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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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Cover picture: Graeme Main

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“

There's a lot more onus on individuals and more freedom of manoeuvre

”

New Horizon - p34



29



## History makers



WITH some genuinely sophisticated training going on across the Army right now (pages 7, 19, 34) and glass ceilings finally starting to be smashed when it comes to workforce diversity (page 20) it feels like a great time to be part of the military.

Inside this issue, we get the lowdown on an infrastructure project that promises to bring single living accommodation up to the standard you would expect of a modern and professional employer (page 40). If only similarly good news could be shared on family housing, where missed appointments and poor communication from the latest maintenance contractor continue to plague soldiers and their loved ones. We quiz the DIO on page 44.

Please get in touch with your own experiences and questions so we can keep on putting them to the people responsible for this stuff.

Reflecting on the failures of Russian forces in Ukraine recently, Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders said that despite top notch front-line equipment, an army's moral component (its will to fight) matters.

The fighting spirit of tomorrow rests on the improvements of today. So let's hope that our new-look Army doesn't forget the basics in its mission to reshape for future ops.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

### Where to find *Soldier*

#### ► Printed copies

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

#### ► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

#### ► Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at [soldiermagazine.co.uk](https://soldiermagazine.co.uk). Just click on the "read it now" tab.

#### ► Purchase

IF you're not in the Army you can buy *Soldier* from your high street magazine retailer or directly from us at [subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk) (£23 for 12 issues in the UK).

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A battle simulation at the 2019 Army Combat Power Demo

Pictures: Graeme Main

# A taste of things to come...

This month's Army Expo will showcase the future Service

**I**NNOVATION will be the talk of the town at this month's Army Expo, which will be staged at Copehill Down for five days on September 8-9 and 12-14.

The event – formerly known as the Army Combat Power Demo – has undergone a refresh for 2022 to reflect the widespread changes going on under Operation Mobilise.

As well as showcasing the usual line-up of military hardware that defence and industry visitors have come to expect (pictured), the event will see soldiers showing off tech that is still being trialled to illustrate how the future Service will operate.

The newly-established Experimentation and Trials Group will demo advances in lab research, robotics, nano UAS and camouflage systems as well as replacement options for the SA80 assault weapon.

Lt Col Ben Walters (RRF) from the

Army Strategic Engagement Team is one of the officers in charge of organising the varied showcase.

He said integration would be another big theme.

"We will be trying to paint a picture of how the Army is transforming," he told *Soldier*.

"It's really important to make sure people understand how the Service is modernising – particularly in a world where technology is changing things at a dramatic pace.

"Quite often people have a historical view of the military, but we want to show what it will become.

"Some of these things are incredibly exciting – you can easily see how they will become game changers."

Service personnel interested in the event can log in to watch the virtual Army Expo, which will be available to view on Defence Connect from around September 20. ■

The Watchkeeper UAV will be at the expo, along with Wildcat, Boxer, MLRS and more...



The Apache AH-64E will be on display

**“**  
We want to show what the Army will become  
**”**

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# GLOBAL SITREP

Picture: US Army Reserve

## 1. USA

### JUMP STARTS

PARATROOPERS embarked on a trip across the pond to lock horns with other nations during a competition to test their skills.

Taking to the air both individually and in four-strong teams, the troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team showed their mettle on Leapfest – a contest organised by Rhode Island Army National Guard. They were joined in New



England by their counterparts from nations including Germany, Italy, Colombia and South Africa.

The troops were tested with different parachute systems and had the opportunity to jump from unfamiliar aircraft.



## 2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

### MICKS MAKE TRACKS

MEMBERS of 1st Battalion, Irish Guards have taken over as the Roulement Infantry Company.

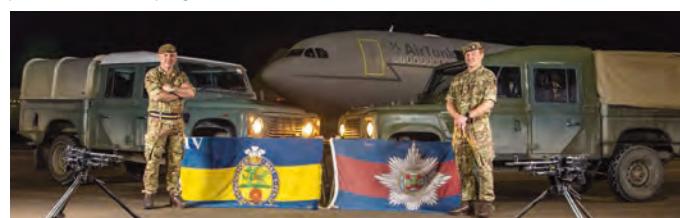
In a demanding tour, the troops will undertake patrols of remote countryside communities as well as training in tough conditions.

The South Atlantic outing also promises to be a poignant time,

taking place 40 years after the Falklands War.

Formed from Number 9 Company, the Aldershot-based Micks have replaced colleagues from 4th Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

Incoming OC Maj Mossie Hamilton said: "This deployment offers huge opportunity to contribute to a longstanding mission as we remember our forebears, particularly those from the Household Division."



## 3. LIBERIA

### PROMOTING PEACE



SOLDIERS from the Armed Forces of Liberia have benefitted from the counter-IED and medical

skills of UK troops in readiness for their deployment to Mali on UN peacekeeping ops.

Six personnel from the British Peace Support Team (Africa) travelled to the country to share their skills.

The trip came ahead of a busy stint for the 40-strong Liberian cohort. They will oversee short-term training packages with personnel from Malawi, Kenya, Ghana and Uganda this month.

The team comprises mainly military personnel who are stationed in Nairobi, Kenya.

## 4. FINLAND

### ARCTIC FOXES



ESTONIA-based troops from the 2nd Battalion, The Rifles Battlegroup swooped into the western region of Niinsalo on Royal Air Force Chinooks during Exercise Vigilant Fox. They worked with local high-readiness forces and the American 3rd Armoured Brigade Combat Team on serials including covert landings, short notice raids and helicopter assaults. Command and control protocols were also refined during the package, which followed the UK's joint security declaration with Finland in May.

Picture: Cpl Tim Laurence, RAF

## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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### 7. NEPAL PEAK APPEAL

FAMED climber Hari Budha Magar, who is aiming to become the first double above-knee amputee to scale Mount Everest, is trying to raise £300,000 to fund his ascent.

The former Royal Gurkha Rifles soldier, who lost both legs to an IED blast in Afghanistan in 2010, wants to climb the 29,031ft peak in nine months' time and inspire other veterans to realise their dreams.

However, the ex-infanteer needs the help of some pricey hi-tech hardware.

"From specially designed crampons to the heated sockets around my stumps, we are developing new technologies to allow me to climb Everest," he said. "It's already been an adventure getting to this point, but through the climb I hope we can positively transform the way people with a disability are perceived, and how they perceive themselves."

To support Hari visit [crowdfunder.co.uk/p/harieverest](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/harieverest)



### SOLDIERSPORT

Road racers battle Belgium's finest as Inter-Services preparations step up a gear – page 65

## 5. BULGARIA

### PRIDE IN DEFENCE

HONING core military skills and integrating with other nations were key objectives for troops on Exercise Platinum Lion.

Soldiers from C Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment worked with US allies and the host nation on a mock defence serial.

Staged on the Novo Selo training area, Bulgaria's annual package this year saw 450 personnel taking part.

And the Brits were able to get hands-on with some less familiar kit, including the Eastern European country's AK-47, MGS90 sniper rifle and PKM machine gun, plus the US M4A1 assault weapon.

The Royal Irish have been in Bulgaria since May as part of the UK effort to strengthen the nation's security.



## 6. UKRAINE HEADING EAST...

A FURTHER batch of artillery kit is en route to forces fighting Russian invaders in the Eastern European state, politicians have confirmed.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said further multiple launch rocket systems (pictured below) including "a significant number" of M31A1 missiles – which can hit targets at a range of 80km – would soon be in the hands of troops defending their homeland. The kit would help Ukrainian forces deal with Russian artillery, he added.

The soldiers had been trained in the UK on how to use the equipment.

Wallace stressed: "Our continued support sends a very clear message – that Britain and the international community remain opposed to this illegal war and will stand shoulder-to-shoulder, providing defensive military aid."

● Infanteers train Ukrainian recruits, page 29



Picture: Graeme Main

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# FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



## On the pull in Telford

STAFF at a major defence contractor made tracks for a good cause by pulling a main battle tank along their factory's test track in Telford. More than 50 employees at Rheinmetall BAE Systems dragged the next-generation Challenger 3 demonstrator for 47 metres in three minutes during a SSAFA Big Brew Up event. Several staff members also laid on a private motor show for the charity, displaying their own classic cars to colleagues.

Amount raised:  
£700  
For SSAFA

## MORE CHILDCARE HELP

FUNDING to help military personnel pay for childcare before and after school is to be rolled out across the country from this month.

From the start of the new term, the wraparound childcare scheme will entitle serving parents of primary school-aged children up to 20 free hours per week.

Open to all UK-based troops and those stationed abroad but involuntarily separated from their families in Britain, the support recognises the disruption that military life can cause as well as the benefits of greater stability for youngsters.

Home-schooled children are also eligible, but not those in boarding schools.

For full details on entitlements and exceptions, including how to register, read **2022DIN01-079** or visit the Army Families Federation's FAQ page via [aff.org.uk](http://aff.org.uk)

“  
They are eye-catching and will do the job  
”



Percentage of the public who admit they know little or nothing about female soldiers and the roles they undertake, according to a poll by Anglia Ruskin University. The survey is likely to concern defence chiefs, who hope to see women account for just under a third of the Armed Forces workforce by 2030. Currently, they make up around 12 per cent of troops.

### IN NUMBERS

82



THE latest Army ad campaign with laser-eyed droids as its centrepiece will help attract the digital generation to the ranks, former and serving personnel have told *Soldier*.

Maj (Retd) Laurence Roche (ex-AGC (ETS)), a one-time instructor at Army Foundation College Harrogate who now works for a publicist, said the drive was insightful and would land well with potential joiners.

His view was shared by others, who agreed it had hit the mark and was the best one launched for some time.

The short films are the latest instalment of the now-established “This is Belonging” series, created with marketing firm Capita.

They aim to challenge the idea that advances in technology will one day see human troops replaced.

With the strapline “nothing can do what a soldier can do”, they have been shown on prime time television slots and in cinemas throughout the summer.

They depict a dystopian battlespace with robot infantry reminiscent of *The Terminator* movies (see above and right). However, a droid gradually fades to a female combatant operating actual cutting-edge equipment.

Roche, who recently retired from the Army after a full career including several Telic and Herrick tours, said the adverts would pay off. ■

Having also been a coordinator of brigade-level media ops during two decades in uniform, he believed the theme would fire up imaginations.

“I have heard people talking about these adverts – they are eye-catching and will do the job,” he added.

“We are trying to attract high-quality men and women to the Army and this campaign will catch the attention of those involved in gaming culture.”

The initiative was launched after a poll of 2,000 people found three-in-ten believed the Service could one day rely on robots rather than humans.

A quarter reckoned that tech advances could lead to “super soldiers” with enhanced abilities.

Roche added: “I know there will be some predominately older people who disagree with the Army’s approach, but then this is not aimed at them.”

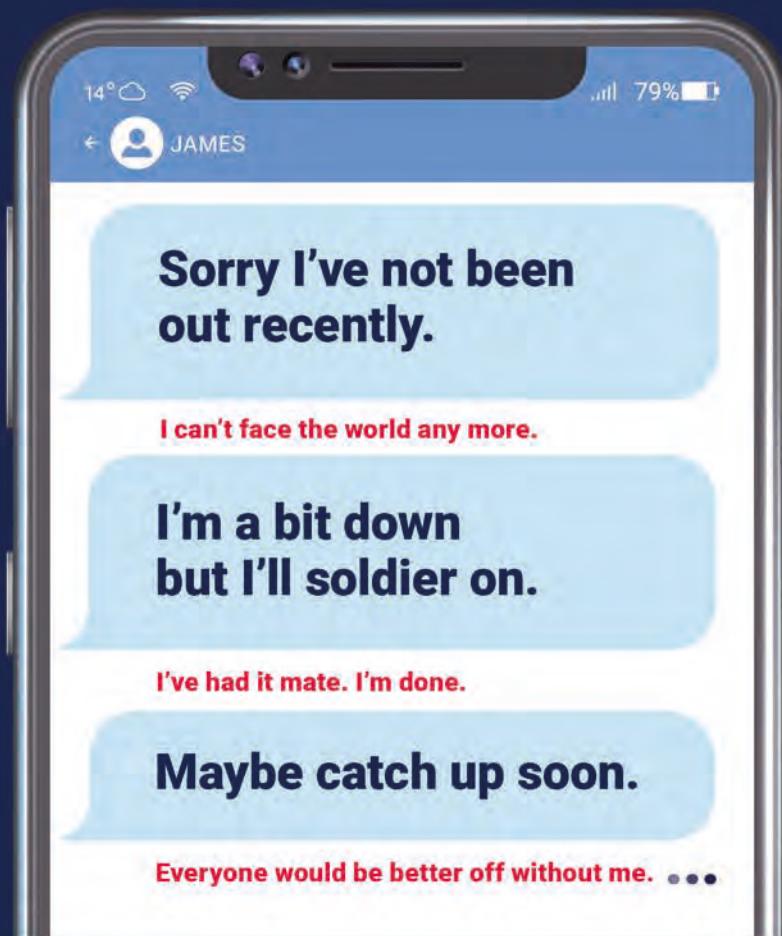
Others agreed the ads would probably catch on.

Sgt Jen Pheasey (R Signals) said: “I really like the advert – it will be popular with young people and definitely hits the mark in my view.”

“My only concern is the focus on females – it seems this has been the theme with the last couple of campaigns,” the NCO added, suggesting the Army needed to ensure it targeted the widest possible recruitment base. ■

# READ between the LINES

**1 in 3 veterans have felt suicidal in their lifetime.\***



**Could you read between the lines?  
We're on a mission to create  
suicide-safer communities for veterans.**  
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**HELP for  
HEROES**



Picture: Cpl Nathan Tanuku, RLC

■ BRITISH soldiers took their place among more than 800 performers at this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. The revamped event saw the Army act as lead Service, supported by defence colleagues from the USA and Canada with logistic support from HQ Scotland. The annual spectacle featured music, dance, performance and cultural showcases from around the globe, with the legendary sound of the Massed Pipes and Drums echoing around the Esplanade with fireworks to boot.

# Hives of information

## One-stop shops are there to be used, troops reminded

**S**OLDIERS are being urged to make better use of the Army's network of information support centres.

Hives, as they are known, are dotted across 40 locations in the UK and overseas – including Cyprus, Gibraltar, Germany and Brunei.

Staffed by civilians, they can find answers to just about any question that Regulars, Reserves, veterans or their families may ask.

They are also active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, where a raft of online information is provided.

Nikki Peterson, head of the Army Hive, said there was a misunderstanding that the hub existed just for families.

"We are here for everyone," she told *Soldier*. "It doesn't matter where you are, if you come to us with a query we won't stop until we have helped you.

"And if you need to know quickly, we are the place. You ask, we answer – that's our mentality."

Hives can help with any area of military life – from housing issues to careers, relationship support, finance and civvy street training.

"We are often the first people to hold the baton when there's a more serious problem too," Peterson continued. "We have dealt with

domestic abuse, child protection issues and have staff specially trained in these areas.

"We are confidential but can link in with the chain of command as well.

"And we have experts on foreign and Commonwealth casework.

"But we can also help if someone just wants to know which shop can offer them a military discount.

"People have busy lives these days – why wouldn't you make use of this established and tested service to do the legwork for you in finding the information you need?

"You can spend time on Google or you can just come to us."

Vitinia Fong, welfare clerk for The Light Dragoons, said the Hive had proved an invaluable service for her unit over recent months.

"Information plays a very big part in welfare and we find the Hive's services so useful, whether that is for single soldiers or families left behind during deployments," she said.

"There seems to be nothing they don't do." ■

**IN NUMBERS**  
80,000 queries to Hives each year  
50 staff employed across the world



## SPACE TO BREASTFEED

■ "A SERVICE person should not have to choose between breastfeeding and going back to work. We can absolutely do both."

This was the message from LCpl Natasha Day (RAMC), founder of the Defence Breastfeeding Network, who captured the above images at a special photoshoot at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to mark World Breastfeeding Week.

So far, the network has opened 33 breastfeeding rooms across defence and at the end of July a new policy was released to provide guidance to breastfeeding Servicewomen and their chain of command.

Read **2022DIN01-076** for more.

**“**  
We won't  
stop until  
we get the  
answer  
**”**

## HOPE FOR PROBLEM DRINKERS IN NORTH

■ A SCHEME that helps personnel in the North with alcohol and gambling problems has been secured for another year thanks to Army funding.

Set up in 2017 by charity Humankind, Project Reset has supported nearly 100 soldiers struggling with addiction.

The initiative provides online and in-person support sessions via a closed Facebook group plus education outreach.

Coordinator WO2 John Reynolds (Rifles), who has previously used Project Reset himself, said the vision was to one day make the service available across England.

"We continue to see fantastic outcomes and feedback we have received from soldiers indicates that, without our support, they would have left the Army or ended up in trouble due to their problematic substance use or gambling," he added.



## ESPORTS SHOW GOES LIVE

■ BROADCASTER BFBS has launched a live esports show presented by OJ Borg.

The 30-minute programme focuses on the military's favourite gaming titles, discusses the latest news from the esports world and features input from players in all three Services.

"Hearing about how significant esports is in the Armed Forces, and how much it can improve the well-being of those serving, I am honoured to be a part of this incredible show," Borg said.

*BFBS* Esports Live is broadcast at 1830 every Tuesday on BFBS Radio, as well as on its Facebook and Twitch accounts, and is available as a podcast.



Picture: Richard Watt

## 80-YEAR MILESTONE

■ PARATROOPERS past and present celebrated the 80th anniversary of their regiment with a Colchester parade.

All four battalions took part in the occasion at Merville Barracks, while the Red Devils freefall display team added some airborne action to proceedings.

Established in 1942 to exploit developments in parachuting, the formation went on to cement its formidable reputation in campaigns such as Normandy and Arnhem.

Regimental Secretary Maj (Retd) Adam Jowett said its personnel had served in every conflict that British soldiers have fought in since then.

"The achievements throughout those 80 years set the standards that we expect of the current generation of paratroopers in their vital role as the tip of the spear for the British Army," he added.

## SULTAN AT SANDHURST

■ THE Sultan of Oman was on the VIP guest list at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as he watched his son pass out of the prestigious institution. Crown Prince Theyazin Haitham Tariq Al-Said was among 103 cadets forming up as they finished the short commissioning course for Reserve officers.



“  
This event  
showed who  
we are and  
what we do  
”

# Groundwork for the Games

## Soldiers lend ceremonial and security support to sporting spectacle

■ AROUND 1,000 Armed Forces personnel played a supporting role at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

Their most significant contribution was in assisting the West Midlands Police security operation – the biggest the region had seen – but their presence spread far and wide.

As well as competing in the Games themselves (page 72), personnel were involved in the officiating of competitions and participated in the opening ceremony.

The Band of The Royal Marines provided a fanfare of trumpeters for the spectacular show and more than 130 Forces flag-raisers were deployed across the venues to lead some 280 medal presentations.

Commander of the deployment Brig Matt Pierson said: "Our personnel raised flags during medal ceremonies, supported security efforts and competed for medals.

"Sport, health and fitness are core elements of the Armed Forces

community and this event showed who we are and what we do."

As part of the long-term planning for the Games, a venue assistance force made up of Service personnel – including Regulars and Reserves – was deployed to support local authorities.

Among those helping to deliver a safe experience for athletes and spectators were expert advisers and bomb disposal teams.

Assistant Chief Constable Matt Ward, gold commander for Birmingham 2022, said: "It was a great opportunity for our people to get to work with military colleagues and officers and staff from so many different police forces and organisations.

"There was a fantastic team spirit, not just inside the stadiums and venues but out on the streets with everyone working together towards the same goal, a safe and truly memorable Birmingham 2022." ■

**SoldierSport – page 63**



Picture: Shutterstock

## FLEXIBLE WORKING WARRIOR GIVES ARMY THE THUMBS-UP

■ THE British Army is ahead of the times in the support it offers to women and working parents, flexible working campaigner Anna Whitehouse has said. Speaking on Army podcast *The Locker*, the broadcaster and author listened to the experiences of personnel and the support networks and variable working patterns available to them. "I think it's important to recognise the organisations that are doing a really good job," Whitehouse said. "And the Army is an incredible example of that. For any young girls looking at the Army going 'that's not a place for me', yes it is!"



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And now even greater complexity has been added as a consequence of the so-called McCloud Remedy. This affects all those serving on or before 31st March 2012 and on or after 1st April 2015 (including service leavers). You will have to choose between the entitlements of your legacy scheme and AFPS 15 for the Remedy period. This decision will need to be made from October 2023 onwards.

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BETTER CHOICES

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# Ground view

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

**S**UMMER leave seems a distant memory as I put pen to paper this month – with the holiday season well behind us, autumn is now fast approaching.

The time off finished suddenly for me – I flew back on a Sunday after a couple of weeks away and was in a taxi by 0300 the next morning, heading for the airport and a trip to Estonia. I was literally back to work overnight.

Since then, my travels have taken me through eastern Europe and I'm in Poland as I write this column. Rapid return to duty aside, however, it has been great to see troops on Op Cabrit, who are working so well with our Nato allies.

They have been away from their families, some for long periods, and unlike many of us have not had summer leave. It has been a tough few months, not least because the security situation makes comms with home more testing.

In Estonia, I had the opportunity to meet soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh Battlegroup. They deployed after finishing an exercise in Germany at the beginning of the year – arriving not long after the Russian

invasion of Ukraine – and are now coming to the end of their time on deployment. The King's Royal Hussars are leading the next outing.

The battlegroup has French and Danish companies embedded within it, providing a different dynamic and another new experience.

I also caught up with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, who have been a crucial part of the op in the country as well as working elsewhere in Europe, then moved to Poland where The Royal Dragoon Guards are operating as part of a US-led force.

The Queen's Royal Hussars are next up on my schedule.

While demanding, these deployments have seen personnel learn a huge amount as they operate within a complex multinational environment.

Integration is crucial in deterring would-be aggressors and it is inspiring to see how soldiers – and young NCOs in particular – are rising to the challenge.

Events in Ukraine have focused the mind and there is a clear sense of purpose among our troops, who are resolute despite lengthy separation from loved ones. My thanks for all you are doing.

**It has been a tough few months**

“ ”

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

**Q** Are there any Army-familiar places you've not visited?

**A** Belize, believe it or not. I'm hoping to go at some stage



## Taking the next step



Would-be officers at Stanta

GOING forward for a commission is a tough undertaking – even after serving for many years with testing leadership roles in the ranks.

Given the demands, it is great to see many senior soldiers continuing to put themselves forward for selection. And I am looking forward to meeting those responsible for choosing the next late-entry cohort at the Army Officer Selection Board when I return to the UK.

The discernment

process – which in the past was carried out by individual regiments and corps – has now been centralised, ensuring that we have a much more consistent approach.

The chosen candidates will complete a shortened version of the commissioning course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst – it will be a huge leap in their careers.

Good luck to them all – we must retain the very best talent.

## Glad to get involved...

■ IT IS vital to put the soldier's needs first in the design of single living accommodation – we all know how frustrating it can be when not up to scratch.

With this in mind, it was great to be invited by a defence contractor to provide some input into the design of new blocks that are set to be

built in the near future.

I went along with an officer and a couple of troops to impart some of my lived experience, acquired knowledge and to give an opinion on the specific needs of our serving personnel.

It's a refreshing approach.

● *Housing focus – page 40*

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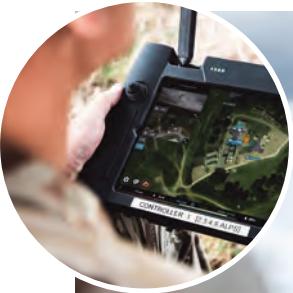
**Engage.** Hear about the UK training we have been doing alongside Ukrainian Armed Forces and the importance of UN Missions, such as Operation Newcombe in Mali.

**Constrain.** Join UK forces deployed to Eastern Europe and find out about how we use modern technology to train alongside our allies.

**Warfight.** Get up close and personal to the Global Response Force involving air assault and aviation, followed up by Brigade Combat Teams.

**How to join:**  
 Follow @BritishArmy for more information and the event link nearer the time.





Pictures: Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC

# ALL EYES



## Tech leap sees one soldier operate several UAVs at once

**A** DRONE swarm demo has been completed over Salisbury Plain in a British Army first.

It represents a breakthrough in tech and flying regulations, according to a Service statement.

Last month *Soldier* reported how UAV training in the UK was being held back by complex civilian and Forces regulations and red tape.

However, this exercise was the first time the Military Aviation Authority had allowed one Service person to operate a swarm.

"The standout feature of this event was seeing an operator control more than one drone at the same time from one single unit," explained Lt Col Arthur Dawe (SG), commanding officer of the Infantry Trials and Development Unit (ITDU). "This added scale and complexity, with each drone able to carry out a separate task."

He continued: "This is a real amplifier, adding capacity, force protection, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

"The intent going forward is to add

a precision strike capability.

"This will not only assist in our targeting but in our strike capability, making us more lethal at range which will protect our very valuable forces and people."

Two different UAS systems were used during the package – the Atlas, where one operator controls four drones on a tablet with individual manual taskings, and the Elbit, where one operator tasks six drones via autonomous missions.

Two scenarios were tested – providing 24-hour surveillance around a specific location and artificial intelligence communicating with the systems to plan overwatch.

Dominic Ferrett, lead UAS engineer at Defence Equipment and Support's Future Capability Group, said swarms would mean reduced operator burden with ground and air elements also set to be incorporated.

LCpl Kai Webb (Rifles) from ITDU, who operated the swarm, said: "This type of technology will be a massive help when rolled out to units."



**WIN**  
An Elliot Brown watch worth £445

LAST month's spine line clues may have been recognised by those with a keen passion for two-wheeled pursuits.

Inspired by our mountain biking enthusiasts at the Harz AT wing in Germany, (Brendan) Fairclough, (Laurie) Greenland, (Danny) Hart and (Bernard) Kerr are all the names of professional British mountain bikers.

This month we have teamed up with UK watch brand Elliot Brown ([elliotbrownwatches.com](http://elliotbrownwatches.com)) to offer one reader a Holton Professional.

Worth £445, it was developed in response to a request from a specialist branch of the military who demanded a fit-for-purpose professional watch capable of surviving the rigours of life in the field.

The offer comes on the back of the company winning an Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme gold award, which identifies businesses that employ and support those who serve, veterans and their families.

Based in Poole, Elliot Brown actively recruits from military communities and 50 per cent of its workforce are either former personnel or spouses.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply tell us what links the clues on the spine of this magazine. Answers, including phone number, to the usual address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by September 30. Good luck!

*In this month's issue...*

## JACKAL AND HIDE

Poland-bound troops go undetected in Dumfries and Galloway – page 34



**ELLIOT BROWN**



**SPINE LINE COMPETITION**

# WEED TO SUCCEED

7 QUESTIONS / NEXT STEPS / FITNESS / NUTRITION / EXPERIENCE

**Name:** Lt Gen Sharon Nesmith

**Role:** Deputy chief of the general staff

**Career milestones:**

Joined the Royal Corps of Signals in 1992; served operational tours to the Balkans and Iraq; commanded 1st (UK) Signal Brigade from 2014 to 2016; subsequently served as Head of Manning (Army) and Director Personnel, before becoming GOC Army Recruitment and Initial Training Command

**Family:** Lt Gen Nesmith's husband, Walker, works as a tree surgeon and she has two sons

# Breaking

Soldier grills the Army's first ever female deputy chief of the general staff, Lt Gen Sharon Nesmith, about her history-making gig

**1** **What difference do you hope your appointment will make?**

I believe I can bring a different set of experiences and perspectives and that's important at every level, but especially at senior leadership and decision making. I think it's also a great example of role-modelling. If you see it, you can believe it and you will see more of the opportunities than the barriers.

**2** **Would it have changed things for the younger you to see someone in this position?**

I've reflected on that a lot and I suspect it would have done, but more unconsciously than consciously. I had great people around me when I was a young officer that we would now describe as being very inclusive, although that's not the language we used at the time. I felt valued by those I worked for and alongside, however, I think our expectations for young women are very different now. My expectations then were less – rightly or wrongly.

**3** **What would you say to people seeing your appointment as tokenism?**

I don't question why I've been selected as the next DCGS. I know why people have invested in me, valued me and recognised what I can do and much of that isn't anything to do with gender. If people want to judge me, they need to get to know me.



# the mould



**4** **How do you feel when you see continued reports of Servicewomen suffering abuse or harassment?**

I recognise it still happens, however, what I like to see is that it's now talked about and not ignored or brushed under the carpet. We all look at our shoes when it's raised and it makes us feel a bit uncomfortable – but then that is what will make us do something about it. Six or seven years ago it was pointed out to me that there were certain behaviours towards me or others that I had perhaps become a bit immune to, but once they had been called out I saw them for what they were. That's the beauty of diverse teams – we can all share different perspectives and be willing to say it out loud, so we all make better decisions and are much better informed.



## 5 Would it have made a difference to you if combat roles had been open to women when you began your career?

Yes and no – when I was thinking about joining the Forces I didn't opt for the Royal Navy because women couldn't go to sea at that time. That was enough for me to say 'maybe that's not for me', so I think it would probably have been an attractive option. But when I look at my strengths now, I enjoy being able to combine my background in STEM with delivering outputs for the Army and I've done that best by serving in what is a technical corps.



## 6 What has been your favourite role until now?

Commanding officer. I loved the fact that we created a very strong team ethos and had a clear single sense of purpose that we all rallied around. That made me skip to work.

## 7 If you could give your younger self some advice, what would it be?

Be yourself. For a long time I tried to be like people around me and I should have just been comfortable in my own skin because I was bringing a different perspective and that was the value I was adding. Also, seek out opportunities and have fun on the way.

# Network

## Why Service leavers should master the art

► MORE than 70 per cent of jobs are secured through networking, according to Lisa Jones, career consultant at RFEA The Forces Employment Charity.

But the former Army captain says the idea of selling themselves to a roomful of civilians might not come naturally to some military folk.

These are her top tips for success...

### 1 Remember, networking is just talking to people

I often say it's just about having conversations – and military people tend to be quite good at that. Everyone has something unique and interesting to say about themselves, even if they don't realise it. However, even an informal chat could lead to something so you need to consider your message.

### 2 Develop your “30-second elevator pitch”

Consider your strengths and transferable skills and work out how to articulate them succinctly. People generally struggle with this, let alone Service personnel who have never had to do this before, so practise in a safe environment, whether that's to a friend, family member or the mirror. You can also record yourself.

# to get work

## 3 Ask for something the other person can easily deliver

Rather than going in with, “hello, help me, I need a job”, say something like, “I’d like to learn more about your sector, organisation or role”. Then allow them to talk. Other good questions are, “why did you choose the sector?” and “what do you wish you’d known?”.

## 4 Buddy up with someone

If you’re going to an event you could take a friend, colleague or ally – there is safety in numbers. But everyone is in the same situation. Look for veteran-focused events – these are a safe space and make it much easier to get conversations started.

## 5 Don’t forget online

Platforms like LinkedIn make life much easier than the old days of business cards. And while face-to-face is always better, Covid has made online conversations more acceptable. Getting an appointment in the diary to meet someone in person can be difficult but squeezing in a Zoom chat with them might get things moving more quickly.

## 6 Start early

RFEA The Forces Employment Charity exists to support you throughout your military career, before you’ve even decided to leave, and after you’ve moved into the civilian workplace. Use us as a sounding board to help you work out who you are, what transferable skills you bring and what value you can add to an organisation.

## The 3 aims of networking

### 1 Knowledge

Time spent on recce is seldom wasted as the military saying goes, so treat networking like researching

### 2 Access

Your point of contact might eventually be a route in to a position. Lots of openings are never advertised

### 3 Contacts

The person you are talking to will hopefully become a friendly face in an organisation whom you can ask for advice



**Name:** Lisa Jones

**Role:** Career consultant at RFEA The Forces Employment Charity

**Military service:** Joined the Adjutant General's Corps' Staff and Personnel Support branch, serving in Cyprus, Bosnia and Northern Ireland. A Dari speaker, she later deployed to Afghanistan as a Reservist

# Strap yourself in

The science behind  
picking the right  
sports bra

► AS any active woman will tell you, the struggle is real when it comes to finding the perfect undergarment for phys.

Striking the right balance between support and comfort can prove a bit of a mission. However, Rachel Ballantyne from online retailer KnockerLocker says that need not be the case.

The former Army wife believes a top-notch sports bra is not an indulgence, but an essential piece of kit, whatever your chosen activity.

“Aside from causing pain, inadequate support can result in postural difficulties and musculoskeletal issues in the shoulders, neck and back,” she says.

“Female runners have been found to shorten their stride length and alter their gait to minimise bounce, as well as tensing chest and shoulder muscles and holding their breath.

“In fact, 32 per cent of London 2012 marathon participants said they experienced breast pain, citing exercise as the primary cause.

“Women should not have to suffer these issues anymore, there are loads of brilliant bras out there.”

Whether you need better support during green PT, on the sports pitch or in downtime gym sessions, Ballantyne says these are the things to look out for...

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

## In numbers

**50**

– percentage of women who experience breast pain. It can be associated with hormones or inadequate support, especially during sport

KnockerLocker are offering the first three customers shopping at [knockerlocker.co.uk](http://knockerlocker.co.uk) a free bra.

Pick any of their range and try the code **PODIUM** at checkout to see if you are in luck. If not, use **SOLDIER** to benefit from an ongoing 20 per cent discount

## Finding the right fit

Start by making sure your best fitting "regular" bra is the right size – surveys claim a staggering 80 per cent of women are still wearing the wrong size. Check the following:

● **Underband** – this is the main source of support in the bra. It needs to be snug but if you struggle to do it up, it's too tight. If it rides up at the back, it's too loose – this is the number one fitting error. Lift your arms up and down – the band should not move on your ribs.

● **Cups** should fully enclose the breast – no baggy areas or breast bulging out under the armpit or at the front.

● **Underwire** should follow the natural crease of your breast and not sit on your breast tissue at all.

● **The centre front** should be flat against your breastbone – if there is a gap underneath try a bigger cup size.

● **Straps** should sit comfortably on your shoulders. If they are digging in it is likely your band is too loose and they are taking too much strain.

## Different types of sports bras

There are three major categories:

1 **Compression** are essentially crop tops that squish your breasts in – okay if you are up to a petite C cup, but not beyond.

2 **Encapsulating** styles hold each breast in an individual cup – either wired and/or moulded – so the bra supports each individually. These are great for reducing movement in three dimensions.

3 **Hybrids** are a combination of the two – the best of both worlds!

## Which is best?

There is no definitive formula for the sports bra that best reduces breast movement.

However, there are a few key features that are consistently found in the best-performing bras studied:

**Wide, elastic, adjustable shoulder straps** and an adjustable underband. **Nylon** material, not polyester. **Encapsulating** style or **hybrid**. It has also been found that the **higher the neckline**, the greater the bounce reduction. Beyond these features, whether wired or not, racerback or regular, with or without padding, it is down to individual comfort.

# Electrolyte DIY

Don't waste money on expensive sports drinks – make your own at home

► HYDRATION is key to every bodily function, including your performance during exercise.

According to health provider Bupa, while plain water is enough to get you through moderate phys sessions, strenuous training could see you lose up to two litres of fluid per hour through sweat and breathing – and that might mean you have to top up your electrolytes.

These essential minerals, including sodium, magnesium and potassium, help the body regulate chemical reactions and the balance of fluid inside and outside of cells. Low levels could lead to cramping, nausea and dizziness.

But before you reach for a pricey, sugar-laden sports drink, try making your own for a fraction of the cost with this easy recipe (right).

Using a typical supermarket own brand cordial will set you back around 13p per serving, compared to a 750ml bottle of a popular branded sports drink at £1.25 – great news during a cost-of-living crisis!

Mix 200ml of squash (not the sugar-free kind, you do need a small amount) with 800ml water and a large pinch of salt – that's it.

Or for a more creative – if slightly pricier option – blend a dash of freshly squeezed orange, lemon or lime juice with unsweetened coconut water and add honey and salt



### Are you well hydrated?

A quick way to tell is to check your urine. Healthy wee should be odourless and the colour of light straw. If it smells or looks dark, you need to drink more



### Want to get scientific?

How much you sweat is influenced by your size, gender, fitness, environment and exercise intensity.

To work out exactly how much you need to drink, weigh yourself before exercise, ideally first thing in the morning after you have been to the loo. Then record your weight after exercise – again after going to the toilet – and subtract the reading from the first figure.

For every kilogram of body weight you lose, drink up to a litre and a half of fluid

### Top tip – little and often

It can take time for fluids to be absorbed into your body, so drinking steadily during the day is better than chugging it all in one go. Keep a bottle of water handy at all times



# ‘It’s about inspiring the next generation’

Reservist marks ten years of project honouring Sikh military service



► A DECADE ago this month, Jay Singh-Sohal embarked on a mission to rekindle the memory of a largely forgotten historical battle.

Saragarhi Day marks the actions of 21 Sikh soldiers who defended a remote outpost on the Indian frontier against 10,000 Afghan troops on September 12, 1897.

While their bravery was still commemorated in the Indian Army, in the UK the clash had faded from public consciousness outside of military history circles – and the then lance corporal decided the situation needed to change.

Ten years on, the event has become an annual fixture and its founder is a captain in the General Service Corps.

Here, he explains how it has evolved to help forge new links between the Service and Sikh communities...

“ The role of Sikhs in the Armed Forces can be traced back to Saragarhi when we proudly stood shoulder to shoulder with the British.

A small group of 21 Sikhs defended a communications post against the



onslaught of 10,000 tribesmen in what is now Pakistan.

We began as enemies in the Anglo-Sikh wars but 1897 was a turning point and it quickly became a collaborative relationship that later proved vital in the First and Second World Wars.

I've always felt this was an episode which could start a dialogue around British Sikh service and what it means today.

It's not a jingoistic means of celebrating empire. Instead, here is a shared history and a heritage we should be proud of.

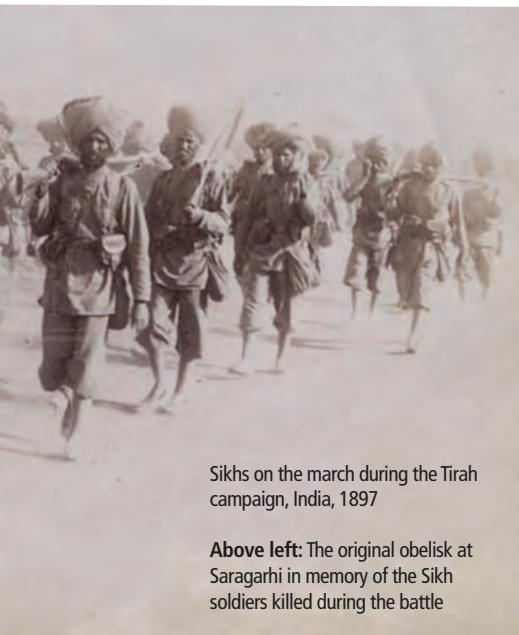
It started with the launch of my book, *Saragarhi: The Forgotten Battle* at the Royal Military Academy in 2013 and grew until last year, when we unveiled a statue in Wolverhampton commemorating the battle (pictured right) – the first ever outside of India.

Through my research I found that after the Partition in 1947 the campaign was no longer really recognised in the UK.

But there were a lot of myths and I wondered what the true story was, so that's what started the journey.

I've had tremendous support from the Army fraternity along the way, which has spurred me on.

I was a lance corporal in the Intelligence Corps knocking on the doors of some very senior people in Main Building and they were absolutely amazing in terms of engaging with the effort and creating an event that allows us to have deeper conversations about our



Sikhs on the march during the Tirah campaign, India, 1897

**Above left:** The original obelisk at Saragarhi in memory of the Sikh soldiers killed during the battle



shared traditions and mutual respect.

The first couple of years were about inviting members of the Sikh community in, and thereafter it became about taking the event out into the wider community.

They've really embraced it, which is fantastic to see. I feel very strongly about both British and Sikh values of public service, not just in an Army uniform but how we as a group can continue to serve our country, whether it's in the police or out in society, as we saw during Covid.

I was the first in my family to join the Armed Forces. I was raised on stories of Sikh service and valour and it was always in my mind that I wanted to enlist.

As a young kid I had a lot of energy – I was spurred on by my family and Sikh values to strive for success and experience different things.

So, while it's nice to see how much ground we've covered with Saragarhi Day this has never been just about me – it's about inspiring youngsters,

from my background or other ethnic minorities or people from inner city areas, and showing them opportunities that they don't traditionally have.

There are a number of people who have come to a Saragarhi event, learnt more about the Army ethos and seen the career choices it offers.

I'm excited to see how the next generation move the story forwards themselves. ■

“



**Name:** Capt Jay Singh-Sohal

**Age:** 39

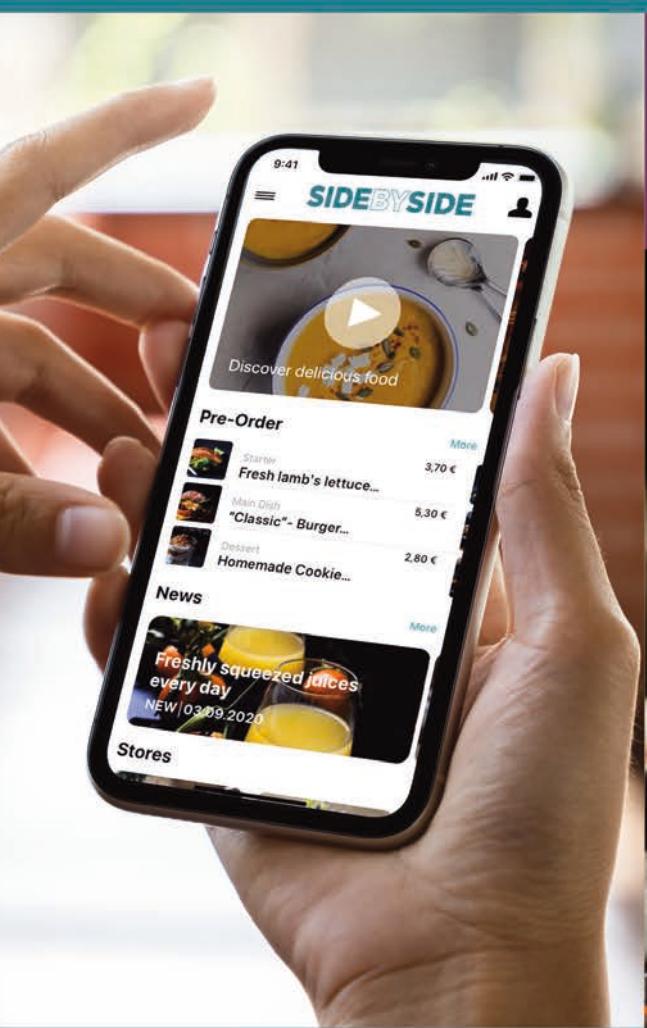
**Cap badge:** General Service Corps

**Military career:** Originally joined the Intelligence Corps in 2009; commissioned in 2017; served on Operation Shader in Iraq in 2015, mobilised for Op Rescript in 2020

**Civilian roles:** Journalist, author, TV producer, documentary-maker and communications strategist. Follow him on Twitter @JSingh-Sohal

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# HUMBLING, WORTHWHILE, VITAL

Infanteers reflect on moulding Ukrainian office workers into front-line soldiers

**“**WE MOVE in a zig-zag across the ground, it's called hard targeting and we do it to reduce the chances of being shot,” shouts Cpl Ryan Braunton-Turner (Rifles) at the line-up of uniformed men in front of him.

This is the British Army training new recruits for the Ukrainian Ground Forces in an open field at Salisbury Plain Training Area. A group of mainly junior NCOs and officers from D Company, 5th Battalion, The Rifles are overseeing a lesson in basic patrol skills – and, yes, it really is that basic.

“You've got to appreciate that these people have only been in the military for five days and, as you'd expect, they come from very varied backgrounds,” the junior NCO tells *Soldier*.

“Some have lived all their lives in cities with office jobs and have no experience of working in arduous conditions, while others are farmers, labourers or factory workers.

“This is, literally, the first time any of them have done any patrolling.”

The Rifles personnel are spending the day teaching the Ukrainians the concept of moving tactically and trying to build their battlefield awareness.

They've provided demonstrations of patrolling in different formations and explained the rationale behind employing various tactics and techniques in different environments.

“It can be difficult to explain that while working only in a flat, open field,” says D Coy's OC, Maj ■

Words: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main





“  
I've been in  
the Army for  
seven years and  
this might be the  
most worthwhile  
thing I've been  
asked to do

LCpl Dylan  
Emblen, Rifles

”





» John Warburton.

“It’s conceptual and this open canvas helps them understand the content.

“They need to know how to do it on a flat field first, where we can see them clearly, before we move to complex terrain like urban areas, otherwise they’ll really struggle.”

During their time training in the UK the Ukrainian recruits will progress through a syllabus that is loosely based on the initial training programme for a British soldier, covering topics such as weapons handling and moving on to section attacks.

“They have to pass the Army weapons handling standard before progressing on to any field exercises and to do that there are a number of criteria they must meet,” explains Lt Miles Hamilton (Rifles).

“For a UK soldier at Catterick this normally takes about a week, but we condense it into a much shorter time frame by stripping the lessons down.

“Consequently, they won’t have the depth of knowledge a British recruit would have, but we are passing on the bare essentials they need to operate safely as a soldier in the field.

“In fact, the whole course for the Ukrainians has been altered as we’re having to accelerate this away from the usual trajectory by removing certain chunks of the normal syllabus.

“Obviously, there’s no drill, ironing, room inspections or PT, and it’s not worth us spending time trying to make individuals a little bit fitter in the brief period they are with us.”

The 5 Rifles personnel have to work surprisingly hard to deliver the training they are providing, however.

Their instructions are passed to a translator and then a member of the Ukrainian Ground Forces, who relays the message to the recruits. But there is good reason for this »

# International effort

THE UK might be one of the most visible nations training Ukrainian troops – but it is far from alone in a global endeavour to help the state defend itself from the Russian invasion.

Experienced instructors from several militaries are now on British shores to bring Eastern European forces up-to-speed on new kit, skills and drills.

As well as teaching soldiering basics, a key aim of the training is to migrate Ukrainian troops away from old Soviet-era weapons to state-of-the-art Western tech – including artillery kit such as the multiple launch rocket system, Starstreak air defence missiles and support weapons such as Javelin.

The action follows widespread international condemnation of the Russian invasion in February – matched by robust sanctions against Vladimir Putin's government and certain individuals linked to the Kremlin.

Those joining training efforts in the UK include Canada, which is sending 225 personnel across the Atlantic to assist on an initial four-month outing.

The first cohort is to be drawn from 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Light Infantry. They will teach a basic syllabus including fieldcraft and weapons handling.

More than 100 troops from New Zealand have also made tracks to Britain – with two infantry training groups delivering a core skills package.

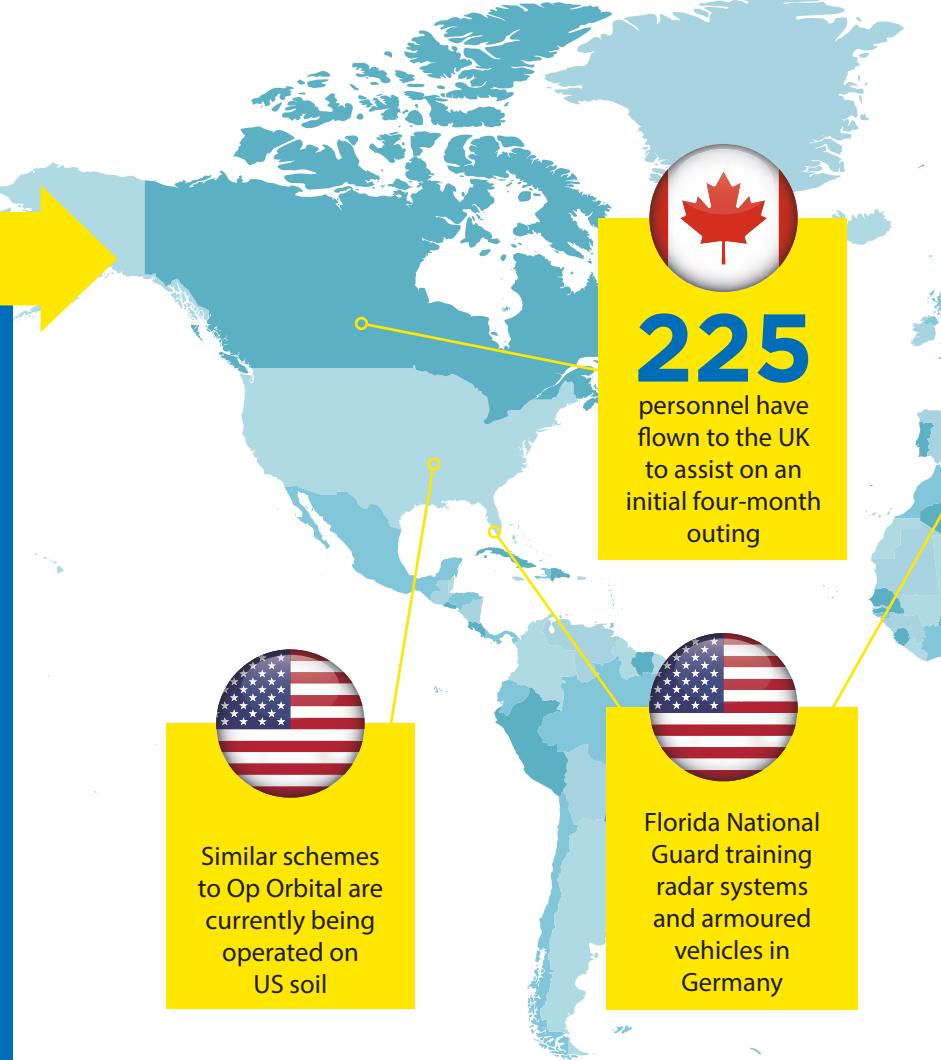
Sweden has despatched 120 instructors to provide training in the UK until the end of the year. The state's defence minister Peter Hultqvist said it was "immensely important" that the world united to help Ukraine.

Neighbouring Denmark has also pledged a similar number of personnel to assist with the effort while suggesting it will launch a similar initiative on home soil.

Meanwhile, the US Department of Defense confirmed its own training initiative in Germany, led by reservist troops from the Florida National Guard.

Some American soldiers previously served as instructors in western Ukraine in the same way as British soldiers working on Op Orbital. There are similar schemes being run on US soil, including in Kansas.

Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said the Germany-based initiative would include "training on radar systems as well as armoured vehicles that have recently been announced as part of security assistance packages".



» seemingly tortuous communications chain.

"I have to liaise closely with the Ukrainian defence staff as we incorporate their tactics and procedures into our tuition," explains Cpl Braunton-Turner.

"At the end of the day, it's their training programme and we don't want to teach them one thing and they go back to Ukraine and find the unit they're placed with does it differently and so they have to be re-taught."

With such a relatively drawn-out process in place, it wouldn't be surprising if these highly trained Infantry personnel felt their time could be better spent elsewhere, doing more stimulating tasks, but that seems to be anything but the case.

"I've been in the Army for seven years and this might be the most worthwhile thing I've been asked to do," says 23-year-old LCpl Dylan Emblem (Rifles).

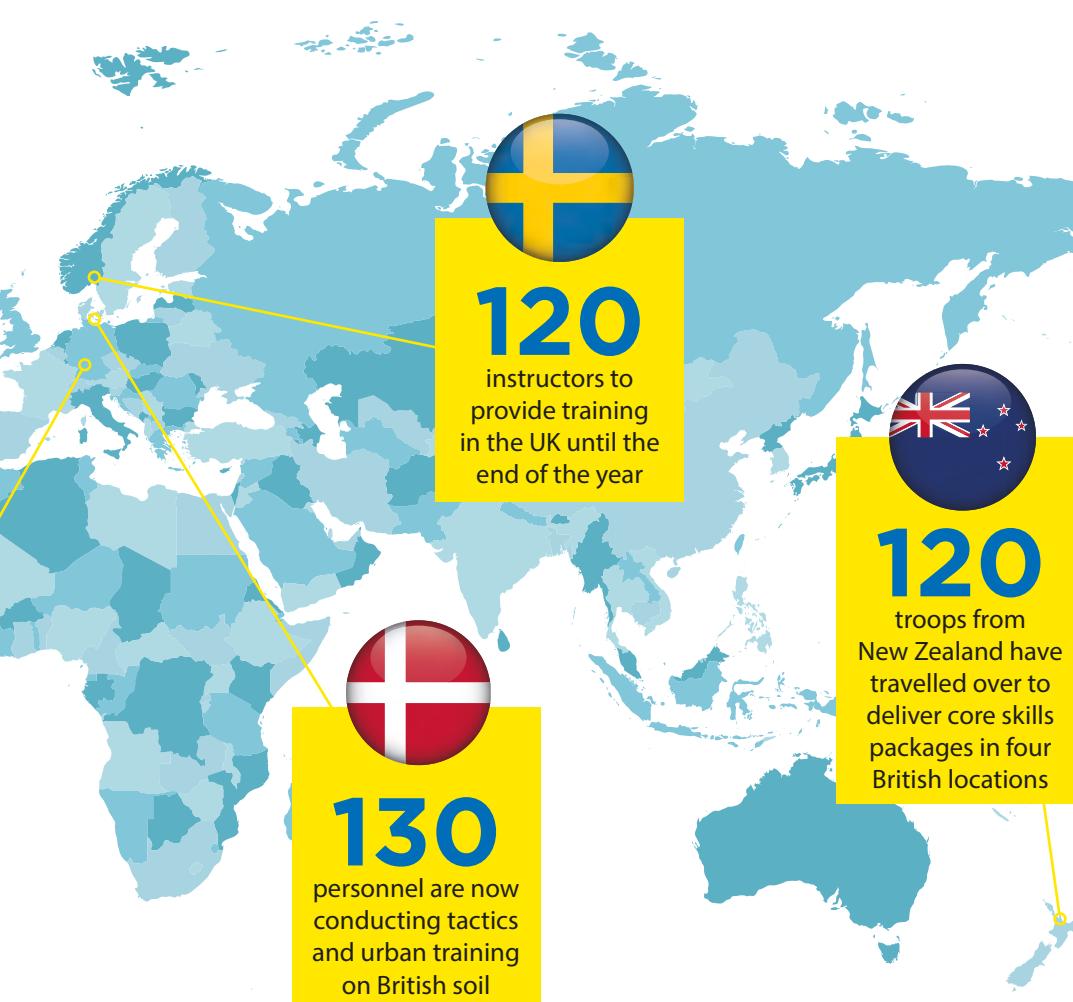
"I'm really enjoying it. We go on exercises in other countries but doing this feels like you're making a difference – it's really satisfying to see these recruits make progress with their soldiering skills."

"It's also humbling to see how thankful they are for your help and when you complete a set of training they literally come up and shake your hand."

"I can't believe the age of some of them either – a few are old enough to be my grandfather, but all the more respect to them for having a massive appetite to learn, and for not looking down on me for being so young."

The benefits aren't all one way however, with many of the Rifles personnel making great strides in their teaching skills, says Maj Warburton.

"Not many of our current generation have experience of serving in Iraq and Afghanistan," he adds.



## Training Ukraine

The 5 Rifles soldiers working on SPTA are just one small segment in a team of around 1,000 UK Armed Forces personnel training groups of new Ukrainian troops.

The programme is part of Britain's enduring commitment to support the country, which so far amounts to more than **£2.3 billion in military aid**, including anti-tank weapons and armoured vehicles.

The Ukrainians are being issued with helmets, body armour, uniforms, and field kit to equip them for front-line operations.

The British Army also supported the country through Operation Orbital when Servicemen and women delivered training packages to more than **22,000 Ukrainian personnel** between 2015 and 2022.

"In my company it's only me and a sergeant who have worked with interpreters abroad on operations.

"It's a new skill for the guys and girls to develop and they're finding the challenge enjoyable.

"For us, this is an excellent fortification of low-level infantry soldiering skills because we are having to teach it over and over and when a lesson doesn't land as hoped or planned some relatively inexperienced instructors have to reassess what they are doing so that it works better next time.

"There's also the fact that this is providing an excellent chance to work closely with another army.

"The Ukrainian defence staff change with each group that comes through so we're learning a lot about their military's tactics and doctrine.

"We are finding out why they have different procedures from us and sometimes it is because of the threats they are facing at the moment."

Those are all too immediate and that's something many of the 5 Rifles troops have not only become acutely aware of but inspired by.

"As each group leaves us I feel very happy that we've trained them to the best of our ability in the timeframe we have been given and put them in a better position than they would have been," says Cpl Braунton-Turner.

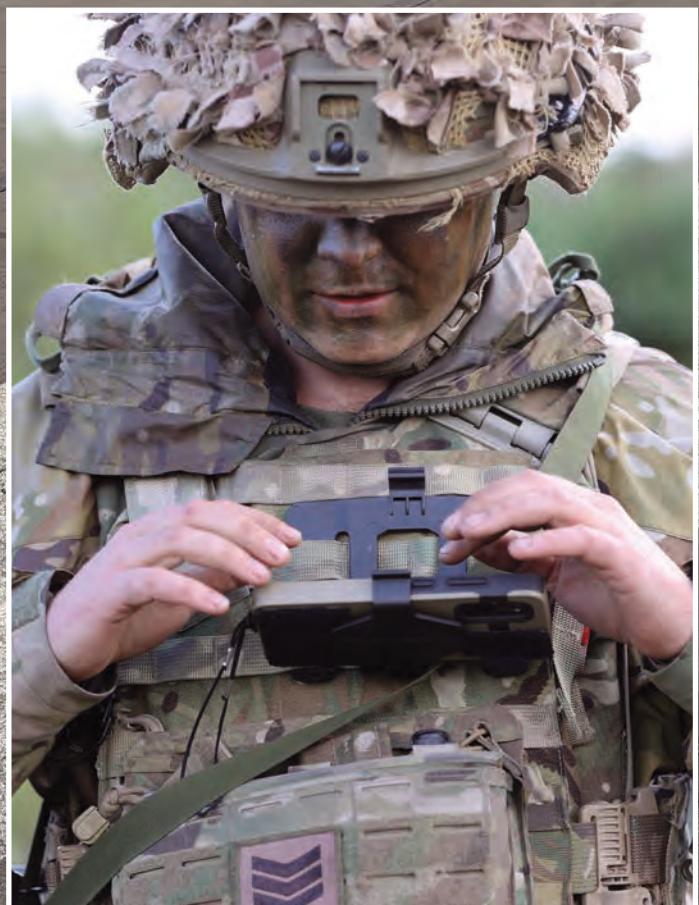
"I feel we've given them a vital base level of knowledge that they can build on out on the ground, working with their local units, wherever they've gone to in Ukraine.

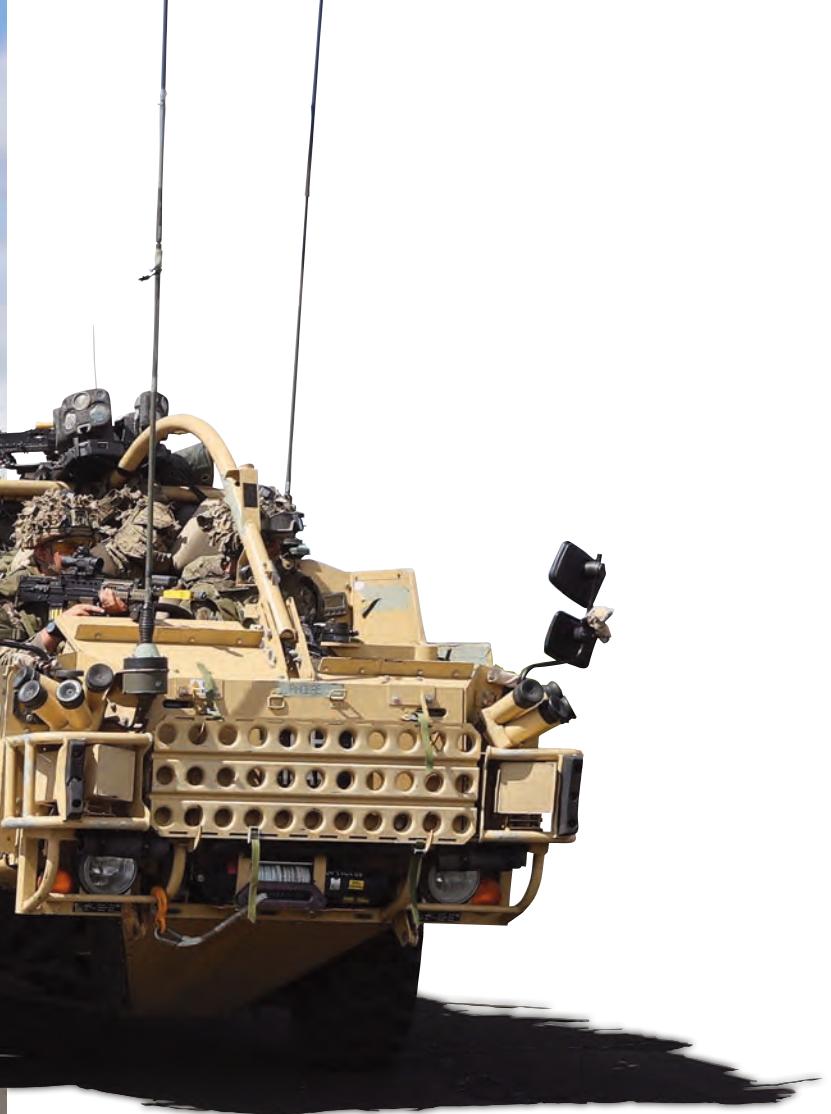
"Only yesterday I learnt that many of the recruits from our last batch, who I said goodbye to literally less than a week ago, are now on the front line, fighting the Russians, so that really brings home to us just how vital this training has become." ■



# NEW HORIZON

Royal Lancers test deep recce strike concept – and more





WITH two new vehicles to get to grips with in the space of a year and two sub-unit deployments to Poland looming it's fair to say The Royal Lancers have had a lot on their collective plate in 2022.

Having re-rolled from the CVR(T) to the Jackal in preparation for Op Cabrit, troops are already gearing up for another conversion – this time to Warrior – in the coming months.

Meanwhile, as part of the recently launched 1 Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team there is also the small matter of developing a new capability to address.

A key component of the Army's Future Soldier plan, the formation officially stood up in July with the remit of delivering artillery and reconnaissance at reach.

So, it was with a lengthy "to do" list that days later the regiment headed to Scotland for Exercise Lucknow Lancer.

Taking place on MoD and private land in Dumfries and Galloway, the battlegroup-level package ticked off a number of mission-specific training objectives for the Poland-bound troops – D Squadron will begin their stint on the US-led Nato mission in October, with C Squadron due to replace them in April.

But a key focus of the manoeuvres was answering the longer-term question – how to make the deep recce strike role their own. ▶

Words: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main

“  
Logistics are susceptible to attack so we need to be self-sustainable  
”



WO2 Ryan Smith



» Lt Nico Hedegaard explained: “Traditional reconnaissance sees us more in a squadron frontage moving across the ground finding bridges, enemy packets and routes.

“Here we’ve been operating in the deep space, taking the Jackals far beyond the front line of our own troops and finding high value targets – so looking for enemy air defence and artillery assets, which would have a huge effect on the armoured battlegroups to our rear.

“It’s really good for junior commanders – it means we can send out troop leaders like me or even corporals on recce patrols without much oversight.

“There’s a lot more onus on individuals and far more freedom of manoeuvre.”

The 25-year-old also described how he and his colleagues were experimenting with new technologies that could one day give them a battle-winning edge.

“In the reconnaissance space innovation is everything because we’re right at the front and every advantage we gain over the enemy is massively beneficial,” he continued.

“So we have been trialling new equipment, such as Android team awareness kit, which allows us to plan routes and pass information more quickly.

“It’s not perfect but it’s everything that we’ve talked about that would help improve our combat effectiveness – like, ‘wouldn’t it be good if we could do what we can do on our smartphones, but in a secure manner on a military-specific platform’, and that’s

what these offer.”

Known by the shorthand “Atak”, the body-armour-mounted devices were already used by elite forces, so presented a convenient off-the-shelf solution when the regiment was looking for new ideas.

As well as route planning, the cutting-edge tools provide a group and individual chat function, allowing troops to maintain radio silence.

“We’ve gone long distances without needing to communicate because we can see everyone else’s trackers moving,” said WO2 Ryan Smith, sergeant major of C Squadron.

“Our situational awareness is much greater and you can send instant messages, which is really helpful when you’re doing 100-200km journeys.

“Being so far forward you have to be careful of counter electronic warfare measures, so anything we can do to aid our stealth and continue to push forward without being detected is something we want to utilise.”

Modern tech aside, the training also reinforced some old-school practicalities, namely the importance of being able to do without regular resupply.

“Operating in the deep environment, we need to see how long we can survive without G4,” added WO2 Smith.

“Logistics are susceptible to attack so – as we’re seeing in the conflict in Ukraine – we need to be self-sustainable.

“That means we’re carrying ten days’ rations instead of three »



## Poised to strike

1 Deep Recce Strike Combat Team was formed on July 1 out of 1 Artillery Brigade and 1 Armoured Infantry Brigade. Part of 3rd (UK) Division, its role is to combine fires and reconnaissance at long range



**300**

VEHICLES USED ON THE PACKAGE,  
INCLUDING JACKAL, MASTIFF, PANTHER  
AND CVR(T) - AMONG THEM THE SULTAN  
COMMAND AND CONTROL  
VARIANT ON ITS LAST OUTING

**700**  
NUMBER OF PERSONNEL FROM  
THE ROYAL LANCERS BATTLEGROUP  
DEPLOYED ON EXERCISE  
LUCKNOW LANCER





“  
It shows  
soldiers at the  
lowest level that  
they are part  
of something  
bigger  
”

Sgt James  
Bowers



» to five days, extra fuel and we're topping up on water by whichever means possible – all of which combines to give us greater range.”

Making life more difficult still for the exercising troops was the presence of a free-thinking opposition played by members of A Squadron.

Determined to give their colleagues a robust test, they spent the two-week field phase disrupting progress wherever possible – landing a coup when they captured two close target recce experts from 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery, whose presence added further complexity to the battlegroup's subsequent mission to secure an enemy-held airfield.

In a combat scenario, identifying and calling in fires on high-value targets such as this would be core business for the brigade combat team.

Staged at West Freugh airport, the impressive set-piece also showcased interoperability between allies as F15s of the US Air Force's 48th Fighter Wing at Lakenheath screamed overhead, before troops from the Danish Guard Hussar Regiment moved forward to clear the position under covering fire from D Squadron's Jackals.

According to Sgt James Bowers, ending on such a realistic note made the lessons learnt in training more likely to hit home.

“It shows soldiers at the lowest level that they are part of something bigger,” he said.

“We never fight on our own and having the ability to integrate

land and air makes it a better experience for everyone.”

Reflecting on his personal thoughts towards The Royal Lancers' role in the Army's newest formation, he added: “I think it's exciting.

“You join the cavalry to be at the leading edge and deep recce strike is a step in the right direction.

“The last time we had a divisional asset of this kind was the Long Range Desert Group in the Second World War.

“That was the cavalry too and it's good that we're taking lessons of old and bringing it into the new – it has now come full circle.”

The troops may be embracing their part in the capability, but significant work is required before it is fully up and running – not least clarity on the future of the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle on which the concept hinges.

As if to underline the changing of the guard, Exercise Lucknow Lancer was also believed to be the very last outing for the Sultan command variant CVR(T), a model that first entered service in the early 1970s.

However, there is little time for nostalgia – by the end of this year the Catterick-based personnel will be mounted on the interim solution, Warrior, with driver and gunnery courses already in full swing.

Despite the uncertainty, in keeping with their new brigade insignia – a scorpion poised to strike – they will be making sure they are ready for action when the time comes. ■

# OUT WITH THE OLD





Prefab makes perfect: The bed spaces, prototypes of which are shown here, are made in a factory and delivered to sites – preventing lengthy onsite building work



## Block life is about to get a whole lot better, thanks to a new infrastructure project

**W**HEN demolition work to flatten some of the Army's grottiest single living accommodation (SLA) begins this month, soldiers are likely to breathe a collective sigh of relief. Ask any Service person living in the block how the quality of their surroundings could be improved, and many of them won't hold back.

But the latest overhaul to the Army estate goes much further than a few cosmetic changes.

Over the next decade, 16,500 bed spaces – around a third of all SLA – will be demolished and replaced with brand new prefab buildings that give personnel of all ranks more space, double beds, a more sociable layout, proper kitchen-diner areas and better soundproofing.

And the senior officer overseeing the project, Head of Infrastructure Plans Brig Richard Brown, is delighted by how »

# OUT WITH THE OLD



## WHERE & WHEN?

The SLA programme will be delivered initially through three main waves:

### MID 2023-EARLY 2025

501 newbuild bedspaces across four sites: Kinloss, Moray (136 soldier); Beacon Barracks, Stafford (75 soldier); Imjin Barracks, Gloucester (69 officer); Trenchard Lines, Upavon (82 soldier, 69 SNCO, 49 officer newbuild and 21 officer refurb).

### MID 2024-MID 2025

Another 491 newbuilds: St George's Barracks, Bicester (69 soldier); Kendrew Barracks,

Cottesmore (75 soldier); Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Camberley (47 SNCO, 63 soldier); Wootton Barracks, Blackpool (69 soldier); Flying Station Wattisham (168 soldier)

### EARLY 2025-EARLY 2026

Another 472 bedspaces at: Infantry Training Centre, Catterick (144 trainee multi-occupancy and 3 Z-type); Baker Barracks, Thorney Island (252 soldier, 47 SNCO and 26 officer)

» quickly things are coming together.

If all goes to plan the first newbuilds at Imjin Barracks, Gloucester will be ready by next summer, meaning the same officer who began the project will actually get to cut a ribbon on it – a rare occurrence in the world of slow-moving defence infrastructure projects.

The timescales may be fast but, as he explains to *Soldier*, a huge amount of thought has gone into the overhaul. And it will change its inhabitants' lives for the better.

## COMMUNAL AREAS

“Multiple occupancy rooms and the ones without ensuites are being targeted first,” Brig Brown (pictured right) says.

“Single ensuite rooms are absolutely the way our people want to live today, but we are also trying to make sure the buildings are more conducive to better mental health and well-being.

“The new blocks are being built with kitchen-diners and improved communal areas that sit at the centre of the building, where people walk frequently.

“We are also in discussions to see if we can allow individual bedroom doors to be held open.

“In the past, we got communal areas wrong and the bedroom ratios too low.

“By creating these bigger spaces, with ratios of around 20-1, we are ensuring there will always be people around and enough of a community there.”

It is an issue that can't be taken seriously enough, according to Jim Wilde (ex-RAOC) from the campaign group Veterans Against Suicide.

His records – for there are no official counts – say that at least 13 British troops have taken their own lives already this year.

“Making communal areas larger and more central is a great idea and would, I think, go a long way to addressing some of the isolation issues we see among the guys,” he tells *Soldier*.

“Someone sees somebody walking towards their room and asks ‘why the long face?’ – that could be the moment that saves their life.”

SSgt Mark Evans (AGC (SPS)), who lives in the block Monday to Friday at Imphal Barracks in York, believes a more sociable feel will certainly improve day-to-day life.





He was one of a handful of senior NCOs and young officers invited onto the factory floor of one of the building manufacturers (above) last month to see the plans in detail.

“The biggest thing for me is these communal areas,” he says.

“It’s clear they have really thought about that. They are connected to the kitchen by a door, which means people can come together to cook a meal.

“Junior ranks don’t always get the opportunity to mix like others do in the mess.

“But with this someone has obviously thought, ‘What can we do to improve the lived experience? How can we make lives better in the block?’.

“That’s refreshing.”

## SPACE AND STORAGE

New room layouts will give junior Servicemen and women around ten per cent more space than they currently have in SLA, with plenty of wardrobes to boot.

“We are trying to incorporate additional storage outside the bed spaces too,” the brigadier adds. “Areas where personnel can lock away their Virtus.”

Storage was high on the agenda when the soldiers visited the Reds10 factory site in Driffield, with the troops giving feedback on how existing designs could be further improved.

“The people who make these decisions aren’t necessarily around soldiers all the time, so it’s good that they are listening,” says SSgt Evans (pictured below).

“It was nice to see the brigadier asking the manufacturers if things could be altered too.

“As we sat around they were changing things on their plans there and then.

“The new wardrobe spaces look brilliant, there are lots of them, but we asked if they could be reinforced for Bergens and other kit.

“A lot of the furniture I’ve had in the past isn’t strong enough for stuff like that.”

Other notable changes to the new-look buildings will include bigger windows, motion-sensor lighting, double beds, individual thermostats and better soundproofing on floors and walls.

According to Sig Danielle Kelly (R Signals), who lives in the block at Stafford’s Beacon Barracks, the latter cannot come soon enough.

## A FEW SPECIAL CASES

In some historic barracks, where it is impossible to demolish SLA accommodation for planning reasons, rooms will be refurbished inside existing buildings instead.



“You can pretty much hear inside every room in our corridor,” she says. “The old blocks here have no storage either, and single beds. The condition of them isn’t the best and that 100 per cent affects soldiers’ morale.”

## MODERN ARMY

The bed spaces will address some of the other issues demanded by their modern residents, too. They will be energy-efficient, with solar panels and building materials that help the military meet its net-zero targets.

Brig Brown is convinced that the hard work by his team to bring all these elements to reality so quickly will be well received across the board – especially given the modernisation going on throughout the wider Army.

“This programme has been a key priority for the chief of the general staff,” the senior officer continues.

“The people we are recruiting and retaining these days are different from 20-30 years ago when I joined; they have different expectations. And we expect a lot more of our soldiers too.

“Training them is far more expensive, and we want to retain them for longer.

“For many this space is their home. Not everyone has parents they can go back to in the holidays – foreign and Commonwealth soldiers, for example.

“We want to be the most professional force we can be, and part of that is making sure we look after our people.”

With work on the first new-look SLA block due to start in a matter of months, and the pace of delivery ramping up thereafter, it won’t be long before soldiers can expect the digs they live in to be as forward-thinking as the organisation they serve. ▶





# FAMILY HOMES FALLING SHORT

**It's not all good news on accommodation this month.**

**Missed appointments and long waits continue to plague those living in quarters – we asked the Defence Infrastructure Organisation why**

**W**HEN Pinnacle Group Ltd took over management of Service families' accommodation (SFA) in April, residents were promised a better experience all round.

But some five months on, troops are reporting a slew of issues, from missed appointments, slow responses and poor communications.

Among those affected is Catterick-based WO1 Chris Watson (RE, pictured bottom right), who not only struggled to get his boiler fixed, but as the regimental sergeant major of 32 Engineer Regiment has also seen some of his soldiers live for extended periods without working showers and cookers, or with ceilings in disrepair.

The 40-year-old said he has been "shocked and saddened" by what troops are expected to endure, while continuing to pay full rent.

"I'm a landlord myself and would never get away with not providing a replacement oven or calling in tradesmen within 48 hours, but this seems acceptable for our people," he added.

"There is also a deeper issue – I've seen an increase in personnel requesting to work second jobs as they are struggling to support their dependents in the financial climate.

"If a boiler fails, they are expected to run an immersion heater while they wait for a repair, sometimes for weeks at a time. The extra expenditure could cripple a young family."

Soldier put some of the complaints to Air Cdre James Savage, head of accommodation at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (pictured above) to find out what's being done...

## **How many complaints have been logged?**

A total of 5,462 since April 1.

## **What are the most commonly reported issues and**



## WHO DOES WHAT?

**Pinnacle Group Ltd** operates the **National Accommodation Management Service**, which covers the whole UK. They are the single point of contact for military families, handling calls about repairs and overseeing the march in and march out process.

Once a repair is logged it is passed to the relevant **regional contractor** for action. In the North of England, the Midlands, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales this is covered by **Amey**, while **Vivo** is responsible for the South East and South West of England.

For **emergency and urgent tasks**, the regional providers are required to respond as soon as possible. For more routine jobs, Pinnacle will agree an appointment window with the family from the range of slots made available to them by the relevant contractor.

### in which areas?

Duration of works, communication – particularly around updating on follow-up work – and missed appointments have made up 90 per cent of complaints to Pinnacle. The majority came from the South East and South West regions, which arose due to two separate IT issues relating to Vivo's scheduling system. Both have now been resolved. Missed appointments have reduced to single figures daily since August 5 and we continue to monitor the situation closely.

### When can Forces families expect to see progress?

Our aim is to deliver the best possible service to personnel and their dependents. Now the IT problems have been fixed, customers should notice a significant improvement, but we accept that so far, we have fallen short of the expected standard and are very sorry for that. Our contractors are working hard to address the backlog, including making contact with impacted families to confirm or rearrange appointments as needed and proactively issuing compensation.

### What reimbursements are available for missed appointments and how do people claim?

Families are entitled to a £30 Love2Shop voucher as compensation for no-shows. When they call the National Service Centre regarding a missed appointment, they are automatically provided with a case reference number and their claim will be reviewed within one working day. Families should receive their vouchers within a week.

### How much are these contracts worth and how long will they run?

Pinnacle's is worth £144m per annum. Vivo's contracts across the south of England are worth a combined £296m yearly and Amey's total £209m for the rest of the UK. The contracts will last for seven years, with the option to extend for three years depending on performance. They can also be terminated after

three years if the supplier does not deliver to a satisfactory level.

### How are you holding the suppliers to account?

The contracts have mechanisms in place to address poor performance, including significant financial consequences. For the first time there are also incentives to exceed the minimum required standard in the form of additional payments. These measures will take effect after an initial six-month bedding-in period, but our suppliers have already paid or are processing more than £132,000 in compensation, a cost that would have been the DIO's under the last contract. We have been holding daily calls with directors to see where and how improvements will be made and to track their effectiveness.

### When will the promised online portal, the *Home Hub*, be ready?

We expect it to be operational later this year. Its introduction has been delayed because it needs a stable IT system across all the providers so that the self-service functions – including the ability to make and change appointments – work effectively.

### Where do people go if they need urgent support?

Service personnel should advise their military housing liaison officer, who will coordinate with a regional DIO counterpart. ■

## VIEW FROM THE PATCH...

“ I think we all understand that any new contractor will experience teething problems but the lack of communication and failure to attend appointments is what frustrates us most.

Having spoken recently to representatives of Pinnacle, Amey and DIO, they acknowledge that the process is struggling.

I also know the chain of command is working hard to resolve the issues and drive improvement, albeit slowly.

As SFA tenants we can help by reporting issues and then raising official complaints when the inevitable poor communication leads to long waiting times.

**WO1 Chris Watson, RE**



”





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## Kit and Personal Possessions Insurance Prize Draw

One lucky person who buys a Kit and Personal Possessions Insurance policy by 31st October 2022 will win a Samsung Galaxy S22 256GB 5G Phantom - Black mobile phone in our great prize draw\*.

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\*T&Cs apply see [www.forcesmutual/prizedraw](http://www.forcesmutual/prizedraw) Eligible purchases only. Draw takes place 7th December 2022, with prize delivered no later than 40 days after the draw\*.

^Items above this value must be specified on your policy schedule.



## Guards out in the cold

**W**HY do the Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS) enjoy relatively few benefits compared with other personnel?

I have served with them for two years and have been told we are not entitled to the get you home travel (GYH(T)) allowance or the over-37 package.

Also, the reduction in home to duty travel to a maximum of 30 miles means life can be a struggle for personnel on low pay, or those who have just rejoined and are not in receipt of any pension.

And we are now being told that to keep our jobs we might have to move further away from our families so these benefits could and would make it easier for us – especially in view of the cost of living crisis we're in now. – Name and address supplied

**WO1 Jamie Donachie, MPGS Sergeant Major at Provost Marshal (Army) Headquarters, replies:** Firstly, MPGS soldiers are employed on a military local service engagement as full-time Regular Army personnel and are afforded allowances in keeping with their terms of service.

They determine their geographical preference and can only be employed within 30 miles of that location.

This restricts their mobility and that affects related allowances such as GYH(T), which contributes to the cost of travelling from a duty station to a qualifying residence.

The pay and allowances casework and complaints cell will consider exceptions though – for example, when individuals are detached or have temporary duty periods in excess of 30 days.

It's the same principle with home to duty travel, which is based on

the mobility and conditions Regular soldiers face. Those in the MPGS do not have the same concerns and therefore a direct comparison in entitlement should not be made.

Meanwhile, the Army over-37 provision that supports the family when personnel choose to serve unaccompanied in the later part of their career, hasn't kept pace with changes to our terms and conditions of service, so we expect the Future Accommodation Model will remove the requirement for it.

However, MPGS entitlement to home to duty travel, which contributes to the costs of daily commuting between a residence and place of work, was confirmed in 2018.

The policy says a 30-mile limit should be applied as this is the maximum distance MPGS personnel should have to cover. **JSP 752** has been updated with this clarification.

When it comes to pay, MPGS soldiers have their own terms and conditions of service with a reduced x-factor of five per cent. It differs due to the balance between positive and negative factors of Service life that impact them. There are 12 elements taken into account. More information can be found in **JSP 754**, chapter one, section two.

Obviously, job security is a concern at a time like this but rest assured that while the new blended workforce of MPGS and Ministry of Defence guards will result in reductions, these will take place only through contractual expiry or non-extension.

MPGS personnel can apply to remain in the Service – see Defence Connect for further information.

“Life can be a struggle for those on low pay”

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

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

## NAME CHANGER

● MY unit has been asking its personnel to incorporate pronouns (he/she/they, etc) into their email signature blocks.

However, no-one has received official direction to do this from our regiment or higher up the chain.

Is there now an Army-wide policy to force individuals to display this?

If so, why are we being told to do this when we have a rank by which we can all be addressed? – **Name and address supplied**

**Maj Jeremy Hann from the diversity team in Army Headquarters, replies:** For many transgender people it's an easy way to show the world the pronouns they'd like you to use.

However, it is not just about trans and non-binary equality.

If their cisgender counterparts (those that identify with the sex assigned to them at birth) also include pronouns in email signatures it normalises discussions about gender and removes assumptions.

Ultimately, this is about eradicating bias, stereotyping and prejudices and signals an intent to be an inclusive employer.

Army policy on the matter is enshrined in **AGAI 75** and the relevant section is below:

*"The inclusion of pronouns often prompts questions and conversations about the importance of inclusion and signals the user as an ally.*

*"Pronoun use in email signatures should therefore be encouraged but never made compulsory: this can undermine the intent.*

*"Some people, including LGBT+ personnel, may not feel comfortable including their pronouns in an email signature, and nobody should be pressured to do so."*

## GOT A GRIPE?

THEN WHY NOT GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST?

✉ [mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

## The contract needs changing



## 'Sole criteria needed for trainers'

**T**HE fitness level needed to be able to deploy on operations and exercises can only be reached by doing drills, both in unit and at home, where training shoes are required.

However, I have been repeatedly informed that issued trainers are only for recruits in phase one and two and physical training instructors.

We expect our serving soldiers, both Regular and Reserves, to purchase them at their own expense. A decent pair will set you back quite a lot of money. With the cost of living rising all the time, privates and junior NCOs may go for the cheaper options and that could cause an injury to an individual.

I believe the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force do a one-for-one swap as and when they are required.

If, quite rightly, the emphasis is put on every person maintaining a high level of fitness to pass the mandatory tests the correct equipment should at least be issued. The present contract needs changing. – **Maj David Jenkins, RLC**

**Lt Col Nick O'Shea in the personnel policy team at Army Headquarters replies:** Thank you for your letter and you raise a valid point.

The current situation on the scaling of trainers is inconsistent with other issued clothing policies.

We are going to initiate a review into the current procedure with the other single Services and Field Army and a full reply will be published by the policy lead when our conclusions are reached.

**The complaint is entirely military in nature**

## 'HAVE LINES BEEN CROSSED FOR THIS RESERVIST?'

● OUR unit currently has a situation where one Reservist has complained to a colleague's civilian employer about the individual while on operations abroad, rather than use the chain of command.

The complaint is entirely military in nature and has nothing to do with the accused person's day job.

This has resulted in them facing a disciplinary procedure with the Army and their employer.

Is there anything within military regulations or the Armed Forces Covenant that safeguards Reservists from this when they are mobilised? – **Name and address supplied**

**Col Conn MacEvilly from the Personnel Directorate in Army Headquarters, replies:** Nothing in the law governing mobilised service or in the Reserve Land Forces

Regulations expressly protects a Reservist from being disciplined by both their civilian employer and by the Army for the same act committed while on military duty.

However, in the circumstances you describe, it appears the civilian employer bringing a disciplinary process for behaviour while mobilised could be judged unfair.

The accused may wish to inform their employer that they are already (or have been) subject to military disciplinary proceedings.

They could suggest to the employer that one set of proceedings is enough and ask them to drop their action.

If the employer decides to go ahead anyway the individual may need the advice of a trade union or legal professional.



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**SaluteMyJob** has launched a cyber career jumpstart programme to attract, train, qualify and place members of the Armed Forces community into employment. Visit [salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways](http://salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways)

**The Open University's Disabled Veterans' Scholarship Fund** is again open for applications this year. The initiative offers 50 free study places at the academic body to former personnel that have a disability or injury resulting from their military service – including mental health conditions. See [open.ac.uk](http://open.ac.uk)



### COMPETITIONS

**June 2022 HOAY winner:**  
Maurice Gibson, Cameron Barracks, Inverness

**Spinelines winner:**  
Tim Carpenter, Fife



### SEARCHLINE

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

**The University of Chester's Westminster Centre** for Research in Veterans is looking to learn more about the experiences of former British Army personnel from the Indian sub-continent and West Indies. The research – funded by charity The Forces in Mind Trust – is examining how service shaped the lives of ex-troops and their loved ones. Contact [veterans@chester.ac.uk](mailto:veterans@chester.ac.uk) for more information.

**Lanyard collector** Craig Pennels is trying to achieve a Guinness World Record for the largest ever collection of these items. He is also on the look-out for challenge coins. Can you or your unit help add to his collections? Please email [lanyard.challengercoincollector@gmail.com](mailto:lanyard.challengercoincollector@gmail.com)



### WELFARE

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

#### Army HIVE

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

[army.mod.uk/hives](http://army.mod.uk/hives)

#### Forcesline

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

[ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline](http://ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline)

#### Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via [rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk) or 01904 882051/2053

#### ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

#### Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

#### NHS support

[nhs.uk/livewell](http://nhs.uk/livewell)

#### BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

##### Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691  
[army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

##### Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or mil 96770 4656  
[army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk)

##### Defence BHD Helpline

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

#### CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

##### Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004  
[aff.org.uk](http://aff.org.uk)

##### Flexible working

has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes alternative working arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regular personnel can find out how flexible service impacts pay and benefits at [discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk](http://discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk)

#### DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

##### Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988  
[forcespensionsociety.org](http://forcespensionsociety.org)

##### Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives [joiningforcescu.co.uk](http://joiningforcescu.co.uk)

##### Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators [moneyhelper.org.uk](http://moneyhelper.org.uk)

##### National Debtline

A charity that can help talk through your options and give you clear advice on how to take back control 0808 808 4000  
[nationaldebtline.org](http://nationaldebtline.org)

##### StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111  
[stepchange.org.uk](http://stepchange.org.uk)

#### GAMBLING

##### National Gambling Helpline

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

#### GRIEF

**Cruse Bereavement Support**  
0808 808 1677

#### SSAFA support groups

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

#### HOUSING

##### Joint Service Housing Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120  
[rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

##### Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797  
[spaces.org.uk](http://spaces.org.uk)

##### Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support [veteransgateway.org.uk](http://veteransgateway.org.uk)

#### INJURY/SICKNESS

##### Personnel Recovery Centres

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

#### LONELINESS

##### Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation [afvbc.net](http://afvbc.net)

##### Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123  
[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

##### The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080  
[britishlegion.org.uk](http://britishlegion.org.uk)

#### MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

**Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline**  
0800 138 1619

**Headspace**  
All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address  
[work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll](http://work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll)

**Mind – The Mental Health Charity**  
0300 123 3393  
[mind.org](http://mind.org)

**NHS**  
[nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

**Samaritans**  
116 123 [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**The Ripple Pond**  
A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans  
0333 900 1028  
[theripplepond.org](http://theripplepond.org)

**Togetherall**  
A safe, online community where people

support each other anonymously to improve mental health  
[togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

**RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE**

**Aurora New Dawn**  
Safety and support for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking 02394 216 816  
[aurorand.org.uk](http://aurorand.org.uk)

**ManKind**  
Support for male victims of domestic abuse 01823 334244

[mankind.org.uk](http://mankind.org.uk)

**Relate**  
UK provider of relationship support  
[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)



**REUNIONS**

**Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies**, The Wessex Regiment's 75th reunion lunch on September 24 at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Contact Jim Cooper on 023 9281 6165.

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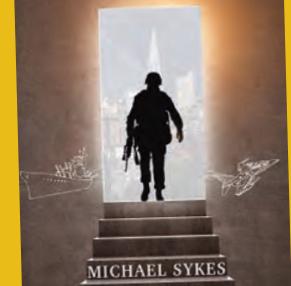
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# REVIEWS

## PICK OF THE MONTH:

### Top Gun: Maverick

High-octane follow-up hits streaming service

► THE sequel genre is a cruel mistress. For every *Godfather: Part II*, there's a *Grease 2*.

For every franchise that inexplicably manages to ride the box-office gravy train long after it should have hit the buffers (*Fast and Furious*, anyone?) there's another that fizzles out in ignominy after a handful of increasingly implausible instalments – *Jaws: The Revenge*, we're looking at you.

Therefore, it was with some trepidation that fans of the original *Top Gun* awaited the much-hyped follow-up, a mere 36 years later.

Despite the weapons-grade cheesiness of the OG version, it was impossible not to appreciate the antics of Maverick and co as they "turned and burned" at Mach 2, played volleyball in skin-tight jeans and allowed their egos to write cheques their bodies couldn't cash – all to a soundtrack of absolute bangers.

Its enduring appeal has as much to do with nostalgia for the halcyon days of 1986, when the



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GAMES

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MUSIC

# MOVIES

Out  
now on  
digital



world seemed an altogether more hopeful place – climate change wasn't really a thing, the War on Terror was still 15 years off, relations with Russia were on the up and Donald Trump was just another New York property mogul.

So Tom Cruise and the team behind the 2022 iteration, *Top Gun: Maverick*, faced somewhat of a mission impossible – how to keep a now decidedly middle-aged fanbase happy, while appealing to a new generation of viewers.

On paper the movie was a sure-fire flop, but the reality is that it's far better than it has any right to be.

From the opening scenes once again depicting life on the deck of an aircraft carrier it's clear that Cruise had no intention of messing with a winning formula.

Edge-of-your-seat action – check. Macho but charming cast – check. Gratuitous topless sports scene – check. Unspecified brewing geo-political crisis that only the best of the best can deal with – check.

Alongside Val Kilmer, reprising his role as Iceman – despite his struggles with throat cancer – the film puts relative unknown Miles Teller in the jump seat as Goose's son (known by the call sign Rooster).



And if his turn as the moustachioed offspring of Maverick's late buddy doesn't elevate him to Hollywood's A-list, something has gone very wrong indeed.

Much like his on-screen character, Cruise has pulled this venture off against all the odds – combining the old and the new with aplomb, and no doubt laughing all the way to the bank along with producer Jerry Bruckheimer and director Joseph Kosinski.

The film smashed a host of box-office records on its cinematic release and looks set to continue pulling in audiences now that it has moved to digital platforms.

Check it out, if you haven't already. Those

who were alive for round one will find themselves enveloped in a warm blanket of familiarity, while the (ahem) younger cohort, should enjoy a bona-fide white-knuckle ride. Either way, this is not to be missed. ■

## VERDICT:

Nostalgia in its purest form – an absolute fist-pump of a movie



REVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



## The Hunt

Andy McNab talks to *Soldier* about his latest book, which lifts the lid on a lesser-known op to eliminate one of the Taliban's most feared leaders

► THERE'S little chance that Andy McNab's latest effort will create the bickering, claims and counterclaims that his groundbreaking first book, *Bravo Two Zero*, did soon after its release nearly three decades ago.

For a start, there are unlikely to be any rival publications focusing on the same special forces mission. Second, this is not McNab's personal recollection or perspective on a particular series of events carried out in the heat of battle.

*The Hunt* is a factual account, in dramatised form, of Operation Tetris in May 2007 to capture or kill the notorious Taliban military commander Mullah Dadullah.

The main storyline was meticulously researched and the author sought out many of the members of the British Special Boat Service team who undertook the mission.

"Writing about any special forces op is challenging," McNab tells *Soldier*. "But you have many elements involved in a mission like this, so

there are multiple sources to draw upon.

"Many of the American organisations involved in the mission were great mines of information and some of the Royal Marines, who are out of the Service now, were willing to talk about it.

"There were a lot of urban myths floating around about what went on during Op Tetris and I wanted to produce an accurate account.

"I had a contact in the US who knew a lot of the SBS lads on the mission and the project progressed from there.

"It was a question of finding consistency because, as time goes on, people's memories and views can change."

The operation was US-led but executed mainly by members of the SBS' C Squadron, bolstered by air assets and a handful of Afghan and US special forces operatives.

It took place in 2007, when the SAS was tied up with operations in Iraq and their Royal Navy brethren had been charged with providing special forces capacity in Afghanistan, supporting US equivalents working their way through a growing capture-or-kill list of high value targets.

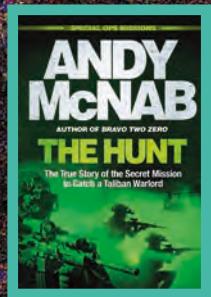
C Squadron was given the name sitting right at the top of that list – Mullah Dadullah, considered a ruthless hard-liner, even by many of the high-ranking Taliban.

A committed fighter – he'd lost his leg in the war against the Soviets in the 1980s – Dadullah was notorious for killing anyone he regarded as a traitor to Islam, which included Afghans working for the American-backed government in Kabul and Nato forces.

He would make an example of them with gruesome executions. The "traitors" were beheaded, and photographs of their corpses placed on display in local bazaars.

Dadullah was also behind the proliferation of IEDs and suicide bombers attacking the government and the International Security Assistance Force – and he openly expressed his ambitions to export this particular brand of terror to the West.

The planning and execution of the mission – which led to the death of Dadullah in his fortified compound near the Pakistan border – is described through the eyes of



● *The Hunt* by Andy McNab is out now in hardback, published by Welbeck and priced £18.99

Picture: Sgt Chris Halton, RLC

# BOOKS

**JAY** Jay, the squadron sergeant major. McNab says he is an amalgam of two soldiers he got to know from the team.

"You can write a book like this in two ways; you can produce an almost academic view that documents events in minute, dry detail or you can turn it into a narrative with a central figure you can identify with and is relatable," he explains.

"That's the route I chose because creating strong pictures in people's heads is more engaging in my opinion – and you can communicate a lot of information in a very digestible way through passages of dialogue."

It's hard to disagree with his assessment. I found the chat between troops a little cheesy in a couple of places but overall this is a real page-turner, providing some fascinating insights into the planning and recce work that a daring operation in Taliban-held territory required of both intelligence and combat personnel. The account of the night attack on Dadullah's fortified compound is particularly gripping.

McNab's light touch also makes the scene-setting chapters, outlining Jay's perspective on the mission's objectives, the very clever gathering of intelligence on Dadullah's whereabouts and the quagmire of Afghan tribal politics that underscore the Taliban's structure, alliances and actions, very easy to absorb.

Ultimately though, McNab says it was important to accurately depict the bravery required to pull

off one of the most successful operations of the Afghanistan War.

"Of course, someone else can come in quickly and replace a leader like Dadullah but this op was a huge win; it cut the head of the Taliban off for a while, it severely disrupted their planning and made them change tactics away from direct confrontations with Nato forces," he adds.

"The success of the mission and the lack of casualties also buoyed people on the ground.

"Any alliance engaged in this type of campaign needs to see tangible successes like this."

So, what next from the author who says this is the first in a new series of similar tomes?

"At the moment I'm considering two possibilities; whether to return to the post 9-11 wars or go back further, not to the Second World War but to lesser-known clashes such as the Battle of Mirbat in Oman and post-colonial conflicts in Africa and the Far East," he concludes.

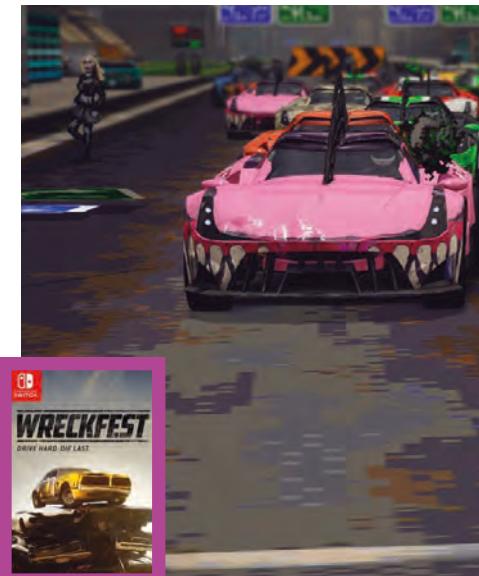
"There's so much to choose from – you'll have to wait and see which option I go for." ■

## VERDICT:

An enthralling account of a real-life elite forces mission



INTERVIEW: STEVE MUNCEY, SOLDIER



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

# Wreckfest

For: Switch

Car crash capers prove a hit...

► WHEN operational rotations to Northern Ireland were the order of military life – and everyone had a pair of circulation-cutting stonewashed jeans in their wardrobe – banger racing was a ritual of growing up in Aldershot.

Dog-eared posters advertising the latest smash-up around the town seemed to be pasted on every billboard, those stopping to look often soaked by a Bedford four-tonner full of laughing squaddies as the vehicle cruised through a strategically-placed puddle. The events themselves were packed outtings despite usually taking place in dreadful weather, the smell of grilling burgers mingling with the scent of fuel fumes.

The sport seems as popular as ever four decades on and – albeit in a glamourous American format – has endured through to the digital generation. Console stock car clashes – in virtual venues far more visually appealing than the long-demolished Aldershot stadium – now feature in the online sphere.

*Wreckfest* – a heady mash-up of demolition derby and specialist track events – is the latest video game offering of this type. Already a hit with Xbox and PlayStation petrolheads, the title has now arrived in handheld form on the

## BOOK RELEASES



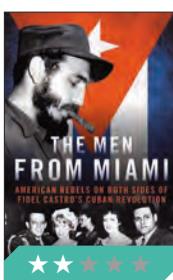
### Berlin

By Sinclair McKay

THROUGHOUT the 20th Century, Berlin had a very chequered existence, ranging from liberal hedonism to absolute terror and destruction. Thereafter, it was occupied

by Russia, the USA, France and Britain. This account – the follow-up on the author's previous offering, *Dresden* – gives a warts-and-all view of the city and how the changing times affected its population. Well written, and well researched, the story gets very harrowing at points. It is not produced as a reference book, but certainly could be used as one as it details the social history of one of Europe's major capitals. A good read – if somewhat disturbing in parts.

**Andy Kay, ex-RS**



### The Men from Miami

By Christopher Othen

WHILE the Cuban Revolution has often been written about, there have always been certain elements missing on the US involvement, beyond the Bay of Pigs operation and the missile crisis. Next to nothing has been said about the Americans that fought for "freedom fighter" Castro before he revealed himself as an ardent communist. This would have been the perfect opportunity to tell those stories but unfortunately, the author glosses over many of the genuine tales of combat, instead concentrating on the epic failures and Walter Mittys who remained in Miami plotting to overthrow the Cuban leader without the finance or bottle to do so. Interesting from a curiosity perspective but hardly a military classic.

**Scott Roberts, ex-Rifles**



Nintendo Switch – and it does not disappoint in the slightest.

Packed with destructive action aplenty, the package offers players a variety of solo and multiplayer outings – from a career mode that spans progressively more demanding leagues around the world to one-off challenges.

Drivers can also choose from an extensive vehicle fleet and customise their driving dynamics to suit the upcoming task. Beaten up muscle cars, minivans, pickups and once practical estate models are all racing candidates. Meanwhile, some of the more off-the-wall events require competitors to deal with novel kit such as sit-on lawnmowers and even motorised sofas.

As well as racing tests, frequent demolition derby style events pit protagonists against each other in wild free-for-all clashes, where obliterating the opposition is the sole objective. Success in each challenge is rewarded with upgrades to enhance the player's mount for future battles.

The upshot of all this mayhem is an

entertaining game with a decent bang-to-buck ratio for the £35 price tag. *Wreckfest* has been capably remixed for the Switch, with the outstanding graphics and thrash metal soundtrack flawlessly ported from the original console titles. Controls have been thoughtfully re-worked too, offering decent driving dynamics, while a plethora of downloadable content ensures longevity aplenty.

Action is consistently slick throughout while an accurate physics and damage model adds to the fun – the most wincing impacts deliver huge chunks of hazardous airborne bodywork into the paths of drivers. The Nintendo hardware deals with crowded races without detraction in performance while loading times are astonishingly prompt given the game's high level of complexity.

Criticisms are few and far between – but working out the correct route around tracks can prove a challenge on the small screen in handheld mode. And there are moments of hair-ripping frustration when, tantalisingly close to

the finish, tiny errors result in race leaders being flipped by insignificant obstacles and flattened by the pursuing vehicle pack.

Nonetheless, these are the smallest of issues in an otherwise near-flawless game. Even those usually indifferent to racing titles will likely enjoy this invitation to drive madly and pulverise opponents in the process.

And, thankfully, you don't need to queue for an over-grilled burger on cold Aldershot days while wearing the worst excesses of 1980s fashion to take part. ■

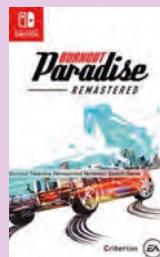
#### VERDICT:

A smash hit in every respect



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

## Looking for more handheld driving action? Try...



### Burnout Paradise

THIS EA classic was remixed for Switch more than a decade after its original release on the Xbox 360 and PS3 consoles of the late 2000s era and it remains equally exhilarating to play today. Gamers are presented with a huge open-world urban and rural setting around which to drive their chosen vehicle, taking on challenges as they see fit. The environments are beautifully rendered while the hard rock music – fronted by iconic **Guns n' Roses** track *Paradise City* – makes the hairs of the neck stand on end.



### Grid Autosport

A HANDHELD title for the more committed petrolhead, players can pit themselves against the clock or opposition in a variety of events in this race package. Touring car-style track

encounters and rally showdowns all feature in a game offering as much in the way of diversity as action. But don't expect to be able to simply pick up and play... putting in the hours is required here.



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## Will of the People

Back with a bang – Muse return in style

› IS IT the year 2000? Did I just put on a Marilyn Manson album?

No, apparently, it's Muse, however, the opening song and title track *Will of the People* would suggest otherwise and yes, I did have to check whether I still had baggy jeans on and was sporting stupidly spiky/messy hair.

While the thought of a throwback to my teens might not be the end of the world, I did have to remind myself that it was 2022 and I can't just be angry at my parents for no reason. But for a moment I was there. Fortunately, I regained my composure

as proceedings calmed down and I quickly found myself immersed in the distorted Muse guitars of old on tracks such as *Won't Stand Down* and *You Make Me Feel Like It's Halloween*, which brings the whole album back to reality.

While these are not "turn it up to 11" rock classics, they are still pretty good.

With nods to Depeche Mode, the trio have gone back to what works best and what has helped make the festival headliners instantly recognisable – synth keyboards, big guitars, and reverberating drums. Oh, and don't forget a whiney lead singer, but that never hurt Oasis.

There are some odd songs in among the good ones, which is no better summed up than on the record's final offering, whose name I will leave to be read alone.

The only real downside is the underlying moaning and cynical political messaging, especially on *Compliance*.

Yes, I know there is uncertainty in the world and there has been a pandemic, but I don't need it in my music – I get enough of it on the news.

There have always been political undertones for artists and their output – now it's just getting boring. So, Muse please stick to what you're good at – the music.

## MUSIC RELEASES

**Profound Mysteries**

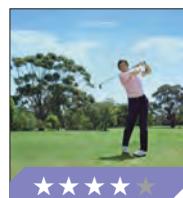
By Royksopp

THERE is lots to like on album number six from the Norwegian electronic duo. Its pulsating, ethereal tracks feel new and nostalgic all at once. That said, nothing created by these DJs will reach the heights of their 2005 hit *What Else is There?*. But you could do much worse than nurse yourself through the return to work by sticking on this gorgeous album and daydreaming about more hedonistic days. Pretty much as good as electronica gets.

**Sarah Goldthorpe, Soldier****Special**

By Lizzo

ANY buzz around this latest offering from the mesmerisingly high-energy American singer and rapper has been slightly overshadowed by the media storm over offensive lyrics in its third track. In case you missed it, *Grrls* had to be re-recorded when disability action groups took exception to Lizzo's use of a derogatory word for cerebral palsy. At least the star was in good company with the misstep... Beyoncé came in for similar criticism soon after. But PR disasters aside, it is hard to dislike much about this uber-joyful disco-pop offering, which is brimming with body positivity, sex and PMA.

**Sarah Goldthorpe, Soldier****The Theory of Whatever**

By Jamie T

IT'S taken a while (six years) and could be his last, so thankfully Jamie T's new album is characteristically intriguing. The usual rapid-fire lyrics reveal poignant nostalgia and the regular shambles around South London and its colourful cast (taxi driver mini-drama *Thank You* is proper LOL). Lacking the diversity of sound of earlier albums, but showing a maturity that really suits the 36-year-old, if this is the end of Jamie T, then it's a happy enough conclusion to his unique tales.

**James Morton, civvy**

That said, this latest release is consistent throughout, and that is consistently good. Is it alternative rock? Is it arty university rock? Is it electro-pop? No, it's Muse, and they're truly back on top. ■

**VERDICT:**

Big synths and guitars set an impressive tone



REVIEW: SCOTT ROBERTS, EX-RIFLES





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# SOLDIER SPORT

## GAME, SET, MATCH »»

WOMEN'S second seed Pte Amelia Davies (RLC) hits top form at the Inter-Services Tennis Championships. The Army again proved to be the team to beat at Wimbledon as they dominated their military rivals on the way to another title. Read a full report on pages 68-69...





# DOWNPOURS DENY MURRAY WITH RECORD IN SIGHT

ENDURANCE cyclist Lt Col Christina Murray (Int Corps) has spoken to *SoldierSport* about the agony of having to abandon her Land's End to John O'Groats (Lejog) challenge with less than 100 miles remaining as torrential downpours scuppered her record bid.

The officer set a blistering pace on her gruelling journey north and had covered 760 miles in just under 46 hours before Mother Nature cruelly intervened.

She was on target to beat the existing record of 51hr 5min 27sec when she reluctantly called time on her painstaking effort on Dornoch Firth Bridge.

“Everything was going amazingly well, and I was totally on track,” Murray explained. “I got to Perth and had been pouring water over myself to cool down. I had done 600 miles in the summer heat.

“I was ahead of schedule before a freak weather occurrence – the

like you'll see maybe two or three times in a lifetime – happened.

“Within seconds the road was flooded. I took refuge under a railway bridge during the worst of it, waiting to crack on up the A9 on the final straight.

“It has a 40-mile climb, there were periods when the rain subsided and then there were absolute downpours – at one point I saw frogs hopping over the road.

“I was riding in the dark in the pouring rain and all I could see in front of me was a silver screen. I was clinging on to the bike just to steer, while trying to avoid the potholes, which is not good on such a busy road.”

Murray had also developed a neck injury, which was only made worse by her valiant battle with the elements.

“I had more than 650 miles in my legs at this point and your body can only take so much,” she continued. “You are spinning so



**“ALL I COULD SEE WAS A SILVER SCREEN”**

many plates – and then you have to deal with the rain and cold. I was devastated.

“My legs were still good, and I could pedal. The problem was my neck and the ability to see, I even tried putting a neck brace on, but I could not hold my head up.

“I strongly believe that if it had not been for such sustained rain I would have broken that record by a good margin. It was the perfect mix of everything you do not want to happen.”

The setback followed a disappointing first attempt in September 2020, when a knee injury scuppered her hopes at around the halfway point.

Murray, who won the Inter-Services Time Trial Championships earlier this season, admitted a third bid seems unlikely and was in philosophical mood when assessing her performances.

“I felt stupid and that I had let myself down,” she said as she

recalled her emotions from two years ago.

"But this time it was frustration as I knew I could get there.

"In the military we train to win and if you do not win you have been defeated. However, I know it's not that cut and dry with something like this.

"In the Army we are now talking more about our failures. If we only do stuff thinking we are going to win things can get lost along the way – there is an awful lot to be gained from trying.

"I still rode for 760 miles and if we have inspired others to do something challenging and push hard, then that is a positive.

"Someone said that success for me was completing that first pedal. I'd picked myself up after what happened in 2020 and had made it to the start line. Dealing with failure and facing the thing that had caused so much anguish was success in itself."

Murray also praised the support she has received from the Army Sport Control Board and Army Cycling Union in helping her pursue her ambitions but said it is too early to say what might come next.

"I went again as there was so much I could change from that first attempt," she explained.

"This is such a massive undertaking and I'd have to ask what the driver would be for a third bid, other than hopefully having better luck.

"I love endurance cycling and maybe it's about using that ability in a different challenge." ■



## LEJOG IN NUMBERS

LENGTH OF ROUTE, IN MILES, FROM LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS

**340**

MILES REMAINING WHEN MURRAY WAS FORCED TO CALL TIME ON HER RECORD BID

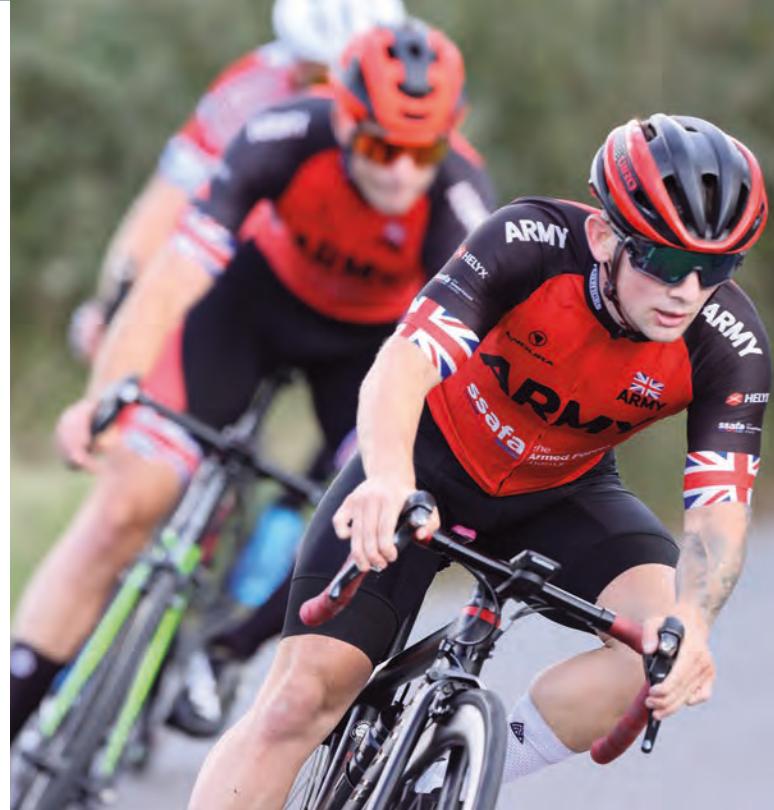
**80**

MONTHS SINCE CHRISTINA MACKENZIE SET THE LEJOG RECORD – BEATING THE PREVIOUS BEST WHICH HAD STOOD SINCE 2002

**14**

MILES COVERED IN MURRAY'S FIRST ATTEMPT IN 2020 BEFORE INJURY ENDED HER HOPES

**425**



## RIDERS SEEK BELGIAN BOOST

**N**EW Army men's road race team manager Sgt Mike Cripps (RE) is hoping a series of intense battles with some of the leading amateurs in world cycling will propel his riders to glory at this month's Inter-Services Championships.

The squad was in the midst of a week-long tour of Belgium as this issue went to press, where they were due to compete in up to four Kermesse races against athletes who will push them to the very limit ahead of the Forces showdown on September 21.

"While they have probably not had 15-year careers as professionals they are still seriously high-level cyclists who have been knocking on the door of pro contracts," Cripps told *SoldierSport* as he described the calibre of opposition his riders will face.

"We will be doing average speeds of 29 or 30 miles

per hour in events lasting 60 or 70 miles, riding over cobbled streets and through town centres – so it will be interesting. It's almost like the wild west of road racing.

"Belgium is fairly flat and the circuit for the Inter-Services is the same, so it will be a good lead in for us."

Cripps also said the trip will be an opportunity to bring a full team together in what has been a challenging year.

He added: "The standard of racing in the UK has been very high. The guys have been there or thereabouts, but it has been tough to break into the top ten positions."

"Lots of events have fallen by the wayside, whereas others have been oversubscribed. It has also been difficult to get more than six riders together in a race as organisers do not always allow bigger teams."

"So, this is a chance to get everyone together and bounce off each other." ■



## BOYNTON'S DEBRIEF

SKIPPER Sgt Jay Boynton (REME, pictured below) was thrilled to secure a second Inter-Services title of the season having already claimed the Twenty20 trophy at Lord's.

He also paid tribute to all three teams, who recorded more than 1,500 runs between them across the competition.

"The cricket that was played over the last few days was outstanding and credit to all three Services," he said.

"At the beginning of the tournament I thought our fielding was the worst of all three teams, but against the RAF we showed how good we are. Capt Ollie Cross (RA) taking those three catches was outstanding.

"We are saying goodbye to WO2 Uriel Hill (RLC) and Spr Connor Reed (RE).

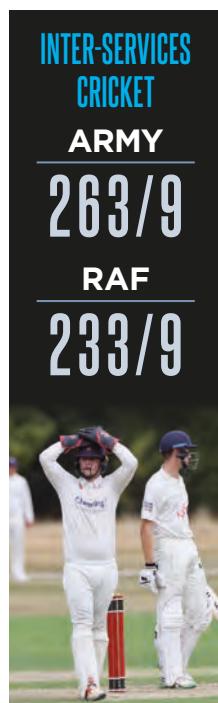
"They have been an absolute credit to themselves and have won a lot of trophies during their time in Army cricket.

"They will be a huge miss but we have some great talent coming through and it will be exciting to see that next year.

"We will reflect on this for a couple of weeks and then start thinking about how we can improve for the new season."



## FIELDING EFFORT FUELS REDS' VICTORY



**A** STELLAR performance in the field proved decisive for the Army as they overcame the challenge of the Royal Air Force to seal the honours in the Inter-Services 50-over Championships.

Chasing 264 to win, the airmen built momentum at varying stages of their innings only for progress to be halted by the ruthless efficiency of the Reds' fielders.

A smart stumping from wicketkeeper Spr Connor Reed (RE, pictured left) – playing his final Army game – set the tone as he removed Cpl Ross Diver for 35 off the bowling of Sgt Denson Narayan (RLC).

Reed then caught Flt Lt Adam Fisher before Capt Ollie Cross (RA) snared the first of three stunning boundary catches to reduce the RAF to 127-3.

SAC Tom Shorthouse was the next to perish as he holed out to Cpl Varun Bali (AGC (SPS)) in the deep and Narayan claimed a third scalp as Sgt Graham Wiseman (RA) held on to a sharp chance in the covers.

Cross secured a fourth wicket for Narayan with another expertly judged take and, having restricted their rivals to 157/6, the Army looked set for victory.

But a 46-run stand between SAC Jack Harrison and Sgt Sean McCabe threatened to tip the contest in their rivals' favour before the former was caught by Bali off SSgt Ross Darden (RE). His departure saw the run rate stutter, with the airmen eventually finishing on 233/9.

Earlier on, the Army's batters posted useful contributions as the RAF won the toss and elected to field. Cross top scored with 46 from 40 deliveries, while LCpl Tade Carmichael (RLC) looked in fine form for his 40. Openers Bali (pictured above) and LCpl Liam Fletcher (REME) also put on 58 for the first wicket.

Fletcher and Carmichael were in the thick of the action as the Army chased 258 to beat the Royal Navy in their opening tie.

The former struck 74 off 57 balls, while the latter blasted ten fours and three sixes in an unbeaten knock of 86. ■



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# COURT RUN CONTINUES

## ARMY MAINTAINS POSITION OF DOMINANCE AS SERVICES TITLE IS SECURED IN FINE STYLE

**F**Ollowing on from their historic victory in 2021, the Army produced another dominant display on the courts of Wimbledon to be crowned Inter-Services tennis champions once more.

While they failed to match their record from last year, when they won all 12 rubbers in both the men's and women's draws, the soldiers still proved too strong for their Forces rivals across two days of singles and doubles matches.

The men finished with an impressive haul of 11 wins from 12 ties – meaning they have claimed the trophy in eight of the past ten years. The women could not reach the same high, but a record of nine victories from 12 contests ensured they sealed their title in style.

The Army signalled their intent with a ruthless showing in the opening round of singles action – winning all four encounters in straight sets.

Women's number one Sgt Chloe Pike (Int Corps, pictured near bottom left) made short work of Royal Navy rival Lt Cdr Anna Misiak as she triumphed in under an hour without dropping a single game.

"It looked straight forward but these matches are never easy," she told *SoldierSport* afterwards. "The grass at Wimbledon is completely different, so you have to get used to the bounce and the feel under foot."

"I would have liked to have made a few more first serves but I did well hitting through the ball and generated some good pace."

"You never get bored coming to Wimbledon, even though we're on the practice courts it is

still incredible and to have 500 people watching on is pretty cool for an Army sport."

Pike also said the players were keen to avoid any complacency coming into the tournament – which got underway the day after England won the Women's Euro final – after their dominance in 2021.

"It's important not to have too much pressure or big expectations," she added. "The Royal Air Force have some new players, and this is a completely different championship."

"Everyone is excited and we want to carry on in the spirit of the Lionesses – we have players here for the first time and they are buzzing off that."

Second seed Pte Amelia Davies (RLC, main picture) also progressed with ease as she downed the RAF's Fg Off Andrea Jackson 6-2, 6-2.

"I definitely had it under control," she said as she reflected on her performance. "It was nice to get the first few games out of the way, I could then relax into the match."

"My drop shots played a big part in the win. I was also hitting the ball deep, which kept my opponent on defence. My serving was not as consistent as I would like, but on the whole I'm very pleased."

Men's number one Lt Harry Randle (RA, pictured middle left) faced the sternest test as he battled his way to victory over the Navy's PO Scott Nicholls.

The left-hander survived multiple break points to hold his serve in a pivotal fifth game of the first set and then immediately broke his rival to seize control at 4-2. The officer went on to win the set 6-3 and faced further resistance in

the second before eventually prevailing 6-4.

Randle then triumphed over RAF top seed AS2 Mike Greedy to be crowned the tournament's individual champion.

Pte Marco Wright (Para, pictured far bottom left) enjoyed a successful start to what was his second Wimbledon outing with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Fg Off James Marchant (RAF).

"There were some ups and downs," the Army second seed said of his performance.

"When I fell behind, I managed to stay calm, think about things and then correct my mistakes."

"I figured out his weaknesses quite quickly and realised he was less consistent on the forehand. That really worked in my favour."

Wright hails from an impressive tennis pedigree and after moving to Portugal as a 12-year-old was ranked in the country's top ten. He later played on the ITF Futures circuit but didn't have the chance to play at SW19 until he represented the Army.

"I remember telling my dad that one day I will be playing on these courts – it has just happened in a different way," the Reservist added.

"This is a similar standard to the ITF events I competed in in North Africa and Europe. It is great to be here."

The season continues with the Inter-Corps Winter League, which gets underway this month and has matches to the end of the year. ■



# BOWLERS BLOW NAVY AWAY



**A**SUBLIME bowling performance against the Royal Navy paved the way for another commanding victory for the Army women in the Inter-Services 40-over Championships.

Seamers Cpl Abbie Sullivan (QARANC) and Sgt Amanda Potgieter (REME, pictured) both claimed five-wicket hauls as the Senior Service were bundled out for a paltry 29 in the tournament decider, leaving the soldiers to race to their victory target off just 11 balls.

Only one Navy batter reached double figures and there were eight ducks in a miserable innings that was elevated by 13 extras from the Reds' bowlers.

Skipper Lt Connie Cant (RA) told *SoldierSport* she had hoped to bat first in order to spend more time in the middle, but when they lost the toss they rose to the challenge with the ball.

"We wanted to show that we have a strong bowling attack to go with our batting line-up," she explained.

"The plan was to try and dismiss them for 50, and we then adjusted that to 30, so it was great to bowl them out for 29."

The Royal Air Force offered a slightly stiffer test in the opening game by at least managing to post a score in excess of 100.

Potgieter and Cpl Gabie Clark (Int Corps) took three wickets apiece before the RAF closed their innings on 111 in the 35th over.

The run chase proved a formality as opener LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) posted an unbeaten 56 from 36 deliveries. Potgieter was 39 not out as the Army finished on 113/1 in the 12th over. ■



● ARMY opener LCpl Liam Fletcher (REME, pictured) top scored with 39 as the UK Armed Forces enjoyed a taste of Caribbean cricket in Aldershot. His efforts helped the military outfit post 165/9 in their Twenty20 clash with Grenada. LBdr Nick Schofield (RA) then starred with the ball, claiming 4-12 as the tourists were dismissed for 104.

**"IT WAS  
GREAT  
TO  
BOWL  
THEM  
OUT  
FOR 29"**

## SPORT SHORTS



### Winner in Wales

**■ TRIATHLETE** Capt Kat Matthews (RAMC) continued her fine form in 2022 with victory at the Ironman 70.3 event in Swansea.

Her success came on the back of a silver medal at the Ironman World Championships, which was followed by a record-breaking performance at the Sub8 project in Germany – where she became the first female athlete to break the eight-hour barrier over the full ironman distance.

Matthews then helped Europe to glory in the Collins Cup team event as this issue went to press.



### Women's league launches

**■ THE** Headquarters South West Women's Sports League gets underway next month with fixtures being staged at venues across the region.

Basketball, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, football, volleyball and netball are among the disciplines included in an event that is designed to give opportunities for female personnel to participate either as individuals or in a unit team.

The league runs until July next year and regiments based in the area are encouraged to submit as many teams or athletes as they would like. Those lacking numbers to form full teams will be amalgamated with others.

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# MONTH IN SPORT

## September's key dates...



**WHAT:** Inter-Services Waterskiing and Wakeboard Championships  
**WHEN:** September 12 to 15  
**WHERE:** Bedford  
**NEED TO KNOW:** Army

riders will be hoping to make waves as the annual watersports showdown returns to its traditional home at Box End Park



**WHAT:** Inter-Corps Power Cup final  
**WHEN:** September 13  
**WHERE:** Army Cricket Ground, Aldershot  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The Royal Artillery claimed corps cricket's top prize last season, but who will seal the honours this year? The Major Units final will be held on the same ground the following day



**WHAT:** Inter-Corps Netball Championships  
**WHEN:** September 22 to 23  
**WHERE:** Aldershot  
**NEED TO KNOW:** Each corps can enter up to three teams, with the competition staged in a two-division format. Can the Adjutant General's Corps retain their title from 2021?



## LOGGIES SHINE BRIGHT IN LEAGUE FINAL



DEFENDING champions the Infantry saw the Lawson Cup title slip from their grasp as they were downed by the Royal Logistic Corps in rugby league's showpiece final.

In a pulsating first half, winger Pte Semisi Drauvaki touched down in the corner to open the scoring for the loggies, before their rivals fired an immediate response.

A second score then saw the Infantry open a 10-4 advantage, but the challengers would not be deterred.

A jinking run saw Pte Andrew Smyth glide through the defensive line for a sublime solo effort and when LCpl Epeli Kotobalavu crashed over for a converted try the RLC found themselves 14-10 ahead at the break.

The lead was extended within minutes of the restart as some quick thinking from Pte Chanel Panapasa caught the Infantry cold and he was able to cross for his side's fourth try

of the afternoon.

The defending champions managed to reduce the arrears but the electric pace of Drauvaki effectively sealed the contest as he sprinted clear on the left to score in the corner.

A consolation try for the Infantry proved to be the last act of a thrilling final, as the loggies celebrated a 28-20 win.

"It's been a hard season," RLC skipper Cpl Jake Boardman said. "To get to the final was an accomplishment in itself and there are not many words that can describe the feeling of winning it."

"We had nothing to lose and there are no doubts about the capability of our team. We have a player at a professional club in Bradford and lads in the Army first team – that experience brought another string to our bow."

"I've been involved with RLC rugby league since 2014 and to come away with the Lawson Cup is the best feeling in my career by far." ■



Pictures: Gary Fox

## ATHLETES TESTED BY COMMONWEALTH CHALLENGE

**J**UDO ace Cpl Sarah Hawkes (AGC (RMP), main picture) spoke of her honour of representing the Army on sport's elite stage after narrowly missing out on a bronze medal at the Commonwealth Games.

The athlete, who represented Northern Ireland in the +78kg ranks, saw her hopes dashed when she was defeated by an ippon at the hands of New Zealand's Sydnee Andrews.

The soldier lost her opening bout of the competition but entered the repechage and fought her way to medal contention after beating Kenya's Diana Kana.

"It was a really close fight," Hawkes said as she reflected on her loss to Andrews.

"She is my training partner at the club I train at, so we know each other well."

"As nice as it would have been to win the bronze, I'm just pleased to have represented the Army at this level and to

get to a medal contest at the Commonwealth Games.

"With any sport all you can do is go out and give your best, nobody can predict what will happen on the day and it might, or might not, go your way. Everyone is in with a chance and it's great to be able to give everything you have."

The odds were against fellow judoka LCpl Victor Ahiavor (RRF) as he faced off against Team England's Harry Lovell-Hewitt, and the home favourite duly progressed before going on to win a bronze medal.

"When I saw the draw I knew I had a big match coming," the soldier said. "His coach was brilliant, they found out what to do and Harry capitalised on it."

Boxing delivered two medals for Service athletes the last time the Games were held in the UK in 2014, but there was to be no repeat performance this time round as Cpl Meg Reid (RLC)



**"ALL  
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bowed out in the round of 16.

Like Ahiavor, the Scottish fighter was drawn against a home opponent in the form of Gemma Richardson and her English rival triumphed via a unanimous verdict.

"I'm devastated with the outcome," Reid said. "I can't complain though, although I thought the first round was closer than what was on the scorecards."

"Trying to bring it back when you're down after the first is difficult but overall, I'm happy with my performance."

Cpl Arnold Rogers (RG), representing Gibraltar, finished 16th in the marathon with a time of 2hr 37min 11sec and there was success for double amputee veteran Micky Yule, a former staff sergeant in the Royal Engineers, who won a bronze medal in the para-powerlifting.

He said: "This tops everything. I knew that if I performed I would do myself justice." ■



ENTRIES OPEN: FURTHER DETAILS ON THIS MONTH'S BEGINNERS' COURSE CAN BE FOUND ON DEFENCE CONNECT

## » ARCHERY



### HITTING THE MARK

ARMY captain WO2 Craig Cherrie (RLC) praised the team spirit in the ranks after his side fired their way to glory at the Inter-Services Archery Championships.

The soldiers held off a strong challenge from runners-up the Royal Air Force to top the standings – a result that came on the back of their success in the indoor equivalent late last year.

"It was a real team performance and every single archer contributed," Cherrie told *SoldierSport*. "They all pushed each other on, which is quite a unique situation in a sport where you are used to focusing on your own score."

"It was close and the three-day training camp (pictured) we had in the build-up made the difference. It took everyone to the next level and we went in with confidence and in high spirits."

"We are probably on a par with the other Services but the training we do, together with the coaching we receive, really helps."

LCpl Sarah Roderick (Int Corps) led the Army charge by posting 906 points in the barebow and Cherrie was also keen to praise the efforts of WO2 Retief Uys (AAC) in the compound.



### HOTSHOT RODERICK HELPS TALENT PUSH



**"I HAVE PUT 120 POINTS ON MY BEST SCORE"**

**F**OLLOWING their latest success at Inter-Services level, the Army Archery Association is pressing ahead in its mission to attract newcomers to the sport.

Numbers have continued to increase in recent seasons, and it is hoped more sharpshooters will join the fold when the organisation hosts its latest beginners' course in Abingdon from September 27 to 29.

The set-up is particularly keen for more female personnel to get involved and one of its leading lights, LCpl Sarah Roderick (Int Corps, pictured), has been speaking to *SoldierSport* about her passion for the discipline and the opportunities on offer to those serving in the military.

She took up archery while studying at university and said one of the first things she did on arriving at her unit was to reach out to the Army team.

"I wanted to try something completely different," she explained. "Football, rugby and hockey are all sports you do at school, but archery is quite niche. I had the opportunity to do a beginners' course and I

have not looked back."

Roderick, part of the victorious Inter-Services squad and who specialises in the barebow, qualified for the head-to-head competition at last year's national indoor finals but admitted her initial progress was quite slow.

"It wasn't until a year later that I could do it properly," she said. "But I loved the community, and it is the same now I'm in the Service."

"When I arrived at my unit it was a little overwhelming as I didn't really know anyone, but I had my archery."

"I joined the Army team, and it is such a relaxed environment. There is no formal rank structure, and we are all friends who want each other to succeed."

"We have some fantastic coaches and I have put 120 points on my personal best score since I have been involved with them."

"It is also good from a mental health perspective. I use it as a way to de-stress – if I've had a busy week I can go to a field and get all that stress out through my arrows." ■

# Final Word



I'm a PTI and fitness is key – especially in regard to all the kit and equipment we carry in our reconnaissance role. You need that high standard of robustness at all times to be ready to go out the door

**LCpl Aaron Dixon, RL**



For me it's keeping my low-level skills and drills up, staying fit and active, eating well and preventing injuries so I'm not downgraded. But as well as being physically ready, it's also important to be mentally prepared if we are needed to deploy

**Tpr Morgan Woodcock, RL**



I've been at readiness before and it's important to make sure your affairs are in order. So, for me that's preparing my wife and kids that at the drop of a hat I might be called on to go out of the door

**Sgt Robert Julian, RL**



Part of it is that we need to keep on top of our individual training records. People should be proactive by looking ahead at the programme and checking whether they are in date for courses, medicals and fitness tests

**Sgt Nils Carr, REME**



We go onto the training area at Catterick quite a lot and make sure we're competent doing drills like fire and manoeuvre, fire missions and close target recce – which we specialise in. Knowing what's going on in Eastern Europe makes you realise it could make a difference one day

**Tpr Stacey Hughes, RL**

It's about topping up skills and revising the basics. We've got a new OC and he wants to take that further, so every week we go out on the area and practise stuff like contact drills, sentry points, withdrawals and so on

**Tpr Jordan Scragg, RL**



It means having to be prepared at all times, for example by having a go-bag ready, with your kit all sorted rather than leaving it until the last minute

**Cpl Harry Hitchcock, RL**

## Gearing up

We asked The Royal Lancers what the chief of the general staff's readiness drive, Op Mobilise, means for them

# LEVEL PEAKS

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