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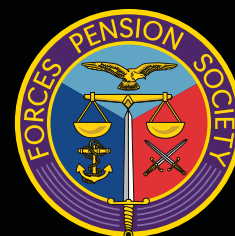
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## OUR CONTRIBUTORS THIS MONTH...



### WO1 PAUL CARNEY, RE

THE Army sergeant major is a long-time friend of this magazine, having penned a column for us every month over the last couple of years. His latest offering (page 15) is perhaps his most forthright yet – and with very good reason, as you'll discover. When it comes to values and standards, Paul certainly knows his onions. He joined the Service back in 1997 and has served on operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo and Macedonia. The Army's most senior soldier leaves his post and the Service this month, and this publication will certainly miss his erudite contributions.



### LSGT ASHLEY RYAN, IG

OUR lead video-game reviewer this month is a 17-year soldier who has operational experience in Afghanistan and Cyprus. But Ashley likes nothing better than a virtual battle on his PC in his downtime and is something of an expert on digital combat. He first indulged his gaming passion on a 1990s-era Sega Megadrive and cites Hideo Kojima's stealth outing *Metal Gear Solid 1* as his all-time favourite title. See what he thinks of the latest in this genre, *Sniper Elite Resistance*, on page 70.

# WELCOME TO A NEW-LOOK MAG

**OUR birthday**, which we celebrate this month (page 58), pales into insignificance alongside some of the the other 80th anniversaries that fall during 2025.

In May and August the world will commemorate VE and VJ day respectively – events that changed the course of history and both of which we'll be covering in upcoming editions.

But please humour us for just one month, because the fact that *Soldier* is still doing what Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery originally set out to do eight decades ago is, in its own way, quite remarkable.

To mark the occasion there is a small exhibition and short film about the history of the magazine on display at the **National Army Museum** in London (pictured below) until early July, and we've introduced some brand new features for you to enjoy.

First up is a **new look and feel**, with rejigged dimensions to keep the title looking fresh and modern.

We've also launched a fantastic, free **online archive** (page 7) containing *Soldier's* back issues. This is open for anyone to access. It provides a fascinating window into the Army's operations, training and the ups and downs of military life since the end of the Second World War.

Not only that, but we've introduced a new **online version** of the magazine optimised for reading on mobile phones and tablets – ideal for those on the move and a handy alternative to the existing flip-book edition.

It's our hope that this package of improvements will help *Soldier* to continue shining a light on the hot topics, views and opinions that matter to serving personnel for many years to come.

Please let us know what you think.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

“We've introduced  
some brand new  
features to enjoy”





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# LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD



**SOLDIER may have turned 80 years old this month, but that's not the only cause for celebration.**

The magazine has launched a new online archive, which means searching for an article in a past issue – perhaps about a relative who once fought in the Army or you and your comrades serving on ops in a far-flung destination – has never been easier.

The collection contains every *Soldier* published since the first edition was distributed to troops in March 1945 (see above) – that's nearly 1,300 issues in total due to two spells the magazine spent as a more regular fortnightly title, as well as the monthly publication it's been for most of its life.

*Soldier* writers and photographers have

recorded the bravery, fortitude and struggles of troops during every major conflict the British Army has been involved in since the mag began in the final months of the Second World War.

The reports include first-hand accounts of the surrender of Nazi Germany and the liberation of the concentration camps, the fall of the British Empire, the rise of the nuclear age, National Service, Northern Ireland and the conflicts in the Balkans and the Middle East over the last eight decades.

*Soldier* has also covered topics from food to kit, medals, welfare and housing – all of which means the archive contains a unique record of Service life during conflicts and peacetime.

With such a lot of ground to cover, the site is, thankfully, equipped with a search function, which can locate articles based on the date of the edition or a specific word or name.

Kate Holvey-Williams, The Royal British Legion's head of Armed Forces engagement,

said: "It's a brilliant resource for veterans, military aficionados, researchers, casual readers and academics as well as serving personnel."

"Our many veterans will love scrolling back through *Soldier's* pages, looking for stories about their comrades or unit when they served, or generally just for nostalgic reasons."

Access to the archive is free for all – simply visit the *Soldier* website (address below), where you will also find a new online edition of the magazine that is optimised for mobile phones and tablets.

To enjoy both of these great new additions log on to **[soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://soldiermagazine.co.uk)**

## "IT'S A BRILLIANT RESOURCE"

Kate Holvey-Williams, RBL

### WHERE TO FIND SOLDIER



#### Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the month. Pick up a copy at the cookhouse and if you aren't seeing it tell us at **[subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk)**



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#### Online

Digital versions of current and past editions – going right back to 1945 – are now available to view on **[soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://soldiermagazine.co.uk)**



#### Purchase

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





## 1 UNITED STATES

### Tech trial continues

THE latest stage in a long-running US-led experimentation programme is underway in the Californian desert.

Project Convergence Capstone (pictured above during the 2022 iteration) is teaming troops from the Army's Experimentation and Trials Group (ETG) with international colleagues against a peer enemy equipped with swarms of attack drones.

The exercise aims to provide insights into how planning, execution and command and control might be conducted differently against a foe equipped with robotics and autonomous systems as well as emerging AI software.

"We are being challenged in the surface, near-surface and electromagnetic spectrum as well as in sustainment," said the ETG's Maj Adam Szczerbiuk (RA). "All this is against a backdrop of having to integrate across the joint and multinational community."



## 2 FALKLAND ISLANDS

### Nepalese join the Navy

HARDENED Himalayans from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, discovered their sea legs as a tour down south saw them sample life on the ocean wave.

The soldiers, forming the territory's current Roulement Infantry Company, joined Royal Navy counterparts for so-called marinisation training aboard HMS Forth.

They rehearsed actions on drills for dealing with fire and flood, donned the immersion suits that would keep them alive in the Atlantic swell and honed joint protocols with the sailors.

The package ticked off, the Gurkhas will be able to embark on patrols and deployments around the Falklands archipelago plus amphibious actions on exercise.

A TASTE OF ARMY ACTIVITY ACROSS THE WORLD

# GLOBAL SITREP

## 3 ESTONIA

### Baltic battle sims

A GRUELLING winter training camp has wrapped up in Tapa for 600 troops protecting Nato's eastern flank on Operation Cabrit.

Led by The Royal Dragoon Guards – with French infanteers in support – the Forward Land Forces Estonia Battlegroup took on an enemy formed by counterparts from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, plus Estonian and US personnel.

The aim was to demonstrate they could work effectively together in extreme cold weather, with an emphasis on the tactics that would be used if the alliance was called upon to defend the Baltic state.

"The battlegroup showed it is more interoperable with partner forces than ever before, with French elements integrated into every sub-unit while also working to an Estonian higher headquarters," said Lt Rob Coombs (RWxY).

"They are physically tough and adept at dealing with harsh conditions"

Airborne troops make friends in Japan  
– page 42



Picture: Lt Rob Coombs, RWxY





## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now



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### KOSOVO

## Brits and Danes dig deep

ROYAL Lancers personnel serving on Op Elgin in the Balkans braved snow and plunging temperatures to take part in an endurance event organised by Nato colleagues.

The so-called Dancon March – a 36km weighted tab – traces its roots back to the Danish Army of the 1970s.

LSgt Jack Groves (HAC) was the fastest UK finisher in just over two hours, securing fourth place out of some 1,000 participants.

The Brits' day-job on the mission is to gather information to help KFOR commanders understand the "human terrain" of the country, part of which sees them travelling to meet key stakeholders among the population to identify any threats to security.

Picture: ASI Jason Russell, RAF



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### JORDAN

## Readiness rehearsal

LIVE firing and close integration with allies were the focus of an infantry package in the Middle East.

Staged on Al Quwayrah Training Area, Exercise Olive Grove put members of A Company, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and the King Hussein Brigade of the Jordanian Armed Forces through a testing series of scenarios built around lessons from current global conflicts.

They included casualty evacuations, night

attacks and patrolling the peaks and wadis of the unforgiving desert terrain.

As well as validating the British troops' readiness for high-end warfighting, the exercise saw the host nation soldiers integrated at section level, with teams from both sides exchanging tactics in skills such as urban combat.

For LCpl James Vanstone, it was the first time working closely with a partner force.

"They've been excellent," he said.

"They turn up every morning with so much energy and enthusiasm and I learnt probably more from them than they have from me."

Picture: Capt James Mason, US Army





## BOARD MEETING

ARMY snowboarders faced their Forces rivals on the slopes of Meribel as part of the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships.

With a number of regular riders missing due to deployments, the squad had a fresh look this season and claimed a notable high in the boardercross discipline as they took the men's and women's team titles.

The week-long test also saw personnel compete in a raft of Telemark and Alpine skiing events, with honours spread across all three Services.

Read a full report on pages 80-81.

Picture: Cpl Jack Watson, RAF



## IN THE TRENCHES

Steadfast Dart puts  
Scottish troops to test

Picture: Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC



**SOLDIERS from the Desert Rats were braving an arduous European winter as this issue went to press, operating alongside Nato troops on a huge training package across**

### Romania and Bulgaria.

Exercise Steadfast Dart saw soldiers from 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards lead the charge during serials

**“They have gained a great deal”**

Maj Jamie Graham, Scots

such as trench clearance and fighting in woods and forests.

The two outfits, from 7 Light Mechanised Brigade Combat Team, form part of Nato's new Allied Reaction Force.

They paired with nations including the host country and Spain, working with tanks and fast jets, among other assets.

The manoeuvres also saw the soldiers flex deployment protocols, travelling to training areas in Romania by road across central Europe.

In all, more than 700 vehicles – including the likes of Jackals, Coyotes and Foxhounds – were shipped to ports in Greece and Germany from Marchwood, near Southampton (*Soldier*, February).

Maj Jamie Graham, OC Delta Company, 4 Scots, said the troops had acquitted themselves well on an exercise involving nine nations.

“There have been – in particular – a lot of junior troops and they have gained a great deal from the training,” he said.

Read more on what went down in Romania in our next issue.



# LETTING SOLDIERS BE MUMS

**MORE than 100 breastfeeding rooms are now open across defence, with 46 in the Army.**

The facilities have been set up with the help of local infrastructure funding to create welcoming spaces for mothers to pump while on duty.

One room at 3rd (UK) Division Signal Regiment was organised by Cpl Heidi Watts (AGC (SPS)) with support from commanders.

"For Servicewomen returning to duty after maternity leave, balancing military responsibilities with breastfeeding can be challenging," she said.

"I was allocated a room to pump but it wasn't very comfortable.

"The new facility provides a hygienic space, with a supportive chair, a small fridge for milk storage and essential supplies so that female personnel can continue their routines.

"The initiative reflects the regiment's commitment to inclusivity and sets a positive example of how units can adapt

Picture: Shutterstock



to meet the needs of troops while maintaining operational effectiveness."

Cpl Watts decided to stop breastfeeding when she volunteered to deploy to Germany on Exercise Cerberus last autumn, but told *Soldier* she is pleased other serving mums will benefit from the initiative.

**"It sets a positive example of how units can adapt"**

Cpl Heidi Watts, AGC (SPS)



Picture: Graeme Main

## RECRUITMENT RE-ORG

**SEPARATE formations will now oversee the training and hiring of troops following a top-down reorganisation of structures.**

The splitting of the Army Recruiting and Individual Training Command sees a new Army Individual Training Command, led by Maj Gen Nick Cowley, manage institutions such as the Royal Military Academy

Sandhurst, the Soldier Academy and Army Adventurous Training Group.

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Army Recruiting has eyes on the Capita contract, Recruiting Group and the Army Officer Selection Board.

Top brass say a pan-defence initiative to bring new blood into the ranks will go live in 2027.

“

## REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

**Army padre, Rev Graeme McConville (RACHD), offers some words of reassurance on 2025...**



**Every new day is an opportunity.**

Be deliberately thankful for what is good and start afresh if you need to. Seek adventure in what excites or inspires you and maybe even share it with someone new.



**It's yours to give.**

Choosing to be cheerful will impact positively on those around you. You can make your little corner of this world a better place for someone who needs it.



**You are loved.**

Even if you don't believe it, you are loved by friends, family, people you work with, people you don't even know... and you are loved by God.

”

### A PRAYER TO SHARE

*O, Holy Spirit,  
descend plentifully  
into my heart.  
Enlighten the dark  
corners of this  
neglected dwelling  
and scatter there  
Thy cheerful beams.”  
Saint Augustine*





# DARK MOMENT

**Inquest triggers wave of abuse allegations and some serious soul-searching for Army leaders and soldiers. Why do we continue to fail our sisters-in-arms?**

**THE hundreds of allegations of sexual assault, harassment, humiliation and rape that flooded the Fill Your Boots Facebook page last month would have come as scant surprise to many of the Servicewomen reading them.**

Last year's Armed Forces continuous attitude survey found that 13 per cent of women had been subject to sexual harassment in the previous 12 months alone. So it is hardly a stretch to imagine that, over the course of her career, the average Servicewoman would have encountered some sort of mistreatment.

This is borne out by last month's outpouring of testimonies, which came as the inquest of Gnr Jaysley Beck (RA) – who took her own life in 2021 after relentless harassment and a sexual assault – hit the headlines.

And it has raised the question of whether decent people – both soldiers and their leaders – are doing enough to call out mistreatment of women and men at the lowest level.

Among the wave of anonymous accounts from Regulars and Reservists, were tales of soldiers being pinned against walls, groped, humiliated and having their bedrooms broken into during the night.

In one shameful incident, an ex-Servicewoman claimed to have been poked in the vagina with a fork in a cookhouse in view of several other male colleagues who

watched on.

The experiences lay bare how some leaders are continuing to fail the women under their command.

This was underscored in a letter sent to all commanding officers by Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Roly Walker, who said he had been left "disgusted" by the many allegations of "appalling and shameful" behaviour in the ranks.

He urged COs to step up and play their part as leaders – "visibly and confidently" – in order to stop this behaviour.

Alfie Usher (ex-Para), who runs the Fill Your Boots (FYB) social media account and who has acknowledged the role this platform once played in humiliating women, told *Soldier* he had been left shocked by the scale of the allegations that flooded his inbox (see overleaf).

In many of the stories he reposted, leaders appeared to have prioritised protecting the perpetrator's career over seeking justice, with referrals to mental health services or discussions about "banter" often the result.

One victim commented: "Sometimes it's not the perpetrators who cause the most damage, but the people who victims think will have their back and let them down."

The revelations, which have been likened to the Me Too movement in the civilian world, triggered a range of high-profile responses on FYB, including defence chiefs and the Provost



Marshal, responsible for serious crime investigation in the MoD.

The latter thanked victims for speaking and reminded personnel that anyone wishing to report an incident would be treated with respect, and any follow-up actions based on their wishes.

The Defence Serious Crime Command can be contacted 24/7 by anyone (Service or civilian) who has been the victim or witness of serious crime at any point in their service.

Contact them via the Service Police Crime Bureau on **02392 285 170**.

Crimestoppers can also be reached on **0800 555 111** or complaints reported directly to the civilian police.

There is no need for any soldier to speak directly to their chain of command to report an allegation.

Posting after Gnr Beck's inquest, which ruled that Army failure to take action over her mistreatment had contributed to her death, and for which the

Service sincerely apologised, her family said: "The only comfort we have now is knowing that hundreds of people in the military have come forward, sharing their own experiences and seeking support."

"No one should have to suffer in silence."

"There are independent sources of help available, and we urge anyone affected to reach out. You are not alone."

Commentators said male bystanders must do more to call out humiliation of women in everyday life.

One Facebook user, Dave Rowbottom (ex-RE), said "Gents, we all need to do better."

"We need to speak up when we see things that aren't right and educate ourselves about what is and isn't acceptable."

He quoted stand-up comedian Daniel Sloss, whose live show X went viral after he talked about discovering that his friend was a rapist and feeling guilty he





Picture: Cpl Nathan Tanuku RLC

## “Women in uniform are tough, capable and willing to serve their country – but they deserve better”

hadn't confronted the individual's attitudes sooner.

“There are monsters among us and they look like us,” he said, addressing men.

“Were there signs in my friend's behaviour over the years towards women that I ignored? The answer is yes – and then he raped my friend.

“That's on me 'til the day I die. Talk to your boys.”

The Army already tries to equip soldiers to do this with something known as “active bystander training” (see more overleaf).

Introduced in 2019 after a report into inappropriate behaviours in the MoD, its lessons are used by COs as part of the

annual “behaviours” individual training requirement (ITR).

One point the training gets across is the idea of “diffused responsibility”, which means the more people that witness a situation, the less likely it is anyone will call it out.

When we are part of a large group, we often wrongly assume others will take care of things.

But personnel can also feel intimidated or embarrassed about tackling bad behaviour. However, there are tools to help with this (see right).

But with this and other initiatives such as Teamwork days and zero tolerance of sexual misconduct in place for some

years now – and mistreatment of female troops persisting – the Army's top brass will no doubt be doing some serious soul-searching.

Sarah Atherton, whose 2021 report into women in the Armed Forces laid bare the scale of the problem, said defence continued to refuse to confront its “toxic leadership, systemic misogyny” and “a chain of command that prioritises reputation over justice”.

She added: “Women in uniform are tough, capable, and willing to serve their country – but they deserve better.

“Until military culture is fundamentally reformed, cases like Gnr Beck's will keep happening. And that is a national disgrace.”

If military culture is to really be improved, however, the spotlight must surely also fall on individuals as well as their leaders.

“Jaysley was exactly the kind of person the Army needs,” a Service statement said. “She was excelling at her job.

“Her friends described her as someone who was kind, funny and always putting others before herself.”

Loyalty is an Army value that British soldiers live and die by. Put simply, it's about looking after your teammates and never letting them down – even in tough circumstances.

According to Army Servicewomen's Network co-chair WO1 Hayley Cornforth (AGC (SPS)), anyone unable to fully support female colleagues in the face of this problem should ask themselves serious questions.

“How would they feel if it was their sister, mother, brother or themselves affected?” she adds.

Finding the moral courage to do the right thing and speak out when women are mistreated, it seems, could spell the difference between another tragedy and the start of a new era for the Army. One that supports women in deeds, as well as words.

**If you would like to share your story with *Soldier* – anonymously or otherwise – email [editor@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:editor@soldiermagazine.co.uk)**

**You can find more details of how to report incidents or crimes – or find support – in our Directory on page 66**

## HOW TO CALL IT OUT

If you think behaviour towards a woman is unacceptable, others probably will too. So if you intervene first, you are likely be backed up. There are lots of different ways to do this. Try one of the **4Ds** next time you need to have a word...

Be **DIRECT** and keep it concise. Try saying “what you say really bothers me” or asking them how they'd feel if someone said this to a member of their family

**DISTRACT** by changing the subject and trying to stop the behaviour. Ask loudly if anyone wants a brew.

**DELEGATE** to someone else if you don't feel confident enough to intervene. You could ask someone, “are you mates with Anna, can you ask her if she's okay?”

**DELAY** and take action at a later date instead. You could ask, “are you okay – I was a little uncomfortable with what happened last night”. Ask them if there is anything you can do to support, or signpost them to resources to make a report.

*Info taken from Army active bystander training material*

**In our next issue we talk to Army leaders about the measures that have been implemented, and will soon be introduced, to address unacceptable behaviours in the Service**





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# DON'T WALK ON BY...

**ALL personnel, from the newest recruit to the highest ranking general, must play their part in making the Service a better place for everybody, the Army Servicewomen's Network says.**

Co-chair Lt Col Sam Dodge (RLC) called on individuals to challenge misconduct.

"Personnel need to understand that touching someone without their consent is a crime that must be reported to the Service or civilian police," she said.

"For victims, I know it's hard, but I want to encourage them to report their experiences and for those people who witness the crimes to also do their duty and tell someone.

"Then there's a lot of unacceptable behaviour that isn't criminal but that by going unchecked could allow crimes to take place.

"Having the courage to speak out may well prevent something worse from happening to someone else.

"Be an ally to the person on the receiving end – don't walk on by and don't assume that the RSM or CO know about it and are dealing with it."

The officer emphasised leaders should "set the tone and back it up with substance" by making it clear that wrongdoing wouldn't be tolerated.

Prioritising complaints and discipline cases to ensure swift resolution was key, she insisted.

In addition, the network's committee called on Service personnel to actively engage with mandatory behaviours briefs and active bystander training (see previous page).

"No one likes attending another lecture but those people sitting there and rolling their eyes at it need to look inwards and ask themselves why they find it difficult to listen to," explained co-chair WO1 Hayley Cornforth (AGC (SPS)).

"Is it because they think some of that conduct is acceptable? Or would they look away if they saw it happen?"

"They should consider how they would feel if it was their sister, mother, brother or themselves affected."

Despite being in positions of authority, both women said subordinates had used inappropriate language to them.



Picture: Cpl Nanda Atherton, RLC

"In my role as RSM I can stamp it out – I won't allow anyone to act like that," continued WO1 Cornforth.

"But if it's happening to me, there will be others more junior or reserved who don't feel able to speak up."

Lt Col Dodge concluded: "The stories are heartbreaking and at the centre of each one is a Service person who is meant to be part of your team – if you can't feel empathy for them, you're not a good team member."

**'If I can't trust leaders to look after troops in peacetime, how are they going to do it at war?'**

FURIOUS outgoing Army sergeant major, WO1 Paul Carney, says NCOs must do more to weed out "appalling" behaviour towards women.

Speaking in the wake of Gnr Beck's inquest, the top soldier said the revelations had "honestly made my skin crawl".

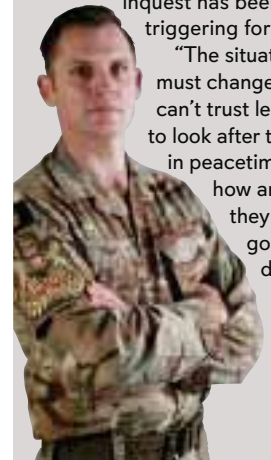
He added he was "shocked that we have still not done enough to make people feel safe". And he demanded NCOs – from lance corporals to senior warrant officers – step up to tackle this.

"I know we've made progress but we haven't moved fast enough. I want everyone to double down on their efforts to let soldiers know they're there for them, and help victims understand where to report things and – importantly – that they'll be looked after.

"COs have a lot to do – the nature of the role means they can't be everywhere – so I want people to be visible in places such as accommodation blocks, cookhouses and vehicle parks."

Revealing how someone close to him had received unwanted attention during her time serving, he said: "She went through the experience of not being heard – and reading the stories from those who have come forward during the inquest has been triggering for her.

"The situation must change – if I can't trust leaders to look after troops in peacetime, how are they going to do it at war?"



## FACEBOOK FLOODGATES

**THE MAN** behind the Fill Your Boots social media page reflects on the day his inbox filled up with hundreds of allegations of abuse, assault and humiliation from former and serving female soldiers...

*I wasn't expecting the response that came. I never served with women in the Paras, so it never crossed my mind it would be happening on this scale. I've received more than 1,300 messages and some of them are shocking – stories of Servicewomen too scared to sleep in the block or use the bathroom at night because of blokes coming to their rooms. If my daughter or wife was serving I would want CCTV in every corridor.*

*The overwhelming majority of people aren't sex pests, but those who are, or those in authority who are abusing positions of power, need to be kicked out, not moved on or promoted.*

Alfie Usher (ex-Para), Fill Your Boots founder





# career



Pictures: Graeme Main; Shutterstock

## IS YOUR BOSS IN THE DARK?

Q&A



**IF YOUR OC is a bit oblivious – or your RSM is failing to read the room – there may soon be a way to put them in the picture better.**

Changes to the officer reporting process for 2025 mean all lieutenant colonels must use “180 feedback” from team members as part of their mid-period appraisals (MPARs).

And from the end of this year, that system will be extended to majors in OC roles as well as warrant officers in regimental sergeant major and squadron, battery and company sergeant major jobs.

Essentially, this means more soldiers are going to be asked for their views on their boss’s leadership style.

Short surveys are sent to a select number of the subject’s team members for comments, and the feedback is discussed with their reporting officer at their MPAR before being used to draft development plans.

Maj Ollie Davey (RDG, shown left) from the Personnel Policy team told *Soldier* more about the new system...

### **Why is 180-degree reporting a good thing?**

It improves awareness of leadership style and how it affects the team, meaning Army officers are better able to develop. This makes them more effective for their teams. It’s also a chance for soldiers to tell leaders what is going well and what should continue.

### **Why do other ranks need to have their say on their bosses?**

It’s important officers consider multiple points of view when they are looking to develop themselves. Everyone has blind spots – and the more perspectives that are offered on a person’s performance, the more likely it is they will spot areas for development. It also helps to ensure that leaders consider the impact of their behaviours on their subordinates.

### **But isn’t this just creating more work for soldiers at a time when the Army is trying to cut out paperwork to up its lethality?**

It’s absolutely understood that there is a significant amount of admin our people are already asked to complete. So 180 feedback will happen every two years to make it as low impact as possible. This change would not be taking place if it had not been shown to provide genuine opportunities to improve our organisation. Ultimately, better leadership improves both the Army’s effectiveness and its fighting power.

### **Do you think Servicemen and women will feel they can be completely honest about the performance of their bosses?**

Feedback is anonymous and detailed guidance is provided to ensure that this is maintained.

For more details on 180 feedback and changes to Army appraisals read [ABN 002/2025](#).

**“It’s a chance to tell leaders what is going well”**





## BRAIN BOOSTER



**BORED of those dodgy smartphone games?** There's now a far more fruitful way to keep your noggin sharp at the screen – and it could even boost your future career prospects.

Online learning platform *My Digital Skills* has been added to the Defence Gateway and it gives troops access to hundreds of courses geared towards clueing you up on topics that could be vital to future operations.

Its AI-driven content allows users to learn five minutes at a time, and according to the creators in the Digital Skills for Defence programme it has a training value of £200 per person.

The same material is also available for free to military spouses and veterans via **techvets.co**

LCpl Melicia Antoine (AGC (SPS)), who has already tried the courses out, said: "I've picked up practical ways to be more efficient at work and am diving into exciting new topics. It's a great tool."

## WOMEN UNITE

There has never been a better time to join the **Army Servicewomen's Network...**

...AND this vital organisation, which gives a voice to females of all ranks, is looking for men to be part of its committee too.

Co-chairs WO1 Hayley Cornforth (AGC (SPS)) and Lt Col Sam Dodge (RLC) told *Soldier* they are recruiting male soldiers into the fold to act as a "red team" during discussions.

"We want to make sure the decisions we make take both perspectives into account," said Lt Col Dodge, who works in the Personnel Services directorate at Army HQ.

"It doesn't matter what level they are at – we just want a couple of people who can come along to our meetings and speak up about men's views."

The news comes as the network marks the tenth year since it was set up as an informal support group for female troops, outside of the chain of command.

At just over 6,000 members, a significant portion of the Army's approximately 7,000 serving women have joined its ranks.

Some three months into her tenure as co-chair, Lt Col Dodge said the network continues to be a "safe space" to share issues and ideas while providing opportunities for coaching and mentorship and also giving advice to



**Lt Col Sam Dodge, RLC**

senior leadership.

WO1 Cornforth, the regimental sergeant major at Worthy Down's Defence School of Logistics and Administration, added that the chain of command should remain the first port of call for Servicewomen, but that the network was there to back them up.

"We still want people to feel they can go to their units with issues but if they can't or aren't comfortable doing so, we are there to help," she said.

To join search "Army Servicewomen's Network" on Facebook or Instagram, or look them up on Defence Connect.

**Women speak out on abuse – page 12**



# tech



## FIBRE FIGHTS

### Ukraine expert shows raft of radical ideas for winning the drone war...

**THE speed of the drone warfare revolution is showing no sign of slowing down, a leading light of the Ukrainian military machine has revealed.**

Vadym Slyusar, a professor at Ukraine's Central Research Institute of Armaments and Military Equipment, said new concepts were being introduced all the time as his country and Russia vied for superiority in the so-called "near-surface domain".

"Every day of war brings something new to the battlefield," he told delegates at the International Armoured Vehicle Conference in Farnborough last month.

Slyusar highlighted the increasing use of drones controlled by fibre optic cable that spools out as the platform flies, with both the Russians and Ukrainians regularly fielding such systems in clashes.

Ukrainian personnel captured a Russian device recently and found commercial Chinese-made parts inside and a spool showing it had held 10km of line.

The Ukrainians have been exploring the use of this technology to deploy mothership drones connected to a smaller, more agile interceptor UAS for counter-missions.

Video processing and target detection is undertaken by the mothership using inbuilt AI capabilities which track targets and automatically guide the interceptor drone.

Since the cable does not touch the ground, the risk of entanglement in obstacles or breakage is reduced.

The huge advantage of the technology is its immunity to electronic warfare measures, although Ukraine's Unmanned Strike Aviation Brigade has introduced a method for detecting fibre optic-guided drones using a specially developed mobile radar station.

Counter measures such as highly sensitive sound detection devices and quadcopters equipped with sharp titanium-tipped rotors that slice through such cables are also being evaluated currently.

Other drone-based concepts being assessed



Pictures: Alamy

include "aerial minefields" – swarms of drones that protect convoys from first-person view kamikaze devices where a central, AI-powered hub allows the system to learn and adjust to enemy tactics.

Multiple UAS carrying camouflage or Kevlar anti-drone nets over vehicle convoys are also being looked at, the professor said.



# DOGS OF WAR

Could these weird canines remove the IED threat from human hands?

**ROBOTIC dogs fitted with disruptor mechanisms have been showcasing their ability to destroy improvised explosive devices in trials.**

In four days of tests, the mechanical canines fired high-energy projectiles and jets of fluid at bombs to either render them safe or destroy critical components before detonation.

This reduced the need for human technicians to get danger close.

Shown here is Boston Dynamics' Spot the Dog, which was transformed into a mobile bomb disposal unit for the duration of the trial.

Scientists found it was able to move swiftly and accurately to place the disruptor at the ideal position, ensuring the threat was neutralised with precision.

The trials were conducted by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) alongside industry partners to show what could be done to enhance the military's explosive ordnance disposal capability.

Other innovations they looked at included



**“It fuses together military and commercial solutions to keep our people and country safe”**

drones equipped with AI to identify threats and monitor safety cordons, and robots that open and close doors, navigate stairs and inspect devices.

DSTL's chief science and technology officer, Prof Andy Bell, explained: “This is a great example of how defence can achieve an advantage through the exploitation of technology, fusing together military and commercial systems to keep our people and country safe from deadly threats.”

**Involved in a tech trial?**

Tell us about it at [news@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:news@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

# MOVE OVER, CHAT GPT

AI tool helps defence staff with research, reports and more

**AN AI tool has been launched to help military personnel with a range of essential daily tasks.**

Chat-MoD – essentially a secure version of Chat GPT – can assist with the likes of drafting emails, summarising text, retrieving information and answering questions.

Troops could also use it to research geopolitical events, generate weather forecasts for given locations or translate text when communicating with international partners.

Designed by Defence Equipment and Support and the Defence Artificial Intelligence Centre to boost efficiency, the platform trawls

a range of internal and external sources to generate answers.

It is part of wider efforts to integrate large language models and the latest multi-purpose AI technology.

Paul Lincoln, the MoD's second permanent secretary, noted that it was exciting to see the department rapidly adopting new tools.

“Harnessing AI is key to maintaining our competitive edge in the battlespace, and

to maintaining our productivity in defence outputs,” he added.

He urged all staff to try the chat bot and make use of available training.

Available across MoD desktops, iPads and iPhones, the platform has seen more than 2,000 users and 10,000 queries per day since its launch.

It is currently in beta version and will continue to be developed according to feedback and demand.

To access Chat-MoD visit [chatmod.desdigital.mod.uk](https://chatmod.desdigital.mod.uk) on your Modnet device.





# fitness



## BRINGING IN THE EXPERTS

**SPORTS science was at the fore as personnel from The Royal Lancers embarked on a day of training under the watchful eye of experts at Liverpool John Moores University.**

Around 60 troops from B Squadron were invited to the institution's School of Sport and Exercise Sciences, where they underwent lectures in nutrition, physiology and biomechanics.

They also faced a range of physical challenges including VO2 max and strength tests, and gained an insight into world-leading research by staff and students.

"I was tasked with delivering some health-related training and thought instead of me droning on, why not outsource it to the subject matter experts," said troop leader Lt George Wallington.

"The soldiers gained valuable knowledge that can hopefully be implemented to improve their fitness and wellbeing, as well as making them more resilient.

"As a regiment we deploy on a regular basis so our people need to be ready to go at all times."

Dr Gus Ryrie, senior lecturer in sport coaching and a former Royal Engineer, added: "Our experts have run a range of studies to investigate the impact that intense training and operational deployment can have on soldiers, from immune health to heat strain and stress fractures.

"It was brilliant to share these findings with The Royal Lancers while understanding more about their challenges, sharing knowledge and exploring opportunities for future collaborations."





**40 days, 17 hr,  
40 min**

time taken to complete the crossing from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to Antigua in the eastern Caribbean

**£190k** team's current fundraising total for regimental charities and MacMillan Cancer Support in memory of Capt Treasure's father, who died in 2021.

To help them reach their £200,000 goal visit [justgiving.com/fundraising/macmillanv3](https://justgiving.com/fundraising/macmillanv3)

**Q & A**

**FRESH** from becoming the first serving military trio to complete the World's Toughest Row, Captains Rob Cross (WG), Charlie Newman (RHA) and Rob Treasure (Rifles) – known collectively as Team V3nture – are back on home soil and reflecting on the voyage of a lifetime.

Here, Capt Cross (pictured left) tells *Soldier* about the highs and lows of the gruelling 3,000-mile race...

**Has the experience sunk in yet?**

Not really – we're still digesting it, looking through all the photos and videos we took and listening to the voice notes we recorded.

**What were the highlights?**

Seeing pods of dolphins and getting to know two guys I thought I knew really well, even better – it's rare in life you get that chance.

**What about low moments?**

Getting pinned by the wind in the first couple of weeks and being at the mercy of nature with waves crashing over you in the night.

**Any seasickness?**

We were all sick once in the first week but

fortunately we adapted quickly after that.

**What made you a good team?**

We are similar people in terms of military background and fitness, but we all have different approaches to problem solving, which is a huge strength. Three is also good for a democracy!

**You won the trios category – was that always the aim?**

No. Our goals were to finish as really good mates and raise as much money as possible for our chosen charities – but we got caught up in the competition and are delighted to have won.

**How did you pass the time?**

By listening to *Harry Potter* audiobooks, the *Tailenders* podcast, electronic dance music and the Red Hot Chilli Pipers. Whoever had been on the oars longest got to choose the playlist.

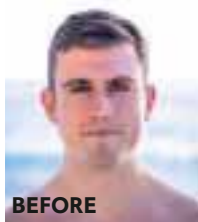
**How much weight did you lose?**

A combined total of 22kg.

**What have you learnt from the race?**

What the human body is capable of! I have been amazed. I didn't think we could go for 40 days on less than two hours' sleep at a time.

**"We got caught up in the competition"**



## MAKING THE CASE FOR SPORT

**LAST** month's issue looked at how troops can up their fitness to be ready for war. Here, Army basketball player SSgt Alex Rees (R Signals, pictured) tells us about the almost-endless benefits of sport in the mission to become a better soldier...

"Getting involved in sport not only improves your physical strength, endurance, and agility – all of which are critical to demanding military tasks – but it aids your flexibility and coordination, which reduces the risk of injury in the field too.

Competitions help you perform under pressure, by mirroring the stress of combat situations. And strategic and tactical games enhance decision-making and

adaptability, which are vital skills to have in dynamic combat environments.

Team sports teach us to work effectively with others – a skill essential in coordinated military operations.

They also foster leadership qualities such as motivation and communication – key to operational success.

Games are great for unit cohesion, strengthening the bonds that exist between soldiers and creating a supportive

environment with enhanced 'esprit de corps'.

Mastering a new discipline also provides that sense of achievement and enjoyment, which can improve overall morale.

Attendance at training instils punctuality, self-discipline, respect, rule-following and a strong work ethic – qualities directly transferable to military service.

And it also mitigates stress and anxiety by giving us a healthy outlet for emotions that can reduce psychological strain.

All these benefits translate to improved performance, readiness, and an ability to work cohesively under pressure – making Army sport a vital aspect of our training as Service personnel."

**Looking for inspiration on a new discipline? Check out our revamped *SoldierSport* section from page 74**





# skills

Pictures: LPhot Finn Stainer-Hutchins, RN



## TAKING THE PLUNGE

Army commandos test their Arctic mettle in northern Norway

**SUB-ZERO temperatures awaited troops serving with the UK Commando Force as they travelled to the far north of Norway to tackle winter training in the Arctic circle.**

Soldiers from 29 Commando, Royal Artillery; 24 Commando, Royal Engineers; the Commando Logistic Regiment and other supporting units were among a 2,000-strong contingent to take on the cold weather warfare course delivered by mountain leader instructors from the Royal Marines.

The programme is designed to equip participants with the skills needed to survive as well as teaching them how to Telemark ski while carrying Bergans.

They also faced the infamous ice-breaking drills (pictured above), in which individuals plunge into freezing water with kit, before gaining their composure and then climbing out.

As well as completing the

course, the soldiers carried out their own special to arms training including building field defences and establishing helicopter landing sites and forward arming and refuelling points on frozen lakes.

Divers from 24 Cdo conducted multinational training and dive tasks, while the gunners of 29 Cdo fired the 105mm light gun in the field.



## SHIP HAPPENS

**SPACES are still available on a series of exciting sailing expeditions starting in the spring and running until the autumn.**

Units or individuals can sign up for the following opportunities:

**Exercise Highland Express**, a trip from Gosport around the Western Isles of Scotland and back from **April 25 to September 25**

**Exercise Mediterranean Express**, which departs Lanzarote on **April 23** and ends in Portugal on **November 23** via Spain, Sardinia and Malta

**Exercise Norway Express** from Gosport to the Arctic Circle, taking in the Baltic Sea, Copenhagen, Sweden and Norway, including the Lofoten Islands, from **May 1 to October 7**.

For full details read **2025DIN-07-005, 004 and 002**



# SNIPER SWITCH?

Wannabes may soon be trained centrally rather than in unit

**ASPIRING sharpshooters from different cap badges could be training their sights together if a pilot initiative is given the green light.**

Around 30 students were showing their mettle at the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School's trial of the sniper operators' course (pictured below) as this magazine hit the press.

While training usually falls to individual units, military top brass believe that putting troops through their paces in a single cohort could bring benefits.

But pilot course boss WO2 Nick Christian (Rifles) said it was currently too early to say whether the ten-week package, covering disciplines including marksmanship, navigation, observation and concealment, would be adopted.

He told *Soldier*: "There could clearly be many positives in training troops together on a single course and using a common set of standards. However, there will be an extensive process to analyse the findings of the pilot and

whether it is a suitable way forward once this has concluded."

Ten instructors are involved in supporting and delivering the course with the highest standards expected of those taking part.

WO2 Christian continued: "There

have been around a dozen different units supplying personnel to the trial and they all have a very good standard of soldiering.

"But we have already lost seven people who didn't pass the standards expected during a navigation exercise – this remains a very hard course."

More details on the pilot will be available after data has been analysed.

Anyone interested in becoming a sniper should speak to bosses at their unit sniper platoon.

**"We have already lost seven people who did not pass the standards expected during a navigation exercise. This remains a very hard course"**

**RIGHT** Think you're up to the cut for sniping? We asked WO2 Christian for his three top tips for anyone interested...



## 1 FITNESS SORT IT

**You need to be physically and mentally robust so get a grip of your fitness. General gym time is going to help but a focus on areas such as cardiovascular will prove especially useful. Speak to your PTI for guidance or support.**



## NAVIGATION DON'T SLIP UP

This washes a lot of people out. During the course you will need to prove you can navigate by day and at night, so get out and hone these skills in your own time. Organised events, such as orienteering competitions, can also help you focus.



## 3 THE RANGE BE A REGULAR

**With the support of your unit, try to get as much range time as possible beforehand. You will need to be an above average marksman to secure a place on any Army sniper course.**





# diary dates

## 5

### Peak performances

Future kit will be the hot topic for the NCO Academy when WO1 Dave Bates (R Signals), command sergeant major of Defence Equipment and Support, provides an online update on the equipment modernisation programme. A further event on March 19 will feature human performance guru Sophie Arana from the Edge innovation team. Both are part of the fortnightly Tea and Toast Talks programme established last year. Register via the NCO Academy page on Defence Connect.



## 12

### Reds tackle Forces foes

The Inter-Services Football Championships kick off with the Royal Air Force v Army at Shrewsbury. The Service then hosts the Royal Navy on March 26. There has been little for the Army to celebrate in this competition in recent years as their rivals have reigned supreme. But the men's and women's teams have both appointed new coaches this season. Can fresh figureheads bring about a change in fortunes?



Pictures: Graeme Main



## 14

### Hitting the hay

Make sleep a priority – that's the message behind this year's World Sleep Day, which handily falls on a Friday. Of course, many of us don't get much choice over number of hours in the doss bag. But there are things everyone can do to make the most of the time you do get – from cutting back on late-night gaming and caffeine to better bedtime routines. Guidance on healthy sleep has now been published in JSP 661 ch 6 and you can read more on page 50.





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## Sticks at the ready

Action aplenty is promised during the Inter-Services Hockey showdown at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth. Last year's tournament proved a disappointing affair for the Army as they missed out on senior honours. The opening round of fixtures against the Royal Navy yielded impressive goal returns for the soldiers, as the men and women won their respective fixtures with ease. But subsequent defeats to the Royal Air Force ended their hopes of silverware. However, the Reds won both titles at the Inter-Services indoor showdown in November and will head south in confident mood.



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## Making the transition

Looking for a new direction in civvy street? Visit the Career Transition Partnership job fair in Bristol. The free event supports soldiers with transition by giving direct access to Forces-friendly employers. Logistics, manufacturing and the emergency services are three of the industries that will be represented. The day is open to serving and ex-military personnel, with booking required – visit [modctp.co.uk/list-events](http://modctp.co.uk/list-events)



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## Boxing clever

A walkover victory for Sig Tobi Lawal (R Signals) proved crucial for the Army last time out at the Inter-Services Boxing Championships, when they retained the trophy by the narrowest of margins. This month's event at RAF Honington – the premiere fixture on the Forces boxing calendar – will see fighters enter the ring in peak condition after new head coach Sgt Chez Nihel (RAPTC) embarked on a programme of improved fitness.





Personnel master the art of Telemark skiing while carrying Bergans during the cold weather warfare course in Norway. A 2,000-strong military contingent – including soldiers from 29 Commando, Royal Artillery; 24 Commando, Royal Engineers and the Commando Logistic Regiment – took part in the package, which sees the UK Commando Force hone skills for Arctic conditions. Read more on page 22

Picture: LPhot Finn Stainer-Hutchins, RN











# KICK START

Muay Thai joins Service's official roster of combat sports





**S**TRENGTH, fitness and controlled aggression are attributes soldiers need in spades. And they're also key components of the Army's latest official martial art, Muay Thai.

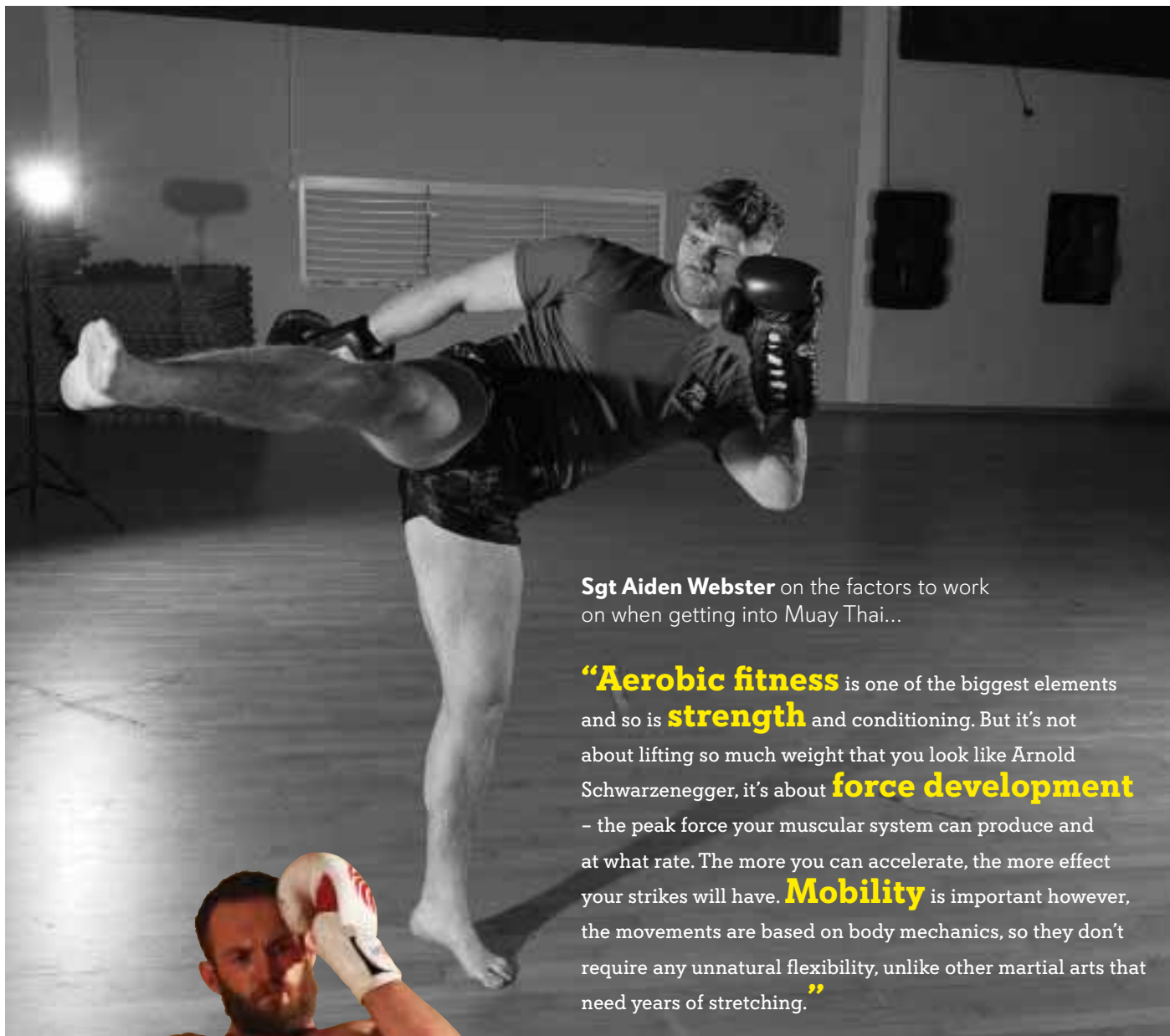
After a long-running campaign to get the sport recognised by the Service's governing body, a 12-month trial is now under way, thanks in large part to the hard graft of two determined individuals.

Sgt Aiden Webster (RAPTC) and Cpl Ben Nicholson (Para), both experienced fighters, were convinced the camaraderie and discipline that underpin the format made it a natural fit for the military.

Not only that, but the widespread popularity of MMA – or mixed martial arts – among troops suggested that the appetite for combat sports was not limited to the six already certified: karate, judo, jiu-jitsu, taekwondo and kendo.

However, the road to recognition has been a long one, with Cpl Nicholson first >>





**Sgt Aiden Webster** on the factors to work on when getting into Muay Thai...

**“Aerobic fitness** is one of the biggest elements and so is **strength** and conditioning. But it’s not about lifting so much weight that you look like Arnold Schwarzenegger, it’s about **force development** – the peak force your muscular system can produce and at what rate. The more you can accelerate, the more effect your strikes will have. **Mobility** is important however, the movements are based on body mechanics, so they don’t require any unnatural flexibility, unlike other martial arts that need years of stretching.”



**Go along to your local club. All you need is a pair of shorts, a t-shirt and a good attitude – they should have all the kit required, including wraps, gloves and pads**

Cpl Ben Nicholson

» attempting to get Muay Thai’s status formalised in 2016 while serving as a private soldier in 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

Having failed to gain traction, despite the fact the Royal Navy had an official outfit, he and other Army devotees had to content themselves with fighting off-duty on the civvy circuit until Sgt Webster reignited the campaign in 2023.

And with their combined efforts now bearing fruit, the coming months will see the pair focusing on developing grassroots-level engagement across the Service.

A keen practitioner since the age of 15, Sgt Webster explained why he hopes the discipline will catch on.

“Muay Thai is great for what we do first and foremost as soldiers – any form of hand-to-hand combat is going to be helpful in our core role,” said the NCO, a PTI at the Defence School of Logistics and Administration in »



“ I started when I was 15 and the bug just got me – from the first day I whacked a pad I could never stay away. It’s great for keeping fit and staying active but it’s also the history and tradition that sits around the sport that fascinates me. ”

“ Muay Thai takes a lifetime to master – even the greatest coaches are never the finished article – but to start with it’s really easy. It’s been a ten-year slog to achieve official recognition, so I’m really happy. ”



## The Muay Thai guys

**NAME:** Sgt Aiden Webster

**AGE:** 29

**YEAR ENLISTED:** 2013

**CAP BADGE:** RAPTC, formerly Coldstream Guards

**FIGHTING FACTS:** Fought his first professional bout – for the ISKA Muay Thai British title – in April 2024 at the O2 Arena, before challenging for the UK number six spot last November. Has posted seven wins, zero draws and two losses

**NAME:** Cpl Ben Nicholson

**AGE:** 30

**YEAR ENLISTED:** 2013

**CAP BADGE:** 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment

**FIGHTING FACTS:** Fought for UK ranked spots and titles in 2019, as well as other high-profile bouts. Has notched up eight wins, zero draws and three losses. Also helped coach close combat techniques to soldiers from the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team



» Worthy Down.

"On top of that there's the fitness element – a lot of balance and coordination is required, which is an underworked aspect of PT.

"And then there's the high level of discipline involved – maintaining yourself for competition is really hard work. I think Muay Thai will help mould and shape Service personnel in that respect too."

For the sport to become a permanent fixture, the trial will need to show that demand exists among the ranks – so the fact that some 450 troops have expressed an interest is a promising start.

A series of introductory sessions are planned throughout 2025 and an inaugural Army championship tournament for 2026, with hopes for a wider Armed Forces competition later on.

Safety is also a concern and participants will fight in the sport's lower three categories – where more protection is worn – throughout the probationary period.

However, Cpl Nicholson was keen to dispel the notion the discipline is inherently dangerous.

"I played rugby for eight months and in that time I was airlifted to hospital with a dislocated shoulder and got knocked out twice," he said.

"I've been doing Muay Thai for 16 years and I've never had a serious injury. There are many other sports that are more risky."

Another goal is securing sponsorship to offset the cost to fighters since the format is not currently eligible for military funding.

Dave Campey (ex-RE), ops manager for Army martial arts, said official certification was by no means a given, but he remains optimistic for a positive outcome.

"We have a strategy in place and I think that it will be a success," said the retired lieutenant colonel.

"Martial arts has its origins in the military and is what the Services are about – camaraderie, aggression, rough and tumble.

"Being in the ring gets the adrenaline going because if you don't perform you could get hurt. Then there's the cognitive element and hand-eye coordination. There are lots of benefits.

"If we can prove we have the participation, as well as the safety and assurance, I'm confident we can achieve category two status, which will make Muay Thai eligible for public funding."

Having finally got the green light, it seems the future is bright for the Army's first new combat sport in ten years.

In another positive sign, several soldiers are actively competing on the UK scene.

Sgt Sam Cooney (RAPTC) was taking part in an off-duty bout at the Leapfrog Fight Night in London as this issue hit shelves, while Spr Michael Teece (RE) and Sgt Steve Palmer (Int Corps) will be representing the Service at amateur level as part of a World Boxing Council event in Leeds at the end of this month.

With talented fighters establishing themselves on the national scene and a grassroots recruitment drive under way, the martial arts fraternity will be hoping to keep up momentum and secure Muay Thai's long-term future in the Army's sporting arena. <<

**I enjoy all martial arts – I've done Brazilian jiu-jitsu, taekwondo and a bit of judo but there's something about Muay Thai that has captured my soul**

Sgt Aiden Webster



## The art of 8 limbs

Muay Thai differs from other combat sports in that fists, elbows, knees and kicks are all used to strike the opponent. Grappling on the ground, eye gouging, biting and head strikes are not allowed.



## Newbies welcome

PART of the trial will see Muay Thai taster events organised around the country, including some aimed specifically at Servicewomen.

AirTpr Francesca Woods (AAC) recently attended a mixed session at Worthy Down and said novices should not hesitate to join the fold.

Having previously sampled boxing, the 31-year-old described “jumping at the chance” to get involved.

“It doesn’t matter who you are or where you’re from – it’s honestly so inclusive,” the soldier added.

“I think close combat sports can be a bit intimidating for women, but we were all just there to learn a new skill and made to feel welcome.

“It builds strength and confidence, along with practical self-defence techniques.

“And as well as being a great blend of cardio, strength work and stamina, it’s also about mental resilience and focus.”



## WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Contact Sgt Webster on  
[aiden.webster110@mod.gov.uk](mailto:aiden.webster110@mod.gov.uk)



An infantryman surveys desert from a derelict building during Exercise Olive Grove in Jordan. The package involved 140 troops from 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, who were partnered with troops from the country's King Hussein Brigade.

Picture: ASI Natalie Adams, RAF





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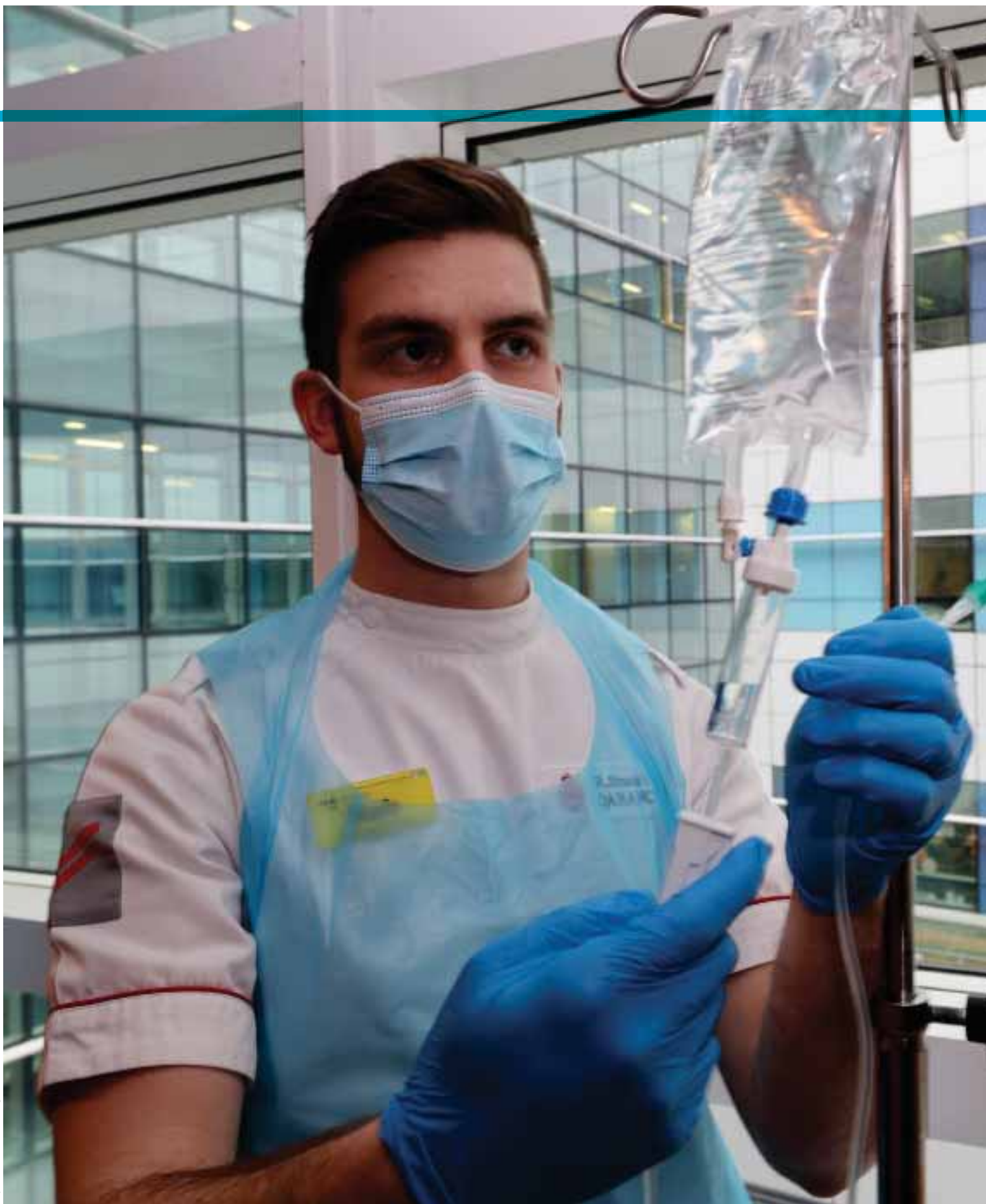
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# TRAUMA ZONE

What happened when military personnel took over a busy NHS ward?

**I**T IS among the biggest hospitals in the UK and today personnel from the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) are running a ward here.

Trauma and orthopaedics is a hectic corner of Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital – one that is currently running at capacity.

In the coming hours the tri-Service team could be dealing with anything from gunshot wounds to road smash injuries.

The military takeover is not a crisis response, though. It is a regular event at the city-centre site.

The day sees NHS staff step back from their front-line roles and leave the military in sole charge.

Likely treatments required from those on shift today will be fracture care, joint replacements, ligament repairs and the management of arthritis, sports injuries and joint instability.

Patients are predominantly civilian. But given the centre's role is to provide medical support to operational deployments and specialist care for members of the Armed Forces, a small number of personnel are occupying bed spaces.

At the height of the Afghanistan campaign the military intake here was high. Today, one of the biggest causes of admissions is the Forces ski season.

A normal morning here sees NHS and »







» defence care providers working side by side. But on a takeover, things run differently.

"These days are planned in advance to give our colleagues a break and allow them to catch up on things like training," Maj Poppy Davies (RAMS), RCDM's nursing clinical lead for wards, tells *Soldier*.

"It helps us plan together as a team, which is good when it comes to deployments – we can set the military nursing standards we want to see at home and overseas.

"Operating alongside the NHS can feel disjointed at times but on takeover days there is more structure.

"Some of us assume leadership roles and we are all on the same page.

"We always have a big nursing contingent, from those who are newly qualified to others who have been doing this for 20 years.

"It means we can give really good patient care and look after people holistically. We talk to patients and their families, and everything is not such a rush.

"There are some who specialise in trauma and orthopaedics and we also have healthcare assistants, physios, pharmacists, junior doctors and senior consultants."

Support to exercises and operations is a key role of the RCDM, with personnel deploying as and when required.

Takeover days help put in place the

practices that will serve them well in the field, as trauma and orthopaedic specialist nurse Sgt Anna McMahon (RAMS, pictured) discovered on a military hospital exercise two years ago.

"Basically, we did everything we do here, just in tents – it was fantastic," she explains.

"You have limited resources. If you use something you have to seriously think about whether you need it as you don't always know when you'll be getting a replenish.

"That makes you prioritise.

"On a deployment you only have yourselves to rely on – there are no civvies – so today is brilliant.

"We do it every two months or so, and it really helps us understand how we would work in the field and builds a rapport between us.

"There are road traffic collisions, stabbings and gunshot wounds from local gangs and those experiences are transferable to the deployed environment."

Sgt McMahon worked as a civilian nurse before joining the British Army after visiting a careers fair. And it is a decision she has not regretted.

"I have a personality where I always have to be challenged and that is what the Service gives me – I'm constantly doing things I never thought I would," she continues.

"Trauma and orthopaedics is brilliant







**“It’s brilliant. I know we’re not in the field, but this gives you an idea of how you’d work with colleagues and the standards that need to be kept”**

Staff nurse  
Cpl Marcus Donkor, RAMS

from that perspective. There are only three specialist trauma nurses in the Army, and it has been a great fit for me.”

But this is not the only ward covered on takeover days. Acute care, burns and plastics, as well as sections of the intensive therapy unit, all fall on the rotation, meaning the

RCDM contingent spread skills far and wide.

And it is an arrangement that benefits parties on all fronts.

“It allows us to keep on top of our clinical skills, so we are current and competent for deployment,” Maj Davies concludes.

“NHS patients love it, and they feel like they are getting a great standard of care, while we are contributing to wider society.” <<





Zara Lachlan drinks in the Atlantic during – and after – her victorious bid to become the first woman and youngest person to row solo from Europe to South America. The 21-year-old faced broken equipment, a near miss with a ship and her boat capsizing during 97 lonely days at sea. She will begin officer training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst this September. Speaking to *Soldier* by Voicenote on the voyage, she said: “I think I’d get far too bored in a civilian job.”

Picture: Team Forces













# ‘Like Otterburn on steroids’

There are a few surprises in store for any  
soldier leaping into Japan’s unknown...





Right **A soldier patrols through long grass on the final tactical exercise alongside Japan's 1st Airborne Brigade**  
Below **An infantryman from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and a member of the Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces take aim in joint drills**

**T WAS unfamiliar territory 6,000 miles from home alongside troops from a different culture.**

But this type of action has always been core business for the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team.

From keeping the peace in a volatile Kosovo to the harrowing evacuation of Kabul four years ago, this formation has a proven reputation for rapid deployment on complex ops.

And a recent training outing to the unfamiliar highlands of Japan for 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment again showed their mettle.

It is only the third time British troops have taken part in Exercise Vigilant Isles, and the participating personnel from B Company showed why their brigade is earmarked as the Army's global response force, held at high readiness for deployment anywhere.

Fighting across the Hijiyudai training area – known for its steep inclines and thick grasslands – on the island of Kyushu south-west of Tokyo, the soldiers worked with Japanese airborne and infantry counterparts in a rigorous test of skills.

"This place is honestly one of the most alien environments I've ever seen," reveals

Maj Iain Thompson, commander of the company-strength British contingent. "It's a bit like Otterburn on steroids.

"As well as being geographically demanding, it's one of the coldest places I've been for a while.

"People tend to think of Japan as a tropical paradise but we have seen temperatures of 14 or 15 degrees in the day, falling to minus ten with windchill at night.

"But the exercise has clearly made an impression because the soldiers out here are saying it's the best thing they've ever done, which is great to hear."

Troops began their two-week tenure by rehearsing low-level skills and drills as well as live-firing on the ranges.

There was also a command post exercise before the package ramped up to a full-on mock battle.

Focused on a scenario that involved re-taking territory from an invading power, the soldiers saw counterparts from the 1st Airborne Brigade of the Japanese Ground Self Defence Forces parachute in.

With landing areas secured, the Paras deployed by Chinook and Blackhawk helicopters, starting three days of simulated combat in which they also worked alongside









Right **A Para checks the rear is clear as troops go through contact drills.** Below **Personnel tab through a ditch with members of the Japanese Self Defence Forces** Below right **Troops hit the hills during the final phase of Ex Vigilant Isles**



**“Soldier-wise,  
the Japanese  
are nails”**

Maj Iain Thompson







» seasoned infanteers from the Japanese 12th Brigade.

British specialists played a critical role throughout, using intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance systems to assist with mission planning and deliver results.

Notably, electronic warfare teams from 14 Signal Regiment tracked the enemy by monitoring their comms while gunners from 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery kept a close watch from the skies with Puma unmanned aerial systems.

Working with the host nation's forces proved a particular highlight, with the armies learning a huge amount from each other, Maj Thompson adds.

"Soldier-wise, the Japanese are nails," he continues. "They are physically tough and professionally adept at dealing with harsh conditions – while they do things differently to us, notably in terms of their command and control protocols, it doesn't make them any less effective."

Maj Thompson points out that the Japanese constitution – stemming from the Second World War – means their personnel

have their own specific operating codes.

And this makes working with them quite different to Nato nations.

"It wasn't like being with the Americans where you could fully integrate with their force as a company," he explains. "But we had a valuable learning experience – in their downtime the soldiers have socialised too and got along well."

"This this is only the third time the British have been involved in Exercise Vigilant Isles – it's been worth it as both forces have a similar mindset and this in itself creates a natural partnership."

The results speak for themselves.

With the Paras on a high from the opportunity to work in Japan, and closer defence ties between the UK and the Asian state on the cards, Vigilant Isles is poised to go from strength to strength.

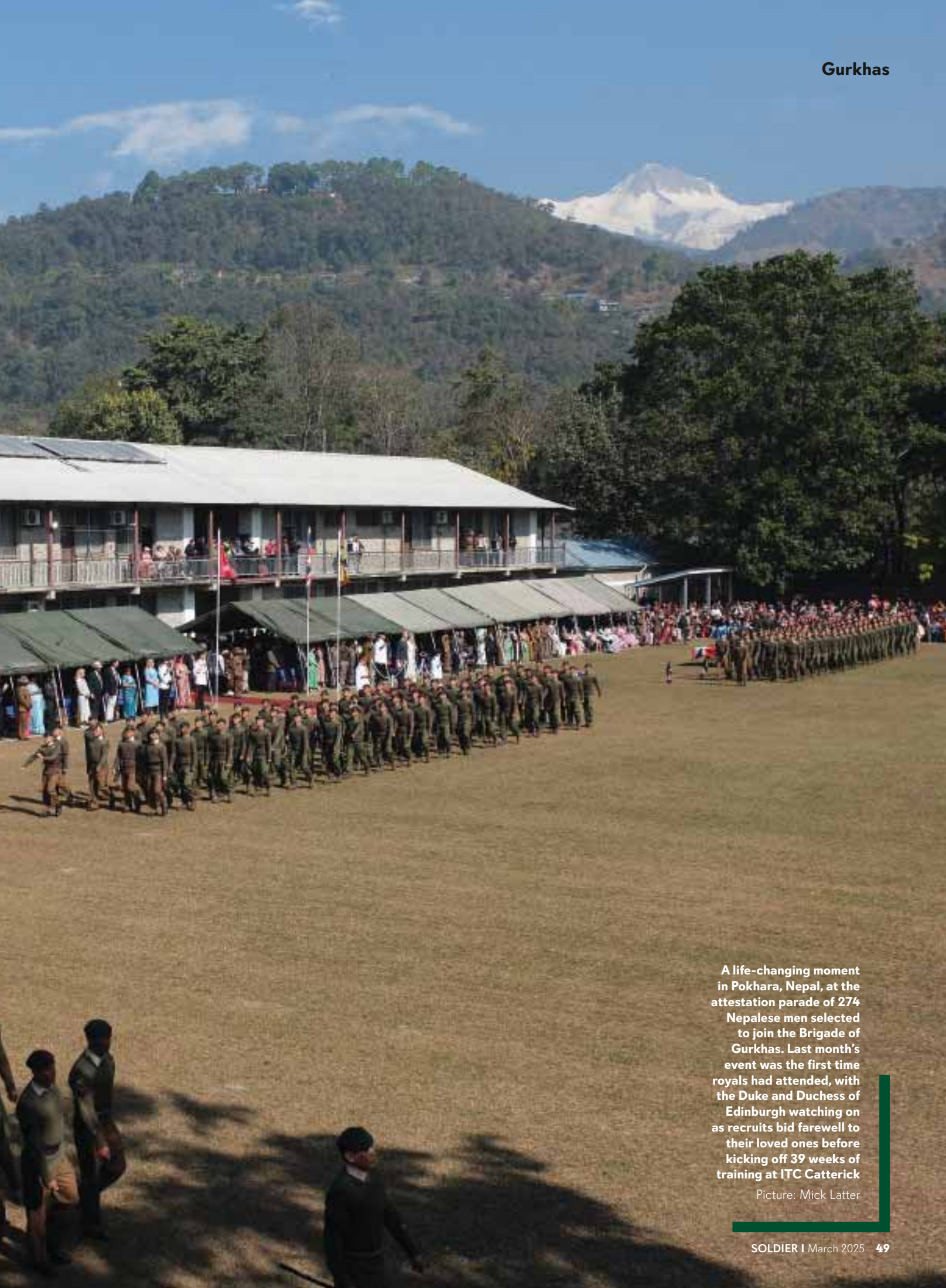
Building relationships is vital in an unpredictable world, where new threats are continuing to evolve and flashpoints can quickly erupt.

In standing and working together, trouble is more likely to be headed off before it escalates into a full-blown conflict. «










A life-changing moment in Pokhara, Nepal, at the attestation parade of 274 Nepalese men selected to join the Brigade of Gurkhas. Last month's event was the first time royals had attended, with the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh watching on as recruits bid farewell to their loved ones before kicking off 39 weeks of training at ITC Catterick

Picture: Mick Latter





~~0500~~ 0600

# Wake-up call

Could extra time in the doss bag make us better soldiers?

**I**F GOOD sleep improves physical performance, you could be forgiven for wondering why soldiers get so little of it.

The reasons we're deprived of the ZZZs, let's be honest, can sometimes be down to our bad decisions.

Early hours gaming, doom-scrolling and nights on the lash can all mean insomnia is only ever a step away from Service life.

And that's before the inevitability of being on stag or deploying leaves you even more bleary-eyed.

Talk to a certain generation of squaddie and you will often hear that 'sleep is for the weak' and anyone feeling tired should just 'grizz it out'.

But a growing body of scientific evidence is showing that, in fact, sleep deprivation is not something you can just acclimatise to.

Scientists employed by the Army say that if leaders want to make the most of their soldiers, they must let them get as many of the recommended seven-to-nine hours per night (eight-to-ten for young adults) as they can.

And troops themselves need to take their sleep hygiene – or in other words, the stuff you do to prepare for a good night – seriously too.

"There's this idea in the military that restrictive sleep can be used as an effective stressor," says Dr Alex Rawcliffe from the Army Recruit Health and Performance Research team.

"And while that may have legitimacy in certain situations, there is no evidence to suggest any positive effects in training."

The defence sleep medicine expert has been working with basic training establishments to investigate whether shutting off timetables earlier in the day allows recruits to get more shut-eye and, therefore, achieve better results.

It sounds like a no-brainer, but the findings are not what you might expect.

The study found factors such as noisy roommates, locker inspections, kit prep and socialising still stopped many getting their recommended hours even when days wound up earlier.

Recruits only got better sleep – and significantly fewer disciplinary actions too – when they were allowed to lie in longer in the mornings.

The study also found a mismatch between the bed and wake times set out in policy in JSP 822 (2200 and 0600), and what is happens on the ground.

This suggests that as well as soldiers needing to make sleep a priority, their >>







“Sleep  
deprivation  
is not a  
trainable  
skill”



### World Sleep Day March 14

Visit the Army Health and Wellbeing page on **Defence Connect** for more info and find the Service's recently published sleep hygiene guidance in JSP 661 ch 6



» commanders must take it more seriously when planning lessons and morning feeding times.

"Sleep is critical to the health, wellbeing and performance of recruits, yet its importance can be underappreciated," Dr Rawcliffe adds.

One person who needs no convincing of this is Lt Col Benjamin Salt (Rifles) – CO of 2nd Infantry Training Battalion (2 ITB) and an advocate of sleep's superpowers since changes were made to his team's own training schedules.

When the officer arrived in post, the wastage rates on some Catterick courses had been as high as 45 per cent – a clear concern at a time of low recruitment.

But along with his leadership team, the boss is now steering his institution through something of a culture change.

"In the Infantry we pride ourselves on mental resilience," he tells *Soldier*. "So there is this idea with training that we just have to get through it.

"But we educated ourselves, and have decided we must use the science that's out there around human optimisation to get better outputs."

A recent sleep hygiene trial with Dr Rawcliffe's team and Parachute Regiment Training Company successfully reduced anxiety, stress and fall-out rates, he explains. And it increased training performance too.

Another study with both the Para and

Guards training companies has yet to be published, but Lt Col Salt is certain more shut-eye is a positive thing for recruit pass rates and, by default, the Service.

He and his staff are now working with human performance experts (more on them in a future issue) to rewrite the Infantry programme and put things like sleep, mental fitness and nutrition front and centre.

"Sleep deprivation is not a trainable skill," emphasises 2 ITB's regimental sergeant major, WO1 Jamie Weaver (Para). "In fact, completely the opposite is true.

"We all need three things to survive – food, water and sleep. So if you are training to survive, you must prepare your body with sleep.

"We talk about the body battery, and how it needs to be recharged if you want to optimise performance.

"We have also spent time developing a sleep education package for all staff so they understand this, and enact it in their own lives and the recruits' education."

That's not to say there aren't times when leaders might want to use sleep deprivation with their personnel, the CO points out.

"But giving recruits so little sleep, then wondering why they aren't learning, is not the right approach," he adds.

"Some struggle academically anyway, then we are depriving them of the thing that aids learning. »





» "You can't give someone three hours per night and then wonder what they're achieving on day three – the answer is not very much."

"So when exercises are there to teach, we've been making sure there is time to sleep and recharge."

"And if the recruits are purposefully sleep deprived, recovery processes are implemented to quickly recharge their human battery."

"Ultimately, this is about engendering good behaviours that will serve them for the rest of their careers."

The importance of decent rest is already well appreciated among the Service's sporting community.

Distance runner and Army Sportswoman of the Year Lt Kate Olding (Int Corps) says that a lack of it can affect her not just physically but mentally.

"If I've had a bad night it plays on my mind – I think the session won't go to plan and I won't be able to find the energy," she says. "I start to think I can't perform."

"My decision-making skills drop off when I'm tired as well."

"It impacts how rationally I think when things aren't going as planned – if you've

had sleep, it's easier to be logical."

The Servicewoman admits, however, that good sleep practices can be challenging to maintain in uniform.

"It's something I have to work on," she says. "I try to put my phone down earlier at night now, and look at something that isn't a screen. That helps."

"Routine is a big one too. I aim to keep bedtimes as regular as possible, winding down by about 2200."

If the outcome of good sleep is so stark for athletes, it doesn't take a genius to see the difference it could make to someone making life-or-death decisions in the heat of battle.

"The evidence we have is that sleep deprivation has a negative impact on all aspects of health and performance," Dr Rawcliffe concludes.

For most people in uniform, the early morning reveille has been the norm for years. But it seems if the Army wants to make the most of personnel on future operations, a wake-up call of a different kind is required.

Could longstanding sleep deprivation be compromising your team's warfighting ability before they even get out the door? <<

## Threaders to bedders

Is lack of sleep making you...

### FAT?

Poor sleep, be it acute or more long-term, influences eating and how we use energy stores. Leptin – the hormone that tells our brain when we're full – drops when we're denied enough ZZZs. And the sleep deprived also report a greater desire to eat junk food or heavy starchy meals.



### LESS FIT?

Testosterone is vital in developing and maintaining muscle mass for both men and women. But a recent study in Australia showed a 24 per cent reduction in this hormone among men after a period of sleep deprivation. Over time, this could contribute to a loss of muscle mass and functionality.





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Wheelchair basketball stars from the British military lock horns with Team Unconquered at the Invictus Games. A total of 550 athletes from 23 nations competed across 11 disciplines at last month's event in Canada

Picture: Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF





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# EIGHTY

This month marks a milestone for the Army's official mag.  
Here is the surprising backstory to *Soldier*  
you probably never knew...





**E**IGHTY years of magazines is a big achievement when you consider *Soldier* wasn't supposed to be published for more than a few months after it was launched by Field Marshal Montgomery in March 1945.

The legendary war leader wanted it to boost morale and keep troops informed as they fought the Nazis across Western Europe during the Second World War.

A publishing operation was set up, led by Col Sean Fielding – an experienced journalist who would go on to edit *Tatler* and the *Daily Express*. At first, the fortnightly title was printed in Brussels and later in Hamburg – ironically on presses that had once churned out Joseph Goebbels' propaganda sheet, *Signal*.

*Soldier* was one of the first titles to record the horrors of the Bergen-Belsen Nazi

concentration camp.

And its other early scoops included the unearthing of Hitler's invasion plan for the UK and the mission by British engineers to build submarine oil pipelines under the English Channel to support Operation Overlord – the Normandy invasion.

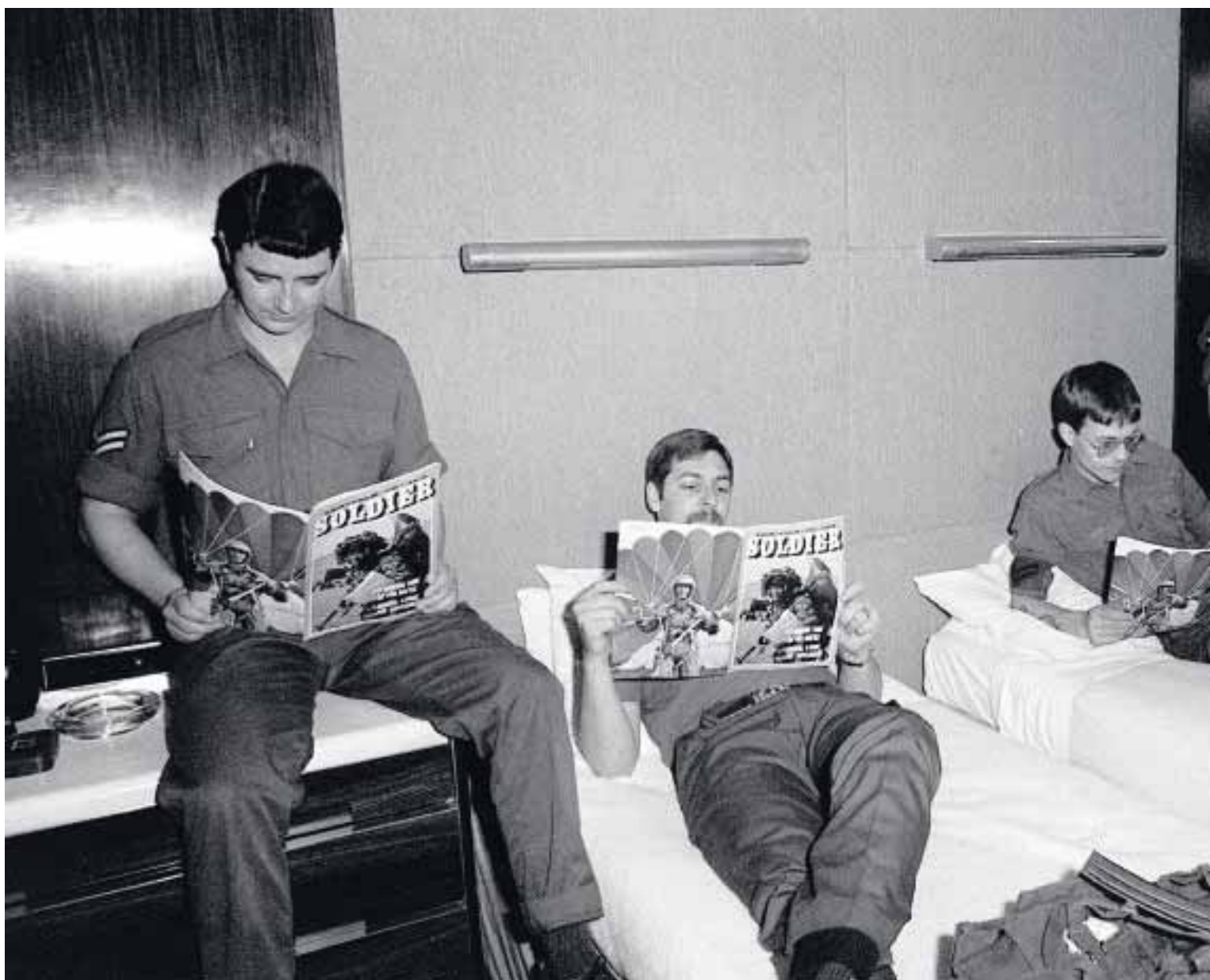
The magazine was expected to cease publishing after the Allied victory, but with Germany on the front line of a Cold War with the Soviet Union it survived to become the in-house magazine of the entire British Army.

Later, it would publish iconic images of the Falklands War and unique coverage of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During the 1950s, with the British Empire in decline, troops were deployed to flashpoints including Aden, Malaya and Cyprus, and a good proportion of readers were National »

**The title remains an essential piece of kit in 2025, communicating for an Army facing new challenges in a changing world**





» Servicemen, with conscription still a reality into the 1960s.

In fact, since 1945 the story of the British Army has been one of continuous operations, with a small in-house team working hard to ensure personnel were kept informed of them.

*Soldier* writers and photographers have recorded the bravery and everyday struggles of troops in every major conflict the Service has been involved in since the final throes of the Second World War.

They include Korea in the 1950s, Malaya in the 1960s, Northern Ireland in the 1970s, Iraq, Afghanistan and, more recently, how personnel are supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia.

In these theatres, the magazine's staff talked to troops, recording life in often austere conditions, during ferocious contacts and the struggle to keep the peace.

The stories conveyed the highs and lows, the tension and the offbeat.

*Soldier* gave an insight into how life in theatre looked and felt as well as the huge demands placed on personnel and their families. It also reflected the sacrifice of so many, with tributes and memorials.

Away from operations, the daily grind of soldiering brings its own issues to work and family life and over the years *Soldier* has covered many personal gripes.

These are reflected in our letters pages – covering topics from food to kit to medals and housing and often escalating them straight to the top.

This boosts morale and gives commanders a sobering ground view from the ranks. And these published letters have even helped change policy.

Over 80 years, the magazine's content

has been a barometer of Army life, reflecting evolving tastes, values and concerns.

Female film stars once featured on the back cover, and Pen Pals was a popular forum for troops to find romance in an era before the internet arrived.

The Army has seen many changes more recently: women now serve in ground close combat roles and diversity has become a key theme. The ban on LGBT personnel was lifted in 2000 and when the Army's first openly gay soldier featured on the front cover it hit the headlines in the UK media.

The publication has changed significantly under the leadership of different editors, photojournalists and writers through the years. It eventually morphed into a glossy, consumer-style A4 magazine and is now printed on cutting-edge presses by Walstead, in Cornwall.





**RIGHT:** Earlier editions of the mag featured striking, hand-drawn cover art

**LEFT:** A new edition provides a welcome downtime distraction for troops serving in the Falklands, 1982



The title remains an essential piece of kit in 2025, communicating for an Army facing new challenges in a changing world.

A small group of civil servants who are trained journalists uphold its finest traditions today. And articles, letters and news articles talking openly about the very best – and worst – aspects of military life still dominate the pages.

Most importantly, this trusted title continues to keep soldiers informed, educated and entertained in the same manner that Monty intended.

With a new online archive, social media feeds and overhauled digital edition launched to make the mag phone and tablet-friendly (see right), it is hoped our mission to bolster the moral component of fighting power – by giving a voice to British soldiers – will continue for many years to come. «



You'll find the latest online edition of *Soldier*, optimised for mobile phones and tablets, and our new online archive containing every issue published to date, at [soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://soldiermagazine.co.uk)



A busy Heathrow Airport is caught on camera 500km above Earth by UK Space Command's Tyche satellite. View the October 2024 issue on our new-look website to read our full report on the organisation

Picture: MoD

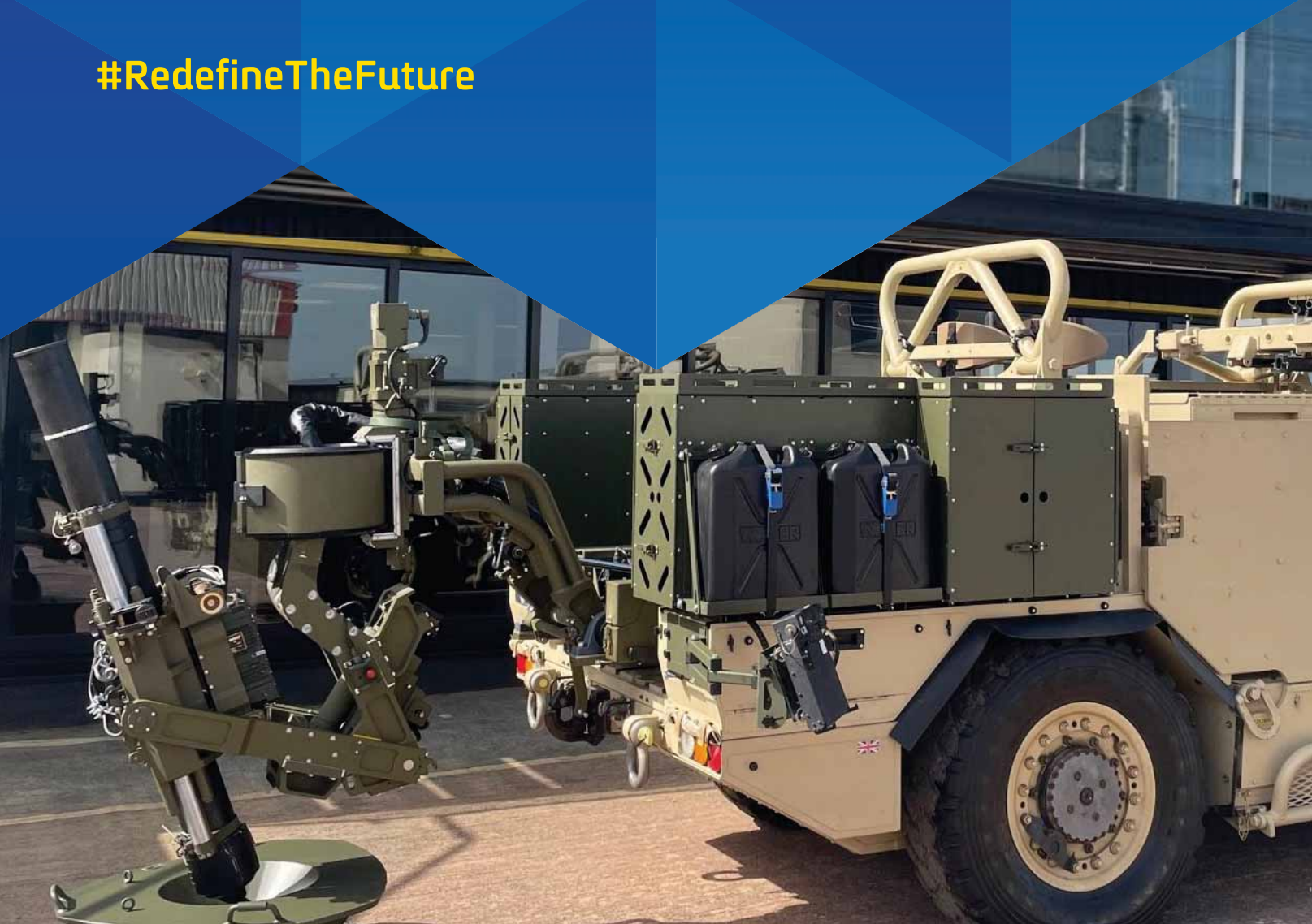


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# TALKBACK

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**Building up an appetite**  
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Steve Dock

## ‘Why’s cooked food being denied to us?’

THE cash in lieu of rations (Cilor) policy, which is contained within **JSP 456**, was amended in November 2024 to include the phrase: “Cilor is not to be claimed for cooked foods as this would impact the Service person’s ability to financially obtain the correct calorie intake required for their activity”.

Previously, Cilor could be used to buy cooked meals but this has now changed.

Please may I ask how numerous adventurous training expeditions, run by both units and the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre, are expected to feed personnel during these on-duty, recognised military activities? Some can only access cooked foods, such as mountaineering expeds

relying on Alpine huts for feeding (using huts is on the foundation course syllabus) or expeditions to Nepal and Morocco, for example, that often count on tea house-cooked food.

Are they really no longer permitted to use Cilor for that purpose? – **Name and address supplied**

**WO1 Martin Foulds, Command Food Services Warrant Officer, Field Army Headquarters, replies:**

*Thank you for your letter – you raise a very good point.*

*Cilor is intended to support feeding in locations without access to Service facilities or food supply during military, on-duty activities.*

*The daily rate is calculated based on a generic basket of local raw ingredients providing*

*4,000 kcal across three meals per 24-hour period.*

*The decision to remove the option of purchasing cooked food from restaurants was made because the high cost of such meals often meant personnel could not receive the full nutritional provision without incurring personal expenses or relying on additional funding.*

*Defence catering policy, as the owners of the Cilor chapter in **JSP 456**, has agreed to*

*include a footnote clarifying that this can be used for group feeding under specific conditions, such as those mentioned in your letter.*

*In the meantime, I am happy to approve – or allow the approval of – Cilor claims where a structured feeding plan is guaranteed, such as those provided in Alpine huts, where soldiers and officers can receive the necessary meals at a competitive price.*

## Blasts from *Soldier’s* past

**AS it is this publication’s 80th anniversary this month and we’re launching our new online archive (page 7), we thought we’d reprint a couple of letters from our March 1945 edition showing how times have changed since those early years...**

### Thanks, Yank

WHY is it that Yanks are always complaining about the poor quality of English ale?

Some of them even say they prefer American beer to it.

We much prefer English ale to any kind of American beer.

One thing about American beer is that it is too gassy, too effervescent. On the other hand, English ale also has just the right lift. Another thing we like is the variety of ales they have over here.

If one doesn’t like bitters you can have brown ale or lager. The English seek to please individual tastes.

This may be incidental but we don’t think there is anything in the States to compare with an accompanying platter of fish and chips to go with one’s ale. As far as we’re concerned,

the English have the servicing of a man’s alcoholic taste down to a fine art. – **Seven Yanks**



Imperial War Museum

### Family tribute

AFTER the last war we heard a great deal about war memorials of one sort or another. No doubt we shall hear more about them after this one.

There’s a memorial I should especially like to see in London after this show is over.

That is a really impressive one from the Services to the rest of the people of Britain, who have supported us so faithfully and have also suffered badly from actual enemy attack in air raids.

They’ve gone through a lot and our successful campaigns wouldn’t have been possible if they’d failed us. – **Tpr RG Foxwell, RAC**

“HOW ARE THEY EXPECTED TO FEED PERSONNEL?”



# DIRECTORY

SOLDIER

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

## WELFARE

If you have a problem, your chain of command and unit welfare teams are 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-Omailbox@mod.gov.uk** or **01904 882051/2053**

## ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own 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-**

**Omailbox@mod.gov.uk**

### Army Speak Out Helpline

**0306 770 4656** or **mil 96770 4656**

**army-speakout@mod.gov.uk**

### Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command **0800 014 2381**

## 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 arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at **discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk**

## DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

These can be a considerable burden, made worse by dealing with them 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 [moneyspinner.org.uk](http://moneyspinner.org.uk)

### National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you 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**

## RESETTLEMENT

Career Transition Partnership employment fairs help support the transition to civilian life by providing resources, networking opportunities and direct access to Forces friendly employers. To book your place at an event visit **modctp.co.uk**

**Bristol – March 20**

**Edinburgh – April 23**

**Plymouth – May 20**

**Lincoln – May 21**

**Newbury – June 18**

**York – July 2**

**Elgin – July 9**

**Bournemouth – September 10**

**Newmarket – October 8**

**Belfast – October 15**

**Cardiff – November 5**

**Telford – November 19**

SSAFA supports people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding group **supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk**

## HOUSING

### Pinnacle Home Services Team

The primary point of contact for families for housing and the allocation of SFA **UK 0800 031 8628** **Overseas +44(0) 161 605 3517** [pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk](http://pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk)

### Vivo

Helpdesk contactable 24/7, 365 days a year **0800 0466010** (freefone)

### 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

These centres can be found across the United Kingdom. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability

on Defence Connect or send an email to **rc-pers-arc-Omailbox@mod.gov.uk**

## LONELINESS

### Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

### 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 you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. A number of charities and other organisations can also provide support and they 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

## COMPETITIONS

### JANUARY 2025 HOAY WINNER

Majority P300 2.0 Bluetooth party speaker:

**Matt Finnigan, Warminster**

**RULES:** Winners chosen at random from valid entries. Unless stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by our terms and conditions. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass your details to a third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified.

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[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**  
 General mental health support  
[nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

**Op Courage**  
 A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for “Op Courage” on [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk) to find your local team

**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  
[togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

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

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

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

**Relate**  
 Relationship support  
[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)

## SEXUAL OFFENCES

Anyone wishing to report an incident can do so in multiple ways. It does not matter if your allegation is not recent, or if you don't feel you have any evidence. There is no need for anyone to speak directly to their chain of command.

The **Defence Serious Crime Command** is responsible for investigating crimes such as sexual assault and harassment within defence and operates independently of the three Services. Contact them 24/7 via the Service Police Crime Bureau on **02392 285 170**

**Crimestoppers** can be reached at **0800 555 111**

Alternatively, complaints can be reported directly to the **civilian police**.

To discuss victim support contact the **Victim Witness Care Unit**, which operates independently from the chain of command, on **07974 074259** or via [people-dscc-vwcugroup@mod.gov.uk](mailto:people-dscc-vwcugroup@mod.gov.uk). Your information will be treated in confidence and you can discuss your options for reporting any allegations.

Further support can be found on the **Defence Connect Call it Out Hub** or via the **Speak Out Helpline** on **0306 770 4656** or [army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk)

# WIN... A Majority Teton Plus soundbar and wireless subwoofer

**TEN details have been changed in this image of the Infantry beating the Royal Artillery 14-0 in the first staging of rugby league's 1925 Cup at the Honourable Artillery Company in London.**

Circle all the differences on image **B** and send the panel to HOAY 994, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU, along with contact details, including email address, by March 31.

A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win this superb Bluetooth soundbar courtesy of Majority (buy at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)) worth £100.

Boasting 180 watts of power, the sound quality on this piece of kit is exceptional – breathing new life into movies, music and games and transforming your home entertainment set-up.

Good luck!

MAJORITY



Picture: Graeme Main

## WHAT'S ON

### AT MILITARY MUSEUMS

#### Imperial War Museum London

**War and the Mind** is a free exhibition exploring the psychological dimensions of conflict, from the First World War to the present day. Until April 27.

**Bruce Crompton** of television's *Combat Dealers* is hosting a tour of the museum's collection of military vehicles, plus a Q&A, on March 18. [iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk)

#### Army Flying Museum

**Bouncing the Rhine.** On March 24, Military historian Mike Peters (ex-AAC) will give a talk on Op Varsity and the role of the Glider Pilot Regiment in the allied mission to cross the Rhine. [armyflying.com](http://armyflying.com)

#### National Army Museum, London

**The story of Soldier.** Find out all about the amazing history behind this, the official magazine of the British Army. Running until July 6. [nam.ac.uk](http://nam.ac.uk)

#### Norfolk Tank Museum

Fans of military vehicles are gearing up for **Armourfest**, a two-day festival on August 16-17. [norfolktankmuseum.co.uk](http://norfolktankmuseum.co.uk)



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No under 18 allowed to enter. No prizes will be paid to anyone under 18 years of age. Full terms and conditions apply, please visit [raffle.blindveterans.org.uk/rules](http://raffle.blindveterans.org.uk/rules) for more details.



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# REVIEWS

★ BOOKS ★ GAMES ★ MOVIES ★



## WIN A COPY OF THIS GAME!

SOLDIER has teamed up with *Sniper Elite* publisher Rebellion to offer you the chance to bag a copy of the latest title.

We have five codes to give away for either the PC or Xbox versions of *Resistance*.

To stand a chance of winning one, tell us the name of the special suit worn by snipers to conceal them on ops. Email your answer to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk), stating your preferred format. Closing date March 31. All the usual rules apply.

## Virtual sharpshooters take aim...

*Stealth actioner sees players pave the way for D-Day*

### GAMES

#### Sniper Elite Resistance

by Rebellion

Out now, priced from £54.99

THE marksman has always held a unique place in the annals of video gaming.

From *Silent Scope* to *Call of Duty*, there is something special about winning battles one round at a time. Arguably, no title has delivered this experience with more confidence than *Sniper Elite*.

The series has – for the past two decades – seen players place their crosshairs on Axis oppressors through various theatres of the Second World War, while delivering slow-motion replays of accurate shooting in wincingly graphic detail.

Now the latest instalment – *Resistance* – puts digital sharpshooters on the European battlefield once again as they fight for supremacy against the cream of the German Wehrmacht.

This time players are cast in the boots of British Special Operations Executive agent Harry Hawker.

Set in the run-up to Operation Overlord, the game offers single-player action plus multiplayer options.

And it does not disappoint in its delivery – with a thrilling experience that builds on established features of the franchise while introducing plenty of fresh elements as well.

Focused on seven missions – which all play out in France but across varied locations from vineyards to complex urban environments – the atmosphere of the era is captured well.

Weapons, vehicles and equipment of the 1939-45 period have been meticulously rendered and the action is slick throughout.

Pushing back the opposing force, however, is no easy task, with success usually hinging on the ability to size up situations quickly.

The multiplayer action is especially worthy of note, with the standout feature being the Axis Invasion mode.

This effectively gives players the chance to become a sniper killer, wrecking somebody's day by crashing their game.

There's something truly satisfying about dropping into an enemy fighter's mission, unexpectedly turning the tide, and sending them packing back to their main menu in disgrace.

It's a brilliant addition, adding a layer of





unpredictability and tension that really keeps you on your toes.

Every shot feels more impactful, knowing that your opposite number could be lurking in the shadows, waiting for you to make a mistake.

*Soldier* sampled the PC and PS5 builds of the game and both worked well.

The combat throughout is exhilarating with pace aplenty and a palpable sense of suspense.

The visuals are impressive too, with beautifully crafted environments that make it feel like you're in the middle of a Europe in the depths of conflict.

From the scenery of the rooftop vistas to atmospheric dark alleyways, the developers' attention to detail is commendable.

Gripes are few and far between, but the voice acting

from the central character is one I cannot easily ignore coming from cockney territory myself.

While I appreciate any effort at authenticity, Harry Hawker's in-game patter sounds more like a dodgy impersonation of Dick Van Dyke.

It's a minor gripe, but one that, unfortunately, stuck out like a sore thumb.

The game otherwise impresses on pretty much every front.

It looks the part and digital snipers of all skill levels will find themselves fully tested.

*Resistance* is a must-play for fans of the series and anyone who enjoys a bit of chaotic multiplayer fun.

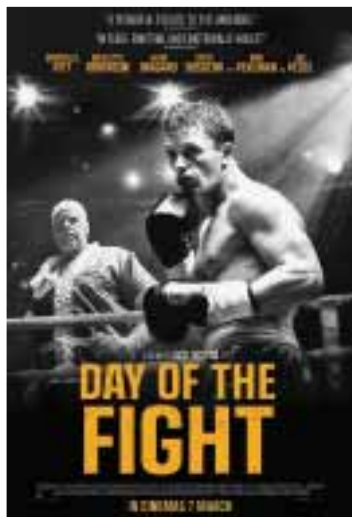


Review: **LSgt Ashley Ryan, IG**

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If you fancy helping us give new games, movies, music and podcasts the *Soldier* treatment, email [reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk)





## MOVIES

### Day of the Fight

Out in cinemas March 7

THIS simple but emotional tale follows Mike Flanagan, a former boxer and product of an abusive upbringing whose compulsive drinking leads him to kill a nine-year-old boy in a car crash.

Now released from prison, penniless and bearing a potentially fatal brain aneurism, he uses his one final day before his last fight to right his wrongs, seek redemption for his past and beg forgiveness from those he hurt.

**Michael Pitt** – looking like a cross between Paul Newman and Tom Berenger – is perfectly cast as the

rough and ready “fighting Irish” boxer, backed up by a supporting cast of big names (**Steve Buscemi**, **Ron Perlman**, **Joe Pesci** among them).

The resulting action combines Hollywood-scale drama and gritty realism, coupled with minimal yet elegant cinematography, a resonant piano score and effective visual storytelling.

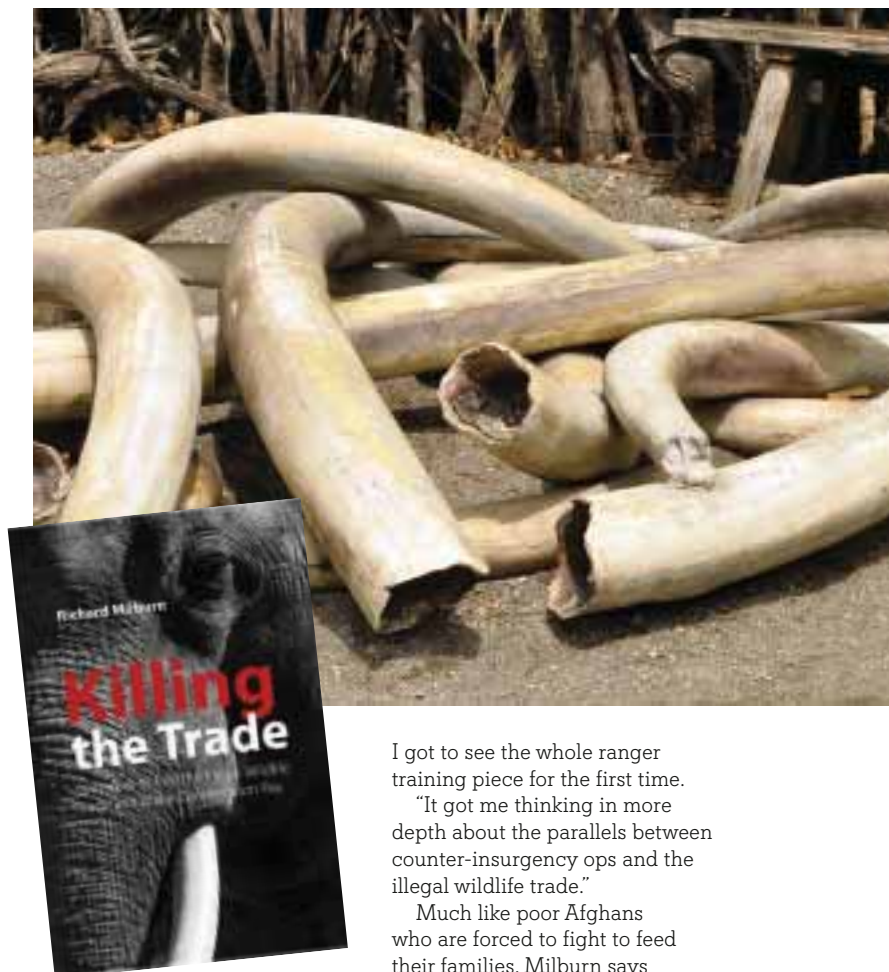
**Jack Huston’s** directorial debut is a superb example of doing more with less. Stripped down to a colourless filter, with many a pregnant silence, the film takes you on a journey and the pay-off, while predictable, is ultimately a knockout blow.



Review: Tpr Luke Maxwell-Libby, HAC







## BOOKS

### Killing the Trade

by Richard Milburn is out now,  
priced £24.99

A RESERVIST and academic has published what he believes is a blueprint for ending animal poaching worldwide.

In *Killing the Trade*, Richard Milburn, a lecturer at King's College London and an acting corporal in the Intelligence Corps, argues that a combination of local and strategic measures could break the business model underpinning the entire industry.

The book is based on 12 years of research and field work, both in the Army and with civilian initiatives in Africa.

In fact, it was an article in *Soldier* that first drew his attention to the Service's efforts to tackle poaching.

"I was finishing my trade training while coming to the end of my PhD, and there was a report about a deployment to Malawi," the 36-year-old explains.

"I got in touch with the commander and about six months later we went to Zambia, where

I got to see the whole ranger training piece for the first time.

"It got me thinking in more depth about the parallels between counter-insurgency ops and the illegal wildlife trade."

Much like poor Afghans who are forced to fight to feed their families, Milburn says impoverished poachers face a similarly stark choice.

"When people are desperate, they choose that option," he continues. "In Zambia, a guy was pulled into camp as part of a bush meat capture.

"He was dirt poor, not some organised crime gangster, and every single soldier on that deployment felt sympathy for him.

"So in some ways it's simple – provide alternative jobs so people can put food on the table.

"That could wipe out 80-90 per cent of poaching."

Army activities at the tactical level are currently on hold due to a freeze in funding. But Milburn hopes they will resume in the not-too-distant future, not least because of the benefits such taskings bring to troops.

"There's value in terms of innovation, training and development," he concludes.

"It's a good space to bring in new medical stuff or drones too.

"Small teams with a relatively small budget can have a big impact. This is an eminently solvable problem."

Interview: **Becky Clark, *Soldier***

## DOCUMENTARY

### Surviving Black Hawk Down

On Netflix

TOLD from both the Somali and American perspectives, this **Ridley Scott**-produced documentary reveals the true personal stories behind the 1993 "Black Hawk Down" mission when 18 US troops were killed in Mogadishu.

Fans of the film – this reviewer included – will be fascinated by the first-hand accounts from those who were on the ground. However, the three-part series somehow fails to fully clarify the confusing sequence of events.

Capturing a rounded picture of the brutal, fast-moving engagement was always going to be a challenge but it feels like there are some major elements missing – for example, the role of the other UN peacekeepers and the fact that Delta Force snipers Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon received posthumous Medals of Honor for their heroic defence of injured pilot Mike Durant.

What does stand out is the utter chaos of the battle and its long-term impact on combatants and civilians alike as well as, unfortunately, how America's misconceived approach lit the flame.



Review: **Capt Mike Owens, RE**



## BOOKS

### The Nazi Mind

by Laurence Rees is out now,  
priced at £25

WITH the 80th anniversary of the Second World War's end approaching, this timely analysis of 12 tactics used by Hitler's regime to attain and hold onto power makes for sobering reading.

Charting the Nazi's use of the mass media to spread conspiracy theories, through to the creation of industrial death factories, the author looks at the dark psychology that allowed them to prevail for so long.

Rees – whose stunning back-catalogue includes the BBC documentaries *The Nazis: A Warning from History* and *Auschwitz* – avoids any direct comparison with the world today.

But any reader will be hard-pressed not to think about the current state of global politics, the rhetoric coming from the personalities involved and the potential trajectory of future events.



Review: **Cliff Caswell, *Soldier***







## YOUNG SAINTS PROVE TOO HOT



The Army defence  
make their mark

### RUGBY LEAGUE (MEN)

**THE young guns of Super League giants St Helens proved formidable opposition for the Army men's rugby league team as they ended a run of three games in eleven days with a heavy defeat.**

Dubbed the Capital Challenge, the clash ended 74-4 in favour of a dynamic Saints outfit, whose rising stars offered rich attacking entertainment for crowds at the Honourable Artillery Company.

The match followed swiftly on from the Reds' loss to Wests Warriors in the second round of the Challenge Cup and with a host of senior players unavailable on the day, an already tough assignment was made even more difficult.

Wing Elliot Jamieson opened the scoring for the visitors in the fourth minute and it was one-way traffic throughout the first half as strong carries and incisive passing saw them run in

seven tries and build a 40-0 lead at the break.

The soldiers showed greater endeavour in the second period and despite conceding within minutes of the restart, produced promising signs in both attack and defence as their intensity levels increased.

Cpl Liam Lindsey (Para) caught the eye with some big carries, and they deservedly got themselves on the scoreboard in the 59th minute.

Having previously attempted the cross-field kick on the sixth tackle to no avail, skipper LCpl Mikey McDonald (RE) boomed a high ball from right to left and with the Saints rearguard failing to gather, Sig James Amachree (R Signals) was on hand to touch down in the corner.

A flurry of five tries in the final 15 minutes – all converted by the boot of Kian McGann – then underlined the gulf between the two teams as the visitors headed home with an emphatic win to their name.





Cpl Liam Lindsey (Para)  
breaks through the Saints' lines

"We were not really focused on the result," head coach Cpl Leigh Paul-Rientoul (R Yorks) told *SoldierSport*.

"Having just played in the Challenge Cup and with people unavailable, we only had four or five senior players in the squad so had to backfill with academy talent. It was a great opportunity to look at them before our next match in June.

"We didn't get to attack in their half during that first period so our goal at the break was

## ARMY RUGBY LEAGUE CAPITAL CHALLENGE

### CAPITAL CLASH

SAINTS V ARMY

74 V 4

### 1925 CUP

INF V RA

14 V 0

to see if we could play more downfield. We managed to do that, and we got our reward with the try.

"The final score was not great, and they had some fantastic players – five of them were on first-team contracts.

"But this was not just about what happened on the field. There was a networking dinner afterwards and it was a great occasion. It is something they want to do annually and hopefully we can continue to build on this relationship."

Four days earlier the Army lost 36-18 in their Challenge Cup clash with Wests Warriors, who will go on to face Leeds Rhinos in the next round.

"We were right in it until the last ten to 15 minutes," Paul-Rientoul said.

"We thought we had equalised, but the try was then ruled out for offside. With a kick to come that would have put us two points in front.

"Our heads went down after that, but it was a good competitive game.

"We will return for pre-season in April and now have time to get the squad nailed down.

"Our strength and conditioning coaches will be sending individual programmes out to all the players and as we only get a two- or three-day lead-in before each of our fixtures, they have to do the hard work beforehand."

## INFANTRY FIRE WARNING TO RIVALS

### RUGBY LEAGUE (MEN)

**THE Infantry laid down an early marker in the new Army rugby league season as they triumphed over the Royal Artillery in the inaugural 1925 Cup clash.**

Played in the prestigious grounds of the Honourable Artillery Company, the fixture marked the 100th anniversary of the first meeting between the two sides – an affair that was staged distinctly under the radar given the sport was not officially recognised by the Army at the time.

The latest encounter proved a bruising affair, with the physicality of both squads at the fore as tries from Fus Ratu Malakai Leiloma (RRF), Rfn Archie Sawyer (Rifles) and Gdsm Shaun Duthie (SG) helped steer the Infantry to a 14-0 win.

With a number of senior players called into the Army squad for their clash with St Helens, head coach Sgt Chris King (R Irish) was able to blood an array of newcomers – many of whom caught the eye.

"We only had four players from last season, the rest we had never seen before, so it was almost a brand-new team," he told *SoldierSport*.

"It was a physical game and we can now see that those

players can compete.

"As coaches it was a bit of a shock to see how well they have done.

"Pte Jamie Stringer (Para) is just 19 and only passed out of depot a few months ago, but he did not look out of place in what was his first game of military rugby league. He did not put a foot wrong.

"We have used this fixture as an exhibition, and these new guys have shown the others that they have something to fight against, whereas before they would probably walk back into the team.

"That is great for the Infantry, as well as the Army set-up afterwards."

King's attention now turns to the Lawson Cup and the Infantry's bid to lift the trophy for a third successive season.

"Having seen that performance today we are confident," he added.

"We have gone into the previous finals as underdogs but came out on top – people have to fear us now."

**"IT WAS A BIT OF A SHOCK TO SEE HOW WELL THEY HAVE DONE"**



## LEAGUE BY NUMBERS

**13** Tries scored by St Helens as they romped to victory

**11** Successful goal kicks from 13 attempts by Saints' Kian McGann

**3** Finals reached by the Infantry in the past four Lawson Cup campaigns

**9** Date, in April, of the Army Inter-Unit competition – The Nav Nines

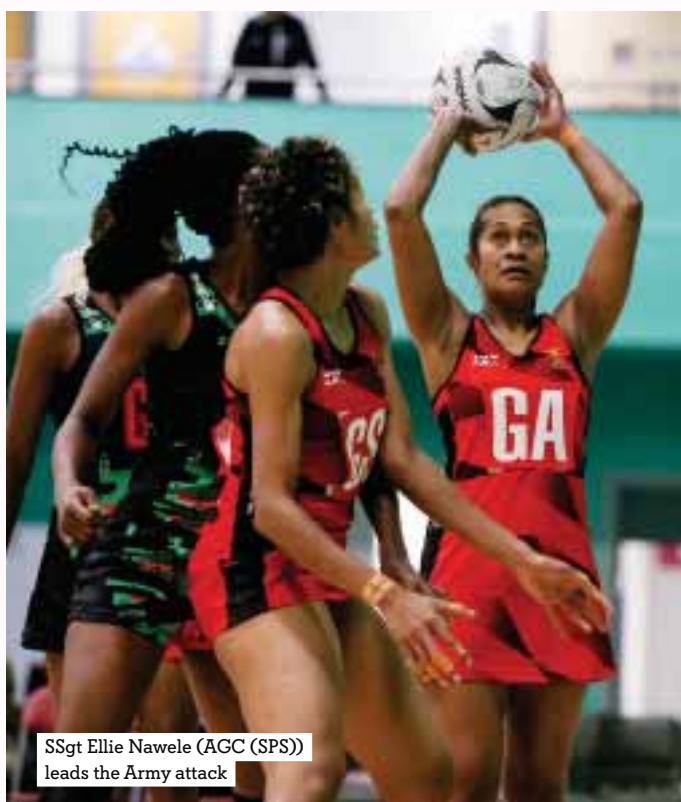


## MALAWI MASTERCLASS



INTERNATIONAL  
NETBALL

ARMY V MALAWI  
**24 V 98**



SSgt Ellie Nawele (AGC (SPS))  
leads the Army attack

## NETBALL (WOMEN)

**THE Army's netballers were given a taste of life on the international stage as they locked horns with Malawi at Loughborough University.**

Ranked seventh in the world, the tourists showed their class as they cruised to a 98-24 victory as part of their preparations for the Vitality Nations Netball Cup, in which they faced England, South Africa and Uganda.

For the Reds, the fixture served as an elite-level workout as they stepped up preparations for this month's Inter-Services campaign – in which they'll be striving for a sixth successive title win.

"It was a great opportunity," skipper SSgt Ellie Nawele (AGC (SPS)) told *SoldierSport*. "We knew we would not get the win, but it was a chance to showcase what we have been doing in training as we move towards the Inter-Services.

"The girls were a bit nervous

beforehand but looking back we were grateful to play against such talented opposition.

"No other team said yes to this, so we tried to go out and play our own game.

"The biggest difference is the pace of their play – everything is so fast. We had been working on our defensive skills and tried to implement that on court, but as soon as they got a turnover it took seconds to get to goal and score. The consistency of their pace was ridiculous, and they were so clinical."

Nawele singled out Sgt Dee Bolakoro (RE) for praise, with the Fijian international called up to represent her country at the PacificAus Sports Netball Series in the aftermath of the clash.

"She was in the defence to start and then moved to attack – she played her heart out," the captain continued. "She knows what it takes to play at this level.

"We have learnt so much from this and will take that forward into our next training camp."



## REDS STORM TO TITLE WIN

### INTER SERVICES CYCLOCROSS

#### MEN

- 1 RICH JENNINGS (ARMY)
- 2 SIMON HALE (ARMY)
- 3 RICH SUMMERBELL (RAF)

#### WOMEN

- 1 AMY DRYSDALE (ARMY)

Women's champion  
Capt Amy Drysdale (REME)

Picture: Luke Brimble

### CYCLOCROSS

**THE off-road terrain of Norton Manor saw Army riders produce a dominant display to reign supreme at the Inter-Services Cyclocross Championships.**

The soldiers headed to Somerset on a mission to dethrone the Royal Air Force as champions and signalled their intent early on as Capt Simon Hale (R Anglian) and Sgt Rich

Jennings (RAPTC) opened a comfortable lead at the front.

With Sgt Danny Preece (RE) holding third place and Capt Amy Drysdale (REME) storming the women's field, the Reds looked set for a sweep of the podium places.

Jennings broke clear of Hale on the third lap as he went on to secure the individual honours, however, Preece was pipped to third by Sgt Rich Summerbell (RAF) in the closing stages.

Drysdale was crowned women's champion, with the Army taking the team prize.

"The course was extremely challenging, with a variety of surfaces ranging from tarmac to sand with technical sections including off camber and slippery woodland," said team manager Maj Jon Robinson (AGC (SPS)).

"It was the first time in recent memory that we have won the title and we are delighted."

## HEADS OF THE TABLE

Picture: Graeme Main



<b>Men's singles champion</b>	SSgt Pete Owusu (RLC)
<b>Women's singles champion</b>	Sgt Hilary Greig (RAMS)
<b>Men's doubles champions</b>	SSgt Peter Owusu (RLC) and LCpl Pratic Tamang (R Signals)
<b>Women's doubles champions</b>	SSgt Hilary Greig (RAMS) and Rev Nicola Frail (RACHD)
<b>Mixed doubles champions</b>	Capt Matt Hutson (REME) and Rev Nicola Frail (RACHD)

### TABLE TENNIS

**MORE than 100 players tested their skills in Aldershot as the Army Table Tennis Championships proved as popular as ever.**

Welsh coach Phil Avery ran a training camp in the build-up to the main competition, which featured novices through to Service-level players.

A total of 29 teams entered the inter-unit tournament that was won by 7 Aviation Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

And given the continued growth, the set-up will host its first Inter-Corps Championships in September.

"The Royal Signals brought more than 40 players to this event," Army Table Tennis Association chairman Capt Matt Hutson (REME) told *SoldierSport*. "But other committees are forming as well."

"Having a corps competition will help bridge the gap between the novices and the Army team."

### RUGBY UNION

**THE Army rugby union senior teams posted strong results on the road as their Inter-Services preparations continued.**

Wing LCpl Isabel Bibby (AGC (RMP)) crossed for four tries in an emphatic victory for the women over Havant in Portsmouth. The Reds added eight further scores on the night, as well as six conversions, to complete a 74-0 demolition job.

However, the men faced a sterner test against Cambridge University (pictured) at Grange Road, eventually battling their way to a 31-28 win.



Picture: Cat Goryn/Alligin Photography

### EQUITATION

**JOCKEY Sgt Nick Oliver (Int Corps) took the glory at this season's Royal Artillery Gold Cup as he rode Frenchy Du Large to victory at the prestigious Sandown Park.**

The 5/1 shot raced clear after successfully navigating the final hurdle and then eased towards the line to finish ahead of Fil D'ariane, ridden by Capt Doug White (RWxY).

The result thwarted White's attempt at a Forces double after the officer won the Military Gold Cup at the same course two weeks earlier.

Last year's champion Maj Will Kellard (RL) finished last in the five-strong field on Farceur Du Large.



Picture: The Jockey Club





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Pictures: Graeme Main

# TAKYI TAKES CENTRE STAGE

INTER-SERVICES  
U23 FOOTBALL

ARMY **3** V **1** RAF

## FOOTBALL

**WINGER Cfn Femi Takyi (REME, pictured) was the hero for the Army as his clinical late strike sealed a 3-1 win over their Royal Air Force rivals and with it the Under-23 Inter-Services Football Championships trophy.**

After drawing 2-2 with the Royal Navy in their opening game, the Reds needed to beat the airmen by two clear goals to take the title but looked to be falling agonisingly short as they led 2-1 with the clock ticking towards the 90-minute mark.

However, Takyi had other ideas and when the physicality of forward Spr Jack Lowe (RE) proved too much for the visiting defence the wide man was on hand to race into the area and fire a low shot across goal and into the bottom corner to secure the silverware.

The result was a deserved outcome for the soldiers, who carried the greater attacking threat throughout with Takyi at the heart of their play.

After a cagey opening spell, the hosts asserted control and came close to opening the scoring when Tpr Tyler Stevens (RAC) drew a smart save from AS1 Miles Coaley with a well-struck drive from the edge of the area. Skipper Sig Luke Thompson (R Signals) then headed wide from a corner before Stevens went one better.

When the RAF failed to deal with a lofted ball into the box, Takyi showed some sublime skill to leave two defenders in his wake before cutting the ball back for his fellow attacker to convert at the near post.

A moment of magic from Pte Buster Reed (RLC) then saw the Army double their lead in the 53rd minute. Fullback LCpl

Ethan Reynolds (RE) played a pass into the striker's feet and he was given time to gather and turn before firing a rasping shot past Coaley from 25 yards.

With the scoreline in their favour the Reds set about managing the remainder of the contest and they largely went untroubled until the RAF scored with their first meaningful effort on goal – substitute AS1 Dean Higham drilling home in the 80th minute.

However, they regrouped and after Thompson powered a free header over from a corner Takyi took centre stage to deliver the knockout blow.

"From the moment we came into camp it has been brilliant," Thompson told *SoldierSport* at full-time. "It's not just about the players; it's the coaches and all the stuff that goes on behind the scenes. We have all worked so hard for this."

**MEANWHILE... the Army women's team hosted the next generation of talent from Manchester United in a two-day camp.**

The visit featured a series of command tasks, a tour of the Army School of Physical Training and concluded with a match between the two sides. Unfortunately, the Red Devil's under-21s proved too strong for the soldiers as they ran out 8-0 winners.







## NEW BREED LOOK TO FUTURE

### WINTER SPORTS

**A NEW-look Army snowboarding team exceeded expectations with a strong showing on the slopes of Meribel at the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships.**

With a number of seasoned riders missing due to deployments, the set-up blooded a raft of newcomers in the hope that early exposure to the competition will allow them to flourish in future years.

Their biggest success came in the boardercross, with the men's and women's squads securing team titles.

Capt Lisa Gibson (RAMS) and LBdr Jordan Buckley (RA) finished second and third respectively in the women's individual standings and while the men failed to register a podium place, they managed to take five of the top ten positions on their way to sealing the collective honours.

Gibson claimed gold in the women's slopestyle, but the

Royal Air Force triumphed in both team competitions. They repeated that achievement in the parallel giant slalom, despite SSgt David Grant (REME) winning the men's final and Cpl Brandon Finch (REME) finishing in third place.

In a further sign of progress, Cpl Kazim Jones (RLC) was named as the championships' best newcomer.

"We were really struggling with availability due to deployments," WO2 Dale Gallagher (REME), team rider and manager, told *SoldierSport*.

"We knew that would be the case last summer, so we made the decision to develop some fresh riders.

"It is a new team, and there were no expectations going in. It was more about bringing them through and giving them experience of this level. They all pulled it out of the bag."

Gallagher said the corps structure, particularly that of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, has helped develop



Army skiers embraced the downhill test

Pictures: Cpl Jack Welson and Cpl Lauren Brown, both RAF





LBdr Jordan Buckley (RA)  
in boardercross action

newcomers to the sport and with 102 athletes competing in this year's Army Championships – Exercise Snow Jack – there is no shortage of talent in the ranks.

"Around 70 per cent of the Army team comes from the REME," he continued.

"They are really pushing this at corps level and their latest camp was oversubscribed – they could not fit everyone in.

"They also run instructor courses and have really set the precedent when it comes to

producing riders.

"With what we have done this season we now have depth going forward and there will be some tough selections next year if everyone is available.

"Hopefully we can continue to build on this so in two- or three-years' time the other Services cannot touch us."

On the back of their performances, Gallagher, Grant and Buckley were selected for the UK Armed Forces team that will compete at the British Championships in Austria later this month.

Elsewhere, the Army women's Alpine ski squad won the downhill team championship for the first time in three years.

Capt Lauren Bailey (RA) was in sublime form and led the charge with a gold-medal run, finishing ahead of teammate Cpl Holly Lake (REME) in second.

The soldiers claimed four further top ten places in what proved to be a dominant outing in the discipline.

"It was a shock to win gold on a course I've never raced before," Bailey said.

"The downhill was absolutely amazing, and I was so proud to represent the Army alongside my teammates. Our collective spirit pushed me to perform at my best."

Spr Lizzie Knox (RE) was another star performer and sealed the individual honours in the slalom, super giant slalom and super combined. The Army women also won the slalom team prize.

In the men's events, the soldiers took the giant slalom team title as Capt Rob Vanbeck (RA) and Capt Alex Combe (RGR) finished second and third respectively in the final. Vanbeck also took bronze in the slalom and super combined.

## INVESTMENT PLAN REAPS DIVIDENDS

### TELEMARK

**THE Army women's Telemark squad enjoyed a week to remember at the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships as they claimed a clutch of titles.**

In an impressive display, the soldiers sealed the honours in the parallel sprint and classic disciplines, an effort that saw them crowned as the overall team champions.

Spr Georgia Binnington (RE) was the standout performer as she topped the podium in both, while claiming silver medals in the sprint and giant slalom on her way to becoming individual champion. Teammate Maj Lori Seed (RA, pictured below right) took bronze medals in all four events.

Binnington's most dramatic win came in the parallel sprint, when Royal Navy rival AB Georgiana Altham lost her skis and fell – narrowly missing the Army ace in the process. The loose skis then followed the soldier down the slope, with avoiding action required for a second time.

"It was a pretty mad last run," she said. "I could hear people yelling and I was looking around thinking, 'what's everyone shouting at' but thankfully the skis missed me and I carried on."

The men's team lost out

on the team prizes but saw stalwart Capt Stefan Hurst (RLC) take silver in the parallel sprint along with bronze medals in the sprint, classic and giant slalom.

"We have really invested in our women's team and are lucky to have some good young skiers coming through," Maj Adam Smith (WG), men's team lead, said.

"It has been about nurturing the talent we see at the Army Championships and bringing them through a training pathway so they are ready for racing in Meribel.

"The men's team had a couple of injuries, and the Royal Navy were very strong this year; we fought hard but came up just short.

"We are trying to get the message out there that Telemark exists as a sport. It is niche, but if you want a new challenge and a break from the norm it is worth a try."

For more information on how to get involved follow @britisharmy telemark on Instagram or the Army Telemark Skiing Association Facebook page.

**"IT HAS BEEN ABOUT NURTURING THE TALENT"**



## MERIBEL BY NUMBERS

**14** Years on the Telemark team for the retiring Lt Col Daz Howells

**12** Months since Spr Lizzie Knox broke her heel on the course

**4** Army women in the boardercross top ten – taking the team title

**5** Days of Alpine, Telemark and snowboarding action at the resort



Scan here to register an interest in Army snowboarding





I was in the Welsh Guards when I first joined and I remember the RSM to this day. He was tall with a deep, Welsh voice and could make you sweat just by looking at you.

**WO1 Ni Butler, RAMS**



When I joined nearly 30 years ago, being in front of the RSM meant you'd really messed up. If I saw him coming, I'd turn around and walk the other way. I'm command sergeant major of the NCO Academy these days and still remember the impact he had on me.

**WO1 Matt Howarth, RE**



My first RSM had a fearsome reputation – I only ended up in his office once and I never, ever wanted to do it again. He was scary but I think it is important to acknowledge the qualities of past leaders – they were right for their era.

**WO1 Paul Carney, Army Sergeant Major**



I avoided mine like the plague, and spent a lot of time dodging him in the corridors. He was a big character and military life was new to me. But as time went on, I learnt a lot from him and the way he listened. I'll carry this with me in my new role as an RSM in the Army Welfare Service.

**WO1 Bekki Sugden, AGC (SPS)**



Mine was about four-and-a-half feet tall. I remember him being angry most of the time. But things have changed these days.

**WO1 Jock Colvan-Graham, RA**

## FINAL WORD

# The shouty one

We asked senior warrant officers what impact their first regimental sergeant major had on them...

I remember the RSM being the person who did the shouting if you did things wrong. It's different now. In my last role as a squadron sergeant major I only ever raised my voice once.

**WO1 Will Laughlan, RE**



What will the next generation of RSMs be like? *Soldier* visited the NCO Academy to find out. **Read more in the next issue**



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