main

ARM Y Rugby League stars overcame the challenge of the nation's best amateur players to win a physical encounter against England Lionhearts.

Excellent pressing defensive work from the home team stifled the Lionhearts' preferred running game and twinkle-toed back Spr Ben Seru (RE) did the damage at the other end with two finely taken tries during a 28-16 win at Aldershot.

Director of rugby Capt Nav Naivalurua hailed his team's effort and concentration against an England side containing several experienced conference-level players.

"It's a fantastic result," he said after the match. "If you go back to only 1994 the Army did not even have a team in place and now we have prevented England Lionhearts from playing their running game."

"You can see what a tremendous amount of work our coaches have done, both with our forwards and our pressing defence."

The Reds' dominant performance stemmed from the ability of the pack to stifle the Lionhearts' creativity, and it was telling that the visitors changed their line-up a number of times to try to haul themselves back into the game.

Seru also proved a constant menace to the Lionhearts and the amateurs

found it hard to cope with the Fijian's blistering runs which are familiar to regular spectators of both Army Rugby League and Union matches.

The only dark spot on the comprehensive win was a broken arm suffered by powerhouse skipper Sgt Dave Goddard (RE), which makes him a doubt for February's opening Challenge Cup game.

Naivalurua recognised the hard work of his pack and singled the forwards out for praise for the heavy pressure they exerted on their opponents.

"Our pack gave theirs a seeing-to," he continued. "England Lionhearts rung the changes but we kept ours intact until a serious injury to Goddard forced a change. That's a source of immense pride for our boys."

"We took a gamble playing some young new players in this match, but you could see how difficult it was going to be for the England players with our determination, controlled aggression and will to win."

"I thought if we won it would be by a couple of points, maybe even five but certainly not by 12."

Army rugby league secretary Capt Mick Scholes added that the game could become a regular addition to the sporting calendar.

"I'm sure we will get a tough game if we play a return fixture next year and, as we have seen, an excellent advert for Rugby League. Perhaps this should be on the calendar every year," he said. ■

Climbers up for world first

JOINT-SERVICES mountaineers are putting the finishing touches to their preparations ahead of an ambitious attempt to reach the summit of the world's fifth highest peak.

Two teams made up of Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy specialists are heading to Nepal in March to climb both the north-east and south-east ridges of 8,462m giant Makalu.

The south-east ridge team will then try to descend via Makalu's opposite face in an attempt to become the first group to successfully traverse the mountain, described by Sir Edmund Hillary as "one of the hardest propositions of all".

Makalu is notorious for its steep pitches, knife-edged ridges and the



technical climbing needed to reach the summit and expedition training adviser Alan Hinkes is under no illusions as to the difficulty of the task.

"It is one of the most formidable mountains in the world," the Royal Marine Reservist said. "Its remoteness, technical difficulty and unpredictable weather will make this one of the toughest propositions yet faced by a Joint Services' mountaineering team."

Approximately 200 teams – just one tenth of the number to have climbed Mount Everest – have reached the

summit of Makalu since the first successful climb in 1955.

Service climbers have made one previous attempt on the mountain, but heavy snow and driving winds meant the 2004 effort ended in failure.

In addition to the Makalu climb, a high altitude development team will be attempting a British first by ascending the 6,793m Pethangste. A junior team will climb 6,476m Mera Peak.

All three expeditions are hoping to raise money for Nepali charities, including children's villages and education projects.

● For more information, visit the Makalu website at www.myspace.com/makalu2008 ■



Fleet footed: Debutant Cpl Bruce Francis's (RAMC) powerful run was typical of the Army's incisive attack during a deserved victory over England Lionhearts

Gym's a knockout

TERRITORIAL Army boxers provided a knockout night of entertainment at the opening of a capital city boxing club.

London Amateur Boxing Association president Terry Gillam watched as six TA fighters took on opponents from Fitzroy Lodge, New Addington and Honour Oak to mark the inauguration of the Grove Park sporting facility.

Wins from Gnr Felix Hawken (RA), Gnr Harry Finch (RA) and Pte Adrian Teare (4 Para) ensured the TA came out on top with three wins ahead of Fitzroy Lodge, which won two bouts, and New Addington, which won one.

Hawken, a Blackheath resident taking part in his first competitive fight, was happy with his win: "It has been an unbelievable night. I'm over the moon to

have won but we all did a great job."

As well as nurturing London-based Army talent, members of Grove Park TA and the Army Boxing Club have set themselves the challenge of raising £25,000 for the Help for Heroes charity.

A fundraising event has been planned for next month, while the gym has also applied to host an Olympic team during the 2012 London Games.

Former Irish Guard Capt Robbie Wilmont explained that the money will go towards the fund the charity has started to allow it to buy a swimming pool for the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court.

● For more information, contact Capt Wilmont on 0208 8601 461. ■

MASSEY TABLES

MASSEY TROPHY – DIV 1

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Infantry	5	5	0	0	12	15
RE	4	4	0	0	17	12
RA	5	3	0	2	-3	9
R Sigs	5	2	0	3	2	6
RLC	5	2	0	3	-2	6
REME	5	1	0	4	-7	3
APTC	5	0	0	5	-19	0

MASSEY TROPHY – DIV 2

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
AGC	4	2	1	1	11	7
Int Corps	3	2	1	0	2	7
AAC	3	1	1	1	0	4
AMS	4	0	2	2	-9	2
RAC	2	0	1	1	-4	1

Simply the best

Members of the British sporting élite pass on their thanks and New Year messages to those serving on operations overseas

Joe Calzaghe, Undisputed world super-middleweight champion

At the start of a new year, a special thought should go to the brave Servicemen and women of the British

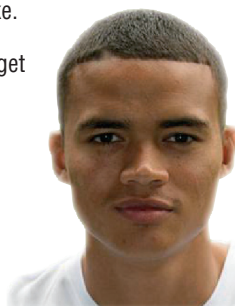
Army. I have just won the fight of my life against Mikkel Kessler but these guys put their lives on the line every day serving our country. I would just like to say that you are doing a fantastic job.



Jermaine Jenas, Tottenham Hotspur and England

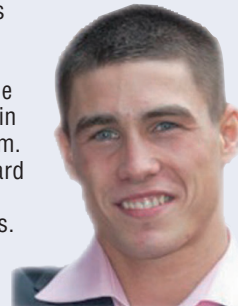
Happy New Year to you all from everyone here at Tottenham Hotspur.

We all appreciate the sacrifices you make. Keep safe and hopefully you will get home to see your families soon and catch up on some celebrations.



Jamie Cox, 2006 Commonwealth Games champion and professional boxer

I'm only 20 but there are men and women in the Army who are younger than me and who are doing dangerous jobs around the world. A few of my pals are in the Army and I stay in contact with them. I know what a hard job it is for them and their families.



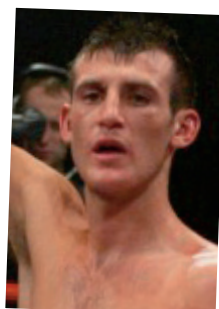
Aaron Lennon, Tottenham Hotspur and England

I want to wish everyone serving in the Armed Forces a happy and safe New Year. Being away from home during the festive period is never easy, but rest assured that everyone at Spurs will be thinking of you and we wish you all a safe and swift return.



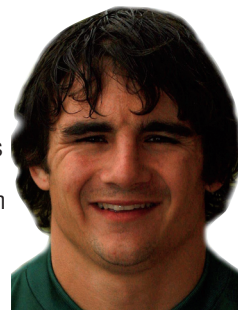
Derry Mathews, Undefeated WBU world featherweight champion

People say you have to be fearless to be a boxer, but there are none braver than the men and women who are serving around the world defending the freedom that we enjoy. Our thoughts and prayers should be with all in the Services and their families. I wish you all good luck, God speed and a safe return. God bless you all.



Harry Ellis, Leicester Tigers and England scrum half

The general public seem to consider rugby to be a pretty tough way to make a living, but we all know that it's nothing in comparison to being a soldier. I don't believe enough gratitude is paid to you guys who are actually out there putting in the hard graft for those of us back here in the UK.



James Hamilton, Leicester Tigers and Scotland lock forward

I remember many times waking up with my Dad not there – he was either in the Falklands, in Iraq, or serving Queen and country elsewhere. I know he believes he has done this country justice by putting in the hard work. Your country needs you now more than ever. Thanks and respect for your dedication to your country and to your families back home.

Enzo Maccarinelli, WBO world cruiserweight champion

The British public should remember all the Servicemen and women who are protecting our nation. While we are all enjoying time with our family and friends, the men and women in the British Army are doing a great job overseas and we should not forget them. Happy New Year.



Coming up . . .

On the Arnhem Bridge with Lord Attenborough's private army



Carinthia Observer Bivvy

Measures rolled 35 x 12 cm. Weight 1800 g. Fabric is IRR treated. Waterproof.

Olive GT213 £399.00



LED LAMP ASSEMBLIES

They fit all kind of TM torches as well as the SureFire 6P, G2Z and C2. Two lamp assembly models are available:

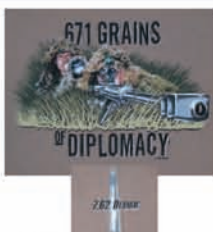
3-Watt LED: 65 lumens, beam rather concentrated	EL304	£19.99
CREE LED	EL305	£24.99



FOLDING KFS Set

Newly issued to the French army. It combines all the cutlery you need for only 135g: locking blade, spoon, fork, can opener, bottle opener, cork screw. Supplied with belt sheath.

Olive BP274 £5.90



7.62 T-shirt

Sniper - 671 Grain of Diplomacy. M to XL.

TS200 £13.95



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Subcom F Black

Similar to the above model but with a black finish blade.

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Sizes 6 to 12.

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Your knees deserve first class treatment too!

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Black	EL272BK	£29.99
Black	EL272BK	£29.99



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Easy to fit and secure - Quick Release button. Fits hand guards equipped with a Weaver or Picatinny rail system.

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Sand	SB260DE	£59.99
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Ideal to instantly camouflage your face or to protect yourself from the cold. Lightweight and very comfortable. 100% cotton.

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Black	TS260BK	£34.99



Camo Kit®

A one pound version of the BUSHRAG. Comes with 7 colours of dyed jute/burlap material.

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Glock® Multipurpose Shovel

Issued to the Austrian Army, made from metal and non-metallic parts, like the handgun of the same name with which it shares a remarkable durability.

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