

SOLDIER

THE BRITISH ARMY MAGAZINE



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BELL

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SOUTH SUDAN

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SPY IN THE SKY**

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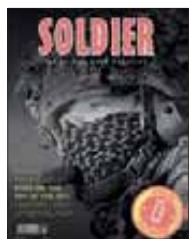
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CONTENTS



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FEATURES

COVER STORY

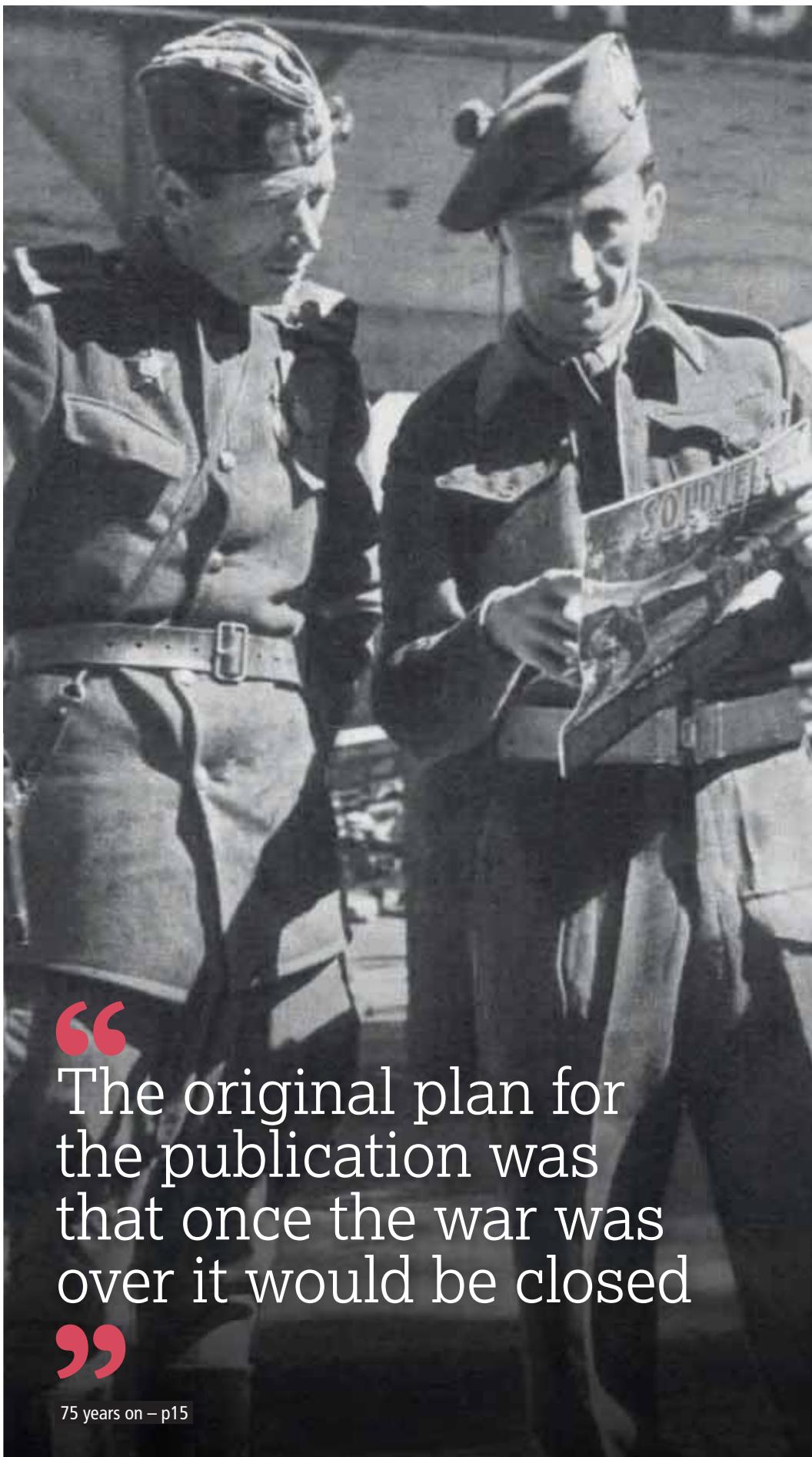
- 15 75 years on**
Soldier celebrates major milestone
- 24 Back with a bang**
Training returns to Sennelager
- 32 Lights, camera, action!**
Watchkeeper soars in Cyprus
- 36 Trenton tales**
Peacekeeping operation draws down
- 41 Clinical capability**
Medical personnel boost NHS cause

REGULARS

- 7 The Informer**
Top stories from across the Service
- 18 Need to Know**
Essential tips for today's personnel
- 45 Talkback**
Ruminations from the ranks
- 48 Bullet Points**
Troops' intelligence assets
- 57 Reviews**
Movies, music and books to fill your downtime
- 74 Final Word**
Troops lift lid on life in Germany

SOLDIERSPORT

- 64 Boxing**
GB duo chase Olympic dream
- 67 Winter sports**
Skiers find form in Meribel
- 68 Football**
Young guns show united front
- 69 Athletics**
Women retain cross country crown
- 70 Rugby league**
Reds make Challenge Cup history
- 71 Swimming**
Pool stars prepare for Services test
- 72 Biathlon**
Lightfoot makes international return



“

The original plan for the publication was that once the war was over it would be closed

”

75 years on – p15



Looking back and forward



AS YOU may have noticed when you clapped eyes on our front cover – a homage to our first edition in 1945 – this is a special issue of *Soldier*.

The title is 75 years old this month, having been launched in the closing stages of the Second World War.

So we thought it would be fitting to use our archive material to help us mark this momentous few months of world history.

Back then our first editorial team were right in the thick of it as the Allies pushed Nazi forces back across Europe, printing the magazine in Belgium initially and later in Germany.

Some of their coverage was unique and we'll be including excerpts from those early issues in our pages over the next six months, taking in the 75th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day along the way.

This month we're looking forward, too – to the British Army's new, slimmer presence in Germany and what that means for personnel there. We also examine how the Service is using Watchkeeper, a system that, surely, is a pointer to how military business will be conducted over the next 75 years and beyond.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

► Printed copies

THESE are distributed to every Army site at the start of each month.

► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

ALONG with news and glimpses behind the scenes at *Soldier*, we publish a link to the latest magazine at www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine and on Twitter (@soldiermagazine).

► Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk. Just click on the "read it now" tab.

► Purchase

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“
The pounds in
people's' pay
go further
”

Overseas payments revised

Stronger value of pound causes changes to local overseas allowance

MANY personnel serving abroad may be feeling worse off after their local overseas allowance was reduced in February.

For example, under the new rate a single soldier at the rank of corporal or below, with no children and who is stationed in Germany would see around £90 less in the paypacket.

Other locations to be affected by the changes include America, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

But Army Pay Colonel, Col Phil Bassingham-Searle, says that these troops are not out of pocket.

"The lower rates of LOA reflect the strengthening of sterling in recent months," he told *Soldier*.

"The better exchange rate means the pounds in peoples' pay go further in the places they serve."

LOA is intended to contribute to the difference in cost of living experienced. A change in the exchange rate affects this – up or down. The allowance's rates are routinely adjusted to keep the difference equal.

Maj Tony Frank (AGC (SPS)) from the Army's personnel directorate explained that LOA is derived from a comparison between the price of common items purchased at home and abroad.

"It is important to understand that LOA is a contribution to the difference in cost of maintaining the same lifestyle you'd have in the UK," he said.

"So, as costs rise in Britain, LOA may well see a fall because purchases are now comparatively cheaper in that overseas location."

This may even be the case where such countries see prices increase – if that rise is smaller, relative to price hikes experienced back home.

"LOA also takes into account items that Service personnel get at a tax-free rate, such as fuel, which may reduce the allowance," added Maj Frank.

"Changes are cascaded with one month's notice as it is recognised that even a small alteration can have an impact on people's income."

In order to shield personnel from fluctuating exchange rates the military uses a Forces Fixed Rate (FFR).

Maj Frank explains: "This is designed to protect troops from currency volatility and so it only changes after a big exchange rate movement or if there are smaller fluctuations over a sustained period.

"They benefit from FFR when they transfer part of their pay to an overseas bank account, so you should set this up upon arrival in a new country."

Currently, LOA is assessed by teams visiting main stations and comparing prices and surveying personnel on their shopping habits. However, work is ongoing to modernise the way LOA is calculated, with a new policy due to be announced by the end of the year.

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GLOBAL SITREP



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS FOR THE FALLEN

ROYAL Engineers past and present unveiled a commemorative bench and plaque for

comrades who lost their lives in the Falklands War.

The ceremony was attended by 59 Independent Commando Squadron veterans Dave Wright, John Maher, Barry Heap and Dan Newbold, who were returning to the islands for the first time since the 1982 conflict.

Project lead, Cpl David Walker of Mount Pleasant-based 34 Field Squadron said it had been an honour to support such a worthy task.

"All those involved savoured the opportunity to speak with the veterans and hear their heroic stories," he added.

The bench was erected at Stanley Memorial Wood, overlooking the hills and mountains where the battles took place and from where soldiers would have made their final march towards Stanley.

Meanwhile, also at Mount Pleasant Complex, the outgoing roulement infantry company, Support Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards handed over to their relief – A Company, 1st Battalion, The Rifles.



2. KENYA PARAS TO THE RESCUE

IF BRITISH civilians one day have to be evacuated from a country sliding into chaos, it is likely paratroopers will be the ones to come to their aid.

In preparation for such an event, Exercise Askari Storm kicked off in Kenya with a simulated non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) serial for the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment Battlegroup – with the families of Batuk-based soldiers and Kenyan people playing the role of those in peril.

Soldiers parachuted in at night to secure an airstrip for an RAF Hercules to deliver further troops and equipment by rapid air landing.

Once established, the force fanned out into the countryside to gather together civilians and bring them back to the airstrip, where they were given food, shelter and medical care before being flown out to safety.

A NEO is one of the core missions that 16 Air Assault Brigade, the Army's global response force, stands ready to carry out at short notice.



Soldiers show their slope style in Meribel – page 67

“
It makes
you think
about what
you have
”

Troops reflect on Trenton drawdown – page 36

1. FALKLAND ISLANDS

Green Line around the capital Nicosia as part of the UN force during the tour, which ends in late October.

Highlighting that the troops had made a "noble choice" to put civvy lives on hold, he added: "Today they are professional soldiers, playing an equal role in the Army's commitments."



3. CYPRUS RESERVISTS TAKE ON TOSCA

SOLDIERS from 7th Battalion, The Rifles are taking the lead for a historic operational tour.

The outfit will head up the largest ever deployment of the Army Reserve in a single action – and under its own command – during a forthcoming six-month outing on Op Tosca.

They will make up part of a 240-strong contingent of soldiers along with personnel from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, relieving colleagues from 27 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps.

Lt Col James Gayner, CO of 7 Rifles, said personnel would be responsible for an area of the

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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6. NEPAL WELCOME FROM THE TOP

CHIEF of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith took to the parade square in Pokhara for the attestation ceremony of more than 450 Nepalese recruits.

They were picked from 12,000 would-be soldiers who applied to join this year, passing the demanding selection course.

The officer – who paid tribute to Gurkhas past and present as he addressed the troops – was joined by high ranking Nepalese colleagues plus diplomatic staff at the event.



4. JORDAN DRY RUN

LEARNING how to operate in the harsh Jordanian desert was a top priority for troops from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment during Exercise Olive Grove.

Personnel from A Company travelled from their base in

Cyprus to the exercise area of Al Quwayrah, where they developed their readiness for operations in the demanding conditions.

They also completed trench and urban operations, as well as a joint live fire demonstration.

Officer Commanding, Maj Mike Brigham, said: "I've had 25 new soldiers join the battalion who have never been overseas with the Army, other than Cyprus where we are based, and this is their first experience of such an arid environment."

The infantrymen also enjoyed cultural trips to Petra, Wadi Rum and the Dead Sea and repaired and decorated a community centre for refugees from Syria run by the United Nations.



5. POLAND HAVING A BLAST

BRITISH soldiers deployed as part of Nato's enhanced forward presence in Poland honed their proficiency on anti-tank weaponry during a live range package at Bemowo Piskie.

The troops from C Squadron, The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, fired Javelin and NLAW missiles and shared expertise with their Polish counterparts.

American, Romanian and Croatian personnel also observed the training.



Picture: Sgt Timothy Hamlin, US Army

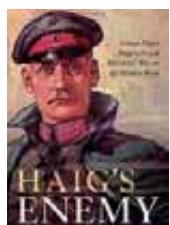
AUTHORS JOIN LONG LIST

■ MILITARY authors are already battling it out for supremacy in the 2020 British Army Military Book of the Year competition.

Some 13 publications, covering topics

ranging from the Normandy campaign to the nuances of command, are on the recently released long list for the contest with the final line-up due to be published this month.

Academic Jonathan Boff took the 2019 accolade for *Haig's Enemy* – a study of how Germany approached conflict on the western front.



SIGNALS IN CYPHER TEST



■ COMPETITIVE troops from the Royal Signals found themselves pushed to the limit when they were tested on the skills needed to defeat attacks on computer networks.

Around 100 soldiers from the corps pitted their wits against a fictional enemy bent on causing electronic havoc while battling against the clock in Exercise Mercury Cypher.

The tasks included defending a corporation from an attack, with players scored on the likes of speed, accuracy and efficiency – they were marked down if they needed hints.

The team from 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron topped the standings at the event.

Organiser Maj Danny Fielding (R Signals) commented: "I know that everyone taking part will leave with more cyber knowledge."

CABBIES' CASH BOOST

■ FORMER troops who fought in campaigns including the Second World War have been honoured by the capital's famous cabbies.

The stalwarts were treated to a formal lunch at the RAF Club in Mayfair in recognition of their fundraising work for the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans.

The cash raised means that black cab drivers can continue to escort ex-personnel on special commemoration events and days out.



UNITED

effort draws praise

PERSONNEL returning from a long-running operation in South Sudan have accrued experience that will underpin the Army's reputation on peacekeeping duties of the future, a senior officer has said.

Speaking as the last Op Trenton tour drew to a close, Lt Col Matt Smith (RE) – commanding the British task force – said troops had honed an array of skills on their six-month outing.

They had also shown both professionalism and compassion amid tough operational conditions.

Lt Col Smith added: "Many of the soldiers are on their first tour but have performed well. They have tackled the tasks at hand.

"Engineers, infantry and signallers have worked together on projects, as well as with personnel from different countries who have different ways of getting things done.

"We have put aside our cap badge identities to wear the blue United Nations beret."

Regular and Reserve soldiers have been assisting the major multinational effort in South Sudan, which has been recovering from a brutal war, for the past four years.

The troops are now working around the clock to put the final touches to initiatives, including the completion of a hospital that has been in construction over successive tours.

Lt Col Smith – who is the commanding officer of 75 Engineer Regiment – said Trenton shared similarities with peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia 20 years ago.

Personnel have been honing vital skills, such as using diplomacy in a volatile environment, in the same way as their predecessors did while on the ground in Bosnia and Kosovo.

He added: "I have been particularly impressed with the way the junior NCOs have risen to the challenge – they are the face of the task force.

"I served in the Balkans as a young officer – it has been great to see our troops working in a similar situation and growing in confidence."

● Trenton tales – p36-40



Picture: Jack Eckersley

Boxer set for assembly

DELIVERIES of the Army's latest armoured vehicle are on course to begin in 2023 after it was confirmed that most of the assembly work will be carried out in the UK.

Boxer will be built by a defence contractor consortium of Krauss-Maffei Wegmann and Rheinmetall – and will give troops a significant boost at the sharp end of operations.

Forming a key part of the Service's new Strike brigades, the 8x8 wheeled asset's line-up will include an armoured personnel carrier, field ambulance and specialist variants.

Workers at Krauss-Maffei Wegmann's British WFEL subsidiary are limbering up to assemble more than half of the vehicles destined for the Army fleet.

The Stockport-based firm already

has a strong pedigree in such projects, having long built military bridging systems and worked with more than 40 armed forces around the world.

The company's apprenticeship programme has been bolstered in preparation for Boxer – which will use components sourced from UK suppliers.

They will be recruiting a number of new trainees, as well as using the existing talent pool.

Ian Anderton, managing director of WFEL, commented: "We are delighted and very proud to be a part of this transformational project for the British Army.

"Our involvement in the Boxer programme allows us to further develop the UK supply chain, creating and protecting engineering jobs and developing new skills."

“It allows us to develop the UK supply chain”

BATTERY BOOST FOR LIGHT GUN SYSTEMS

■ TROOPS will not be wanting for firepower – thanks to a new deal with a civvy contractor.

Specialist firm Lincad has taken on the MoD contract to carry out repairs to the L118 light gun's battery power management system at its recently opened facility in Surrey.

Maintaining these components is critical as they power the howitzer's artillery pointing system – ensuring that accurate fire can be rained down on enemy positions.

Lincad has a solid reputation for battery tech and is used by both UK and US forces. Joint managing director Peter Slade said the latest deal would enhance the firm's 30-year relationship with British defence.



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

Soldiers saluted

A BAND of brothers who fought in the pivotal D-Day landings of June 1944 have again been honoured as they scooped one of the top slots in this year's *Sun* Military Awards.

They were saluted with the judges' special accolade for their participation in last year's 75th anniversary commemorations – along with The Royal British Legion, which took them to France for the event.

The Army was well-represented with Pte Fin Doherty (Para, pictured above with singer Alexandra Burke), recognised for inspiring others. He has followed in the footsteps of his brother – who was killed in a Taliban ambush on Op Herrick – by joining the Service.

Former rifleman Craig Monaghan, who fought his way back after suffering serious injuries in Afghanistan to play elite rugby, took the overcoming adversity award.

And saving the life of a comrade who was crushed by a tipper truck outside Catterick Garrison earned LCpl Craig Daniels (AGC (MPGS)) the individual hero at home accolade.



ROAD SIGN REMEMBRANCE

■ FAMILY, friends and Army colleagues of a young NCO killed during a deployment in Afghanistan turned out for the unveiling of a road named in his honour.

Jamie Webb Drive – in Wilmslow, Cheshire – was officially revealed in a short ceremony attended by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham.

Parents Susan and David and brother Luke were presented with a replica of the road sign during the event. LCpl Webb (24), of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, died after a suicide bomber struck at his patrol base in Helmand province on Op Herrick in March 2013.



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

IT HAS been another busy month. As I put pen to paper, I am about to board a plane to Canada for a multinational conference.

The theme is the "evolution of army leadership" and, while I may be on the other side of the world, we are discussing the same problems.

A long-haul flight is an opportunity to catch up – and I am working through the issues you are sending my way. Judging from this I would suggest there are five areas of concern, ranging from kit to tempo.

It is good that these are being aired, but clearly not great that they are still coming up. Please be patient – our Army is a large organisation and making change is like turning a super tanker. But if a problem was easy to fix, it wouldn't be a problem and it could be a while before we notice a difference.

But this said, it is also important that we – as soldiers – play our part in helping.

Firstly, I will always ask whether any issue has been reported to the chain of command. Junior NCOs are crucial in this – I want them to use their rank to do more for their people.

Secondly – and I have repeated this mantra throughout my time writing in *Soldier* – we need to stop whining and start complaining properly, using the right systems.

Let's take one issue in my mailbox – concerns over Virtus. It's your system, you own it and the continuous improvement. You must use the equipment failure report system and there will be a recommendations portal monitored by experts who are on Defence Connect.

It might take time, but we can help make changes if we follow the right processes.

Flood fighters fly the Service flag

■ THE atrocious weather was a downbeat feature of last month – and a deluge of water has again had tragic consequences for communities and livelihoods.

But I would like to pay tribute to all our soldiers who have worked tirelessly to build flood defences throughout storms Ciara and Dennis – they have done a truly amazing job (page 14).

Their commitment in working around the clock shows that our troops are always ready to play their part to assist, whether on deployments overseas or much closer to home.



I want them to use their rank to do more for people

“

Partnerships are key

JOINT working is important in this day and age. Armed forces cannot operate totally independently, so having good partners is important.

In this respect Nato is a vital component in the world of today and the UK will have an important role to play over the next few years.

I recently attended a Nato conference in Greece and HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, based at Imjin Barracks,

Gloucester, has just become the lead warfighting headquarters for the alliance.

It's an impressive organisation, commanded by an experienced British lieutenant general.

As somebody who has physically been part of Nato I am a great believer in its work.

Relationships with our partners and allies are crucial and must be preserved – remember, you cannot surge trust.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q How do you pass the time on a flight and what do you hate about long-haul travel?

A I tend to do a lot of reading – it's a good time to think too. But getting comfortable can be a nightmare

It's time to get that Refund Feeling again!

Remember how you felt when you saw your tax refund hit your bank account? Well the good news is that it's nearly April, which means it's time to make your next claim.

So far, we've claimed back £78,389,263 in tax refunds for 47,500 Armed Forces personnel, so make sure you get your share this year.

If you've made a claim with RIFT before, things should be even easier this time. What's more, returning Armed Forces customers get an exclusive discounted fee of 25% as a thank-you for choosing RIFT to help you again this year.

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SPINE LINE COMPETITION



THE spine clues on last month's magazine wouldn't have fooled those of you familiar with the media. Roger Fenton, Moises Saman, Robert Capa and James Nachtwey are four of the most distinguished war photographers of all time.

This month, we have teamed up with Healthspan (www.healthspan.co.uk) to offer one reader a goody bag of various supplements worth around £200.

They are formulated by expert sport nutritionists with experience of working with the most successful athletes and teams and independently tested by Informed Sport.

To be in with a chance of winning, just tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers – including daytime phone number – to the usual postal address or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by March 31.

WIN
a goody bag
worth £200

“I enjoyed the running and tabbing”

ARRC READY TO ROLL

NATO remains as relevant as ever and well equipped to take on new threats, the commander of the alliance's UK-based Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ Arrc) has stressed.

In one of his first interviews since arriving in post last summer, Lt Gen Sir Edward Smyth-Osbourne insisted partnerships between members remained steadfast despite a changing world.

And he believed the forthcoming Exercise Defender Europe 20 – a package on a scale not seen since the 1980s – would underscore the organisation's effectiveness.

“We must be flexible as we face a mix of conventional threats and a complex operating environment,” he said.

“As we will be in the lead warfighting role for some time, HQ Arrc is an interesting environment.

“I'm excited about our future.”



P Company breaks new ground

THE first female soldier to pass P Company has played down her label as a “trailblazer”, stating it was the women who attempted it in the past that inspired her to tackle the gruelling test.

Capt Rosie Wild (RA) made headlines last month when she was awarded the coveted maroon beret after completing the three-and-a-half-week physical examination and is to join 7 Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery.

“This is a lot bigger than me,” the 28-year-old told *Soldier*. “I may be the first to pass but there are females before me who have gone really far in the course only to be injured or not quite meet the standard.

“They blazed the trail for me. I would not have attempted this if I did not know others had tried.

“Hopefully it shows fellow soldiers – male and female – what can be done.

“I'm 5ft 5in and weigh 64kg, I'm sure there are people out there who might think they cannot make the grade, but I would say give it a go – you've got nothing to lose.”

Capt Wild is coming to the end of

a two-year posting with 4 Regiment, Royal Artillery and it was her desire to serve as a fire support team commander that saw her migrate to 7 Para RHA and P Company.

And it was her background as a member of the Army triathlon team that helped her meet the challenges.

“I adapted my training prior to going on the course,” she explained. “I particularly enjoyed the cardiovascular side of it, the running and tabbing.

“It is difficult, but at the same time it is doable. A lot of it is about looking after your body, making sure you stretch and recover properly, and during the events you have to dig in and do your best.

“Your physical robustness is tested but people don't appreciate the mental resilience that is required.

“Camaraderie is important and you have to work together, cheer each other up and help with injuries or admin.

“At no point on the course was I treated differently to anyone else.

“I was not a captain or a female; I was given a number and that was me – it was brilliant.”

FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS CONTINUING

AROUND 170 soldiers were called in to help protect flood-hit areas of west Yorkshire ahead of Storm Dennis.

Personnel from A Coy, 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and Reservists from 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment deployed to several locations as the weather deteriorated.

They helped to lay hundreds of sandbags and restored 550 metres of existing temporary defences between Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge in Calderdale following damage from Storm Ciara.

Barriers were also built to protect areas in and around the town of Ilkley.

The leader of Calderdale Council, Cllr Tim Swift said: “Support from Armed Forces personnel gave a real boost to morale in the Calder Valley at a stressful time.

“They worked incredibly hard in difficult conditions to protect communities, making a huge difference to



residents and businesses.”

A further 11 soldiers from 5th Battalion, The Rifles helped move residents requiring urgent medical support from a care home in Herefordshire.

Three battalions remain on emergency 12- and 24-hour notice to move at the time of writing.

75 YEARS ON



How *Soldier* was launched on the command of one of the Army's greatest ever leaders...

WHEN Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wanted to provide a morale-boosting magazine to keep his troops informed about developments on various fronts during the latter stages of the Second World War, he turned to a group of journalists serving in the British Army.

A total of 41 staff were gathered together, including writers, artists, drivers and even a cook. Headed up by editor Col Sean Fielding, they launched the first issue of *Soldier* on March 19, 1945, replete with a stirring letter from Monty on the front cover (below).

The then tabloid-sized magazine was printed in Brussels at first and later in Hamburg on the captured

colour presses that had churned out the German Army's notorious propaganda title, *Signal*.

When the war in Europe came to an end, *Soldier*'s editorial team were responsible for a series of scoops, revealing details about the undersea pipeline between England and France and Operation Sea Lion, Hitler's master plan for the invasion of Britain, among others.

The original proposal for the publication was that once the war was over it would be closed or perhaps

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

I am glad to have this opportunity of being able to speak to all soldiers in the B.A. through the first number of "SOLDIER". You and I have come a long way together; we have been through some very bad times and some very good times.

And what is the situation to-day?

By all possible conceivable chance our Germans are the very fighters for the Allies. All that is left is to fight Hitler, to fight the remnants of the remnants of Germany itself.

We are fighting on German soil and we have crossed the line for the last round; there is no time limit for this round; we shall continue until our opponent has had enough.

And what are we fighting for?

You remember the poem written in the Desert by a soldier of the Eighth Army, in one verse of which he gave his views as to what we were fighting for:

"Peace for the kids, our brothers freed, A kinder world, a cleaner world."

That seems to describe it very well.

I like to feel that out of the comradeship of the great armies that are fighting in this war will be born a new factor - a factor for good, which will be a powerful influence in the difficult days that will be ahead when the fighting is over.

We must see to it that this will be.

On your behalf I send our greetings to our comrades serving in other theatres of war. There are many of our friends in Africa, in Italy, in India, in Burma, and in other places; to all of them we send our best wishes, and to the many thousands who garnish and maintain the lines of communication throughout the world.

We salute our comrades in the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, and in the R.A.F.; we salute our sailors and airmen, and their efforts we could have achieved little.

We send friendly greeting to the soldiers of the Allied nations fighting with us.

And to our families and friends in the home countries we send a very special word of greeting.

I have often wished "Good luck" to soldiers.

I do so now to "SOLDIER".

B. L. Montgomery.

Field Marshal,
21 Army Group





14. We have checked with the Prime Minister, the Minister of State for
All General Services and the Director of Public Prosecutions and
PERSONALLY, we have checked with the Director of Public Prosecutions
and the General Counsel to the Ministry of State for All General Services.

PREMIER IN THE SIEGFRIED

URING his visit to the front, Mr. Winston Churchill spoke to officers and men of the 51st (Highland) Division. He told : "I am very proud to come and meet you at El Alamein, of which our arms have honoured.

The Highland Division began with a terrible disaster, lost its soul role again and those who had struck down are themselves defeated and see men before them. The name and honour of Scotland have been held high, and the deeds of the division rank with those of any performed by any equal unit in the British army.

"You are now in the midst of victorious battles. Your struggle in the north has enabled great advances to be made in the south, and soon we shall be across the Rhine. Far away on the other side the gallant Romans are pressing on."

Anyone can see that one good stroke
heave all together will end the war in Europe.

bent down tyranny, and open the path to peace and the return to the homeland.

"Let us bid so that it will end in a better and broader world in which our island home and the men from it will always be held in honour - a world in which British ideals and fair play will find themselves established over ever broader regions.

"God bless you all."

Mr. Churchill chalked on a giant sheet the words "Heller — personally," and then fired a great 240 mm. gun which sent the shell crashing them on one of the main German supply routes across the Rhine.

escape routes across the Rhine.

the Rhine floodlands, toured a ruined airfield, heard the massed pipe bands of the 51st Division play on German soil, and inspected bridges across the Rhine.



Almost invisible from the ground, this sniper's post was discovered when British troops entered Saeffle, Germany.

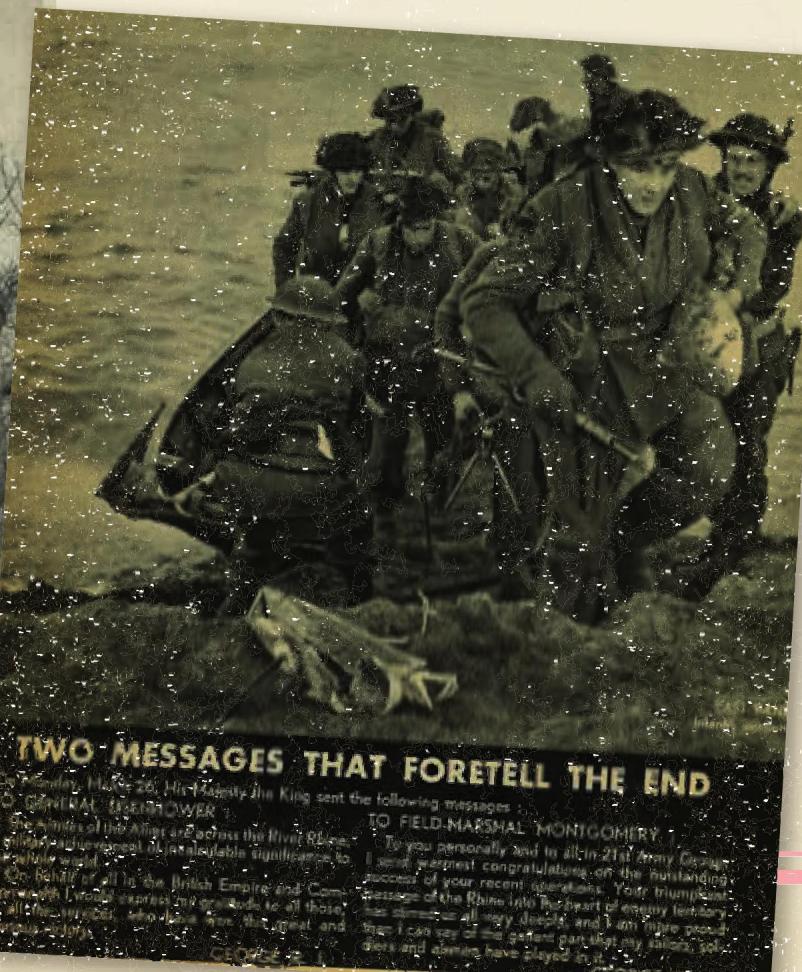
handed over to the British Army of the Rhine, but so popular was it that Service chiefs decided to establish an editorial team in the UK and distribute copies to their bases all around the world.

Since then, *Soldier's* writers and photographers have covered virtually every major operation in which UK personnel have been involved.

Some of our longer serving staff have experience of working in operational theatres, with photographer Graeme Main – awarded an MBE for his services to military photography last year – travelling to Iraq and Afghanistan several times, where he was humbled by the professionalism and bravery of the troops he met. Assistant editor Cliff Caswell, meanwhile, has also reported from Northern Ireland, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo.

During the course of its 75-year history, the magazine has changed in format, style and content but one thing has remained the same – its mission to keep soldiers informed, educated and entertained about all things British Army.

To mark *Soldier's* illustrious birthday we'll be including extracts from editions published in the first few months of 1945 in our next six issues, taking in our original coverage of events surrounding VE and VJ Day and the conclusion of the Second World War, which occurred 75 years ago this year.



PROUD CLAIM

"Man of Kent" (name and address supplied): What is the oldest regiment or corps of the British Army? Can you settle an argument that started in our "Y.M." the other day and looks like going on till the "Cease Fire"?

The Royal Scots are the First Foot and they call them "Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard," but when I joined the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) we were impressed with the fact that we were formed from the Train Bands of London, that this was a sort of militia-cum police force keeping order in the City, and such good scappers that we were asked to go to Holland to help them in a fight against the French. Further, that while we were on the Continent the Royal Scots were embodied; that's why we were a year or two behind them in our embodiment, which was in 1572.

One or two in our argument thought the Guards or the Royal Engineers (under another name) were the oldest, but a barrack-room lawyer who was a pre-1914 "Terror" said we were all wrong — that the Honourable Artillery Company had the privilege. Who's right please, or are we all wrong?



THANKS, YANK

We have a gripe. Why is it that Yanks are always complaining about the poor quality of English ale? Some of them even say they prefer American beer to it. After an impartial study we find that we much prefer English ale to any kind of American beer. One thing about American beer is that it is too gassy, too effervescent. On the other hand English ale has just the right lift. Another thing we like is the variety of ales they have over here. If one doesn't like bitter he can have brown ale or lager, etc. The English seem to please a man's individual taste. This may be incidental, but we don't think there is anything in the States to compare with an accompanying platter of fish and chips to go with one's ale. As far as we're concerned the English have the servicing of a man's alcoholic taste down to a fine art.

SEVEN YANKS.
(in "Yank").

WE'RE CONQUERORS!

"R.A.C." (name and address supplied): New name, please! Just the thing while the Nazis were being chased out of France, Belgium and Holland, the term B.L.A. is now out-of-date. The liberating part of the business, except for the few odd corners still to be tidied up, is over. We're in Homeland now. Not as liberators, but as conquerors!

My suggestion: that the B.L.A. be re-named the B.C.A. — the British CONQUERING Army.

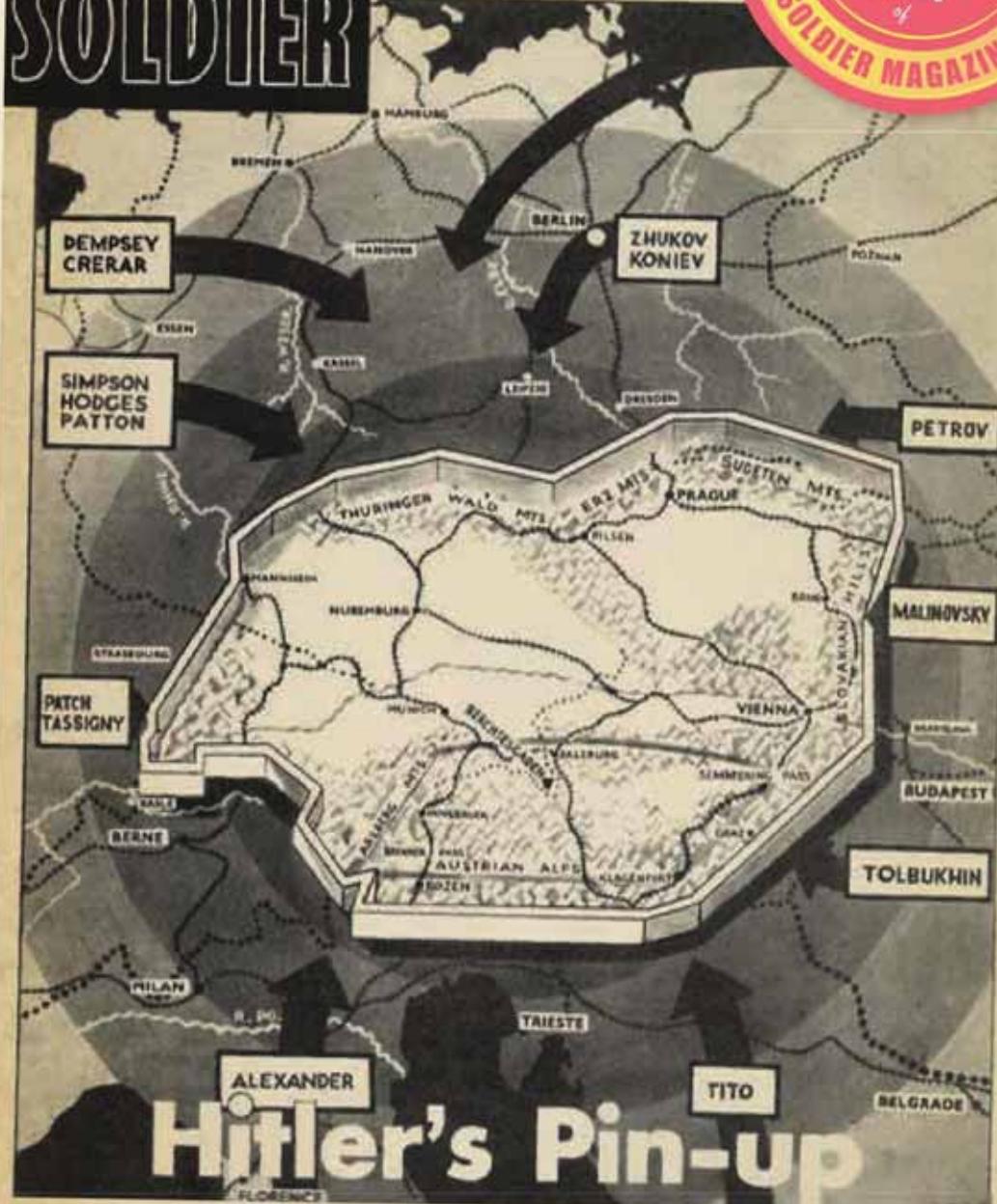
The Prime Minister has stated that there will be no room for Germany in the comity of nations until all traces of Nazism and militarism have been extirpated. That's a tough job and we've got to act tough to do it. Rechristen us the B.C.A. and you're starting on the right lines.

CELEBRATING

75
YEARS

of
SOLDIER MAGAZINE

SOLDIER



HITLER is reported to give his orders for starving off East and other defeat in these later "fortresses" inside the Reich. SOLDIER map shows you all these of them.

First, there is a natural outer zone shown on SOLDIER map as a wall which Hitler hopes to hold if he can save the bulk of his armies from being destroyed before they withdraw to it.

This area is bounded to the west by the Rhine from Bielefeld to Münster, in the north

by the Thuringer Wald and the Erz and Saxon mountains, in the east by the Bohemian hills and in the south by the Austrian Alps. Within this ring lie the vital food and raw material resources of Czechoslovakia, Silesia and Austria.

Next there is a middle zone shown on the map by a rough quadrilateral. This area, also from the Artillery estimates of western Austria, is nearly as far Southwest to

and then 100 miles north-east to the Semmering Pass, some 50 miles south-west of Vienna.

This zone might be defended by picked divisions of the Wehrmacht, such as the SS, paratroopers and Gebirgsjäger (mountain troops) which have always been stronger than other Army formations.

Hitler's last and final hope, according to speculation, might be his own mountain

stronghold at Berchtesgaden. Close by are the retreats of Goering, Ribbentrop and other Nazi leaders. Surrounded by rings of anti-aircraft nests and gas emplacements hidden in the Alpine rock, it is said to be honeycombed with underground tunnels and workshops and linked to the outside world by underground passages like a medieval castle.

Looking at SOLDIER map you can see how the Allies might close in. Will Hitler pin his hopes for living a little longer on these three last hopes? Time alone will tell.

Opposite, top to bottom: Fd Marshal Bernard Montgomery and Prime Minister Winston Churchill on German soil for the first time; British troops discover an ingenious sniper position; King George VI uses Soldier to send a personal message. This page: The first batch of readers' letters gives a flavour of the attitudes of the time; a graphic shows Adolf Hitler's main defensive positions on home soil.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT'S NEW

NUTRITION / EXPERIENCE / DRILLS / SKILLS & STEPS / NEXT



A notable

CHANGE

A lifelong love of music prompted this former cavalryman to rethink his Army career



Thinking of a swap

Before you pull the plug on Army life, Musn Dixon has this advice ...

It might be the role you are in that is wrong for you rather than the wider Service. But do your research and be sure you know what you are getting into ahead of making any changes

You should go through your chain of command – you'll be able to talk through your intentions and take advice on the best options on whether a new cap badge is right for you

Later you will be able to sit down with troops who are already doing the role you are looking at taking on before you fill out the formal paperwork and prepare for a new direction

► PLAYING the piano had been a part of Matt Dixon's life for as long as he could remember – and after serving with The Royal Dragoon Guards for four years, he had a nagging feeling that he might be missing his vocation.

So, the Challenger 2 driver decided to take his chances and call time on his service to pursue his musical ambitions.

However, just two weeks before he was due to hang up his boots, he heard about opportunities with the Corps of Army Music (Camus) – and a tour of its headquarters opened up a new avenue.

Now with the Band of the Scots Guards, the 26-year-old is regularly performing to thousands and in 2019 received the Household Division Musician of the Year award.

Originally from Leeds, Musn Dixon recalled: "I had always enjoyed being a soldier and although full-time study at university had seemed to be the best option at first, it was going to be expensive – changing cap badge meant I would still be paid to do something I loved."

Electing for a transfer instead, Musn Dixon first had to pass a theory exam and demanding audition, but it was not long before he was training to become a fully-fledged military musician.

"Being at Kneller Hall was a really great experience – in a lot of ways it was probably a bit like university in the sense that you are immersed in music all the time," he added.

Having completed a year of training, as well as taking on the tuba as an additional instrument along the way, his first 12 months in post saw extensive travel with a European-wide concert programme.

And with a variety of roles available in the Army, Musn Dixon suggested that anyone yearning for a fresh start should explore the options and consider a change of job, rather than quitting for civvy life.

"Transferring to a new career within the Army really worked for me," he said.

"These days I am living in Knightsbridge and am having an enjoyable and rewarding professional life."

Camus: The deal

Requirements: Applicants must pass an audition and theory exam

Age ceiling: Opportunities up to 55

Benefits: These include global travel and transferable qualifications such as a BTEC



CONFIDENCE

MINDSET

SUCCESS

Have a word with yourself



Change your perspective on a problem with this one-minute self-coaching exercise

► LIFE coaching is all the rage, especially for those dealing with challenges and transition.

But according to Sid Madge, founder of training provider Meee – My Education Employment Enterprise – only 23 per cent of people who have received such mentoring feel it actually helped them.

What's more, he believes that anyone can foster a coaching mentality within themselves and others by mastering some simple techniques.

Best of all, it only takes a minute...

1. NO MORE DRAMA

- The first step is to analyse your role in the so-called Karpman Drama Triangle, a term coined by psychologist Stephen Karpman back in the 60s
- In any dispute we tend to fall into one of three categories: **Victim**, **Persecutor** or **Rescuer** and often switch between them depending on the situation
- None of these feel great. They are anxiety-based, negative responses to the inevitable challenges of life
- Take a minute to ask yourself what role you are playing and whether there could be a better way

STRENGTHS

CHANGE

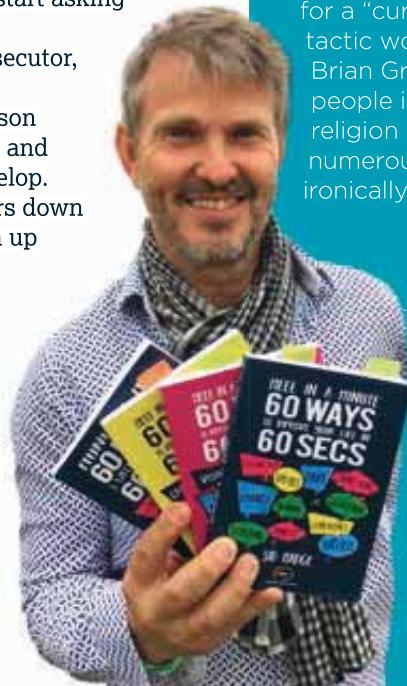
VALUES

2. THINK SOLUTIONS, NOT PROBLEMS

- All sides of the drama triangle are problem-focused. But one of the quirks of life is that we tend to get what we fixate on and expect, so it makes sense that putting an issue front and centre merely perpetuates it. In your minute, question whether you are part of the problem, or part of the solution

3. REFRAME YOUR APPROACH

- David Emerald's TED Empowerment Dynamic suggests micro-interventions that can nudge us into a more constructive mindset and break us out of our drama triangle personalities
- Instead of playing the victim, try being the '**creator**', someone who focuses on the solution and takes responsibility, stops reacting and starts choosing
- Instead of being a rescuer, become the '**coach**' and empower others rather than stepping in to save the day. Stop telling people what to do and start asking
- And if you're the persecutor, aim instead to be the '**challenger**'. This person encourages themselves and others to grow and develop. They stop putting others down and start building them up
- Take a few moments to consider how you could shift your position to help a friend, colleague or loved one



IN A FUNK AT WORK? TRY THESE QUIRKY TIPS TO RETHINK THE SITUATION

Dress like a superhero

As bizarre as it sounds, research from the University of Hertfordshire showed that students who wore superhero t-shirts scored better on mental agility tests than those wearing plain t-shirts. The take-away is that our clothing can prime us for success, so if you could do with a boost ahead of an upcoming challenge, donning Superman pants or a t-shirt under your normal work attire might just give you the edge

Try 180-degree thinking

If your current strategy is getting you nowhere, why not do the exact opposite? We often double down on a course of action, but if it's wrong, working on it harder will make it more wrong. For example, if you're struggling to get the best out of your team and berating them has made no difference, try a different tack

Take a leaf out of Da Vinci's book

Leonardo da Vinci knew a lot of stuff about a lot of stuff and one of the ways he achieved this was by seeking out people with expertise in different fields. If you need to expand your understanding of something, why not approach someone with more knowledge than you and invite them for a "curiosity conversation"? This tactic worked for Hollywood producer Brian Grazer, whose discussions with people in science, politics, the arts and religion helped provide inspiration for numerous blockbusters, including – ironically – *The Da Vinci Code*



- These ideas are just three of 180 tips, life hacks, exercises and anecdotes featured in Sid Madge's *Meee in a Minute* pocketbook series on work, life and family. Visit meeebooks.com or meee.global for more info.

Good communication is at the heart of my approach



Being able to connect with former soldiers suffering from mental health issues is as important as treatment, says Dr Jonathan Leach (ex-RAMC)

AT ITS most extreme, military service calls on those who enlist to undertake tasks that would be unthinkable in civilian life.

It is no surprise that some have problems – I saw it first-hand with soldiers returning from Iraq in pieces.

Using the right language is hugely important when you are talking through mental health issues with veterans – they are more likely to open up if someone is able to relate to them.

Very often the medicine is the same for ex-soldiers and civilians alike – only their experiences are different. The key lies with having people who are able to speak to former troops on their terms, and relate to the life they have led.

I currently advise on veterans' services for the NHS after a 25-year career in the Royal Army Medical Corps. My past military life helps engage with patients – most recently I was talking to someone who was in Northern Ireland around the same time as me.

Even something as simple as recalling

the helicopter rides to Crossmaglen when the roads were too dangerous was enough to develop trust between us.

Good communication is at the heart of my approach. We now, for example, have a register of GP surgeries friendly to the needs of former Servicemen and women.

The idea is that every practice should ask whether a patient has served in the Armed Forces.

Those signing up to the register must have a clinical lead for military patients. Typically doctors, nurses or paramedics, they advise colleagues as well as assisting veterans.

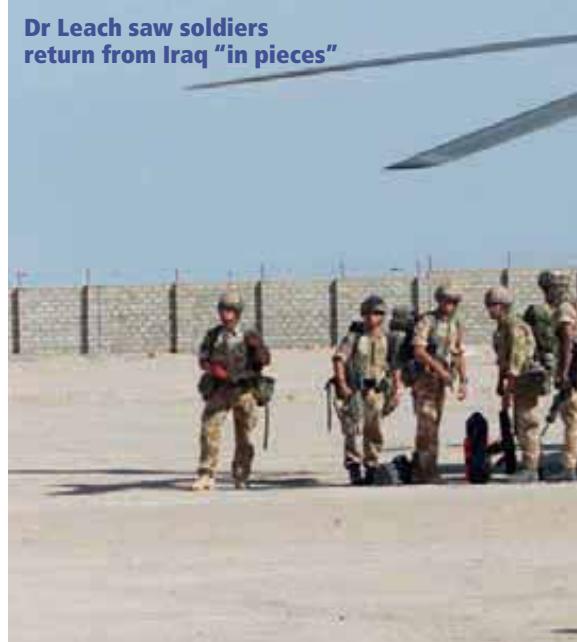
The network is continuing to grow – we now have around 700 practices registered with the Royal College of General Practitioners across England. But as there are 7,000 surgeries in the country, we have a way to go.

Another scheme is the transition, intervention and liaison service for those moving to civilian life as well as veterans. A GP can refer them, or they can do it themselves.

As well as helping with issues around health, the initiative also provides links into areas such as housing, financial advice and employment.

In addition, the complex treatment service is there to assist those experiencing post traumatic stress disorder, regardless of when they left the Armed Forces.

Dr Leach saw soldiers return from Iraq "in pieces"





Profile: Dr Jonathan Leach

Job title: NHS medical director for military and veterans' health; GP

Age: 60

Army service: RAMC, 1984-2008

Rank on retirement: Colonel

Operational experience: Includes Iraq, the Balkans, Northern Ireland

In the summer we'll also be launching the high intensity service, aimed at better assisting those who find themselves in psychological crisis – and their families, too.

People continue to dedicate their lives to the defence of their country – we need to make sure that we fully support their needs after they return to civilian life.



Gut feeling

Tips for beating the dreaded bloat



► MOST of us can feel a bit uncomfortable after an indulgent meal, but regular bloating can be a sign your digestive system isn't working optimally.

It is caused by excess gas in the bowel and can be a painful, embarrassing experience.

However, Dr Simon Smale – a gastroenterologist and trustee of the Irritable Bowel Syndrome Network – says making these simple changes to your diet and routine could help...

Avoid these common triggers

Rich, fatty or processed foods, as well as spicy dishes and gassy drinks. It's also a bad idea to eat all your calories in one go at the end of the day. Instead, eat regular, small meals

Too much coffee. Caffeine can have a negative impact on the gut and promote wind, so try to limit yourself to a couple of cups a week

Sugar. Overindulging on the sweet stuff can lead to a build-up of gas-causing bacteria

Artificial sweeteners. These are indigestible sugars in diet drinks and even diet foods that can have adverse effects on the gut. They can ferment in the large bowel and disrupt good bacteria, causing trapped wind

And now for some good habits

Eat mindfully. Take your time, chew every mouthful and don't gulp. Sit down in a relaxed environment – preferably not at your desk

Incorporate prebiotic ingredients. These act as the "fertiliser" for good bacteria and counter the effects of more harmful types. Leeks, onions and garlic are all prebiotics

Stock up on fermented foods. Like prebiotics, these are great for digestive health. Examples include kefir (a cultured milk drink similar to yoghurt), miso paste, organic apple cider vinegar, kimchi (a Korean dish typically made from fermented cabbage), kombucha tea and sauerkraut. Probiotic supplements can similarly boost your healthy bacteria

Exercise. This has been shown to help gut symptoms from flatulence, to bloating and constipation. Anything that gets you out of breath such as jogging or walking briskly, done for half an hour, a few times a week helps both bowel function and heart rate

And finally...fart. Yep, holding in wind can cause more issues in the long term, so let it out!





BACK WITH A BANG

Royal Lancers first through the doors as training restarts in Sennelager



Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main



THE heathlands around Paderborn fell silent last year when the British Army withdrew most of its troops from Germany.

But now the thump of large calibre rounds can once again be heard echoing across Sennelager ranges, while the flash of tracer streaks across the darkening sky.

The garrison is the UK military's largest remaining hub in the country and a succession of units will use its extensive facilities to hone their skills throughout 2020.

First up were The Royal Lancers, who created a bespoke, four-week package of live firing, dry drills and simulation serials for their personnel.

Exercise Mons Lancer was part of the regiment's preparations for its imminent stint on the Canadian prairie and saw troops working through the battle craft syllabus, carrying out mounted and dismounted shoots and rotating through virtual scenarios in the on-site Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (Catt).

"It's nice to get to grips with our core role of formation recce in a new environment," LCpl James Pennington told *Soldier* as he waited for a night shoot to begin.

"Everyone's used to being on Salisbury Plain and you don't really get the same out of it when you know exactly what's around the corner.

"It's good, as well, to have everything on hand here, where we can go straight from the ranges out onto the training area or to Catt training. There's nowhere really in the UK that offers that for us."

LCpl Pennington was getting to grips with the role of gunner in the Scimitar, having recently stepped up from his previous job as armourer.

The 52 vehicles used on the package – which also included Spartan and Sultan CVRT variants – were provided by the Land Training Fleet (Sennelager).

But with some having been unused since The Queen's Royal Hussars handed them over last summer, a team of Royal Lancers and members of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers travelled out early to carry out maintenance.

"A few were in bad shape, so we helped get everything fixed and ready for the exercise," explained 30-year-old Tpr Darren Clarke, pictured below.

"There was quite a bit of rust – things had seized up, so we had to do a lot of work on the brakes, final drives and gears, as well as checking and changing the tracks and ordering any new parts we needed."

"We worked around 12 hours a day, six days a week and got them running up to the point where we could fire and move them about."

One of the three newest members of D Squadron, Tpr Clarke was going to be extending his stay to take part in additional live firing alongside the next battlegroup to use the ranges.

"It's good – I need the experience," the South African continued.

"Being out here gets you working together but everyone seems to be a lot further ahead. They've been here for a few years, so for me it's about trying to fit in with the crew and make new friends." ➤

In numbers:

370

number of troops taking part in Exercise Mons Lancer at its peak

FIVE

years since The Royal Lancers were formed out of The Queen's Royal Lancers and the 9th/12th Royal Lancers. The regiment celebrates its 5th anniversary on May 2

3,000

number of 30mm rounds fired during the mounted range package from the Scimitars' L21 Rarden cannons, along with 150,000 7.62mm machine gun rounds



Aside from the military focus, adventurous training in the nearby Harz mountains and a visit to Berlin were also on the cards – a highpoint both for those new to Germany and others who had served there before.

But as much as such outings were an opportunity for team bonding and experiencing another country, the regiment also had its eyes firmly on its future as part of the Strike brigades.

2Lt Nico Ozanne, pictured below, explained that a visit to the Second World War battlefields around the German capital was aimed at developing troops' understanding of what their new role could entail.

"The guys aren't that familiar with Strike yet," said the 29-year-old.

"So, we're doing some conceptual development orientated around historic battles – defensive operations around the Seelow Heights and urban fighting around the Reichstag – and putting that together with what is currently known about Strike to try and get that down to the guys.

"That all round understanding is crucial – getting our commanders and crew to consider how they might have manoeuvred and how it could

have panned out differently.

"But it's also as much about feeding up how we think things should be going as it is being told from the top down, so getting people to think along those lines now is an important part of that process."

Commanding Officer, Lt Col Adam Foden, was confident that such a varied, "expeditionary-style" exercise was popular among his troops.

But he said the package was especially welcome following a period when the regiment had been operating outside of its usual role.

"A couple of years ago, there weren't any major collective training events for armoured cavalry regiments," he explained.

"We then went to Cyprus in 2018 for a dismounted tour, so consequently we didn't have the experience of mounted close combat as a battlegroup.

"Now we're on a long pathway through to our operational deployments to Bosnia and the Baltic from the end of this year and into 2021.

"We started 2019 with simulation and technical gunnery in the UK and this is a continuation of that training to get us up to the level we need to be at to conduct tactical gunnery in Batus."

With more demanding exercises and Operations Elgin and Cabrit looming, Ex Mons Lancer ramped up in complexity towards its finale.

As this issue went to press, elements from the wider battlegroup – including A Company, 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, plus Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer personnel – had joined proceedings for a tactical simulation package in the Command and Staff Trainer.

And they will be the first of many. This month will see 700 members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh Battlegroup put through their paces at Sennelager, followed by other units from 3rd (UK) Division, the wider Army and even international forces.

The Service's footprint in Germany may be much reduced (see page 29), but it's clear that what it now lacks in quantity, it makes up for with the quality of training on offer. ➤



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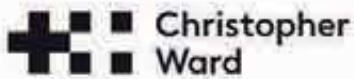
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RAISING THEIR GAME

Drones are just some of the battle-winning innovations The Royal Lancers are hoping will take off

AS WELL as being a chance to sharpen skills and drills, Exercise Mons Lancer was an opportunity to continue experimenting with new ideas and equipment.

The replacement for their CVRTs – the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle – is due in the next couple of years but until then the regiment are determined to stay on the front foot.

Using £12,000 from the 3rd (UK) Division's innovation fund, they have recently started trialling concepts aimed at improving the survivability and lethality of their sub-units.

These include portable methods of crossing obstacles – such as fascines – which would reduce their reliance on Royal Engineer support in forward locations, and using satellite

communications alongside standard radio transmissions.

Those deemed successful will be taken to Batus for further development.

"Some of the ideas are technology that's already on the shelf or are things we think can be constructed relatively quickly," explained Lt Col Foden.

"For example, we are looking at how we better enable our crews to engage armoured vehicles when we don't have an in-built anti-armour capability."

"So, how do we put hand-held anti-armour weapons closer to the soldiers so they can be used more quickly?"

Part of the solution the regiment came up

with was to rejig its order of battle so that each squadron has two "find" troops and two fire support troops, whose snipers are also armed with anti-tank weapons such as Javelin and NLAW.

The Sennelager package was the first time the units had deployed in that formation and Lt Col Foden expected the move to result in a more agile force.

"It will enable us to rapidly flick between anti-armour and more conventional recce tasks," he added.

"We can move the troops in front of each other and keep our tempo up and also split callsigns down, even to the pair level. That's a major part of how the Strike brigade is going to fight – being able to reorganise at the lowest level.

"Experimenting to see what works best is exciting – soldiers like the opportunity to make things better."

Another capability being tested in Germany was the introduction of drones. Project lead and intelligence officer, Capt Alex Humphreys, explained that such devices are now commonplace in theatres from Ukraine to Syria, where they are used for reconnaissance, battle damage assessment and even targeting.

Consequently, the 29-year-old believes becoming familiar with the technology – and how to counteract it – is vital for British soldiers.

He explained: "In an ideal world, your four cars in a troop would have a drone with them so they can throw one up in the sky to improve their situational awareness while staying in cover, and

also not have to rely on the intelligence picture being fed down to them from brigade.

"The other side of the curve is how you counter that threat tactically? How do you disable a drone being used as a weapon?

"And the answer isn't necessarily to blow it out of the sky – instead you could disrupt the electro-magnetic spectrum or block the radio link with the ground station, causing them to land or fly back to base.

"It's really hard to defend yourself from UAVs, so that's the area that we want to develop further."

With that in mind the regiment has trained up six operators and one member of safety staff, who were using Sennelager's spacious ranges to get to grips with their three Parrot Anafi quadcopters.

"It's low-level stuff at the moment," continued Capt Humphreys (pictured below).

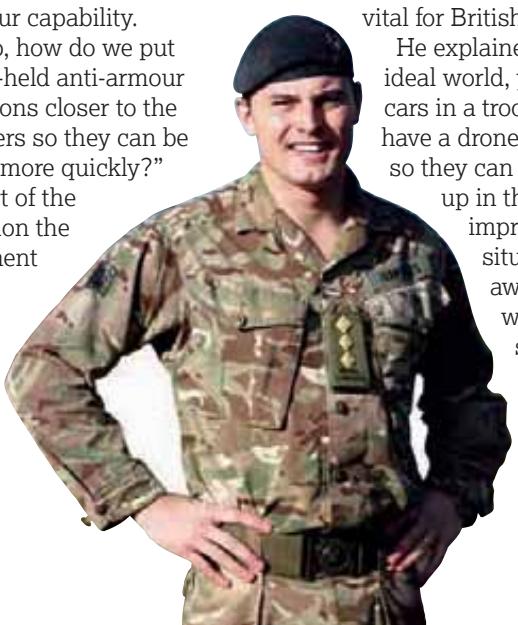
"This is their first real opportunity to get hands-on and experiment with how we are going to integrate these in the tactical sense.

"Every enemy is using them prolifically so it's important we work out how to deal with the threat. And with our move to Strike it's at the forefront of our minds." ■



Drone data

The Parrot Anafi drone has a maximum range of 2km and altitude of 500m. It can be launched on the move and fly for 30min, at top speeds of 15.3m/sec. Its gyroscopic camera captures stills and video footage which its operators can watch live, while recording at the same time.



A brand new BA(G)

THERE may be fewer British troops in Germany than at any point in the last 75 years, but some 250 remaining Army personnel are still serving in Sennelager and 14 other locations...

Muenster

Wulfen

The Defence Ammunition Depot is run jointly with the German Bundeswehr

Moenchengladbach

Ayrshire Barracks houses the Stored Equipment Fleet (Germany), which is maintained in readiness for operations by ten military staff and more than 90 civilians

Oberstdorf

Throughout the year the Joint Services Mountain Training Wing in Bavaria offers thousands of soldiers a wide variety of adventurous pursuits from its facilities in Oberstdorf and Wertach. The winter sees its 55-strong team of military and civilian staff focus on ski foundation, ski leader and ski mountaineering instruction, while in the summer the programme includes canoeing, kayaking, paragliding, rock climbing and alpine mountaineering. Units interested in booking spaces should visit atga.mod.uk

Sennelager

- As the Service's main hub in Germany, the station is home to some 670 soldiers and family members, as well as Headquarters British Army (Germany), The Germany Enabling Office, Garrison Support Unit and Defence Infrastructure Organisation

- A 50-strong team of military and civilian staff run the Command and Staff Trainer and Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (Germany), staging simulation packages up to brigade level. With further, corps-level serials also planned, around 4,000 visiting troops are slated to hone their skills in the facilities this year

- The Land Training Fleet (Sennelager) maintains vehicles for use by visiting units, including two companies' worth of Warriors and a squadron of CVRTs

- The newly formed 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron, 75 Engineer Regiment is the largest single formation in Germany at 90 soldiers and counting. Its specialists operate Nato's only M3 Amphibious Rigs working alongside the Bundeswehr's Panzerpionierbataillon 130 to provide a "wide wet gap" crossing capability. Their first big test will come in May, when they deploy on Exercise Defender Europe 20

In numbers
11,200

size in hectares
of Sennelager
Training Area

GERMANY

Stuttgart

And finally...

There are also around 25 personnel serving in liaison roles around Germany, including Nato Headquarters in Muenster and Stuttgart, as well as at the British Embassy in Berlin

● 'A good place to be', Final word – p74





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A word on welfare

Lindsay McCran, Army Families Federation (AFF) Germany coordinator, gives the lowdown on life in Sennelager

“The number one plus point is the location. Opportunities to serve abroad are getting rarer and Paderborn is a great city. It has lots of amenities, but you can be out in the forest or at a lake within minutes, too.

Schooling and housing are big positives – the primary school is well equipped and the staff to pupil ratio is high. Everyone lives within a few hundred metres of the school gate, the houses are spacious and of good quality, and they all have a garden.

Unfortunately, there is no MoD secondary education, so the options are currently boarding school or sending your child to a German senior school. The chain of command is looking at alternative options and AFF is supporting this work.

The medical centre is right on your doorstep. As in the UK, you'll need to use local transport to access secondary healthcare if you don't have a car – there is advice available from the welfare office on how to get around.

Jobs for dependants are currently limited but we encourage everyone to sign up to our free training and employment platform – forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk. The number of positions

advertised is growing all the time, as are the options for free online training courses.

The local community is so welcoming and there are Anglo-German initiatives like coffee mornings where people can meet and practise their language skills.

Really, in proportion to the size of the military community the welfare provision has actually increased. Yes, there is still some bedding-in to do, but everyone has an opportunity to shape the community if they get involved.

● For more information visit aff.org.uk/uk-overseas/your-germany-posting



“A different way of doing business”

Quickfire Q&A with Col Tim Hill, Commander British Army (Germany)

● What's changed now that BA(G) has replaced BFG?

It's a lot smaller, of course, but it's a completely new set up. This is about shaping the future. The mission is focused on Sennelager Training Centre, whose primary aim is to enable Army units to deploy from the UK and use its facilities. However, in terms of the lived experience I'm not sure much has changed.

● What's the sense that you are getting from people about life there?

I think, hand on heart, they would say they are pretty well supported. For only 190 soldiers stationed in Sennelager we have a welfare officer, a well-equipped community hub, two Naafis, a gym and so on. We are still exploring how we can improve the experience for families – for example, we're looking at possible arrangements with local riding and sailing clubs – but on the whole I don't think we want for much.

● Were there any teething problems during the transition?

Invariably, with setting up a new structure there will be a few issues, however, we've worked through them with

the chain of command. It's a slightly different way of doing business and we've had to adapt, but people have been very patient. Now that we are up and running, we are well set up.

● Do you see the footprint increasing at all in the future?

Not significantly, but we retain the ability to grow should defence change its posture.



● Has Brexit affected BA(G)?

Not really. We are now in the transition period and there are issues that the chain of command and the government will have to work through in the coming months, but otherwise it's business as usual. Our continued presence in Germany is guaranteed separately under the Nato status of forces agreement.

● Personally, what do you enjoy most about Germany?

Every day is an adventure. We are a little bit of Britain living on the continent alongside our European friends and colleagues. That gives us the opportunity to get out and explore the country and culture, whether that's in cities such as Berlin or Cologne, or going skiing in Bavaria or elsewhere in the Alps.

LIGHTS CAMERAS ACTION!

Words: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main



Royal Artillery personnel enjoy Watchkeeper's performance in Cyprus

BOMBARDIER Wayne Stevens (RA) is surrounded by computer terminals, banks of blinking lights and humming hard drives.

But he's not sitting in a swish office at a headquarters, he's inside a cold ISO container located in a car park near the airfield at Royal Air Force Akrotiri in Cyprus.

His eyes scan down a long checklist and he proceeds to tick off 73 separate functions – that's ten more than a Boeing 737 pilot carries out prior to take-off.

This portable steel box is the ground control station – the cockpit, effectively – for the Watchkeeper unmanned aerial system.

It houses the lead pilot, a second pilot who acts as the payload operator, managing Watchkeeper's sensors; the mission controller, who liaises with ground forces and commanders; a signaller; and an image analyst from the Intelligence Corps, who interprets what the asset picks up with its infra-red and optical cameras and a radar for detecting ground-moving objects and generating detailed imagery.

"If you forget one thing in this powering up process then something in the chain might not work – there is even a danger

this whole ground control station could close down," the junior NCO tells *Soldier*.

"We've had things go wrong in the past that have caused delays to take-offs and missions."

Bdr Stevens, a qualified Watchkeeper pilot and former operator of the Desert Hawk and Hermes 450 drones, is one of 80 highly trained personnel from 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery in Cyprus to practise the very complex task of putting the aircraft into the sky – and for this particular night mission it will be flying into a designated area over the sea.

This is the ES2 incarnation of Watchkeeper, an upgraded version of the aircraft first delivered to the unit in 2018.

It was certified to fly over UK airspace the following year, allowing training to take place at Boscombe Down.

Since then the unit has been busy operating the asset with the objective of boosting the competency and currency of crews and gaining operationally deployable status – which means one battery must be able to carry out three sorties per day on a consistent basis. →



→ However, the regiment was on the lookout for a winter training base where finer conditions would allow for more flying, and the facilities in Cyprus became available last summer. Consequently, the Watchkeeper crews have built up their flying hours and skills much more quickly.

"We've made huge strides in the past few months, training up a significant group of our own people to instructor level and increasing our competencies and qualifications," says Maj Russell Proctor (RA).

"We need to be at readiness for deployment in the first half of this year and we're right on course to achieve that."

"Being able to hone our abilities in Cyprus, as well as at home, has given us as real leap forward in terms of capacity."

"We're using this base to complete lower level individual training and then working together more as a fighting unit in support of land exercises when we're back in the UK."

On the face of it, conducting three missions per day might seem a relatively straightforward ask, but launching one Watchkeeper, even in the relatively benign conditions of Cyprus, is a daunting task.

Before Bdr Stevens had powered up the ground station, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers attached to the regiment had conducted exhaustive pre-flight checks on the airframes and on-board systems.

"Watchkeeper is like any other machine, it likes to be flown," explains LCpl Lauren Broadbent (REME, pictured opposite).

"If they are used regularly and everything is kept ticking over they are fine – it's when they sit in a hanger for long periods that problems can start to appear."

LCpl Broadbent has been assigned to the platform for six months after spending two years with Wildcat helicopters.

"Obviously it's completely different from working on rotary winged platforms so this has widened my knowledge base massively," she says.

"Watchkeeper is enjoyable to maintain though because the innards are far more accessible – and it's such up-and-coming technology; it's definitely the future in my opinion."

But before even one morsel of data can be gathered by the platform's impressive array of sensors, there is the small matter of getting it airborne, and Royal Artillery ground crews must diligently position automatic take-off and landing equipment to allow that to happen.

This kit is comprised of a data link that communicates with the aircraft and a beacon that guides it to and from the runway, as well as arrester cables that capture the asset as it lands in much the same way as those on an aircraft carrier work.

Pilots must also put in a huge amount of preparatory work before each flight, regardless of its duration.

A pre-mission briefing reviews objectives, weather projections, potential aircraft movements in the area of operations – no mean feat on a busy airfield such as Akrotiri – and any other factors that might affect the mission, including the wellbeing of the aircrew.

An authoriser – an experienced pilot – casts a cold eye over the whole operation and then decides whether the flight can go ahead. Like nearly all the roles involved in operating Watchkeeper, this responsibility is not rank dependent.

As in the appointment of the pilots and mission controllers, each role is delegated based on skills and experience. The authorisation for the mission could, technically, fall to a bombardier – and his or her word is final.

Having had the upgraded version of Watchkeeper only since 2018, 47 Regiment is still developing some tactics and



“

If you forget just one thing in the process the whole ground control station could close down

– Bdr Wayne Stevens

”



procedures and exploring its potential. Also, it is relatively young in operational terms, a previous version having been deployed only very briefly to Afghanistan during Herrick 20.

“We’re still pushing to see what we can do with it and what its limits are,” says pilot Sgt Geoff Moody (RA).

“It’s fascinating to be at the cutting edge. We’re still developing concepts, trying them out and then assessing the results to see how we could have done things better before going through it again.

“It’s an unusual situation to be in, looking at the new ways in which we can support the wider Army, but that makes being here pretty exciting.”

Image analysts, who also work from the ground control station, are evaluating Watchkeeper’s potential as well.

“This package is the first chance we’ve had to use the aircraft in an operational context,” says an Intelligence Corps junior NCO, who cannot be named for security reasons.

“We’ve found that it’s in need of some tweaking but that’s what we’re here for.

“We’re optimistic about its potential – it’s produced good data and having a tactical air asset that can be tasked in the way Watchkeeper can is a game changer for ground commanders.

“As a result, we’ve been rotating as many of our people through here as we can so they can be exposed to what it can do, so if we were to be pushed forward for an actual operation we’d be familiar with its outputs.”

With Cyprus proving to be a hit on all fronts as a training location, 47 Regiment are planning to continue exploiting the facility at RAF Akrotiri into 2021.

“It’s simply a great place for us right now,” comments Maj Proctor. “It’s a sovereign base area with an air bridge so we can move people in and out easily.

“It’s a busy airfield, too, and that’s a good thing in many ways because in a live operation we’d probably have to operate under those conditions.

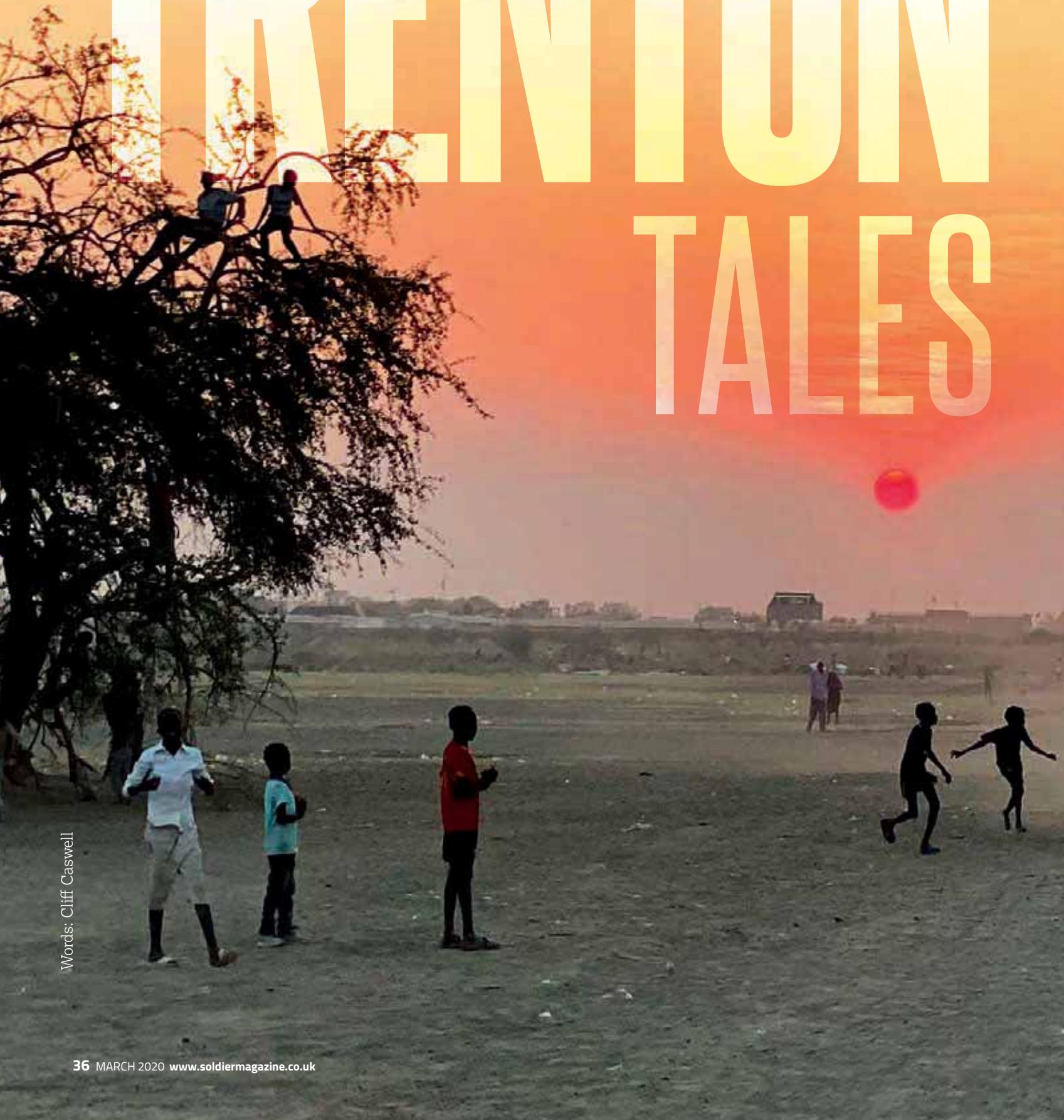
“Also, what’s really made this work has been the great relationships we’ve forged with those running RAF Akrotiri and the units based here, like the 903 Expeditionary Air Wing.

“For the long term, whether we stay in Cyprus or go somewhere else, we have to focus on making the quality of our training as high as possible.

“It takes a huge combined effort, a system of systems, to fly Watchkeeper operationally, but thanks to our training time in Cyprus we’re very nearly there.” ■



TRINTON TALES



Words: Cliff Caswell

As the UK mission in South Sudan ends, troops reflect on bringing hope to a shattered nation

IN AN era before the Iraq and Afghanistan wars – when a string of European conflicts stemming from the Soviet Union's demise dominated the global picture – the international community was battling to restore peace.

The emerging world order of the 1990s saw old racial hatreds once held in check by repressive regimes flare up again. The states that made up the former Yugoslavia bore the worst of the trouble with conflicts and a level of violence not seen since the Second World War.

But as politicians battled to find a solution to seemingly insoluble problems, British soldiers became renowned for peacekeeping excellence. Working with colleagues from other nations, they helped save countless lives and restore order in the likes of Bosnia and Kosovo.

The world has moved on in 20 years – and the remaining troops who served in the Balkans are passing into retirement. Yet some 4,000 miles from home a new generation has been treading their path, away from the public gaze, protecting civilians and rebuilding a country torn apart by a savage conflict.

Supporting the United Nations effort in the south-east African state of South Sudan, personnel on Op Trenton have been

upholding the Army's hard-earned reputation.

And while the UK's involvement was due to end after four years of rolling tours as this issue went to press, their presence has undoubtedly achieved a huge amount.

"I would definitely compare the mission here to the Balkans of the late 1990s, and early 2000s," said Lt Col Matt Smith (RE) – who commands the British task force supporting the international effort. "Then I was a second lieutenant on my first deployment.

"In the same way, this is the first taste of operational life for many of my soldiers, but there has been a great ethos among everyone, with a 'one team' mindset and mentality.

"We have many different augmentees involved as well as both Regulars and Reservists."

The world's newest country, South Sudan is a demanding outing. The state was plunged into war following a disagreement between government and opposition politicians in 2013.

The resulting spiral of violence saw bitter fighting between rival factions and the spectre of ethnic cleansing. Although peace is currently holding, the situation remains tense.

Working to help the civilian population – among them around 1.6 million displaced people – British troops donning the UN ➤



“

The local kids in particular are really appreciative and are always giving us high fives

”

FACT FILE

SOUTH SUDAN

Year created: 2011

Distance from UK:

3,853 miles

Time difference: +3 hours

Climate: Tropical; dry

season temperatures up to 40 degrees Celsius



→ beret have faced the additional challenge of working alongside a diverse group of nations, each with their own way of operating. Extremes of weather can also make life hard, particularly with an underdeveloped infrastructure.

But taking the lead from the Royal Engineers, the Brits have been focused on construction projects in their three areas of operations. They had already completed a hospital in the settlement of Bentiu and had been working on another in Malakal, due to be finished by the end of the op.

Elsewhere the soldiers have assisted in upgrading road networks – which has encouraged some of the refugees to return – and all the while ensured UN troops and bases were protected. With an undercurrent of violence still prevailing they have also been helping locals with a number of initiatives including self-defence classes for women.

Those involved believe the operation is making a difference to a war-torn country, as well as giving the people resources and life skills for a better future.

Capt Sophie Piper (QGE) said the work had been satisfying – adding that the close relationships between different cap badges had been a particular high point of the tour.

The officer has been involved in community projects – including enlisting young civilians to be role models and running human rights classes.

“I served in Cyprus before coming out here and the difference between the two peacekeeping operations is quite striking,” she said. “We have a really interesting mission acting as enablers to support the UN in the work it is doing.

“The force that we are working with is also a colourful mix of people – it’s a great leveller when you are in this type of environment and I have really enjoyed the experience.”

Gdsm Adam Hughes – who is among the infanteers providing force protection from Number One Company, 1st Battalion, Irish Guards – admitted that South Sudan had been a test.

“This is quite a complex environment, but we have had some good times,” he added. “The local kids in particular are ➔

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“

It's a great leveller when you are in this type of environment and I have really enjoyed the experience

”



→ really appreciative and are always giving us high fives.

“But being here does make you think about what you have – the people are really poor.”

“Op Trenton has been my first operational tour – it's been good,” he added.

Sharing the sentiment, LCpl Sandeep Sombaphie (QGE) was convinced Trenton had developed soldiers professionally. “I'm a plumber by trade and it has been a great opportunity for me,” he added. “Work on the hospital has been particularly interesting.

“We're confident that all of our assigned tasks will be completed before the tour ends – there is a good team spirit here.”

Keeping the peace is one of the Army's strengths. With a combination of solid core values and the diplomatic skills of commanders at all levels, troops have been instrumental in winning the hearts and minds of civilians around the world.

South Sudan is no exception. Upholding the Service's global reputation, soldiers are set to leave with their heads held high and experience that will prove invaluable in years to come. ■

IN NUMBERS: OP TRENTON

300

British troops on tour

3

Areas looked after
by UK forces

26

Number of Reservists
on final tour

1.6m

Estimated number of
displaced civilians

BUILDING a hospital from scratch is challenging at the best of times – but introduce time constraints, a multinational workforce and the demanding conditions of South Sudan and you have a real battle.

But British troops have managed to overcome the difficulties and were putting the final touches to the building in Malakal as this issue went to press.

Project manager Lt Louis Trup (RE) told *Soldier*. “Even getting materials can be difficult – unlike in the UK, you don't know exactly what you are going to receive when you ask for something.

“Even sourcing the right quality sand in South Sudan can prove difficult – there have been times when personnel have physically had to sift out the clay before using it.

“The heat here also makes concreting a problem – it has been a bit of a game changer.”

But Lt Trup said troops from several different Army disciplines had given a helping hand. “It has been great to see the capability we have, with so many trades being used on the project,” the officer added.

CLINICAL CAPABILITY

Service's medical talent shines bright in the NHS

HIS is such an overpopulated area, so having Forces personnel working here is a real boost," Cpl Charlene Bevilacqua (QARANC, pictured left) tells *Soldier* as she takes a brief break from her duties at Surrey's Frimley Park Hospital.

The healthcare assistant is in the midst of a three-year posting to the facility as part of the Joint Hospital Group (South East), where more than 200 military medical personnel help bolster the front-line services provided by the NHS.

Given the constant headlines regarding staff shortages in this sector, allied with recruitment concerns in a post-Brexit era, the Service's contribution is crucial.

The working relationship with Frimley spans 25 years and delivers mutual benefits. While the Servicemen and women offer a much-needed presence on the wards, the setting allows them to build the clinical experience that could prove to be the difference between life and death on combat operations.

"People don't really understand our role and many believe we still have military hospitals," explains commanding officer Lt Col Tessa Grieves (QARANC).

"We have been within the NHS at Frimley Park since 1995. We used to have three military wards, where we would look after a mixture of civilians and Service personnel. But once we deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, we could no longer man them.

"Now, I have nurses working across most of the main wards, as well as in surgery and intensive care.

"We have a host contract with Frimley that allows us to rent accommodation for offices – in return the MoD receives payment for our staff. But we also have flexibility, which means we can deploy at short notice and meet high-readiness tasks.

"Being here means we can gain key clinical proficiencies and experience across many specialities that we would not see at a military hospital.

"It is great for newly qualified nurses or biomedical scientists to come here and perfect their skills."

Joint Hospital Group (South East) is one of four such

Words: Richard Long | Pictures: Graeme Main





Armed Forces units in the country, with others found in Portsmouth, Derriford and Middlesbrough.

The sites are staffed by doctors, nurses and allied health professionals – such as biomedical scientists, perioperative practitioners and radiographers – from across the Royal Army Medical Corps and Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, as well as their Royal Navy and Royal Air Force equivalents.

And personnel can find themselves working in a variety of settings – from wards, laboratories and theatres to radiography, critical care and accident and emergency departments.

Lt Col Grieves holds regular meetings with the chief executive of the Frimley NHS Foundation Trust to ensure the partnership continues to flourish, while the Forces contingent have been running the facility's recent flu campaign.

“The NHS are getting value for money with professional, hard-working soldiers adding to what they already have,” she says.

“This is a long-standing collegiate relationship. People join us because they are looking for something different. They want to care for wounded soldiers on operations but they also get the balance of working in the NHS.”

Pursuing a medical career via the military offers distinct advantages compared to those following a similar path in the civilian world.

For example, potential nurses will be supported through a three-year degree programme before embarking on a one-year consolidation period to bring their skills up to speed.

They are then eligible for overseas deployments, where the fast-paced nature of life in the field can boost their development.

“We are also better paid as military nurses and get assistance in areas such as housing,” adds Lt Col Grieves. “When I go to recruiting events the two things that are mentioned most are sport and deployments.

“They can see we have the opportunity to get away and that we also have personnel competing at a high level.

“These skills transfer to civvy street. For nurses there is a huge

range of work in the community and overseas with NGOs.

"They also have access to career courses and professional development – meaning they can specialise in certain areas. That is a real attraction."

Transfer time

HAVING served in the Royal Logistic Corps for four years as a driver with 4 Medical Regiment, Cpl Bevilacqua made the decision to switch cap badges in 2011.

The 31-year-old was a carer for her mother and the sense of satisfaction that stemmed from the vocation formed the motivation to transfer.

And she soon found herself in the thick of the action.

"I deployed to Afghanistan in 2012 and worked on the wards as a healthcare assistant for four months," she recalls. "It was an incredible and amazing experience."

"The pace was so fast – patients would go from the intensive

care unit in Bastion and back to the UK for further treatment in a matter of hours.

"It was hard going, and we were under pressure, but we worked as a team. There were days when we had sad news, but we carried on with the job."

"It was great for me as I had never deployed before and as a junior healthcare assistant, I got to do a lot more than my equivalent in the NHS would at the same stage in their career. "That breeds confidence."

Cpl Bevilacqua's abilities were further tested in Sierra Leone on Op Gritrock – the Army's effort to tackle the Ebola epidemic.

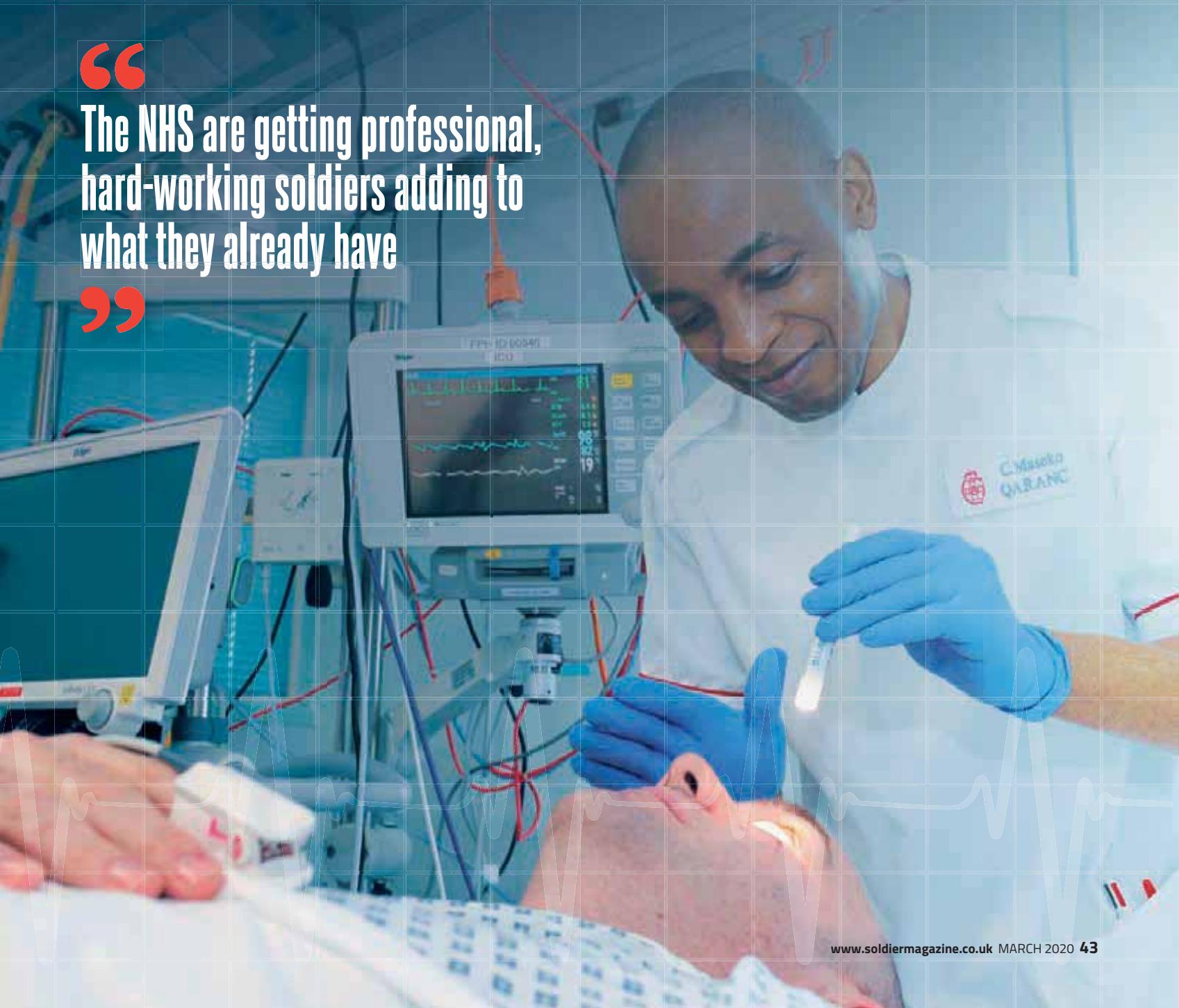
"It was one of the scariest things I have ever done," she adds. "If you caught the virus you could die, and I remember thinking I may never see my family again. But at the same time, it was a fantastic experience."

"The local population really appreciated what we did for them while we were there; it is such a poor country and they →

“

The NHS are getting professional, hard-working soldiers adding to what they already have

”



IN NUMBERS

4

Joint Hospital Groups covering four regions – the north, south, south east and south west

1996

the year Joint Hospital Group (South East) was formed. More than 200 personnel serve with the unit – the vast majority of which are based at Frimley Park Hospital. The Army lead the way in terms of numbers, but there are representatives from the RAF and Navy



seemed extremely happy to have us around.”

The opportunity to transfer was also followed by Cpl Christopher Maseko (QARANC).

Now working as a registered nurse in Frimley Park’s surgical assessment unit, the 40-year-old’s new path is not completely alien as he previously served as a combat medical technician.

But after completing tours of Afghanistan on Op Herrick 8 and 13 he felt it was time for a change.

“Joining the QARANC represented a progression to my career,” he says. “I had the option of becoming a paramedic in the RAMC but it was more about satisfaction – you cannot be a medic forever and it was time to step up.

“My background helped. University can be challenging and you have to be disciplined and teach yourself. On an Army course you will get one-to-one support but at university you are given an assignment and told to get on with it.

“I’ve been here for a few weeks now and it is good to be back in a military unit. The wards are very busy, but that is a good thing and with my background I am used to that.”

Friday focus

WHILE the day job is all about clinical work, the personnel also maintain a firm military ethos.

Fridays are dedicated to Army activity with PT, briefings, leadership training and front-line skills among the regular fixtures. They also embark on exercises in the field and overseas deployments continue to feature.

Personnel have served in South Sudan on Op Trenton – where they worked in a role two hospital treating infectious diseases and non-battle injuries – and the Joint Hospital Group recently saw a doctor join the British effort in Iraq on Op Shader.

Elsewhere, the unit has people on high readiness to deploy with the UK’s Joint Expeditionary Force and they have bolstered the Navy’s efforts by serving on ships at sea.

At home, they are on standby to help with flood relief efforts and ceremonial duties.

Cooperative approach

THE formation is a tri-Service organisation, with RAF and Navy personnel serving alongside the Army.

One of those to excel in this setting is Flt Sgt Colin Hudson (pictured above), a biomedical scientist providing diagnostic testing for the NHS and on operations.

This includes blood testing and the diagnosing of infections such as sepsis. He is also involved in the development of new capabilities, looking at what is happening in the civvy world to see if it is applicable in the field.

“I have taken a lot from my Army colleagues and having the NHS around us means we are learning every day,” he explains.

“I also serve in a management role within the department, working with more than 40 staff – most of whom are civilians.

“That is quite unique, you can carry certain things over from the military, such as good practice and being robust with people who are senior to you, and when a point needs to be made, I am happy to do it.”

Flt Sgt Hudson joined the RAF in 2008 and has since served in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.

“When I was going through my training the prospect of deploying to Afghanistan was a really big carrot on the end of the stick,” he adds. “I was based at the role three facility at Camp Bastion and we were providing blood at a rate not seen anywhere else in the world. It was a horrendous amount to get through.” ■



Making a noise about ear protection

AS LONG ago as the Herrick tours of 2014, soldiers were issued with ear protection that automatically filtered out dangerously loud background noise while allowing spoken communications to be heard.

They could also be plugged into personal role radios (PRR).

So, six years later, why are these not standard issue kit?

Despite being a Reservist, I have only ever been given small yellow foam plugs or the big green ear defenders that do not plug into the communications system.

Neither of these allow transmissions between soldiers and they cannot be worn on both ears with PRR in use.

On exercise it is often easier to simply forgo this protection so that orders on the radio can be heard clearly. – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Gareth Davies, Delivery, Soldier Systems Programme, Army Headquarters, responds:

The current system for purchasing hearing protection provides a basic level of cost-effective equipment (yellow foamies and Peltor Bullseye headset) for all roles. Capability sponsors ensure particular requirements for different roles are met.

Hearing protection apparatus can vary depending on the weapons and platforms being employed, the level of situational awareness needed and the type of communications equipment being used.

Not all systems will satisfy everyone's needs.

The Tactical Hearing Protection

System Basic User provides a low level of situational awareness.

It is widely available and covers a large majority of roles. There are three different versions to provide a comfortable fit for all ear sizes and they can be used with headsets (although they are not plugged into them) to allow communications.

Dismounted close combat roles are provided with two active pieces of kit called **Dismounted Close Combat User (DCCU)**, and **Specialist User (SU)**.

DCCU is an in-ear system that provides maximum situational awareness and communications, while **SU** provides greater protection when using support weapons which have a louder noise signature than small arms.

These are the replacements for the in-ear protection system provided on Op Herrick.

More information on hearing protection can be found on the Army Knowledge Exchange.

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“
Why are they not standard issue?
”

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

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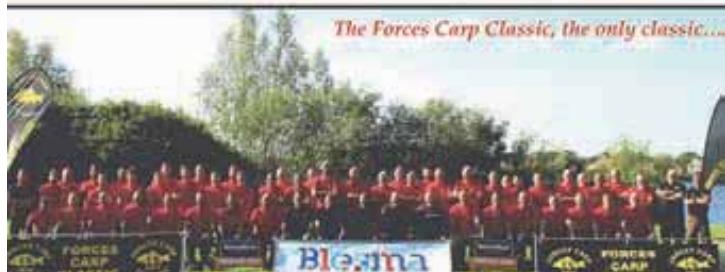
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LEARNING LITTLE

● SOLDIERS may access standard learning credits up to a value of £175 every 12 months.

But this amount has stayed constant for close to 20 years and offers little purchasing power when it comes to securing places on useful courses and gaining qualifications.

Why has this amount not risen in line with inflation, or been increased at all, in recent times? – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Stu Allen AGC (ETS), Learning and Development Policy, Army Headquarters, replies: The Army learning and development offer is extensive and has grown over time.

It encompasses apprenticeship opportunities up to degree level, the fully funded Army accreditation offer, academic and industrial placements, and the Service's higher education programme, to name but a few.

Individual funding for personal development includes enhanced learning credits (ELC) of up to £6,000, as well as the annual entitlement to standard learning credits (SLC) at £175 per year.

Advice on how to exploit these opportunities is available at Army education centres.

The Service and the MoD recognise the need to reform the current system of funding for personal development, including SLC and ELC.

This work will commence in the first half of 2020 and feedback will be gathered and analysed once concrete proposals for these changes have been developed.



No fan of the Toon town rats

I WAS recently posted to Albemarle Barracks in Newcastle with 3rd Battalion, Royal Horse Artillery.

Within a few days of arriving I was woken up in the middle of the night by strange sounds in the pipe work.

After speaking to others in the block they told me it was caused by rats – and every night since then I've been disturbed by the constant sound of rodents running through the network of pipes, scratching and squeaking.

This has been reported on many occasions to Carillion Amey who responded to the complaints on only one occasion and had no success in getting rid of the creatures.

I think it's completely unacceptable to expect soldiers to live in such sub-standard conditions. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Andy Szabo, Assistant Chief of Staff, Infrastructure Branch, Headquarters Regional Command, replies: The Army is committed to providing its soldiers with decent, safe and hygienic accommodation, but our barracks have suffered from decades of under-investment.

We are now addressing this and in 2019, recognising a problem with rodents in barracks, more money was spent on the maintenance contract to

undertake preventative pest control at single living accommodation, medical centres, diners and messes.

In the case of Albemarle Barracks, five scheduled preventative pest control visits were carried out in a six-month period last year while the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's (DIO) contractor, Amey, responded 25 times to rodent reports there throughout the year, including 18 times to SLA blocks 35 and 38.

The Army's infrastructure lead for your region also visited Albemarle Barracks with your commanding officer and quartermaster, as well as with DIO and Amey managers.

He was personally satisfied that all parties were doing everything possible to deal with the issue and to bring vacated accommodation blocks back in use as soon as it was safely possible to do so.

That said, warm buildings and poor food hygiene in utility rooms will always attract such animals, so occupants must take personal responsibility for keeping doors closed, utility rooms free of food waste and reporting any rodent activity they see to the Amey helpdesk – telephone 0800 707 6000 or email: RPHelpdesk@AmeyDefenceServices.co.uk



CAREERS

Interested in a career as a personal trainer? Ultimate Performance is expanding and on the lookout for more ex-Service personnel to join its growing ranks. Visit www.upfitness.com/en/careers for more information on the opportunities available.

Service leavers interested in working in the network cable and data centre sectors can now use enhanced learning credits to access more courses. The funding can be spent on programmes delivered by CNet Training, which offers packages from a level-three BTEC in certified network cable installation up to a level-seven masters degree in data centre leadership and management. The BTEC has been specially tailored for Forces personnel and includes a two-week industry placement. Visit www.cnet-training.com

The **Recruit for Spouses** coaching programme, which helps Army partners get back into employment, has received a funding boost to help it reach more husbands and wives. To apply for a six-week course of one-hour sessions contact coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk

Forces Families Jobs is a platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk to see the site, which is free to advertise on for employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: John Coogan, Montgomery House, Hants.



DIARY

April 7, 9, 15 and 16: Bring the Noise free music and singing workshops for youngsters at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Participating children will be given the opportunity to perform in a special choir at the venue's VE Day commemorations on May 8. Visit www.thenma.org.uk

May 2: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo. Held at King's Hall, Kingsway, the event features concert bands, marching displays, a beating retreat sunset ceremony and a lone piper. Doors and bars open at 1730, with performances from 1830. Tickets cost

£10. Visit www.musicmaniauk.com or call 01782 206000

May 8: The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire will be commemorating VE Day, starting a three-day activities programme. The free event will also remember those who fought in the Far East until August 1945. Further information is available at www.thenma.org.uk

May 9-10: The National Memorial Arboretum vintage fair, held as part of the VE Day commemorations. It features live music and family activities. Visit www.thenma.org.uk

May 16: Paras' 10 – the ultimate ten-mile endurance race. Take on the course from Parachute Regiment training. Run or tab, team or individual, canicross and Paras' 2 for children. Enter online at www.paras10.com

May 23 to 24: Duxford Air Festival. The event will mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day by bringing the street party atmosphere to life with a vintage funfair, complete with original 1940s rides, as well as live music and entertainment inspired by the era. A range of contemporary aircraft will also take to the skies. Visit www.iwm.org.uk/airshows

July 27: The inaugural North East Military Ball will be held at The Hilton, Bottle Bank, Gateshead. Open to tri-Service personnel, Regular and Reserve plus friends and family, it features a three-course dinner, live entertainment, raffle, auction and disco. Proceeds will be divided between The Royal British Legion, Veterans in Crisis and Grace House NE. Tickets bought before April 5 cost £50 per person or £450 for a table of ten, rising to £60 and £550 after this date. Email tickets@nemb.co.uk or call 07841 650980.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
www.soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
www.afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
www.afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
www.adviceasap.org.uk

Army Families Federation:
01264 382324;
mil 94391 2324;
www.aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:
www.armylgbt.org.uk;
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124;
www.blesma.org

Blind Veterans UK:
(formerly St Dunstan's)
020 7723 5021;
www.blindveterans.org.uk

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
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Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
24-hour Mental Health Helpline for service personnel and their families
0800 323 4444;
www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
www.erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
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Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
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Forcesline:
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065;
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from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

Forces Pension Society:
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Help for Heroes:
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www.helpforheroes.org.uk

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Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
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Medal Office:
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Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association:
www.nesa.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
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Poppyscotland:
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www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Assn:
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www.rfea.org.uk

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
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www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
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www.legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
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www.rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
0131 556 0091;
www.srvonline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:
01748 833797;
www.spaces.org.uk

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975;
www.ssafa.org.uk

Continued on page 50

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The Poppy Factory:
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The Royal Star and Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676;
www.starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

Troop Aid:
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;
troopaid@icloud.com;
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uk4u Thanks!:
01798 812081;
www.uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);
www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service

WRVS Services Welfare:
02920 232 668



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to rc-aeg-mailbox@mod.gov.uk with the event you are interested in attending.

March 3: South Tyneside

March 11: Burnley



SEARCHLINE

Anita Louise Watson is trying to trace her father, James Watson, who served as a lance corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers during the 1970s. Anyone with information should email anitawatson164@gmail.com

Former gunner Chris Dunham and four other Royal Artillery veterans want to hear from survivors of Op Dynamo in Dunkirk. The ex-soldiers are travelling to France on May 27 to

mark the 80th anniversary of the evacuation and intend to present a plaque listing the present-day survivors to the Dunkirk Museum. Email chridunham@aol.com or call 07545 094909

Hugh Corby is trying to trace the military medals and citations of his late father, Capt Eric Corby (RA), who served during the Second World War. Anyone with information is asked to contact him on 07961 606766

Ben Fielding, the grandson of Korean War veteran Eric Thomas Fielding, who served in The Royal Welch Regiment, is researching an article intended for publication in June to mark the 70th anniversary of the conflict's outbreak. He would like to interview some of his late grandfather's fellow veterans, so that their testimony may inform the finished work. Email benf10383@gmail.com

Retired Royal Air Force Serviceman Andrew Clark is a collector of British Military Tokens used in Iraq and Afghanistan and is seeking examples of pre-2007 issues to boost his collection. If you can help email amcpapermoneyman@aol.com

The Air Training Corps, now part of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets

will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2021. To help mark the occasion, they would like to identify those who were cadets when the formation launched in 1941 and interview them to capture memories of those early days. Email al.munns@btinternet.com



REUNIONS

The 86th Artillery Clerks' Reunion and Association dinner is at the Royal Artillery Sergeants' Mess, Larkhill on Friday, June 5 to Sunday, June 7. Attendance forms are at www.artyclerksssn.org

The Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland (RAVC) Association annual AGM and reunion is on Saturday, May 2 at the Holiday Inn Express in Burton upon Trent, from 1500. A memorial service will be held at the National Memorial Arboretum the following day. Contact John Tucker on 07734 113077 or email johnatucker70@yahoo.com



JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU? No. 940

TEN details have been changed in this picture of soldiers from The Royal Lancers on Exercise Mons Lancer in Germany. Circle all the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 940, Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11**

2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than March 31. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

The first two correct entries drawn after the closing date will win an Osprey Transporter 65

duffle bag, which has lockable zips, four grab handles and is made from extremely durable, water-resistant fabric. The winners' names will be published in the May issue. All the usual rules apply. **January's winner:** Sherri Haywood, Army Library and Information Service, Salisbury.



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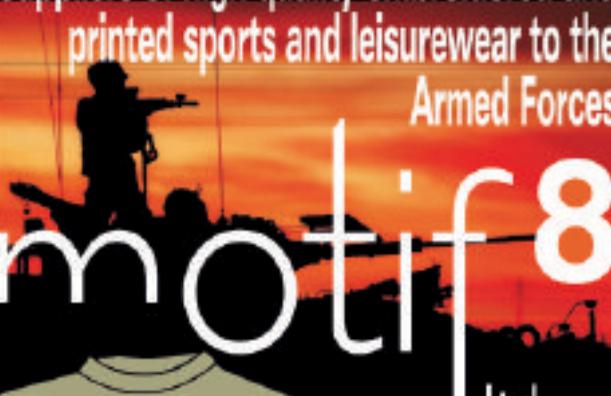
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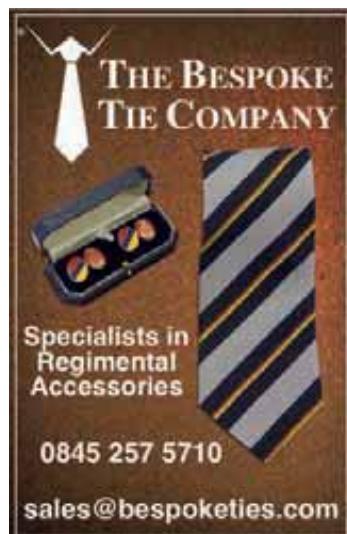
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CALLING ALL ARMY RESERVE PERSONNEL

Currently all Army Reserve personnel who are members of the Army Sports Lottery can pay for their lottery tickets annually in advance.

Good news, from 1 April 2020 all Army Reserve personnel will be able to pay for their tickets (which also allows access to the membership grants of the Army Sports Lottery) monthly through their Army salary, exactly the same as their Regular counterparts.

Full details of the monthly cost for tickets, and the benefits of membership, can be found in the Army Sports Lottery (IN) which can be found on the Army Sports Lottery website

www.armysportslottery.com

Weekly prize money is **£30,000** with members having the opportunity to win the following prizes:

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REVIEWS

MOVIES

Military Wives

Big screen outing for singing spouses

IT WAS a story that captured media attention and won the hearts of the public – a group of Service wives who formed a choir to distract themselves from the reality of seeing their husbands deploy to Afghanistan.

Facing the prospect that any day could bring bad news, the resilience of the women in the face of the unremitting pressures of the Op Herrick era was as impressive as their performances. And perhaps inevitably the story of the Military Wives has found its way onto the big screen.

Directed by **Peter Cattaneo** – who made the 1997 comedy hit *The Full Monty* starring **Robert Carlisle** – and inspired

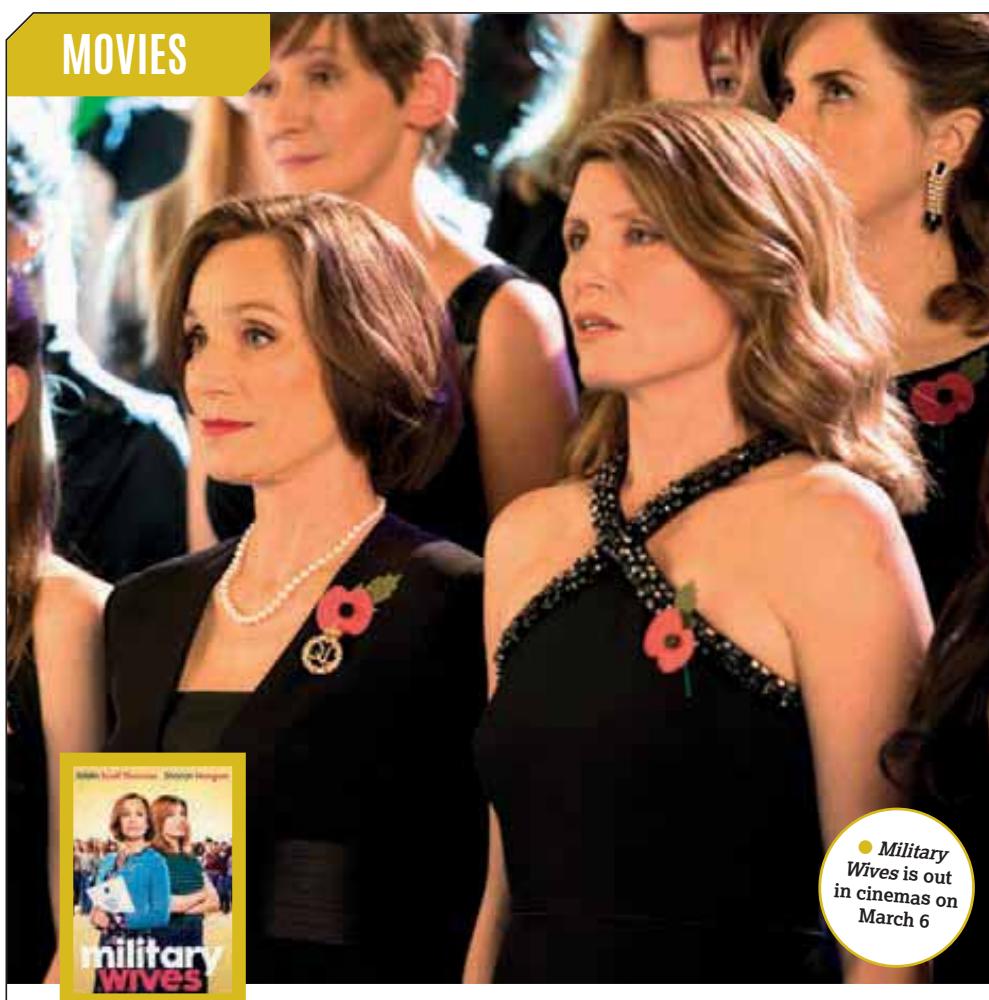


P57
MOVIES

P59
MUSIC

P61
BOOKS

MOVIES



● *Military Wives* is out in cinemas on March 6



by true events, the movie centres on the friendships the spouses forge as they support each other through the grind of an operational tour.

After forming an initially unpromising choir, the women soon discover their true, and very fine, voices.

Finding themselves at the centre of a media sensation, they face new pressures after being invited to sing during Remembrance commemorations at the Royal Albert Hall.

And as they rehearse in their own time, the audience is given the opportunity for a glance into the lives of each of the singers as they collectively begin their road to the spotlight.

Sadly, this is where the film begins to fall down. While there is undoubtedly a good story to be told, there is simply not enough time to really understand the characters.

Given the plot potential this is a great shame. There are some good individual performances, particularly from the two lead protagonists who it's clear are destined for a personality clash from the outset.

Sharon Horgan (*Catastrophe*) is consistently brilliant as the wives' social committee chair, Lisa – a woman with a dry sense of humour and

an endless supply of sarcasm.

Kristin Scott-Thomas (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *The English Patient*) is also impressive as recently bereaved Kate, who has lost her son during the fighting in Afghanistan and whose husband is a senior officer at the garrison.

But this alone is not enough to lift a deeply mediocre offering.

Military Wives is certainly not a bad film – it is entertaining enough with its fair share of laughs and a few tears, however that is all.

If this is what you are looking for then it will happily fill a couple of hours, but it is significantly let down by characters that are not fully rounded, which is a shame.

I would watch if I stumbled across it on TV – but it is not a movie I would go out of my way to see again.

VERDICT:

A passable flick flawed by poor character development



REVIEW: JESSICA HUTCHINSON, SOLDIER

DVD/DIGITAL RELEASES



Villain

Out now on digital download

HAVING spent ten years behind bars **Craig Fairbrass** (*Rise of the Foot Soldier*), in his usual rent-a-thug guise, returns home to London to find his drug addict publican brother has got himself into more trouble than he can handle. With the family pub under threat from **Robert Glenister**'s mob boss character, he must try to juggle rekindling his relationship with an estranged daughter and organising retribution against those threatening his sibling – all without being dragged back into the criminal life he thought he'd left behind. Filled with intensity and only ever one step away from a shootout, this film was better than I was expecting. What was a little out of left field is the ending which, without giving it away, will take you completely by surprise, leaving you with a bit of a tear in your eye. Not a British classic such as *Lock Stock*, but still worth a watch one evening.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



Terminator Dark Fate

Out on DVD and Blu-ray on March 2

THE seemingly never-ending *Terminator* saga returns for a sixth instalment. Initial thoughts could easily see *Dark Fate* dismissed as franchise overkill, but the film represents a significant upgrade on its immediate predecessors. It is helped by the inclusion of original cast members **Arnold Schwarzenegger** and **Linda Hamilton**, while the plot actually links to events in the early **James Cameron** movies – the true highlights in this series. There's action aplenty as the returning heroes help Dani Ramos (**Natalia Reyes**), and her family, when a highly advanced and deadly new Terminator travels back through time to hunt and kill her. This provides the backdrop for some breathtaking chases and fight scenes, with the special effects proving to be especially well done. However, the story forms a major stumbling block and the apparent desire to rehash elements from previous chapters prompts much frustration. As an all-out action offering this title duly delivers, just don't scratch under the surface for anything more.

Richard Long, Soldier



FATHER OF ALL



Punk rockers make mainstream diversion

VETERAN punk outfit **Green Day** have never been shy of airing their political views.

When President George W Bush was re-elected at the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan back in 2004 the band took aim and opened fire with their song *American Idiot*.

Now in similarly divisive times, fans could be forgiven for thinking that the title of their new album, *Father of All*, represents a similar uppercut to the Trump-led administration. Yet the musicians claim their latest set shuns politics in favour of a reflection on their more carefree youthful times.

With its 30-minute track listing awash with powerful melodies and catchy riffs, this offering has a more mainstream rock 'n' roll feel compared to the American trio's traditional alternative territory.

But it is also energetic with a depth that belies Green Day's superficial claims.

"Glorious, or glorious anarchy, are the words that keep coming up about the record," says singer and lead guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong.

"It feels inspired, going in new directions but it is also glam and authentic – sonically modern.

"The lyrics are like a party and lifestyle of not giving a f**k, not political but surviving in chaos," he adds. "Rock has lost its balls – I want us to cut through the b**ls**t."

The ten songs are certainly as polished as they are diverse. From the opening of the pulse-

inducing title track and subsequent *Fire, Ready, Aim*, the album later takes on a jive tone with *Meet me on the Roof*.

Dialling down the tempo with the funky interlude of *Junkies on a High*, the record delivers on every front. While not the most original effort, Green Day more than compensate with their fresh approach and powerful delivery – there is no dud song here.

While the band's hardcore fans might disagree with the change of direction, this is undoubtedly a line-up of tracks written with a depth of thought and performed with aplomb.

And in the reflection on youthfulness that underpins this record there is something of a ghostly feeling of a political statement about the current world mood.

If there is one criticism it is the brevity – there could and should be more.

All in all, Green Day have delivered another decent piece of work – and one which may well attract new followers more than three decades after they first appeared.

VERDICT:

A short, sharp album, strong on all fronts



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

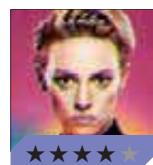
MUSIC RELEASES



Been Around

A Girl Called Eddy

THIS is the first release in 16 years from American solo artist **A Girl Called Eddy**, real name **Erin Moran**, so you will be forgiven for not recalling her name. For me this is an album of two parts, the first is very much in **The Pretenders** and **Chrissie Hynde** stable, with sultry vocals and a good vibe that keeps the foot tapping. *Someone's Gonna Break your Heart* opens proceedings nicely with a good hook and easy vocal. *Two Hearts* follows this mould with a guitar line reminiscent of many a summery tune. But the standout track for me is *Been Around*, a lovely melodic song that builds over its five and a half minutes adding horns to compliment her melancholic vocal style. Unfortunately, the second half loses its way and becomes too slow and predictable. However, it will appeal to fans of the **Carpenters'** cheesier moments. Overall this is a tale of two halves – a great start but not enough stamina to see it out. **Damian Hern, ex-AGC (SPS)**



Supervision

La Roux

SYNTH pop duo **La Roux** rose to prominence in the late noughties with the smash hits *Bulletproof* and *In for the Kill*. The tunes appeared to lay the foundations for a prolonged spell in the mainstream – but instead of building on some impressive beginnings the 80s enthusiasts gradually slipped from the musical conscience. La Roux, now the name for singer **Elly Jackson's** solo career, made a fleeting return in 2014 and a similar time lag followed before the arrival of this follow-up effort. But it has been worth the wait as Jackson maintains the successful retro pop formula that has worked so well in the past. Her vocals prove to be the perfect accompaniment for the electro sound and songs like *Automatic Driver* and *Do You Feel* highlight the strength of this merger. The one downside is the fact that *Supervision* only boasts eight tracks. Surely, we could expect more from a record that has been six years in the making? **Richard Long, Soldier**

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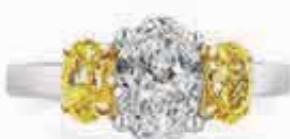
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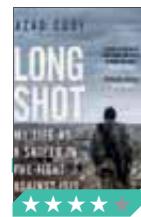
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BOOK RELEASES


Long shot
by Azad Cudi

MEMOIRS of British civilians fighting in overseas conflicts occasionally pop up in bookshops – and while many are about adventure seekers,

this offering could not be more different. Out now in paperback, the tale of sniper Azad Cudi's part in the battle against Daesh is a deeply personal account of a bitter campaign, and the quality of the writing alone sets it apart. As well as plunging readers into the middle of the fighting, Cudi – an ex-Iranian army conscript later granted asylum in the UK – also sets out the wider political situation and plight of his people. The result is a compelling insight into a conflict still widely misunderstood. Well crafted, this is a rare gem in a genre often best left well alone.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier


British Forces in Germany: The Lived Experience
by Peter Johnston

SPANNING the period from 1945-2019, this title offers a glimpse into life in Germany for British troops – mainly Army personnel – and their families. Considering the vast scope of the book the author does a very good job, breaking the 74 years down into chapters covering the major changes. These include the transition from conquering to occupying force and, in later years, to friend and ally. Berlin features heavily as the area where the threat of Russia was felt most strongly. Well illustrated with maps, photographs and formation insignia, this is not so much a who-did-what-and-when type of account as a look at real life in the British Army of the Rhine and its successors. Anyone who served in the country will read it with a great deal of interest and probably no small amount of nostalgia.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

Want to join our review team?
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PICK OF THE MONTH:

The World Beneath their Feet

Britain, America and the Nazis' battle for the Himalayas

THIS work of non-fiction is about one of the slowest, but deadliest races that has been part of human endeavour – the quest to see who would be the first nation to summit Mount Everest.

We know who emerged victorious, and when, but this book also reveals the backstory and the previous attempts on the so-called "Achttausender" – peaks of more than 8,000 metres – such as the daunting K2 and Nanga Parbat.

Much of the account focuses on the period 1931-53, however, it goes back to the 19th century, too, to examine the beginnings of mountaineering as a sport.

From the start, the author takes us right into the lives and thoughts of the climbers and their Sherpas, and the reasons they repeatedly put their lives on the line. The many deaths that occurred underline the risks they took in the process.

They hailed mainly from Britain, Germany, Austria and the USA, but China, Italy, Switzerland and other countries also mounted expeditions.

The British goal was Everest, a secret they jealously kept to themselves as much as they could.

When the famous climber, George Mallory, was asked why he wanted to scale it, he notoriously replied: "Because it is there".

The remark sums up the ethos of the mountaineer, but Mallory would go on to

lose his life on Everest.

The author shows huge respect to the climbers yet is not shy in pointing out their foibles and faults – scaling the highest, most dangerous peaks in the world does not call for shrinking violets.

Likewise, he charts the change in status of the Sherpas from glorified servants to fellow mountaineers.

This is one of the best factual books I have read in a long time. It is a fine piece of writing, filled with drama, courage, endeavour and, at times, it is easy to put oneself on the mountaintop experiencing the freezing gales whistling round one's tent.

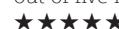
There are extensive notes and appendices, with thumbnails on the personalities and the main expeditions to the Himalayas, as well as a helpful glossary of climbing terms.

I am not a mountaineering enthusiast, but this tale really drew me in.

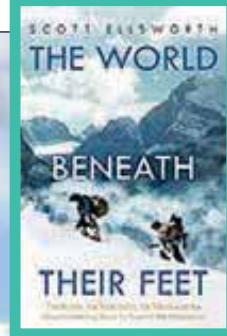
If you are interested in human adventure, skill, courage and ingenuity then seek out a copy of this book – it is all there.

VERDICT:

A fantastic read – I would give it ten out of five if I could



REVIEW: ANDY KAY EX-RS



● *The World Beneath their Feet*, by Scott Ellsworth, is published by John Murray and priced £25

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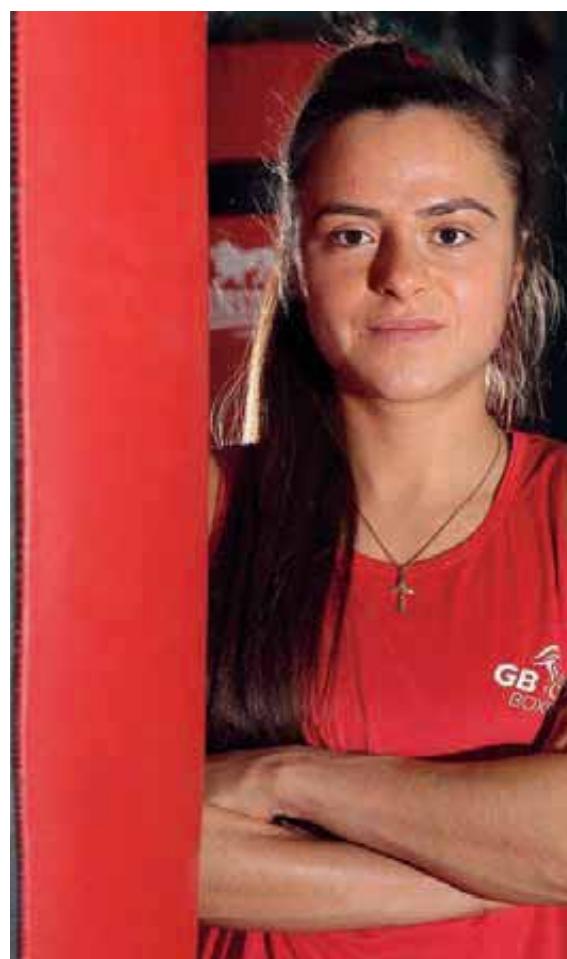
SOLDIER SPORT



MERIBEL MAGIC »

THE Army's winter sports stars made their annual pilgrimage to the French slopes for the Inter-Services Championships. Alpine, snowboard and Telemark honours were up for grabs and the competition proved fierce. Read the full piste report on page 67...

Picture: Cpl Nicholas Egan, RAF



GOING FOR THE GAMES

BOXERS LOOK TO ACHIEVE OLYMPIC DREAM AS QUALIFYING TEST DRAWS EVER NEARER

BOXING sensation Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) steps into the ring this month on a mission to secure her place at this summer's Olympic Games.

The 25-year-old has been named in a 13-strong Team GB squad that will compete at a European qualifying event at London's Copper Box Arena, where victory in the quarter-finals would guarantee her place at the sporting showcase.

Artingstall (pictured right and above left) is no stranger to success on the big stage having won silver and bronze medals at the European and World Championships in 2019, but she is taking nothing for granted ahead of her next test.

"Given the countries I could be up against, this is the hardest route to qualification," the fighter told *SoldierSport*. "But I know I'm capable of beating anyone."

"It is all about mindset. As long as I'm focused and turn up on the day, I know I can win – I feel confident."

"In three weeks' time I could be calling myself an Olympian. I was asked about that in an interview the other day and I couldn't even put it into words."

"It would be unreal and is something anyone involved in amateur boxing would love to be able to say."

While last year's world bronze represented a significant milestone Artingstall was disappointed with the outcome, believing she was on the wrong end of a split decision in the semi-finals.

However, she has learned from the experience and will look to benefit from that as the opening bell chimes this month.

"It was hard to take at the time," she recalled. "I sat down with my coaches afterwards and tried to look for things I could have done differently."

"I've taken a few things on board to hopefully make sure it does not happen again."

The featherweight star has been with Team GB for two years and began preparations for the qualifiers with a training camp in Colorado in January.

And her skills will be further sharpened in a series of multinational sessions that have been planned in the build-up.

"The sparring here is second to none," Artingstall explained. "But you get used to it, so when the international fighters come in it becomes far tastier."

"They could be potential future opponents and you want them to know that you are the better boxer."

While Artingstall will be in the thick of the action, teammate Gnr Tori-Ellis Willetts (RA, pictured left) will find herself on the sidelines at the competition after being named among the squad's reserves.

Team GB opted to go with Charley Davidson in the flyweight ranks, meaning the soldier's hopes may rest on a second, world-level qualifying tournament in Paris.

If Davidson fails to hit the mark this month, Willetts will go forward to fight in the French capital in May.

"It was difficult news to hear," the 24-year-old told *SoldierSport*. "I was devastated – I'd worked so hard, but the decision was out of my hands."

"They said it came down to experience. I've only been on the programme for a year but the girl they have selected is

just as inexperienced as I am.

"Now it's a case of staying focused and pushing for Paris. In my head I believe I will be going there, and I have to take my chance."

"Karriss and I are really good friends and while I won't be fighting in London I will be behind her all the way."

Willetts has made rapid progress since joining the national programme in Sheffield and believes she is ready to stake a claim for a coveted Olympic place.

"I'm learning all the time," she added. "The training camp in Colorado was a really good experience for me."

"It put things into perspective as I realised that I'm just as good as the girls I'm now mixing with."

"I held my own against an opponent who is ranked third in the world and that was a real confidence boost."

Earning a place at the Tokyo Games would be the realisation of a lifelong dream for the Servicewoman, who migrated from kickboxing to boxing as an 18-year-old in order to pursue her ambition.

"It is not an Olympic sport, so I had to make the decision to switch," she explained.

"Every time I watched the Games on television I thought it would be so cool to go and win a gold medal."

"Hopefully I will get that opportunity. I really have to thank the Service for releasing me from work so I can pursue my dream." ■



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SKIERS LEAD THE WAY

ROUND 150 Forces athletes descended on the slopes of Meribel, France, for the annual Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships.

With titles in Alpine skiing, snowboarding and Telemark up for grabs the competition was fierce, with the prizes shared between the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

The soldiers proved to be particularly successful on the skis as the men's squad won the downhill, slalom, giant slalom and super giant slalom on their way to sealing the overall team crown.

There was further cause to celebrate as Spr Duncan Kuwall (RE) topped the individual standings following gold medals in the slalom and giant slalom.

"It was great to get the win and I've put a lot of effort into my training this season," he said.

"Two gold medals is good, obviously, but everyone wants to win them all."

The women enjoyed success in the downhill ranks but the Royal Air Force claimed victories in the three other disciplines to secure the collective Alpine honours.

In the snowboarding, the Army men triumphed in the snowboard cross and parallel giant slalom as another overall title was added to the haul, but it was the Royal Navy who made history in the women's competition as they won the team crown for the first time.

The Telemark events also proved to be a happy hunting ground for the Senior Service as they reigned supreme in the slalom, classic and sprint.

The Army prevented a clean sweep with victory in the parallel sprint. ■



Picture: Cpl Nicholas Egan, RAF



REDS MAKE SERVICES STATEMENT

THE Army's footballers hit the goal trail as they recorded a convincing win over Camberley Town in their latest Inter-Services warm-up.

Skipper Sgt Calum Wilkinson (RLC, pictured) led from the front with two well-taken goals in the 5-0 romp – a fixture that marked the 125th anniversary of the Aldershot District FA.

In truth, the Combined Counties outfit offered little in the way of a test for the soldiers, who raced into a 3-0 half-time lead as they assumed complete control.

Midfielder LCpl Sean Thompson (REME) opened the scoring in the 17th minute when he fired home from the edge of the area after a cross from LCpl

Kyle Cassell (AAC) was parried by keeper Mo Nyamunga.

A second strike followed just minutes later as Spr Dan Stoneman (RE) converted at the far post following uncertainty in the Camberley back line.

The visitors' creaking defence offered another gift on the stroke of half-time as they failed to deal with a long ball down field, allowing Wilkinson to calmly find the bottom corner.

The striker rifled in his side's fourth on the hour mark after a deft touch from Stoneman released him in the area and the Reds saved the best for last as substitute Cfn Clay Bryant (REME) drilled a volley into the bottom corner off the post.

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Align Photography



Knights slay the soldiers

THE Army men's senior side began their preparations for this season's Inter-Services campaign with a 26-14 defeat to Scottish semi-professional outfit the Southern Knights.

Playing in front of a healthy crowd at the home of Melrose Rugby Football Club, the Reds found themselves trailing 14-0 at half-time.

Skipper Capt Jamie Miller (AAC) was among the scorers as they reduced the arrears after the break.

The soldiers followed the result with a 20-7 loss to the French Army and face Championship club Coventry in their next match on March 7.



Fitness fanatics wanted

ORGANISERS of the National Fitness Games are looking for Service athletes to join the action at this month's event at London Olympia.

Featuring four workout zones – velocity, force, strength and endurance – the March 21 contest is open to competitors of all ages and abilities.

And in a new move, it will feature prizes for the fittest male and female Armed Forces' entrants.

For more information and to enter visit www.nationalfitnessgames.com – Service personnel will receive a 20 per cent discount using the code military20.



YOUNG GUNS MAINTAIN UNITED FRONT



"WE HAD NO OPTION BUT TO BEAT THE NAVY"

HEAD coach SSgt Gerwyn Griffiths (RE) praised the togetherness of his Army under-23 squad after they put the disappointment of a last-gasp defeat to the Royal Air Force behind them to end their Inter-Services campaign on a high.

Skipper SAC Kyle Willis dispatched an injury-time penalty to give his side a 2-1 victory in Aldershot, but the soldiers bounced back a week later when they defeated defending champions the Royal Navy by the same score.

"We knew we needed to improve and play a different style of football," Griffiths told *SoldierSport*. "We did not deserve to lose against the RAF; we had our chances but a draw would have been fair.

"It was tough to take but the players stuck together. They showed real unity and we had no option but to go on and beat the Navy."

The Reds' opening clash certainly proved to be entertaining and they took

a deserved lead in the 13th minute when Air Tpr Scott Hynd (AAC) ran clear of the visitors' defence before emphatically finding the bottom corner.

Having weathered the storm, the RAF restored parity in the 21st minute. A corner from the right caused chaos in the Army defence and SAC Liam Wood produced the composure that was lacking in his rivals as he controlled the ball and rifled a half-volley into the roof of the net.

The early exchanges of the second period lacked the same intensity and the first real chance did not arrive until the 73rd minute, when Tpr Nathan Donnachie (RAC) was thwarted in a one-on-one battle with the keeper.

Wood was denied a late winner by the offside flag but the RAF's pressure was rewarded in injury time as Willis converted his penalty.

Donnachie and Spr Liam Silver (RE) were on target in the win over the Navy. ■



AIRMEN NARROWLY MAKE THEIR POINT



THE Army men came agonisingly close to breaking the stranglehold of the Royal Air Force in a keenly contested Inter-Services Cross Country Championships at Minley.

After a firm scrutiny of the results it was just a single point that proved to be the difference between the two sides as the visitors claimed an eleventh successive title.

Fg Off Mike Kallenberg secured the individual crown but Army champion Maj Ed Knudsen (REME) led the home charge with an inspired run to claim second place.

With his fellow soldiers scoring valuable points down the field the battle for honours was too close to call, meaning a lengthy deliberation was needed before the team champions could be crowned.

“We are getting closer every year,” Knudsen told *SoldierSport*. “The team is gelling well and we are discovering new talent along the way. The key thing now is to

keep everyone together and to retain their interest.”

A lengthy winning run was also maintained in the women’s competition, where the Army claimed the team prize for a fifteenth successive season.

Capt Lauren Hall (REME) proved to be the athlete to beat as she was first to cross the finish line and, with Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC) coming second, the outcome was never in doubt.

Their teammates featured prominently in the top ten as the Reds extended an unbeaten run that stretches to the competition’s inception in 2006.

“I’ve just returned from a race at the weekend, so I was mindful of being tired,” Hall said. “It was okay – I wanted to win with the bare minimum.

“The others went out quickly at the start, but I decided to stay in the bunch and trust in my volume of training.

“I put in a burst towards the end and Kat could not keep up with the pace; that move proved to be decisive.” ■



HALL'S HIGHLIGHTS

VICTORY at the Inter-Services came at the end of a hectic season for distance runner Capt Lauren Hall (REME, pictured above).

The runner pipped fellow elite athlete Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC, pictured below) to the title and concluded her campaign at the national championships as this issue went to press.

That effort followed hot on the heels of a win at the Army Championships and an eighth-place finish while representing England at the Elgoibar international event in Spain.

“It is difficult,” the officer said. “Everyone wants you to run for them and it can be tough to find the balance.”

“I have goals in mind for the national championships, but the main thing is to have a solid race and stay injury free.”

“From there I will start focusing on the track season. I worked on my speed last summer and that is now paying dividends.”

“I’m so close to that GB vest; the potential is there and the training is in the bank – I just want it all to come together.”





REDS REACH CHALLENGE MILESTONE

HISTORY was made in this season's Challenge Cup as the Army senior side progressed to the competition's fourth round for the first time.

A home win over Oulton Raiders set the Servicemen on their way, a result that was followed by a dramatic golden-point victory against National Conference Division One outfit Skirlaugh in Aldershot.

And with a major milestone in their sights the Reds duly delivered in the third round as they crossed for six tries on their way to a 34-22 triumph over Ince Rose Bridge.

Wings Cfn Jefeti Vakalalabure and Cfn Uraia Naulusala (both REME) were among the headline performers as they each recorded a brace of tries, while further scores from Pte Ben O'Connell (Para) and LCpl Jamie Laing (REME) helped secure the result.

Head coach WO1 Ben Taylor (REME) told *SoldierSport* the cup run is a reflection of the squad's development over the past three years and is not ruling out further

progression in the tournament.

"We have a great crop of players," he added. "We've won the Inter-Services for the past two seasons and 80 per cent of the team have been around for a few years now.

"It is a cliché, but they are like brothers and when they play together you can tell they are a close-knit group.

"Reaching the fourth round highlights how far we have come and everyone – the players, coaches and management – should enjoy the experience."

While Taylor has celebrated the success to date he has also been ruing the absence of a potentially key asset in the shape of Pte Ratu Naulago (Yorks).

The soldier has starred on the wing for Super League side Hull FC but the terms of his contract with the club mean he is forbidden from playing for the Army in the competition.

"Having a Super League player in our team while we chase this dream would be a fantastic story," the coach added. ■

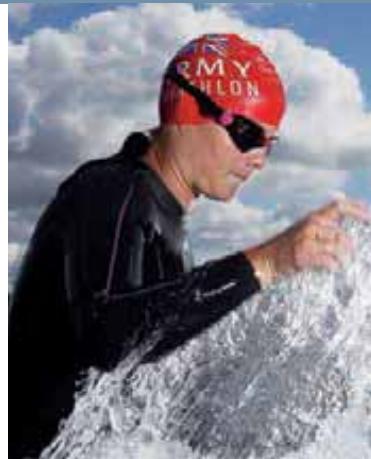
CHALLENGE CUP RUGBY LEAGUE

ARMY

34

INCE
ROSE

22



CORPS CELEBRATES

THE Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' Museum has unveiled a new exhibition charting the corps' sporting success, past and present.

Olympic gold medallist Jim Fox – one of the most influential figures in the development of modern pentathlon – had the honour of opening the display, alongside serving soldier and ironman star Sgt Becky Hoare (REME, pictured above).

"While we highlight the corps' Olympians and international sports people we also wanted to focus on the lower level," assistant curator Kimberley Day told *SoldierSport*. "So we look at some of the new teams at battalion level and we've included a feature on a REME strongman. There's a real range of experience."

As well as boasting a host of archive photography, the exhibition features a range of trophies, kit and mementoes.

The museum is located just outside the military camp at MoD Lyneham and is open from 1030 to 1630, Tuesday to Saturday. The exhibition runs until the end of the year.



MONTH IN SPORT

March's key fixtures...

**WHAT:**

Inter-Services Netball

WHEN:

March 4 to 6

WHERE:

Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW:

The Reds recorded

emphatic wins over their Forces rivals in 2019 to claim yet another title. They will be looking to turn on the style and defend their crown on home turf

**WHAT:** Inter-Services Hockey Championships**WHEN:** March 24 to 25**WHERE:** Aldershot**NEED TO KNOW:** It was a familiar story last season as the Army women maintained their grip on the trophy. They will start as favourites this year but can the men join them at the top?**WHAT:** Army v Royal Navy – Inter-Services Football**WHEN:** March 25**WHERE:**

Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW:

The soldiers will be looking to claim

a Forces double at home. The women play at the Aldershot Military Stadium at 1500, while the men play at the home of Aldershot Town at 1900

SWIMMING IN NUMBERS

DAYS OF TRAINING AT THE ALDERSHOT GARRISON SPORTS CENTRE

3

SWIMMERS IN ATTENDANCE AT THE CAMP

52

SUCCESSIONAL FORCES TITLES WON BY THE ARMY WOMEN'S TEAM

22

POINT WINNING MARGIN RECORDED BY THE ROYAL NAVY OVER THE ARMY MEN IN 2019

3

DATE, IN JULY, FOR THE OPENING DAY OF THE INTER-SERVICES DIVING, WATER POLO AND SWIMMING

1

» SWIMMING



PRIMED FOR SERVICES PUSH

PREPARED for this season's Inter-Services showdown stepped up a gear as Army swimmers took to the pool for an intensive training camp in Aldershot.

Featuring an array of established squad members and fresh talent from the corps scene, the gathering included regular sessions in the water, as well as strength and conditioning work and briefs on upcoming challenges.

More than 50 soldiers were involved, a number that continued the upward trend from last season when the camp was moved from its traditional weekend slot to a midweek fixture.

"This is all about preparing for the Inter-Services," Army team manager Lt Col Katie Hislop (RE) told *SoldierSport*. "My job is to win those titles and this is the first step."

"There will be another training camp in Cyprus in June, and we will then look to smash that competition the following month."

"Swimming is growing within the Army. We have

seen a lot of privates and lance corporals here this week who have recently joined up and want to get involved.

"I've been very impressed, not only with the newcomers but with our recognised Army swimmers, who have been training hard at clubs across the country."

"They are role models for those coming in."

The camp also paved the way for future progression, with the Institute of Swimming delivering a Swim England assistant coach's course.

Hislop added: "This will allow us to deliver more dispersed coaching at unit and corps level."

"It is about building a succession plan for the Army team. Our current coach Garry Mitchell, a former warrant officer in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, will retire at some point."

"A lot of people have swum for the Army in the past and we don't want to lose them. Hopefully they can get involved in coaching and give something back." ■



LIGHTFOOT'S RETURN PROMPTS NEW GAMES PUSH

BIATHLON star Sgt Amanda Lightfoot (AGC (SPS)) is targeting a third Winter Olympics campaign after making a successful return to Nordic action this season.

The soldier took a break from international competition last year but a host of top-20 finishes during the current campaign have seen her produce some of her best results for Great Britain at senior level.

One of the highlights was the IBU Cup in Brezno, Slovakia, where Lightfoot finished 13th in a field of 89 athletes in the 7.5-kilometre sprint.

"The consistency of my races has been great," she told *SoldierSport*. "This has been a comeback season and I didn't know what shape I'd be in compared to the rest of the world.

"My expectations were not particularly high. However, after achieving a great result in my first race I realised that I was

back to being me, with that fight in my head to aim to reach a place on the podium."

Lightfoot's fine form continued at the recent British, Inter-Services and Army Championships in Ruhpolding, Germany, as she dominated her individual races.

She finished more than nine minutes clear of her nearest rival to top the standings in the ten-kilometre mass start event and also won the 7.5-kilometre sprint and 12.5-kilometre individual.

Lightfoot's bid has not been helped by the fact British Biathlon currently receives no funding from UK Sport, meaning there is added pressure on athletes as they look to make their mark at competitions such as the European and World Championships.

This makes the support she has received from the Service and Adjutant General's Corps even more important and the 33-year-



**"I FEEL
POSITIVE
ABOUT
THE
FUTURE"**

old has made some impressive gains in recent months.

"I would put that down to hard work and commitment," the Servicewoman added.

"Especially the work I have done with head coach Ilario Maddalin on the shooting side of things – it has really pushed me to new limits.

"We do not currently have any funding or sponsorship, but our new federation are working extremely hard to get biathlon known in the UK and to attract potential sponsors.

"With the results I've had this year I feel really positive about the future.

"The 2022 Olympics in Beijing are my goal. I have the capability and my results this season show that I can definitely qualify for a third Games.

"I'm really excited and this will be a monumental achievement – it has not been done for GB in biathlon by a female before." ■



SNOWSPORTS REVEL IN RAPID GROWTH



**"WE
WERE
ALPINE
HEAVY"**

THE chief operations officer of the Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team (AFPST) has spoken to *SoldierSport* about the organisation's unprecedented success as it nears the end of another winter season.

Elizabeth Winfield, a former major in the Royal Logistic Corps who retired from Service life late last year, believed the set-up had reached its pinnacle in 2018 when two members – ex-soldiers Scott Meenagh (pictured left) and Owen Pick (pictured above) – competed at the Paralympics.

However, the rapid developments made since then have proved her theory wrong.

"I really thought it would tail off after that," Winfield explained. "But it was the springboard for new and exciting adventures."

"The Paralympics really accelerated the interest in this and at the newcomers event held directly after the Games we had quadrupled in size."

"At the time we were Alpine heavy, with a few snowboarders and a Nordic

programme that was just coming to fruition. Now we have three disciplines of equal size with athletes from the elite level downwards."

In snowboarding, a 3D printer has been used to create the binding mechanisms that have allowed two double above knee amputees to attach their stumps directly to the board.

Two-time Invictus Games gold medallist Alex Tate, a below knee amputee who served in The Royal Anglian Regiment, has made an immediate impact and after just one season has been picked up by Team GB.

And Ben Shaw, formerly of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, is one of two blind athletes to have joined the programme.

Another positive step was seen at the Royal Logistic Corps Championships, where AFPST Nordic members competed alongside their able-bodied colleagues in a military contest for the first time.

"I think we will quadruple the military presence at the next Paralympics," Winfield said. "That is really positive." ■



SLOPE SUPPORTERS

AS A charity, the Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team (AFPST) is reliant on donations and fundraising efforts to keep its members on the slopes.

The set-up needs to generate around £500,000 to cover its running costs each season and two major events are already planned to help personnel reach this target for 2020/21.

Later this month, skiers from a number of University Officer Training Corps will take part in a 24-hour endurance challenge at the Gloucester Ski and Snowboard Centre.

Starting on March 5, they will ski non-stop for a full 24 hours with a team member on the slopes at all times.

And aerospace engineering company Leonardo will celebrate the tenth anniversary of its support for the AFPST with their Summit Challenge 2020.

The feat will see 40 employees cycle from London to the summit of Alpe d'Huez, in France, between July 9 and 13 in a route that will take them through Newhaven, Dieppe and Grenoble before reaching its conclusion in the French Alps.



Final Word



I was already out here and requested a move to this unit to stay longer. There are perks to make up for being away from home – like local overseas allowance and tax-free fuel and goods, so if you're trying to save money it's a good place to be.

LCpl Luke Crossley, RE



I've been here a year now, first in Bielefeld and now Sennelager. Germany is great – it's something new, a break from the norm and I like the atmosphere.

Spr Bradley Ware, RE



It's nice to experience a different culture to the UK. I've been here ten years now and it's strange not having a large community anymore, especially the Fijian element, which was stronger before. Now there are only about four families.

LCpl Sairusi Turuva, RE



In my career I've spent a total of nine years in Germany and I have a German wife, so I was glad to get out here again. The standard of living is high – there's always something to do in summer and in winter.

LCpl Chris McCann, RE



I was in Germany for three years, then I left the Army. But I rejoined after about nine months and asked for a posting back here. I enjoy the amphibious role and I think it's a better lifestyle compared to the UK. Not having a big community means we're more close-knit.

LCpl David MacKay, RE



It wasn't actually one of my preferences but now that I'm here it's good news. It's a nice place and culture, the cost of living is cheaper and there are financial savings to be made, so I like it.

Spr Jack Harris, RE

'A good place to be'

Troops from 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron reveal what it's like living in the scaled down British Army Germany.

I left the Army but signed back on to come out here just because I wanted to live abroad and there aren't that many opportunities anymore. Hopefully I'll be here for a couple of years.

Spr Darren Thomas, RE

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