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Cover picture (left): The Operational Service Medal for Afghanistan Picture: Steve Dock, Chris Sell, Sgt Rupert Frere (RLC)

Background image: Scimitars from The Queen's Royal Lancers conduct live firing at Bovington and Lulworth Training Area (Page 44) Picture: Graeme Main



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Parsons House, Ordnance Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

All enquiries: Tel 01252 347353
(Ald Mii 94222 2353)

Fax: 01252 347358 (2358)

Email: mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Managing Editor: Andrew Simms

EDITORIAL

Assistant Editor:

Sharon Kean 01252 340753 (5753)
skean@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Joe Clapson 01252 347154 (2154)
jclapson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Sports Editor:

Richard Long 01252 347362 (2362)
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Editorial Assistant:

Doreen Cadwallader 01252 347360 (2360)
dcadwallader@soldiermagazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Art Editor:

Tudor Morgan 01252 347169 (2169)
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Graphic Designers:

Chris Sell 01252 355080 (8080)
csell@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Kath Lee 01252 347361 (2361)
klee@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chief Photographer:

Mike Weston 01252 347357 (2357)
mweston@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographers:

Graeme Main 01252 347357 (2357)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Steve Dock 01252 347357 (2357)
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

ARCHIVE

Archivist/Information Manager:

Ruth Kusionowicz 01252 355056 (8056)
rkusionowicz@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MARKETING and ADVERTISING

Business Manager:

Andy Clarkson 01252 347351 (2351)
aclarkson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising:

Heather Shekyls 01252 347352 (2352)
hshekyls@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions:

Stephen King 01252 347353 (2353)
sking@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Distribution:

Patricia Lampert 01252 347354 (2354)
plampert@soldiermagazine.co.uk



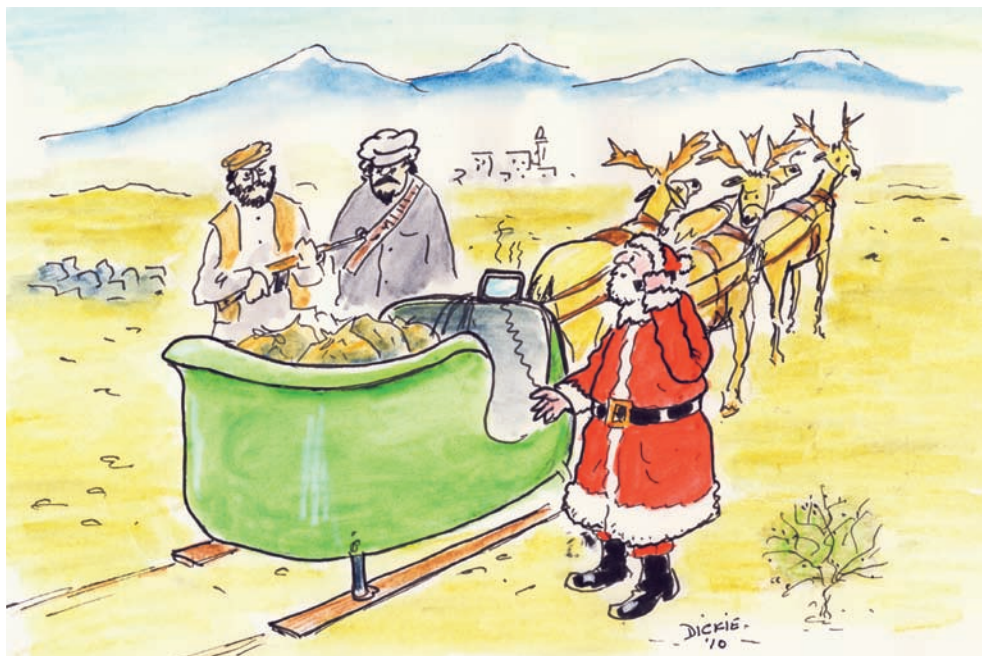
ARMY



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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"Yes, I know I should be at Camp Bastion, but I think my satnav has been cyber attacked."

● Defence bytes back – Pages 26-29

Vast volumes of valour

AMONG the plethora of big names to shoot the breeze with *Soldier* this month is Roy Hodgson – the Kop commander who will have to deliver Liverpool's first league title since 1990 and add to the club's haul of European silverware if he is to enjoy the same hero status on Merseyside as loyal lieutenants Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher.

And while the former Fulham boss is determined to win the adulation of Anfield, the beautiful game's place in the grander scheme of things is not lost on the 63-year-old (Pages 38-39). Of a generation whose parents will have inevitably fought in the Second World War, Hodgson believes that the moniker of hero – used liberally by football fans to describe the stars of the Premier League – is far better-suited to the men and women of the military.

And even the staunchest of Scousers would have to agree that while Gerrard's 15-minute hat-trick against Napoli was worthy of applause, in terms of heroics it pales into insignificance when compared to the actions of Victoria and George Cross-winners LCpl Johnson Beharry (PWRR) and the late SSgt Olaf Schmid (RLC). Decorated for their selfless gallantry, the soldiers are among those featured in *Extraordinary Heroes*, a new exhibition at the Imperial War Museum which pays homage to the Forces' finest (Pages 46-47).

The tales of courage that led to the medals being awarded are well-known and rightly exalted by those in the ranks, but visitors to the museum should consider that such stories are by no means limited to the Lord Ashcroft Gallery.

As acknowledged by Dr Patrick Tissington – an expert on the psychology of bravery – the British Army is a breeding ground for such feats of courage (Page 49) and operations in Afghanistan have not been shy in asking troops to show their

mettle. As soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment are discovering (Pages 9 and 15), Helmand province is a theatre which demands heroes on a daily basis.

The fact that the British Army has battalions full of unassuming men and women who are such dedicated professionals that they will risk their own lives to ensure Op Herrick's success is the reason why we chose to feature the Operational Service Medal for Afghanistan on this month's cover.

If ever the nation wants to identify its true heroes, it need look no further than those who are in line to receive or are already wearing the medal. And the British public should rest easy in the knowledge that the Service's vein of valour runs deep. Whether support personnel (Pages 30-31)

or explosive ordnance disposal operators (Pages 41-43), the next-generation of Herrick soldiers will be well-equipped to emulate those currently serving with distinction.

That our readers are an extraordinary group of men and women is not lost on the team at *Soldier* HQ, which is why Operation Reindeer's Hoof has been rolled out for a second year (Pages 60-61).

Keen to do more than just report on your good deeds, we decided to do our own and at the time of typing have amassed more than 250 prizes to give away throughout the Advent period.

Like the dedicated team of scientists, medics and engineers at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Pages 33-35), we would always like to give troops more but we hope that the competition will bring some Christmas cheer to the lucky winners.

Wherever you are this festive season, be it Helmand or at home with your families, I wish you a happy and safe Christmas. – **Andrew Simms, Managing Editor** ■

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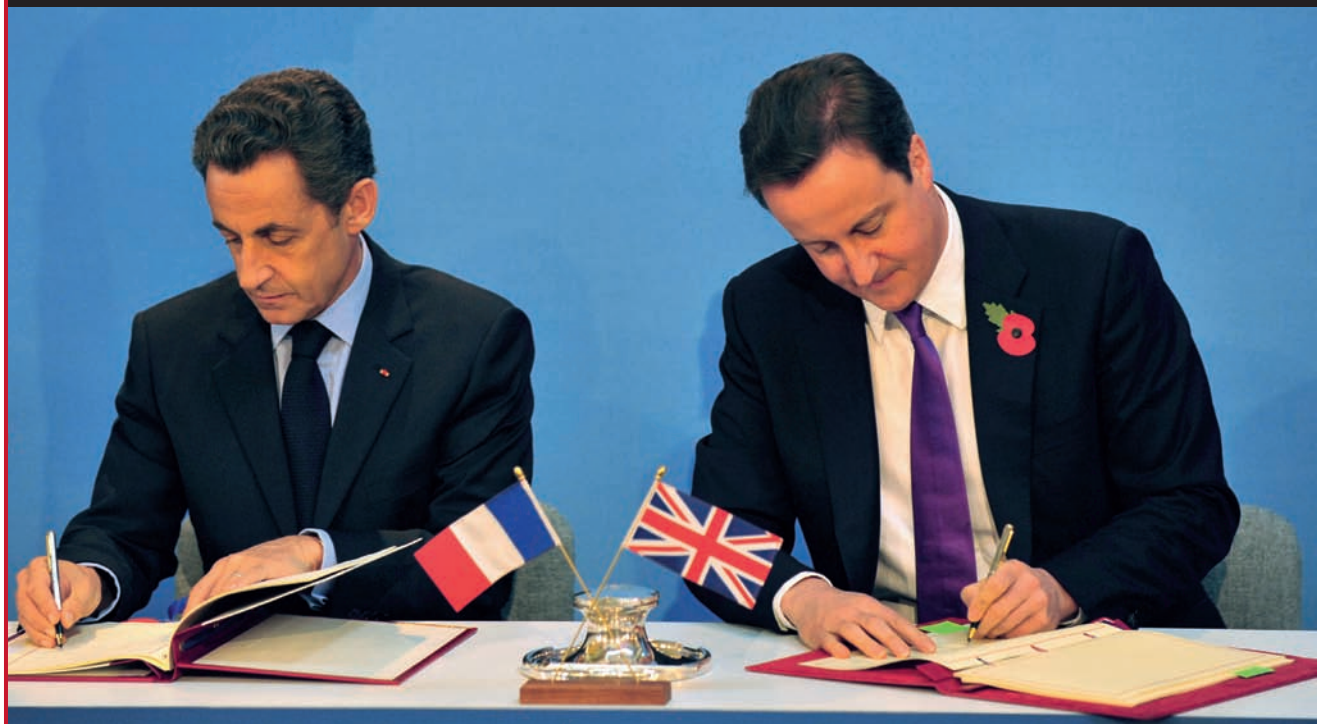


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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



United nations: French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron sign treaties aimed at enhancing the defence capabilities and effectiveness of the two leaders' respective countries during an Anglo-French summit at Lancaster House in London Picture: Andrew Parsons, Crown Copyright

A level of trust 'unequalled in history'

PRIME Minister David Cameron has announced details of a new military programme that will see the UK and France working together on a number of key initiatives.

The agreement will be delivered through an over-arching Defence Co-operation Treaty and there will also be a subordinate accord relating to a joint nuclear facility, a letter of intent signed by Government ministers and a package of joint defence strategies.

The move is aimed at improving the collective capability of both countries, with forces working closely together to strengthen the effectiveness of Nato and European Defence.

The proposed measures build on commitments outlined in the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review to create stronger relationships with UK allies who share similar interests

and military capabilities.

As part of the deal, the two countries will develop a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force as a non-standing unit that will be able to carry out a range of operations in the future.

Plans are also in place to build a maritime task group around the French carrier *Charles de Gaulle*; to create joint military doctrine and training programmes; to co-operate on the acquisition of equipment and technologies such as unmanned aerial systems; and to align, wherever possible, logistics arrangements.

Speaking after his London summit with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Mr Cameron said: "Britain and France have a shared history through two World Wars. Our brave troops are fighting together every day in Afghanistan. But let me finish by saying

this is a treaty based on pragmatism, not just sentiment.

"I would like to thank Nicolas for joining me in taking these bold and important steps which I believe will make our sovereign nations safer."

Mr Sarkozy added: "This is a decision which is unprecedented and shows a level of trust and confidence between our two nations which is unequalled in history."

Writing in the *Sunday Telegraph*, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "There are many reasons why this co-operation makes sense. We are Europe's only nuclear powers. We have the largest defence budgets and are the only two countries with real, large-scale expeditionary capability.

"We are both permanent members of the UN Security Council and leading members of the G8 and G20.

"And there is no better time to deepen our relationship with France.

"Since President Sarkozy came into office we have seen a vigorous attempt to bring Europe and America closer together, and to bring France deeper into Nato." ■

50 **THE PERCENTAGE BUSINESS UNITS CAN EXPECT TO REALISE IN SAVINGS BY ENGAGING THE MOD'S SINGLE SOURCE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT TEAM (WWW.SSM-CSD.DII.R.MIL.UK) FOR IT SUPPORT PROVISION**

CIVVY STREET

IN A NUTSHELL

Regular Armed Forces redundancy programme: How will the British ranks be reduced?

In brief

The redundancy programme aims to reduce the number of Armed Forces personnel while maintaining a satisfactory balance of skills, experience, ability and seniority in rank throughout the Army to meet operational needs.

Who will it affect?

At this stage the specific personnel required for redundancy is unknown and it will take a number of months to complete this work. Single Service DINs will be published in around six months, detailing the specific personnel requirements, and it is at this time that individuals will be able to apply for the redundancy scheme. The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency will be able to provide information on the size of payments in due course. No applications are being called for at this stage.

What's on offer?

There are two redundancy systems in place that are aligned to the two Armed Forces Pension Schemes and will see personnel receive a tax-free lump sum, which will be paid as compensation for lost career expectations. Other benefits and entitlements will also be paid.

Can I volunteer for civvy street?

Redundancy fields will be determined by trades, branches, ranks and length of service. Only officers and soldiers who fall in the redundancy field will be notified and considered for selection, those not meeting the criteria will not be eligible to apply.

What sort of timescale are we talking?

The redundancy programme will be completed in three phases with all the fields announced by 2014 and the last person to leave under compulsory redundancy terms doing so by the end of March 2015.

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All change: From left, Gen Sir David Richards, Ursula Brennan, ACM Sir Jock Stirrup and Sir Bill Jeffrey

New team at the top table

GENERAL Sir David Richards has spoken of the "special privilege" he has in leading the "outstanding" members of the Armed Forces after formally starting work as the new Chief of the Defence Staff.

The experienced officer said he will be striving to meet the orders set out in the National Security Strategy and has reiterated his belief that military personnel, and their families, are the most important element of capability.

Gen Richards, who takes over as CDS from Air Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup, added: "I will not disguise from you that we are, self evidently, in a difficult position. But, as a very minor historian, I know enough to tell you that our forebears have frequently been in the same place.

"They, through a combination of sound decision making and turns in fortune, brought their respective generations through it. I have absolutely no doubt that we will do the same."

On leaving office, ACM Stirrup paid tribute to the courage and commitment of those under his command during difficult and dangerous operations in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

He said: "I have no doubt that you will rise to the challenges ahead as you have to those in the past. This country can and should be enormously proud that it still has men and women of such quality and integrity who are prepared

to step forward and serve.

"It has been the privilege of my life to have served alongside you. Good luck and God speed."

The period of change has also seen Ursula Brennan taking over as the new Permanent Under Secretary, replacing Sir Bill Jeffrey who retires after five years in the post. On her first day in the new position she spoke of the many challenges facing the MoD but insisted the talent and quality of staff available means these will be met head on.

She said: "The job reductions which we need to make over the next few years will be unsettling and difficult.

"Over the coming months CDS and I will be looking to everyone in Defence, civilian and military, to support each other and to work together for the defence and security of the United Kingdom. The challenges we face are considerable, but we know that when civilians and the military work together, using the skills and experience of everyone in the team, we are capable of great things."

Sir Bill said he had been honoured to work with such a dedicated department and believes the future is in safe hands. "In Ursula Brennan I have a successor who is already well respected in the MoD and widely experienced in Whitehall, and to whom I pass the baton with confidence," he added.

"I wish her, and all of you, the very best for the future."

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£10,000	WINNING MARGIN Donated by Newbury Racecourse-goers during the John Smith's Armed Forces Raceday	The Royal British Legion, Berkshire Poppy Appeal www.poppy.org.uk
2	£6,870	PEAK PERFORMERS A 19-strong team from 3 Military Intelligence Battalion (Volunteers) conquered the Three Peaks Challenge, scaling Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis	ABF The Soldiers' Charity soldierscharity.org
3	£3,560	BIKE RIDE TO THE BIG APPLE Former-Royal Engineer Peter Hitchings cycled from San Francisco to New York – an arduous 3,500 miles in the saddle – in a total of 75 days	Help for Heroes and RETT Syndrome Association UK www.justgiving.com/Peter-Hitchings



Osprey outmuscles Taliban offensive

A BRITISH soldier escaped with only bruising after his Osprey body armour stopped a direct hit from a high-velocity Taliban bullet. Rgr Ryan Boyd, of 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, would almost certainly have been killed had he not been wearing the hi-tech armour issued to troops on operations. One of the side plates fitted to the state-of-the-art system absorbed the force of the shot, which knocked the

26-year-old off his feet but did not cause serious injury.

“I feel lucky to have got out of this uninjured, it’s very possible I owe my life to that armour plate,” said Rgr Boyd (pictured left and holding the defeated round, right).

The soldier was on a reassurance patrol with other members of his recently-deployed unit in the Nad-e-Ali district of Helmand province when they came under attack.

“As I was returning fire with my light machine gun, I was thrown off my feet and felt a sharp pain in my side,” he said.

“I told the sergeant next to me that I had been hit.”



Pictures: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

After checking for bleeding and finding none, Rgr Boyd returned to the battle.

Ambushed from both flanks and to their front, the Royal Irish troops successfully held off the insurgents for 25 minutes before artillery fire eliminated the threat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THEATRE ROLE FOR TONGA

■ TROOPS from the South Pacific Kingdom of Tonga will be deploying to Afghanistan to help the international mission to improve security in the country.

Brig Gen Tau’aika ‘Uta’atu, commander of the Tongan Defence Services, signed an agreement that committed his personnel to the campaign during a recent visit to London. More than 200 soldiers will be deployed over the next two years and will work alongside UK, US, Estonian and Danish colleagues in central Helmand province.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: “This deployment represents a significant contribution from a comparatively small country and further demonstrates the continued will of the international community to work towards a stable and secure Afghanistan.”

The first contingent of 55 troops will be posted to Afghanistan in a force protection role, a function which they proved particularly adept at during operations in Iraq.

VIRGIN VOICES ITS SUPPORT

■ VIRGIN Media has donated 200 mobile phone handsets and SIM cards to help wounded troops keep in touch with their loved ones.

The communications giant presented the equipment to injured personnel at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham.

Jonathan Kini, director of mobile at Virgin Media, said: “We’re delighted to support Selly Oak Hospital with this initiative to make the lives of our wounded military personnel that little bit easier. It is a small gesture to show our appreciation for their service and it will hopefully make their time in hospital a little more comfortable during their recuperation.”

Soldiers will be able to keep their new mobile phones with them at any of the hospitals or recovery centres they may reside at throughout their treatment and rehabilitation.



Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Risky business: Progress has been made but British troops still face significant threats in Afghanistan

‘The finest any nation could hope to have’

BRITISH troops serving on Op Herrick are making “steady progress” but still face “serious risks”, according to Foreign Secretary William Hague.

Delivering the first of the coalition Government’s quarterly reports on Afghanistan to Parliament, the minister insisted that military operations in the country represented “the top foreign policy priority”.

Mr Hague began his report by praising the work being done by British Forces, who he described as “the finest any nation could hope to have”, and paid tribute to the families of the 341 fallen personnel.

During his statement to the House, Mr Hague asserted that the security of Afghanistan was vital to both preventing al-Qaeda from returning and to Britain’s own national security, and that progress – specifically in Helmand and Kandahar provinces – was being made.

“International forces now number 130,000 while the Afghan National Security Forces will reach 260,000 by

the end of the year, exceeding their target size for 2010,” he said.

“Afghan and Isaf [International Security Assistance Force] forces have checked the momentum of the insurgency and the area under the control of the Government of Afghanistan is increasing.”

However, the minister was clear that the current situation in the region remained dangerous, adding: “We must expect levels of violence to remain high, and even increase, as Afghan and Isaf forces tackle the insurgency.”

The Foreign Secretary predicted that Nato would agree to the process of transferring lead responsibility for security across Afghanistan to Afghan forces by the end of 2014 during a summit held as this issue went to press, and that this phased process would lead to British troops being drawn down from combat operations by 2015.

The next report will be delivered by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox in the New Year.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

MOD'S MISSION MISSIVE

■ A BUSINESS plan has been published by the MoD as part of Government efforts to create a new transparency framework across all departments.

The document sets out the main priorities until 2015 and builds on the outcomes of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Included among the six main objectives of the plan is a commitment to succeed in Afghanistan and in any other future operations; a focus on delivering defence in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way; and a pledge to continue to fulfil all standing commitments.

These priorities will be taken forward and used in all the MoD's strategic documents such as the Strategy for Defence and the Defence Plan.

The transparency framework replaces the previous administration's use of Public Service Agreements and is aimed at helping citizens hold politicians and public bodies to account while delivering better value for money.

SIBLINGS' SUPPORT SCHEME

■ BROTHERS Anthony and Timothy Johnson have joined forces with mental health charity Combat Stress to help raise awareness of the psychological cost of conflict.

The fund-raising duo decided to launch the Yellow Ribbon Campaign after research revealed that 7,200 soldiers have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering from severe post traumatic stress disorder.

The initiative hopes to highlight the problems Servicemen and women face via "Support our Soldiers" yellow ribbons that magnetically attach to the back of a vehicle.

Scheme supporter Mark Starling, a Royal Marines Commando, said: "Any soldier that has fought in Afghanistan will be changed in some way. Some need support to get over what they have seen and gone through."

"To return home and see that show of support, to see that people put the yellow ribbons on their cars, it's amazing."

The magnetic ribbons are available for £2.99 at www.showyoursupport.co.uk



DISTINGUISHED DISTRIBUTION

■ THE AGENCY in charge of returning British military equipment from Iraq has been honoured by the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) at its annual prize ceremony.

The Defence Storage and Distribution Agency beat off strong competition to take the much-coveted award for Development of People.

A CILT spokesman said: "Operation Anvil was set up and spurred on by the need to address one of the biggest logistical challenges of recent times, the returning of British military equipment from Iraq."

"To date 170 personnel have been trained and their effective deployment has saved the Armed Forces an estimated £12.7 million."



Pictures: Sgt Rupert Freer, RLC

Armoured assistance: A British Trojan cuts through the dirt in support of American and Afghan forces

Trojan effort to oust enemy

TROOPS from the Royal Engineers have taken their awesome capabilities to the front line as part of an ambitious operation to drive the Taliban out of Kandahar province.

Personnel from 5 Armoured Engineer Squadron, part of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), offered close support to their American and Afghan colleagues during a two-month mission in the Zharay district.

Op Hamkari, a campaign dubbed as "The Battle of Kandahar" by soldiers on the ground, was launched to defeat insurgent elements and increase Afghan governance across the area while enabling development west of Kandahar City.

The sappers provided assistance in the form of two Trojan armoured vehicles that were able to clear safe lanes through high-threat improvised explosive device [IED] areas.

They were joined by elements from the Royal Logistic Corps, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Royal Army Medical Corps, who provided Husky; an armoured recovery and repair capability; enhanced platform systems; and fuel tankers.

The British contingent also had US counter-IED, explosive ordnance disposal and route construction teams under its command.

As part of its work the unit provided supplies to American troops caught in prolonged contacts, assisted in the

detention of two suspected insurgents, established communications lines to infantry units and helped in the evacuation of a casualty.

Speaking at the end of the tasking Maj David Bickers, officer commanding 5 Armd Engr Sqn, said: "Even though an airborne battalion, the Americans we have worked alongside have grown to appreciate the benefits of armour, and armoured engineers in particular."

"The Trojan vehicles are the talk of the battalion, the US [troops] appreciate their ability to rapidly create new and safe routes and have designed their concepts of operations around the effects we can offer. To a man, the US are hugely committed in what they are doing in Zharay and it has been an honour to fight alongside them."

"We have considered it a privilege to be involved in Op Hamkari. It is an ambitious and potentially-decisive operation, which strikes at the heart of Taliban support."

"We have no doubt the US and their Afghan National Army partners will succeed in their operations here."

"Wherever we have been, Afghans have been relieved to have the Taliban pushed out from their villages. I think every man in 5 Squadron will look back on the last two months as one of the most formative experiences of their military careers."

● Route clear – Pages 41-43

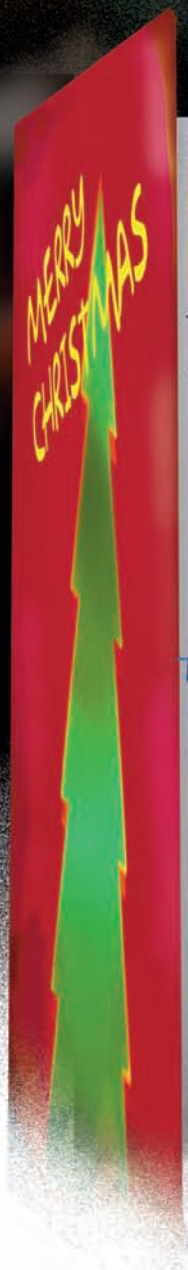


■ British sappers worked alongside allies from the US Army's 2nd Battalion, 502nd Regiment



■ Spr Jamie Wornham (RE) operates the crane on a Trojan during Op Hamkari in Zharay district

Happy New Year?



Merry Christmas

In the very first week
after last Christmas Leave
28 Soldiers tested positive.

They **ALL** lost their careers.

It just not worth it.

Best wishes.

CDT



CDT Positive

- A moment of madness, a lifetime of regret



“WE UNDERSTAND THE THREAT AND WHAT THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS ARE ON THE BODY”

– HOW SCIENCE IS SAVING LIVES, PAGES 33-35

NEWS IN BRIEF

ROYAL RECOGNITION

■ HER Majesty The Queen has bestowed a Royal title on the Army Physical Training Corps in recognition of its loyal service to the Crown.

The honour was announced during last month's Festival of Remembrance and coincides with the 150th anniversary of the Service's fitness experts. The title of the Royal Army Physical Training Corps took effect on November 13.

CLOSE TO CAPACITY

■ THE latest MoD Manning figures have revealed the Armed Forces are currently at 99.7 per cent of their full-time trained strength requirement. This represents a continued upward trend, with the last study, which was carried out a year ago, reporting the military as being at 97.9 per cent of capacity.

Statistics show that 15,570 new recruits have joined the UK Regular Forces in the past year, a decrease of 8,660 from the previous 12 months. However, with the Armed Forces now nearly fully manned the intake requirement has been reduced.

The number of people leaving Service life has fallen by seven per cent compared to the same period a year ago.

CHANGE IN POLICY

■ PAX insurance prices are set to rise by one per cent from January 4, matching the increase in Insurance Premium Tax announced as part of this summer's Budget.

Existing policy holders will automatically continue on the PAX scheme with the number of units currently held, but with revised personal accident premiums. Personnel only need to take action if they wish to cancel or change their cover.

VISA VERIFICATION

■ THE UK Border Agency has made revisions to the immigration rules that apply to the families of serving foreign and Commonwealth personnel.

Under the new arrangements dependant children can enter or remain in the UK for schooling purposes as long as they have a valid visa or are settled in the UK.

Spouses, partners or children can now apply for a visa to enter the UK as a relative of a serving soldier while living with them on an overseas assignment, and those with a visa can now enter and leave the country without needing to be accompanied by their partner.

Further information is available via email from LF-DPSA-PS4A-D2@mod.uk



Picture: Sgt Mark Nesbitt, RLC

Unleashed: Helmand-bound Husky crews will be drilled in handling and husbandry skills at Sennelager

Herrick training steps up a gear

VEHICLE crews are being taught essential drills in how to operate in the heart of Helmand province courtesy of a new purpose-built training centre in Germany.

Based in Sennelager, the site includes an extensive cross-country range with deep water crossings, ditches, dirt tracks and slopes that have been specifically designed to replicate conditions in southern Afghanistan.

The Crew Training School (CTS) is the only facility in the British Army that allows an entire team to use their skills in conjunction with one another to operate, maintain and conduct live cover fire from the vehicles which they will use in theatre. When personnel complete their courses they will be able to start their mission-specific training as fully-qualified vehicle crews.

Capt James Fyvie (Scots DG), second in command at the CTS, said: "This school will be the first opportunity these people will have to work together as a crew.

"The vehicle commander, gunner and driver will be taught to hone their respective skills and then use their vehicle just as they will be expected to in Afghanistan. It provides an opportunity to develop tactics, manoeuvres and a chance to actually fire weapons from a vehicle moving

across difficult terrain.

"The training is comprehensive and develops confidence in the equipment but more importantly the team.

"This is the best facility available to us outside of Afghanistan and with many of the soldiers due to deploy based in Germany it's good to have it here. It means that the majority of soldiers [deploying on Herrick 14] will be able to train without the need to spend a long period of time away from their families and it reduces the cost of travelling without making any compromises on quality."

Troops from 3 Commando Brigade and Germany-based 7th Armoured Brigade were the first to test the new site, with personnel from 20th Armoured and 19 Light Brigades due to start courses in the New Year.

In 2011 the CTS will train up to 4,000 soldiers on vehicles including Jackal, Springer, Mastiff, Ridgback, Vixen, Husky and quad bikes.

More than 100 driving, maintenance and tactical vehicle commander instructors are based at the centre and provide five-day training packages.

Capt Fyvie added: "All troops going through the school are expected to apply the same levels of expertise and maintenance skills which will be required in theatre."

Troops on operations to be handed new kit

GLOVES worn by troops in Helmand province are to be produced in a new camouflage pattern to reflect the versatile uniform of the Armed Forces.

The leather gloves, which are issued to all personnel on operations, are designed to give protection to soldiers when they touch kit that has been exposed to the searing Afghan heat. Currently printed in two styles that reflect the country's desert and woodland climate, the gloves will now be available in the new multi-terrain pattern camouflage.

Col Stephen James, team leader for clothing at Defence Equipment and Support, said: "Not only do these gloves offer protection against hot materials, particularly metal, but they are also light and flexible and will sit much like a second skin allowing our troops to use their weapons comfortably and effectively in the harsh conditions of Afghanistan."



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NEWS IN BRIEF

RATIONS REVISED

■ REFRESHED 24-hour ration packs will be heading to the front line as part of a new food contract that is expected to deliver annual savings of £1.6 million for the MoD.

Hampshire-based Purple Food Services will be providing the revamped scoff and troops can look forward to a range of fresh menus as well as the launch of a Kosher option.

A new lightweight alternative, tipping the scales at less than one kilogram and designed for soldiers sent on patrols lasting up to 12 hours, is being planned and will include snack items such as beef jerky and long-life sandwiches.

An overhaul of the ten-man ration packs used by military chefs to feed personnel in remote bases is also on the cards.

Capt Jeremy Rigby (RN), head of Defence Food Services, said: “We are constantly receiving and responding to feedback from our boys and girls in Afghanistan, which makes sure we keep up with taste trends and how they break the packs down and carry them.

“This new agreement will provide a great degree of flexibility in the supply chain and enable the MoD to produce innovative new rations in short timescales, allowing us to adapt quickly to operational requirements and customer feedback while not compromising on the nutritional content.”

The contract, worth an estimated £140 million, was signed by Defence Equipment and Support ahead of schedule and under budget and will run for an initial three years.

RATIONALISATION RETHINK

■ AN AMBITIOUS Government plan to combine the technical and engineering training for the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force on a single site has been scrapped.

The Defence Training Rationalisation (DTR) project, designed to provide improved, more efficient specialist training at a high-tech site at MoD St Athan in South Wales, began in 2005.

Announcing the termination of the scheme, Secretary of State for Defence Dr Liam Fox said: “The Metrix consortium was appointed as preferred bidder in January 2007 subject to it developing an affordable and value for money contract proposal.

“Given the significance of this programme and the opportunity to provide a world-class training facility, the MoD has worked tirelessly to deliver this project. However, it is now clear that Metrix can not deliver an affordable, commercially-robust proposal within the prescribed period and it has therefore been necessary to terminate the DTR procurement.”

The MoD has stated that it intends to retain the concept of DTR but plans to examine a range of alternative proposals, which will consider how training could be delivered from a Defence Technical College.

On the future of the site, Dr Fox added: “St Athan was previously chosen as the best location on which to collocate that training for good reasons, and we still hope to base our future defence training solution there.”

Pictures: Capt Jeffrey Herbert, R Irish



Top hat: Rgr Alan Hawthorne (left) and Rgr Silbert Wilson show off the helmets which saved their lives

Defender's Helmand hat-trick

THE Army's new state-of-the-art combat helmet has been proving its worth in Afghanistan by saving the lives of three soldiers just weeks into their tour.

With enemy fire directed at their heads, Rgr Silbert Wilson (20), Cpl Tommy Creighton (25) and Rgr Alan Hawthorne (23), all of 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, walked away unscathed thanks to the superb protection offered by the recently-introduced Mark 7 variant.

The three separate incidents followed another escape by their colleague Rgr Ryan Boyd (Page 9), who was left with just a bruise after an insurgent round fired directly at him was stopped by his Osprey body armour.

Rgr Wilson was the first to test the helmet's strength during a morning patrol in Nad-e Ali district.

He was confronted by machine-gun rounds from four different enemy firing points and had to seek refuge in an irrigation ditch.

“I was moving to get into better cover when suddenly it felt like someone punched me on the side of my head,” Rgr Wilson recalled.

“I was pushed off my feet and ended up submerged in the water. There was no time to think. I got up and fired my weapon back at the enemy firing points.

“Once the magazine was empty I started to check myself. I was still confused and a bit dazed. My head was ringing but I was okay.”

Cpl Creighton was also on patrol when his Mark 7 was called into action.

After hearing a round being fired he saw movement from a compound wall and identified an insurgent with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher through the sight of his weapon.

The attacker panicked and fired the missile, which was followed by incoming bullets from all directions.

After taking cover Cpl Creighton

started to identify enemy positions when he was struck on the helmet.

“I saw the strike of a round hit the ground in front of me. I could actually see the strike and the dirt lifting,” he explained. “My reaction was to lower my head, tilting it slightly forward and then I felt the thud against my helmet as the round struck me.

“The bullet had hit me right on my shamrock regimental badge, which I guess is kind of symbolic. But at the end of the day it's a great bit of kit and that's what it's designed to do.”

Rgr Hawthorne experienced the benefit of the new and improved helmet when he felt a “big thud” on his head during a contact with insurgent forces.

“When things quietened down, my section commander Cpl Kyle Scott tapped me on the shoulder and was pointing to my head,” he said.

“That's when I realised what had happened. I'd been so involved in the shooting that I had thought nothing more about the thud.

“I took my helmet off. Lots of the boys gathered round and they were all pointing at the big gash the bullet had made in the side of my helmet.

“I have to say, I feel like a lucky boy, but it just shows the quality of the kit we have.”

● Porton protection – Pages 33-35



“Great bit of kit”: Cpl Tommy Creighton (R Irish) praised the Mark 7 helmet after escaping unhurt



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IN MEMORIAM



SPR WILLIAM BLANCHARD (39)
101 ENGINEER REGIMENT
(EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL)
KIA OCTOBER 30 – AFGHANISTAN

A RESERVIST working as part of a bomb-disposal team and described as a “perfectionist” with “endless patience” died after being shot while trying to destroy a suspect device.

Spr William Blanchard, of 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment, was conducting a clearance operation with the Counter-IED Task Force in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province when his team came under small arms fire and he was killed by a gunshot wound.

The 39-year-old from Gosport in Hampshire leaves behind a large family including his wife Suzanne, children Tom and Lucy Rees-Blanchard and six brothers.

In a statement, his wife said: “Will was a wonderful husband, son, brother, father, brother-

in-law, son-in-law and friend. So sorely missed; always in our hearts, never forgotten.”

Having volunteered for mobilisation, the TA soldier aspired to attempt officer selection on completion of his tour and was already showing many of the hallmarks of a great leader.

Lt Col Mark Davis, the commanding officer of the Counter-IED Task Force, said: “Spr Blanchard was a father figure to the younger elements of the squadron. He was the consummate professional and was both impeccable and irreplaceable; people like Spr Blanchard only come along once in a blue moon.”

Lt Col Mark Budden, CO of 101 Engineer Regiment, said: “The loss of Spr William Blanchard has shaken the regiment deeply.”



SAC SCOTT HUGHES (20)
NUMBER ONE SQUADRON,
ROYAL AIR FORCE REGIMENT
DIED NOVEMBER 7 – CYPRUS

A SENIOR Aircraftman who showed fierce dedication and determination while deployed in Afghanistan died from injuries he sustained in an accident as he undertook decompression activities on his return from theatre.

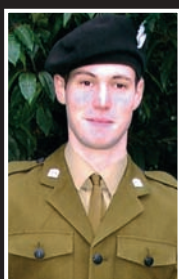
SAC Scott Hughes, of Number One Squadron, Royal Air Force Regiment, was swimming in the sea when a powerboat being operated by the Military Training Wing at British Forces Cyprus struck him. An investigation into the incident is now taking place.

The 20-year-old, who died the day before he was due to return to the UK, had been relaxing with friends and colleagues in Cyprus at the end of what proved to be an arduous and demanding six-month tour. While in theatre SAC Hughes

provided top cover on a lead patrol vehicle and was also a signaller on the medical emergency response team helicopter – taking part in numerous casualty evacuation tasks.

Fg Off Christopher Taylor, OC C Flight, One Squadron, said: “During his tour in Afghanistan, his skill and dedication helped to protect the lives of countless coalition personnel and Afghan civilians. It is a great tragedy that, having safely completed this tour, he should be killed in an environment designed to help him recover from the pressures of operations.

“My lasting memory of Scott will be that he was the most professional of gunners, who would never complain and always wanted to be at the front looking after his mates.”



RGR AARON MCCORMICK (22)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT
KIA NOVEMBER 14 – AFGHANISTAN

A DEDICATED soldier whose professionalism, selflessness and enthusiasm were well known across his battalion was killed in an explosion while on patrol in Helmand province.

Rgr Aaron McCormick was conducting an operation to help clear an area in Nad-e Ali of IEDs when a device detonated.

The 22-year-old, of 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, was on his second Herrick tour and had been quickly identified as a quality soldier and volunteered to take responsibility as the lead Vallon man.

Lt Col Colin Weir, commanding officer of 1 R Irish, said: “Rgr Aaron McCormick was the epitome of the Irish infantry soldier: tough; selfless; good-humoured and full of compassion.

In many of his battles he was unfailingly brave, and perhaps more tellingly, he was brave even when the adrenalin was not flowing.

“In full knowledge of the danger, he was determined that he would be the front man in every patrol, and the first man out of the gate of the checkpoint.”

Friend and colleague Rgr Ian McKernan added: “His first thought was always about the remainder of the troops and if they were happy he was happy and this made him a model rangers’ ranger.”

Rgr McCormick, who came from Coleraine in Northern Ireland, leaves behind mother Margaret, father Lesley, sisters Callie-Ann and Tammy, brother Michael and his girlfriend Becky.



GDSM CHRISTOPHER DAVIES (22)
1ST BATTALION,
IRISH GUARDS
KIA NOVEMBER 17 – AFGHANISTAN

A SUPREMELY-talented soldier who was a courteous, genuine and caring friend to all was killed by small arms fire while on patrol in Helmand province.

Gdsm Christopher Davies, of 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, was involved in a partnered operation with the Afghan National Army when he was attacked in the Nahr-e Saraj district.

The 22-year-old was born and raised in St Helens and joined his unit in January 2009, fulfilling a childhood ambition to serve in the Army. His brother, Gdsm John Davies (21), is part of the same battalion.

Lt Col Christopher Ghika, CO of 1 IG, said: “In a short space of time he forged a legendary reputation. Quiet and unassuming by nature,

he had a deep military talent which shone out from his first day in the battalion. He took time and care to be the perfect soldier: he was always punctual, well prepared, smart and thoughtful.”

Colleague Gdsm James Atkinson added: “He was a strong lad, mentally and physically, nothing could beat him, he would come back fighting stronger than ever.”

Gdsm Davies was a loving son to Catherine and Gary; stepson to Nick; brother to Bernie, Matt and John; stepbrother to Mark, Emma and Jack; boyfriend to Emma and father to Lucy. A family statement read: “We are very proud of Christopher and all that he achieved. He was very focused on his job and enjoyed the work, his comrades and the lifestyle.”



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Picture: Sgt Rupert Fere, RLC

Policing the province: An air-insertion operation mounted by British soldiers and led by Afghan police has helped to re-establish government control in an area of Helmand province previously under heavy Taliban influence. Op Zamyar Kargha – Lion Falcon – saw soldiers from D Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and officers from the Afghan National Police provide a show of force in Hoorzai and forge relations with the area's population.

Strengthening security forces a sign of success

THE restructuring of international troops in theatre and the growing confidence of Afghan National Security Forces have weakened the insurgency in Helmand province, according to a senior British officer.

Speaking shortly after returning to the UK following a 12-month tour as the regional commander of coalition assets in the south of the country, Maj Gen Nick Carter said that Taliban activity was being restricted by a greater understanding of the enemy and Afghan forces who were “better partnered and enabled” as a result of a reconfiguration of British and US personnel.

“There is a lot less space for the insurgents to have freedom of movement in,” he explained. “All of the green zones around Kandahar now have a coalition and Afghan Security Force presence in them. The same applies to central Helmand.”

Maj Gen Carter, who was responsible for International Security Assistance Force operations in Kandahar, Daykundi, Uruzgan and Zabul, pointed to an increase of four Afghan National Army brigades and a 30 per cent rise in police numbers in his area during the past year as a sign of success.



Picture: Lt Nick Southall, RN

“[The Afghan people] are beginning to become more confident in their own security forces,” he added. “The fact that 80 per cent of the IEDs found in and around Kandahar City over the past few months have been handed in to the Afghan National Police is indicative of greater trust, it is also indicative perhaps of the views of the population generally in supporting the government.”

However, despite these “green shoots”

of progress and a decrease in violence in recent months, Maj Gen Carter said it was too early to say for certain how much improvement had been made during his tenure.

Describing the insurgency as “resilient”, he cautioned that the fall in fighting could be a consequence of the onset of winter. “Until June or July next year we won’t be entirely confident things are better, because you have to compare and contrast with June or July of this year to show that those things are really happening,” he said.

Maj Gen Carter, pictured above left, added that he had been “hugely privileged” to serve as a coalition commander and paid tribute to the 302 personnel killed and thousands injured during his tour.

“We should remember the human cost in all of this,” he concluded.

“We should remember the blood and treasure that’s been invested.”

2 THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL TRAINING AWARDS WON BY THE ARMY. THE SERVICE WAS CROWNED IN THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL STAGES OF THE COMPETITION FOR MAXIMISING SOLDIERS’ POTENTIAL THROUGH APPRENTICESHIPS



“EMAG IS MORE THAN 40 PER CENT LIGHTER
THAN THE IN-SERVICE STEEL MAGAZINE”

– EASING THE LOAD, PAGE 37

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHRISTMAS CHEERS

■ VIDEO-hosting website WinkBall is doing its bit to support troops who are away from their families and friends over the festive period by collecting Christmas messages from celebrities and members of the public and displaying them on an online wall.



Faces for the Forces is an annual campaign to generate seasonal support for the Services and will see teams of citizen reporters across the country aiming to gather one million videos of goodwill.

Dame Vera Lynn, Jools

Holland and Pixie Lott (pictured) are among the well-known names that have already recorded messages (Page 59).

To view or add a video to the digital wall visit www.facesfortheforces.com

REGIMENT RETURN TO RATS

■ THE 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers has rejoined the “Desert Rats” after a ten-year break.

Leaving behind their former home and public duties in Hounslow, the fusiliers have moved to Celle in Germany to become part of 7th Armoured Brigade and have taken over responsibility of the Small Scale Contingency Battlegroup.

In preparation for their new role, the unit deployed on Exercise Druid’s Dance on Salisbury Plain for hybrid formation training.

Lt Col Charles Calder, CO of 2 RRF, was pleased with the performance of the personnel under his leadership.

“Given the shortage of time for preparation, 2 RRF have had an enjoyable and demanding exercise and are very pleased to have reached the training standard required to take on the full role of the Army’s most capable contingent force,” he said. “We are very proud to be back in the Desert Rats after a ten-year absence.”



Shared heartache: Helmand Governor Gulabuddin Mangal visited the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire where he laid a wreath in remembrance of those commemorated and met Lucy Aldridge, the mother of Rfn William Aldridge (2 Rifles) – the youngest British soldier to die in Afghanistan

‘Lives lost are not for nothing’

THE Governor of Helmand province has insisted that the sacrifices made by UK personnel in Afghanistan have not been in vain.

Gulabuddin Mangal, who took charge of the war-ravaged region two-and-a-half years ago, explained that there had been notable improvements in security, education and agriculture as a result of British engagement.

“The sacrifices of the international community are not for nothing,” he said. “We have achieved a lot and I share the pain of families who have heard that their loved ones have been killed in Afghanistan.”

“As a father I realise how difficult it must be for a family, a mother or father to hear that their son or daughter has been killed.”

Describing the successes of the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf), Mr Mangal said the Taliban’s grip was being weakened and freedom was being increased.

“The insurgents are not able to

have ten to 15 people in their groups, which means they are broken into and defeated,” he said.

“The reason behind this is the efficient operations conducted by Isaf and the Afghan Security Forces.”

The governor was also positive about the increase of security and democracy in his province, which he attributed to coalition troops working alongside Afghan civilians.

“We have got local government and it is there to provide public services that the public should have,” he said. “In the areas that are controlled by us we have law and order. Narcotics was a problem but now we have managed to reduce the cultivation of drugs by almost half.”

The Afghan official, on a week-long visit to the UK, was also clear that Op Herrick was of benefit to Britain as well as his own country.

“Security in Afghanistan means security in the West and in the UK,” he concluded. “We have got a shared common enemy.”

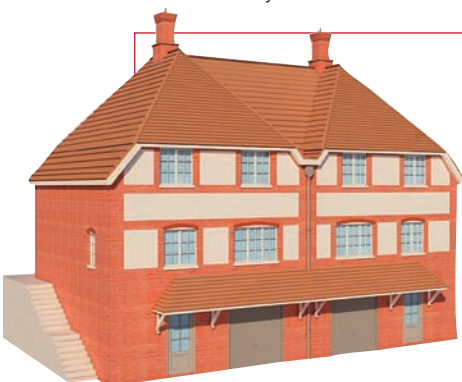
■ TWO hundred and sixty new family homes are to be built in Bulford, Wiltshire, for soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

The construction of the houses – part of the Canadian Estate project – will cost £46 million and is due to be completed by the end of 2012, with the first 60 properties scheduled to be ready for occupation in August 2011.

The homes will be built by Bovis Lend Lease and project-managed by Defence Estates, and will surround a boulevard and village green, with speed-controlled roads and safe play areas.

Responding to the announcement of the building project, Andrew Robathan, Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, said: “We owe our Service personnel and their families the best possible support, and that includes providing them with good quality accommodation. Having seen the old accommodation at this site – which is virtually uninhabitable – I was determined to push this project through despite the current financial pressures.”

The Vikings are currently based at Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Pirbright, Surrey, but will move to a new £110 million purpose-built base at Bulford next year.



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COMPETITIONS

SERVICE SCRIBES

■ A PUBLISHING house has launched a creative writing competition to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help.

Kingston University Press is inviting anyone over the age of 18 who has been involved with the military in any way, whether as a participant, a family member or as an observer, to enter the contest, entitled *Forces Stories and Poems: Lives touched by service*.

The judges will be looking for work that catches their attention, engages the reader's imagination and entertains.

The closing date for entries is December 17 and full details can be found at <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/kup/competition>

SPINE-TINGLING FLAVOURS

■ RALEIGH Addington's brief foray into Lord Alan Sugar's boardroom inspired last month's spine line competition.

While Raleigh walked away from the current season of *The Apprentice* after learning that his brother Ed, a captain with 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, had been seriously injured in an explosion in Afghanistan, each of the names printed on the side of November's cover – Campbell, Dewberry, Ambrose, McQueen, Siadatan – are past winners of the BBC's hit show.



We have again teamed up with Jelly Belly, www.jellybelly-uk.com, to offer up one of the company's selection boxes of gourmet jelly beans.

To enter, tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue.

Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by December 31.

SHARE IN SOLDIER'S SPOILS

■ DON'T forget to check out our Facebook page – www.tinyurl/soldiermag – this month. Op Reindeer's Hoof 2 kicks off on December 1 and runs through to Christmas Eve (Pages 60-61).



Picture: Paul Rider

Pensioners join the pop parade

A SEVEN-man band of Chelsea Pensioners have set their sights on a Christmas number one after becoming the oldest group to infiltrate the album chart's top 20.

The singers' debut record *Men In Scarlet* reached number 15 on the week of its release and the Service veterans, who have a combined age of 546, will now go head-to-head with the *X Factor* winner in their quest for festive honours.

White Christmas will hit stores on the same day as the Simon Cowell-inspired single and the group is hoping they can generate enough support to drive them to the top spot. The battle for Christmas number one will also see the Chelsea residents take on serving officer Xander Rawlins (Pages 88-89).

"Our fate is in the hands of the British public, we just hope they can get to hear it for themselves and make their minds up," they said.

The pensioners – David Poultney, John Shuter, Denis Shiels, Paddy Fox, Malcolm Smart, Michael Allen and Thomas Fox – were brought together by a love of singing and proceeds from the record will go towards the cost of refurbishing the old dormitories at The Royal Hospital.

Men in Scarlet includes classic songs such as *Danny Boy* and *Jerusalem* and features guest collaborators Dame Vera Lynn, Forces' sweetheart Katherine Jenkins and The Soldiers.

● Bluntly speaking – Pages 54-55

Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC



■ BROTHERS SSgt Ray Neenan (29) and Cpl Darren Neenan (21) have been reunited in Helmand province as part of the service crew for the Apache gunships of 654 Squadron, Army Air Corps.

Older sibling Ray (right) joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1998 as an apprentice aircraft technician and Darren (left) embarked on a similar career eight years later.

Despite being employed in the same trade their paths had not crossed professionally until their recent deployment to Afghanistan.

Ray is an aircraft artificer in 654 Squadron's close support section while Darren is part of 7 Air Assault Battalion REME, who have sent extra technicians to bolster numbers at Camp Bastion.

"I've been keeping an eye out for him and we're getting to know each other a lot better," explained the elder Neenan brother. "But bossing my brother around is no different to the rest of the lads. At the end of the day he is another guy on the shop floor."

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SEE THE DIFFERENCE

THE BIGGER PICTURE

SERVICES of Remembrance were held across the UK last month to honour those who lost their lives in wars and conflicts over the past century. The poignancy of the occasion was observed in Afghanistan, where Prince William joined an emotional ceremony at Camp Bastion. In Wootton Bassett, Prince Harry marked the official opening of the Field of Remembrance at Lydiard Park's walled garden. The site, pictured, pays tribute to the brave Servicemen and women who have fallen while on operations in Afghanistan. Picture: Steve Dock





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WEB WARFARE

● THE IBM SERVERS (PICTURED ABOVE) ON THE FAREHAM CYBER RANGE WIELD THE POWER OF 400 DESKTOP PCs

● THE FACILITY USES 60KW OF ELECTRICITY HOSTING CYBER EXPERIMENTS, WHICH CAN LAST ANYWHERE BETWEEN ONE DAY AND THREE MONTHS (THE COMPUTER NETWORK OF A LARGE BANK COULD BE TESTED IN AROUND TWO WEEKS)

● THE SERVERS HAVE 15 TERABYTES OF STORAGE, ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THE INFORMATION STORED ON 3,200 DVDs

cyber tactics

...could provide the battle-winning
edge in future conflicts

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

COMPUTERISED technology is playing an increasingly dominant role on the battlefield with tanks and heavy artillery set to take a back seat in future warfare.

Soldiers could be required to defeat the enemy by jamming communications and sending navigation systems off-course, as opposed to using more traditional methods such as pointing weapons at their foes and firing.

The ability to fend off and launch such cyber assaults is deemed a key requirement of tomorrow's Armed Forces, according to the recent Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), which suggests attacks on computers are now among the greatest threats to national interests.

Speaking in the wake of the SDSR's publication, the head of the Army, Gen Sir Peter Wall, noted that while Afghanistan would remain the military's top priority until 2015, there would be some "significant changes to our equipment" between now and then.

A point underlined by the Minister for International Security Strategy, Gerald Howarth, when he told *Soldier* that digital technology was "absolutely essential for Defence" as he officially opened the UK's first cyber range designed to test computer systems and the mechanisms in place to protect them from attack.

"The military is dependent on cyber technology," he said. "Obviously ISTAR [Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance] is a major user, but so are other battlefield systems. This really does go to the heart of modern warfare.

"It's not a matter of if, but when our country gets cyber attacked. It's happening now, from low-level hacking to state-sponsored espionage.

"In Afghanistan their [the Taliban's] attitudes may be 15th Century but they are harnessing the technology of today."

The technological ability to defend computerised weapon systems from hackers has the potential to win battles, according to Robert Brammer, vice president and chief technology officer for Northrop Grumman, the company which designed and built the new cyber facility near Fareham in Hampshire.

"There's really nothing that we are going to war with these days that doesn't have computers in it," he said.

"Weapon systems today are highly computerised and very information intensive. Those computers are vulnerable to cyber attacks, penetrations and manipulations; you need to make

sure they will stand up.

"We could make the cyber range look like the computer systems on-board an aircraft or advanced ground vehicle. It's very early stages, but a couple of ranges built in the US have already been used for testing Defence projects."

The Northrop Grumman set-up consists of a room full of computer servers, separated from the conventional internet by an "air gap", which means even the most dangerous viruses can be released within it without causing damage to real-life "live" systems.

Describing the range as "the internet in a bottle", John Marriott, a programme manager for Northrop Grumman, said entire networks could be replicated allowing for tests to be carried out on anything from online banking software to

modern military equipment.

"It's like a video cassette recorder, recording results which can be replayed later," he explained. "There is a space at one end for customers to bring in their own equipment, such as laptops, and plug them in."

Attacks can then be launched on a copy of the client's computer network, testing the defences they have in place.

**'It's not a
matter of if,
but when
our country
gets cyber
attacked'**

Digital deployment:
Soldiers on ops are increasingly reliant on computerised vehicles and kit

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frier, RLC

At the time of writing the Fareham cyber range is unclassified and therefore unable to cater for military customers such as the British Army or MoD. However, as the facility expands and develops, there are plans to upgrade it to a higher level of security.

"With the same configurations and equipment in place, we could then use other parts of the range to launch cyber attacks and intrusion attempts to see how the defence mechanisms of a military organisation would stand up," explained Brammer.

Potential threats to a Service network could come from foreign intelligence agencies or Taliban hackers and the potential consequences of sensitive information falling into the wrong hands are cause for serious concern.

"Communications could be suppressed and equipment may not work," Brammer added.

"Navigation systems may not be accurate, radar equipment might miss targets.

"Then there's espionage – the enemy might get technical details of your weapon systems and battle plans, that information could be stolen from a network.

"Prior to the physical strike on Georgia by Russia a few years ago, there were cyber attacks which slowed down or blocked entirely communications and the ability of the government to get information out to tell people what was going on."

This sort of "info incursion" could interrupt vital planning and limit the ability of organisations such as the Army to respond to, or even be aware of, events.

But just how easy is it to succumb to a cyber sortie? Picking up a digital disease could be as simple as clicking the "yes" button to download a free online game or plugging an infected memory stick into a PC.

It has been suggested that the Stuxnet computer worm, which is thought to have affected systems at an Iranian nuclear power plant earlier this year, may have been introduced through a USB port.

The virus has been described as the first "cyber weapon" capable of spying on and reprogramming major industrial networks and infrastructures and its origin is the subject of ongoing speculation.

Although the full extent of the damage caused by the Stuxnet worm is not yet apparent, it's already clear that the race is on to keep up with enemy use of computer technology.

The UK National Security Strategy, published alongside the SDSR, pledged to "transform our cyber capabilities within Defence by establishing a UK Defence Cyber Operations Group" (**Forces' firewall – Page 29**).

With this evolution in mind, facilities such as the range in Fareham will undoubtedly have a future role to play in preparing our Armed Forces for the battlefields of tomorrow. ■



NET SAVVY

CYBER SECURITY – MEASURES TAKEN TO PROTECT A COMPUTER SYSTEM AGAINST UNAUTHORISED ACCESS OR ATTACK

WORM – A MALICIOUS PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO INFECT A NETWORK, WITH AN IN-BUILT METHOD OF REPLICATING

TROJAN – ROGUE SOFTWARE THAT APPEARS TO PERFORM A DESIRABLE FUNCTION (SUCH AS A GAME) BUT OPENS UP A BACKDOOR OR POP-UP ADVERT

VIRUS – COMPUTER CODE DESIGNED TO CONTAMINATE A SYSTEM WHICH NEEDS AN EXTERNAL VEHICLE, SUCH AS AN EMAIL OR DOWNLOAD, TO SPREAD

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Forces' firewall

Soldier interrogates the data behind the decision to byte back at the digital menace

Q. WHY IS THE MOD SO WORRIED ABOUT CYBER SECURITY?

A. THE ARMED FORCES DEPEND ON COMPUTER NETWORKS TO CARRY OUT THE FULL RANGE OF MILITARY TASKS. THE ENEMY THREAT IS CHANGING, SO STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO UPGRADE CYBER SECURITY



Q. IS THIS THE START OF E-WARFARE BY THE MOD?

A. ACTION IS BEING TAKEN TO DEFEND OUR NETWORKS AGAINST INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED ATTACKS, ENSURING WE HAVE THE NECESSARY CAPABILITIES TO PROTECT OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS

Q. WHO WILL MAN THE PROPOSED DEFENCE CYBER OPERATIONS GROUP?

A. EXPERTS FROM ACROSS THE ARMED FORCES AND THE DEFENCE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY



Q. HOW MANY PERSONNEL WILL BE DEDICATED TO CYBER SECURITY IN THE MOD?

A. EXACT NUMBERS ARE YET TO BE CONFIRMED BUT ARE LIKELY TO BE IN THE HUNDREDS. PRECISE DETAILS WILL BE CLASSIFIED

“The Defence Cyber Operations Group will bring online security into mainstream UK Defence”

Q. WILL THE MOD CONDUCT CYBER ATTACKS?

A. THE CAPABILITY IS STILL AT AN EARLY STAGE IN DEVELOPMENT BUT WHERE NECESSARY NATIONAL INTERESTS WILL BE DEFENDED. THE USE OF CYBER ASSETS WILL BE DEVELOPED, TESTED AND VALIDATED AS A POTENTIALLY MORE EFFECTIVE AND AFFORDABLE WAY TO COMPLEMENT AND DELIVER TASKS

Q. IS THE DEFENCE CYBER OPERATIONS GROUP JUST A CLONE OF US CYBER COMMAND?

A. IT REFLECTS UK NEEDS AND WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH US CYBER COMMAND AND OTHER ALLIES, BUT IT IS NOT AN EXACT ORGANISATIONAL PARALLEL



Q. HAS THE MOD COME UNDER CYBER ATTACK?


A. MOD NETWORKS AND SYSTEMS ARE PROBED ON A REGULAR BASIS. AS THE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS HEADQUARTERS (GCHQ) RECENTLY COMMENTED: “THERE ARE OVER 20,000 MALICIOUS EMAILS ON GOVERNMENT NETWORKS EACH MONTH, 1,000 OF WHICH ARE DELIBERATELY TARGETING THEM”

Q. WILL THE MOD WORK WITH GCHQ?

A. GCHQ AND MOD ALREADY WORK TOGETHER AS PART OF A NATIONAL CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY. ONE OF ITS KEY ROLES IS SUPPORTING THE MILITARY IN AFGHANISTAN AND THIS CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WILL CONTINUE



Pictures: Crown Copyright



Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR young Servicemen and women embarking on a career within one of the Army's many trades, the first lesson they will inevitably learn is "soldier first".

With operations in Afghanistan making ever-increasing demands on personnel, this ethos has never been more important and modern troops are expected to be confident and capable of meeting the vast challenges of Helmand province head on.

The Adjutant General's Corps Staff and Personnel Support (AGC (SPS)) branch has taken this mantra to the forefront of its training to provide potential NCOs with a new course that develops core combat, command and leadership skills to sit alongside the expertise of their specialist vocation.

Soldier made the trip to the Stanford Training Area (Stanta) in Norfolk for a closer look at the drills being taught and soon discovered that these soldiers are far more than desk-bound office clerks.

The three-week course starts with classroom-based theory lessons before progressing to field training in section attacks, casualty evacuation, patrol skills and how to handle prisoners of war.

As a finale, personnel face a four-day exercise where they are expected to put what they have learned to the test in a series of challenging serials.

"This is about ensuring we establish our credentials as soldiers first," explained Lt Col Lance Patterson, commanding officer of the SPS training school.

"We are soldiers first, but we are also competent in HR [Human Resources].

"This course has been running since July 2009 but before

COMBAT CADRE

SUPPORT PERSONNEL LEAD FROM THE FRONT AT NORFOLK PROVING GROUND

then our personnel came out of Phase Two and would not come back for any more command and leadership training until they were up for corporal. There was a missing link of up-front, combat-style leadership.

"Even though these soldiers have been in the Service for at least 18 months, they still arrive on these courses imagining a *Bad Lads Army* scenario.

"They are all amazed at the scientific process that goes into the training as well as the coaching and mentoring techniques that are involved."

Before the course was introduced, those who were recommended for promotion were almost guaranteed to achieve their new rank.

Now, however, advancement cannot be gained until a soldier attends and passes the three-week proving process at Stanta.

"That gives them much more credibility as an NCO," Lt Col Patterson said.

"It is important because if we want to be victorious in Afghanistan we need everyone to punch their weight.

"Military HR is not a back-office function. We are in forward operating bases delivering administration support at points of need.

"We have clerks providing top cover and operating in sangars. We have women deploying with Infantry patrols as part of search and female engagement teams.

"Our NCOs may find themselves in a position where they are the most senior person in a particular point of crisis.

"This course allows us to deliver a lance corporal who is able to command, lead and manage in different situations, potentially under fire, and has an in-depth understanding of the Army's core values."

Course organiser SSgt Joey Jordan (AGC (SPS)) explained that the training has two main objectives – to promote values and standards and to provide the basic close-combat skills that NCOs will undoubtedly need on the ground.

"We start with a theory process then we put things into practise," he explained.

"We teach them how to handle prisoners of war and the priority is to get that right. With the patrols we show them how to look for IEDs and anything suspicious and we also put them through casualties under fire drills.

"They then face a final exercise which starts with a shura that creates information for future tasks.

"We all strive to be soldiers first and this course allows all of our personnel to be exactly that. I am incredibly proud of my job."

Student Pte Mark Buckley (AGC (SPS)) transferred to the corps from the Royal Engineers and admitted he had not seen the combat function

of the unit until he deployed to Stanta.

"By coming here you soon realise they do a lot of work," he said. "The course has only been running for a short while and we are learning some good Infantry skills.

"I have got a bit of experience to back me up, but for some of the privates it has been an eye-opener. It has certainly blown the cobwebs away."

Pte Eugene Abonge (AGC (SPS)) was full of praise for the training on offer and believes the drills being taught have been a real boost for himself and his colleagues.

"I think it is a very good course," he told *Soldier*. "When you go back to your unit you are more confident and you know that you have earned your rank.

"You can also stand alongside

the lance corporals from other corps and say 'I know what it means to take the lead'.

"You can adapt the skills learned here to different situations. If you get promoted without doing this cadre you could be put in a position where you are expected to rise to the challenge but fall short."

The ongoing campaign in southern Afghanistan means the philosophy of "soldier first" has never been more relevant and it is not just the Infantry who are in the heat of the battle.

The AGC (SPS) is doing all it can to ensure its personnel are up to the challenge and that its NCOs are capable of leading from the front when required. ■

'This is about ensuring we establish our credentials as soldiers first'

IN THE FIELD



Soldiers from the AGC (SPS) are being taught core combat, command and leadership skills as part of a three-week course at the Stanford Training Area



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PORTON PROTECTION

**How the appliance of science
is saving soldiers' lives**

**Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Mike Weston**

AS a means of vividly demonstrating the life-saving properties of the British Army's personal protective equipment, the opening weeks of Op Herrick 13 could not have gone better.

Less than one month into the tour, three soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment were praising their Mark 7 combat helmets for deflecting Taliban rounds and Rgr Ryan Boyd (Page 9) was saved from serious injury by one of the side plates of his Osprey body armour.

Reflecting on escaping a bullet strike with just bruising, the 26-year-old said he felt "lucky".

Luck, however, has very little to do with such amazing stories according to Alan Hepper, a scientist at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) in Porton Down.

"Adjustments were made to the latest Osprey body armour allowing small plates to be fitted to the side, after a change in Taliban tactics saw snipers targeting that area of the torso," Hepper told *Soldier*.

"We understand the threat, how it damages the body and what the

physiological effects are on the body. There are two outputs from that – one is treatment and the other is protection."

As the man responsible for testing body armour systems, protection from bombs and bullets is Hepper's field of expertise.

Using a purpose-built indoor range at the Wiltshire site, the scientist and his team fire live rounds and pieces of shrapnel at different types of material to work out which will best safeguard British soldiers.

"We look at ballistic performance – at what velocity fragments start to perforate through the material," he said.

"Soldiers will then try [a material] out on Salisbury Plain to see how comfortable it is and whether they are able to carry out their work while wearing it.

"Comfort is one of the major issues, particularly for kit which will be used in Afghanistan in the summer."

Conscious that their efforts can ultimately save lives, the army of engineers, physicists and medics working at DSTL are constantly redressing their priorities to reflect emerging threats from the battlefield – an evolutionary approach evidenced by the ongoing search for the perfect protective material. >>

"You always hope for a material that weighs nothing and stops everything because we would always like to give troops more protection," explained Hepper.

And while bulletproof uniforms remain the preserve of science fiction movies, Porton's professionals hinted that a new "link" will soon be added to the Army's armour.

After a series of secret tests at DSTL, during which nearly 1,300 small metal fragments were fired at sample materials mounted on a dummy, an unlikely solution emerged.

"The material we are now looking at has an extremely good ballistic performance for its weight," said Hepper.

"We could have used one of the more exotic aramids [synthetic fibres such as Kevlar] but they can be quite uncomfortable to wear."

While the input of some of the brightest minds in the field of physics and engineering is key, medical expertise and knowledge of the kind of injuries suffered by Service personnel in Afghanistan also play a vital part in the creation of any new kit.

Maj Jonno Breeze (RAMC), a military surgeon currently based at Porton Down, is helping scientists to develop better neck protection for troops. Having worked on the wards of Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham he has first-hand experience of treating soldiers wounded in the field.

"I can share information about those I have treated and the protection they were wearing when they were injured," he explained.

Soldiers are already testing potential solutions – which range in complexity

from a collar system that attaches to body armour to a scarf – and the development team is hopeful that the fruits of its labour will be seen on the front line in the very near future.

Producing cutting-edge kit is one thing, but DSTL also has a role to play in ensuring their "customers" actually use the equipment they provide. While wearing a helmet might be second nature, putting on a pair of sunglasses or goggles is perhaps less obvious.

"At first some soldiers didn't realise the sunglasses they were issued with offered ballistic protection," explained Hepper. "We had to communicate that to them."

"We don't just throw more armour at people, we look at other ways of protecting them, whether that is by changing tactics or procedures, or through education."

Providing the best possible protection for soldiers operating in Afghanistan underpins everything that is done at DSTL and headlines of miracle near misses on Herrick provide evidence of its endeavours.

As an organisation it is doing all that it possibly can to reaffirm the old cliché that "you make your own luck". ■

"You always hope for a material that weighs nothing and stops everything"



SCIENCE AT THE SHARP END OF MILITARY OPERATIONS



Front-line feedback: The combat helmet (above left) and body armour worn in theatre by the likes of Rgr Ryan Boyd (centre), who survived a bullet strike, have both proved equal to Taliban rounds; Right, the "shrapnel" used to test protective materials; Above, the air pressure machine used to propel metal fragments



Picture: Sgt Rupert Freer, RLC

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

THE indoor firing range where kit such as the Osprey body armour was tested is a purpose-built, reinforced concrete structure.

Inside, a tunnel extends from one end of the range, allowing shots to be fired from distances of up to 100m.

At the other end, a lighting system and high-speed camera are positioned next to a dummy, known as a behind armour blunt trauma rig, to which sample kit is strapped.

A small armoury contains shotguns and machine guns, as well as a pressure hose that fires small metal fragments.

A universal mounting system can be fitted with whichever weapon is being used in a test.

When the ammunition has been loaded, scientists leave the room, lock the doors and view the laboratory from a small control room.

From there they can manage the release of bullets or fragments, which are fired at the dummy at various speeds.

The cameras and a hi-tech laser behind the target collect data about how well a material has performed.

The walls are covered with chips and scratches from bullets and fragments that have ricocheted and over the years numerous light bulbs, wires and even an entire heating system have had to be replaced as a result of stray shots.

"You hear a bang and sometimes see a flash," said Hepper, describing a typical experiment.

"We check to make sure that nothing has caught fire, but that is the nature of testing – we are trying to find things that go wrong.

"And you have to test in a realistic environment, so you do get the odd smouldering heap in there."

'We don't just throw more armour at people, we look at other ways of protecting them'





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STOP PRESS

NEW LIGHTWEIGHT MAG HITS STORES

Report: Richard Long

WITH front-line soldiers facing an ever-expanding equipment list, it is safe to assume that any attempt to reduce the additional weight they carry will be gladly received.

So news that Level Peaks Associates has begun providing the MoD with new polymer magazines – kit which is 40 per cent lighter than the current variant – will undoubtedly go down well with those deployed in Helmand. The Hereford-based equipment company has already delivered 250,000 Magpul EMAG 30-round 5.56 polymer magazines to theatre as part of a deal that will eventually see one million units presented to the Armed Forces.

The lightweight version is compatible with a range of Nato-pattern rifles, including the SA80, and is designed to provide enhanced reliability, functionality and durability over the standard steel and aluminium models.

This is achieved by the inclusion of a slimmer profile, a viewing window with round counter and an integrated impact and dust cover.

A spokesman for Level Peaks Associates said: “Agility in the Infantry is of increasing concern to the MoD as both protection and firepower increments add additional weight to a soldier’s burden.

“EMAG is more than 40 per cent lighter than the in-service steel magazine and represents more than a 1kg reduction

to combat loads.

“Polymer magazines do not suffer from rust degradation, crushing damage or dust and sand ingress. They do not clog, meaning troops need not clean every round before loading them into the magazine and this potentially reduces the time taken to reload in dust and sand environments.”

The new polymer magazines are manufactured in the USA by Magpul and are imported and delivered by Level Peaks Associates. ■

**Magpul
EMAG
specifications:**

Weight: 4.6oz
Length: 7.46in
Maximum
depth: 2.66in
Maximum
width: 1.16in
Calibre: 5.56mm Nato
Capacity: 30 rounds

READ ALL ABOUT IT

● **Slim-line body profile:** For ease of use with double and triple magazine pouches, the EMAG features a slim, rib-less, anti-snap profile. Front-to-back and side-to-side width and thickness have been adjusted to ensure compatibility with as many weapons as possible, including the HK416 and non-Colt spec AR15 rifles.

● **High-visibility round indicator:** For simpler and more accurate identification of loaded round count, the stainless steel magazine spring is coated with mil-spec black oxide and the indicator coil is painted with high-visibility fluorescent orange. Numerical indicators have been added to identify five, 15 and 25 loaded rounds.

● **Large MagLevel window:** Combined with enhanced high-visibility round indicator spring, the large single-side MagLevel window allows for fast, accurate round count identification which, although redundant in the field, is an excellent addition when training as learning to round count is invaluable in a firefight.



LIVERPOOL LEGIONNAIRE

Kop star Roy Hodgson pays tribute to sacrifices of Service heroes

Interview: Richard Long

IN the money-orientated, results-driven pressure cooker of Premier League football it is easy to be consumed by the seemingly make-or-break performances on the pitch.

But last month the multi-millionaire stars from one of the world's most lucrative sporting competitions showed their support for a significant Forces' fixture.

Poppy emblems took pride of place on the famous club colours of the nation's greatest teams in a united show of respect during the Remembrance Day commemorations.

For Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson the gesture was a mere continuation of a lifetime of support for The Royal British Legion's annual appeal and in an exclusive interview with *Soldier* he spoke about why the campaign is so important to him.

"I don't think there will be too many people of my generation who did not have fathers who fought in the Second World War," the 63-year-old explained. "I come from a wonderful generation that was born just after the war who owe a great deal to the effort and sacrifices made by so many people who made our lifetime very, very different to theirs.

"My father lived through the depression of the 1930s and he got plunged into the Army during the best period of his life. He was in his mid-20s when he went to war.

"So when it comes to the Poppy Appeal and anything to do with Remembrance I, as part of that privileged

generation, am all for it. In my capacity as a public persona I will do anything I can to help."

Hodgson said his close association with the appeal stems from his family links to the Armed Forces, as his father and grandfather were both serving soldiers.

"It has been an important part of my life, slightly less so when I've lived abroad, but all the time I have been in England I have had nothing but respect for Remembrance Day," the Anfield boss added. "My grandfather was a professional soldier. I remember visiting him at The Royal Hospital. He was a Chelsea Pensioner but I was quite young at the time and only really remember those visits.

"My father was a member of the 8th Army, driving petrol lorries. I have seen pictures and snapshots but neither he, nor my grandfather, really spoke of the wars.

"Maybe it was because it had too many bad memories for them and I have no idea what it would be like for a soldier in situations like that."

Despite having strong ties to the military, the former Fulham manager was not tempted to follow in his family's footsteps.

However, he has nothing but respect for those who perform the job he could never do.

"The idea of war and warfare horrifies me," Hodgson said. "I don't know how people find the courage to be a soldier and be involved in something like that. I think I would have been the worst soldier you would ever see. Therefore it fills me with great admiration when I see those who have got the guts and determination to pursue that way of life."

After speaking passionately about his support for the Poppy Appeal, the decorated coach found time to talk about his day job, managing the once-mighty Liverpool Football Club. Since taking charge in the summer, Hodgson has faced

a stern test of his credentials and matters off the pitch have not helped his situation.

But with new owners now in place, he was quick to assure the Army's legion of Reds fans that progress is being made.

"It is settling down very well but we still do not have the results a club of this stature would like," he explained.

"The off-field situation has not helped but we have got a rebuilding process to do. Last year cracks started to appear and Rafa Benitez, after a successful spell, moved on. When you come in you inherit a club on a downward spiral, that is why you are offered the job, but people expect you to turn it round straight away.

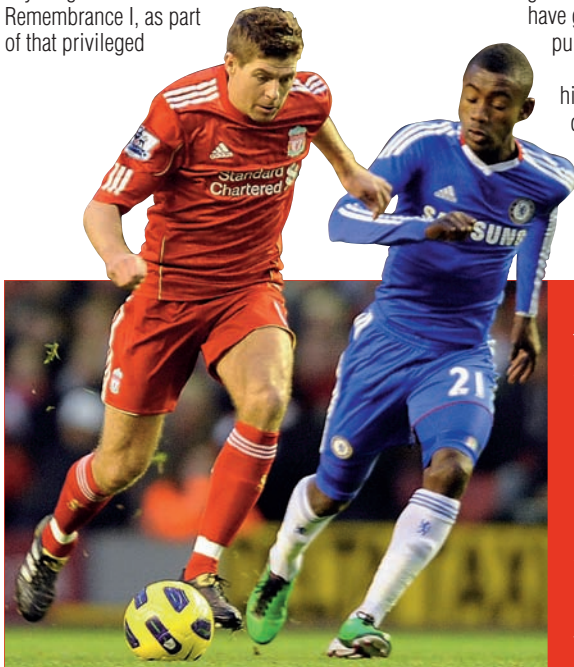
"The players are responding well and with new owners coming in there may be the possibility of changing the squad around. At this stage we are not out of anything. I think it will be a tight league this year and we have seen some incredible results.

"You would not expect Arsenal to lose at home to West Bromwich Albion and Newcastle and you do not expect Sunderland to go to Chelsea and win. Teams are now getting better. Everyone now has access to foreign players and they pay good salaries, the difference between the haves and the have-nots is disappearing."

Last season Hodgson enjoyed unprecedented success at Fulham as he guided his team to the Europa League Final, picking up the 2010 Manager of the Year award along the way. But when one of the biggest teams in club football come calling it is hard to ignore their advances.

"It was a difficult decision to make as I was at a great club, it was going well and I was not contemplating any problems in keeping our play going," the ambitious Hodgson said.

"But when a job of this status comes around it is difficult to stay as a big fish in a relatively small pond. You are obliged by ambition and your passion for the game to take it on and give it your best shot." ■



Anfield appreciation

Just a short message from me to say good luck and be safe. You're doing a fantastic job and I hope you all return safely to your friends and family soon. — Steven Gerrard

On behalf of everyone at Liverpool Football Club I'd just like to thank you all for doing a great job and fighting for your country.

You are the real heroes so stay safe and strong and we wish you the best of luck. — Jamie Carragher





Picture: Liverpool FC




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A full-page photograph of a bomb disposal expert in a black protective suit and helmet with a clear visor. The expert is walking away from the camera towards a large, bright orange and yellow explosion in the background. The ground is green grass.

Dynamic demonstration:
SSgt "Scouse" Wray, an IEDD instructor at the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search School in Kineton, walks away from a simulated bomb blast

Picture: Mike Weston

ROUTE CLEAR

**Bomb disposal course opened up to
discover most talented in Defence**

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE “biggest challenge” in the Armed Forces, and one which only the fittest soldiers with the sharpest minds will conquer, has been opened up to all Army personnel.

Previously the role of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) operator was a preserve of the Royal Engineers and Royal Logistic Corps but, as part of a response to the current IED threat, talent is now being drawn from a wider pool.

With only those who pass through the Defence EOD course able to undertake the further training required to become Advanced IED Disposal (IEDD) operators in Afghanistan, *Soldier* paid an exclusive visit to the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search School (DEMSS) at Kineton in Warwickshire, where commanding officer Lt Col Rick Davies explained the demand for exceptional soldiers to join his ranks.

“With operations in Afghanistan the need was to broaden the pool from which we attract personnel,” said the former Advanced IEDD operator.

“The idea is to widen the base at the bottom to get the best for when we come to the top.”

To be accepted on the course applicants must first pass through a two-week aptitude test, which ensures only those who are physically and psychologically prepared go forward.

Once loaded onto the 16-week programme, students are taught by instructors from the RLC, RE, Royal Signals, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and Infantry.

To counter the enemy's increasing use of roadside bombs more EOD operators are needed and the MoD has boosted the training capacity for IED disposal by 40 per cent in the last 18 months.

However, before deploying to take on the Taliban's lethal weapons, those who succeed on the Defence EOD operator course serve as Military Aid to the Civil Power (MACP), defending the UK from attack.

Lt Col Davies emphasised that only the very best are sent on Op Herrick.

“We may get someone who hits their peak at EOD operator level and will provide MACP, which is absolutely fine,” he explained.

“It's not for us to pass people to get out to Afghanistan; we've set the standard and that's what we pass or fail people against.

“It is up to Land HQ what they then do with those personnel.”

For the first eight weeks of the course novice students are based at DEMSS South in Chattenden, Kent, where they learn to deal with conventional, manufactured munitions such as artillery shells and aircraft bombs.

But once at Kineton, in the second half of the training, the future EOD operators are faced with lethal explosive devices of the letter, pipe or vehicle-borne variety.

Capt Eamon Heakin, part of Land Forces' EOD and search branch, explained that the fast-paced course enables soldiers to progress from knowing nothing about bombs to being informed technicians.

For the first two weeks at DEMSS North the students learn the theory and technology behind all types of devices.

“By weeks five to six they are on team drills and each student conducts seven training serials and observes 21 tasks, which range from simple things like criminal pipe bombs up to terrorist car bombs,” said Capt Heakin.

While a fellow trainee donned his personalised

EOD suit and deployed the latest version of the state-of-the-art Wheelbarrow robot to work on a dummy device, Sgt “Des” Desmond (2 Para) praised the new recruitment process.

“I have been a section commander and for me the next step would be loading stuff in stores at Camp Bastion and I'm not ready to give up the fight just yet,” he said.

“Now this is open to Infantry SNCOs like me it means we're still able to influence the battle.”

Faced with potentially handling the devices that have killed more British soldiers than any other weapon in Afghanistan, he added: “I'm sick of my mates getting blown up and wanted to do something about it.

“If all goes well we'll be working as high-threat operators for Herrick 15.”

The next generation of bomb disposal experts learn from decorated veterans of Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan.

If they pass they will be at the basic level in the grand scheme of dealing with IEDs and – in the first instance – will only be tasked to operate in peacetime locations.

However, Capt Heakin highlighted the significant role the graduates of the current and upcoming courses would be fulfilling prior to any overseas deployment.

“As an EOD operator you are presented with the biggest challenge the Army has to offer – you've got to be fit, motivated and intelligent and you've got to really want it,” he said.

“These are the operators of the future who will save lives, protect property and gather information which will close down terrorist networks.

“There's no better reward than knowing that if it wasn't for you there would've been a catastrophe.”

With responsibility for numerous lives resting on their suited shoulders, EOD operators work at the forefront of technology in an ever-changing and increasingly treacherous environment.

But as Maj Colin Whitworth, a senior instructor in the IEDD wing at DEMSS, explained, some individuals will thrive on such pressure.

“This is a chance of a lifetime to do something you can't do anywhere else in the world,” he said.

“You might finish the course on a Friday afternoon and on the Monday morning you are tasked to an incident. The whole world is expecting you to sort it out.

“Being an EOD specialist is not ‘operation certain death’, the operators know that once they pass here they are ready.” ■



Suited and booted: Trainee EOD operators from across Defence use cutting-edge technology to safely neutralise demonstration devices

ORDNANCE OVERVIEW

**Col Gareth Collett,
head of Army bomb
disposal, explains the
recruiting rethink**

**"We are now fighting
a campaign where the
insurgent uses the improvised
explosive device as an
indiscriminate weapon
of choice.**

**The scale of the problem is
different to that faced by
the British Army for over 40
years – it affects our home
shores as well as operations
overseas – and we have had
to revise our training to meet
current and future threats,
without losing sight of
the old.**

**There has been no lowering
of standards, contrary to
ill-informed media coverage,
rather a revision of training,
doctrine and concepts to
open up EOD to the very best
from across the entire Army,
and indeed Defence.**

**EOD operators are the pride
of the nation and to be one
of this new breed will assure
our national security over
the years to come."**

**If you
are interested
in becoming a
Defence EOD
operator contact
Capt Eamon Heakin
on 01252 863068 or
einca-eod-so3-wpns-int
@mod.uk
or Maj Ben Day
on 01252 863676 or
einca-eod-so2-policy
@mod.uk**



Picture: Steve Dock

Seaside shelling

Lancers practice skills at Dorset beauty spot

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main



THE notion of repeatedly firing weapons of destruction into an idyllic area hailed for its rare beauty might seem a strange one.

But since 1916 when tanks destined for the battlefields of the Great War were tested over its terrain, the picturesque location of Lulworth in Dorset has led a double life as a walker's paradise and a military proving ground.

In the era of Operation Herrick, Bovington and Lulworth Training Area provides vital facilities for soldiers learning to crew armoured fighting vehicles and can accommodate advanced live fire and manoeuvre exercises.

And ironically it is playing host to such kinetic activity that has helped to conserve the 7,500 acres of stunning countryside which stretch along England's Jurassic Coast.

"The environment has only survived because of limited public access and careful military stewardship of the land," said Defence Training Estates (DTE) spokesman Tony Moran. "First and foremost it's important to provide an excellent training facility for the British Armed Forces, but at the same time we must ensure the upkeep of the wildlife and conservation area."

Despite repeated .50 calibre rounds being blasted into the green hills by soldiers in command of machine guns, the protection of nature is a constant focus.

With more than 75 per cent of the seaside exercise ranges declared as sites of special scientific interest or areas of outstanding natural beauty, there is huge responsibility on DTE to look after the species and land under its charge.

"Our top priority is to provide facilities to prepare soldiers to go on operations, but we also have to ensure the sustainability of the countryside which we are privileged to use," said Lt Col (Retd) Christopher Donaghy, commandant of the training area.

Soldier took a trip to Lulworth to see a group of

recruit gunners from The Queen's Royal Lancers putting classroom theory into practical action on the ranges.

Firing 30mm cannons from Scimitar vehicles, the soldiers were tasked to hit varying targets located amongst the green gorse on Binden Hill.

Maj James Cripps (QRL) said: "This is an excellent training facility with everything set up as we need it."

"It provides an ideal setting for the recruit gunners to put what they have learned into practice with the ability to fire high explosives effective to 1,500m."

Making good use of the training area – which includes the only world heritage site to be fired on – was Tpr Joe Fiddaman (QRL).

"It's a lot to take in, learning how everything works, but now we've been given chance to use the ranges it all becomes clearer," he said.

"I saw a video of a Scimitar speeding down the road and straight away I said I wanted to do that and this is a great environment to learn in."

A major asset of the Lulworth package is its multi-path rail system that provides moving eight-tonne targets to fire on.

The fully-computerised five kilometres of railway track allows three "enemy" assets to travel at speeds ranging from one to 50mph.

Lt Col Ken Davis, range liaison officer, said: "The ability to run targets at different paces puts this range into a league of its own."

"It's the only multi-path rail system in Europe and it's very sought-after."

The Lulworth range area is open to the general public 137 days each year and it is estimated that in that time 500,000 tourists flock to admire the wildlife and scenery. As a military asset, the same plot of land is proving to be vital to the training of soldiers who deploy to fight on foreign soil. ■

It provides an ideal setting for the recruit gunners

On the range



Top, On target: Royal Marines from 3 Cdo Bde fire the 50mm calibre machine gun

Above, On track: One of the three fully-computerised rail-borne targets at the DTE ranges in Lulworth, Dorset



Uphill challenge Scimitars from The Queen's Royal Lancers train their barrels on the targets on Binden Hill at Lulworth ranges



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IN THE COMPANY OF HEROES

NEW EXHIBITION SALUTES FORCES' FINEST

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

A SMALL room at the top of London's Imperial War Museum is now home to the world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses and the tales of courage that led to them being awarded.

Housed in the Lord Ashcroft Gallery, the *Extraordinary Heroes* exhibition pays homage to the elite group of people to have been awarded the UK's top military honour for bravery in the face of the enemy.

The medals are accompanied by multimedia displays and interactive touch screens that reveal the fascinating personal stories behind the decorations and are joined on parade by nearly 50 George Crosses (awarded for the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger).

Lord Michael Ashcroft, whose personal collection of more than 160 VCs are on show in the gallery which he funded and now bears his name, told *Soldier*: "However these medals got out of the family, whatever the circumstances, the fact they are on public display in a place showing great respect for those acts of bravery is something many of the families wished for.

"What makes someone save that life or rescue the situation? It's a question that I've struggled with for a long time," he said. "I discovered it was possible to buy VCs on the occasional times that they came up for auction. I resolved that one day, if my financial circumstances permitted it, I would buy one."

Since purchasing his first medal in 1986, Lord Ashcroft has amassed 164 VCs – the largest collection in the world. All are now on permanent public display alongside the Imperial War Museum's own 48 Victoria and 31 George Crosses in the new gallery.

"The medal collection is quite simply my pride and joy," Lord Ashcroft added. "To me the medals are the tangible mementoes of an individual's service and bravery."

Alongside the awards are tales of men – and a few women – running, riding, driving and even swimming into enemy fire with no thought for their own safety, which are told through video

screens, life-size models and even comic books.

To mark the opening of the gallery, the museum commissioned war photographer Don McCullin to shoot a portrait of LCpl Johnson Beharry (PWRR), who was decorated with a VC for two separate acts of heroism in Iraq (see Page 49).

"It's amazing because we all have different stories," said LCpl Beharry, one of just seven Victoria Cross-holders alive today. "I've not seen VCs displayed like this before."

The medal-winner, who still carries the physical scars from the head wounds he suffered in Iraq, acknowledged that being awarded the honour completely changed his life and career.

"Learning to live with it has been difficult," he added. "As a private soldier all I thought about was getting promoted – I didn't know what the VC was. Only twice since have I had a moment to sit back, think and take it in. Words can't describe it."

Commenting on the tattoo of a Victoria Cross which he now carries on his back, LCpl Beharry added: "I knew it would hurt – it took 64 hours and it was painful, but I always wanted a tattoo and the Victoria Cross has changed my life [for the better], so I would go through the pain for it."

"Actually it was easier getting shot than having the tattoo because at least I didn't know the round was coming."

The exhibition is divided to represent seven qualities of bravery – aggression, boldness, endurance, initiative, leadership, sacrifice and skill – and visitors to the gallery are encouraged to consider the medal winners'

reactions to the decisions they had to make.

Among the VCs on display is the one awarded to Sgt Ian McKay (3 Para) for his actions during the Falklands War in 1982. When his platoon commander was shot in the leg during a night assault on an enemy position, the paratrooper opted to take charge and lead an attack. The three

men he was with were struck by Argentine fire so Sgt McKay ran towards a heavily-defended position alone and was killed just as he eliminated the threat.

His mother, Freda McKay, was at the opening of the



Extraordinary Heroes exhibition.

"Sometimes I think 'how can I have a son that is what he is, among the company here?'," she said. "I feel happy about what's happened to his medal. At least I can come and see it whenever I want and any of the family can too, it's not locked in somebody's drawer away from eyes."

The posthumous award given to SSgt Olaf Schmid (RLC) for his bomb-disposal work in Afghanistan in 2009 is one of the 48 George Crosses exhibited. After bravely disarming more than 70 Taliban homemade devices, SSgt Schmid died instantly after being caught in an explosion.

His widow Christina Schmid told *Soldier* she felt the gallery was a fitting tribute to her husband and all the other VC and GC holders.

"I'm incredibly proud but very sad that he's not here physically to see it," she said.

"To people who knew him and people in his trade and within his team, I think it means a lot, because they know they were part of that and that medal is as much theirs as it is his."

"I know a lot of people think the George Cross is a lesser medal but it's not – some of the acts of bravery are just as, if not more, incredulous."

Since its creation – by Queen Victoria in 1856 – the Victoria Cross has been awarded to 1,354 people, just seven of whom are still alive today. Since the George Cross was created in 1940, a total of 406 have been presented. ■

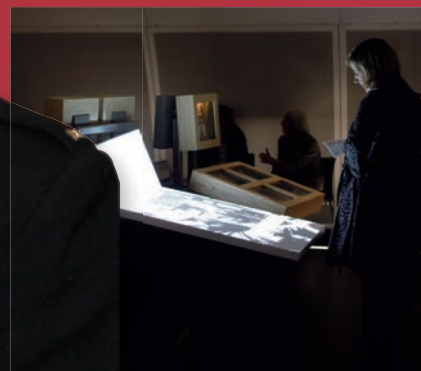
Extraordinary Heroes – the world's largest collection of Victoria and George Crosses – is now open. For further details call 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

Decorated delegation:
LCpl Johnson Beharry VC (PWRR), Tony Gedhill GC (Met Police) and LCpl Mathew Croucher GC (RM) attended the opening of the new Lord Ashcroft Gallery



'Fitting tribute': Christina Schmid (above left), the widow of SSgt Olaf Schmid GC (RLC), stands by her husband's medals in the Imperial War Museum's new gallery, which was funded by Lord Michael Ashcroft (top)

Above and below, Bravery on show: Medals featured in the *Extraordinary Heroes* exhibition are accompanied by multimedia displays that reveal the stories behind the decorations



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Interviews: Sharon Kean

Pictures: Steve Dock

STORIES of heroic feats fascinate the masses because courage is an attribute we would all love to boast, according to an expert on the psychology of bravery and the process of decision-making in difficult situations.

Speaking to *Soldier* at the opening of the Imperial War Museum's *Extraordinary Heroes* exhibition, Dr Patrick Tislington said: "Most of us would like to think that we would do these things, [acts of gallantry] but we don't know and I think we are fascinated by that.

"Being brave is what we all want to do because it is the exact right point to be at between the extremes of cowardice and recklessness."

But what defines valour and what makes someone courageous?

"Bravery is the management of fear," explained Dr Tislington. "Acknowledging that it is a dangerous situation, realising that something needs to be done and saying 'someone's got to do it and it's going to be me'. It's the overcoming of fear that is the courageous part."

Victoria Cross-winner LCpl Johnson Beharry (PWRR, pictured) certainly showed little sign of fear while on operations in Iraq in 2004 when, just three years after joining the British Army, he displayed "repeated extreme gallantry and unquestioned valour, despite intense direct attacks, personal injury and damage to his vehicle in the face of relentless enemy action".

The Grenadian's first act of heroism took place on May 1, 2004 when his armoured Warrior was hit by multiple rocket-propelled grenades. With the vehicle's optics damaged, the then private soldier was forced to open his hatch to steer his vehicle – exposing himself to withering fire and guiding his crew and five other Warriors to safety.

Six weeks later, an RPG hit Beharry's vehicle, incapacitating his commander and injuring several of the crew.

Despite suffering serious head injuries, for which he later required life-saving surgery, Beharry took control of the vehicle and drove it out of the ambush area before losing consciousness.

Recalling the events in Iraq, he described how every second seemed like an hour, giving him time to make conscious choices about what to do.

"I don't know if I made the right decisions but every decision was clearly made," LCpl Beharry told *Soldier*.

"I made decisions and changed my mind because other soldiers would have been killed, so

I had to come up with a different action."

Dr Tislington believes that this clarity of thought is relatively common during acts of bravery. He said: "It's sometimes difficult for those of us who haven't been through that to understand, but the actual decision to go and put yourself in danger is quite a rational one."

Despite this, those described as brave rarely view themselves as such. Instead they modestly describe a sense of duty or say that they were simply the right person for the job.

"The decision they make is not to be brave, in fact if they thought it was going to be brave they might not do it," added Dr Tislington, who served as a gunner in 16 Royal Artillery before beginning his research career.

"It's that something needed doing, it had to be them and they were confident of being able to do it. In psychology terms that confidence is called self-efficacy.

"It is the belief that you'll achieve something if you're given a task. The military is brilliant at this and it starts right at basic training.

"Everyday you are set a task that you really don't think you can achieve and everyday you do. After a while you think 'I can do anything'. There's a tremendous 'can do' spirit that comes from this, which is particularly true in the Forces."

Part of the enigma of valour is that it is impossible to predict, being the unique result of an interaction between a person and what's going on around them.

Citing Winston Churchill as an example, Dr Tislington explained that while an individual might act bravely in one situation, in another they may not.

"No one can argue with his [Winston Churchill's] wartime leadership abilities but as a peacetime prime minister he was actually not that good," he said.

The unpredictability of acts of courage mean they will often continue to affect those involved, as well as their friends and family members, long after the event.

But within the Armed Forces it's not just those with gallantry awards such as the Victoria or George Cross who must cope with unexpected life-changing events.

"Service personnel coming back home from combat operations will experience this too," Dr Tislington concluded.

"You have a mission you strongly believe in, all resources are thrown at it and nothing else matters, and then you come back to a humdrum existence of picking the kids up from school and doing the laundry.

"That's very difficult to do." ■



'THE DECISION TO PUT YOURSELF IN DANGER IS QUITE A RATIONAL ONE'
– DR TISINGTON

Courage on the couch

***Soldier* analyses the psychology of heroism**

The height of COURAGE

STORIES OF SELFLESSNESS FROM THE SKIES

Report: Sharon Kean
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE BRITISH Army's heroics are not restricted to action on the ground with some of the Service's most daring stories of valour having been played out in the skies.

Three years ago two of the Army Air Corps' Apache helicopter pilots were awarded the Military Cross for their part in an audacious mission to rescue a fallen comrade which made world headlines.

During an attack on the Taliban stronghold of Jugroom Fort near Garmsir in Afghanistan, Royal Marine LCpl Matthew Ford was reported missing and, with ground troops locked in a firefight, WO1 Ed Macy and SSgt Keith Armatage fearlessly flew their gunships – with Capt David Rigg (RE) and three marines strapped to the side wings of their aircraft – into the heat of the battle.

Undeterred by heavy enemy fire, the Army aviators held their nerve, landing, as WO1 Macy described it, "on the Taliban's front lawn" to allow their passengers to recover the body of LCpl Ford.

Macy, who has since left the Service and is the best-selling author of *Apache*, recounted the action at an event to mark the naming of a boardroom at the recently-opened Attack Helicopter Force Headquarters in Wattisham.

While the new conference facility itself is unremarkable, its title – The Dauncey Room – serves as a reminder that Macy and SSgt Armatage are but the latest chapter in the Army's book of airborne heroes.

Brig Michael Dauncey was awarded a Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his actions during the height of the Second World War while serving as a lieutenant in the Glider Pilot Regiment.

He landed in Oosterbeek during the Battle of Arnhem and despite being shot in the thigh and blinded in one eye by a piece of shrapnel, rallied a small group of British soldiers against German guns, tanks and infantry.

At one stage, armed only with a captured Luger pistol, he and a fellow glider pilot took on German infantry soldiers.

During the resulting firefight Lt Dauncey sustained further, more serious injuries when a grenade exploded close to his head.

He was treated in a Dutch hospital before being taken prisoner at the end of the battle. However, he later escaped and upon his return to the UK was initially recommended for the Victoria Cross but was eventually awarded the DSO.

Brig Dauncey's reputation is such that his name remains well known and is often remembered within the AAC, with one of the four initial helicopter landing sites used during the massive air assault at the start of Op Moshtarak carrying his title. The other three sites were also named after Second World

War glider pilots in a nod to the origins of today's Attack Helicopter Force.

"I'm absolutely staggered and thrilled and honoured that they should have done so," Brig Dauncey told *Soldier* at the Wattisham event after the lieutenant tasked with chaperoning him for the

day had revealed the story.

"I don't believe you think about being brave, but you can be determined and I think a lot of soldiers were determined not to be told what to do by the Germans," he added.

"You don't want to let your friends down if they are in trouble and you don't want the enemy to defeat you.

**'I DON'T BELIEVE
YOU THINK ABOUT
BEING BRAVE,
BUT YOU CAN BE
DETERMINED'**



Heroic origins: A Second World War glider carrying Allied troops prepares to land in enemy territory (above left) and an instructor introduces British Army pilots to the stark cockpit controls of a Hotspur



Admiration: Brig Michael Dauncey was awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his actions



"Also, I wasn't afraid. If you're afraid it restricts you but if you're confident that you will do something, then you will do it."

Comparing his role as a Second World War glider pilot with the current job of Apache crews operating in Afghanistan, Brig Dauncey said he was full of admiration for their "fantastic" work.

"The equipment and efficiency is

unbelievable. Just compare the communications systems – I would have loved to have had a radio," he said. "If they want to hit something in a bedroom window they can and as you can imagine, the poor old window often isn't looking so good."

Padre Chris Withers (AAC), who has recently

returned from a tour of Afghanistan with the Joint Aviation Group, said the airborne heroics of the gunship pilots were recognised throughout the Armed Forces.

"It struck me when I met a number of young marines who were on their way home," he explained. "They said the only reason they were alive and on their way back to the UK was because of the Joint Aviation Group pilots."

Col Neal Moss, the current Attack Helicopter Force commander, hopes that The Dauncey Room will keep alive the link between the attack helicopter pilots of today and the Glider Pilot Regiment from which they evolved.

Portraits of the current crop of Apache heroes – including WO1 Macy and SSgt Armatage – hang on the walls of the new boardroom, which will be used by commanders as they plan the Force's crucial operations in Afghanistan.

"In the Apache world we are lucky enough to have a bunch of heroes who get recognised for heroism in the cockpit," said Col Moss. "But we must remember they are worth nought without the team behind them – the technicians, armourers and ground crew who put fuel in the aircraft and put rockets and missiles on them.

"They must not be forgotten." ■

PADRE CHRIS WITHERS (AAC)



What is bravery? The selflessness I saw played out in Afghanistan where men were taking risks, sometimes placing themselves between the enemy and those they were trying to protect with little or no heed to their own safety. That willingness to do what ought to be done rather than what they'd like to do is brave and heroic.

COL NEAL MOSS (AAC)



Those who won George Crosses for doing EOD work were cool and calculated and in my mind are huge heroes. Heroes have been acknowledged in the Apache world but the guys in the cockpit who get recognised would be nought without support teams behind them. These heroes must not be forgotten.



Driving force: The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery will provide musical entertainment at The British Military Tournament, which also reflects the ongoing campaign in Afghanistan

TIME TO CELEBRATE

New-look pageant showcases the proud traditions of Britain's military

Report: Richard Long

WITH its famed field gun competition and spectacular display of military music, the Royal Tournament was rightly seen as one of the flagship celebrations of the Armed Forces.

The world-famous pageant entertained crowds for more than 100 years before financial constraints took their toll, prompting the curtain to fall on the show for the last time in 1999.

But now, more than a decade later, a new event is being staged to fill the gap left by its illustrious predecessor and build on those impressive traditions.

The British Military Tournament will feature hugely-popular acts such as the musical drive of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery; massed bands' marching displays; the return of the much-loved skill at arms; and a re-enactment from the present day conflict in Afghanistan.

Presented by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, the thrilling spectacle promises to bring together the best elements of the Royal Tournament in a new show for the 21st century.

"I think there is a huge surge of people who remember the old Royal Tournament and we have

the difficulty of managing their expectations," ABF chief executive Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter told *Soldier*. "We are doing something a little bit different, we are using the best parts of the old tournament and putting them in a modern context with a story running through.

"It will not be the same but there are lots of things people will recognise. There will also be a few surprises.

"There is a lot going on and it is a great show for the young and old."

Maj Gen Webb-Carter was delighted to confirm the field gun run has been included on the bill and said considerable effort had been spent on including an element from the ongoing conflict in Helmand province.

He added: "We are spending a lot of time on the modern Afghanistan re-enactment, we are making sure things are right and correct so we can replicate what goes on out there. One of the things people will focus on is the gun run, it is an iconic feature."

Although the Royal Navy will not be taking part in the race, Maj Gen Webb-Carter confirmed that students from Wellington College Combined Cadet Force would compete.

"It will be done in exactly the same way and it

will be a very good part of the show."

More than 145 horses and 500 troops will take part in the extravaganza and director Christopher Joll, who served with The Life Guards, is hoping the tournament will offer a real sense of excitement for the crowds.

"I have designed the show as a piece of entertainment, but also to be educational.

"I do not mean that in a pompous way. I think people appreciate being treated as adults and we want to tell them about the Army and what it does.

"First and foremost it will be entertaining, it has to be happy and sad; it has to move people and make them cheer.

"I want them to walk away saying 'wow, that really was quite something'.

"This is not an attempt to bring back the Royal Tournament. It is completely new but it uses those old elements. We want to build on those traditions and move into the 21st century."

The British Military Tournament is raising money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity and will be held at London's Earls Court on December 4 and 5, with two shows each day. ■

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Interview: Sharon Kean

THE last time James Blunt tried to visit troops in Helmand province the aircraft he was travelling on broke down and he only made it as far as a holding camp on the Afghan border.

This time round he is determined to get there.

"Christmas is when soldiers are missing their families the most and when their families are missing them," explained the former Life Guards officer. "So, I'm going to go and say hello."

The chart-topper plans to fly to Afghanistan with fellow singer and Forces pin-up Katherine Jenkins, and is hoping to bring a bit of cheer to those on ops over the festive period.

While in theatre he also aims to catch up with some of those he served alongside during his own well-documented military career, which took in ceremonial duties at Buckingham Palace and a tour of Kosovo.

"Some of my best friends are out there at the moment, so it would be a bonus and a pleasure to see them," he said. "My plan is not just to go to the obvious places – the larger camps aren't necessarily where the toughest jobs are taking place."

The trip will coincide with the release of his third studio album, *Some Kind of Trouble*, and on his return from Helmand he will head off on a UK tour.

As *Soldier* went to press the first single from the record, *Stay The Night*, was flying high in the charts and newspaper reports speculating about an alleged romance with *X Factor* contestant Katie Waissel were rife.

These highs and headlines provide Blunt with a public reminder of the stark contrast between his past life as a cavalry captain and his current life as a Brit Award-winning pop star.

"I went from an industry that dealt with life and death to an industry concerned with hairstyles, fashion and who's in and who's out," he said. "I found it quite hard to care about these things that had no importance or interest to me."

If there is one thing his Army career has given him it is perspective, he says.

"If I call up my mates who are serving today and tell them I've had a hard day, people who have been to Afghanistan will put that into perspective for me."

But there are also similarities between his two careers; not least the prolonged periods of separation from loved ones.

The last time Blunt went on the road with his band he was away from his family and friends for two years.

"I was sleeping on a tour bus with 12

men the whole way, going from city to city without stopping," he said. "And it was run much like you would run a troop on operations, but without the dangerous enemy."

"It was like travelling around in a tank only slightly bigger and a bit more comfortable, and without the five artic trucks following behind."

Despite leaving the Army more than ten years ago, Blunt's links to the Service have endured. He comes from a military family – his father is a retired lieutenant colonel – and some of his closest friends are still in uniform.

As a former soldier he appreciates, perhaps more than most visitors to theatre, the sacrifices made by those he is keen to visit this Christmas and insists that his past ensures there is an air of mutual respect when he is in front of an Army audience.

"I always get the warmest reception I could possibly ask them for – as someone who understands a little bit about what it's like to serve," he said.

"They give me a nod and a smile based on that and every single person I have met has been very supportive of my music career."

A reaction that, despite selling more than 18 million records and collecting a multitude of awards, is not always the case.

Some quarters of the British public and media have been quick to snipe at the singer's success but, true to his military roots, Blunt does not let the detractors deter him and just "gets on with it".

"The way everything is reported in the press is so cynical and negative – coming from the Army you realise that there are much more important things in the world," the 36-year-old told *Soldier*.

A perspective which was reaffirmed to Blunt when he took time to meet some of those wounded in Afghanistan following his appearance at this summer's Help for Heroes concert at Twickenham.

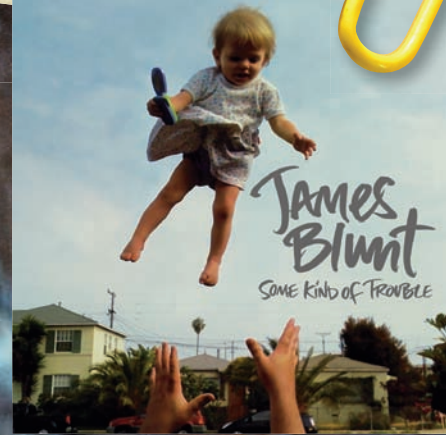
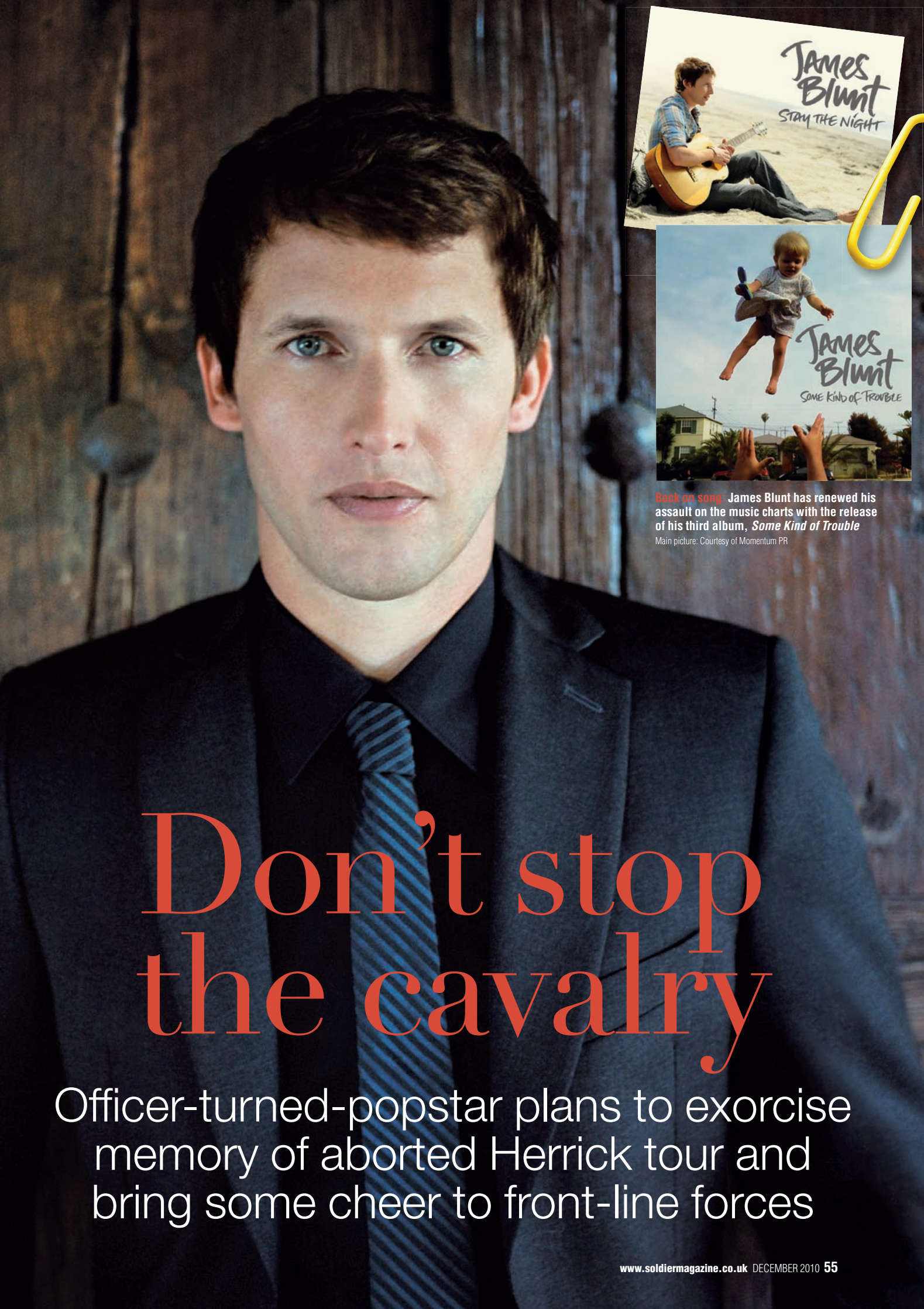
"They've been through things that I hope most of us will never have to experience ourselves," he said. "Yet they aren't complainers, they have a determination to just get on with it and do it."

It is a trait that, in his own way, James Blunt has demonstrated to great success since leaving the Army. ■

‘The way everything is reported in the press is so cynical and negative coming from the Army you realise that there are much more important things in the world’



Support act: The Helmand-bound singer joined an all-star line-up at this summer's Help for Heroes concert at Twickenham



Back on song: James Blunt has renewed his assault on the music charts with the release of his third album, *Some Kind of Trouble*

Main picture: Courtesy of Momentum PR

Don't stop the cavalry

Officer-turned-popstar plans to exorcise memory of aborted Herrick tour and bring some cheer to front-line forces

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A Christmas message from the Chief of the General Staff – Gen Sir Peter Wall

SOLDIERS have less control than most people over where they spend Christmas and whether they will be with their families and friends. Especially when the Army is busy and so heavily committed to operations in far away places like Afghanistan.

Whether on operations, on duty at home or abroad, or with your loved ones this Christmas we can as an Army reflect with pride on another year of achievement.

We have made tangible progress, albeit involving great sacrifice, in Afghanistan; we have had a busy and successful year across the breadth of Army life and we can now see a clearer path to the future following the recent defence review.

There will be lots of challenges in implementing the review, which

I am confident we will surmount with the Army's customary determination and vigour. None of this will be possible without immense support from our families, who play a unique role in the Army's successes and sacrifices. So in thanking you all for your contributions of late I think our families merit particular gratitude.

Notwithstanding the challenges, I am confident we can look forward with some optimism for two main reasons; our track record and the rare qualities of you, our people, which is what the Army is really all about.

Back to Christmas. Wherever you are spending it I wish you the very best for a safe and enjoyable time, sparing a special thought for those separated by operations or on other duties.

Thank you and Happy Christmas.



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[McGregor]

and I were really pleased to hear that *Long Way Down* has been such a hit with troops and, when I visited Camp Bastion last Christmas, we had a surprise visit from some platoon "journalists" who came to say hello! It's this spirit of adventure that inspired us to make our trips and has enabled us to meet so many amazing people. Whether you are serving in the British Army around the world or are the forgotten heroes, like Eddie Craven, who have been helped by the amazing Warrior Programme for ex-soldiers suffering from PTSD back at home, I wish you all a Happy Christmas. Thank you for all you're doing for us back in Britain and may the spirit of adventure live on. – **Charley Boorman, adventurer and actor, www.warriorprogramme.org.uk**



We wish those troops serving abroad during the festive period a safe and prosperous New Year. It's a difficult time of the year to be away from family and friends but those of us in the UK or overseas will be thinking of you all. – **Andrew Strauss, England cricket captain**

The festive period is a time when we should recognise the tireless commitment of our troops serving abroad. We wish you all the best during this time and remind you that everyone back in the UK is thinking of you. – **Paul Collingwood, England cricketer**

On behalf of the Hull FC players and staff, it's a very Merry Christmas to all the lads abroad. Come back safe and you're doing us proud. – **Sean Long, Hull and England Rugby League star**



On behalf of everyone at Watford FC, I'd like to send our best Christmas wishes to all our Forces currently serving overseas. This time of year is a very busy time for us all but rest assured that you will be in our thoughts



as you perform the most important of jobs. – **Malky Mackay, Watford FC manager, on behalf of everyone at Vicarage Road**

In what is traditionally a family time of year we should all think of the amazing work the troops are doing away from their families and friends. Our thoughts are very much with them at this particular time of year and I hope they get a chance to get to see some of the football over the festive period. – **Gary Lineker, Match of the Day**



We would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas. You are in a very difficult place doing a very difficult job, but we are all thinking of you back here and hope that you can have the best Christmas you can. Best wishes. – **Jools Holland, broadcaster and musician**



To everyone serving in Afghanistan, thanks for everything that you do – come home safe. I'll see you out there at Christmas. – **James Blunt**

I just wanted to wish luck to all the troops and [I hope they] have a lovely Christmas. Come home safely and thank you for everything you do. – **Pixie Lott**



While most of us back in the UK will be enjoying the festive season with friends and family we recognise that many members of the Armed Forces serving overseas this year will not enjoy this privilege. Wherever you are serving, but in particular to everyone from the locally-based 16 Air Assault Brigade currently in Afghanistan, on behalf of all at Ipswich Town Football Club can we offer you a safe and Happy Christmas and a speedy return. – **Roy Keane and Simon Clegg, Ipswich Town FC**

Season's Greetings

BY the time most of you read this it will be too late. Repeated requests for plasma TVs, Playstation 3s and iPods will have fallen on deaf ears; great aunts the world over will have bought and wrapped ill-fitting, roll-neck jumpers and your significant other will have splashed some of your hard-earned cash on novelty gifts that will be broken long before the first cracker has been pulled in anger.

But fear not, the team at *Soldier* HQ has taken evasive action to ensure this Christmas is not a proverbial turkey by rolling out Operation Reindeer's Hoof 2.

Aiming to bring some cheer to those serving in Afghanistan this month as well as to those having to celebrate the festive season without them, the magazine's second Advent calendar-style competition launched on our Facebook page – www.tinyurl.com/reindeershoof – on December 1 and, running right through to Christmas Eve, will see thousands of pounds worth of Gucci gear given away.

With not a satsuma or sugared almond to be seen, *Soldier's* Service stocking contains everything from signed footballs and CDs – compliments of James Blunt (Pages 54-55) and friends – to family holidays and luxury hotel breaks. ■



*Good tidings we bring
to you and your kin*

***Soldier's* seasonal salute to the men
and women of the British Army**



Among those *Soldier* will soon be penning thank you letters to are: Abode Group; Adrenalin Quarry; Beartown Brewery; Beaulieu; Bendicks; Birdworld; Bowlplex; British Film Institute; Bristol Rovers FC; Brittany Ferries; Butlins; Camelot Theme Park; Cardiff International White Water; Character; Club MSV; Coral Reef; Coventry Blaze Ice Hockey Club; Crealy Great Adventure Park; Crips Snacks; Delimann;

Delta Force; Denbies' Wine Estate; Dickinson & Morris; Diggerland; Doncaster Rovers FC; Duerr's; Ebury Publishing; Epicure; Eurostar; Eventageous PR; Fox's Biscuits; Franco's; Geometry PR; Green & Black's; Guildford Flames; Harper Collins Publishers; Hiho Silver; Hogs Back Brewery; Hotels.com; Intercontinental Brands; Ipswich Town FC; La Campana at The Bell; La Rosa Hotel; Mayflower Theatre; McLaren



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For families:

A three or four-night break for a family of four at Butlins' prestigious Ocean Hotel and Spa at the Resort in Bognor Regis; an annual pass for Creaky Great Adventure Parks in Devon and Cornwall; and a family ticket to Whipsnade Zoo.



For big kids:

Zorbing for two courtesy of Pod London; a day's jousting with The Knights of Middle England; and bodyboarding and surfing lessons at the Rip Curl ESF Surf School & Rob Barber's Bodyboarding School.

For you both:

A one-night weekend stay for two in a deluxe room at The Berkeley Hotel in Knightsbridge, London; a luxury two-night break (inclusive of dinner, bed and breakfast) at Pool House on the shore of Loch Ewe, a refuge consistently listed among the most romantic retreats in Scotland; and a pair of return tickets to Paris, Brussels or Lille courtesy of Eurostar.



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You've got nothing to lose and perhaps a lot to gain

Housing hiccup left hubby sleeping on the floor

AS a "wife of" and ex-military, I very rarely moan about the service we receive within the Army regarding accommodation, removals and the like as it is normally very good.

However, our most recent move was probably the most stressful to date. My husband received a posting notice for a job in a Territorial Army unit, which meant there would be no married quarter and a private rental would need to be acquired.

I had a very well-paid job and did not want to uproot, but arranged to leave my place of work in plenty of time to take care of the admin and packing for the move.

Days passed and we heard nothing about where we would be living, despite being told all was in hand. Eventually my husband's start date arrived and, with still no house on the horizon, he opted to stay in a hotel rather than face a daily commute of more than two hours.

During his first week at work a house was found and we felt obliged to accept it having not been offered anything in the way of choice. Finally in possession of an address, I tried to book the company responsible for removals but was told that they were busy and that we would have to wait for two weeks.

With the property not ready for occupation because of outstanding repair work, my husband began his second week at work and was told that the Army would no longer pay for a hotel as it was our fault the accommodation had not been ready in time. Consequently, my partner decided to sleep on the floor of the empty house rather than spend money on a hotel.

The headache continued when – now



Refuge: The Service Cotswold Centre in Corsham

knowing where I would be living – I began to find local schools for my children to attend. When I spoke to the allocation department I was informed that all of the schools nearby were full and my family now have to travel three miles every weekday to be educated.

My husband is a warrant officer and has completed 20 years of service, during which he has moved every two years.

My son is nine and he is now living in his fifth house. I enjoy the Army life but look forward to the day that we can settle in one place and not be told where to live. – Tracey Smith, Crawley.

DE Operations Housing, RAF Brampton, responds: Where Service Families Accommodation is not available a privately-rented property will be provided, allocated and managed by the MoD accommodation agency contractor, HCR.

The acute shortage of suitable three- and four-bedroom rental properties in the Crawley area meant that sourcing a suitable house for WO2 Smith and his family (according to the requirements that

were requested) was difficult, but was achieved with only a slight delay.

Defence Estates records show that the property adviser at HCR was in regular contact with WO2 Smith to ensure that he was fully aware of the problems that were being encountered.

In fact, in order to secure a suitable house, it was necessary to view properties immediately as they became available – otherwise they would have been let elsewhere such as the level of demand in the highly-competitive housing rental market in that area.

Unit welfare officers are available to help with short-term housing difficulties and can usually offer temporary accommodation via a welfare house.

Where no such provision is available, the Housing Information Centre (HIC) will refer personnel to the Service Cotswold Centre in Corsham which can provide temporary accommodation.

In the unlikely event that none of these provide a workable solution, the HIC can arrange for emergency hotel accommodation if requested.

While you were waiting for a house in the Crawley area your husband would have been entitled to an initial period of seven nights' subsistence which, in consultation with the HIC and MoD project manager, should have been extended until the property became available.



'Don't make me start from scratch'

I AM currently serving as a junior NCO in the Territorial Army and wish to transfer to the Regular Army.

However, when I enquired if this was possible I was told by the Army Personnel Centre (APC) in Glasgow that I would have to start from scratch and complete Phase 1 training.

Why is this the case when I am far more qualified than other recruits having regularly completed military courses?

I can understand dropping down in rank but to have to start from day one makes no sense. – Name and address supplied.

Lt Col Paul Fish, SO1 MS Reserves, APC, replies: I note that the junior NCO wishes to join the Regular Army, but with the current Army manning situation there may

not be any vacancies available.

In the first instance he should speak to his unit adjutant to discuss his options.

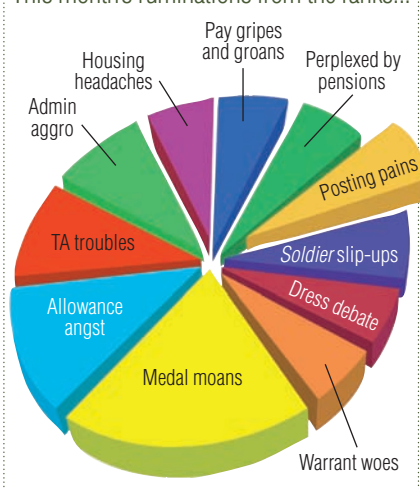
If the unit supports his application he should approach his local Army Careers Information Office who can assist in arranging interviews, medicals, educational assessments and any administrative requirements.

The APC regular desk officer will then advise on whether there are vacancies in the Arm/Service the individual wishes to join and what training he must undertake, based on his previous TA military career and experience.

If and when a vacancy was to become available for the JNCO, he would be discharged from the TA, before enlisting at the local careers office as a Regular.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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'A LOAD OF HOT AIR'

HAVING perused the latest issue of *Soldier*, I'd like to point out an error in the *Ranked* article, "Crazy but true... combat concepts being considered for front-line service" (November).

When describing the US Army's Long Endurance Multi-Intelligence Vehicle [pictured] you referred to the airship as a blimp.

At 300-feet long it is highly unlikely to be a blimp!

The derivation of the term comes from the names given to the two categories of airship; Class A Rigid (a classification which includes crafts such as Zeppelins and the R100 series) and Class B Limp (for anti-aircraft balloons and the like). – Bryan Milham.

PS...

HAVING been promoted to warrant officer class two earlier this year, I recently received my Royal Warrant and, although very proud of attaining the rank after only 15 years of Regular service, I am deeply disappointed with the certificate.

The warrant arrived in a cardboard tube via second-class post and features a scan of the Secretary of State for Defence's signature.

I understand that ministerial duties mean that Dr Liam Fox is a very busy person, however, harmonisation for promotion means he would only have to spend a few moments once a year signing these recognition certificates, of which there would be no more than 200.

To highlight how little of his time it would take, I conducted a small "handwriting" experiment and averaged 15 signatures per minute. – WO2 (YofS) Neil Port, 37 Signal Regiment (Volunteer).

I SERVED on Op Herrick 12 in Combined Force Nahr-e Saraj (South) [NES(S)] as a forward air controller in a fire support team attached to a rifle company.

I write regarding what I believe was a ridiculous dress code which was enforced within the battlegroup and had a detrimental impact on the willingness and ability of men to soldier and, more importantly, on their long-term health.

Personnel were not allowed to wear sunglasses while on patrol or in the patrol base – and I'm not talking Oakleys or Ray-Bans here but the issued ESS dark lenses.

Many reasons were offered in explanation of this ruling, one of which was "it's harder to spot ground signs". If this is the case then why do Royal Engineer search teams wear them?

Another was "they are not good for interaction with the locals". I never had a problem talking with Afghans while wearing sunglasses and found that a lot of children approached me wanting to try them on.

Further dress regulations stated that we were not allowed to wear issued shorts and T-shirts within the patrol base while going about our daily routine and that sandals could only be worn by soldiers who had returned from a patrol.

I often spent entire days in an ops room in 50C heat – drenched in my own sweat and dressed in shirt, trousers and boots – knowing that if I had been working in another battlegroup I would be wearing shorts and a T-shirt.

Being permitted to dress in a similar fashion would have meant I was more comfortable and in turn more focused on the job. – Cpl J Woodward.

Lt Col Gerald Strickland, CO 1 RGR Battlegroup, responds: CF NES(S) enforced high standards of battlefield discipline throughout Op Herrick 12.

Cpl Woodward's statement on



sunglasses is correct, in that they were not permitted on patrol.

However, any soldier with a medical reason for requiring to wear them would have been permitted to do so.

Dress standards are a normal part of Army life and contribute to the discipline of the organisation.

I am certain that Cpl Woodward would not have considered turning up for a regimental parade in his combats when the order was to wear Service Dress, just because he found it more comfortable. The same applies on operations.

To quote Fd Marshal Slim: "It is a great mistake to belittle the importance of smartness in turn-out, alertness of carriage, cleanliness of person, saluting or precision of movement."

"I do not believe that troops can have unshakeable battlefield discipline without showing those outward and formal signs, which mark the pride men take in themselves and their units and the mutual confidence and respect that exists between them and their officers."

"It was our experience in a tough school that the best fighting units, in the long run, were not necessarily those with the most advertised reputations, but those who, when they came out of battle at once resumed a more formal discipline and appearance."



"Susie, I sympathise with your strong feelings about beards and overlong hair, but don't you think this is going rather too far?"

Cut back on the beard growing

ON returning to Afghanistan earlier this year, I was surprised at the number of unshaven personnel at Camp Bastion.

It seems many soldiers are using the excuse that growing a beard helps them to "fit in" with locals and that, in keeping with regional religious beliefs, it earns them more respect when dealing with civilians.

If this is the case then why don't all Afghan men have beards?

Having completed four tours of Afghanistan (in both Kabul and Helmand province) I know that not all Afghan males are bearded, so why do British troops feel

the need to avoid shaving?

I was appalled to see many soldiers looking scruffy with part-grown beards and overgrown locks when there are plenty of free hairdressing facilities on camp.

I don't think we should be using Muslim religion and beliefs as an excuse.

After all, the Bible has the following to say about follicle grooming: "Don't round your hair at the temples or mar the edges of your beard" (*Leviticus 19:27*).

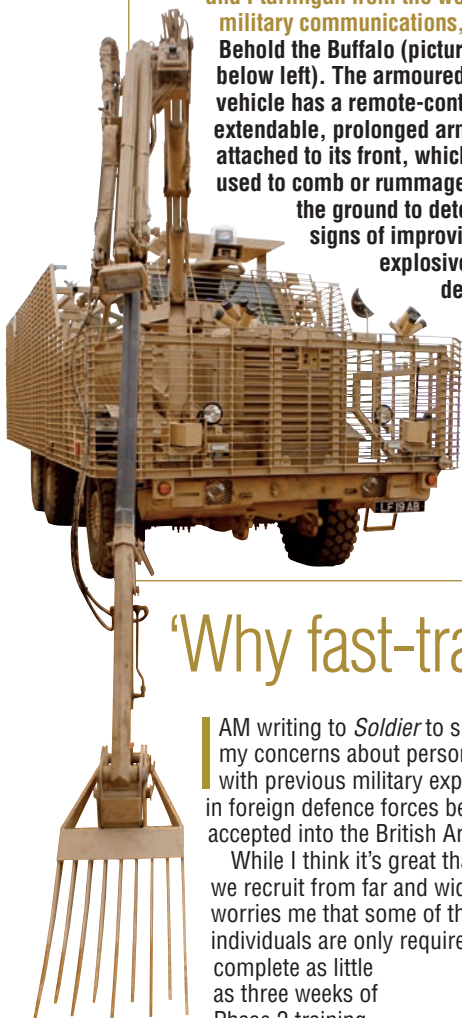
Does this mean that as a Christian I should grow a beard? – A female officer, name and address supplied.

IN the last issue of *Soldier* you referred to a photo of a Ridgback as a Mastiff.

You also missed a trick [when listing items of British equipment with names borrowed from Mother Nature's locker] by not including a shot of the Buffalo mine protection vehicle. — Name and address supplied.

The editor, who has since also thought of the St Bernard (medical variant of the Mastiff) and Falcon, Cormorant and Ptarmigan from the world of military communications, types:

Behold the Buffalo (pictured below left). The armoured vehicle has a remote-controlled, extendable, prolonged arm attached to its front, which is used to comb or rummage the ground to detect signs of improvised explosive devices.



Soldier's Mastiff mistake



I AM writing to make you aware of a number of factual errors in the last issue of *Soldier*.

In the article on bio-inspired military equipment, "Biological warfare" (November), a photograph is incorrectly labelled as being a Mastiff, when it is in fact a Ridgback.

The picture of the Wolfhound is also inaccurately captioned as being the "six-wheeled variant of Mastiff"; Mastiff is six-wheeled and the Wolfhound is the cargo-variant of the said vehicle. Other than that an excellent magazine as always. — Andrew Davies,

Equipment Directorate, HQ Land Forces.

The editor, discarding his mole-inspired specs and hanging his head in shame, writes: Good spot. And just to prove the team at *Soldier* HQ has learned from its mistakes, pictured are Mastiff (top), its cargo variant Wolfhound (above) and Ridgback (right).



'Why fast-track overseas recruits?'

I AM writing to *Soldier* to share my concerns about personnel with previous military experience in foreign defence forces being accepted into the British Army.

While I think it's great that we recruit from far and wide, it worries me that some of these individuals are only required to complete as little as three weeks of Phase 2 training before being

accepted into a battalion as "trained soldiers".

Unless the person in question is an NCO with extensive experience of service in another Nato force, how can this abridged introduction be considered adequate?

I know of former members of the Irish Defence Forces who, with little military history beyond escorting cash in transit around Ireland, have joined a British battalion after just a few weeks of training.

In my mind this represents an easy ticket into the Service when compared to the six months of basic training endured by all the other lads.

How does the Army Recruiting and

Training Directorate (ARTD) feel about this? — Name and address supplied.

Col Charles Newitt, head of operations, ARTD, replies: Recruiting group instructions describe those who are eligible to apply for service in the British Army from British overseas territories, Commonwealth countries and the Republic of Ireland.

All personnel in this category go through selection during which those who have former military experience in a foreign defence force have to provide records of previous training and service, which are then examined and assessed by the relevant Arms and Services Directors.

The vast majority go into initial training as normal and complete Phase

1 and 2 in the same way as any other entrant to the British Army.

A small minority who are assessed to have suitable experience and training may join further down the pipeline, but they will only pass out once they have met the standards required in all respects.



"So it's bangs you can't stand now! What army were you in?"

PS...

AS last month's Remembrance Day was approaching and the nation was preparing to remember its fallen, one question kept nagging away at me. Why does the act of Remembrance always have a religious (normally Christian) association?

Surely, in this age of multi-faith societies and secularism, the Armed Forces should look at whether having a "church parade" is the right way to go.

A more secular act of Remembrance would perhaps be more fitting and more inclusive. — SSgt M Taylor, HQ 2 MI Bn.

I HAVE just received and read the latest issue of *Soldier* (November) and found the headline and photo on Page 8 [which accompanied an article on the new training village at Camp Bastion] howlingly funny.

I know there may be some resistance to gays in the Army but is this really the response

appropriate to a visiting musical group? I can't imagine our forebears greeting the greats of ENSA [Entertainments National Service Association] in such a fashion! Thanks for brightening my day. — Ian Goodwin-Reeves, 150 Recovery Company, REME.



Pregnant pause over port move

I AM based in Marchwood and have a wife, two kids and a third child on the way.

Pregnant and having to look after the rest of the family, my partner is under a lot of pressure and is frustrated that our married quarter is 30 miles away from camp.

On requesting a move I was told that we were first on the waiting list but, four months on, have not been offered an alternative quarter.

Every time I see an empty property I call to chase but am repeatedly told that there is nothing available. I find this hard to believe. — Name and address supplied.

Defence Estates (DE) Operations Housing, RAF Brampton, responds:

In accordance with tri-Service accommodation regulations, DE is required to provide housing for Service personnel within a ten-mile radius of their duty station – or up to a 20-mile radius with the agreement of the local military commander.

The family are housed to entitlement within a ten-mile radius of the soldier's duty station.

Unfortunately, as can sometimes be the case with some geographical locations, the actual road journey can be much longer. The local command were consulted on this issue and agreed that Service Families Accommodation (SFA) could be allocated in the letter writer's current location.

The soldier's application for a transfer is for personal reasons and, as such, his priority for allocation falls below all new applicants seeking SFA in this busy station area. He is on the waiting list for transfer but obviously all new applications must be dealt with first – which is why he may see empty homes that have actually been allocated.

We would encourage the Serviceman to speak to his local welfare staff as they can offer advice and support.

In addition, the soldier should contact the Housing Information Centre to advise them of the expected addition to the family as this could have a positive impact on his entitlement.

Marchwood moan: The Sea Mounting Centre near Southampton is a key logistics hub for Op Herrick-bound equipment and vehicles

Picture: Steve Dock



Picture: Graeme Main

Flashback: Cpl Jon Pratt (1 R Anglian) and a "Green Goddess" on firefighting duties during Op Fresco

Heated response to strike threat

I ENLISTED in the British Army in 2005 and missed out on Op Fresco (the military's civil support during the firefighter dispute of 2002-03), but now watch cautiously as the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) prepare for possible strike action.

As a public servant and soldier I will not refuse a legal order and if Op Fresco is to be implemented for a second time I will conduct my duties accordingly.

However, I would like to question why the FBU and firemen themselves are to be spared the full brunt of the public's anger.

To be clear, if emergency fire cover is to be provided by the Army in the future then the FBU can rest easy, safe in the knowledge that emergency incidents will be dealt with.

How exactly would the public respond if no such measures were in place and homes began to burn down and lives were put at risk? Without the support of organisations such as the MoD, which responded to 7,820 incidents last time round, the FBU would be forced into defending their actions

and the consequences of them.

The military, including those deployed on operations, are facing a two-year salary freeze and cuts of their own.

Why should the Fire Service solely reserve the right to strike when all public sectors are sharing a similar burden?

Furthermore, the FBU must take a share of the blame for its predicament as the full implementation of Prof Sir George Bain's report [the Government-requested independent review of the Fire Service] would certainly have lessened the current cuts they face. Rather than accepting the recommendations made in 2002, it chose to save its union membership by voting down proposals for a part-time service.

It seems that the chickens have certainly come home to roost and that the FBU will consider endangering the British public rather than admitting that they helped to create the current fiasco. Public service means exactly that. It does not mean "I only serve the public if my conditions are met".

— Cpl S Feeney, 1 (UK) Div.

'Fall in allowance rate is foreign to me'

I AM curious to discover why the overseas rate of Incidental Expenses (IE) has been reduced from £10 to the UK level of £5.

To the best of my knowledge the pound has not had a strong resurgence on the international money markets and is not suddenly worth more.

I do, however, know that a call from Europe to the UK costs around 45p a minute; that a copy of the *Times* retails at around £2 when bought overseas and to get a shirt washed can set you back anywhere between £2 and £4.

So, for an outlay of around £8.50 (if you keep your call home nice and short) and putting aside the expense of converting currency, we are now to be reimbursed just £5. Can anyone explain why? — Maj Enever, Sy Sciences Dept, Fort Halstead.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: The decision to reduce the overseas rate of IE

as of April 1, 2010 was taken following analysis of the payment and Local Overseas Allowance (LOA).

In order to claim IE, personnel are required to be on temporary duty. If that requires them to serve overseas, individuals qualify for the payment of the temporary duty rates of LOA. This is set at 75 per cent of the full rate paid to a permanently overseas-based single or unaccompanied Service person of the same rank.

The construct of LOA includes the additional costs of laundry, newspapers and phone calls when compared to the price of those items in the UK.

By receiving temporary LOA, along with the revised rate of IE, it is deemed that you will have been appropriately recompensed for any costs incurred for laundry, the purchase of newspapers and telephone calls.

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<p>9 BUCKFAST TP ATR WINCHESTER 29 Mar-28 Aug 09</p>			<p>HERRICK 10 NAD-E-ALI FOB SHAWQAT</p>		
<p>CAMP BASTION BG INW Demand-Distance-Duration-Destination OP HERRICK 10 MAR-OCT 09</p>	<p>21 SIGNAL REGIMENT AIR SUPPORT 220 SIGNAL SQUADRON OP TELIC 13</p>	<p>FORCE PROTECTION AFGHANISTAN AUG-DEC 09</p>	<p>EGYPT FTR SECT 2RTA VIKING GP BORN SURVIVORS OP HERRICK 10/11</p>	<p>FP & TPT COY ISAF XI(8) KABUL AUG'08 - FEB'09</p>	<p>PANTHERS CLAW PANCHAI PALANG THE BLACK WATCH LAD</p>

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Readers take on boss in boardroom

EARLIER this year we offered *Soldier* readers the opportunity to quiz the chief executive officer of Naafi on everything from prices to products.

Below are the questions you put to **Reg Curtis**, the head of one of the Armed Forces' best-known organisations, and his responses...

■ I run a "brew fund" (tea, coffee, milk and sugar) for a branch of approximately 20 people and find it far cheaper to drive five minutes off camp to my local Tesco than to pop across the road from my place of work to the Naafi store. The difference in price is staggering.

Would Naafi consider running a brew scheme that would allow fund managers to buy related products at a discounted price?

I approached my local Naafi (Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn) about introducing such an initiative but was told that it would have to be sanctioned at a higher level.

Brew funds are an integral part of unit life and Naafi is pricing itself out of the market.

However, I don't want to make this an argument over pricing; I understand the "convenience store" factor.

RC: As you quite rightly mention, Naafi's sole purpose is to provide serving personnel and their families with convenience, however, there is a huge amount of work going on to improve our pricing so that we can offer better value to our consumers.

As a relatively small not-for-profit organisation, we will always struggle to compete with the likes of Tesco, who have much greater economies of scale, but you can be assured we will always do our best to do so.

Whether it's a Naafi break in one of our establishments or one you arrange yourself with brew funds, I'm really keen to ensure you always get great value. I will be passing on your details to our country manager in Northern Ireland who will get in touch with you shortly to see what can be done to come up with a solution.

■ It would be nice if my local Naafi actually stocked more than five pieces of clothing in large or extra large. There are always lots of small items but never any of the larger sizes.

On another note, it would be refreshing to see products priced competitively with the Dutch, French, Danish and American PXs [Post Exchanges] who seem to be able to turn a profit while still offering much lower rates.

RC: Be assured, I really understand your challenge regarding larger clothing sizes! Unfortunately it's the age-old problem of trying to provide a balance of size options with a range of designs to what is quite a small consumer base who (not unreasonably) don't all want to be seen

out in the same T-shirt.

Some weeks we will have too many smalls and then another week too many large. Thankfully there are some weeks when we get it spot on but, having said that, we should always try harder. I will have a chat with our clothing buyers to see if there are any ways in which we can improve the situation for you.

Regarding the second point, unfortunately Naafi does not have the huge economies of scale that the likes of the American PXs do.

While we always try to be price competitive this is challenging when bringing in British products from the UK; our intention is always to provide convenience and a taste of home. That said, we are a not-for-profit organisation so when we do make a surplus it is returned back to the Services to improve facilities for you and your families.

■ I write this email in disgust that Naafi is continuing to increase the prices of its goods. I was always led to believe the organisation was there to help personnel purchase items at a cheaper rate. It seems that all you are interested in is making a whopping great profit.

Personnel can buy the same products at a lower cost elsewhere, so how can Naafi explain the regular price hikes?

RC: One of my main priorities since joining Naafi has been to look at pricing and our range, so I'm genuinely disappointed and sorry that you feel that way.

As we no longer operate sites on the UK mainland, the challenge of shipping British products to our stores overseas is an important and costly one, but critical of course if we are to provide that taste of home to Forces personnel and their families.

Over the past 18 months we have put a huge amount of effort into realigning our pricing and in many cases we do match the UK

high street; our Iceland frozen food range and our magazines are good examples of this. We have also made great steps forward with ranging and I have received excellent feedback from our customers on the launch of the Euroshopper and Enliven products which both offer outstanding value.

We are aware that fluctuating exchange rates increase the perception of frequent price changes as we generally buy in pounds and sell in euros.

Therefore, we have made things easier to understand by adopting the Forces Fixed Rate (FFR) as the conversion value wherever we have price-marked packs. I think this is a great step forward as it aligns our decisions with those of our consumers; it means the cost of these products will remain in line with the UK and only move when the powers that be change the FFR.

One important thing I should point out here is that Naafi has no shareholders to reward and that any financial surpluses we make are returned back to you though better facilities or through local command, who then make decisions on how the money is spent and invested in welfare provision.

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PS...



Soldier stateside

■ THE Intelligence Corps' women's football team recently escaped to Las Vegas for a pre-season training camp (Exercise Green Cactus). On day one of the tour LCpl Abby Russell showed us all how institutionalised she was by pulling out a copy of *Soldier* while relaxing by the pool side. – LCpl Stacey Brown, 241 MI Section.

The editor, preparing to gloat to Navy and RAF News and Defence Focus about "breaking America", types: You say institutionalised, I say incredible taste in reading material... which is more than can be said for her choice of pink sandals.

■ I GO to Abberley Hall School and read your magazine all the time.

My dad is in the Army and has moved to Warminster and I was hoping you could say good luck to him in his new job. Thanks loads. – Tom Wood.

The editor, only too happy to help, writes: Consider it done.

Dummy out over post pregnancy pay reduction

PRIOR to getting married and the arrival of my first child, I spent a year-and-a-half living-in as a single lieutenant and received £19.24 in Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) per day.

I was dismayed to find that marriage reduced this rate to £17.33 and that the addition of a child only saw it climb back up to £19.20.

After researching the subject it appears that lieutenant is the only rank which is penalised for having a family. I fail to see how my situation differs from everyone else.

The only explanation I can think of is that the Army is keen to discourage lieutenants from having families and thus penalises them. – Lt L Wattam, 1 Medical Regiment.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: LOA contributes to the necessary additional overseas costs of maintaining the same lifestyle as you could reasonably be expected to afford in the UK.

The rates are calculated, by determining through survey, the lifestyle patterns of four marker ranks: single/unaccompanied captains and corporals and their accompanied equivalents with one four-year-old child.

The goods and services that the four marker ranks purchase, along with the activities they undertake, do vary considerably; as do the patterns of spend between the two ranks of captain and corporal.

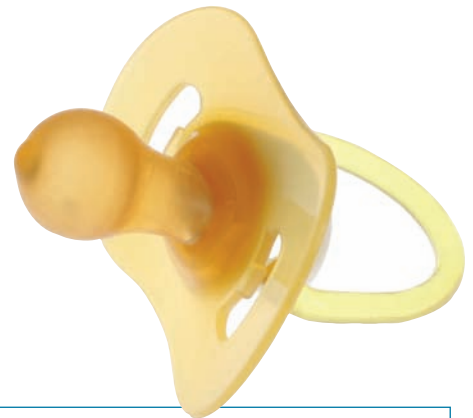
The spending patterns for the marker ranks are costed by pricing the goods, services and activities in the UK.

The same elements are also costed in the overseas location, in this case Germany. The difference between these two sets of costs is the basis of calculating the LOA levels.

These are then factored to produce the rates across all Service ranks, both single/unaccompanied and accompanied.

While I accept that in your case this process has resulted in an overall reduction in LOA, this is not always so.

The allowance you are currently receiving is deemed to be appropriate to contribute towards the necessary additional costs of living the same lifestyle overseas as a UK-based married accompanied lieutenant with one child.



Disturbed by last-minute payment of allowance

My husband is due to be posted to Paderborn from Catterick in about seven weeks' time but has been told he cannot apply for Disturbance Allowance (DA) until 45 days before his posting.

This means he won't receive the payment until the pay run after next – the day before we travel.

How is receiving the money so late supposed to be of any help? Flights, ferries and other associated bills will all need to be paid long before. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

The advice that your husband has been provided is correct. DA cannot be claimed until 45 days before posting and unfortunately in his case this places the next pay run into the period just before your move.

However, in recognition that moving is an expensive time there is a system



"I do hope you're joking, madam. A proposal to introduce a cash advance on DA... I'd have to cancel Christmas to find the money."

in place to allow Service personnel assigned abroad from the UK to apply for an advance of one month's pay.

This sum is then repaid back monthly at a maximum rate of four days' salary per month over a maximum period of 12 months. Your local admin office should advise you of the detail and help to arrange this.

As an aside, DA is not designed to pay for your travel expenses to Germany. There is publicly-funded travel via the air trooping service and transport to and from the airports.

If you decide to use your own car you have to do this at your own expense. The rationale for this is that Local Overseas Allowance currently has an element within it that allows for the buying and selling of your car.

If you decide not to use the provided arrangement then the element is considered sufficient recompense for the costs you incur. The difference is that you receive this element over time rather than as a lump sum.

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Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

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

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

DEFENCE DIARY

Until January 2011: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

December 1 onwards: The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes. The world's largest collection of Victoria Crosses and George Crosses. The new gallery examines the concept of bravery and the personal stories behind the medals. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. Call 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

December 2: The First Afghan War. Fund-raising lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in aid of the Afghan Appeal Fund. Presented by Jules Stewart with an introduction from the Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir David Richards. Venue: South Kensington, London SW7 2AR. For further information visit www.afghanappealfund.org.uk

December 4 & 5: The British Military Tournament will be held at London's Earls Court. Presented by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, it will bring together all the best elements of the world-famous Royal Tournament. Tickets cost £29 to £65 and are available from the Earls Court box office on 0870 903 9033 or by visiting www.britishmilitarytournament.com

December 4 & 5: Wartime Christmas festival. Take a step back in time and discover how Christmas was celebrated during the two World Wars and beyond, from the Christmas truce of 1914 to the front line today. Festive market with local crafts and produce. The Tank Museum, Bovington, Dorset BH20 6JG. Book by calling 01929 462359 or visit www.tankmuseum.org

Until January 31, 2011: Remembering Fromelles – An Imperial War Museum exhibition revealing the story behind First World War graves excavated in 2009 and the creation of the Fromelles cemetery. Visit www.iwm.org.uk

Until September 2011: Exhibition – A National Hero of 95 years ago: Capt Charles Fryatt. In-the-spotlight display gives visitors unique access to intriguing items in the controversial story that caused national outcry when Capt Fryatt was arrested and executed during the First World War. Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk

Starting May 2011: Exhibition of War Correspondents – Reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to us at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

SEARCHLINE

Martin Stubbs is trying to locate a cine film that was taken of his father **23412873 Terence Brian Stubbs (Stubber) MELF** on a beach in Cyprus between November 1957 and March 1959. Terence was with his mates and was filmed by an officer playing football on the beach. Contact M Stubbs by email marstu456@tiscali.co.uk

A researcher is trying to locate two Army personnel who could help him with a tragic submarine incident that happened on March 14, 1943 in the waters around Libya. The soldiers (**Fred, whose surname is not known, and Harold Donnell**) were based at Headquarters 8th Army in Libya at the time of the incident, Gp

Capt Colin Wing RAF was the CO. Contact James Cadwallader by email jimcad@ntlworld.com

Airborne Forces have celebrated their 70th anniversary this year. These volunteers initially wore their own regimental cap badge and headdress until the maroon beret was introduced by Gen "Boy" Browning. It was these men who mounted the first operations in North Africa, Normandy, Arnhem and many more. In just 70 years of service, nine Victoria Crosses have been awarded to Airborne Forces, six in the Second World War, two in the Falklands and one in Afghanistan. To mark the 70th anniversary, a 64-page, A4 colour book packed with historical detail has been published. Now available at £8 including postage. To order your copy, send a cheque to DRA Books, 14 Mary Seacole Road, The Millfields, Plymouth PL1 3JY or call direct on 01752 312061 and pay by card.

Tony Davie is married to the widow of **Capt John Love RA**, a former Army Air Corps pilot who was killed in an accident on the Okehampton Ranges, Devon in 1960. If you served with John and can tell me anything about him, especially the circumstances of his death, his wife Margaret and I would be very pleased to hear from you. Contact Tony at 26 Fetty's Brook Road, Chineham, Hants RG24 8RW or send an email to ajdavie@btinternet.com

Dhekalia Station Officers' Mess, Cyprus has a number of individually-named, silver-plated ashtrays. Purchased sometime between 1960 and 1979, I would like to return these to the individuals named on each ashtray. If you served and were part of the officers' mess, Dhekalia, during this period and would like the ashtray returned, write or call before December 31, 2010. Contact Maj J Mann, QM 62 (Cyp) Sp SqN RE, BFPO 58, email john.mann@cyp.mod.uk or phone 00357 2472 4752.

A founder member of the **Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre Association** has lost touch with the organisation after moving north. Would the secretary please get in touch, plus old comrades of 23 Medium Wireless Section, 6 Comd Signals and any former cadets and staff of the OTS, STC Mhow, Central India from 1944. Contact Mike Sinclair by email at mowgli@york.uk.net

A former soldier wishes to make contact with anyone who served with **8th Railway Squadron Royal Engineers** from late 1954 to late 1957, or anyone who served at Longmoor during that period. Contact John Barnes by email at ernest1234@terra.es

A daughter is trying to locate former soldiers who served with her father (now 92 years old) at Biggin Hill during 1940. Her father **2040039 Alexander Redgate RE, South London Search Light Battery**, was stationed at Biggin Hill to look after the pilots and aircraft during the Battle of Britain. Contact Ann Greenfield by email at annapan2@btinternet.com

15 Battalion REME requires Territorial Army volunteers for Op Herrick 15. Covering a 12-month mobilisation period with tour dates between September 2011 and April 2012. Anyone interested should contact the ROSO, 101 FS Bn REME via their company PSAO by December 10 of this year.

A student studying at Loughborough University and who is sponsored by the RAF is researching the design of an innovative multi-terrain luggage solution for her final-year project. Leanne would like feedback from soldiers on their thoughts on the current issued deployment bags and any issues or problems they may have had with them. Contact Leanne Martin by email at I.martin-08@student.lboro.ac.uk

REUNIONS

2011 Aliwal Dinner: To be held at the Telford Golf and Spa Hotel on January 29, 2011. All ex and serving members, including attached personnel of 16/5 Lancers, 17/21 Lancers and QLR are invited to this weekend function. Nine- and 18-hole golf competition on Saturday. Further details of the event and application forms can be obtained by visiting www.deathorglory.yuku.com or phoning Bill Cook on 01952 740411.

Gloucestershire Regiment 28/LXI: Reunion for 2011 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin, Korea. The all-ranks dinner of Bristol/Gloucestershire RGBW Association Back Badge will take place on April 2, 2011 in Gloucestershire. For full details and booking forms visit www.glost.org/bb2011 or send an SAE to Back Badge and Imjin 60 Reunion Team, 45 Coleridge Gardens, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 2QA.

Ex-Army apprentices: A dinner for all ex-apprentices, regardless of where you trained, on June 24, 2011. This will serve two purposes: firstly to celebrate Armed Forces Day on June 25 and secondly to donate all proceeds to the Army Apprentice National Memorial Fund. To assist planning we need replies by December 31, 2010. Bring partners or form your own groups. Send emails to chepchappy@btinternet.com or send an SAE to Colin Weir, 20 Graburn Road, Formby, Liverpool L37 3PB. The Memorial will be dedicated on September 7, 2011 at the Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffs.

COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: W02 (FofS) D Eyes, SHAPE, BFPO 26.

Naafi winner: P Rendall, 39 Signal Regiment.

Birdsong winners: Ms R Barron, MoD Medal Office; Maj S Cowen, PS2(A), HQ Land Forces; Capt B Exley, 265 Battery RA, London.

Real Band of Brothers winners: J Baker, Farnborough; G Drew, Chepstow; Capt D Bellringer, Abingdon; Ms T Gellatly, Blairgowrie; Mrs M Dawber, Munster ALC, BFPO 17.

This War winners: SSgt L Thompson, 186 Fd Company, Newcastle-upon-Tyne; D Myatt, Defence Estates, Sutton Coldfield; Cpl A Duncan, 5 Armd Company, BFPO 22; W02 (AQMS) I Bailey, BOWTAG(N), Catterick Garrison; Ms C Mercer, Thatcham, Berks.

Optimum Nutrition pack winner: LCpl J Thornton, ITC Catterick.

Multipower sportsfood winners: Capt E Mathieson, 1 Yorks, BFPO 17, M Claxton, St Athan; W02 (CSM) P Yates, Gibraltar Barracks, Blackwater.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

December: No presentations; **January 2011:** No presentations; **February 2011** – Newquay, Exeter, Taunton (dates TBC).

NO. 829

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

WIN
£100

Picture: Mark Owens



TEN details have been changed on this photograph of soldiers at the Personnel Recovery Centre in Gilmerton. Circle the differences in the upper image and send the panel to **HOAY 829, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by December 31.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the February issue.

October competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Dawn Malloy**, Imphal Barracks, York. Runners-up **LCpl C Dawes**, Lyneham, Chippenham and **Capt S J Higgs**, Prince Phillip Barracks, Bordon, each win a £25 gift voucher.



HE may well be the Governor of California, but politics was the last thing on the minds of *Soldier's* company of caption writers when confronted with the shot of Arnie and Dave below.

With not a single swipe at the American administration to be read, November's entries refused to probe beyond Schwarzenegger's silver screen service.

And predictably, one character in particular dominated proceedings.

Rosie Tyler from Reading, Berkshire, set the tone for a torrent of *Terminator*-themed responses with her offering of "Dave, I've got a message for you from Gordon... I'll be back".

And last month's winner Gavin Hall (103 Bn REME) came close to securing back-to-back victories with "Even with a karaoke chip installed, the new BAE Systems-built Terminator was clearly inferior to its US counterpart".



Picture: Andrew Parsons

"So we're agreed Nicolas, the treaty will include a clause on tactical voting... we can't have Germany winning next year's Eurovision Song Contest on their home turf."

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by December 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Karl Marlantes' best-seller *Matterhorn*.

However, a copy of Nick Allen's *Embed* goes to Simon Harrison of Wiltshire. The Ludgershall resident was the only entrant to dig deeper into the "Governor's" back catalogue and venutred "Arnie and Dave deny auditioning for *Twins 2*".

Having escaped relatively unscathed from his first *Freeze Frame* outing as Prime Minister, returning to the fray this month is David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

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www.honour-our-troops.org.uk

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www.youtube.com/britisharmy

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www.erskine.org.uk

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www.oswaldstoll.org.uk

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www.blesma.org

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

www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.nivets.org.uk

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

www.veterans-uk.info

A wealth of information about pay, pension and support services to both military personnel and the veterans community.

MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

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

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

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Picture: Steve Dock

Smaller package: The Forces Pension Society estimate that planned changes to public sector pensions could result in large reductions in retirement income

'A minor change, a major problem'

A SEEMINGLY innocuous change to public sector pensions by George Osborne in his first budget could have dramatic consequences for the future of the Armed Forces.

The Chancellor announced that the rate used to calculate the inflationary increases to pensions is to be changed to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the Retail Price Index (RPI).

For many this alteration will have passed them by, but the Forces Pension Society calculates that the switch, which affects not only pensions but also Guaranteed Income Payments, will have a significant impact.

According to the society's figures, with RPI at 2.7 per cent and CPI at 1.7 per cent, the decision will mean that the average Armed Forces pensioner will receive around £40,000 less before they reach 85.

For example, someone who retired in the year 2000, who currently receives £5,500-a-year, would have a pension of £5,037-a-year if their pension had been increased by the CPI rate rather than on the RPI since their retirement. This is a loss of 8.4 per cent or £463 per year.

The impact on widows and the injured could be even harder – there is a suggestion that in some cases they could be up to £750,000 worse off.

So what is the CPI and why does it have such an impact on the value of pensions?

The CPI and the RPI are both used to calculate inflation but crucially the former

excludes housing costs and mortgage interest payments.

For Forces families who have been mobile for the majority of their Service career and due to a myriad of other factors have joined the housing ladder rather late in life, property-related outgoings are a burden they will have to bear as pensioners.

Importantly, the Office for National Statistics believes that CPI should be recalculated to contain at least housing management costs and the not insignificant Council Tax charges.

Asked about the changes on BBC One's *Andrew Marr Show*, Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir David Richards spoke up for the personnel under his command and the families that depend on them.

He said: "We are concerned because the most important thing that the Armed Forces need to retain and keep happy are our people – we have got outstanding people... it is really important for all sorts of operational reasons." However, Gen Richards then went on to say "this is a done deal... how can we in the Armed Forces be separated from nurses, for example?"

No one would expect the three Services to be held up as better than other public servants, particularly not with nurses who do a wonderful job.

But the Armed Forces are different and I would argue that the widely acknowledged unique nature of military service demonstrates this quite forcefully. If the covenant is to mean anything then the Government must back up their fine words with strong action.

It must also be remembered that the Armed Forces pension is often relied on by both the soldier and his spouse due to the difficulties that partners have in maintaining their own pension funds.

Mobility and the consequential inability to develop a career and cultivate a significant nest egg has, I'm sure, not even been considered as a factor.

Equally as big a threat are the changes to Annual Allowance which could see officers, possibly as junior as majors, with a large tax

bill on promotion as the increase in their pension pot takes them over the new and greatly-reduced tax threshold.

This is another case of the steady erosion of soldiers' terms and conditions of service. Allowances and the pension scheme are seen as an easy target by politicians on a mission to make savings.

The impact on recruitment may be minor as the economic situation continues to make the Armed Forces an attractive package, but long-term retention of good people will be a thing of the past. ■

'This is another case of the steady erosion of soldiers' terms and conditions of service'

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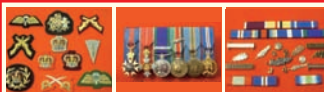
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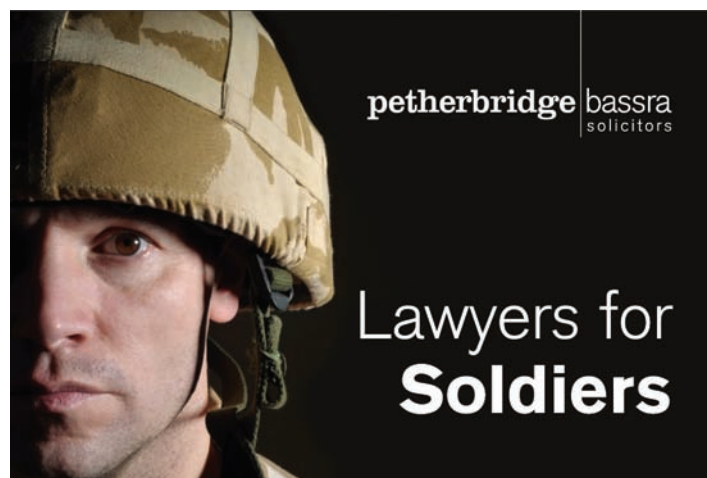


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Candid camera: *Restrepo* offers a true depiction of life as a soldier on the front line of the Korengal Valley in Afghanistan

Soldiering laid bare

Frank documentary delivers dramatic insight into those sent to fight the Taliban

Interview: Joe Clapson

WITH live footage shot from deep within a Taliban heartland, this is the actual story of the war in Afghanistan.

Numerous Hollywood blockbusters and carefully-crafted documentaries have claimed to show the true nature of conflict but *Restrepo* is the real thing.

Photographer Tim Hetherington and writer Sebastian Junger followed the US Army's Second Platoon, Battle Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade during its 14-month deployment to the Korengal Valley and their footage transports the audience to the front line in every respect.

Soldier spoke to Hetherington about the film which has raised the "war movie" bar.

"We wanted to follow a group of soldiers for an entire deployment," he said. "We wanted to take the viewer on a trip to the Korengal Valley.

"Usually photographers represent war in terms of helicopters, guns and aircraft, but the real story is with the people."

The story that unfolds is more powerful than any scriptwriter could have dreamt up, with the

talisman of the group killed in action and the camp being named in his honour.

The close-knit soldiers are visibly shaken when Juan "Doc" Restrepo dies and the struggle to deal with death and the daily monotony of fighting in "the ugliest place on earth" is made plain by the film makers without need for commentary.

"As time went on I became less concerned with the fighting and more interested in the soldiers as people," explained Hetherington.

At times the film will fill the viewer with fear as the troops patrol through woodland in danger of attack from all angles. In other parts it will shock, as they talk about the fact that "no-one is going to help you out here".

But it is in the moments of calm, when personnel have time to relax and reminisce, that the movie strikes an overwhelming chord.

The section where the footage cuts between soldier Angel Toves playing his guitar and family photos being passed round the platoon is particularly spine-tingling.

Hetherington and Junger made an editorial decision to include everything that would inform the audience without being gratuitous.

"The only things I left out were very graphic pictures of people that had been killed," said a

matter-of-fact Hetherington.

"You know what has happened and you are taken on an emotional journey – you don't need to see someone's dead body."

He went on to explain his reason for making the documentary.

"I felt the public – the US audience – needed to understand the soldiers' experience and we brought it as accurately as possible to them.

"The public needs to recognise that we're sending young men out to war and we need to appreciate that they need assistance to re-integrate back into society."

The fictional *Hurt Locker* won Oscars for its portrayal of a US Explosive Ordnance Disposal team in Iraq, but it is widely accepted that parts are exaggerated for Hollywood.

Restrepo highlights that there is no need for special effects or multi-million dollar budgets to create an awe-inspiring, breathtaking and humbling film.

The story of a group of men faced with the death of their best friends, keeping their spirits up while fighting a deadly enemy in unforgiving surroundings, speaks for itself. ■

● *Restrepo* is out now on DVD

From an environmental quest to Christmas party slashing, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

No Impact Man out now

A "DOCU-COMMENTARY" about an eco-evangelist setting out to live as zero-emission as he can for 12 months, taking his patient family on his self-flagellating journey. No electricity or toilet paper and woollen nappies – an extreme position to underline a simple point. The main character is a genuinely nice bloke who allows warts-and-all family tensions to highlight the environmental stance. Don't confuse American sincerity for saccharine schmaltz, I enjoyed this inevitably obsessive film set in the most consuming city on the planet, New York. Eating leek and potato soup for three days – can't help the ozone layer, can it?



Capt Neil Johnson, AAC

Apocalypse out now

THIS six-part documentary outlines the Second World War from start to finish. What sets this series apart from others is the fact 99 per cent of the footage is in colour. The extremely effective result is that it actually gives perspective and depth to the conflict, something the old black and white footage always misses. Each episode is broken down into understandable and very well-narrated slices covering a certain aspect of war. From Hitler's rise to power right through to the defeat of the Nazis and the Pacific War, the vivid colour footage leaves you wanting more. Outstanding from start to finish.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

Not Like Others out now

THIS dubbed European film follows two sisters on a night out and, shock horror, they are vampires. At least I get the impression they are, although in all honesty they could be a pair of brooding emo girls due to the lack of fangs. Within the first 15 minutes the females end up on the wrong side of a motorbike gang and spend the remainder of the film on the run with one wanting to be normal and the other attempting to rein her sibling in. There is nowhere near enough action and too much time with nothing happening. This movie has a plot so thin that if you used it as a tissue you would end up with a very dirty hand.



Spr James Dobbs, 101 Engr Regt



Raw footage: Film makers Tim Hetherington and Sebastian Junger capture every aspect of emotion while filming US soldiers at the Restrepo outpost

Black Christmas out now

Black Christmas is a 1974 Canadian slasher film largely based on a series of murders that took place in Quebec over the Yuletide period. The plot revolves around a sorority house that hosts a late-night festive party and during the celebrations, sorority sister Jess Bradford (**Olivia Hussey**) receives an obscene phone call from "the moaner", a recurrent caller. Throughout the film the attacker proceeds to murder the students and their housemaster one by one. Unlike the current crop of "hack 'em and slash 'em" flicks, *Black Christmas* does not offer thrills and excitement – it is mediocre, tedious and boring to watch.

Daniel Crowder, Greater Manchester ACF



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THE World According to Russell Brand is a mix of adult, dark and sharp-witted humour from Britain's most notorious and talented comedian. The West Ham-loving cockney dandy delves into his scandalous life from childhood memories to travelling experiences and thoughts on sex, lies and generally being famous as a Hollywood movie star. Universal Pictures are kindly offering five readers the opportunity to win a copy of the DVD. To have a chance of winning, tell us which football team **Russell Brand** supports. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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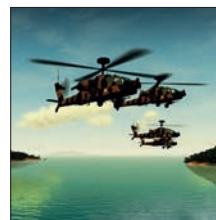


Win... Family Guy: It's A Trap!

In this third instalment of the hilarious satire, out on December 27, the Griffins reprise their intergalactic roles in a retelling of *Star Wars: Episode VI Return of the Jedi*. The offensively uproarious final chapter, sees Luke Skywalker (Chris) and Princess Leia (Lois) travel to Tatooine to free Han Solo (Peter) by infiltrating the stronghold of Jabba the Hutt (Joe). *Soldier* has teamed up with Twentieth Century Fox to offer five readers the chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us which *Family Guy* character plays Han Solo. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: December 31





Flying high: *Apache: Air Assault* gives players a unique insight into one of the Armed Forces' most-feared attack helicopters

Aerial battleground

Brand leaders take to the skies to offer unique insight into modern war machine

Review: Richard Long

AFTER sweeping all before them with the hugely-successful *Modern Warfare* series, publishers Activision have taken to the skies for the next phase of their attack on the games market.

Apache: Air Assault gives an incredibly-detailed insight into one of the most-feared helicopters in combat history and offers a flight simulator experience that spectacularly breaks the mould of its predecessors.

This success is achieved by stunning attention to detail, with players getting a true feel of what it is like to control this cutting-edge weapon.

The painstaking quest for perfection has been given a glowing endorsement by former Apache pilot Ed Macy, who was happy to support the brains behind the title ahead of the game's release.

"When I left the Armed Forces I wrote a book called *Apache*. People loved the level of detail it offered and they knew what it was like to be in there," the veteran of 23 years' service said.

"This game is modelled exactly like an Apache and it also flies like an Apache.

"Those people who love flight sims are really going to enjoy this.

"The game gives so much realism. As an Apache pilot you are there to offer intimate support, you get in there and get involved in missions, you try to take in what is going on.

"Real Apache pilots talk to the guys on the ground who are screaming for help and I think this is as close as you are ever going to get to experiencing that."

Since leaving the Army, Macy has helped to build and develop missions for the Boeing simulator and, after acknowledging that it was virtually impossible to give civilians a taste of the helicopter equivalent, he believes this new title is the next best thing.

"The graphics are better than those in the Boeing simulator and you really get a feel for what it is like to get in and fly it," he said.

"I know about designing these games and this truly replicates the experience of an Apache pilot."

The campaign mode has 16 different missions and lets players sample combat in the Middle East, the Amazon and on the African coast.

Multi-objective sorties range from out-and-out action, such as defending a power station from terrorist attack, to providing deadly-accurate

covering fire for soldiers on the ground.

To meet these goals pilots have the full Apache arsenal at their disposal and in-game cameras, which are attached to Hellfire missiles, offer a unique view of the destruction that is unleashed.

After each campaign there is a mission summary that gives details of the number of enemies destroyed, the time taken to complete the tasks and a breakdown of the financial costs involved in achieving success.

Enemy forces have been developed to react to the decisions made by pilots and the cunning foes deploy flares to deflect incoming fire and respond directly to your style of play, rather than in a stereotyped fashion that is rapidly overcome.

The dual controls are easily mastered and once airborne players are quickly involved in the impressive storyline, which is told through a series of mission briefings and cut scenes.

Apache: Air Assault's biggest success is the fact that it doesn't stick to the rigid boundaries of the traditional flight simulator.

This is truly a *Modern Warfare* of the skies and the all-out violence will appeal to fans of the first-person shooter, while the level of technical detail will offer equal entertainment to purists of this genre. ■

From washed-out wrestlers to managerial masterminds, we check out the latest releases...

Football Manager 2011 for PC and Mac

THE superb *Football Manager* returns for a new season with its biggest and best offering to date. Players can now test their tactical nous by operating in more than 50 different countries, while a new match preparation engine allows you to train your team to the most minute detail. The undoubted highlight is the live contract negotiations with agents and the stars of the game, a feature that offers further insight into the money-obsessed world of today's prima donnas. Developers Sports Interactive have once again hit the back of the net to confirm their place at the top of the management simulation league.



Out now

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood

MASTER assassin Ezio Auditore travels to Italy's greatest city, Rome, to strike at the heart of the Templar Order in the latest instalment of the hugely-popular *Assassin's Creed* series. As a newcomer to the trilogy, *Brotherhood* was somewhat confusing and slow to start with, but as the canon balls bombarded our hero's home city the tempo swiftly accelerated. The gameplay is easy to master and breathtaking scenery adds to the sense of adventure. Stalwarts will enjoy the raft of secret weapons and a new multiplayer function adds even greater variety. On the whole this is a superb addition to this ever-expanding franchise.



Out now

Sonic Colours for Wii

HOT on the heels of the slightly disappointing *Sonic 4* comes the welcome release of Sega's *Sonic Colours*. The game sees our hedgehog friend pitted against Dr Robotnik in an interstellar amusement park and each level is made from a seamless blend of 2D and 3D animation incorporating both racing and platform elements. Starting with a couple of simple run-through stages, the ante is then upped enough to keep the discerning gamer coming back for more. The addition of a Sonic simulator is a nice touch and the blend of additive gameplay and awesome graphics marks a return to form for the series.



Out now



Locked on: Flight sim fans face 16 different missions that stretch from the Middle East to the Amazon in the awe-inspiring *Apache: Air Assault*, out now

Smackdown vs Raw 2011 for all formats

THE extravagant world of "sports entertainment" returns to the video game market for the 2011 version of WWE's grappling simulation. Everything about the title looks polished, from the colourful, easy-to-use menus through to the realistic, muscle-bound superstars who "fight" each other in the ring. But for all its physical attractiveness, the release suffers from quirky controls and a very clunky feel to the gameplay which really hinders the bouts. A revamped career mode lets players take created or real wrestlers from zeros to heroes, but the journey just isn't any fun. One to avoid.

Out now



Fallout New Vegas for all formats

ITS last iteration, the fantastic *Fallout 3*, was undoubtedly one of the best games yet to be released on any format, with its go-anywhere, do-anything gameplay and riveting storyline. *New Vegas* follows the same successful track and, for the most part, does an equally good job. Transporting the action to a post-apocalyptic Las Vegas, complete with vast expanses of open plains, mountains and urban areas, the game allows players to choose between being good or bad, siding with various factions or cracking on with the main quest. A lot of bugs can cause problems but on the whole this is a great title.

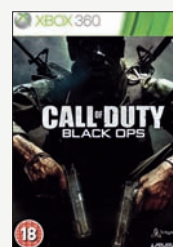
Out now



Call of Duty Black Ops for all formats

DEVELOPERS Infinity Ward switch the action to the backdrop of the Cold War for the latest chapter in the phenomenally-successful *Call of Duty* series. *Black Ops* sees elite forces veteran Alex Mason tackling campaigns in Cuba, Russia and Vietnam in a game that builds firmly on the foundations of its predecessors. The fast-paced action ranges from dense jungle combat to sniping in snow-covered mountains and the easily-mastered controls mean players are engaged from the very outset. The extended campaign mode offers great excitement, while the infinite multiplayer and online options help make this a sure-fire hit.

Out now





Singing soldier: Capt Xander Rawlins (Gren Gds) is hoping debut single *1,000 Miles Apart* will lead to a full-time music career

Guard's chart assault

Herrick veteran targets festive honours with release of Helmand-inspired anthem

Interview: Richard Long

It is hard to imagine that the intense environment of Helmand province could create the backdrop for an aspiring musician to pen a potential Christmas number one.

But for Capt Xander Rawlins a deployment on Op Herrick 11 provided the ideal inspiration for a song he hopes will storm the festive charts.

The Grenadier Guardsman's debut release *1,000 Miles Apart* focuses on the inevitable feelings soldiers and their families face at this time of year and he hopes it will be the first step towards a full-time career in the music industry.

"Lots of people have had similar emotions before they go out to Afghanistan, it is incredibly difficult saying goodbye to those you love and it is one of the most emotional experiences I have ever had," Capt Rawlins told *Soldier*.

"When I left it was hugely emotive and I started writing the song in that environment. I came up with the chords and melody the week before I went to Afghanistan and I put it together while out there with my platoon.

"I tried to make it as neutral as possible, it was

me writing a song that anyone can connect to."

Music was an important part of Capt Rawlins' six-month tour and he was determined to share the experience with his platoon.

Having formed The Renegade Irritations, the officer was keen to take centre stage whenever he could and took great delight in engaging his colleagues in the creative process.

"Music is a huge part of my life and it was obvious I would take my guitar out there with me," he explained.

"Whenever we had down time I would pick it up and start playing. It is a really good thing to do when there is not a lot going on.

"When it is busy there is an awful lot that needs to get done but there are long periods of down time when the boredom kicks in. Playing music brought everyone together.

"Whenever we had the opportunity we would be playing and having a good time."

On his return to the UK Capt Rawlins caught the attention of music company Locomotion Entertainment while performing an intimate gig with his brother.

A working relationship was quickly formed and the singing soldier headed to the studio to record his material.

"I leave the Army early next year so we will have to see what happens," the platoon commander said.

"I hope to bring out an album next summer and I will try to build up some gigs and develop what we have got.

"I have absolutely loved my time in the Army. I have stayed longer than expected, as I wanted to see my job through.

"However, I always intended to give music a crack, that is what I want to do."

In the meantime Capt Rawlins is concentrating on his debut track and aims to be among the forerunners when the Christmas chart starts to count down.

"I certainly hope so but we will just have to wait and see what happens, I will be competing against an awful lot of other people," he said.

"I have had a good response so far, people seem to like the video and they like what the song portrays. Hopefully it can snowball from there."

The single *1,000 Miles Apart* can be pre-ordered at www.hmv.com and is due to be released on iTunes and other download sites on December 13.

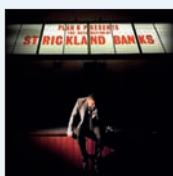
Proceeds from the song will be donated to Combat Stress and ABF The Soldiers' Charity. ■

From classic synth-pop to hard rocking around the Christmas tree, we look back at the best of 2010...

Arcade Fire, Plan B, Kings of Leon

ANY best of list should always include **Arcade Fire** and 2010 saw the release of their third studio album, *The Suburbs*. This does not disappoint and anyone who says they like all types of music needs to get into this band. For style and innovation the **Plan B** release, *The Defamation of Strickland Banks*, also makes my chart. This tells the story of a singer jailed for a crime he didn't commit. The running narrative never overwhelms the quality of the songs and the essence of northern soul complements the frequent rap intrusion. Finally, **Kings of Leon** deliver their trademark high-impact, strong sound on *Come Around Sundown*, which proves to be a solid, well-written effort.

Ray Kalaker, ex-RE



Trapt, Stone Sour, Avenged Sevenfold

THE past year has been great for rock and my top three albums come with a festive serving suggestion. *No Apologies* from **Trapt** is awash with catchy, well-written melodies. After lunch, why not give granny a wake up she will never forget with *Sound Off* and see if she agrees. **Stone Sour's** *Audio Secrecy* is an excellent antidote to plastic pop. Fire up *Unfinished* during Christmas dinner and use the surprise as cover to sneak your sprouts to the dog. Topping the chart is *Nightmare* from **Avenged Sevenfold**, in which every track is a pleasure. Select *Save Me* before telling the family that Santa piled in from 20,000ft, is currently critical in intensive care and unlikely to pull through. Happy Christmas.

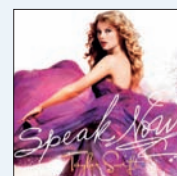
Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)



Pet Shop Boys, Taylor Swift, Cascada

THE **Pet Shop Boys** delivered a timeless collection of their 80s and 90s classics in *Ultimate Pet Shop Boys*. This contains all their best tracks and about time too. You're only going to buy this if you're a fan; I am and it is simply excellent. Although *Speak Now* doesn't really show a different side to **Taylor Swift**, it does highlight the fact she is an excellent singer/songwriter. The album is well thought out and easy to relate to and is modern country music at its best. The **Cascada** release *Evacuate the Dancefloor* was enjoyable from start to finish. This is her third album and there seems to be no let up as she continues to produce floor-filling tracks that you can't help but dance to.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



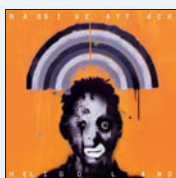


Emotional experience: Capt Xander Rawlins reflects on the thoughts and feelings of soldiers and their families on his debut single, out this month

The Roots, Massive Attack, Arcade Fire

DESPITE the best efforts of Simon Cowell and the wider pop army, 2010 was a good year for those who like their music with a little bit more substance. For hip-hop fans who have outgrown **Eminem's** angst and become tired of **Kanye West's** increasingly-bizarre attempts to reinvent himself, the catchy beats and insightful lyrics of **The Roots' *How I Got Over*** was a breath of fresh air. **Massive Attack** made a welcome return with *Heligoland* and anyone lucky enough to catch them live will confirm they have lost none of their magic on stage. But for me, this year's best album is *The Suburbs* by **Arcade Fire**. As catchy as it is innovative, every one of the LP's 16 tracks is breathtakingly well-realised.

Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier



Slash takes centre stage in 2010

THIS year has been somewhat of a musical anti-climax for me and I have only got excited about one album, which kind of snuck under the radar for a lot of people. The offering I refer to is unlikely to be known outside the readership of *Classic Rock* magazine, but **Slash**, the axeman extraordinaire formerly of **Guns N' Roses**, put together an earth-shattering collection of collaborations with the likes of **Lemmy, Ozzy Osbourne** and even **Fergie**. If you thought that rock was dead, you are very much mistaken; this self-titled release has hardly been off my iPod and looks likely to figure in my listening plans for some time to come. An absolute must if you like rock at its very best.

W02 Mo Morris, RLC



Delphic, Chemical Bros, House Mafia

WHEN pondering the musical highs of 2010 it was rather surprising to see the electro scene featuring so prominently. Manchester trio **Delphic** made a triumphant start to the year with *Acolyte*, an album that flits between indie, dance and trance to achieve stunning results. After being less than impressed with the first few plays, *Until One* by DJ superstars **Swedish House Mafia** has proved to be a real grower and their euphoric sound just gets better with each listen. However, the **Chemical Brothers** led the way with *Further*, a superb record that sees the dance duo ditching their customary collaborators to create a new electronic masterpiece.

Richard Long, Soldier





Magnificent men: Published by Century and out now in hardback, *Warriors* hails Great Britain's ranks of standout Service personnel

Soap star's salute

Eastender pays tribute to the many unsung heroes to have answered their country's call

Interview: Stephen Tyler

EVER since he first set foot in Helmand province for his TV series about the Army's exploits in Afghanistan, Ross Kemp has become a familiar front-line face.

The former-*Eastenders* actor has now deployed to the heart of Op Herrick on five occasions to report on the modern-day acts of bravery performed by Britain's Servicemen and women.

But despite his exposure to the 21st Century military, the broadcaster has looked back to the amazing deeds of veterans of previous conflicts to inspire his latest work.

In *Warriors: British Fighting Heroes*, Kemp retells the stories of soldiers, sailors, Royal Marines and airmen who fought in the First and Second World Wars.

The tales of gallantry make for a gripping read and the author told *Soldier* of his motivation for bringing them to the attention of the wider public.

"I got signed by a publishing house and we had a brainstorming session about what we would like to write about," he said.

"I have been to Afghanistan five times, not

just for a week, and some of my best mates are soldiers and marines.

"I've also got a family with a military background so it was a no-brainer to write this book and let people know about these brave men."

The title is split into sections representing each of the Services and the result is a fascinating feel for the diversity of combat in the 20th Century's largest conflicts.

From an officer who survived behind enemy lines in Malaya to a Victoria Cross-winning senior NCO who took part in the D-Day landings, it is impossible not to admire the personnel featured.

For Kemp, the fact that the vast majority of the case studies were volunteers makes their actions even more remarkable.

"Just by being there they were brave, whether they stormed a pillbox and killed 1,000 men or not," he said. "They lost so many of their friends and colleagues and it's important that we are thankful for what they did.

"If there's a distinction to be made, it's that a lot of these men were conscripted.

"They performed these outstanding acts of bravery after answering the call of their country. It's because of them that we live in a free Britain."

Kemp's family history and personal experiences

of war infuse his writing with a tangible sense of enthusiasm and the research that went into *Warriors* – thanks in no small part to historian Niall Edworthy – lends it an air of authority.

It may not be particularly ground-breaking, but with the last living links to the First World War gone and the number of Second World War veterans ever-dwindling, the book provides a timely reminder of the sacrifices made by previous generations.

The title further enhances Kemp's credentials as a fan of the Forces following his frequent trips to Afghanistan and personal visits to units.

The actor-turned-award-winning documentary maker is also a patron of Services charity Help for Heroes and hopes that the military's high standing in society does not diminish.

"The public support for our Armed Forces is fantastic, but my only worry is that the media fall in love with [the Services] just to fall out with them," he explained.

"I'm very proud to see how much money Help for Heroes has raised and I hope that it continues for a long time.

"If you see a veteran, shake them by the hand because if it wasn't for them we wouldn't be living in the democracy that we are." ■

From the Fallschirmjager to a fishy tale, a furtive flick through this month's literary releases...

Jump into Hell by Frank Kurowski

A JOURNALIST with the German Army during the Second World War, **Kurowski** examines the history of the Nazi paratroopers – the Fallschirmjager – who were the point of the spear of numerous battles undertaken by Hitler's forces. *Jump into Hell* is well researched and features many first-person accounts of hand-to-hand combat; with photographs, maps and interviews with senior officers adding to its credibility. The author takes the reader to the heart of the action, although he should have been more respectful to the enemy when describing the outcome of the skirmishes he dramatically portrays.



Bill Haslam, ex-R Signals

The Burden of Guilt by Daniel Allen Butler

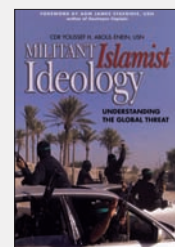
THE First World War caused the death of millions and wrought destruction of a continent on a scale never seen before. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife, a relatively small event, precipitated the chaos. **Daniel Allen Butler** argues that Germany had the power and diplomatic might to prevent conflict but chose to act as a ruthless, battle-hungry protagonist and started the fighting to distract from domestic issues. Historians have contended for nearly a century that responsibility for the war was a shared one between the Great Powers; Butler, in this thought-provoking book, challenges that view.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Militant Islamist Ideology by Aboul-Enein

THE author seeks to define the differences between Islam, Islamists and Militant Islamists by understanding the groups' viewpoints and actions through ideological thinking. By deconstructing some of the fundamental terminology and rhetoric in use by each set and analysing their leaders and prestigious personalities, the title goes some way to explaining the rationale behind the militant movement. The context of the book is set very much at the higher levels of Defence thinking; however it stimulates further thought and reading, recommending several works for a greater appreciation of Islam and the Qur'an.



Capt Jim Vincent, RLC

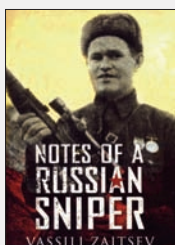


Fan of the Forces: Ross Kemp has developed close ties with Britain's military having completed repeated reporting visits to southern Afghanistan

Notes of a Russian Sniper by V Zaitsev

VASSILI Zaitsev was brought firmly to the attention of the Western world in 2001 by box office hit *Enemy at the Gates*. Reaching far beyond the cinematic interpretation, his memoirs create a vicious and fascinating picture of the Battle of Stalingrad. Punctuated with an indifference to violence that would have been necessary to survive the campaign, and contextualised by the story of Zaitsev's early years, this is a truly captivating read. A must for Second World War historians, casual or otherwise, this book encapsulates the life of a Russian in Stalingrad and the pinnacle of the sniper's art that its author achieved.

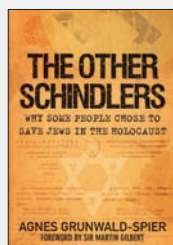
Jon Owens, civvy



The Other Schindlers by A Grunwald-Spier

THANKS to Steven Spielberg, most people will have heard of Otto Schindler and his exploits saving Jewish workers from Nazi persecution during the Second World War. This book, penned by a Holocaust survivor, looks further afield and brings to light dozens of examples of others who put their own lives at risk to save Jewish men and women from being slaughtered. Numerous case histories are presented in a comprehensive and considered manner. This is an academic offering but crucially it remains readable and engaging. I found it an enlightening book that exposed many of the positive facets of human motivation.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



The Crabb Enigma by M & J Welham

A GOOD conspiracy theory is normally guaranteed to provide a reassuring charge of excitement, especially one that took place in the lifeless waters of Portsmouth harbour in 1956, when Commander "Buster" Crabb disappeared on a secret diving mission. However, *The Crabb Enigma* is an intense disappointment. Not content with one conspiracy, **Mike** and **Jacqui Welham** have created another to encompass their own investigation and they are seemingly able to construct a hypothesis from thin air. The writing style is ponderous, the spelling mistakes plentiful and the phraseology repetitive. The most exciting thing about this title is its cover.

Lt Col (Retd) Nick Sim, ex-PWRR





Disco tech: Diesel filters, a low engine idle speed and advanced aerodynamics are among the Discovery 4 XS's green credentials

Drive of discovery

'Chelsea tractor' detractor won over by understated class of Land Rover favourite

Review: Stephen Tyler

AS a manufacturer with a strong military pedigree, Land Rover's vehicles are a familiar sight on the British Army landscape.

The iconic Snatch, which made its name in Northern Ireland, has served on the front line of most major conflicts since and is still easily found on bases and training exercises to this day.

But it is not just while on duty that troops have deployed Land Rovers. The company's various models can be found adorning the driveways of Forces families up and down the country.

Perhaps the most popular of all is the Discovery. Bigger and more able than its baby brother the Freelander and more serious than the bold and brash Range, the "Disco" has won hearts and minds thanks to its go-anywhere ability and rugged good looks.

The vehicle's reliability means that there is a burgeoning market for second-hand models, but with extra features being added each year, we decided to put a brand new Land Rover Discovery 4 XS through its paces. The first thing we noted when the 60-plate off-roader rolled up at *Soldier*

HQ was that it really looked the part. Where the Range Rover Sport featured last month was all body kit and diamond-cut alloys, the Discovery 4 retains the poise of previous versions.

Little touches like a new badge on the front grille and powerful signature headlights add a bit of bling to the exterior, but ultimately the Discovery 4 retains the poise of previous versions.

Climbing into the spacious interior, things get even better. Luxury leather seats are comfortable and provide a good, commanding view of the road. Unlike the Range Rover Sport, passengers in the back seats also have plenty of room, making the Discovery a better choice for families.

Although technology plays a big part in the Land Rover experience, the Discovery is not quite as forward as its siblings in showing off its abilities. A clean, uncluttered dash features push-button start, traction controls and the now-standard hard-disk navigation system and DAB radio.

Any notions that starting the engine will signal an overload of growling noise are quickly put in their place by a discreet hum coming from the three-litre, turbo-diesel powerplant.

The Discovery is comfortable at low revs and, as cynical as our Chelsea tractor-hating selves tried to be, is actually very manoeuvrable around town,

but it is off-road that it really earns its reputation.

An impressive gradient acceleration control prevents the Disco from picking up too much speed downhill or struggling uphill, while Land Rover's hill start assist makes inadvertently rolling backwards a thing of the past.

So, it looks the part, drives well and can reach off-road locations most cars can only dream about. But what about its green credentials?

Despite its reputation as a gas-guzzler, the Discovery has gone a long way to addressing its environmental responsibilities and the latest model features e_Terrain technology which, its makers claim, will boost economy and reduce CO2 emissions. It will probably still do more harm to Mother Earth than a two-door hatchback, but there is no denying that Land Rover has gone to great lengths to ensure that the Discovery does its bit for the planet.

The Range Rover Sport might be the ideal choice for drivers who want to get noticed, but for those who prefer a more subtle approach to luxury, the Discovery 4 is the perfect choice.

Starting at just under £42,500 it might not be within everyone's price range, but for those who can afford it, this Disco is one club that is worth the entry fee. ■

We take a closer look at the raft of features included in the Land Rover Discovery 4 XS...

Beauty contest

THE Land Rover Discovery 4 will win new friends straight away with its classy exterior. Starting with 19-inch, seven-spoke alloy wheels as standard, the Disco sets itself apart from the crowd with touches including tungsten-finish door handles and air intakes and a colour-coded front bumper and rear tailgate lift handle. Making sure the vehicle retains its perfect paint finish is made a lot easier by a series of safety features. The wing mirrors are powered and can be folded in to cope with tight spaces, while front and rear parking sensors make it very difficult to bump into anything while negotiating your local "pay and display".



Mark out of ten: Eight

Space age

WHILE the Range Rover Sport might be seen as the ideal choice of motor for single men or women looking to make an impact, its lack of space in the back makes it less suitable for families. The Discovery 4, however, is perfect. The rear seats offer plenty of leg and head room as well as the comfort you would expect from a Land Rover. Up front, things are just as spacious and combine the room with added luxury. Heated leather seats are a joy to sit in and provide the driver and front passenger with a commanding view of the road ahead. The boot is cavernous and can cater with most cargo – be it double buggies or the obligatory set of golf clubs.



Mark out of ten: Eight

Making a dash

THE rush to shoehorn as much technology as possible into modern cars has seen several vehicles released onto the market with dashboards requiring military-standard training to operate. The Land Rover Discovery 4 is luckily not one of them. The centre console features a touch-screen panel which is used to operate the navigation system and entertainment options including DAB radio and CD player. A simple push button starts the engine and other switches for heating, air conditioning and different driving modes are well-placed and easy to use. Steering wheel controls for the audio system and telephone are also included.



Mark out of ten: Seven



Club class: Less bling and brash than its Range Rover Sport sibling, the Discovery 4 retains the poise and performance of its predecessors

Pictures: Graeme Main

Star performance

ANYONE taking the plunge and buying a brand new Land Rover is in all likelihood not doing so with the intention of clocking up thousands of motorway miles. The three-litre diesel engine's bread and butter is tackling off-road routes and tough gradients and it does a very good job in that respect thanks to stability programmes and suspension options. But that is not to say it does not offer an equally-enjoyable experience on smoother roads. The six-speed automatic gearbox is linked to a turbocharged engine which can pull the Disco from 0-60mph in nine seconds. Not particularly quick, but it is smooth and powerful.



Mark out of ten: Seven

That's entertainment

MODERN motorists have grown used to having easy access to a plethora of multimedia options and the Land Rover Discovery 4 follows that trend in style. The fun is centred around the touch-screen panel located in the main console. With a few presses of the easy-to-use menu system, the vehicle is filled with sound from its nine Harman Kardon speakers. If there is nothing good on the DAB or FM radio stations, a single CD player is also on hand. But the nicest touch is a USB connectivity slot to allow drivers to plug in portable MP3 players and have ultimate control over the soundtrack to their journeys.



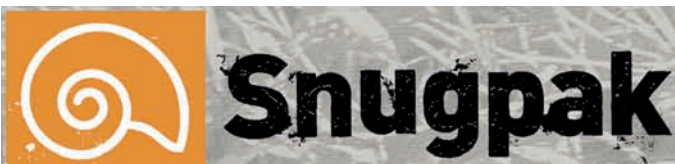
Mark out of ten: Seven

Soldier-specific sales

REGARDLESS of rank, pay scale and whether or not you are in receipt of Local Overseas Allowance, there is no denying that buying a Range Rover represents a major investment. But luckily for serving personnel, Land Rover offers hefty discounts on the prices civvies have to pay for their cars. All members of the Armed Forces are eligible to receive 13 per cent off the price of any vehicle in the range, equating to savings of up to £7,722. Servicemen and women can find out more by calling Peterborough-based Marshall Military Sales on 01733 213231 or visiting the company's dedicated website.



www.landrovmilitarysales.co.uk



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Picture: Graeme Main



ON THE CREST OF A WAVE: ARMY KITESURFERS HIT THE BEACH IN PURSUIT OF INTER-SERVICES GLORY

ALSO IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE...



P96 **RUGBY**
SERVICES SLIP TO
DOUBLE DEFEAT



P98 **SNOWBOARDING**
ARMY ACE RETURNS TO
THE SLOPES



P104 **SKYDIVING**
TEAM EUPHORIA
FLYING HIGH



P105 **MOTOR SPORT**
DRAG RACER SHINES
AT SANTA POD

BRILLIANT BAA BAAS



Star showing: Army fly half Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots) was in fine form for the Combined Services and scored the try of the match as he danced through the Barbarians' defence



Forces friend: Baa Baas coach Brian Ashton celebrates with his players after a hard-fought win in the annual Remembrance Day fixture at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium



On the charge: Lock forward Sgt Darrell Ball (RE, left) marshalls the Services' defence as the free-flowing Barbarians launch another ferocious attack during their 46-21 victory



Game over: Army ace Capt Mark Lee (AGC (ALS)) leads the Combined Services team in congratulating their world-famous opponents at the end of a pulsating and bruising match



Tough times: Spr Peceli Nacamavuto (RE) tries to break through the Samoan defence at Kingsholm

Services outgunned

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Graeme Main, Steve Dock

THE all-out attacking flair of the Barbarians and Samoa proved too hot to handle for the Combined Services Rugby Union team as they slipped to comprehensive defeats in their autumn fixtures.

A 2,000-strong crowd at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium saw New Zealand Maori star Willie Walker lead the world-famous Baa Baas to a 46-21 victory in an enthralling annual Remembrance Day fixture.

The dynamic fly half crossed for two scores and was a constant attacking threat in a game that yielded 11 tries and some outstanding individual performances throughout.

Tongan international lock Talite Vaoleti started the avalanche of points when he crashed over with just three minutes gone.

Walker showed his first glimpse of brilliance moments later as he ghosted through the Services' defence for an easy score under the posts as the invitational side threatened to run riot.

But the hosts managed to stop the rot and slowly found a foothold in the

game after a difficult opening.

The electric pace of Spr Gus Qasevakatini (RE) created an opening for Royal Navy wing LCpl Josh Drauniniu and the England Sevens man evaded would-be tacklers to power to the line.

Man-of-the-match Walker instantaneously hit back with a sublime sidestep that saw the Worcester Warrior ease through the home defence and cross for his second score.

The inspirational Pte Jack Prasad

(1 Scots) underlined his undoubted class with a dazzling try just minutes before the interval but wise words from Barbarians coach Brian Ashton, who led England to the World

Cup final in 2007, had a stunning impact on his side as they made a ferocious start to the second period.

Wing Paul Jarvis, whose searing pace caused problems all night, struck an early blow before South African international fullback Thinus Delpont sprinted to the line from deep inside his own half to extend the advantage.

Royal Air Force fullback Cpl James Reid provided a glimmer of hope when he collected a deft pass from LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh) to

'We matched them in the pack but we lacked the pace and clinical edge'

score, but three further tries from the visitors sealed what proved to be a comprehensive win.

Prasad was a razor-sharp attacking threat on a tough night for the Services, while the rampaging LCpl Joe Kava (RLC) had a fine game in the back row.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* at full time, Ashton was full of praise for both teams and was delighted to be involved in such a thrilling match.

"I thoroughly enjoyed it," he said. "The game was a great spectacle and 67 points on the scoreboard proves that.

"The difference was we scored early tries in the first and second halves. But fair play to the Combined Services, they continued to play throughout and they produced some cracking rugby in the second period, our defence was scrambling at times.

"I have done a bit of work with the Forces so I know what they are about. When you look down the team sheet and see four or five Fijian names you know they will be a danger and so it proved to be."

Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium welcomed more than 6,000 people for the Samoa clash a week later and they were treated to a night of fine attacking rugby from the tourists.

The Services made a strong opening and took the lead courtesy of a penalty from the trusty boot of Navy scrum half POAET Dave Pascoe.

But the Pacific Islanders soon found their rhythm. Iosefa Tekori was the first to score, spinning out of a tackle to crash over in the corner.

Pascoe then slotted a second penalty but Samoa replied with two quick tries to stretch their lead.

Senior Service star Cpl Greg Barden reduced the arrears as he pounced on an error from Mikaele Pesamino to score, but the visitors immediately hit back and went on to establish a 35-13 interval score.

The electric pace of the Samoan backs was a key feature of the second period as the points continued to flow, with replacement Falemiga Selesele particularly elusive.

Powerful forward play was the Services' biggest weapon and the Army-inspired pack forced a penalty try following a series of brutal drives close to their opponents' line.

Reid continued his fine form from the Baa Baas clash to add a further score at the death but the Samoans were well worth their 66-25 win.

Combined Services manager WO1 Billy Bragg (RLC) said Samoa's international class was a significant factor in the outcome but believes his players should be proud of their effort.

"Samoa had been together for three games before this fixture where we had

just a couple of days to prepare," he told *SoldierSport*.

"We also lost four or five to injury, big players like Satala, Qasevakatini and Drauniniu, but we decided to stick with our initial 30-man squad.

"They did well but it just shows the difference between internationals and part-timers like ourselves. Every single mistake we made was pounced upon.

"But we hope our boys have developed and have enjoyed the experience of playing in matches like this."

Bragg highlighted the Services' forwards for particular praise, with Kava and Capt Mark Lee (AGC (ALS)) among the standout performers on the night.

Tpr Samesi Rokoduguni (Scots DG, pictured below) also impressed with a fine display on the wing.

Bragg added: "It was good to see an Army front row out there and we smashed them. We matched them in the pack but we lacked the pace and clinical edge in our backs.

"A few harsh words were said but I really don't think that is fair.

"Samoa are the current International Rugby Board Sevens champions and their pace simply tore us apart." ■

'We hope our boys have developed and have enjoyed the experience'



STUNNING SAMOANS



Hands on: Prop forward LCpl Melvyn Lewis (WG) gets to grips with a rampaging Samoan attacker during the Combined Services' first international fixture in 15 years at Gloucester



Strong defence: Army powerhouses Capt Mark Lee (AGC (ALS)) and LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh, left) do their best to thwart the pace and creativity of Samoa's brilliant backs



Captain marvel: Skipper POAET David Pascoe slotted an early penalty to open the scoring but his efforts with the boot could not prevent a comfortable win for the Pacific Islanders



Opening stance: Samoan players perform the traditional Siva Tau war dance ahead of kick-off. The chant inspired the tourists to a dynamic 66-25 victory over their Forces rivals

BOARDER CROSSING

Winter sports star targets top international honours after sublime Service form prompts progress to the ranks of the British team

Interview: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH London's Olympic spectacle now less than two years away, athletes across the country are honing their skills in a bid to grace what will undoubtedly be the nation's greatest-ever sporting event.

But Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) has set his sights further afield and is dreaming of glory in the freezing temperatures of Sochi in Russia, rather than on the track in Stratford.

The snowboard cross star has progressed to the ranks of the British team and after an encouraging debut campaign last year has returned to action on a quest to push for a place at the Winter Games in 2014.

Nicholson started his ascent at the annual Army snowboarding competition Exercise Snow Jack and he was soon selected for the Inter-Services showdown, where he was victorious in his first year.

"It just carried on from there," the officer told *SoldierSport*. "I represented the Combined Services at the British Championships and did quite well.

"Off the back of that I was asked to try out for the Great Britain team. I got that opportunity last winter and they liked what they saw.

"I was travelling around, competing against a lot of other national teams, racing at Europa Cup level.

"The tracks were a real step up from the Inter-Services. The courses were double or triple the size, they were

incredible, and the obstacles were simply unbelievable.

"I was in a sink or swim situation. I finished 17th in my first competition and I had a number of good results throughout the season.

"But for me it was all about learning the techniques and courses and developing my robustness in preparation for this year.

"This season I should start to see the results of that. I have the equipment and skills I need and I have been training at the British Institute of Sport, where I had specific fitness programmes designed for me."

The adrenalin-fuelled discipline is a fast and aggressive downhill race that sees riders going head-to-head on specially-designed courses that include an array of obstacles and challenges, at speeds of up to 70kmph.

Nicholson will compete in the Army Championships in Austria before facing a two-week training camp ahead of a Europa Cup event on December 18 and 19.

The Inter-Services will be held in Meribel from January 29 and he has set his sights on further success on the French slopes.

"My aim is to win each individual event at the Inter-Services, that would be incredible," he explained.

"I also want the Army team to win overall and as captain I will be pushing the guys to reach the standards I expect.

"The Europa Cup and the International Ski Federation competitions are my proving grounds

SOLDIERSPORT'S SNOWBOARD GUIDE

● Snowboard cross is an event featuring four riders who start simultaneously at the top of an inclined track

● Courses are quite narrow and include cambered turns, gap jumps, steep and flat sections, berms and drops that are designed to test a rider's agility and skill

● It is not uncommon for competitors to collide and they wear full-face helmets for extra protection

● Snowboard cross has been part of the Winter X Games since the annual event was launched in 1997

● The sport made its Winter Olympic debut in 2006 and has been included among the events at the 2014 Games to be held in Sochi, Russia

● Zoe Gillings is one of GB's most high-profile riders and was ranked fifth in the world last season





this time round. I have had a season of experience and now I want to start seeing some results.

"I will know at the end of the year if the 2014 Olympics are a possibility, I'm in a strong position and I now know I have the resources behind me."

Despite progressing to the international stage, the skilled athlete has not forgotten the terrific Service support he has received and is delighted to be part of a set-up that has become the envy of its Forces rivals.

"I did not race seriously until I joined the Army," Nicholson said. "They gave me the opportunity to really push myself in the sport of snowboarding and go down the avenue of representing Great Britain.

"The Army has been very, very strong in snowboarding, winning the Inter-Services every year. That is down to the professionalism of the squad and the hard work of the manager and coaching team.

"The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have had to up their game and they are bringing in professional coaches to train them. For the first time we are all competing on the same level.

"The support of the REME and my CO has also been fantastic.

"My career is being carefully managed and I do not want to be a tracksuit soldier. I want to be a professional engineer in the REME and pursue my career in the Army." ■

Board meeting: Snowboard ace Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) showcases the tricks of his trade during a training session on the indoor slopes at the SNO!zone in Milton Keynes



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Surfers find right wave

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

ARM Y riders have continued their fine progress on the water with a determined showing at the Inter-Services kitesurfing championships.

With near-perfect conditions greeting competitors at Westward Ho in Devon, a youthful Army team was hoping to improve on its second-place finish at last year's event.

But despite some fine individual performances, the Royal Navy were ultimately too strong for their Forces rivals and the Service stars had to settle for the runners-up spot yet again.

Spokesman WO1 Kev Main (R Anglian) told *SoldierSport* the team will be going all-out to get their hands on the 2011 title and believes that another year of training and competition will provide much-needed experience for the new recruits.

"We had some real up-and-coming riders taking part, three or four guys who have not even been highlighted in Army circles before," he said.

"Some of the younger members have come from a land boarding background. They have no fear on land so when they get out on the water they really rip it up a level.

"A lot of it is down to the training. We are trying to do a lot more for next year and we are hoping to set up rider clinics so we can improve standards.

"We have mainly concentrated on meetings up until now but next season it will be far more technical."

The Devon coastline brought particular success for Maj Hamish Macpherson (1 RRF), who was crowned individual Inter-Services champion, while Cfn Adam Hogarth (REME) was second in the slope style event, a contest judged on who performs the best tricks.

This year's competition was subject to extra scrutiny as officials from the



Surfs up: Cfn James Matthews (1 RRF) rides the waves at the Inter-Services championship in Devon

British Kitesurfing Association assessed the riders via the marking criteria used at national tournaments.

"There was a lot of wind, ranging from average to strong bursts, which created great conditions," Main said.

"Adam did very well and Hamish had a lot more tricks up his sleeve. The strong winds slightly overpowered him and he should have won the slope style competition as well."

With the sport continuing to go from strength-to-strength, Main is now appealing for more newcomers to show

their interest and help push kitesurfing even further.

"Young privates, craftsmen and junior NCOs are what we are ideally looking for," he added.

"This is a chance to try one of the best adrenalin sports going. It takes a couple of days to learn the basics and with lots of practise it can take you anywhere in the world."

For more information on Army kitesurfing and the various courses on offer visit www2.armynet.mod.uk/sports/asa/kitesurfing ■



MAIN MAN

WO1 Kev Main (R Anglian) helped the Army claim second place in this year's Inter-Services kitesurfing championships. The senior NCO finished equal tenth in the individual standings and was delighted to see a number of new riders taking to the waves in Devon



FLYING HIGH

ARMY riders have continued to make fine progress in the sport of kitesurfing with another encouraging performance at Westward Ho. The squad will be going all-out to secure next year's Inter-Services championship crown after suffering a narrow loss to their Royal Navy rivals



STAR TURN

LEADING light Maj Hamish Macpherson (1 RRF) celebrated outstanding personal success after he was named individual Inter-Services champion. He returned to the water to finish third in the slope style event, with teammate Cfn Adam Hogarth (REME) coming second

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Sporting star: Capt Michael Mooney (RAPTC) has continued his illustrious career on the squash court

All-rounder plays on

SERVICE veteran Capt Michael Mooney (RAPTC) has continued his pursuit of sporting excellence with a strong showing at the 2010 Inter-Corps Squash Championships.

The 62-year-old won four of his five matches during the three-day competition at Aldershot to help his team retain their first division status.

Testing himself against the best the Army has to offer is nothing new for an officer who has achieved an incredible array of sporting honours in a Forces career that spans 45 years.

Mooney is a former athletics and boxing champion who has played rugby for the Welsh Guards and was captain of his corps football team.

He excelled in the pole vault and pentathlon and was also a member of the Army tug-of-war squad.

With such a strong pedigree it is no surprise that his performances have been anything other than exemplary.

"Squash has now taken over as my main sport," Mooney told *SoldierSport*.

"I will carry on for as long as my body lets me and I want to continue competing against the young ones.

"The RAPTC was promoted last season and our aim for this year was to build for the future.

"I was really successful. At the age of 62 you have to prepare properly and hopefully I can help bring some more players through." ■

SPORT SHORTS

■ **BADMINTON** players have been put through their paces with two days of intense competition at the AGC championships in Aldershot.

More than 230 games were played as 35 competitors sought victory on the court, while also hoping to qualify for the squad to tour Hong Kong in April.

A professional coach was brought in for the first time to provide advice and help personnel improve their game, with novices and the more established players taking full advantage of the tuition on offer.

Competition winners were: mixed doubles – Maj Sally Kirk and WO1 Jon Purvey; ladies' doubles – Maj Sally Kirk and Sgt Pippa Henderson; men's doubles – Pte Ken Li and Cpl Eric Yuen; ladies' singles – Maj Sally Kirk; men's singles – Cpl Eric Yuen; novice ladies' – Capt Jenny Long; novice men's – SSgt Smudge Smith; and inter-men's – Maj Greig Taylor.

■ **ARMY** Rugby League players have taken to the field for a charity match in memory of the late Pte

Tom Sephton (Mercian), who died from wounds sustained in Afghanistan.

A crowd of more than 1,000 people watched the Service side take on a strong Crosfields ARLC select team in a match that raised £7,700 for Help for Heroes.

The opposition fielded a number of players who lined-up alongside Pte Sephton during his time with the club, a number of which now play with Super League teams Warrington Wolves, St Helens and Salford Reds.

The game proved to be a full-blooded affair, with the Army celebrating a narrow 32-30 victory.

■ **RUNNER** Capt Edward Matts (3 R Welsh) has completed the gruelling Sahara Ultra Marathon to raise more than £1,800 for charity.

The TA soldier raced across 250km of arduous desert terrain while carrying all his own kit, food and clothing in a bid to support the work of Help for Heroes and Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Donations can still be made at www.justgiving.com/saharamarathon-H4H

Gunner's silver service

OLYMPIC hopeful Lt Heather Stanning (RA) has taken a giant stride towards making the Great Britain team for the 2012 Games after winning a silver medal at the World Rowing Championships.

Competing alongside civilian Helen Glover in the women's pair, the 25-year-old gave an inspired performance as the duo pushed reigning champions New Zealand all the way before finishing in second place.

The rookie double act was not expected to medal at the event having finished ninth and fifth in two World Cup Series races earlier in the year.

GB performance director David Tanner was thrilled with the medal and described the result as a "breakthrough performance" for Stanning and Glover.

"We knew we wanted to be on the podium," the Army star said. "We both have high standards and I don't think we would have been happy with anything else."

Stanning (pictured below on the left) won gold at the 2007 World Under-23 Championships and is now in full-time training with the British squad.



Picture: GB Rowing Team/Intersport Images

SPORT SHORTS

BOBSLEIGH driver Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) has continued her rapid rise in the sport by being named as the British number one for the new season.

The Army star will be hoping to build on her encouraging form at the Winter Olympics earlier this year, when she finished an agonising 0.05 seconds away from a top ten spot in Vancouver.

"I have worked hard for the last three years, making sure I was the strongest, the fastest and the best mentally prepared and now it has paid off," she said.

"I feel I have come so far in such a short time. I now need to prove that the right choice has been made. I am in great shape and have been pushing personal best times so I am confident that I will be getting some great results this season."

AN early call for entries has been made ahead of the 44th Army Tenpin Bowling Championships in March.

The event is open to past, present and future Service bowlers, as well as their spouses, partners and children.

Entry forms are now available for the competition, which will take place from March 4 to 6.

Further information is available from Mark Passfield on 07887 692237 or mark_passfield@dsl.pipex.co.uk

DISTANCE runners from 156 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps have raised £20,000 for charity following an impressive showing in the Moscow Marathon of Peace.

The event was the culmination of ten months of fund-raising and training for the nine-strong team, who are dividing the money between ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the Everton Foundation sports initiative.

The race route featured a number of famous sites, including the Kremlin, All Saints Cathedral and Gorky Park, and the athletes will officially donate the money from their marathon effort before a Premier League fixture at Everton's Goodison Park stadium.

To offer your support visit www.justgiving.com/156runningmoscow

Picture: Andy Newell



Flying high: Sgt Andy Myers and Sgt Dave Pacey (both RA) have celebrated a terrific year of success

On top of the world

THE Army Euphoria parachute team has capped a fine year in the skies by claiming seventh place at the World Championships in Russia.

Jumping from 13,500ft, the daredevils had to complete artistic routines and randomly assigned patterns over seven rounds.

For Sgt Andy Myers and Sgt Dave Pacey (both 29 Commando Regt, RA), along with cameraman Andy Newell (ex-RHA), the event marked the culmination of more than a year's hard work and they were delighted with the result.

"We lost to the German national team who finished sixth by the narrowest of margins, 0.1 of a point, and we were top of the non-professional teams," Pacey said.

"This was an awesome experience for everyone, we achieved more than we thought was possible against the best in the world and we look forward to coming back again."

The team's success in Russia was followed by victory at the Army competition and a silver medal at the national championships, which were held in Lincolnshire.

Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding, RLC



Smith returns to court

ARMY medic Pte Kerry Smith has helped guide her team to a second-place finish in a Service netball tournament just over a year after being injured in a Taliban ambush.

The 26-year-old was on patrol in the Babaji district of Helmand province when she was shot twice in her left leg and once in her hand in an attack that saw her lose two fingers.

She had to talk two members of her company through how to treat her wounds and after several months of treatment and physiotherapy at Headley Court she was able to regain full fitness and returned to her regimental duties at Easter.

Smith volunteered to play for 2 Medical

Regiment's netball team and, despite finishing as runners-up to 1 Logistics Support Regiment in the German tournament, will accompany her team to the Army Championships in the UK.

She said: "I always intended to come back and get involved in sport again after my injury. It has taken a long time and I had to go through a lot of tests to see if I was ready.

"We did well to get to the final, all the girls should really be happy with themselves and now we can look forward to competing in the Army championships. It is good to get back into the swing of things and I am delighted that I can represent my regiment in competitions like this."



Speed demon: WO2 Paul Cresswell (REME) tests his modified Honda Civic on the Santa Pod circuit

Racer hits top gear

Report: Richard Long

PETROL head WO2 Paul Cresswell (10 Trg Bn REME) has celebrated a superb second-place finish in his debut season on the exhilarating HKS drag race circuit.

The motor sport fanatic pushed his modified Honda Civic to its very limits in the five-stage series, which sees cars hitting speeds of up to 170mph at the famous Santa Pod Raceway.

With drivers seeking every possible advantage on the track, the Army ace stripped his vehicle of all unnecessary components, with rear seats, plastic panelling and the spare tyre all falling by the wayside.

"It ran all year without a hitch," Cresswell told *SoldierSport*. "That was quite an achievement as it has a stock engine and all the bits that make it run are as the factory intended, which can make them more than a little fragile when you're pushing them to the limit."

"However, with several modifications, including a large turbo, very heavy duty clutch and lightweight wheels, it has stayed together."

Each race weekend consists of a practise day followed by a series of qualifying sessions, elimination heats and finals.

Scores are awarded for the qualifying position achieved, with further points coming in the eliminations and final of the quarter-mile race.

Cresswell said: "I've been an avid follower of all things motor sport, from

karting to Formula One, for as long as I can remember, but to finally take part in a sponsored race series was such an amazing buzz.

"However, racing these cars is far from easy.

"Anyone with a slightly sporty front-wheel drive car will know that any sort of fast getaway will normally end up with vast amounts of tyre spin, clouds of smoke and a great deal of unwanted noise, with very little else.

"We counteract this by having huge bouncy slick tyres which are run at seven to nine PSI and are extremely flat-looking.

"The track is sprayed with a coating of what we call glue, a sickly sweet-smelling mix of chemicals that simply make the track very sticky, almost enough to pull your shoes off if you walk on it.

"This was my first year of competition and I was basically learning the ropes as I went. There is an awful lot to learn.

"Bogging on the line, wheel spins and missed gear shifts are all too common and when you're racing for tenths of a second a miss shift can ultimately ruin your race."

Having converted his relatively hot hatch into a 400bhp race car, Cresswell has now turned his attention to the new season on the track.

He is in the process of stripping the Honda and will rebuild his machine over the winter months in a bid to make it even faster and stronger. ■

SPORT SHORTS

LEADING city investment firm Charterhouse Capital Partners teamed up with Tickets For Troops to provide Armed Forces personnel with free hospitality packages for England's autumn Rugby Union internationals.

The generous offer saw Servicemen and women from the Royal Marines, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and injured soldiers from Headley Court enjoy the crunch matches against New Zealand, Australia and Samoa from the luxury of a private box at Twickenham.

For more information on the scheme visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

SOLDIERS from 158 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps have reached peak fitness ahead of their deployment to Afghanistan courtesy of a free gym membership scheme in Peterborough.

The Territorial Army personnel were given use of the facilities, which are run by Vivacity Culture and Leisure on behalf of Peterborough City Council, after they revealed it was difficult to keep fit due to the limited equipment available at their centre.

Since April, when the scheme began, the number of TA soldiers passing the Army Combat Fitness Test has more than doubled, rising from 42 in 2009 to 89 this year.

ORGANISERS of the Royal Air Force Akrotiri International Festival of Rugby are appealing for Service teams to sign up for next year's competition.

The event runs from May 30 to June 3 and is open to ten-a-side men's, women's and veterans' teams.

Anyone interested in taking part in the contest, which is being held at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, should contact Sqn Ldr Steve Williams on 07961 891449 or email theoldgoat@ntlworld.com

THE Combined Services boxing and Rugby Union teams have signed three-year sponsorship deals with military charity The Royal British Legion.

Rugby players wore their new Poppy-branded shirts in last month's clashes with the Barbarians and Samoa, while the boxers will be using their uniforms in a number of exciting fixtures this season.

The RBL has also announced that it will operate four personnel recovery centres and will build, equip and operate the Battle Back Challenge Centre for adaptive sports and adventurous training.

EX-Servicemen Kevin Allen and Andy Hastings will be climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in the New Year to raise money for the Queen Alexandra Hospital Home.

The former Blues and Royals soldiers have set an £8,000 charity target for the challenge, which starts on January 20.

To support the duo visit www.justgiving.com/Andy-Hastings0

final word



Picture: Graeme Main

We asked AGC personnel serving in Helmand for their thoughts on delivering Human Resources (HR) support to front-line forces

PICTURES: CPL MARK WEBSTER, RLC



Cpl Aimee-Leigh Dawson

As well as working within the Lashkar Gah admin cell, I form part of the female engagement team and am a patrol search instructor which means that I might have to deploy alongside a combat patrol. It is important to help females in Afghanistan move forward to gain more independence in their day-to-day life such as finding out what advice they need for healthcare.



Pte Megan Bone

As a combat HR specialist I provide vital support to the troops deployed forward. I ensure their pay and administration is correct, that their mail gets to them and that they have the ability to contact their family and friends at home. This is my first tour and I'm really enjoying it. It is completely different from life in the UK and I'm very conscious that everything I do has an effect on the unit and the lads.



LCpl Tejpal Dosanjh

As a combat HR specialist attached to 1 R Irish, I focus on making sure my company get the right pay and allowances. I am also part of a patrol team with the Afghan National Army (ANA) adviser. I've enjoyed teaching and talking with the ANA and have found it to be really rewarding. Preparations for the tour were excellent and the lessons we learnt are used daily on the ground.



Cpl Anna Seeto

My role is to provide information administration, information management and staff support to HQ Task Force Helmand which subsequently enables the Combined Forces to effectively plan and carry out operations. The major challenge is ensuring mission-critical info gets passed on. All data is time sensitive to allow the production of op orders and intelligence reports.



Capt Ryan Lewis

I am the RAO for Combined Force Nad-e Ali South and am responsible for administering a formation of more than 1,000 troops and ensuring that the soldiers' morale component remains extant and without flaw, to allow the fighting power to be channelled 100 per cent in the right direction at all times. The two major challenges are communication and expectation management.



2nd Lt Jacobus Bayards

I am employed as a forward regimental administrative officer, both a test and privilege for a newly-commissioned officer. One of my biggest challenges is OPLOC'ing [operation locations] our combat logistic patrols as they progress throughout the area of operations in theatre. However, managing the rest and recuperation plot is a task I cannot get wrong.



Sgt Christopher Grass

I am in the fortunate position of being 2 Para Battlegroup's line manager for some 70-plus Afghan interpreters. This daily interaction means that I get the opportunity to learn about their culture and more importantly I can teach them about hearts and minds. I believe if we can educate the "educated" we have a real chance of improving the lives of the Afghans.



Pte Suzi Hockley

I am responsible for issuing and activating the Paradigm phonecards for all personnel deployed in theatre and the subsequent OPLOC of recent arrivals. These roles are very much at the heart of the morale component and I simply can't afford to make mistakes. As a mobilised member of the TA, I found the pre-deployment training to be exacting yet rewarding.



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