

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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ARMY: BOBION, CLEGANE, TARTY

ON THE PROWL

Wildcat flexes muscles on Baltic mission



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“ They learn a huge amount about themselves ”

The fight for full screw – page 36



Variety begins at home



ONE of the best things about working on *Soldier* is the interaction we get with our readers as we follow them

around the world.

Cataloguing the Army's various operations and training packages for this and future generations is without doubt a huge privilege.

But with so much activity happening across Eastern Europe and the rest of the world (page 8), it is easy to forget how much brilliant stuff is going on back in the UK too.

This month we take a closer look at some of those taskings – from preparations for Wildcat's operational debut (page 32) to the varied work of Northern Ireland's Reserves (page 42) and the mission to mould the next generation of Army leaders (page 36).

As ever, though, Service life is far from perfect. If something is irking you check out page 47 for a lively mix of readers' letters and details of how you can submit a question or comment yourself.

Whether at home or abroad, we hope you enjoy the magazine.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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Picture: Tim Browne

Sky Sabre missile system unveiled

Rapier replacement to provide major leap in capability

THE Army has been given a first glimpse of the new cutting-edge air defence weapon that will be heading its way in 2020.

Sky Sabre will provide a major uplift in capability for 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery, offering greater range, accuracy and firepower compared with the existing Rapier short-range air defence system that it replaces.

"It represents a real change to how we do our business as ground-based air defenders," Lt Col Chris Coton (RA) told *Soldier*.

"It not only offers us the ability to engage targets beyond visual range, but also to attack multiple platforms at the same time – it really is revolutionary stuff."

A special preview day at Baker Barracks on Thorney Island (pictured above), the home of 16th Regiment, showed Sky Sabre's three main components together for the first time.

The electronic brain is a state-of-the-art battle space management command, control and information system provided by Rafael Advance Defense Systems of Israel.

The Saab Giraffe agile multi-beam radar can detect targets over 100km away, providing accurate real-time information to help guide the new, highly advanced Common Anti-air Modular Missile developed by MBDA.

The launcher is mounted on a Man

SV 8x8 vehicle equipped with eight ready-to-use missiles.

The system is designed to be deployed remotely and reloaded by its crew who can then intercept a wide variety of aerial targets including fixed wing, rotary and cruise missiles.

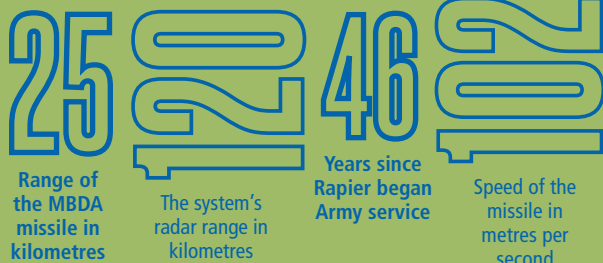
Personnel can monitor and predict the path of incoming threats and once the weapons are in flight they can be updated and directed on to multiple targets, enhancing the kill probability.

Air Cdre Ian Gale, the senior responsible officer for the introduction of Sky Sabre, commented: "You are seeing the future here, you can't replace like for like in the digital age."

"This will take the Army from short to medium range and is a truly integrated air defence system. It's fast, reliable and trusted."

“
It really is
revolutionary
stuff
”

IN NUMBERS: SKY SABRE



SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP



1. BELIZE

PARAS PREPARE

AIRBORNE personnel have converged on Belize for two separate training packages.

Some 200 troops from 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment are carrying out a range of maintenance tasks around Price Barracks and the training areas as part of Exercise Sailfish – the first time the serial has been run for six years.

Meanwhile, soldiers from A Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment became the first to test a new training area in the north of the country.

Exercise Mayan Warrior has seen them take on skills and drills in previously untouched primary jungle (pictured).



2. NORTH CAROLINA

BRAGGING RIGHTS

NEARLY 1,000 personnel will deploy to Fort Bragg later this month to conduct the biggest divisional headquarters training package since the British Army of the Rhine era.

Exercise Warfighter will see 3rd (UK) Division fighting directly under the American 18th Airborne Corps and is the formation's chance to prove its readiness for modern operations.

IN
NUMBERS

65 Days, 16 Hours
and FOUR minutes
time taken to
complete the
crossing

3,800

miles from Portugal
to French Guiana

500

miles further
than the more
direct route from
the Canary Islands
to Antigua

3. FRENCH GUIANA

TRANSATLANTIC TRIUMPH

A ROYAL Engineer completed his last day of service in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, half way through an astonishing world record attempt.

Spr Duncan Roy and his companions set off from Lagos in Portugal in December, aiming to become the fastest team to paddle unsupported from mainland Europe to South America.

But after being forced to stop at Lanzarote and then Cape Verde for repairs, they instead ended up becoming the first team ever to complete the so-called "Trade Winds Two" route from Africa to French Guiana, landing in Cayenne just 28 days later.

Writing on Instagram, Roy – who served with 24 Commando Engineer Regiment – said: "It was an absolute honour to represent the regiment on my Atlantic row."

"It gave me motivation and inspiration every single day."



2. NORTH CAROLINA

1. BELIZE

3. FRENCH GUIANA

4. GERMANY

SEND YOUR SNAPS

MEMORIES and photographs from troops who have served in Germany are still being sought for the British Forces Germany legacy project, which will be compiled in a book produced by HQ BFG.

Find out how to participate by visiting www.bfgnet.de



5. NORTH POLE



4. GERMANY



6. CHAD



7. MALAWI



5. NORTH POLE COOL RUNNINGS

A FORMER Army officer is gearing up to take on the world's only long-distance race staged entirely on the frozen sea.

Rob Shenton (ex-REME, pictured below in his Arctic training gear) will tackle the North Pole Marathon next month.

The 45-year-old has already completed the Marathon Des Sables and the Everest Marathon in his quest to run the toughest, highest and coldest foot races on Earth. To help him raise funds for Help for Heroes and Combat Stress visit www.runningrob.com



Meribel hosted the Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships – page 70

“Being busy makes the time fly”

Troops ponder Estonian stint – page 82

6. CHAD UNITED FRONT

THE UK has taken the lead for the liaison and coordination cell that supports the anti-Boko Haram Multinational Joint Task Force.

Based in N'Djamena under the command of Col Jon Cresswell, the unit is comprised of specialists from France, USA and the UK together with liaison officers from participating nations, while the task force features personnel from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Benin.

“The challenge is significant due to the vast area of operations, the number of nations involved and limited resources, and yet the achievements to date have been significant thanks to international will and determined leadership,” Col Cresswell said.

CRIMINALS illegally hunting animals are now the quarry of British troops. UK personnel are ramping up their presence in Malawi following a pilot initiative in Liwonde National Park – mentoring locals who are trying to stop the poachers.

There will be new deployments to Nkhosha and Majete wildlife reserves beginning in May, doubling the number of rangers trained by the troops to 120.

Under the initiative, announced by Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson, teams from African parks will learn tracking skills, bushcraft and information analysis.

The scheme follows similar missions elsewhere on the continent, including in Gabon (pictured).

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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8. AUSTRALIA DIPLOMACY DOWN UNDER

CHIEF of the Defence Staff Air Chf Mshl Sir Stuart Peach met senior Australian politicians and Armed Forces representatives to discuss a range of issues during a visit to the country.

Big talking points included closer working between the two militaries, as well as global concerns such as North Korea, Syria, Iraq and countering international terrorism.

Air Chf Mshl Peach said: “From the First World War right up to the fight against Daesh, the UK and Australia have stood shoulder-to-shoulder as the strongest of allies.”

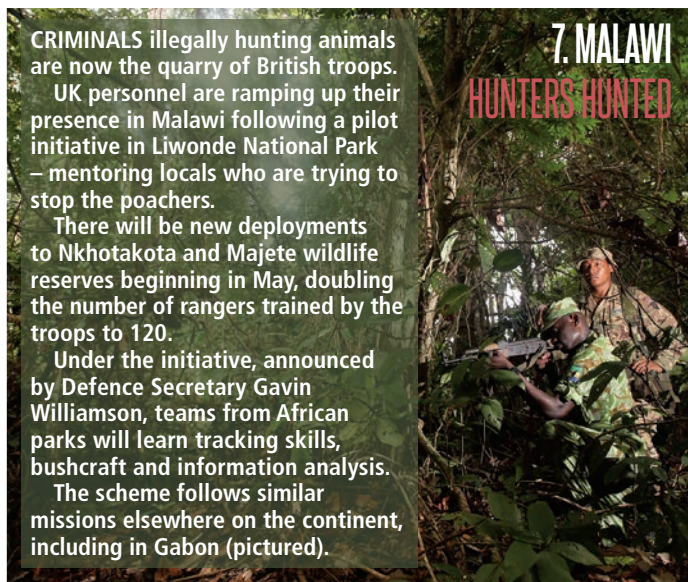
8. AUSTRALIA



Pyeongchang calling

Army Olympians take on the world – page 79

7. MALAWI HUNTERS HUNTED



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Picture: Cpl Tom Evans, RLC

Show of strength on Askari Storm

RESOLUTE troops have been put to the test in a demanding environment as they sharpened their skills in readiness for deployment anywhere in the world.

The soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Rifles were pushed to their limits on Exercise Askari Storm – where the heat and arduous conditions of the British Army Training Area Kenya proved testing.

But they rose to the occasion, taking part in a range of serials including live fire attacks in urban as well as rural areas, defensive tactics and convoy moves.

The validation training prepared the battalion for its current Nato readiness role. From March 1, the formation will be attached to 12th Armoured Infantry Brigade.

The soldiers arrived in Kenya in mid-January, conducting acclimatising physical training and recces of the training area before embarking on the exercise package, which lasted for around six weeks.

They faced determined opposition mounted by troops from the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment during the manoeuvres as well as regular debriefings on their performance.



MEDICAL MANOEUVRES

■ AIRBORNE medics have been sharpening their skills on manoeuvres in Suffolk following a testing deployment to South Sudan last year.

Troops from 23 Medical Squadron, 16 Medical Regiment, faced a variety of drills on Exercise Pegasus Serpent in Woodbridge in preparation for future ops.

LEAVERS: HELP AT HAND

■ ARMED Forces Charity SSAFA has launched a new mentoring facility for Service leavers.

The two-year trial at Catterick Garrison will offer troops emotional and practical help through weekly face-to-face meetings, which supplement the support provided by the Army and Career Transition Partnership.

Catterick-based personnel can apply via their employment advisor, resettlement career consultant or directly via the charity.

GO GIBBS

■ CAPTAIN Mark Gibbs (RLC) will try to smash the Guinness World Record for running a half-marathon in a 65lb bomb suit in Bath this month.

The officer is hoping to raise £2,500 for the Felix Fund charity by completing the feat in less than 3hr 15min.

Visit his fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/58-ato



DEATH BENEFIT EXTENDED

■ THE Army Dependents' Trust has extended membership to all Regular Reserves at no cost – provided they were members during their service and completed their annual reporting letter during their liability.

The organisation makes awards – currently £15,000 – to dependants or next of kin after on- or off-duty deaths.

Membership is also open to Regulars, Reservists, full-time Reserve service troops, non-Regular permanent staff and Military Provost Guard Service personnel.

Elderly gay veterans could be pardoned

VETERANS who were convicted of sexual offences before homosexuality between men was decriminalised five decades ago may be eligible for a pardon under legislation known as Turing's Law.

Those who served until 1967 can now apply to the Home Office for a pardon. If granted, they can contact the MoD Medal Office to establish whether it would be appropriate for Service decorations to be reinstated.

Only the abolished offences in the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and earlier civilian legislation – which relate to gay sex – are covered, even if they were tried by court martial.

Other military offences, such as disgraceful

conduct of an indecent kind or scandalous conduct by an officer, are not currently covered but may be considered for future changes.

An MoD spokeswoman said: "This is a complex area – we are asking people to contact the Home Office in the first instance and, if a pardon is granted, individuals may then approach the MoD.

"It is important to note that the act that attracted the discharge must not remain an offence today – it must have been consensual and with a person over the age of 16."

The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and the Policing and Crime Act 2017 made the pardoning of the historic offences relating to gay sex possible.

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Record row

A COURAGEOUS amputee has set a record time for rowing across the Atlantic. Jordan Beecher (ex-Para), 28, and 31-year-old Capt Jon Armstrong (RGR) braved tough conditions to complete the 3,000-mile Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge from the Canary Islands to Antigua. They shaved around 72 hours off the existing record to finish in 37 days. Beecher, who lost his lower left leg in an IED strike in Afghanistan in 2012, worked in two-hour shifts with his friend to complete the challenge.

Money raised:
£100,000
For: Blesma



Ultra-marathon men

TWO Royal Engineers are preparing for an ultra marathon in the Amazon jungle. Over five days and 230 kilometres, majors Chris Hulme and Nick Hedgeley (pictured) will battle dense undergrowth, rivers and stifling humidity, while lugging all of their food, water and equipment. To help them fundraise for Combat Stress and the Rainbow Trust log on to <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/junglesappers>

AFTERCARE SERVICE IN NUMBERS

63,000

members in the UDR
and Royal Irish
veteran community

700

widows and
parents of fallen
troops helped

2007

year the service
was set up

Visit [www
aftercareservice.org](http://www.aftercareservice.org)
for more



Picture: Soldier archive

Op Banner legacy lives on

AN organisation set up with the backing of the MoD has been continuing to support veterans of Northern Ireland's harrowing Troubles era – a decade after the end of military operations.

The Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Aftercare Service is dedicated to looking after the welfare of the 63,000 personnel who served with both outfits during the four decades of Op Banner.

The UDR was later assimilated into Home Service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment, but these were disbanded in 2006 as part of the military drawdown in Northern Ireland.

However, the aftercare service remains in demand from veterans – and has helped some 20,000 people since it was set up in the wake of the climax of Op Banner a decade ago.

It has also assisted some of the 700 spouses and parents of the soldiers who were killed.

Peter Baillie, who heads up the service, said the disbandment of the Royal Irish battalions meant veterans could not access the traditional route to help through their military family.

He pointed out that the organisation could assist with benevolence and general welfare for the Northern Ireland veteran community as well as assisting those with mental and physical injuries.

Baillie added: "One of the issues here in Northern Ireland is that our veterans are constantly reminded of the past – but we have ex-military people in our team who understand.

"We also work in close partnership with other groups such as the regimental associations."

Metal in sight for Service marksmen

■ TOP-notch sharpshooters will soon be taking delivery of striking bronze badges.

Made by military accoutrement manufacturer Firmin and Sons, the Army marksman and Army sniper marksman insignia replicate the cloth badges already available.

There are also versions for the Army 100 and Reserve 50 marksmen awards at the Army Operational Shooting Competition.

"The badges will be issued to those who are qualified and are to



be worn above the left pocket on combat uniform in barracks," Lt Col Paul Redding of the Small Arms School Corps told *Soldier*.



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BOOTS ON THE GROUND

■ **MANPOWER** will be provided to Army units at the start of their training year rather than during their readiness year, the Service has announced.

The change in policy has been introduced to avoid troops arriving at regiments too late in the cycle, meaning they might not complete qualifying exercises in time to be prepared for operations.

The adjustment ensures units can begin their readiness commitments or deployments with a higher level of fully qualified manpower.

Read **ABN 01/18** for more details.



TRENCH TIME-HOP

■ **SURVEYORS** from the Royal Engineers have been helping to plot First World War training trenches at RAF Halton.

Members of 170 Engineer Group spent a week mapping as-yet-uncharted parts of the dugouts (pictured), sections of which have already been restored and opened to the public.

"The system extends further than we thought," explained Sgt Dairmaid Walshe (RAMC), an archaeologist and Reservist attached to the formation.

"We've spotted a lot of features that hadn't been noted before, like what could be a rifle range."

Troops used the Buckinghamshire site for exercises before deploying to France 100 years ago.

The tunnels were constructed to mimic the front-line environment.

"It's not just about recording the trenches, but also connecting Service personnel to their heritage," said Sgt Walshe.



Picture: Steve Dock

New league for Army leaders

“
This is
unique and
exciting
”

THE Army is further boosting the leadership skills of its troops with the launch of a degree apprenticeship qualification.

Run in conjunction with the University of Portsmouth, the three-and-a-half-year course combines academic studies with real work challenges, with 80 per cent of study done on the job.

There are currently 44 apprenticeship programmes in the Army but this is the first to be targeted at degree level.

A total of 30 senior NCOs were selected as the first intake, and they have already completed a week-long residential stage at the university.

They will study via regular modules, online chats and video conferences, liaising closely with Army mentors.

The qualification has been given the thumbs-up by the

Service because it allows troops to apply academic theory in the daily leadership challenges at their units.

Students were selected from a wide range of corps and cab badges.

If successful they will graduate with an honours degree in leadership and management, while gaining chartered manager status by the Chartered Management Institute.

"This is unique and exciting, not only for the individuals but for us as an organisation," Maj Rachael Lamont (AGC (ETS)), project lead for degree apprenticeships, told *Soldier*.

"It will provide a unique opportunity to upskill our workforce."

Initially held as a trial, a further cohort of 30 Servicemen and women have been added to the programme since it began.

● The fight for full screw – page 36



■ **SOME 400** proud teenagers headed off to start the next part of their military life after graduating from the Army Foundation College in Harrogate. College CO Col Rich Hall said: "These soldiers represent the very best of our nation's young people." The youngsters will move on to phase two training in a variety of careers.

Picture: Cpl Donald Todd, RLC



Soldiers 'on-track to win jobs race'

SERVICE leavers are better equipped for the jobs market than their civilian counterparts, research by Barclays has found.

The bank put former personnel through different psychometric tests to measure their workplace strengths.

It concluded that ex-soldiers bring a host of important attributes and outperform civilian workers in various key skills.

For example, veterans came out as top performers in social influencing and creativity.

But there are concerns some employers still don't understand the benefits of taking them on.

Stuart Tootal – a former 3 Para commanding officer who heads up the firm's Armed Forces Transition, Employment and Resettlement programme – said the new research demonstrated "the strength and depth" of veterans' skills.

"They proved to have twice as much potential as civilians in demonstrating board-level leadership and innovative solutions to problems," he said.

"Around 20 per cent scored at the top end of creative thinking compared to 16 per cent of civilians.

"This, combined with the fact that veterans are less than half as likely to need rigid structure in the workplace, shows the powerful role they can play in a team."



Picture: Graeme Main

“It shows the powerful role they can play”

Barclays' findings follow an earlier study by the bank, which found that half of employers would look favourably at an applicant's service in the Forces.

However, one-in-eight admitted that military experience would go against their candidates.

'We want to stop other people from suffering'

A MILITARY family is gearing up for a charity bike ride to raise awareness of the serious illness that claimed the life of their newborn baby.

Cpl Jon Roden (REME) and his wife Becki lost their son Tommy to sepsis when he was just six days old last July.

The illness – sometimes called blood poisoning or septicaemia – is a rare but serious complication of an infection that causes the body to attack its own tissues.

Born prematurely at 31 weeks, Tommy was in the neonatal intensive care unit when he fell ill and died in his parents' arms the following day.

"They told us his body was basically shutting down," Becki said. "They put him in my arms and he took a breath, let it out and passed away."

"It's devastating, but our goal is that through our pain we can stop other people from suffering."

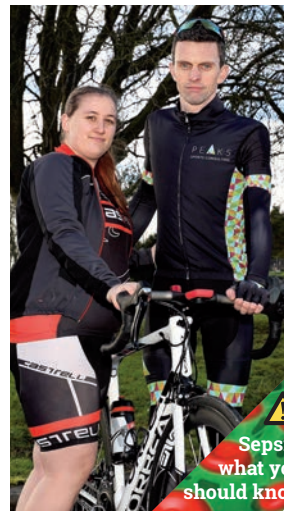
In April the Rodens will cycle from John O'Groats to Land's End and back to their home in Tidworth – a distance of 1,250 miles – along with a team of fellow soldiers.

The couple, who also have three sons aged two, seven and nine, will be raising money for the UK Sepsis Trust.

"Anyone can get sepsis," added Becki. "Doctors sometimes pass it off as flu, but if you're concerned don't take the first answer."

"Ask, could it be sepsis?"

To support the Rodens visit www.justgiving.com/ridefortommy



Sepsis: what you should know – page 26

FLEXIBLE WORKING

■ A LAW has been passed that will allow some soldiers to serve part-time for certain periods to do things like raise children or care for sick relatives.

The Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Act comes into force in 2019.

It means personnel will be able to restrict the time they spend away from their home bases.

Applications will be assessed against the needs of the Army and troops would still need to deploy on operations in emergency situations such as a national crisis.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said that consultation with troops had found they wanted more options when personal circumstances change.

He added: "Flexible working is key to retaining the expert personnel we have invested in."

BRAVE ENDEAVOURS

■ THREE courageous veterans who battled their way back from injury to complete tough challenges received royal recognition at a ceremony in London.

The achievements of Ben Lee (ex-RE), Sean Gane (ex-Rifles) and Royal Marine Daniel Claricoates were applauded at the second Endeavour Fund awards.

Led by Prince Harry and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, the fund helps veterans have the opportunity to rediscover their self-belief through physical challenges.

Read more about the recipients online at www.endeavourfund.co.uk

GOING ON EXERCISE?

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LOGGIES MAKE BOMB SAFE



■ ARMY specialists joined forces with Royal Navy and police colleagues to make a Second World War bomb safe.

The troops from 621 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squadron, Royal Logistic Corps were called after the 500lb device was found in the George V dock during work at London City Airport. Personnel freed the shell and took it away for destruction.



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Ice Maiden Lt Jenni Stephenson (RA) takes to the treadmill in the environment chamber. Picture: Coventry University



Female adventurers go to extremes

PIONEERING research from the Ice Maidens Antarctic expedition will help the Army to better understand the impact of women being moved into front-line roles.

Medical tests carried out on the six female explorers at Coventry University were part-funded by the military and will feed into its data on women in ground close combat.

The first of their kind, the trials aim to establish how a woman's body reacts to prolonged exercise in extreme conditions. Previous studies have only focused on men.

Having spent 61 days skiing coast-to-coast across Antarctica, becoming the first all-female team to complete the feat using muscle-power alone, the troops headed to Coventry to repeat a set of tests they first took before they left in October.

Data from both will now be analysed to see how their bodies changed during the expedition, which covered 1,700km in temperatures plunging to -56 degrees Celsius.

The women were pushed to their limits on a treadmill in the university science and health building's environment chamber, running at increasing speeds until exhausted.

The experiment simulated both sea-level conditions and the 3,000-metre altitude the personnel experienced on their mission.

Several measurements were taken, including oxygen consumption and how efficiently it was used.

The team also spent 36 hours in a facility checking their energy use.

Ice Maiden Capt Zanna Baker (RA) said: "It has been really interesting to do these tests to see how our bodies have changed.

"Hopefully, this will be useful in understanding more about female physiology and will positively influence women's roles in the military."

Dr Doug Thake, applied human physiology lecturer at Coventry University, said: "The Ice Maidens' achievement was absolutely amazing and it has been riveting hearing stories about their expedition.

"It will be fascinating to look through the data – this is an excellent opportunity to understand more about how a challenging environment affects women's physiology."



“It will be fascinating to look through the data”

SPINE LINE COMPETITION

HAS Pyeongchang left you feeling like a bit of an expert in the field of winter sports?

If so, last month's spine lines competition will have proved a walkover.

(Jenny) Jones, (Eve) Muirhead, (David) Murdoch and (Lizzie) Yarnold were all Team GB medalists at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

This month *Soldier* has teamed up with British nutrition and beauty brand Proto-col (www.proto-col.com) to offer one reader a bundle of Informed Sport-registered products worth more than £200.

To be in with a chance of winning the set – which includes Collagen Pro Sport Plus tablets, Pro Gold Protein and Collagen Whey Powder, vitamin D supplements, sports bag, bottles and more – tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by March 30.

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A £200 Proto-col sports nutrition bundle



CAMBRIAN CALL

■ **SOLDIERS** are being invited to challenge themselves and face down the elements at this year's Exercise Cambrian Patrol.

The famous manoeuvres run from October 12-21 in Wales, and focus on infantry skills and drills.

The deadline for bids to take part is July 15 and for more details call 01874 613280.

PARENTS UNITE

■ A **FACEBOOK** group has been launched to support serving parents.

The Army Parents' Network is a closed forum where troops can find help on issues such as pregnancy, shared parental leave, schools and childcare.

Members include policy desk officers, who can offer guidance.

Some 1,500 troops had joined as this issue went to press and a website is also due to be launched in the coming months.

Search for the "Army Parents' Network" on Facebook.



A personal view from
Sara Baade, Chief
Executive of the Army
Families Federation...

SIGN UP TO STAY TUNED

MOST of this year's work will be based on feedback from our "offer" survey, where we asked whether the difficulties you face as Army families are mitigated by your package of benefits.

And our current focus is on healthcare issues.

We're making soldiers and their loved ones more aware of where to get help in certain areas – using the Armed Forces Covenant to get parity on waiting lists, for example.

We have heard that some are struggling to access NHS dentists, so we'll be investigating that.

And we plan to launch support groups for carers of youngsters with additional needs.

Families in adapted quarters have many questions around the future accommodation model, and we will get those answered.

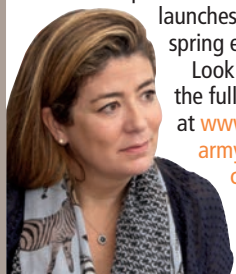
Empowering our families with the information they need is part of our core business. But we too are facing challenges.

A change to data protection laws in May will mean that families in mainland UK will now need to opt-in to continue receiving our trusted *Army & You* magazine.

We have produced this title for 35 years, and a campaign to encourage as many people as possible to sign up launches in our spring edition.

Look out for the full details at www.armyandyou.co.uk

[armyandyou.co.uk](http://www.armyandyou.co.uk)



www.aff.org.uk



Fusiliers mark 50 years

Picture: Steve Dock

THE Royal Regiment of Fusiliers is marking its half-century with a busy programme of events – including services and parades – over the coming year.

Commemorations begin on April 21 with a freedom parade in Newcastle ahead of the regimental 50th anniversary on St George's Day, which will be marked at the Tower of London.

Other events include a gathering at the National Memorial Arboretum in

Staffordshire. Special commemorative medals are also being issued to Regular and Reserve personnel.

An amalgamation of four regiments, the RRF (members of which are shown above) was formed in 1968 and has since seen operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Regimental secretary Col (retd) James Denny said: "This year is very important for us. You're only 50 once, so we want to mark the event properly."

WINTER SPORTS

Soldiers shred it up
– page 70



CAPT DEAN SPROUTING (46)
STAFF AND PERSONNEL SUPPORT,
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
DIED JANUARY 31 – IRAQ

IN MEMORIAM

COLLEAGUES of a gifted officer have paid tribute to his professionalism, and compassion following his death on Operation Shader.

Capt Dean Sprouting was serving with 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland when he died at Al Asad Airbase.

An inquest into the married father-of-two's loss was told that the Serviceman had been in collision with

a forklift truck while jogging.

Lt Col Rob Hedderwick, CO of 3 Scots, said: "He had become an indispensable part of the battalion, not only for his professional expertise but also for his compassionate manner and camaraderie."

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and children whom I know he cherished more than anything in the world."

"I am hugely proud and thankful to have known him."

Capt Sprouting, who came from Stirlingshire, had nearly 30 years of soldiering experience.

Initially enlisting in the Royal Green Jackets, he transferred to the Adjutant General's Corps before joining the 3 Scots administration office in late 2017 from HQ 51st Infantry Brigade.

He arrived in Iraq in January, where he was the detachment commander of a human resources team.

The officer had previously served in the former Yugoslavia and Cyprus as well as Sudan, Angola and Germany.

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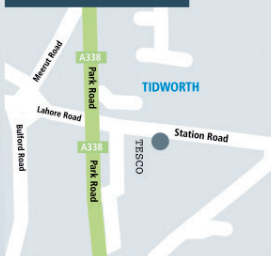
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Picture: Graeme Main



Exercise shines light on 'fake news'

TACTICS for dealing with fake news and misinformation have been honed by officer cadets in a pioneering training package at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

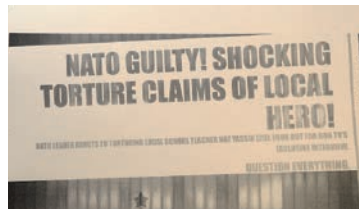
Exercise Agile Influence put soldiers at the heart of a community in which a prolific media machine puts out stories – not all of them accurate.

The day-long exercise forms a prelude to Templer's Triumph on Longmoor Training Area, and is an opportunity for cadets to don costumes and take on the personalities of the type of characters they could face on operations.

The company-sized scenario was designed to improve troops' influencing skills.

A variety of media outlets were simulated in real-time, putting out a combination of radio broadcasts, TV reports, blogs and print material.

Gareth Bloomfield, senior lecturer from the academy's Department of Communication and Applied Behavioural Science, explained that soldiers also needed to learn how to engage with journalists.



"Troops could find themselves in the media if they do not respond to events," he said.

Exercise creator Dr Deborah Goodwin – who heads the department – said the serial had received considerable interest from outside organisations.

"Agile Influence is still unique in terms of officer training internationally," she said.

"Those who have come to see the exercise played out include representatives of our sister organisations from other branches of the Armed Services."

Although the exercise was custom-written for Sandhurst, Goodwin can advise other units on creating their own influencing scenario.

“
Soldiers
could find
themselves in
the media
”

DEFENCE LOGISTICS

■ A CHANGE in terminology has been introduced to avoid future confusion in supply chain comms issues.

The Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Logistical Operations) directorate has now been rebranded as Defence Logistics.

It is hoped the move will better distinguish the wider department from the two-star general in command.

SWORD AWARD

■ THE selfless work of troops committed to protecting the UK public from explosive hazards during 2016 has earned 11 (EOD) Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps the prestigious Firmin Sword of Peace.

The unit saw more than 2,850 call-outs during the year, while raising around £30,000 for charity.

The sword will be presented during a ceremony at Blenheim Palace this month.



TRAGIC TREK CONTINUES

■ A MEDICAL officer who died taking part in the charity event he created will be remembered when the trek is relaunched this summer.

The D-Day 44 Challenge will see participants undertake a 44-mile run and 22-mile walk around Normandy to raise money for Blesma, Blind Veterans UK and Combat Stress.

Army surgeon Lt Col Mike McErlain (pictured above right) collapsed during the trek five years ago.

To get involved search for D-Day Challenge 2018 online.

SUPPORT FOR SAPPERS

■ A 24/7 mental health helpline, set up after the death of a Royal Engineer, has been recognised with a national award.

Founded by Tim Evers following the loss of his colleague Chris Walmsley, Sapper Support (www.sappersupport.com) received the best new charity accolade at the *Charity Times* Awards.

Although the organisation initially helped Royal Engineers, its nine volunteers now work across all three Armed Forces as well as blue light services.

Evers, who left the Army two decades ago and is now a firefighter with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, said it had been "an honour" to receive the gong.

In this month's

**SOLDIER
SPORT**



» ATHLETICS P68

» FOOTBALL P73



» RUGBY LEAGUE P75



THE BIG PICTURE

Bergen-Hohne ranges, Germany

FLASH TO BANG

SOLDIERS from A Squadron, The Queen's Royal Hussars unleash the firepower of their Challenger 2 Main Battle Tank during a range package at Bergen-Hohne. The intense three-week exercise tested individual drills, crew cohesion and teamwork as well as target accuracy.

Picture: Dominic King





C

ARROGANT

NEED TO KNOW

MENTAL HEALTH | HEALTH | NUTRITION | NEXT STEP | SKILLS & DRILLS | EXPERIENCE | HOUSING

Mental muscle

How building a tough mindset
can help you weather the
storms of Service life

Picture: FreePik



▶ LET'S be honest, soldiers face more than their fair share of challenges. So being mentally resilient is just as important as physical robustness.

Resilient people don't dwell on failure, they quickly learn from it. And evidence shows these individuals are quicker to solve problems, suffer less stress, perform better at work and have higher levels of wellbeing and happiness.

The good news is that everyone can learn to develop a strong mindset. Try these tips from online mental health service Big White Wall...

Practise thought awareness

If you notice any negative or unhelpful ideas creeping in, challenge them. Instead of being overly critical of yourself, adopt more realistic thoughts.

Keep a sense of perspective

However overwhelming events are, they are usually short-lived.

Problem solve as you go along

Don't store or bottle stuff up in the hope someone else will deal with it.

Be more flexible

Accept that things change and your plans may sometimes need to be altered or scrapped.

Change the way you approach new or difficult tasks

View them as opportunities for learning and growth. Being negative can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Confidence leads to success.

Don't worry about "losing face" by asking for

help

Others can offer a different view on a problem, and can help you reach your end goal more quickly.

Develop strong personal and work relationships

Having a strong support network to fall back on increases your resistance to stress.



Worried about your mental health? Speak to the chain of command, a doctor, welfare officer, medic, padre or SSAFA Forcesline on 0800 731 4880 (UK). You can also log on to www.bigwhitewall.com for support.

Sepsis

What you should know

⚠ What to do:

Seek medical advice immediately from NHS 111 if you are showing possible early signs of sepsis – especially if you've recently had an infection or injury.

If it becomes severe the body can go into septic shock when blood pressure drops to a dangerously low level. This is a medical emergency. If you think you or someone in your care could have this condition **go straight to A&E or call 999.**

Did you know?

Sepsis is sometimes referred to as septicaemia or blood poisoning, although these terms actually refer to the invasion of bacteria into the blood stream.

What is it?

A rare but serious complication of an infection in which the body attacks its own tissues.

It can lead to multiple organ failure, loss of limbs and death.

Who is at risk?

Anyone is susceptible but young children, old people and those whose immune systems are impaired, or who have recently had surgery or been injured are most at risk.

What to look out for:

Symptoms can be hard to spot and easily confused with illnesses like flu, gastroenteritis or chest infections.

Early signs for older children and adults include a high or low body temperature, chills and a fast heartbeat and breathing. Children under five and babies may also develop a rash that doesn't fade when pressed, be lethargic, vomit repeatedly, be unwilling to feed, stop urinating or experience convulsions.



REMEMBER this acronym and seek urgent medical help if you develop any of the following symptoms:

Slurred speech or confusion

Extrême shivering or muscle pain

Passing no urine (in a day)

Severe breathlessness

It feels like you're going to die

Skin mottled or discoloured

In numbers:



250,000

the approximate number of cases in the UK, annually



37,000

deaths on average every year in England

Pictures: FreePik

■ For further information visit:
www.sepsistrust.org

Smashingly simple

Too much on your plate? Ditch the fad diets and stick to this simple rundown of what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet...

► IN general, a good daily diet should include the following:



Plenty of starchy foods (such as bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, oats)



Plenty of fruit and vegetables



2 to 3 portions of milk/dairy



2 to 3 portions of non-dairy sources of protein (such as meat, fish, nuts, soy)



At least 6 to 8 glasses of water

■ Advice taken from the Defence Nutrition Advisory Service. Download the full guide online or email navyinm-emsdnas@mod.uk

Fat	Sugar	Salt	Alcohol
%	%	%	%

Over the limit?
Remember to cut back on foods and drinks that are high in fat, sugar, and salt. As well as booze. If in doubt – check the label.

► NEXT STEP

Pack a

Leadership

A disciplined and confident approach to leading teams is something Service personnel can bring to the commercial world to great effect.

Drive

Soldiers are required to be task- and results-orientated to motivate the team around them. Roles in the military can change every 12 to 18 months, meaning troops are constantly taking in new information, learning and adapting.

Communication

Clear and concise comms are vital across all Armed Forces to ensure operations run smoothly, and this translates across most industries.

Service ethos

Integrity, honesty and responsibility are core values in the Army. Being willing to learn, with a can-do attitude to hard work is something that will serve you well in most civvy street roles.

Comradeship

Whether it's being a team player looking out for your colleagues, or a leader considering different ways to approach a task, being able to connect different opinions into one positive direction is a must in most military roles. And something civilian employers will want to hear about.

■ Tips provided by John Chantry (ex-Scots DG), vice president at Barclays Investment Bank and manager of the Veteran Employment Transition Support programme

Want a knockout CV?
Get these buzzwords
on there and open
civvy street's eyes to
the skills the Army has
given you

The lie of the land

With concerns about the GPS signal being taken down by enemy action, practising navigation skills with a map and compass is a necessity. Here, orienteering coach Maj Bernie Fowler (AAC) gives some advice on finding your way

Prepare properly

Before you set off make sure you **work through your checklist** – and don't let anything distract you.

Read the relief

Take time to **understand the scale and symbols** because they will vary from map to map. Read the contours – what is up, what is down and the height of the peaks. In your planning think in terms of identifying an easy-to-find "attack point" to head for and then plan your route.

Trust your compass

This is very important. You need to look at the map, work out what you can see and **make sure you orientate the compass properly**. Do not try to make the map fit the ground.

Don't fear getting lost

If you find yourself lost then stop and take a breather. If necessary, **relocate to a known point** where you were happy with your progress, go back to your map and compass and reorientate.

Pace yourself

Knowing how many paces you take for each 100 metres can really pay dividends. During your preparations **conduct a count on the flat, and on uphill and downhill gradients** because this will help you work out crucial information relating to speed, time and distance, especially when orienteering at night or over relatively featureless countryside.

Practice makes perfect

Make sure you practise regularly. **Using a map and compass is a life skill**. Satellite navigation is not something you are always going to be able to rely on. Orienteering training is available in the Army as a course and competitively at all levels.



'You bring a great deal back to your military work'

Troops deployed to fight the Ebola outbreak in Africa faced a personal battle against a deadly infection – and the operation has continued to affect their work ever since, reflects Reservist doctor Lt Col Tom Trinick (RAMC) of 204 Field Hospital

It was a deployment where I learned to wash my hands like I had never washed them before.

You had to be scrupulous about your hygiene in Sierra Leone.

Ebola is a virus that is easily transmittable. If it finds its way into your body, you have a really serious problem.

Being deployed as a doctor was both restricting and stressful. But it was when we came home that a real sense of anxiety started for some of our team.

We were put into a loose form of quarantine, which was psychologically difficult. Ebola has a 21-day incubation period. We were all issued with thermometers and told to phone our temperatures to Public Health England every day.

There's not much else you can do other than keep going.

But as a result of the experience I am now far more aware of people's fear of illness – your role is to help keep your patients calm, and I have more empathy with them now.

You bring a great deal back to your military work from this type of situation. The protocols you hone can also help you develop transferrable skills for other environments – particularly, for example,

when you are dealing with CBRN threats.

Sierra Leone was extremely testing. I'm a consultant in general medicine and chemical pathology, and deployed on Op Gritrock near Freetown a few years ago.

You had a real sense of vulnerability in Africa and it really hit home when a nurse in our own team contracted the illness – fortunately she was well treated, evacuated and went on to recover after being flown back to the UK.

But it had been a tense time for all of us, particularly as we had already seen what Ebola could do.

People tend to think of the disease as a haemorrhagic fever.

But this is only part of its effect. It starts off like flu and in the end your organs start packing up. You can expect fits, crashing blood pressure and loss of kidney function as your vital systems shut down.

The situation was complicated for us because malaria is also a hazard in Sierra Leone, and its symptoms can be remarkably similar to Ebola when they first appear.

In any area where the risk of contamination is rife, you must be well prepared at the start and your drills sound.

We had strict rules governing our day-to-day life out there. Where possible, we stayed within the camp to minimise contact with local people.

The team had to find effective ways of keeping up morale. Our padre had an important part to play here and my exercise regime – running – also helped.

Op Gritrock was a really testing time for all of us, but we learned a great deal from the deployment and the team are the richer for having the experience.

I'm glad about the habits I picked up, in particular that I wash my hands so often – it goes to prove that, ultimately, good personal hygiene can save lives”



Be a *GOOD* landlord

Worried about the snags of letting out a property? Here are some words of wisdom



► IF you own a house and you want to rent it out, there is lots to know. The industry has never been more heavily regulated, so making the move involves far more work than simply finding a tenant. Ele Wolstenholme, Army spouse and director of Welcome Homes Property Solutions, has the following checklist for any personnel thinking of handing over their keys while deployed or on assignment...



Sort the paperwork

You're not allowed to advertise your property without an energy performance certificate and, legally, you must provide tenants with a copy of this before they sign an agreement. Visit www.epcregister.com to see if your property already has one. You also need to make sure tenants have a copy of the government's *How to Rent* guide, available on www.gov.uk

Check out the tenants

Landlords can face unlimited fines – and a prison sentence – if they don't ensure their tenants are allowed to reside in the UK. Make sure you carry out a "right to rent" document check on everyone and not just the main tenant.

Take a deposit

It's always a good idea to do this before anyone moves in. This safeguards against the cost of any damage caused during the tenancy. However, landlords are required by law to protect this money in an approved tenancy deposit scheme. If you fail to protect the deposit within 30 days of receiving it, the court may award the tenant up to three times this amount in compensation.

Leave them to it

Some landlords wrongly believe that because they own a house they can enter it at any time. But when you grant a tenancy, you are granting a legal interest in the property so you must follow the law when gaining access. If a landlord tries to illegally evict a tenant they can face a prison sentence and a hefty fine.

Stay safe

This is probably the most obvious responsibility, but what does it involve? You definitely need a landlord's gas safety certificate, and the tenant needs to have seen this before moving in. Fully functional smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are also a must. All electrical wiring, installations and appliances need to be safe, and any furniture should meet minimum fire safety requirements.



Get full advice

This is not an exhaustive list, and there are different rules for houses of multiple occupation. If you want to let out a property speak to a specialist or get a professional agent to do it on your behalf.

IT'S a sad fact of life that some species fail to survive when their habitat changes rapidly, and that's exactly what happened to the much-loved AgustaWestland Lynx.

In the space of a few short years the battle space morphed from analogue to digital, and the Army Air Corps' trusty old workhorse didn't make the cut.

As a result, its successor – the Wildcat – was designed from the outset to be the king of the electronic jungle, a platform that could use an array of cutting-edge kit to fight, communicate, coordinate and see the combat zone more clearly than just about anything else on the ground or in the sky.

The platform formally entered service in 2014 but it has yet to be tested where it counts, on an operational deployment.

That will change in April, however, when 661 Squadron, 1 Regiment Army Air Corps travels from its base at RNAS Yeovilton to Estonia to support Nato's enhanced forward presence.

Four platforms, along with a supporting ground crew and experts from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, will head for Estonia, where they will support the country's defence forces alongside the 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh battlegroup in Tapa (*Soldier*, February).

"We learnt in the autumn that we would be deploying so there's been a considerable amount to do in a relatively short period of time," Maj Alex Rivett (AAC, pictured below), officer commanding 661 Squadron, explained.

"However, we are well prepared as we have been on a high-readiness footing

since April 2017.

"Last year we also prepared ourselves at short notice to support Op Ruman in the Caribbean, although we weren't eventually required there."

The squadron geared up for its deployment by travelling to Spadeadam in Cumbria for electronic warfare training and Kirkcudbright in Scotland for a live-firing package with door gunners operating their .50-calibre M3M machine guns.

As a result, the formation's air and ground crews are now itching to put their abilities to the test in Eastern Europe.

"I can't quite believe I'm getting a tour to Estonia so early in my career," commented Cpl Roan Botes (AAC, pictured overleaf), an aircrewman who joined the unit in January straight out of conversion training at RAF Shawbury and RNAS Yeovilton.

"The Wildcat is a complex aircraft and my role is more demanding than it was on the Lynx; we help pilots plan the routes, assemble the map pack which acts as a backup if the digital equipment fails, and carry out checks and drills as an essential part of the crew.

"I can't wait to employ all those skills during what will be a proper deployment."

LCpl William Dimmock (REME), a class two aircraft technician, added: "The Estonia mission has given everyone here a real boost – it feels like we're doing something important; it's exactly why we joined the service.

"We all want to see what Wildcat will be like to use and maintain in real operational conditions."

The squadron will have plenty of opportunity



ON THE





Wildcat's
technology
is set to be
unleashed
in Estonia



The cat's whiskers: A gunner firing a .50-calibre M3M machine gun from a Wildcat Mk 1 during a 1 AAC live-firing exercise at Kirkcudbright, Scotland



It allows us to be
reconnaissance
specialists for
the wider Army



for doing just that as the tour is due to last around four months.

During that time they'll not only be supporting the Estonians and The Royal Welsh in training, but plugging into a major annual Nato serial, Exercise Sabre Strike, which spans Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania and involves the armed forces of around 20 nations.

"The Estonians have only four Robinson 22 light helicopters in their fleet so they're really excited about us bringing a cutting-edge platform such as Wildcat to provide air support," said Maj Rivett.

The squadron won't be hoping to impress only the locals, however.

"Many of our own ground forces are not fully aware of Wildcat's many capabilities yet," added the officer.

"Our sensors and mission systems mean that we can operate well ahead of other assets feeding back critical information instantaneously."

In fact, Wildcat's impressive communications and recon capabilities mean it has the potential to be the controlling platform for air and ground forces.

"The aircrew are trained reconnaissance pilots who have the ability to read the situation and direct ground-based weapons or aerial assets like Apaches and F-35s to prosecute targets,"



explained Maj Rivett.

"In Estonia we want to demonstrate those sorts of abilities to our own commanders and prove they do not need to see what the aircrew can see in order to trust their judgement.

"It's not a big leap from what we have always trained to deliver, but the Wildcat capability allows us to be reconnaissance specialists for the wider Army".

Whether this ambition will be achieved in one deployment remains to be seen but there will be more than one bite of the cherry because 659 Squadron, 1 Regiment's other operational Wildcat unit that was formed in January, will deploy to Estonia in 12 months' time.

Over the course of these two missions the helicopter's aircrews will be presented with a rare opportunity to demonstrate its full potential in conditions that are as

close to real combat as they can be without actually firing a weapon in anger.

More importantly, they will also be able to show that, far from falling victim to a new environment, Wildcat could actually be the driver of change as divisional and brigade-level forces start to realise the full extent of its many capabilities. ■



- Infrared camera, stabilised electro-optical camera, laser designator and range finder to mark targets

- Integrated global positioning and inertial navigation system

- Mission planning system includes mission orders, tactical airspace information, meteorological and geographical data.

This enables sorties to be planned for single or multiple platforms. The plans can be rehearsed in either 2D or 3D.


- CTS800 engines, giving greatly improved hot and high altitude performance over Lynx
- Four LCD integrated display units that integrate core avionics, communications and navigation systems
- Cursor control device for the display and management of tactical views and control of the sensor suite
- Thales Avionics secure communications control system featuring VHF, UHF and HF radios



- A pintle-mounted general-purpose machine gun or M3M heavy machine gun
- Integrated defensive aids system
- Radar warning receiver and defensive aids system controller
- Missile warning system
- Countermeasures dispensing system (chaff and flare launcher)
- Ability to interact with the Bowman network, exchanging secure voice and data communications

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

The technology troops in Estonia will have at their disposal



THE FIGHT FOR FULL SCREW

Airborne gunners eye
promotion in Welsh hills

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main

» STEPPING up as a military leader can be a daunting task at the best of times. But when you're doing it in a bleak and inhospitable environment – with no rank over the men you command – the challenges may seem insurmountable. Luckily, these lance bombardiers of 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery are a determined bunch.

If they get promoted at the end of this week's junior NCO leadership course, they will have successfully faced off some of the toughest soldiering conditions to be found on the UK training estate – the cold, windy and boggy expanses of Sennybridge Training Area.

"These guys have shown outstanding grit and determination," Capt Phil Wright, the officer in charge of the package, tells *Soldier* as the troops move into their final exercise.

"The weather has been truly awful at stages.

"We are trying to create an environment that mirrors the conditions we might get in theatre. And Sennybridge presents opportunities that are almost impossible to mimic anywhere else, with uneven terrain and unpredictable weather."

He explains how the course's 20 hopefuls have been taking turns to write a set of battle orders and lead in their execution.

"In normal life you hold rank above the soldiers you lead, but here you're with mates of the same rank," he says.

"That changes the dynamic – many challenges are presented by giving these guys responsibility among their peers."

For LBdr Ben Pinkney (pictured overleaf), this element in particular has been a test of character.

"Working with guys of the same rank has been tough," he admits.

"It's harder to make sure they listen to what you want them to do, like they would automatically for a one-up rank.

"You need to start off strong from the very beginning, and change your tone so they know you're there to stay."

After getting through initial education and live-firing phases, troops are spending five days in the field – where a hostile Mother Nature is serving up a cold and callous reminder that sound admin is every bit as important as good battle orders and the estimate processes.

Out here, wet and dry drills could be the difference between success and failure.

Ambushes, patrols and survival challenges are all on the menu too, before a final exercise tests the troops on everything they have learnt.

Today, the participants are busy clearing a valley of enemy fighters played by phase two recruits from 24 (Irish) Battery RA at Larkhill.

Some of those on the course may not be eligible to promote for another two years, but by getting experiences like this under their belts early the regiment hopes to nurture strong leadership for the future.

And all the better if that is done while developing their basic infantry skills.

Capt Wright explains why.

"It's all about putting ourselves in the best position to support manoeuvre arms," he says.

"Some regiments get troops to deliver presentations or lessons on this course, but we like to put them under pressure.





"Potentially, our role means we are going to be isolated for long periods with no real support or logistical chain.

"So robustness in arduous conditions is critical, and the infantry model is a great way to teach them basic leadership.

"It is stressful, high impact and unpredictable, with lots of fatigue.

"They learn a huge amount about themselves, and it's about building that experience, and looking back one day to say 'this isn't as bad as that time we were in Sennybridge'.

"When you don't have active operations, you have to manufacture these scenarios to build an understanding of the demands that has, mentally and physically."

But excelling on this course does not mean soldiers will automatically be promoted; eyes are on them all-year-round.

"The lads could come here and be amazing, but if they are rubbish in their daily life they won't be selected," Capt Wright adds.

"For example, someone might be ninja at certain aspects of soldiering, but then be a little bit lazy when he thinks no one's looking."

They don't know it yet, but one of these students is destined for an immediate promotion when the Sennybridge stint is over.

"That will be huge," Capt Wright smiles. "To get to the end, have that sense of real achievement, and then get promoted in front of our brigade deputy commander."

But for now, the worthy recipient is none the wiser as he soldiers on through bogs and marshes – unaware of the brilliant reward that lies in wait for him. ■



“
You need to
start off strong
from the very
beginning
”

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Much is at stake for the wannabe bombardiers... and the weather won't stop them

» "THESE guys are fiercely proud of being airborne soldiers," Capt Phil Wright explains as the sun makes a rare appearance from behind the clouds while troops clear through a marsh-riddled valley in Sennybridge.

"They have a strong aspiration to promote, and they really thrive on the pressures of the regiment and 16 Air Assault Brigade."

For LBdr Adam Duncan, the conditions have been "emotional" – and a big step up from the potential NCO course he did this time last year.

"A lot of the battle has been with the elements," the soldier says.

"It's about mind over matter – making sure your admin and drills are squared away. If they aren't, you're going to be no use in lessons let alone the field.

"I am normally the brigade commander's driver so this is completely out of my comfort zone. But I came to get stuck in."

LBdr Connor Stevens is in no doubt the course's lessons have already made him a better soldier.

"It's the organisation – trying to take control of the situation and knowing when to move," he explains.

Whatever the promotion outcome, these troops will certainly be taking fresh lessons and new skill sets back to the day job.



HEADS of SHED

Troops join veterans and civvies in show of biker solidarity

MOTORCYCLE-MAD soldiers and civvies have been learning some new tricks from each other in an exciting project that is uniting the two communities.

Based at Chetwynd Barracks, Chilwell, the Forces Bike Shed has been going from strength to strength since it was launched with a cash windfall three years ago.

The brainchild of bikers Pat Machin and Nigel Atkin, it is a place where members can trade stories about their hobby and learn more about maintaining their vehicles.

Machin – a retired paramedic – and former civil servant Atkin had taken part in the Ride to the Wall to the National Memorial Arboretum. They wanted to do something to bring military and civvy bikers closer together.

The pair approached Lt Col Stu Wiles – who was then CO of the local Personnel Recovery Unit – with their idea and he secured a hanger on the barracks to host the shed and an Armed Forces Covenant grant to launch the project.

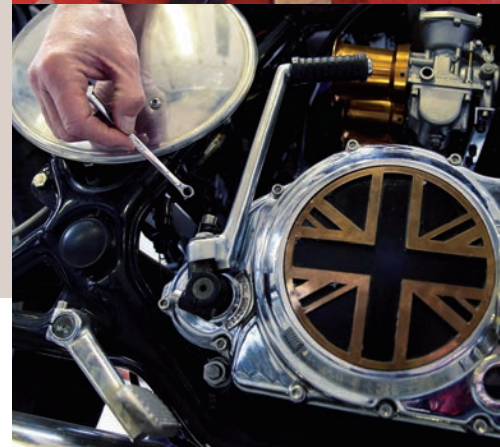
Now retired, Wiles (ex-LD) remains chairman of the initiative and said it continues to bring people together.

"We now have many regulars attending our Wednesday and Saturday meetings, and are still growing," he told *Soldier*.

"It is great to see the interest from our local community.

"Motorcycling is something we can all enjoy together – serving Armed Forces members, veterans and civilians." ■

Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Graene Main Icons: FreePik





Get in touch
www.forcesbikeshed.com
 @Forces_BikeShed

SENIOR SADDLEMAN

At 80 years old, Les Hooley is the most senior biker at Chilwell. A veteran of the The Life Guards, he has been riding since he was 16. The former cavalryman spent his 78th birthday with his beloved Triumph touring the Somme battlefield. "The Bike Shed members are good company," he said.



Forces Bike Shed in numbers

Launched in
2015

80 Age of the oldest veteran member

£6,000

Cash grant that launched the scheme

SIX Ongoing projects at the site

50 Regular attendees

20 Bikes currently in the shed

FIRST

RESPONSE

Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Robbie Hodgson and MoD

Northern Ireland's
part-time troops
are providing
valuable skills
in support of
operations

IT WAS a focal point for service for generations of courageous men and women – the Northern Ireland Troubles were characterised by individuals who risked all to protect others.

In the 1970s, 80s and 90s the country could be deadly. With terrorists targeting volunteers in communities on- and off-duty, those in uniform found themselves in the line of fire. Scores were killed and injured in the most brutal years of the Op Banner campaign.



“
Our teams
punch well
above their
weight
”

More than a decade has passed since this 38-year operation ended and Northern Ireland is now a more peaceful place. But the experience of those who served in the likes of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and Royal Irish Home Service battalions is still present – providing a backbone of the potent Army Reserve based throughout the country.

Working with Regular counterparts, there are several specialist units around the region. As well as using their skills to provide capabilities such as medical support and front-line fuel supply,

many troops have years of operational experience at their core.

“I think there is a strong military ethos in Northern Ireland, which is deeply embedded in communities,” Col Mark Sheridan (pictured below), an anaesthetist and CO of Belfast-based 204 Field Hospital, told *Soldier*. “And the Reserve service is backed by unusually supportive employers.

“Obviously we have seen the years of the Troubles but I think the positive attitude towards serving actually goes back a long way before. People across Northern Ireland are unfailingly passionate; they like to do things professionally and they really enjoy their soldiering.”

Col Sheridan is typical of many locals who still thrive in the Army. A former member of the UDR and 9th (County Antrim) Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment – one of the Home Service battalions disbanded in 2006 – he has significant experience.

“Although my Royal Irish service was part-time, it was unique in the sense that we essentially worked as Regulars,” the officer added. “I enjoyed it and made a lot of friends.”

However, Col Sheridan went on to point out that the military has moved on from the days of the Troubles. He stressed that recruiting from across all communities in Northern Ireland provides a formidable wealth of talent. In addition, there is a sizeable number of Reservists from the Republic.

He is also convinced that the attitude of the area's employers is crucial to the success of Reserve soldiering, highlighting that local National Health Service chiefs had given strong backing to his 200-strong regiment.

“We have built really good relationships with them,” Col Sheridan added. “They are positive about people going on operations and appreciate the skills they bring back to civilian life. As a result, our small medical teams are able to punch well above their weight.”



In numbers: Northern Ireland Reservists

2.5%

of the UK population
is in the region

1 in 5

Reservists at the
height of Herrick were
from NI

70%

of the Army Reserve is based there



Mission ready: Members of 204 Field Hospital train in York. Troops from the unit have deployed on operations across the world



"I have been on Op Herrick in Afghanistan – other members of the unit have helped to deal with the serious Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone (page 30) among other deployments.

"We are representative of Northern Ireland's populace as well as having strong retention rates. A lot of our guys are older, experienced and have been around for a very long time."

Maj George McFarland – a spokesman with the Reservist 2nd Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment – also believed there was a strong service ethos throughout the region.

A former soldier who served with the UDR during the Troubles, he highlighted that the personnel in his battalion had years of operational experience between them.

"When I signed up during the late 1970s it was to protect life – the same was true of many others," he added. "But this is all very much evident in those volunteering today.

"We have people here who were on Op Banner – and those coming in generally have family or relations who have served on Regular or Home Service battalions. A few have no other connection to the military but there are not many of them."

Commitment to public service certainly appears to be a constant in Northern Ireland. With Reservists from all elements of the country's communities serving, the dynamic is positive – and their skill sets are benefiting a raft of important capabilities.

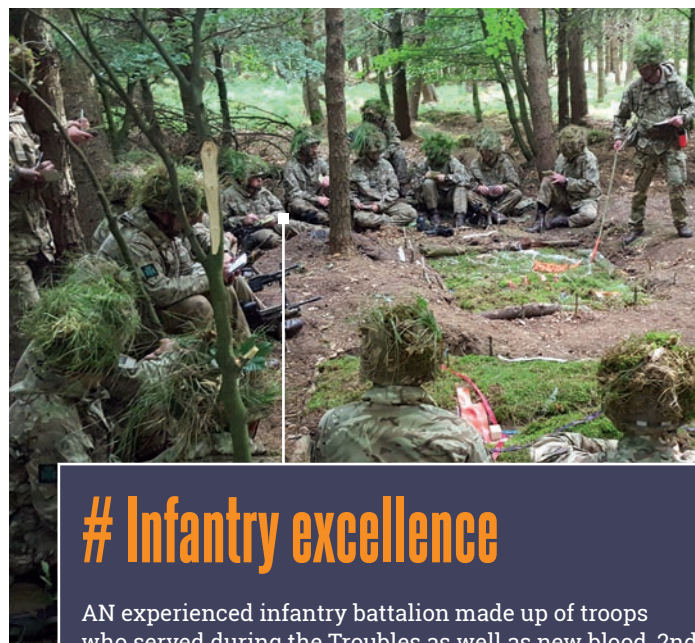
With crucial operational experience under their belts, the contribution of these soldiers is not to be underestimated. Pound for pound, they continue to punch well above their weight. ■

SMALL WONDERS

NORTHERN Ireland's small population makes a huge contribution when it comes to the Army Reserve – with a range of units providing capabilities to underpin operations.

Drawn from all elements of the region's communities and with the strong backing of employers, troops are involved in activities ranging from managing fuel to cutting-edge infantry work.

With a strong ethos of service clearly embedded in the volunteers, *Soldier* got a snapshot of the skills and experience on offer during a recent visit...



Infantry excellence

AN experienced infantry battalion made up of troops who served during the Troubles as well as new blood, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment is continuing to show its mettle around the world.

Having been involved in Afghanistan, the soldiers have more recently turned their attention to passing on their experience to counterparts in Eastern Europe including the Ukraine and Moldova.

Maj George McFarland said the unit would expand in future, continuing to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community.

But he emphasised that the rich heritage of the antecedent regiments was also important – and that veterans of campaigns past remained a vital part of the military family.

Maj McFarland added: "We are one of the biggest Army Reserve battalions in the UK."



Getting technical

BUILDING strong relationships with employers in Northern Ireland – and an emphasis on developing skills that can be transferred to civvy street – are key to the success of the Reserve in Northern Ireland.

Maj Mark Brotherston, officer commanding 157 Divisional Support Company, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers said many businesses saw the value of allowing staff to volunteer in the military.

He commented: “Ultimately, we believe that the uptake of Reserve service is adding to Northern Ireland PLC – it is a small place and we are looking to contribute to the economy.

“Several REME personnel served during the years of Op Banner but we are now seeing soldiers who were not on the deployment – and are very much influenced by Afghanistan.”

Maj Brotherston said 157 Company now represented the REME Reserve in Northern Ireland – the corps’ presence has been consolidated into the unit in recent years.

As well as packing a punch in terms of operational experience its troops – who are drawn from across the region’s communities – have been involved in a raft of projects benefiting people living in Northern Ireland. They also work as ambassadors for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Fuel for thought

A SPECIALIST unit dedicated to keeping fellow soldiers moving has been proving its potential after going through an extraordinary transformation over the past three years.

The Reservists from 152 (North Irish) Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps are unique, being the only group of soldiers dedicated to handing fuel and moving it to where it is needed in the field.

With its heart at Palace Barracks in Belfast, the unit is continuing to develop its capabilities and will be rehearsing interoperability with American allies at Fort Stewart, Georgia, later in 2018.

The regiment’s adjutant Capt Toby Hartle highlighted that making the changes in a relatively short time had been a significant achievement.

Just a decade ago it was responsible for military ambulances before moving to more general transport duties.

Capt Hartle emphasised: “We reached full operating capability in October last year and the unit is now the largest single entity of petroleum operators in the British Army.”

The regiment packs a punch for its relatively modest size. Built around four squadrons – two of which operate tankers – its personnel can be called on to support operations and exercises where needed.

Using the joint operational fuel system, which effectively unpacks to create a deployable liquid bunker, the soldiers have an impressive reach, pushing well forward to assist their colleagues at the front.

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'This is not professional'

I WAS alarmed by the British Army's recruitment video, where a young soldier stops marching on patrol to carry out his prayers.

In my opinion this is a breach of the Army service test that we all abide by as well as elements of current military annual training test regulations.

How are we to keep command and control when there are advertisements such as this suggesting that it's fine to stop a patrol, remove your personal protective equipment, drink from an unknown water source and carry out prayer while the rest of the patrol look on and even turn off their radio so as not to disturb the young man?

This is not total professionalism.

Surely there are better ways to show the Army's policies of equality, diversity and inclusion than this. – **Name and address supplied**

Maj Michael Mahoney, SO2 Marketing, Recruiting Group, replies: The current recruiting environment is uniquely challenging, with a reducing population, changing demographics, and the lowest unemployment levels for 40 years.

Additionally, the Army is seen by many to be intimidating, unobtainable and populated by negative stereotypes.

With that in mind, the current recruiting campaign is designed to demonstrate that the modern British Army is tolerant, respectful, fair and human, and that it supports you physically and mentally.

Consequently, all the adverts feature real Servicemen and women in scenarios that represent their

experiences of military life.

The clip that you refer to shows a team of soldiers during a tactical pause on exercise. They use the halt to attend to some personal administration, which includes taking the opportunity to pray.

Before the individual does this, he performs the special pre-prayer ablutions, known as wudhu, which includes washing the mouth, rather than drinking.

Tactical pauses on an exercise are the decision of the commander on the ground; he or she decides what level of personal administration is appropriate for the scenario.

In this instance, it obviously includes the decision to allow a soldier to remove his protective gear – just as on other occasions it might include a decision to make a brew – although if you look carefully you will notice the tactical positioning of sentries.

There is no breach of training regulations or the service test, real or implied.

Indeed, I would argue the opposite: the advert shows a practical demonstration of the Army's commitment to its values and standards by illustrating the team's respect for others.

It also represents the Army Leadership Code, which states, "teams that embrace diversity... are always stronger for it".

Therefore, far from undermining the commander, it shows her actively exercising command and control, with a demonstration of effective and inclusive leadership that we should all aspire to.

I was alarmed by the recruitment video

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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 🐦 [@soldiermagazine](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine)

USING ART TO ESCAPE THE DARK

● WE have heard lots about the negatives surrounding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) but I recently met a veteran whose experience of this condition has driven him to produce some incredible works of art.

Walt Freudenau is a former Royal Artillery soldier who made a stunning contribution to a civic project in Macclesfield that is to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War.

His transformation of a conference room into a trench overlooking a battlefield (pictured below) is incredible.

Walt told me he finds comfort and solace from his creative work and that if he gets into a dark place he throws himself into his art and it really helps.

"Otherwise I'm just a typical squaddie who wishes he was back with the lads," he said.

I hope his example shows other sufferers that as dark as life can get away from the Service, there is always something that can help.

– Cpl Mark Pattison, MPGS



GOT A GRIPE? GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST

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BMI is not fit for purpose

THE popular image of a British soldier is one of near-perfect physical prowess and the Army's high physical standards help reinforce this.

However, it is becoming increasingly common for personnel to receive Army general administrative action (AGAI) due to their body mass index (BMI) being too high, regardless of their physical ability.

Admittedly, weight gain is a national problem – with almost two-thirds of the UK's population reportedly being overweight or obese.

But I recently came across a warrant officer who completes all his mandatory annual fitness tests (putting some younger soldiers to shame), but due to his height and build has a BMI above the so-called normal level.

This has resulted in him receiving an AGAI and given three months to reduce his body mass – he has been ordered to attend remedial physical training.

The problem with this type of action is that it could cause severe negative effects such as eating disorders, which can produce an array of other physical, mental and emotional issues.

These could follow certain individuals far beyond their Army careers.

What can be done to help people like this and how can we change the old "too fat to fight" mindset within our higher echelons? – Name and address supplied

Dr Nicola Sides, SO2 Health Psychology (Lifestyles), Army Headquarters, replies: The first thing to acknowledge is the difference between BMI and body composition measurement (BCM).

Caution should be exercised when using the former as it does not relate to fatness or distribution of fat, which is linked to health risk.

Being a soldier is a physically demanding occupation so when using this indicator some personnel can be classified as overweight due to their muscle mass.

This is why the Armed Forces follow National Institute for Health and Care Excellence best practice guidelines and use BCM as a rule, which also takes into consideration the waist circumference.

We do this because part of the Army's duty of care is to look after its soldiers' health.

An increased BCM measurement not only puts an individual at a higher risk of suffering physical and mental health issues but also of medical downgrading.

It indicates a greater likelihood of increased medical care costs in the future and a reduced ability to work. These have serious implications for both the individual and the Army.

With regards to treatment, you assume that by asking a person to reduce their weight they are at risk of developing an eating disorder but this is very rarely the case. Such a condition usually stems from a mental health issue not from changing behaviour with regard to diet and exercise.

However, it shouldn't be ignored so when advice is offered it's important to use the appropriate language such as "reaching a healthy BCM" rather than weight loss. This can give personnel a target to reach rather than seeking continual losses.

The Army should always use BCM rather than BMI to assess an individual's health risk and respond in accordance with the Armed Forces weight management policy.

“
It could
cause
negative
effects
”



“I’m left out of pocket”

Feeling the blues on tailoring

AFTER commissioning from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst young officers receive a grant that supposedly covers the cost of tailoring and clothing purchases before they arrive at their regiment.

But there is no loan scheme for number ones or blues tunics.

I have been in regiment for two-and-a-half years and while I have worn my mess dress (for which I did receive a loan) about eight times, I have worn my blues twice a week as orderly officer and every single day when numbers of my

colleagues are low.

There is no option to wear our multi-terrain pattern clothing or number twos.

Captains who are posted to Sandhurst as platoon commanders do receive a grant for blues, however – presumably because a lot of cap badges don’t require them while at regiment.

Why then can this grant not be extended? I wear mine far more than a platoon commander at Sandhurst does but unlike them I’m left out of pocket.

I’m a cavalry officer and there is a notion that we are made of money but

£1,000 for a piece of uniform that others get a grant for feels a bit harsh. – [Name and address supplied](#)

Lt Col (retd) Kestrel Simson, Ceremonial and Operational and Service Awards, Army Headquarters, replies: On commissioning both Regular and Reserve officers receive an initial outfit grant (IOG) which they can use to purchase uniforms and associated accoutrements.

This is because the Army requires them to be worn when ordered but they are uneconomic to provide as issued items.

These include regimental mess dress and items to complete the number two dress uniform, such as hats, belts and shoes.

The IOG is not intended to provide a number one dress (blues) jacket to all officers.

I am aware that some regiments, particularly cavalry, do require their orderly officers to wear this outfit for their evening duties but there is nothing in Queen’s Regulations or other Army policy documents that states they have to.

It is therefore a regimental requirement, not an Army one. The Service cannot provide grants or loans to cover the traditions or styles of individual regiments.

When the Army does require personnel to wear number one dress, such as officers posted to Sandhurst, military advisers to senior officers or Corps of Army Music musicians, the Service provides either an additional grant or issues the uniform.

‘WHY AM I CHARGED MORE FOR THE SAME PROPERTY?’

● RANKS from private to corporal pay the same rate for single living accommodation (SLA), as do NCOs and warrant officers.

But junior and field officers pay different rates, with majors like myself (and those above) paying an extra £489 for grade one accommodation, despite often living in the same type and size of housing as those paying less.

So why are we being charged more for nothing? Effectively this extra payment amounts to a rank-specific levy on my salary. – [Name and address supplied](#)

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head of Personal Services, responds: The daily charge for accommodation and utilities is not based on rank but on the type and grade of the room you

occupy, and SLA type is determined by several factors including room size.

Service personnel are generally provided with accommodation based on their eligibility by rank.

However, if there is pressure on accommodation this housing can be allocated on availability, in which case the charge raised is that for the grade of room occupied.

If you have been allocated a junior officer’s type of SLA as opposed to a senior officer’s suite, then you should be paying for the room you are in – the £489 you refer to is the difference between the two.

If you believe you are being incorrectly charged, contact your unit administration staff.



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68	Christ's Hospital Sch	57%
81	Monmouth School	55%
	Cheltenham College	55%
85	Bromsgrove School	54%
	Dauntsey's School	50%
	Dean Close School	49%
114	Kingswood School	48%
143	Kingham Hill School	45%
	Monkton Combe	42%
	Gordon's School	36%
	King's School Bruton	34%
	Welbeck College	34%
239	King's Coll Taunton	31%
	Stamford School	30%
	Millfield School	25%
	Barnard Castle School	21%
271	Licensed Vict Ascot	16%

If you made a list, the same reasons would keep appearing. We think the list might include: happy children, top ten academics a personalised approach, top quality teachers with specialised expertise, good discipline, latest technology and superb facilities, excellent pastoral care, amazing sport, first class boarding accommodation, diverse experience, small classes, university success, excellent career prospects and first class confidence and self assurance. If you want the best for your child, and to stand a chance of achieving most of this list, we believe you would need to pick one of the top 10 UK Independent boarding schools as ranked by the Daily Telegraph. BUT, most importantly of all, we unashamedly also offer TLC - tender, loving care!



UK's Top 20 Independent Schools 2017 - % A*/A A-Level (Daily Telegraph)

Ranking of Schools taking boarders

Nationally Ranking all type schools		
		% A* / A A-Level
1	1	Cardiff Sixth Form College 91%
	2	Perse School, Cambridge 87%
2	3	Westminster School, London 86%
	4	King's College School (KCS) 86%
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On course for eviction notice

WITH very real retention issues facing the Armed Forces, isn't it time a more informed approach is taken on housing?

As a unit welfare warrant officer I have dealt with numerous difficulties in this area, but one stands out – retaining Service family accommodation (SFA) when spouses are on educational courses.

JSP 464 states that this housing should continue to be available when there is a realistic expectation the course will be completed during their soldier's current posting, but many assignments of senior NCOs and above are set at three years or less.

So if their partners undertake a three-

year university degree where does that leave them?

Some courses are transferrable but many others are not.

A colleague of mine recently fell foul of this policy and received an aggressively written 28-day eviction notice.

After contacting Occupancy Services he was told he could stay in his SFA as “non-entitled”, thus eliminating any home-to-duty expenses.

He was also told that if he did stay on he would have to do so at a continued 28-day notice to move, and would not get his removals paid for at the end.

I think we can all agree that these ultimatums are compelling and cause

“My colleague fell foul of the policy”

personnel to move, creating additional stress and unhappiness when faced with travel and child schooling issues.

– Name and address supplied

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head, Personal Services, responds: The key consideration is that the purpose of SFA, and the basis for the accommodation subsidy we receive, is to meet the need for mobile personnel rather than to provide geographic stability for spouses' education or careers.

Also, in many areas this housing is limited and every retention granted means that someone posted into that location may have to accept substitute Service family accommodation or SFA somewhere other than their new station.

This is why the criteria for retention of these properties is restricted (key stages of a child's education, another move within 11 months or on the basis of exceptional welfare need).

Allowing such a measure to also support spouses' education could lead to significant shortages in particular locations and unfairly disadvantage others.

That said, where it is possible we will try to support these aspirations.

For example, policy was amended three years ago so that where a spouse has started a course expecting to complete it during their serving partner's tour and he or she is posted early, retention of SFA can be granted.

And where availability permits, a licence to occupy this housing on a surplus basis can be granted.

Occupancy is on an eligible, not entitled, basis – meaning that a mid-assignment move at public expense would not ordinarily be covered.

However, in your colleague's case it should not lead to a loss of home-to-duty allowance; he should contact his unit administration office about this.

On receipt of an assignment order there is a requirement to submit an application for this housing, even if this is to formalise continued occupation of the same property when reassigned to the same location.

When personnel do not follow that process, they can be identified as an over-stayer, leading to receipt of a letter as your colleague did.

This is done to ensure maximum SFA availability for those posted into a given location.

‘WILL I ENDANGER MY PENSION BY LEAVING EARLY?’

● I HAVE served for more than 20 years on a versatile engagement (VEng) and am thinking of putting in a notice to terminate very shortly.

On JPA I can set a leaving date so that I can start my resettlement preparations.

However, my chain of command have told me I must wait until June 2018 when I will reach my 21-year point.

Is this correct and if so why is there an option on JPA to set your own termination date?

And if I put in my notice in now would I endanger my pension? – Name and address supplied

Maj Ali Smith, SO2 Soldier Policy, Army Headquarters, replies: As you joined the Army prior to 2005 you may have pensionable service on three schemes.

Certain benefits from these are only payable after completing

22 years' pensionable service, so before applying to leave you should confirm that you will receive the pension you expect.

Go to the website www.gov.uk/armed-forces-pension-calculator to get an estimate and download a pension forecast request (form 12).

This only provides a useful estimate so obtain a full forecast.

All Service personnel are entitled to one in any 12-month period free of charge.

Further assistance is also provided by the Forces Pension Society.

Once you are content with your entitlement, you can use JPA to apply for early termination.

There is a JPA self service user guide to assist you with this.

Entitlement to resettlement depends on length of service, with the full policy detailed in JSP 534.

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Ben Moore, Oakham, Leicestershire.



DIARY

March 13-31: *Soldier on*, performed by the Soldiers' Arts Academy, at the Playground Theatre, London. Written by veteran Jonathan Lewis, the play covers issues affecting those leaving the Forces. Visit www.theplaygroundtheatre.london for details and further tour dates.

April 29: New memorial stone to be unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum, dedicated to those who served in The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire and its antecedents The West Yorkshire Regiment and The East Yorkshire Regiment. Tickets available via the regimental association.

May 5: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo, in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, at King's Hall, Kingsway. Doors open at 1730. Tickets are £10 from Music Mania, Hanley on 01782 206000. Information on VIP packages available on 01952 674323.

May 22 and 27: Guided walk at the National Memorial Arboretum National Forest Walking Festival. Admission £3.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
0845 241 4820

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

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01252 311221; 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:
020 7469 6661

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

Combat Stress:
01372 841600;
www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

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

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901
www.felixfund.org.uk

Forcesline:
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
www.ngvfa.org.uk

Poppyscotland: 0131 557 2782;
www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058;
www.rfea.org.uk

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
0131 550 1583;
www.legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

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

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

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

Stoll:
020 7385 2110; info@stoll.org.uk;
www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400
www.nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star & 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

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



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information

Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 24/18: All arms and services late entry applications

ABN 23/18: Continuity of education allowance sixth form reapplication

ABN 22/18: Changes to Field Army C2 structures as a result of Broadway phase one

ABN 21/18: Flexible service available from 2019

ABN 20/18: The Army Dependents' Trust

ABN 19/18: The Army brand

ABN 18/18: Potential officer development programme

ABN 17/18: Grand Military Gold Cup Day 2018

ABN 16/18: Mediation advice in bullying, harassment and discrimination Service complaints

ABN 15/18: Patrouille Des Glaciers

DIN 2018DIN01-026: MoD ex-gratia payments in lieu of maternity allowance

DIN 2018DIN01-024: Increase in lifetime allowance – budget 2017

DIN 2018DIN01-023: 60th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes

DIN 2018DIN01-022: Application for late entry commission – all arms and services

DIN 2018DIN01-021: The 67th International Military Protestant Convention, June 21-24 – Mejanne-le-Clap Gard, France

DIN 2018DIN01-020: Armed Forces continuity of education allowance – sixth form reapplication

DIN 2018DIN01-019: Armed Forces pension scheme 2005 medical officer and dental officer bonus payments

DIN 2018DIN01-018: The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Championships – Wimbledon 2018

DIN 2018DIN01-017: Universal infant free school meals

DIN 2018DIN03-003: The handling of flying complaints from members of the public in the UK

DIN 2018DIN04-025: Standardisation of unit operational medical holdings – 300 Module

DIN 2018DIN04-024: Phased replacement of Wedge Bellows spirometer NSN 6515-99-513-1961 with Vitalograph Alpha NSN 6515-99-667-8773

DIN 2018DIN04-022: Procedures for requesting a visit to Queen Elizabeth

class aircraft carriers

DIN 2018DIN04-021: Operational infrastructure programme 60-day demand lead times

DIN 2018DIN04-019: Nato functional area services software

DIN 2018DIN04-018: BATCIS declaration of obsolete – bag, individual equipment NSN 8465-99-425-5754, DMC EZPRR

DIN 2018DIN04-017: Front-line command actions and the impact on surveillance and target acquisition support

DIN 2018DIN04-016: SA80 inventory rebalancing

DIN 2018DIN04-015: Deletion and disposal of obsolete NSNs on the heavy and littoral platforms. Specific to DMCs 9ETS, 4ETSA, BRV

DIN 2018DIN04-014: Planned withdrawal of support and disposal of obsolete items from Artillery System project team

DIN 2018DIN04-013: Self-help infrastructure work

DIN 2018DIN05-005: Rebrand of the ACDS (Log Ops) directorate to Defence Logistics (Def Log)

DIN 2018DIN06-014: Defence Safety Authority generic duty holder course

DIN 2018DIN06-013: Firemark fire extinguishers to replace current Chubb

fire extinguishers

DIN 2018DIN06-012: Publication of JSP 800 Vol 4a *Dangerous Goods by Air Regulations*, version 4

DIN 2018DIN06-011: The Defence Accident Investigation Branch

DIN 2018DIN06-009: Defence Annual Road Safety Award

DIN 2018DIN06-008: Defence infrastructure fire standards – relating to asset and property protection

DIN 2018DIN07-031: Courses at the Joint Service Sub Aqua Diving Centre in 2018

DIN 2018DIN07-029: Royal Navy Warfare Training Group air defence, ASW, EW, IW and Sky Siren courses open to a joint audience 2018/19

DIN 2018DIN07-028: Defence Centre of Training Support courses April 2018 to March 2019

DIN 2018DIN07-026: The operational shooting policy (formerly Army operational shooting policy, volume four – AFV live firing)

DIN 2018DIN07-025: Exercise Cambrian Patrol 2018, October 12-21

DIN 2018DIN07-024: Unit recovery officer courses for Army personnel, 2018 onwards

DIN 2018DIN07-022: 2018 Inter-Services cyber network defence challenge

DIN 2018DIN07-020: Defence foreign language training courses for training year 2018/19

DIN 2018DIN07-019: Applications for evaluator aircrew courses at the Empire Test Pilots' School

DIN 2018DIN07-018: Number 49 aerosystems course applications

DIN 2018DIN08-002: Insurance arrangements for unit-organised community engagement events, open days, families days and other functions

DIN 2018DIN09-002: Armed Forces Day – June 30

DIN 2018DIN10-009: British Army Motorsports Association – navigation events 2018

DIN 2018DIN10-008: Ex Solent Venture (Army Sailing Association Regatta) 2018

DIN 2018DIN10-006: Services Offshore Regatta 2018 – notice of race



REUNIONS

The Army Dog Unit NI (RAVC) Association will hold its annual general meeting and reunion in Burton-on-Trent on May 26-27. For further information and to register contact John Tucker on johnatucker70@yahoo.com or 07734 113077.

The 16 Regiment RA old comrades association will hold a reunion – including two-course meal and entertainment – at the Wortley House Hotel, Rowland Road, Scunthorpe. Cost £25 per head. Payment must be made in advance, either directly to the HSBC 16 Regt OCA bank account (number 82118726, sort code 40-40-24) or by sending a cheque to treasurer Guss Goodall at 18 Dunstan Hill, Kirton in Lindsey, DN22 4DU.



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments.

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March: 1, Milton Keynes; 8, Bridgend; 13, Medway; 22, Bournemouth

April: 17, Inverness; 18, Aberdeen; 19, Dunfermline; 26, Brighton

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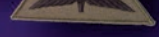
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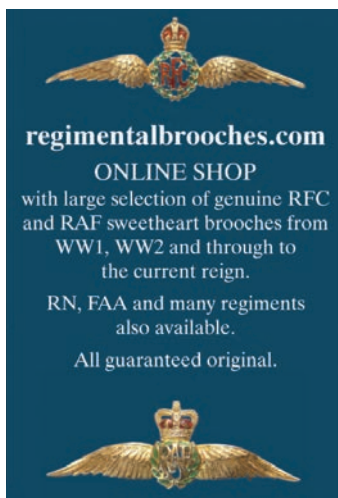
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6 January 2018

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K Jacobs, 219 Sqn, 2 Signal Regt, York; LCpl T Ingham, 110 Pro Coy, 1 RMP, BFPO 16; Maj C Lethbridge, 127 Sqn, 16 Med Regt, Colchester; Maj T Badham, 1 Dev, D Pers, Andover.

13 January 2018

1st Prize (£10,000): Capt J Eaves, 3 Rifles, Edinburgh; 2nd Prize (£5,000): Cpl G Boycott, 280 Sqn, 162 Regt RLC, Swindon; 3rd Prize (£4,000): Name withheld, RAF St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan. 4th Prize (£2,000): Tpr J Ward, ARTD, Stafford. 5th Prize (£1,000): Pte K Maniak, Army Foundation College, Harrogate. 15 Consolation prizes (£200 each): LCpl K Gurung, Sp Coy, 1 RGR, Folkstone; WO1 J Rhodes, HQ 8 Engr Bde, Camberley; WO2 G Weatherston, 124 Sqn, 71 Engr Regt, Cumbernauld; Cpl A Pearson, 1 MI Bn, Catterick Garrison; Cpl I Gurung, 23 Bty, 29 Cdo Regt RA, Plymouth; Cpl A Stephen, 202 Sqn, 3 Signal Regt, Salisbury; Cpl M Bramley, MPGS, Lichfield; Capt P Rummung, 1 R Welsh, Tidworth; LCpl M Hodgkinson, HQ Coy, 2 R Anglian, BFPO 58; Capt E Walker, B Coy, 5 Rifles, Salisbury; 2nd Lt G Usher, T Bty, 12 Regt RA, Emsworth; Pte O Pearce, Sp Coy, 2 R Anglian, BFPO 58; Pte S Hughes, B Coy, 2

PWRR, Cottesmore; Pte S Carrick, 26 Engr Regt, Tidworth; OCdt S Hayes, RMAS, Camberley.

20 January 2018

1st Prize (£10,000): Sgt L Reid, DBS Secretariat, London. 2nd Prize (£5,000): Pte J Turnbull, 8 Bn REME, DSEME, Chippenham. 3rd Prize (£4,000): Capt P Batley, 39 Engr Regt, Forres. 4th Prize (£2,000): Capt D Wall, HQ 29 EOD and Search Gp, Aldershot. 5th Prize (£1,000): LCpl S Browning, MPGS, RM Poole, Hamworthy. 15 Consolation prizes (£200 each): Maj M Woodward, JSCSC, ICSC(L), Shrivenham; Cpl S Knight, Sp Coy, 5 Rifles, Salisbury; Capt V Sutherland, 54 AEC, HQ ETS, BFPO 58; Sgt G Smith, A Coy, 2 Lancs, Preston; Sgt M Hill, G Bty, 7 Para RHA, Colchester; Sgt M Bennett, 1 WG, Pirbright; Gdsm P Clements, A Coy, 1 IG, Hounslow; Capt S Jones, M Bty, 3 RHA, Newcastle upon Tyne; Gnr M Wookey, 16 Bty, 26 Regt RA, BFPO 113; Cpl S Dewan, B Coy, 1 RGR, Folkstone; Pte M Purvis, RR (N), ARTD, RG, Strensall; Pte C Coleman, Sp Coy, 2 Yorks, Catterick; Pte S Mason, 9 Sqn, 7 Regt RLC, Cottesmore; Maj S Hempsey, RCDM, Edgbaston; Maj G Brocklehurst,

Inf Battle School, Brecon.

27 January 2018

1st Prize (£10,000): Pte H Thapa, 2 Sqn, 1 Regt RLC, Bicester. 2nd Prize (£5,000): Pte A Bailey, Sp Coy, 2 Para, Colchester. 3rd Prize (£4,000): LSgt T Bates, C Coy, 1 Coldm Gds, Windsor. 4th Prize (£2,000): Maj J Cartwright-Terry, Army Foundation College, Harrogate. 5th Prize (£1,000): Sgt G Loveridge, Sp Sqn, 14 Signal Regt (EW), Haverfordwest. 15 Consolation prizes (£200 each): LCpl T Hallett, 95 Sqn, 9 Regt RLC, Chippenham; Cpl M Chadwick, 2 Sqn, 11(RSS) Signal Regt, Blandford Forum; LSgt L Humphries, C Coy, 1 Gren Gds, Aldershot; LCpl M Hughes, B Coy, 1 IG, Hounslow; LCpl A Woollam, Outreach Team, Beaconside; Cpl P Howell, Sp Coy, 1 R Welsh, Tidworth; Lt R McGrath, 2 ITB, Catterick Garrison; Spr B Doolan, 1 Sqn, 21 Engr Regt, Ripon; OCdt H Ziegler, RMAS, Camberley; LCpl N D'Rozario, 1 Coy, 1 CS Bn REME, Catterick Garrison; Pte K McClean, 31 Sqn, 3 Regt RLC, Abingdon; Lt Col A Craig, DES ComLand, VST, Bristol; Maj C Griffiths, Whitchurch, Hampshire; Maj M Morrissey, A Sqn, RL, Catterick; LCpl R Keeler, MPGS Manston, Ramsgate.

REVIEWS

TOP GEAR

SMOOTH OPERATOR

The Velar is striking... but is its beauty just skin deep?

➤ THERE aren't many cars that look as at home in a country club car park as they do traversing a muddy mountain trail, but the Range Rover Velar is one of them.

Designed to fill the gap between the compact Range Rover Evoque and imposing Range Rover Sport, this is undoubtedly one of the most elegant looking sport utility vehicles on the market – even the door handles retract when the car is locked to make the bodywork's lines look as clean as possible.



P60

BOOKS

P62

MUSIC

P63

MOVIES



Tech spec

Price:

Base from £44,575
S from £50,165
R-Dynamic from £52,585

Dimensions:

Length – 4,803mm;
Width – 1,930mm;
Height – 1,685mm.

Towing capacity:

2,400 to 2,500kg

CO2 emissions:

142-214g/km

Economy (combined):

30.1–52.5mpg

Most people will fork out for one of these smooth operators simply because of its image and looks.

But in typical Range Rover style there's a good dose of practicality on offer, too.

The Velar can comfortably seat five people and the rear bench splits three ways to accommodate awkwardly shaped loads.

The boot offers an impressive 1,731 litres of space when the back seats are folded down and a useful 558 litres (632 litres without a spare wheel) when they're up.

The cabin is also as plush as a gentleman's club but features a splash of high-tech gadgetry up front where two ten-inch touchscreens are used to direct most of the major controls.

These screens have replaced most of the traditional buttons and switches, with the exception of the headlights and windows.

As a result, you'll need the skills of an Apache pilot to find your way around the bewildering variety of entertainment functions and driving modes such as the terrain response system – unless you've taken time out to read the phone directory-sized user's manual.

The upper screen primarily handles audio, navigation and vehicle settings while the lower display swaps between climate controls and driving mode, which you can alter for sand, mud, grass, gravel and snow.

You even use the touchscreens to alter the sharpness of the steering, throttle and gearshift.

The Dynamic-R model we tried was

equipped with enough gadgets to put the Batmobile to shame – it even had adjustable air suspension so at a flick of a switch you could hunker it down for racing around on a track or provide plenty of ground clearance to wade through floodwater.

But regardless of how wild it looks out there, you'll always feel cosy and cosseted by the leather-clad interior – our model even had seats that massage your back.

Not everything was perfect, though. The turning circle was akin to a Royal Navy aircraft carrier's and the rear parcel shelf seemed to have been transplanted from a budget hatchback.

And while most buyers will probably opt for one of the efficient diesel versions, David Attenborough certainly wouldn't have approved of the model we drove: a top-of-the-range, 380-horsepower petrol version, which barely managed 20mpg while driven sedately on B roads.

There's no denying, however, that if you want a luxurious ride with ample room for the whole family, enough performance to entertain, and something that makes you feel special whether you're off for golf at Carnoustie or climbing in the Cairngorms, the Velar fits the bill. ■

REVIEW: GRAEME MAIN, SOLDIER

VERDICT:

Elegant and practical –
a vehicle to remember

★★★★★

PICK OF THE MONTH:

THE LAST BATTLE

Endgame on the Western Front

► THE tumultuous last weeks of the Great War have all too often been glossed over and summarised in a few pages at the end of heavyweight tomes about the Verdun, Somme or Passchendaele campaigns.

If the reader is lucky there may be a chink of light in the form of a commentary on the air war or perhaps the clash of naval leviathans at Jutland.

This has been a source of personal frustration for many years. Even if you find a dedicated history that is entirely focused on the final year of the conflict, the dramatic chronology of the closing weeks are unlikely to be given the scrutiny they deserve.

At last, though, we have a book that really does these events justice.

In *The Last Battle*, Peter Hart skilfully navigates the reader through the rival national narratives that each claim credit as architects of the final victory.

Making sense of the overlapping Allied offensives, he presents a clear timeline that highlights the cumulative weight of military force imposed on the Germans on the Western Front.

It challenges the accepted view that the British and Commonwealth, French and US armies were playing the long game, holding on for the blockade-induced collapse of the German state.

The Kaiser's army was not undone by revolution or the stab in the back, but convincingly defeated in the field.

In terms of narrative, the book is easy to follow, effortlessly taking the reader from the highest political and strategic thinking down to the operational level of command, and then onto the battlefields at tactical





The Last Battle by Peter Hart is published by Profile Books and priced £25

level by means of a well-chosen thread of anecdotal accounts.

This is a fast-moving and wide-ranging period of the war that contrasts totally with the trench-bound deadlock that preceded it. And the dynamic tempo of those last weeks is conveyed through the eyes of combatants of every nationality.

The battles of Meuse-Argonne, the Canal du Nord, the Hindenburg Line, the return to Flanders and the epic struggle for the Selle, the Sambre and Mons are all described in a readable style and well illustrated with clear maps and a good collection of photographs.

If I could suggest one improvement to an otherwise exceptional book I would ask for some extra German source material and a little more from all sides at battalion and company level.

But Hart has delivered a well balanced, enlightening history that enables the reader to make sense of an exciting but potentially confusing chapter of the war. ■

REVIEW: MIKE PETERS, EX-AAC

VERDICT:

A welcome examination of an oft-overlooked period

★★★★★

Picture: Imperial War Museum

BOOK RELEASES

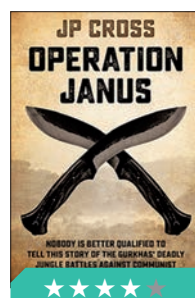


The Paras by Max Arthur

FROM the Falklands War through to modern day operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 100 contributors

reveal what it's like to be at the tip of the British Army's spear. Major generals and private soldiers alike describe each battle in detail. If anything could have improved the book it would be the inclusion of experiences in Northern Ireland but the accounts of the lesser-known conflicts are interesting. It avoids bombastic self-indulgence and is simply each man's perception of his own personal war. Together with the *Mr Men* set, this is a must-have for any airborne bookshelf.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



Operation Janus by JP Cross

BASED on real events witnessed by the author as a Gurkha colonel during the Malayan Emergency in

the 1950s, this novel concerns the defection of a British officer and a Gurkha battalion's operation to track him through the jungle to the HQ of the communist guerrillas. The tale has the authenticity you might expect given Cross's first-hand experience, especially when you consider the number of non-fiction works he has also penned. Though another twist or two would have been welcome, overall it delivers intrigue and suspense and ticks a lot of boxes for those interested in the legendary exploits of Nepalese troops.

Capt Henry Lidgley, AGC (SPS)

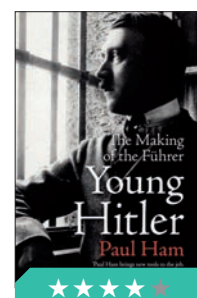


Nightfall Berlin by Jack Grimwood

THIS novel harks back to Germany in the mid-1980s when the Cold War was intense. Maj

Tom Fox has to battle the KGB, elements of the British establishment and his own demons in a fast-paced thriller that mixes storylines and timeframes in a complex pattern. The action carries on from the author's earlier novel, *Moskva* – where leading man Fox was first introduced – adding another layer to an already multifaceted plot. It is a great read but it does demand a degree of concentration from the reader to keep up with the twists and turns.

Mark Hainge, ex-RE



Young Hitler by Paul Ham

THIS is a concise biographical study about one of the most fascinating and evil men in

history. It examines Adolf Hitler's childhood, formative years and his move into politics after the First World War, revealing which key events shaped him and helped to cement his extremist views. Paul Ham offers an unbiased view of the Fuehrer and the propaganda coming from the Nazi regime both before and during the war, as well as from the Allies afterwards. This is a straightforward, informative read, essential for anyone interested in military history in general and Hitler in particular.

Robert Shaw, ex-RLC

MUSIC



PICK OF THE MONTH:

A BAND REBORN

Scottish indie outfit chart new path

► IT has been almost 15 years since **Franz Ferdinand** burst onto the music scene with the colossal single *Take Me Out*.

The track, and the record it stemmed from, cemented their status as one of the UK's most exciting bands. But when founding member **Nick McCarthy** walked away in 2016 it seemed as though an impressive run of critically acclaimed albums and sold-out tours would be coming to an end.

But instead of calling time on their endeavours the group is embarking on a second coming, with two new members joining the fold ahead of the release of *Always Ascending*.

Working alongside producer **Philippe Zdar** they set about creating a fresh sound inspired by electro-pop and dance music, and it was a process that proved to be reinvigorating.

"We loved working with Philippe," said frontman **Alex Kapranos**. "He

understands that what is essential is the emotion; the emotion that inspired the song and the emotion that the song inspires in you on hearing it.

"It's all that matters. Everything comes from that: the sound, performance, tempo, instrumentation, even how far you stand from the microphone – everything."

The album was recorded in just a couple of weeks but had been written over the course of the preceding year somewhere in the west of Scotland.

"We all lived in the one place together," Kapranos explained. "It's remote and that's what we needed."

"We weren't just writing an LP but were creating a band, a sound, a universe. We started from zero with no expectations. It was liberating."

"From nothing, we created this new universe to inhabit, something nebulous at first that gradually took form until it felt like it had always existed."

VERDICT:
Reinvention
sparks
interesting
new path
★★★★★

Hints of a rebirth are obvious from the outset and this is an album that leans firmly in the electro direction, although Franz Ferdinand's trademark guitars can be heard simmering away in the background.

While the sound may be slightly different the lyrics remain as thoughtful as ever, with *The Academy Award* mocking the world of celebrity and obsessions with selfies, and *Lois Lane* pondering the grim reality of middle age.

The album's title track oozes energy and vigour and further highlights can be found on *Huck and Jim* and the disco-inspired *Glimpse of Love*.

However, it would be difficult to call this a full reinvention for the band as there are elements that have been heard before and while the music hints at an exciting new dawn it fails to fully follow through on its promise. ■

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*

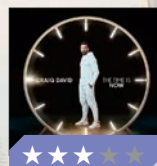
MUSIC RELEASES



Man of the Woods by Justin Timberlake

HAVING been named as the headline act for this year's famed Super Bowl half-time show, **Justin Timberlake** was handed the ideal platform from which to launch his return to the musical spotlight. But his comeback proved far from spectacular as complaints of poor sound quality and a lack of excitement hampered what should have been a triumphant performance. Unfortunately, the underwhelming theme continues on *Man of the Woods*. This is a collection that fails to tread any new ground and proves to be rather dull as it relies on the pop, soul and gospel combination so often seen in the past. It also veers in a sickly direction, with wife **Jessica Biel** contributing to a number of tracks. One to avoid.

Richard Long, Soldier



The Time Is Now by Craig David

HAVING seen his career as the poster boy of UK garage derailed by the brutal mocking of comedy series *Bo Selecta!*, **Craig David** is now basking in the glow of an impressive rebirth. Comeback album *Following My Intuition*, released in 2016, was his first number one since his 2000 debut and latest offering *The Time Is Now* builds on the growing momentum. The record covers a wide array of dance genres and with eight different producers on-board there is no shortage of input from those who know what it takes to create a polished pop offering. But such variety proves to be David's undoing as the singer comes across as a guest vocalist on a collaboration project, instead of being the star of his own show. There are a number highlights to enjoy but this album fails to fully deliver.

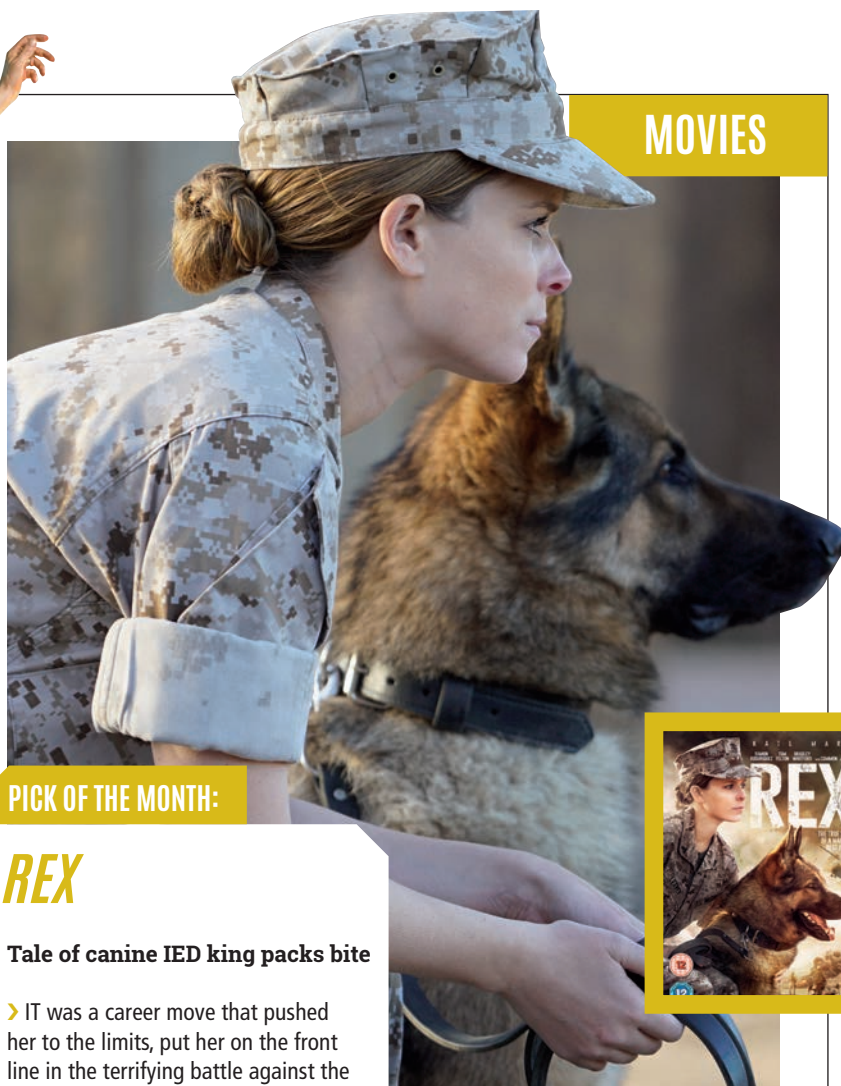
Sarah Goldthorpe, Soldier



Little Dark Age by MGMT

US duo **MGMT** seemed destined for greatness following the release of standout singles *Time to Pretend* and *Kids* in 2008. So it was surprising to see them take a distinct backwards step on the albums that have followed since, where their detours and experimentations were not well received. Fans will be relieved to hear they have made a welcome return to form on *Little Dark Age*, a record littered with infectious pop anthems that ticks all the boxes. Opener *She Works Out Too Much* sets the tone and this impressive formula continues on the likes of *One Thing Left to Try* and *Hand it Over*. There's also great fun to be had, none more so than on the track *TSLMP*—an abbreviation for time spent looking at my phone—which delivers a gentle dig at today's screen-obsessed generation.

Richard Long, Soldier



PICK OF THE MONTH:

REX

Tale of canine IED king packs bite

➤ IT was a career move that pushed her to the limits, put her on the front line in the terrifying battle against the IED, and demanded that she place the ultimate trust in a canine companion.

But Megan Leavey would not change anything. The former corporal maintains her decision to join the US Marine Corps changed her life for the better – and the relationship the handler forged with her explosives search dog Rex during two back-to-back tours in Iraq was its high point.

Now the focus of a film based on her experiences during some of the most volatile years in the Middle Eastern country, she is delighted with the way she has been captured in celluloid.

"It was really surreal when I first saw the movie," Leavey told *Soldier*. "But I am pleased with how it has turned out and the fact that it raises awareness of working dogs."

"Rex was one of the best but you had to trust him and let him work his way."

"He was amazing at his job and as a handler he was exactly the partner you would want by your side."

Released on DVD this month and having already received critical acclaim, **Gabriela Cowperthwaite's** film

adaptation of Leavey's story is set against the backdrop of the concerted IED campaign that faced US troops in the insurgency of the mid-2000s.

Tracking her Service career from 2003-07, which followed dead-end civvy jobs and strained relationships with her parents, the plot charts her success in the dog section after a difficult start to military life.

Partnered with German Shepherd Rex, who had sunk his jaws into the arm of a previous handler and put him in hospital, the pair deploy out into the full force of a terrorist campaign.

When Leavey and her canine partner are split up after both being wounded in a harrowing contact with insurgents, the handler later embarks on a new fight to adopt him after he is retired from service – and recommended as unsuitable for re-homing.

"The movie is not a documentary and some liberties have been taken in the story's transfer to Hollywood," the 34-year-old New Yorker admitted.



MOVIES

VERDICT:

A powerful story, well filmed

★★★★★



"I am an animal lover and there has never been a time in my life when I did not have a dog or cats around.

"When I enlisted I heard about the K9 programme in the military police – it piqued my interest but getting on it meant that I would ultimately have to finish at the top of my class."

Despite the changes made to the cinematic rendering, Leavey said it had accurately conveyed the feeling of life during her two seven-month deployments to Fallujah in 2005 and Ramadi the following year – and the atmosphere in Iraq at the time.

In particular, the scenes set in the Middle East – shot in Spain – provided an insight into the threat of IEDs and ambush as well as the daily battle against the searing summer heat.

Leavey said the sequence depicting the high-intensity contact in which she and Rex were wounded had proved suitably emotive.

"They did a good job with this in the

movie," she said.

"The actual incident was a really long day for me. In reality I had been with a US Army unit – and not the Marines – on this occasion and everything was pretty intense."

The on-screen battle is certainly tense and is one of the moments that make *Rex* stand out with a combination of a worthy story and a depiction of the Iraq campaign at its height.

A strong cast fronted by **Kate Mara** as Leavey puts in some convincing performances, and the action is well paced throughout.

At its heart, however, *Rex* is an extraordinary tale of trust between dog and handler as well as the faith placed in them by the soldiers who depended on their expertise and courage to detect lethal threats.

For Leavey, the film is also about the bonds forged in service.

"I am an only child," she concluded. "But by the time I left in 2007 I had so many brothers and sisters."

"Joining the United States Marine Corps was absolutely the best decision I ever made." ■

INTERVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*



DVD/DIGITAL RELEASES



Wings of Eagles

Out now

A COMPANION piece of sorts to *Chariots of Fire*, this title tells the continuing story of Eric Liddell (**Joseph Fiennes**) – he who refused to run on the sabbath. Interestingly, he spent much of his life as a missionary in China and was placed in an internment camp by the Japanese during the Second World War. This movie chronicles Liddell's experiences at that time through the eyes of his Chinese driver. Fiennes is fine, but the rest of the film just doesn't really click and is hard to engage with emotionally.

Maj Alex Janaway, RAMC



Jigsaw

Out now

ONE of the highest grossing franchises of all time is back, taking Jigsaw's signature brand of twisted scenarios to the next level. Will it never end? You'd be forgiven for thinking this offering is some sort of prequel to the *Saw* films, but it certainly isn't. In fact, quite the opposite because this movie is too busy jumping around trying to tie in as many people and plots as possible to produce anything resembling a storyline. The traps are nowhere near the *Saw* standard, which will disappoint ardent fans.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

WIN



RELEASED at the start of this year, *The Man With the Iron Heart* tells the story of the real-life Second World War mission to kill top-ranking Nazi Reinhard Heydrich. Based on international bestseller *HHhH* by **Laurent Binet**, its cast includes **Jason Clarke, Rosamund Pike, Jack O'Connell, Stephen Graham, Jack Reynor** and **Mia Wasikowska**. *Soldier* has teamed up with Lionsgate Films to offer three readers a Blu-ray film and book combination set. To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us what year *HHhH* was released. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by March 30.

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Note that British Army personnel can only wear non-standard equipment when specifically authorised by the chain of command*



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Dates and Venues

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Round 2. 25-Apr-18 Deepcut

Round 3. 16-May-18 Cannock Chase

Round 4. 06-Jun-18 Colchester

Round 5. 27-Jun-18 Sandhurst/Minley

Army Championship. 18-Jul-18 Tidworth

Army Endurance Race. 12-Sep-18 Minley

ONLINE ENTRY - Follow the QR code or visit
www.armycycling.org for more information.

POC James.Cooper431@mod.gov.uk

• TWITTER - ACMTBXC Race Series @

ArmyMTBXC Series

• FACEBOOK - Army Cycling Union (Members Only)

• MOSS - Army Cycling Union



Sports Editor: Richard Long
Photographers: Graeme Main and Peter Davies

SOLDIER SPORT



PISTE PERFORMERS >>

THE Army's winter sports stars faced their Forces rivals on the slopes of Meribel. Read about their Inter-Services successes on page 70...

Picture: Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC



TRAIL RUNNER PRIMED FOR WORLD STAGE

ENDURANCE runner Capt Tom Evans (WG) has seen his remarkable rise in the sport rewarded with a call-up to the Team GB squad for the World Trail Running Championships.

Having claimed third spot at last year's Marathon des Sables – an event billed as the world's toughest footrace – the officer secured a place on the Ultra Trail World Tour, where he has continued his impressive run of recent form.

Evans finished fourth at the Eiger 101-kilometre race and repeated the feat at the CCC event – a 100-kilometre challenge that features a 6,500-metre climb along a route from Courmayeur in the Italian Alps to Chamonix in France, via the Swiss resort of Champex.

Such consistent performances caught the eye of the national selectors and the officer will now line up for his country at Penyalgosa, in Spain, on May 12.

"I've always wanted to be an athlete and getting selected for my country is a huge opportunity," Evans told *SoldierSport*. "I'm incredibly proud to get the call.

"We have a really strong team and want to do ourselves justice. My focus is on the process, not the outcome – if my training is right in the build-up the race will take care of itself."

Individual and collective honours will be up for grabs and the athlete is eyeing success on both fronts as his training regime continues.

"We run as individuals but it is a team event," he added. "I have goals I hope to achieve and I want to do Great Britain, the Army and Welsh Guards proud.

"If I finish fifth so be it but I'd love to be on that podium. I'll give 100 per cent and will leave no stone unturned."

At 80 kilometres in length, the World Championships boast a



**"THE
ARMY
ALLOWS
YOU TO
DO THE
BEST
YOU
CAN"**

slightly shorter distance for the Serviceman and he is predicting a swift pace once the action gets under way.

"The exact course has yet to be confirmed but it will be 50 miles with a climb of around 4,000 metres, so the ratios are fairly similar to the other races I have done," he explained.

"It will be very quick and that will suit my style of running, I'm really looking forward to the start of the race."

With such an important fixture on the horizon it would be safe to assume that Evans will be concentrating fully on the task.

But before he heads to the Iberian Peninsula he faces the small matter of The Coastal Challenge – a gruelling 230-kilometre multi-stage race across the beaches and mountains of Costa Rica.

Jungle and rainforest trails await, along with routes down highland and coastal ranges, and

the country's climate will also add to the difficulty.

"The heat and humidity will be the biggest challenge," Evans said. "I've been training in the heat chamber at St Mary's University in Twickenham (pictured) to help my body acclimatise to the conditions.

"I'm looking at this race as a really big training week. I will then come back to the UK to continue my build-up to the World Championships."

Such opportunities have been fully backed by the chain of command and Evans believes the Army forms the ideal backdrop for those looking to reach sport's elite stage.

"This is all a complete surprise to me," he added.

"I have come to the sport relatively late on but I've got another ten years of being able to run at the level I'm at now.

"But I could not have done it without the support of my unit and the Service, who have given me the time off I need to train and compete.

"For aspiring athletes the British Army is the place to be. It allows you to do the best you can both physically and mentally.

"A lot of results come down to mental preparation.

"Being an officer gives me the discipline and state of mind to complete incredibly difficult challenges and look after myself and my teammates.

"There are so many transferable skills." ■



COSTA RICA IN NUMBERS

LENGTH OF
THE MULTI-
STAGE
RACE IN
KILOMETRES

230

DAYS
NEEDED TO
COMPLETE
THE
GRUELLING
EVENT

6

DEGREES
CELSIUS
HEAT
AWAITING
ATHLETES
ON THE
TROPICAL
COURSE

35

HOURS, 29
MINUTES, 45
SECONDS
- THE TIME
POSTED
BY MEN'S
CHAMPION
TOM OWENS
IN THE 2017
CHALLENGE

22



MIXED FORTUNES AT MINLEY

THE absence of key athletes failed to scupper the Army women's hopes at the Inter-Services Cross-Country Championships as an inspired team effort saw them seal the collective honours.

With leading lights Capt Lauren Hall (REME) and Cpl Dani Hodgkinson (QARANC) missing, the Reds relied on their strength in depth to get the job done on a windswept wintry course at Minley.

The Royal Air Force claimed top spot in the individual standings but with debutant Lt Rosie Wilde (RA) leading the charge the Service secured the next four places to take the overall title.

"We are well practised on this course as the Army and Inter-Corps Championships were both held here," team manager WO1 Kelly Haniver (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"So we knew the girls could run well.

"Rosie is new to the team and did really well to finish

second. She came here on the back of being on exercise overnight. If that had not been the case she could have pushed harder.

"The RAF were strong this year so I was a little concerned beforehand but the girls worked well as a team to pack the top positions.

"We have massive depth in the squad. We can lose two or three athletes and still get the job done.

"Our junior runners and Reservists are now coming to the fore."

Success for the women proved to be the Army's only victory on the day as the RAF dominated proceedings in the other three races.

Their runners finished first and second in the men's senior event, with the Army claiming third spot, and strong performances throughout the field cemented the team prize.

The airmen also scooped the honours in the masters and under-23 races. ■



Pictures: Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC

MEDALS SHARED AT MERIBEL MEET

A RMY athletes shared the spoils with their Forces rivals during a highly competitive Inter-Services Snow Sports Championships on the slopes of Meribel.

The Alpine disciplines proved a happy hunting ground for the men's skiers, with the dynamic duo of Spr Euan Kick and Spr Duncan Kuwall (both RE) spearheading the charge toward team glory.

Kick won both the slalom and super giant slalom, as well as claiming second in the downhill and third in the giant slalom, as he was crowned the overall individual champion ahead of teammate Kuwall.

In the female competition, debutant Capt Lauren Barr (REME) found herself in a fierce battle with Royal Air Force rival Cpl Rachel Hughes but it was the latter who prevailed with

victories in the individual and team standings.

Barr secured the downhill title and was named the competition's best newcomer.

"The men's team had a bit of a fright on the second practice day when Capt Joe Williamson (KRH) broke his leg," Lt Col (ret'd) Martyn Allen, secretary of the Army Winter Sports Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"But we have real strength in depth and that showed out on the slopes.

"The ladies competition went down to the wire but Rachel Hughes was just that little bit ahead and that pushed her team to the title."

The snowboarding drew further success for the RAF as they won both the men's and women's team competitions, as well as the individual prizes.

Sgt Kris Looker (R Signals)

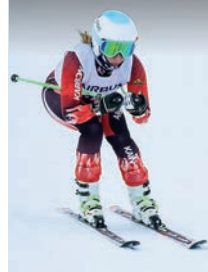
INTER-SERVICES ALPINE SKIING

MEN

ARMY

WOMEN

RAF



and Maj Jessica Drew (RE) were the runners-up, while Lt Jo Szczglowska (RE) was named best newcomer.

The Royal Navy claimed the telemark team crown, with 2nd Lt Robbie Houston (Scots DG) securing the individual title.

"We were slightly disappointed to only win one of the five team prizes on offer," Allen added.

"We probably had some of the best conditions for ten to 15 years and the snow was fantastic.

"The weather over the last three or four seasons hasn't been great so it was good to get back on track."

The Army reigned supreme in the Nordic events as they defeated the Senior Service to win all five team trophies.

The Inter-Services action continues this month at the Ice Sports Championships in the Austrian resort of Igls. ■



RESULTS SERVICE: GET THE INSIDE STORY ON ALL THIS SEASON'S COMPETITIONS BY VISITING WWW.AWSA.ORG.UK

Pictures: Dominic King



SLIDERS HIT THE ICE

THE increasing popularity of skeleton, luge and bobsleigh within Service circles was further highlighted at last month's Army Ice Championships.

Staged in the German resort town of Winterberg, the event featured a week of training for personnel in all three disciplines ahead of the opening race.

The track proved difficult to master but the athletes produced some impressive performances in a series of hard-fought battles.

The pairing of LCpl Ivan Londal and LCpl Rick Ray, of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, claimed the men's bobsleigh title with WO2 Sarah Smith and 2nd Lt Jess Elkington (both RA) reigning supreme in the women's event.

A total of 24 soldiers took to the track in the skeleton, where LCpl Nathan Jackson (RLC) secured the honours in the men's race ahead of novice champion Sig Arran Holmes (R Signals). Capt Rhianon Graham (AGC (SPS)) won the women's competition.

Gdsm Ray Thompson (IG) topped the podium in the men's luge, with Sgt Danielle Scott (QARANC) matching the feat in the women's showdown.



Pictures: Paralympics GB

BOUND FOR PYEONGCHANG



**"WE
WANT
TO GIVE
IT OUR
BEST
SHOT"**

WITH the Winter Olympics now over, attention switches to the upcoming Paralympic campaign and the Army will be well represented on the slopes.

Capt Jen Kehoe (RE, pictured left) will act as the guide for Menna Fitzpatrick in the visually impaired Alpine skiing and the duo have jetted out to Pyeongchang in confident mood following their recent medal haul at the World Cup final.

Selection comes after Kehoe missed out on a place in the Team GB squad at Sochi 2014 through injury and she is excited by the prospect of facing the world's best athletes in what is the pinnacle of her sport.

"It's all a bit surreal to be honest," the officer told *SoldierSport*. "We have worked hard over the last two-and-a-half years and it is incredible to be named in the team."

"We are taking it one step at a time. This is our first Paralympics and we want to give it our best shot. Our performances this season mean we are in good shape."

"There is so much for me to think about as a guide. I have to

get Menna in the right place to get round the gates and make it down the hill in the fastest time possible, so there is lots of teamwork involved."

The conditions in Pyeongchang made life difficult for athletes at last month's Winter Olympics but Kehoe is confident they can conquer the challenges ahead.

She added: "We are fully prepared for whatever the weather throws at us."

"We were out there for a test event last year and the piste is quite technical and you have to think from top to bottom, there's no cruising."

Double amputee and former paratrooper Scott Meenagh (pictured above) will compete in the para Nordic skiing events after progressing to the Team GB ranks via the Paralympic Inspiration Programme.

"It's an incredible feeling to know my name is on the team sheet," Meenagh said.

"I'm determined to give my very best performance."

Snowboarder Owen Pick, formerly of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, completes the line-up. ■

RIFLE RUN



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MAN OF THE MOMENT: CFN SEAN THOMSON (REME) WAS THE ARMY'S HERO AGAINST THE RAF, NETTING THE EQUALISER IN A 1-1 DRAW

FOOTBALL

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Hoycubed Photography



Disney at the double

FORMER soldier Guy Disney rode to victory at the Castel Royal Artillery Gold Cup for the second successive year.

The jockey, who served as a captain in The Light Dragoons, made history last year by becoming the first amputee to win a race at a professional racecourse in Britain.

He will be looking to add to his tally when he competes at the Grand Military Gold Cup at Sandown on March 9.

"I was quite nervous today," Disney said after his latest triumph. "The feeling of winning is like a drug, it's completely addictive."



Road race set to return

THE dates and venues for this season's Army Cycling Road Race Series have been announced.

Featuring 12 rounds, the competition gets under way at Upavon on April 25 and reaches its conclusion at the Brownlee Centre in Leeds on July 25.

Open to all serving personnel, the races are aimed at athletes of all abilities – from beginners to seasoned riders – and there will be prizes for the best individuals, units and corps.

For more details on how to get involved email ian.tosh450@mod.uk



YOUNG GUNS SEAL SERVICES CROWN

INTER-SERVICES
UNDER-23
FOOTBALL
NAVY

0

ARMY

3



A STUNNING 20-yard strike from Cpl Darren Humphries (AGC) was the highlight of a commanding 3-0 win for the Army Under-23s in the opening match of their Inter-Services campaign.

The midfielder's goal gave the Reds a 2-0 lead against the Royal Navy and a late effort from substitute LCpl Rob Shaw (RLC) sealed a comprehensive victory for the visitors.

The players then sealed the title thanks to a 1-1 draw with the Royal Air Force in the tournament's deciding fixture.

Having suffered a 4-2 defeat to the Senior Service during a disappointing 2017 campaign, the soldiers held firm during a cagey opening to their latest contest in Portsmouth.

Endeavour and commitment overshadowed quality of play and clear-cut chances were at a premium until the Army opened their account on the stroke of half-time.

A free kick from skipper LCpl Sean Woolley (RLC, pictured left) was floated into the area and when the Navy failed to clear their lines the ball dropped to the unmarked Cfn Sean Thomson

(REME), who calmly found the bottom corner.

Humphries' wonder goal effectively settled the contest during the early stages of the second half and with their rivals lacking a cutting edge it proved to be a comfortable afternoon.

Further chances followed as LCpl Dan Tewkesbury (AAC) blasted over from close range and Humphries came within inches of a second as his shot across goal drifted narrowly wide of the far post.

Woolley then fired into the side netting from a free kick before a perfectly weighted low cross found Shaw in the area and the wide man clinically drilled the ball into the bottom corner.

"It was a competitive game," head coach Capt Paul Dale (RAMC) told *SoldierSport* afterwards. "We decided to go with three at the back knowing that if we put pressure on their defence we might get something."

"It was a scrappy contest but we controlled it."

"The first goal is massive in any Inter-Services match and the second gave us confidence to move the ball around and play a bit more football." ■



SEASON SIGNED OFF

STEEP hill climbs and energy-sapping mud formed the backdrop to a highly competitive Army Cyclocross Championships in Chilwell.

The event marked the end of another tough season for the riders, who will now move on to the various road and mountain biking disciplines.

In the veterans' race, WO1 Jason Marriott (Rifles) rapidly moved to the front of the field and by the halfway stage had opened a 45-second lead over his nearest rival. He maintained his dominance and secured a comfortable win.

Defending champion Cpl Danny Preece (RE) was the rider to beat in the men's senior race and he finished more than a minute clear of the field as he claimed back-to-back titles.

LCpl Alex Farquhar (RAVC) proved to be in a class of her own in the women's event and a storming display saw her seize the top prize in style.

"It was a fantastic day," Marriott (pictured below) told *SoldierSport*.

"The route was set on the side of a hill and the rain meant the climb was a swampy, wheel-sucking slog."



LEARNING FROM THE BEST



SOME of Team GB's finest up-and-coming boxers were tested in the ring during an intensive week of training with the Army squad in Aldershot.

The camp also featured fighters from Wales and was staged as part of the Service's bid to create a closer working relationship with the heralded set-up, which polishes the country's premier talent at its Sheffield base.

"We are trying to recruit a new head coach," Nathan Pearce, secretary of the Army Boxing Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"We are in the process of organising that through the GB podium team and their performance manager. We want to establish better links with them, so the idea of a training camp came about.

"It has been a learning curve for the Army guys and it is also good for the GB boxers to come in and spar with different people in a different setting.

"This is a fantastic shop window for our fighters. They are in the ring with the best in the country in front of the GB coaches.

"It is a great confidence boost and they can see the step up is not that far away." ■

**"THEY
CAN
SEE THE
STEP UP
IS NOT
THAT
FAR
AWAY"**



● FORCES cricketers return to Lord's on Thursday, June 14 for this year's Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships.

The Army won a fifth successive title at the prestigious venue in 2017 and will be hoping for more of the same this season.

Tickets will be available to purchase on the gate. For more information visit www.lords.org

MONTH IN SPORT

March's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services Hockey Championships
WHEN: March 6 and 7
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO

KNOW: The Army women have been the team to beat in recent years and they will start as firm favourites, while the men will be hoping to hit top gear



WHAT: Inter-Services Football Championships – Army v Navy
WHEN: March 7
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: After falling short last season the women's team will look to kick-start their 2018 campaign with victory at the Aldershot Military Stadium (1430) before the men's side take to the pitch at the town's EBB Stadium (1900)



WHAT: Inter-Services Netball Championships
WHEN: March 7 to 9
WHERE: Portsmouth
NEED TO KNOW: A hectic week of sport

comes to a close on the south coast, where the Reds will be looking to retain the title they won with victories over the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force last year

CUP RUN IN NUMBERS

YEARS OF CUP ACTION – WITH THE FIRST TIE PLAYED IN 1896

122

TOTAL POINTS SCORED BY THE ARMY IN TWO MATCHES IN 2018

74

TRIES FROM PTE MICKY HOYLE (YORKS), WHO ALSO KICKED THREE GOALS AGAINST THE CHARGERS

3

RED CARDS SHOWN IN THE MILFORD MARLINS GAME

3



REDS EYE LEAGUE GLORY

A PLACE in the fourth round of the Challenge Cup is the prize on offer to the Army rugby league team as they travel to Cumbria to face amateur outfit Kells in their latest tie.

The Servicemen have already recorded two home wins in their 2018 campaign and victory over the Whitehaven-based side would see them qualify for the latter round for the first time in their 24-year history.

A 48-10 defeat of the Milford Marlins was followed by a hard-fought 26-14 triumph against the London Chargers (pictured) and head coach WO2 Ben Taylor (REME) is predicting another tough test when the Reds head north.

"This is a great opportunity to progress further," he told *SoldierSport*. "It is the first time we have drawn an amateur team in the third round and that will make it a fair game."

"We don't know a lot about them but it will be a hard match. They have the home advantage and it all depends on how well we travel and train in the days beforehand."

Taylor is planning to keep preparations for the clash as simple as possible, believing the team cohesion that exists within the group will serve them in good stead.

"We have a squad full of captains and that really helps," he added. "We're going back to basics so everyone is aware of what their job is."

"It is all about the players. They are getting the experience of playing in a famous competition that has been running for more than 100 years."

"They have the chance to achieve something that we would have never thought was possible ten years ago."

The Army were in action against Kells as this issue went to press. ■



SERIES KICKS OFF

THE opening leg of the 2018 Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Series will be held at the valley course of Erlestoke, near Devizes, on March 28.

Comprised of five rounds, the competition runs throughout the spring and summer and feeds into the full Army Championships on July 18.

The event regularly attracted between 150 and 200 soldiers last season and those at the helm are hoping to build on these impressive numbers during the upcoming campaign.

"We really want to hit the ground running," WO2 Graham McConaghy (REME), part of the organising team, told *SoldierSport*. "Mountain biking has become such a strong adventurous training sport and the amount of people getting involved is growing."

"Our courses are tailored for riders of all abilities. There will be an option to follow a more technical route but the challenge comes from riding at speed."

For more details on how to get involved and other rounds in the series visit the Army MTB XC Team Facebook page or email graham.mcconaghy630@mod.uk



SIGHTS SET DOWN UNDER



"WE ARE GOING OUT TO BEAT EACH OTHER"

RIFLE shooter Spr Michael Bamsey (RE) became the latest Army marksman to receive a Commonwealth Games call after he was named in the Wales squad ahead of next month's showpiece.

The 24-year-old will join fellow soldiers Cpl Stuart Hill (R Irish) and Sgt Sam Gowin (RA) on the journey down under and is hoping to fire his way into the medal places in what will be his second Games campaign.

Bamsey only joined the Army in August last year but has an impressive record in the sport which includes a three-year spell with the West Virginia University rifle team that yielded three national titles.

With his stateside adventure complete he signed up for a military career and was fast-tracked into the Service's elite sporting programme.

He will face competition from Northern Ireland's Hill in the prone and three-position disciplines and will also take part in the air rifle event.

"It's always a privilege to represent Wales as it is something I do not get to do that often," Bamsey told *SoldierSport*.

"Some of the guys here have also been selected. We usually compete on the same team but now we are going out to beat each other."

Bamsey will be looking to improve on his showing four years ago, when a seventh-place finish in the air rifle and a failure to make the three-position final fell well short of his pre-Games target.

"I went there with the expectation of winning a medal in a blaze of glory," the soldier added. "But I didn't manage those expectations and went in thinking it would be easy."

"Now I just want to execute my own plan and if that works out and I win something it will be fantastic."

"If I come away knowing I did everything I could I will have no arguments with that."

Bamsey's long-term goal is to represent Team GB at the 2020 Olympics and while his performance in Australia cannot help his bid to qualify it will serve as an indication of his progress.

"If I can shoot well in this competition I know I can do it when the quota places come round," he said. ■

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Keith.Sharlott476@mod.uk





ON TRACK: LSGT LAMIN DEAN WAS IN WINTER OLYMPIC ACTION IN BOBSLEIGH'S FOUR-MAN EVENT AS THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRESS

WINTER OLYMPICS

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Allign Photography



Build-up gathers pace

PREPARATIONS for this season's Inter-Services rugby union campaign have continued at pace with three challenging fixtures for the men's side in the space of two weeks.

The Reds recorded a 26-17 win over Oxford University, a result that was followed by a slender 33-31 defeat at the hands of Nottingham.

A 19-5 victory against the British Police got the soldiers back on track and they will travel to Portugal later this month for a warm weather training camp before facing the Royal Air Force on April 11.



Reds prevail on title trail

ARMY players dominated the action on the court as they claimed three of the four team prizes on offer at the Inter-Services Squash Championships.

A 5-0 win over the Royal Air Force gave the men's senior side an ideal start but they had to dig deep on their way to a 3-2 victory over the Royal Navy.

The women downed the Senior Service 5-0 and the RAF 3-2 to capture further collective honours, while the masters squad added a third title.

However, the under-25s missed out to the airmen as hopes of a clean sweep were ended.



Pictures: Andy J Ryan

MISSED SHOTS PROVE FATAL



**"I KNOW
I'M AS
STRONG
AS THE
GIRLS
MAKING
THE TOP
TEN"**

BIATHLON ace Sgt Amanda Lightfoot (AGC (SPS)) suffered mixed emotions in her latest Winter Olympic campaign as she equalled the best-ever British result in the 7.5-kilometre sprint but then struggled on the range in the longer discipline.

The 31-year-old picked up three shooting penalties in windy conditions on the sprint and went on to clock a time of 24min 15.3sec to finish in 67th place – matching the achievement of Emma Fowler at the 2006 Games.

"It was a pretty tough race with the wind," Lightfoot said afterwards. "It was like I was having to fight against the conditions all the time and I got quite unlucky with my shooting in the prone position, where I missed two shots. I then dropped one in the standing.

"It is still good to equal the best ever Olympic result for a British female biathlete.

"I'm often so focused on trying to be world class that I sometimes forget about the little milestones.

"It is a good achievement and I have to give myself credit."

Her performance meant she missed out on qualification for the 10-kilometre pursuit as only the top 60 athletes progressed, meaning her focus switched to the sport's 15-kilometre event.

The soldier made an encouraging start in the competition and was hovering around the top 20 after firing her way to a clear round on the third of four visits to the range.

But three misses in the last round scuppered her chances and she went on to finish 73rd – more than eight minutes behind champion Hanna Oeberg.

"I messed up on my last shoot," Lightfoot said.

"The nerves just kicked in and I couldn't pull it together; that's really disappointing.

"This year has been up and down and I'm just happy to be here. I know I'm as strong as the girls getting top tens and places on the podium.

"I just need the support to make my results consistent." ■



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FINAL FIXTURE: THE ARMY WOMEN PLAY THEIR LAST GAME BEFORE THE INTER-SERVICES WHEN THEY FACE THE BARBARIANS ON MARCH 17

RUGBY UNION

GAME BRIEF

DATE: February 14, 2018
COMPETITION: Army women v England Under-20s – rugby union friendly
VENUE: Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot

ARMY

Wilson 1	Carbutt 2	Athawes 3
Gattlin 4	Snead 5	
Silcox 6	Binskin-Barnes 7	Szczyglowska 8
Gilbert 9	Rowland (c) 10	
Dodd 11	Mullen 12	
Miller 13	McAuley 14	
	Parker 15	

SUBS: Lewis, Smith, McCormick, Claasens, Whitecross, Lloyd, Harrison-Wolff, Stonebridge-Smith

CAPTAIN'S COMMENTS:

"WE STICK TOGETHER AS A SQUAD. THERE WERE MISTAKES BUT THERE WERE POSITIVES AS WELL. WE'LL FOCUS ON MOVING FORWARD AND BUILD FROM HERE"



Pictures: Alligin Photography and Roger Thompson

PAIN INFLICTED IN THE RAIN

RUGBY UNION
FRIENDLY
FIXTURE
ARMY
WOMEN

0

ENG
U20S

44



A FIRST-HALF hat-trick from wing Brooke Clarke helped fire the England Under-20s side to an emphatic 44-0 win over the Army on a miserable night in Aldershot.

Driving rain, howling winds and freezing temperatures posed an extra challenge for the players but it was the visitors who adapted to the conditions better – running in six tries before the break as they took firm control of the game.

The Reds showed greater determination as they steadied the ship after the interval but two further converted scores underlined the gulf between the two teams.

The match has become a regular fixture in recent times and the Army have traditionally provided a stern test for the nation's finest young talent so it was disappointing to see them fall short this season.

Clarke started the rout in the sixth minute as England quickly moved the ball out wide to allow the speedster to cross in the corner and they doubled their

lead moments later as Phoebe Murray collected an offload from centre partner Lucy Attwood to sprint home.

Clarke notched her second as the Army failed to find touch with a clearance from their 22 and prop forward Ellena Perry added to the misery as she powered her way to the line midway through the half.

Some smart play from fly half Helena Rowland created the platform for Lilian Coe-Goddard to score England's fifth try as she pounced on an expertly-judged kick along the ground and Clarke completed her personal milestone on the stroke of half-time as the visitors found time and space out wide once more.

Murray and replacement Michaela Roberts both touched down in the second period to complete a comprehensive victory for the junior Red Roses.

The result leaves the Army with much to ponder as they failed to fire in attack, while their defensive frailties were ruthlessly exposed. ■



I thought I wasn't going to be able to cope with the cold but actually it hasn't been too bad and I think I've acclimatised. It took about two months but after a while I could tell I was getting used to it.

LCpl Sophie Goss, RAMC



I expected the camp to be very basic, but the facilities aren't bad at all.

LCpl Nacanieli Mate, R Welsh



In terms of my role as a joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) it's been a lot busier than I expected, which makes the time fly. There are a lot of different Nato airframes that want to play with the British and Estonian JTACs out here. That gives us the chance to work with aircraft we don't normally deal with.

Sgt Rob Bingham, RA



As a chef I was expecting just to be cooking with ten-man ration packs in the field, but I had £4,000 to spend on the lads for one ten-day serial, so I went loose on it and produced a different menu for every day. When the guys are working out in the cold they need something warming to keep them going.

LCpl Lee Prince, RLC



I don't think there have been any surprises, really. When I heard we were going to the Baltic states I just accepted I was going to be the coldest I'd ever been. For anyone else coming out here – bring your warm kit!

Fus Jonathon Hamill, R Welsh



I thought we'd be doing more sitting around but we've been doing lots of integration with the Estonians to make sure we're in a good place.

Bdr Julian Perreira, RA

Expect the unexpected

Soldier asked troops in Estonia whether Operation Cabrit had thrown up any surprises

I've been surprised by the contrast between the cities and the rural areas. We've been to Tallinn and Tartu and they're really modern and populated, but in the countryside it's a bit like stepping back in time.

Cfn Gareth Carter, REME



An Officer asked us for a forecast of benefits on his proposed PVR date and we told him he would receive more if he served just a few days longer.



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