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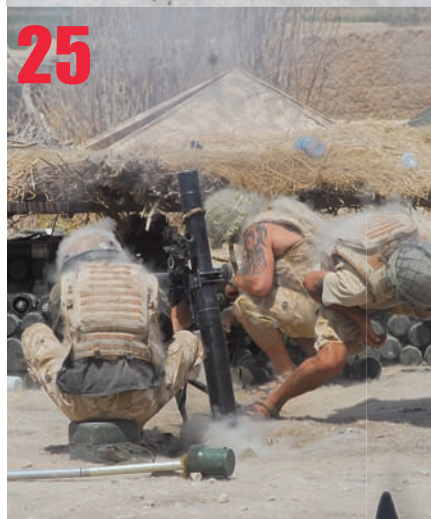
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Cover picture (left): LCpl Jay Donohue (REME) braves the cold to try ice climbing in Canada Picture: Graeme Main

Background image: Pte Paul Brady (2 Para) fires a Javelin missile in Kajaki, Afghanistan Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC





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"Cpl Murphy's infectious enthusiasm has prevailed again . . . this is the
second time he's shouted 'mush' before hitching up."

● School of hard rocks – Pages 36-37

Good sports

AS a self-confessed sports nut, being paid to report on the British Army's activities on the playing field – as well as the battlefield – is like striking journalistic gold.

While contemporaries on lesser publications trudge off to the local recreation ground to watch two teams of 40-somethings kick lumps out of each other for 90 minutes, I am treated to some genuinely top-class competition across more sports than I ever knew existed.

Be it an Inter-Services Rugby Union match in front of 50,000 people at Twickenham (Page 112) or a cross-country race in the wilds of Hampshire, the athletic options open to Servicemen and women are unrivalled anywhere in the civilian world.

The excellent opportunities also extend into adventurous training (AT). Operations undeniably occupy the majority of most soldiers' time and the recently-announced operational honours highlight the excellent work being done (Pages 25-31), but once the tour is over the fun really begins.

Take troops signing up for AT activities in Canada. Thanks to the excellent facilities at Trail's End Camp, near Calgary, soldiers can take their pick from everything from skiing to dog sledding in the winter and parachuting to horse riding in the summer (Pages 36-37).

Equipment, tuition, accommodation, meals – it is all taken care of in a package that *Soldier* could not even begin to put a price on.

For those of a sunnier disposition, how about a spell on a paradise island nestled in the shimmering azure waters of the Caribbean Sea off the coast of Belize?

The Army's AT offering in the Central American country is no less impressive than it is in Canada, with kayaking and sub-aqua diving among the highlights on offer at the British Forces Adventurous Training Centre (Pages 38-39).

There is not even a need to travel abroad to make the most of the Army's facilities and expertise as Capel Curig, in the picturesque Welsh countryside, serves up a package of mountainous proportions (Pages 40-41).

With such a wealth of training on offer, it is little wonder that stars such as Dame Kelly

Holmes still use the skills they learnt from their time in green (Pages 49-51).

Likewise, it explains why the military is such a fertile breeding ground for international-standard

sportsmen and women.

This month's *Ranked* (Pages 64-67) examines the Army's top ten athletic exports, but as ever get in touch if you know better.

Elsewhere, the queue of celebrities waiting to praise the British Army on these pages refuses to die down, as evidenced by this month's exclusive interviews with Joe Calzaghe (Pages 53-55) and TV personality Gethin Jones (Pages 62-63).

Finally, if ever you needed living proof of the tenacity and courage – as well as the sporting ambition – of today's soldiers, look no further than Maj Phil Packer (RMP).

The officer, who was injured on operations and was told he would never walk again, is taking on this month's London Marathon two miles at a time in an effort to raise £1 million for Help for Heroes (Page 47).

What a good sport. ■

‘Once the tour
is over the fun
really begins’

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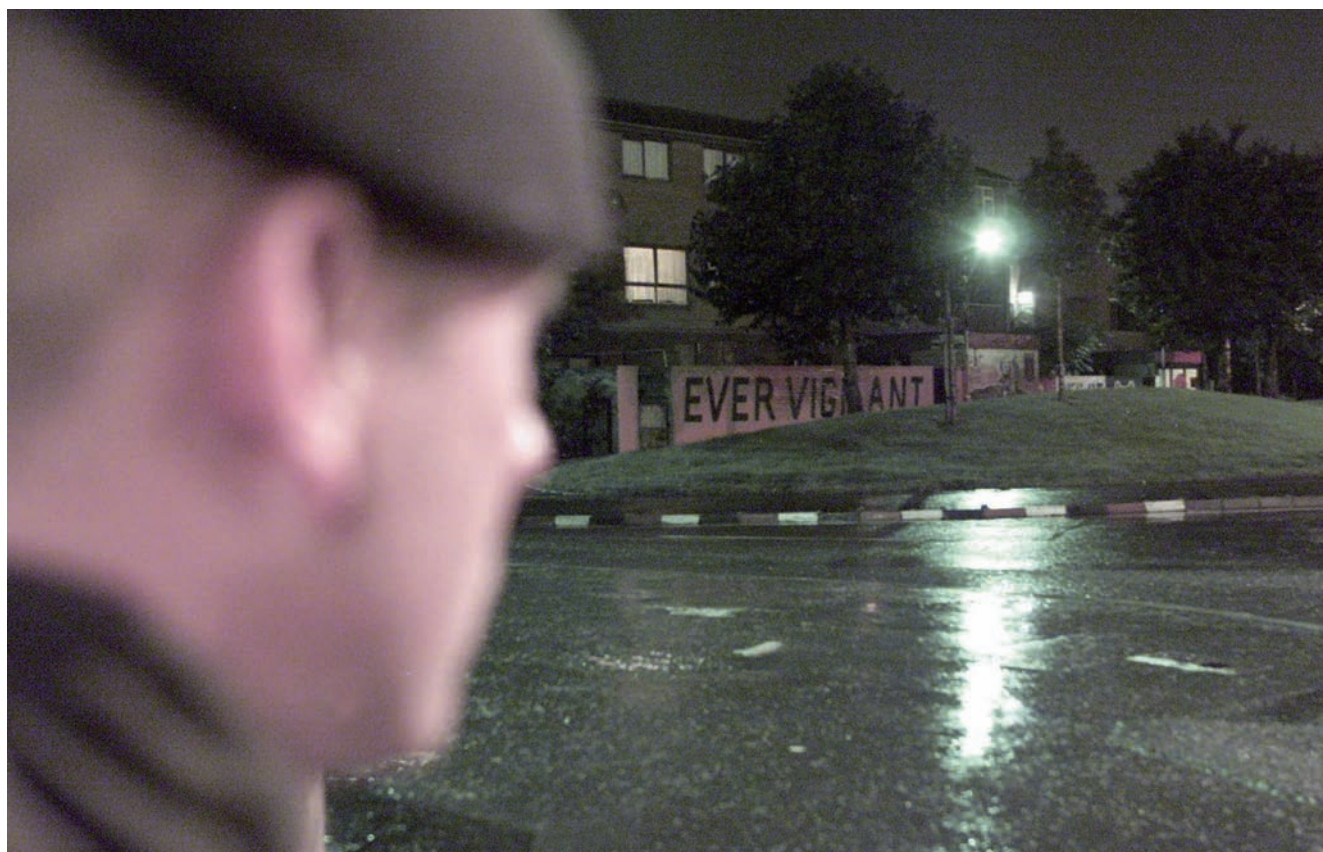
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Picture: Graeme Main

Past troubles: Communities in Northern Ireland are united in their anger at the Real IRA's attacks and have vowed not to allow the return of terrorist violence

Province on alert

Troops begin deployment as police investigate double murder in Antrim

NORTHERN Ireland-based soldiers pressed ahead with their departure to southern Afghanistan despite the terrorist attack that left two colleagues dead and four people injured.

An Army spokesman confirmed that troops from 38 Engineer Regiment at Massereene Barracks in Antrim had deployed on Op Herrick just hours after the murders of Spr Mark Quinsey and Spr Patrick Azimkar. Only the personnel who needed to assist with the police investigation had been delayed.

But he added that security at military bases in the province had been stepped up to be "consummate with the level of threat" and that all precautions were being taken.

The Real IRA, a breakaway terror group, has admitted responsibility for the attack in which gunmen opened fire with assault rifles from close range. The two sappers, who had been waiting for a pizza delivery, were the first troops to die as a result of terrorist action in Northern Ireland for more than ten years.

The spokesman said: "Clearly people are more aware and cautious of the threat at the moment, although it is very

much business as usual and everyone is getting on with life.

"The investigation into the killing of the two soldiers is currently being conducted by the Police Service of Northern Ireland and their officers have been making enquiries."

The spokesman emphasised that the atrocity had been roundly condemned across Protestant and Catholic communities in the province as well as by

the entire political spectrum. He said: "There is a very strong mood among the people here that they do not want to go back to the situation of times past.

"All of us are very sad but we are buoyed by the sympathy that has been extended by the population."

The murder of the soldiers was also strongly condemned by Defence Secretary John Hutton who described the killings as "senseless and cold blooded".

Bastion HQ to treble in size

A HUGE operation is under way to expand the main British base in southern Afghanistan in preparation for the arrival of thousands of extra United States troops.

It has been confirmed that the number of C-17 cargo flights to Camp Bastion in Helmand is being increased significantly between now and the summer.

In addition, engineers have been working to expand the footprint of the HQ, which will eventually swallow up the neighbouring US base at Camp Tombstone.

A British Forces spokesman said that the

growth would bring a number of benefits to soldiers, including extra accommodation, cookhouses and gyms.

There were also plans to upgrade the camp's acclaimed UK-led hospital.

The spokesman warned that the growth would mean the generation of more rubbish, but stressed that waste disposal was being addressed as a matter of priority.

The camp's burn pit, which currently incinerates around 30 tonnes of rubbish every week, is being adapted to take on treble that amount, he confirmed.

Herrick troops die in roadside attacks

Taliban bombing campaign kills six in a black month for British soldiers

RESOLUTE troops serving in southern Afghanistan have been continuing with their campaign despite the devastating loss of further comrades in action.

Cpl Tom Gaden, A/LCpl Paul Upton and Rfn Jamie Gunn, who were all serving with 1st Battalion, The Rifles, died when a roadside bomb detonated during an escort patrol in the Gereshek area of Helmand on February 25.

The trio were all members of an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team responsible for assisting counterparts in the Afghan National Army.

Originally from Taunton, Cpl Gaden enlisted with 2nd Battalion, The Light Infantry in 2002 and had served on both Op Telic in Iraq and on UN peacekeeping duties in Cyprus.

The 24-year-old was posted to 1 Rifles last year and had been working with his colleagues at a remote forward operating base after arriving in Helmand province just after Christmas.

A/LCpl Upton, 31, had clocked up more than ten-years' service having starting his military career with The



● A/LCpl Paul Upton



● Cpl Tom Gaden



● Rfn Jamie Gunn

bered for putting in hours of training to achieve peak physical fitness.

Lt Col Joe Cavanagh, commanding officer of 1 Rifles, said that the loss of the three men had been a devastating blow to the battalion.

Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment.

Despite a brief spell back on civvy street in 2000, the Germany-born father-of-one remained a Reservist and recently re-enlisted in the Regulars. He had already completed operational tours in Northern Ireland and Kosovo and had been working alongside his brother and fellow rifleman Sjt Leon Upton in southern Afghanistan.

At 21, Rfn Gunn was the youngest of the three killed but had made a huge impression on his first tour.

The soldier, who grew up in Wales, joined the Army in 2007 and was remem-

He said of Cpl Gaden: "Of all the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams, Tom's was one of the tightest-knit as a result of the challenges that the team has had to overcome."

Of A/LCpl Upton, he added: "We are all proud of this young man and the decisions he has taken – it has been very difficult to come to terms with his death."

The CO said Rfn Gunn had performed outstandingly despite being on his first tour. He recalled: "For someone so inexperienced at the start of the operation he had performed superbly. He had grown into a very impressive, mature and confident rifleman."

Afghan ops claim three lives in 24 hours

THE Taliban's roadside bombing campaign continued to claim the lives of British soldiers as the beginning of spring heralded a terrible few weeks in Helmand province.

LCpl Christopher Harkett, who was serving with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh, was killed in an explosion while on a foot patrol near Musa Qala on March 14.

Just 24 hours later Cpl Dean John and Cpl Graeme Stiff of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers died when their Jackal patrol vehicle was caught in an explosion near Garmsir. Both had been attached to 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards.

Described as a well-liked soldier, LCpl Harkett trained at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate before joining his battalion in 2004.

The 22-year-old, who was married and from Swansea, was a team medic, Warrior gunner and signaller.

LCpl Harkett had served in the elite Re-



● Cpl Graeme Stiff



● Cpl Dean John



● LCpl Harkett

connaissance Platoon during a demanding tour of Iraq in 2007 and had volunteered to be a sniper in Afghanistan.

Lt Col James Swift, commanding officer of 2 R Welsh, described the soldier as professional and hard-working.

He said: "Chris was a constant source of good humour. He always worked tirelessly to see a job through."

Cpl John, who was 25 and from Neath in

Wales, had joined the Army in 2000 and had served in Northern Ireland, Iraq and on a previous Afghan tour. He was married with three children.

Cpl Stiff, who was born in Germany, enlisted in the REME five years

ago. The 24-year-old had been on his first operational tour.

Lt Col Alan Richmond, commanding 1 QDG, said of Cpl John: "His loss has cast a dark shadow over the regiment. He was one of the most incredible mechanics I have ever served alongside."

Of Cpl Stiff he added: "He was a mainstay of morale and a hugely professional craftsman – he will be sorely missed."



Picture: Sgt Freddie G Cantu, US Marines

States of play: Thousands of extra US troops and Marines are heading for Afghanistan but John Hutton insists that other Nato countries must follow their lead

Calling to arms

Politician urges Nato's European members to boost Afghan commitment

NATO allies must follow the lead of the United States and provide a more robust commitment to Afghanistan if they are to retain their credibility, Defence Secretary John Hutton has reiterated.

Conceding that recent talks with partners had made little progress, Hutton maintained it would be bad for relations in the alliance if the 17,000 extra American troops heading for theatre were left to carry the burden.

He urged Nato's European partners to reconsider their position and assist by offering extra air support and instructors to help bring the Afghan army and police force up to speed.

As previously reported, the Defence Secretary believed there were not enough boots on the ground to win the campaign and said that some allies needed to "step up to the plate" and play their part.

It was not "honest, credible or sustainable" to expect the US to shoulder the weight of the military campaign on its own, he said.

Hutton added that action was now needed to build on President Barak Obama's commitment. He said: "There's

no doubt at all that the additional troop levels the American administration has announced are going to make a very positive difference to security.

"But there is no doubt in my mind that there is more that some countries in Europe can, and ought, to be doing in Afghanistan. There can be no question other than Nato succeeding."

The Defence Secretary confirmed the UK, which currently has 8,300 person-

nel in theatre, had not been asked to increase its commitment but said that the situation was "constantly under review".

Hutton emphasised: "We have to develop the capability for the Afghans themselves to deal with the threat of extremists and terrorists."

"But I think the ball is in our court and we've now got to look very carefully at what more we can do to support US leadership in Afghanistan."

Soldiers square up to Helmand

INCOMING soldiers from 19 Light Brigade were entering the final stages of their move to southern Afghanistan's Helmand province as this issue went to press.

The troops have steadily been arriving in theatre over the last few weeks in what is the first large-scale operational deployment from Northern Ireland since the Second World War 70 years ago.

They are relieving colleagues from 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, who have made good progress in both reconstruction and training the Afghan security

forces during a demanding six-month tour.

The majority of the 8,000 soldiers from 19 Light Brigade are based in Northern Ireland and are being moved to theatre on flights from RAF Aldergrove near Belfast.

Brigade commander Brig Tim Radford said: "We are all very aware of the dangers and threats ahead but we are trained in how we respond and deal with them."

"We are going to be working very hard in Afghanistan for the next six months and the support of our families and friends is vitally important to us."

UNDER Big Ben

A digest of what is being said on Army matters in Parliament

Operations continue to take toll on Army

DEMANDS on military personnel remain "significant" as commitments continue in Iraq and Afghanistan, Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth has admitted.

He told The Commons that while the current situation was manageable, there were still issues with shortfalls in some trades.

But Ainsworth stressed that measures to ease the burden had been put in place, including a reduction in the level of non-operational tasking and the provision of retention bonuses to trades and roles that were under-strength.

He added: "The Services are also undergoing a restructuring programme to rebalance force structures and the drawdown in Iraq will improve tour intervals."

Hidden threat: A huge effort is under way to clear mines in Afghanistan, Defence Secretary John Hutton has confirmed. Responding to a question from Conservative MP Michael Ancram, he said that the UK Department for International Development was providing £10 million to the Halo Trust to remove ordnance in the western province of Herat. Cash was also being given to clear the north of Afghanistan.

Personal safety: Army kit is holding up well to the demands of Iraq and Afghanistan, latest figures suggest. Statistics provided to MPs by Defence Procurement Minister Quentin Davies show that there have only been a handful of reported equipment failures for weapons including the SA80 A2 rifle, general purpose machine gun and underslung grenade launcher in both theatres over the past five years.

Inbound airpower: Merlin transport helicopters are being modified for Afghanistan's tough conditions. The Defence Secretary said all 28 aircraft in the fleet would be beefed-up with a £50 million package of kit, which includes new rotor blades and the latest defensive aids.

Returning fire

Counter-IED team hit back after enemy ambush

AN Army bomb disposal expert twice braved Taliban bullets as he sprinted from cover to destroy a lethal improvised explosive device during an action in Afghanistan.

Capt Tom Bennett (RLC) charged 20 metres into open ground in full view of the enemy to reach the ordnance, which had been planted near a bridge over a canal in Nad-e-Ali, Helmand, while his colleagues laid down covering fire.

The huge bomb contained approximately 20kg of explosives. But with the first attempt to carry out a controlled explosion only partially successful, the officer put his life on the line for a second time to sprint back and finish the job.

The drama unfolded after members of the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Group were rapidly deployed to deal with the IED, which had been discovered by Danish troops.

But as the British were about to set to work to destroy the bomb, they found themselves under a volley of automatic rifle fire from Taliban fighters in three different locations.

Undeterred, Capt Bennett (11 EOD Regiment, RLC) raced to install a demolition charge on the bomb before running back into cover.

Capt Bennett admitted that the ambush had been a harrowing experience,

but stressed that his team was committed to making sure the enemy bombing campaign was disrupted.

He added: "The device was so big that it would have definitely caused death or injuries to anyone caught in the blast. It had been placed in a location that could have hit coalition troops or civilians, which is typical of the Taliban's disregard for life.

"As a team we have been dealing with devices all over Helmand – the most that we have had is five in a day. Sometimes you can scare yourself a bit but there is danger to anyone here in Afghanistan and to us it is just another job."

As previously reported in *Soldier*, 19 Light Brigade Commander Brig Tim Radford has pledged to take tough action to deal with the growing menace of lethal Taliban bombs.

The enemy fighters have been increasingly resorting to these types of tactics after suffering heavy casualties in contact with British soldiers.

Brig Radford confirmed troops, which have recently arrived in southern Afghanistan, would be conducting "an offensive rather than reactive campaign against the insurgents".

Scores of extra bomb disposal experts are also en route to theatre to help deal with the threat.

Army mourns Antrim victims

SHOCKED soldiers based in Northern Ireland have been remembering the lives of two valued colleagues who were gunned down just hours before they were due to leave for southern Afghanistan.

Sappers Patrick Azimkar and Mark Quinsey, serving with 25 Field Squadron, 38 Engineer Regiment, died when terrorists opened fire as the pair waited for a pizza delivery outside Massareene Barracks, Antrim on March 7.

The troops were the first soldiers to be killed as a result of terrorist action in the province for more than ten years. Four other people were injured in the attack.

Spr Azimkar, who was 21 and from London, joined the Royal Engineers in 2005 and trained as a carpenter and joiner. He had already served in Kenya and was expecting to be based in Northern Ireland when he returned from Afghanistan.

Remembered as being a gifted team player, he already had a proven record on the football pitch having had trials for Tottenham Hotspur when he was younger.

Spr Quinsey, who was a qualified electrician, had served in the Army for five



● Spr Mark Quinsey



● Spr Patrick Azimkar

years having attended the Royal School of Military Engineering in Chatham. The 23-year-old Birmingham-born soldier had been based in Ripon and Northern Ireland.

Lt Col Roger Lewis, CO of 38 Engr Regt, said that the deaths had been "traumatic" for personnel.

The CO said of Spr Quinsey: "He was motivated and hugely passionate about his trade. We were expecting him to play a vital role maintaining the living and working conditions of British soldiers."

Of Spr Azimkar he added: "The regiment and I have been very shocked at the death of this very promising young soldier – he couldn't wait to get to Helmand."



Picture: Crown Copyright

A brighter future: A British soldier reflects on the highs and lows of the six-year Op Telic mission as the sun rises over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway in Basra

New Iraq dawns

Commander salutes British success as troops prepare for last leg of Telic

DEMOCRACY is “firmly rooted” in Iraq and troops will leave the country a better place than when they arrived six years ago, according to an outgoing senior officer.

Speaking shortly before standing down as Deputy Commanding General Multi National Forces, Lt Gen John Cooper, late King’s Own Scottish Borderers, said that January’s provincial elections were free and fair and showed “a real desire for change” among the people.

He also maintained that Al-Qaeda insurgents who had been responsible for violence had been weakened and were now far less able to cause trouble.

Lt Gen Cooper added that British Forces could be proud of their achievements when they left in May. “They will leave southern Iraq in a much better position,” he said. “People have made sacrifices, often the ultimate sacrifice, but soldiers understand what they are doing and why.”

The senior officer, who arrived in the Middle East in 2005 and was second-in-command to US generals David Petraeus

and Raymond Odierno, believed that Iraqi forces and their coalition counterparts had delivered a blow to insurgents.

“Al Qaeda had been here in significant numbers and hopefully their objectives have been denied. Their ability to target civilians has been diminished.

“As the militias had been beaten back,

democracy had continued to gather pace,” said Lt Gen Cooper.

“There is a writ of national government, a well-defined legal and legislative system and security structures that have grown,” he added. “Diplomatic missions are beginning and Iraq is again a member of the community of nations.”

Theatre top cover maintained

THE MoD has moved to reassure troops on operations that they will continue to have eyes in the sky after Nimrod aircraft were grounded for safety upgrades.

Armed Forces Minister Bob Ainsworth confirmed all of the fleet operated overseas would be withdrawn until early summer to be fitted with replacement hot air ducts, but stressed that cover would be provided by “other UK and coalition assets”.

The decision to withdraw the aircraft was taken in light of safety recommendations made by a Board of Inquiry following a Nimrod crash in Afghanistan in 2006 in

which 14 personnel died, including Cpl Oliver Dicketts of The Parachute Regiment.

Ainsworth added: “Our technical experts have advised us that in order to ensure the risks involved in operating the aircraft remain as low as reasonably practical, no Nimrods should fly after March 31 unless their hot air ducts have been replaced.

“Our priority is to modify the remaining aircraft as quickly as possible.”

The move will allow the freeing up of the maximum number of Nimrods for modification while still allowing flights to cover vital UK security tasks, Ainsworth said.

IN BRIEF

● A CIVILIAN contractor has been killed during the first rocket attack to hit the British Forces headquarters in Iraq for three months.

An Army spokesman confirmed that there had been a fatality in the raid on the Contingency Operating Base near Basra airport, although no military personnel had been affected.

He said that troops remained focused on their task of training and mentoring their Iraqi counterparts, adding that southern Iraq remained relatively calm and peaceful.

The spokesman added: "We have a job to do and we are committed to it. This attack was the first since December 13 last year and they have become the exception rather than the rule."

● **NORMANDY veterans are being given a cash boost to visit the D-Day landing sites for the 65th anniversary of Operation Overlord, care of two civilian companies.**

Delta Force Paintball, which has sites around the UK, has already started collecting for the Overlord List, a charity set up to help pay for the annual trip in June.

Newcastle-based law firm Muckle LLP has also pledged its support. The legal team has now raised £3,350 for The Normandy Veterans Association, which will ensure veterans from South Tyneside can attend the pilgrimage.

● **SWEET-toothed soldiers in southern Iraq could soon be getting a traditional British seaside treat to mark their summer swansong.**

Sticks of Blackpool rock made in the colours of the Iraqi flag and featuring the words "Op Telic job done" are being shipped out to Basra.

The colourful treat has been made at rock-bottom cost by the Stanton Novelty Rock Company as the profits are going to Help for Heroes.

The stripy rock will be sold to the soldiers currently serving at the Contingency Operating Base in Basra and a batch will be given to Iraqi children in a local orphanage.

● **A SELECTION of striking images taken on the front lines of British operations in southern Afghanistan has gone on display in Scotland.**

The work, by Robert Wilson, is being shown at the National War Museum in Edinburgh and charts the photographer's travels with 52 Infantry Brigade in Helmand last year.

Wilson, who featured in *Soldier* in February after publishing a book recording his two weeks in theatre, was delighted with the exhibition. He said: "I felt it was important to depict the war through the men fighting it."

Healthy praise for med teams

Watchdog says injured troops have best of care

BRITISH soldiers wounded on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan are receiving an "exemplary" standard of medical treatment, according to a review by an independent organisation.

A report by the Healthcare Commission found that trauma care and rehabilitation provided by the military was second-to-none while innovations in dealing with major injuries and the design of field hospitals were also superb.

The audit, which was carried out between June and December last year and looked at the standards of care in the UK, overseas and on-board ships, also praised the programme of continuous learning for the military's clinical staff.

Now MoD officials are speaking to the NHS about sharing best practice techniques while a new Inspector General of Defence Medical Services, Rear Admiral Philip Raffaelli (Royal Navy), has been appointed to ensure military medical standards are continually improved.

Surgeon General Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite, who is responsible for healthcare provision across all three Services, was delighted with the findings of the Commission's review.

He said: "It has endorsed the excellent care we offer our personnel injured on

operations, particularly our trauma care, our ability to reach and treat casualties and the training that we give our deployed medical staff.

"This is testament to the professionalism and courage of our staff serving in both Iraq and Afghanistan and the dedication of the individuals in the UK who support them."

Lt Gen Lillywhite added that recommendations for improvement in the Commission's report, which include undertaking more thorough cleaning and maintenance at some medical centres and the introduction of a new fleet of ambulances in Cyprus, would be "implemented in full".

The Surgeon General's comments were endorsed by Defence Secretary Kevan Jones, who said the MoD was committed to delivering the best standards of care.

He added: "I'm very pleased that the Commission has described our key services for those injured on operations as exemplary – now I want to ensure that this glowing assessment is matched across the Defence Medical Services.

"Where areas of improvement have been identified, we are determined to see changes."

Soldiers face insurance hikes

SERVING personnel will have to dig deeper into their wallets for personal accident cover after the companies behind the Pax scheme announced that prices of their premiums are increasing by 30 per cent.

Aon and AIG, which respectively administer Pax and underwrite the products, recently carried out a review of policies and concluded that costs would have to rise to reflect the growing number of claims.

The number of personnel being wounded in theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan is being blamed for the increase, the second in the space of a year.

From this month, policy holders who have the top level of family cover will be paying a monthly premium of £97.50 as opposed to £81 before the price hike.

Aon, which is the UK's largest insurance broker and risk adviser, arranges the Pax cover on behalf of the MoD although the department does not endorse any single insurance scheme.

Government officials maintained that the benefits of Pax remained competitive but stressed that troops did not have to take out the policy.

The statement added: "The MoD already provides compensation for injuries or death under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and it is a matter of choice as to whether personnel wish to enhance their cover by joining Pax or any other scheme.

"For a number of years now the cost of Pax claims has exceeded premiums – the personal accident premium was last increased in 2008 to address the number and value of claims being received.

"We believe the benefits offered through Pax remain competitive, but it operates in an open and commercial marketplace and is not the only policy of this type.

"There is no obligation at all. Policyholders can change or cancel their insurance at any time by visiting their unit human resources office."



Picture: Mike Weston

Balkans bow: The familiar sight of British troops patrolling Kosovo's verdant countryside will be consigned to history when soldiers pull out in the autumn

Brits quit Kosovo

UK posts in Balkans state to be scaled down to 'a handful' by September

BRITISH soldiers based in Kosovo are packing their bags and heading for home after Nato chiefs announced there was no further need for them in the operation.

Having seen peace steadily return to the former Serb province, nearly all of the 170 UK personnel left in theatre are set to withdraw by September.

The MoD said a handful of staff will remain as part of the 14,000-strong multinational Kosovo Force and stressed the UK remains committed to supporting stability in the Balkans.

The withdrawal comes ten years after Operation Allied Force, when Nato intervened in the province to stop Serb forces carrying out a campaign of violence against ethnic Albanians.

In the alliance's first offensive action in five decades of history, aircraft pounded targets in both Kosovo and Serbia before peacekeepers moved in on the ground.

British soldiers were initially a key component of the deployment although their presence was reduced after operations began in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Last year Kosovo announced its split from Serbia, although the declaration of independence is still not recognised by the entire international community.

But despite disagreements over the country's status, Defence Secretary John Hutton said the state's internal security situation had steadily been improving

and the European Union was now involved in the drive to bring stability.

Hutton said in a statement to the Commons: "Our drawdown reflects the changed circumstances in Kosovo.

"The key milestones in independence have passed and the security situation is generally calm."

Chiswell lands air assault role

THE new commander of one of the Army's highest-profile rapid reaction forces has spoken of his delight after beginning a two-year tenure in the post.

Brig James Chiswell said he was relishing the opportunity of taking the helm at Colchester-based 16 Air Assault Brigade and serving in challenging times ahead.

He added: "It is an exacting and exciting time to be a soldier and we need to balance the requirement for meeting immediate demands with ensuring that we remain positioned to respond to different challenges that may emerge in the future.

"We are seeking to focus on recuperation after what was a successful but hard summer in Afghanistan last year. While the brigade performed superbly, it came at a cost and our thoughts remain with the families of those lost and with our wounded."

A former CO of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, Brig Chiswell has served on operations throughout the world.

The officer, who has the Military Cross among his decorations, was commissioned into the Paras in 1983 and has previously served with 5 Airborne Brigade, PJHQ and the MoD in London.

IN BRIEF

● **MILITARY** working dogs are settling in to new £550,000 accommodation following a spell in temporary kennels.

Built by Aspire Defence, the top-of-the-range facilities in Aldershot include an indoor and outdoor area for each of the 30 dogs and boast individual climate control. Some of the canines and handlers, serving with 101 Military Working Dogs Support Unit, are currently deployed to Afghanistan.

● **BRITISH** forces in Iraq have helped to fund a new dining room for children at an orphanage in Basra.

Previously, the home's 70 youngsters had to eat their food in a corridor at the Al Zahara facility, a centre which also provides education to a further 180 children.

The dining room was paid for by the Multi-National Division (South East) Commanders' Contingency fund, while the furniture was bought with money raised by Iraqi citizens.

Maj Tom Mallinson, 2iC of The Queen's Royal Hussars, said he was delighted to be involved in the project.

● A **PROUD** Second World War veteran received the best 93rd birthday gift he could have asked for when he was presented with the campaign medals that had previously gone unclaimed.

Patrick Holland, who was a gunner during the conflict, was awarded the 1939 Star, the France Germany Star and 1938-45 Medal for his service in campaigns including the Normandy Landings. He was presented with the decorations by Lt Col Greg Role, CO of 4 Regiment Royal Artillery, at the Somerset Nursing Home near York.

● **CADETS** at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst have raised more than £50,000 for Help for Heroes after the organisation was singled out as one of the Commandant's chosen charities.

Bryn and Emma Parry, who founded the fund, received the cheque in a special event at the prestigious academy, which also collected £20,000 for the Portesbury School for disabled youngsters in Surrey.

● AN experienced NCO has become the first Gurkha to wear the Army Physical Training Corps cap badge.

Sgt Min Pun received the honour in Aldershot after changes in the Nepalese soldiers' terms and conditions of service allowed them to formally transfer to other arms of the Army.

Sgt Pun, who has completed tours of Iraq and Bosnia during his 17 years of military service, said he was delighted and hoped to be the first of many Gurkhas to transfer to the APTC. See next month's *Soldier* for a full report.

Atkins endorses Army's progress

Soldiers' welfare is a priority, says ombudsman

THE Service Complaints Commissioner has praised commanders for the progress made in dealing with grievances raised by troops.

In an interview with *Soldier* shortly after the publication of her first annual report, Dr Susan Atkins said most commanding officers had embraced her independent role and had even been calling her office personally for advice.

But she remained unhappy with the length of time it was taking for the military system to address complaints, and said all three Services need to improve by next year.

The commissioner believed that many people were still unaware about how to raise a grievance, that there were inconsistencies between the Services on dealing with issues and that the complaints system needed to be made easier to use.

Dr Atkins said: "Access is a real issue at the moment – when people do pluck up the courage to take action it is just taking far too long. Of 172 complaints last year, three quarters of them are still going through the system.

"Around half of these complaints relate to issues such as bullying or some other sort of improper behaviour. So by 2010 I would like to see 90 per cent resolved in 30 working days, as opposed to the 77 the Army is currently taking."

Dr Atkins, who reports directly to Defence Secretary John Hutton, has immersed herself in Forces culture since

taking up her post last year. As well as holding meetings with senior officers including the Chief of the General Staff, the lawyer and former boss of the Independent Police Complaints Commission has taken the time to visit troops in the UK and Afghanistan.

Having travelled widely and seen the Army in action, she did not believe that there was a culture of bullying and praised the way troops looked after each other on operations.

Dr Atkins added: "Bullying is not endemic, but surveys on the Service suggest there are a minority who report some form of harassment or discrimination and, of these, only five per cent take further action.

"I would urge anyone who has an issue to speak up, whether they are suffering themselves or perhaps know a friend or family member who has a problem – they can come to me in confidence as I see every complaint personally.

"Likewise, I would urge commanders to treat any complaint made like a warning light on their car dashboard," she added. "It is better to get it fixed than wait until it comes up again in Iraq or Afghanistan when you are under significantly more pressure."

● The Service Complaints Commission can be contacted by email at SCC@armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk

Lifesaving course clocks a ton

THE medical programme responsible for training soldiers to save the lives of their colleagues in conflict has made it to a century of courses.

Combat Medical Technicians (CMTs) have trained at the Defence Medical Services Training Centre (DMSTC) at Keogh Barracks, Aldershot since 1996 and the 100th course was completed as this issue went to press.

Ranging from primary health care and environmental health to battlefield injuries, the 20-week common core course is open to NCOs from across the Armed Forces' medical services and teeth arms.

In the current operational climate CMTs often face casualties with catastrophic

bleeds as a result of IED and mine attacks and can now expect to attend to traumas if they are deployed to high-intensity operations such as Afghanistan.

WO2 Edd Gordon, common core school sergeant major, DMSTC, explained that combat medics needed to be of exceptional calibre and be ready for the life-or-death challenges that they will undoubtedly face on the battlefield.

He added: "Troops should have confidence in the medics and have no hesitation in bringing them to the front line. CMTs are trained to such a high standard and are prepared to and do save lives."

● **Man Down** – Pages 68-71



Picture: Steve Dock

Dog of war: The new Ridgback troop carrier is currently undergoing trials and is expected to be deployed to Afghanistan later this year, the MoD has confirmed. The smaller cousin of the Mastiff, the vehicle is based on a 4x4 platform and features the same level of mine and IED protection as its stablemate. It has been fitted with a host of upgrades including night vision kit, thermal imaging and the Bowman communications suite. Other attributes of the 20-tonne vehicle include run-flat tyres and new seats for more effective blast protection. Variants of the vehicle will include a battlefield ambulance and weapons station.

Commanding role

Super NCO team will become guardians of Army's values and standards

A RADICAL new link in the divisional leadership chain is being trialled in a move to keep senior personnel abreast of issues affecting soldiers and junior officers.

Under a two-year initiative, three experienced warrant officers are taking on the post of Command Sergeant Major, where they will work with their General Officer Commanding in raising standards and identifying problem issues.

WO1 Jon Allen (Rifles) is taking on the mantle at 3 (UK) Division in Bulford while colleagues Steve Hickey (Para) and Tim Whiteway (RA) are respectively joining the Germany-based 1 (UK) Armoured Division and HQ Theatre Troops in Netheravon.

The post of Command Sergeant Major is already established in the United States military although it has been modified significantly to fit in with British command structures.

Brig Matt Maer, the Field Army's Chief of Staff, said that the warrant officers would carry considerable responsibility and authority in their new roles.

He added: "They will become the senior NCO across their divisions, directly supporting the GOC and acting as a beacon for our standards and values."

"However the command sergeant major will not be in the left-hand seat of the senior officer's car. He will have his own work programme and will be speaking to soldiers about issues affecting them."

During the trial the three warrant of-

ficers would also be meeting with colleagues in America, said Brig Maer.

In an interview with *Soldier*, WO1 Allen admitted that he was "delighted and honoured" to have been given his new title. He added: "I think it is very important to have WO1 representation at two-star level and the Command Sergeant Major will bring an informed perspective in this respect."

Mess dress funding announced

SENIOR NCOs will stay well in pocket if they are promoted after the MoD announced that new sergeants are eligible for cash to buy mess dress uniform.

In a statement, the department said both acting and full holders of the rank would now qualify for a special one-off grant to buy and keep their kit in order.

The cash, which is only available to Regular troops because of their requirement to attend more formal functions, will be based on the cost of the uniform.

Sergeants in the Household Cavalry and the Royal Armoured Corps are eligible to receive £835, those in the Scottish Division have £550 at their disposal and all other troops are awarded £455. The money is available to those promoted after April 1 this year.

Claims for the grant must be submitted through unit administration staff. The sums will initially be paid through Imprest accounts and later fed through salary on Joint Personnel Administration.

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Picture: Mike Weston

Making waves: Adventurous training has been well received by soldiers and officers as decompression becomes an increasingly important part of Army life

Recreation station

Adrenalin and fitness prove useful tools in the post operational wind down

ADVENTUROUS training (AT) has a key role to play in the recuperation of troops returning from operations, according to a senior officer.

Col Paul Miller (late REME), commander of Adventurous Training Group (Army), told *Soldier* that undergoing courses at AT centres provided Servicemen and women with "quality time" away from deployments.

"In the dark and distant past, AT was used to add an edge to Service life and take people out of their comfort zone during peace-time," said Miller. "As the years went on and the Armed Forces became more operationally-orientated, it began to be used as a form of conditioning to get troops used to risk-taking ahead of going to theatre.

"With the current tempo, the emphasis has shifted again and now AT is being used on the other side of ops for recuperation and normalisation."

Starting at level one, Services AT is delivered up to level four courses that result in soldiers becoming leaders and instructors themselves.

Miller explained that training at the top level allows students to organise and lead their own AT activities when they go back to their regiments.

"The ultimate aim of all AT is to develop leaders and instructors," said Miller. "That's important when units are so busy training, deploying and recovering because it means they can focus on something other than operations."

AT courses also allow troops to gain civilian qualifications, including those from

the British Association of Snowsport Instructors, and the syllabus is constantly evolving to feature new activities such as mountain biking, which is currently being trialled and should be available on courses from May onwards.

● AT special – Pages 34-43

Report urges homes disposal

THE MoD has a long road ahead to improve Forces housing and should now concentrate on selling off costly vacant properties, according to an independent study.

Figures published in the National Audit Office (NAO) report on Service Families Accommodation reveal that empty houses make up nearly a fifth of the department's 50,000-strong stock. The homes are awaiting new tenants, on the list for maintenance work or earmarked for outright disposal.

But NAO officials have warned that MoD plans to upgrade its housing are being slowed by having too many unoccupied homes on the books and have urged the department to take action.

While the MoD has successfully upgrad-

ed some 1,700 properties since 2007 it still has a target to complete around 800 more each year.

And although 51 per cent of Service residents are satisfied with where they live, more than a quarter remain unhappy with the state of their property.

Tim Burr, head of the NAO, said that the empty properties were costing £4,000 per year to keep.

He added: "The department is working to improve the housing stock but it will take many years to achieve its aim of getting families in the highest condition property.

"The MoD needs to press on with disposing vacant properties so that it can focus on improving the main stock."

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Picture: Andrew Linnett

Spice it up: Tabasco sauce is now a standard addition to British Army ration packs after catering experts saw its morale-boosting effects on American troops

Carrying flavour

Troops' taste buds are tickled as defence chiefs serve up rations rethink

HUNGRY soldiers are preparing to get to grips with the Army's latest culinary line-up after an overhaul of front-line food.

In a ration pack rethink, some of the less-popular items – led by the much-maligned biscuits brown – have been given their marching orders as part of a trial to see which dishes best meet the needs of today's troops.

Also discharged are chocolate bars, pate, corned beef hash, treacle pudding, oat biscuits and powdered soup.

Incoming replacements include options such as muesli, rice pudding, ready-made soup, Oreo cookies, chocolate chip cake, the latest drink flavourings and chewing gum.

The menus were changed following feedback from soldiers serving on operations and more than 300,000 of the new 24-hour Multi-Climate Rations (MCR) will be given to troops in a trial starting next month.

Minister for Defence Equipment and Support Quentin Davis said: "One of the most important requirements is to provide increased variety, which will help reduce menu fatigue."

"These new menus have been devel-

oped to meet the needs of Service personnel operating in the extreme climates of Afghanistan and Iraq, providing them with a wider range of nutritionally-balanced meals."

The MCR trial will have 20 menus for general use and a further six to cater for

vegetarian and cultural or religious dietary requirements.

Capt Paul Cunningham (RN), of the Defence Food Services project team, said each pack contains at least 4,000 calories, the minimum for soldiers operating in hot climates.

Chef takes on catering elite

AN Army chef who has already scooped the prize for world's best dessert has gone on to compete in another prestigious civilian catering competition.

Cpl Vicki-Leigh Smith (RLC) was part of a ten-strong Army team of culinary wizards and front-of-house specialists who served up top-notch scoff at ScotHot, a hospitality and catering event in Glasgow.

As part of a new category, the Banqueting Challenge, the Army team competed alongside counterparts from the Territorial Army, the Royal Navy and the hotel trade.

Serving paying guests, the team's menu proved highly popular and was served to more than double the amount of diners than the competition.

"It was probably the best event I've done," said Cpl Smith, who is attached to 5 Regiment RA in Catterick.

"There was a real element of team spirit and I learnt so much from it. I did the main course and it was very busy, but good fun. We're hoping to work together as a team for the Combined Services competition because it worked so well this time."

Despite their mouthwatering menu of smoked halibut and scallops, followed by venison and then mango and passion fruit mousse, the team lost out on the top spot to the Gleneagles Hotel.

"We were disappointed but there is always next time and I'm sure we will continue to do well," said Cpl Smith.

Great War honour for trenches hero

Last fighting Tommy receives top French award 90 years after epic battle

THE final surviving British soldier to have seen action in the trenches of the First World War has been decorated with France's most prestigious military accolade.

Harry Patch was awarded the Legion d'Honneur medal for his role at the ferocious Battle of Paschendale, Ypres in 1917, during which around 70,000 British troops were killed.

The 110-year-old veteran, who was conscripted into the Army at the age of 18, served for four months with The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry as a Lewis Gun assistant before he was wounded when an enemy shell exploded above him.

French Ambassador Maurice Gourdault-Montagne presented the award at the nursing home where Patch lives in Somerset.

The veteran said he was delighted to become an Officer of the Legion of Honour, which is personally conferred by the French president. The decoration joins his array of other awards including the British War and Victory medals and the Freedom of the City of Wells.

He added: "I will wear this medal with great pride and when I eventually rejoin my mates it will be displayed in my regimental museum as a permanent reminder of the kindness of the people of France."

Veterans' Minister Kevan Jones, who attended the presentation ceremony, said the UK owed a huge debt of gratitude to the men and women like Patch who fought in the brutal conflicts of the 20th Century.

He added: "I welcome this award which pays tribute to him for the huge contribution he has made."

"We are justly proud of his service and we thank the French government for giving this honour."

Patch is one of the two surviving British First World War veterans to receive the Legion d'Honneur.

Henry Allingham, who is 112 years old and one of the founding members of the Royal Air Force, was also presented with the medal for his work with the Royal Naval Air Service during the 1914-1918 conflict.



Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding RLC

Marching on: Decorated Harry Patch has become a living icon of the lost First World War generation

CEO clarifies memorial policy

NAMES of fallen civilian personnel cannot be placed on the new Armed Forces monument for policy reasons, the chief executive of the National Memorial Arboretum has pointed out.

In an interview with *Soldier* at the Royal British Legion's London HQ, Charlie Bagot Jewitt said the terms of the Staffordshire memorial meant only personnel from the three Services who had died on duty after the Second World War could be recorded.

Bagot Jewitt was responding to calls from some ex-soldiers in the Palestine Veterans Association, who have asked to add the names of Palestine police officers to the monument.

While the officers were liable to military duties during the Second World War, they officially returned to civilian status at the end of the conflict.

Bagot Jewitt, who is a former Royal Navy officer, said he understood why members felt strongly about the issue.

He said that the Palestine Police could look at having their own individual memorial in the Arboretum.

Bagot Jewitt revealed that several other organisations had approached him over the Armed Forces Memorial eligibility issue.

There are also 16 applications for new memorials being processed, including a monument to fallen Polish personnel.

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- Concentrate on the basket. You're aiming to drop the ball straight through the hoop, not come off the backboard.
- Bend your knees, feet shoulder-width apart.
- Extend your knees and arms at the same time to jump and throw (you rarely throw with your feet on the ground).
- As you rise from the knees, push the ball up with your shooting hand as the other hand supports. Keep your throwing arm in line with the basket, not straying off to either side.
- Release the ball just as your arm fully extends.
- As you release the ball, flick your wrist. Your middle and index fingers should be the last ones touching the ball.
- Let your shooting hand follow through in line with the basket, as if guiding it in.
- Practice as much as you can, shooting from different angles and distances.
- Mastered the set shot?

To score a slam dunk, launch yourself above the basket and slam the ball down through it. Easy.

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- Find a steady pace and rhythm you can keep up, don't go flat out.
- Breathe long and deep, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Breathing in time with your footfall can help create rhythm.
- Keep your head up and your eyes looking forward.
- Keep your shoulders drawn back – don't hunch over. Push your hips forward as you run.
- Move your arms in rhythm with your running – swing each arm in time with the opposite leg. But don't move your arms excessively; keep your elbows into your sides and avoid rolling your shoulders.
- Make sure your knees and feet are moving in line so that movement is concentrated forward, not up and down or side to side.
- Strike the surface of the ground with your heel first, then roll off with the ball of your feet.



- Extracted from 'BE THE BEST ... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.



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Valuing valour

Heroic actions of British troops recognised
in latest operational honours and awards

AN inspiring commanding officer who set an “outstanding personal example” to those around him while under fire has been awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Lt Col Nicholas Borton had deployed to Helmand in April last year to carry out security sector reform as a brigade staff officer with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. But after his arrival he immediately found himself under orders to take command of independent subunits in Lashkar Gar and Garmsir.

Having planned and conducted successful operations against Taliban fighters there, the senior officer was then ordered to hand over and deploy to Musa Qaleh. With

the previous CO wounded, it fell to him to stop a resurgent enemy.

Operating in extreme conditions, Lt Col Borton’s citation recalled how he had worked tirelessly on the front lines of Garmsir, where he carried out reconnaissance missions for a planned American assault. For nearly two weeks his troops were in constant battle with Taliban fighters in the district centre.

He was dispatched to Musa Qala on June 12, where he found himself at a forward operating base and had to set up measures to protect the position from further attack.

But Lt Col Borton managed to retain the tactical initiative over three months of fighting, preventing the Taliban from again becoming a credible threat in the area.

His citation said: “He commanded with great energy, dash, conviction and wisdom. No commanding officer has spent longer in contact with the enemy than Borton, a remarkable record given that he had deployed as a brigade staff officer.

“No matter how demanding the circumstances, his example lifted the morale of his soldiers and imbued commanders with the fighting spirit to defeat a ruthless enemy.”

The citation added: “Undaunted by the scope and scale of the challenges, the infectious force of Borton’s leadership, energy, initiative and character set the conditions for stabilisation and development has continued to flourish in the areas he secured.”

● A CAPTAIN who held off 400 Taliban fighters in scenes echoing those of *Zulu’s* Rorke’s Drift, has been awarded a Military Cross for his “remarkable bravery”.

A/Capt Russell Archer (RE) was isolated with a handful of fighters in Nawa District Centre, south of Lashkar Gar, for more than a month and was repeatedly attacked by insurgents. Despite originally only being sent on a 48-hour reconnaissance patrol, Archer defended the unprotected building with just seven colleagues from the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) and a number of Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers.

The Afghan troops did not trust each other, the supplies began to run out after five days and radio communications were cut off as more than 400 Taliban fighters advanced on the position.

On August 25, 2008 the first shots were fired, claiming a British casualty. The ANA position came under fire for three hours with rounds pelting into the rooms the OMLT were fighting from.

Capt Archer led from the front, constantly moving between the men to reassure and mentor them and relaying instructions to the ANA through an interpreter. They were attacked nine more times in 15 days, but not content to sit back, Capt Archer organised aggressive patrols to keep the district centre in their control.

His citation read: “His remarkable bravery and exemplary leadership under regular sustained and intense fire was nothing short of exceptional.”

Distinguished service:
Pictured left to right, Pte Dean Rees and LCpl John Dippnall (2 Para) clear rooms in a compound on a patrol around Forward Operating Base Inkerman in the Upper Sangin Valley

Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC

● **AN inspirational leader who repeatedly risked his own life to save his men while under fire has been awarded a Military Cross. Maj Robert Armstrong (RA) saved an ANA casualty whose leg had been severed when their vehicle convoy was attacked by an IED and RPGs in the Gereshek Valley.**

Following the blast, he ordered four soldiers to secure the front of the patrol and rushed to the back to organise the

● **A JUNIOR officer shot in the back of the leg as he rescued three of his men who were trapped during a Taliban ambush has said his Military Cross is for his whole platoon.**

2nd Lt Alexander Barclay was on a joint mobile patrol with the ANA in a convoy of six Land Rovers in Nad-e-Ali when they were ambushed in a well-coordinated attack.

"We were sent on a recce to look at a Taliban stronghold at Nad-e-Ali when we were ambushed. We pushed through but when we got to the other end I realised one of the vehicles hadn't made it," he recalled.

"As we tried to get hold of them we were ambushed four more times, coming under small arms fire.

"Our vehicle went back into the main

● **A SOLDIER who put himself in full view of the enemy, attracting a volley of bullets so that he could save his colleagues, has been rewarded with a Military Cross.**

Pte Paul Coleman (3 Para) was employed as a lance corporal and fire team commander on August 16, 2008 as he took part in Qab Tsuka – the operation to transport a turbine across Helmand.

Tasked with disrupting enemy forces in the Green Zone so the convoy could safely

● **AN OFFICER of "unflinching physical and moral courage" has been awarded a Military Cross for leading constant offensive operations against the enemy.**

Maj Nicholas Calder commanded D Company, 5 Scots and, as the only light infantry company in Musa Qala, it fell to them to drive the Taliban away from the town which had been liberated weeks earlier.

Constantly patrolling the dangerous Green Zone, there was no respite for the exhausted soldiers who took a steady stream of casualties in their daily tussles with determined Taliban insurgents.

Maj Calder kept their spirits up with humour, energy and enthusiasm and

ANA. Dodging bullets, he found shocked ANA soldiers taking cover. Grabbing an RPG from one, he moved into the open and fired upon the enemy, causing them to scatter. He then made his way back into the open to rescue a badly injured ANA soldier and used his torch to direct enemy fire away from the casualty.

Over the next five hours a further four IEDs were found and Maj Armstrong detonated each one with an explosive

killing area from the original ambush and my driver spotted the vehicle upturned in a wadi.

"When we looked at it I was so pleased when I saw faces looking round the door, and myself and the platoon sergeant got the three soldiers back to our vehicle. We were coming under lots of fire – there were small arms and RPGs. I got shot in the back of the leg in my hamstring. I felt a dull pain and thought 'oh no'. We then linked back up with the rest of



● 2nd Lt Barclay

move through Sangin. Coleman's team were ambushed by Taliban fighters who had been watching their advance.

Targeted at close range by a hail of RPGs, small arms fire and mortars, Coleman realised that his men were in mortal danger and isolated from the rest of their platoon. As bullets struck the ground by his feet and RPGs were fired directly at him, Coleman moved out in front of his men to reorganise the team to return fire

demonstrated his bravery when the company were caught in a well-organised enemy ambush.

On August 18, 2008 Calder led a four-day fighting patrol north of the town to disrupt a heavy line of fire, attacking three Taliban before clashing with more fighters.

Calder took control and coordinated his team to neutralise the threat. Skilfully extracting his men without a single



● Maj Nicholas Calder

charge. Having finally extracted the casualty he returned to base, leaving again two hours later to lead a battalion convoy through a patch of desert littered with landmines.

His citation reads: "Had it not been for Armstrong's swift, instinctive actions, personal courage and disregard for his own life, many more casualties would have been sustained by the heavy volley of enemy fire and IEDs."

the platoon and had to move back through another long ambush before we could get back to our patrol base.

"It was my first deployment – I was very lucky because I finished my training and got sent to Afghanistan. It was a fantastic start to my career. It wasn't just me out there – this Military Cross is for everyone in 4 platoon, B Company, 5 Scots."

His citation said: "Worthy of note is the enormous respect that the ANA had for his actions; without doubt his personal example served to stiffen their resolve.

"Put simply three men are alive today because of Barclay's actions. Without his presence they would have been subjected to the most awful of fates."

from a safer position. Amid the confusion of battle, word came that a soldier was missing and once again Coleman put himself back in full view of the enemy to search for him, ensuring no one had been left behind.

His citation said: "Despite being just a private soldier, Coleman demonstrated exceptional gallantry and leadership way beyond his rank or experience which inspired all those around him."

casualty, he took every opportunity to engage the enemy over the next two days.

"We were able to go from fighting a defensive battle to an offensive one where we were in charge," he said. "My guys knew that every time they went out they would be facing a fight – it was a tough campaign. Some of them were sick with fear but they went out there and took the battle to the Taliban every time."

Of the 35-year-old father of three, Maj Calder's citation read: "His task was relentless and required the highest standards of gallantry and leadership by example; Calder has provided this in the most dynamic and impressive way."

● **A COURAGEOUS** and tenacious Parachute Regiment officer who set an “outstanding” example to the soldiers under his command has been awarded the Military Cross. Maj Russell Lewis (2 Para) commanded B



● Maj Russell Lewis

Company troops in one of the most austere and demanding bases in Helmand province.

Based at FOB Inkerman, deep in the Upper Sangin Valley, Maj Lewis and his men dominated the nearby Green Zone and encountered intensive daily fighting against the Taliban.

A combination of casualties, disease and injuries reduced the numbers of men available to the Para officer.

However, his astute and tactical decisions suppressed the insurgents and even under this pressure, Maj Lewis never faltered and continued to battle, even putting himself in danger.

Maj Lewis's citation read: “Few commanders on Operation Herrick can have endured such a demanding tour. But despite the appalling conditions and the attrition of regular combat, he has instilled in his entire command his irrepressible enthusiasm, energy and determination.

“Resolute in defence, tenacious and courageous in attack he has set an outstanding example to his company.”

● **THE determination and gallantry of a Parachute Regiment officer who refused to give in to a fierce enemy proved a winning formula during intense contacts in southern Afghanistan.**

Maj John McDonald (3 Para, pictured bottom right) skilfully manoeuvred his soldiers to suppress the enemy during his short time as company commander at FOB Inkerman in late July of last year.

● **A COURAGEOUS** corporal who saved the life of an Afghan interpreter who was being fired at by insurgents has been rewarded with a Military Cross for his bravery.

Cpl James Cooke (IG) raced into the killing zone of an organised Taliban ambush to rescue a confused and frightened

● **AN infantryman who stormed across open ground to single-handedly destroy an enemy position and prevent his comrades from being ambushed has been awarded the Military Cross.**



● Sgt McConnell

Sgt Stephen McConnell (R Irish) fixed his bayonet and charged across an open field towards two machine guns that had been firing onto the position held by 8 Platoon, of whom he was in command at the time. The bravery and decisive leadership demonstrated by Sgt McConnell led his men through a well-coordinated ambush on July 6 last year.

After destroying an enemy position with grenades and rifle fire a member of the patrol was able to join him in the assault and, during this action, the sergeant's section was engaged from the rear.

Sgt McConnell's citation read: “The tactical deployment of his troops meant that the enemy failed to locate and engage his platoon, as they had intended, and his assault rapidly closed with the enemy, throwing them into confusion. [His] actions inflicted significant casualties on the enemy and his judgement not to wait and use supporting indirect fire prevented the civilian casualties the enemy had intended.

“His courage and personal example were of the highest order.”

His courage and skill in combat while covering an absence accounted for the destruction of the enemy's resistance, and was rewarded with the Military Cross.

During this period McDonald conducted a long-range company patrol, but as he and his men moved further away from the FOB the enemy gathered forces to attack the troops. Throughout constant fire and attack the major moved among his troops,

● **A MAJOR** who fought from one of the most dangerous and constantly-attacked Forward Operating Bases in Sangin has been given a Military Cross for his leadership.



● Maj Adam Dawson

Maj Adam Dawson commanded C Company, 2 Para at FOB Gibraltar for six months from April to October 2008 and was determined to take the advantage away from the enemy who constantly attacked the base. He set up a patrol programme to engage with the local population, talking to the elders and working on reconstruction projects. Commanding the majority of patrols, Dawson and his troops often came under fierce fire at close range.

On June 12 his patrol was ambushed, killing two of his men. His skilful handling of his company saw them inflict considerable casualties on the enemy, forcing them back. A fortnight later while on a night assault another British soldier was killed and Dawson fought a 16-hour battle at close quarters to once again defeat the Taliban fighters.

“Always at the point of main effort he has frequently been exposed to intense enemy fire and has proved an inspirational and determined leader, imbuing his young soldiers with his energy, spirit and resolve,” read his citation.

despite the threat to his life, to motivate and encourage the soldiers and lead his men forward.

Maj McDonald's citation said: “Both junior and senior ranks have expressed their admiration for Maj McDonald stating they felt comfortable and secure under his command. They believed that for the first time they had pushed the enemy back and regained the initiative.”

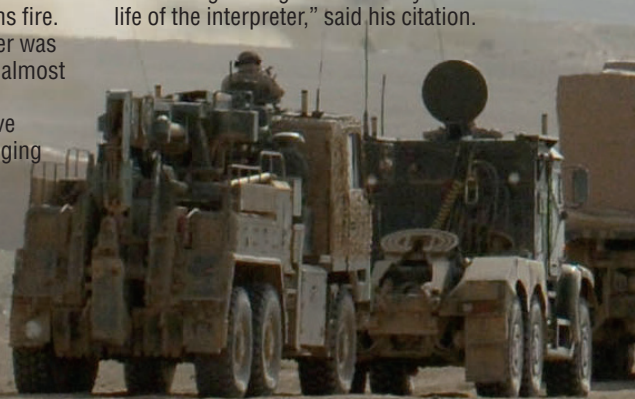
interpreter who had stumbled into the enemy's path. The man had been shot in the leg during the company's foot patrol through the Green Zone.

Aware that the enemy were tracking their every move, tensions were high and the heat began to take its toll on the soldiers who suddenly came under small arms fire. As they dived for cover the interpreter was struck and ran onto a different path, almost oblivious to the incoming rounds.

Cooke dashed into the open to save him, attracting a hail of bullets. Dragging

the interpreter into temporary cover, he administered first aid until the platoon could suppress the enemy and a medic was able to move forward.

“Cooke's immediate intervention, wanton disregard for his own personal safety and unflinching courage undoubtedly saved the life of the interpreter,” said his citation.



● A **FORCEFUL** and tenacious officer led more than 100 foot patrols into the volatile Green Zone despite his location coming under continuous attack from enemy forces.

Capt Graham Rainey (R Irish) successfully fused the ANA, Afghan Police and his OMLT to take part in operations in and around Musa Qala.

On May 22, 2008 Rainey's platoon came under machine gun fire, causing the ANA commander to freeze and the interpreter to flee. Rainey organised the ANA into a baseline of fire and the OMLT gave support. He forced the ANA commander to follow his lead and despite having to stop and engage an enemy sniper, Rainey withdrew the patrol successfully.

The following day another surprise attack paralysed the ANA and Rainey stepped in to organise an effective assault. When a confrontation blew up between the tiring ANA and frustrated OMLT, he defused the situation and forced them to clear the Taliban compounds, finding a badly-beaten prisoner. Applying splints and first aid to the man, he then manoeuvred the patrol back to base where his first thoughts were for the welfare of the casualty.

The Military Cross winner's citation, which described his courage as sublime, said: "Rainey's distinguished command, leadership and tactical skill ensured only the enemy were killed or injured in these ferocious encounters."



● Capt Graham Rainey

● A **CORPORAL** who charged up a bank to lead a surprise assault, breaking the enemy's will to fight, has been awarded a Military Cross.

Cpl Shaun Whitehead (Scots) was a section commander tasked with disrupting enemy forces in Musa Qala after intelligence reports indicated a high number of well-equipped and trained insurgents in the area.

Leading the point section of the company through the Green Zone on August 19, 2008, he made good use of cover, chancing upon three Taliban leaving a compound. Leading his men on a hasty attack, he recovered three rifles and a radio.

Later that day his team were ambushed with Whitehead targeted directly as the enemy could see his radio antenna. His section became separated from the rest of the platoon, causing Whitehead to steady his troops through personal example and constant direction. At one point he put himself in sight of enemy fire as he fired a rocket at Taliban positions.

His citation said: "His calmness under fire and the example that he set were exceptional."



● Cpl Shaun Whitehead

● **THE** junior member of an OMLT bravely took charge of ANA soldiers when they came under direct heavy fire from a Taliban position. By travelling between each ANA section in full view of the enemy – an action that very nearly cost him his life – **Rgr Alan Owens** (R Irish) was awarded a Military Cross.

On June 17, 2008 Owens was a mentor for an eight-man ANA section who were clearing open ground near Kanzi and only 300m from two villages that were known Taliban positions.

As shots rang out, Owens organised the ANA's firing positions and gave accurate radio reports of enemy grid references.

He gave orders to fire two anti-bunker rockets and adjusted indirect fire with mortars and aircraft.

"Owens grasped a clear principle of counter-insurgency operations by checking for civilian casualties; he engendered a level of empathy with the local population which no amount of fighting could establish," said his citation.



● Rgr Alan Owens

Background picture, Road wars: A combat logistic patrol from 13 Air Assault Sp Regt, RLC, supplies locations in Helmand province. Picture: Cpl Ian Holding RLC

Brief encounter: Maj John McDonald briefs his commanding officer, Lt Col Huw Williams (3 Para) during Operation Eagle's Summit, the largest operation since the British deployed to Afghanistan in 2006. Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC



● **A GIFTED** and courageous senior NCO who saved the lives of many British soldiers was killed while attempting to protect his comrades from a roadside bomb.

WO2 Gary O'Donnell (RLC) meticulously cleared convoy routes and used all his experience to make sure his colleagues stayed safe during his Helmand tour last year.

He made the ultimate sacrifice on September 10, when a device he was working on in Musa Qala exploded.

His courage, dedication and tireless devotion to military duty was recognised with the posthumous award of a bar to his George Medal.

WO2 O'Donnell's citation recounts two individual acts of bravery, the first of which was on May 10 when he expertly cleared seven bombs in support of a Danish battlegroup.

Well-hidden and designed, some of



● WO2 Gary O'Donnell

the devices were fitted with booby traps designed to kill if they were handled.

Yet the senior NCO managed to painstakingly work his way through the deadly collection, dismantling each one.

On July 23, he was responsible for clearing the way for a vital logistics convoy heading for a forward operating base after replacing a colleague who had collapsed from exhaustion.

WO2 O'Donnell disabled 11 IEDs over a 24-hour period, one of which the waiting enemy fighters had attempted to detonate manually as he approached.

But the bomb failed to explode and the NCO reported the Taliban position to supporting infantry units before setting to work on the device with a complete disregard for his own safety.

WO2 O'Donnell's citation recounts: "His calm and pragmatic approach to the task in hand has belied the immense personal danger that he repeatedly placed himself in.

"His skill and selfless determination were far in excess of that expected of him and have been an inspiration to us all – ultimately he saved innumerable lives."

He worked for hours, often in the middle of Taliban controlled areas, to make the bombs safe.

The senior NCO also tackled six radio-controlled devices, which can be detonated by the enemy at will, bringing them back for dissection and analysis.

SSgt Dickson's citation said: "His actions added significant value to the intelligence picture, helping shape tactics and developing life-saving equipment.

"Each time he flew out to an IED find Dickson knew that he would be risking his life. Despite this he continued to volunteer for additional work, utterly dedicated to reducing the threat to both coalition forces and civilians alike.

"In shouldering the greatest risks alone time after time, his conduct during the tour was the epitome of professionalism and personal bravery," the citation added.

● **A COURAGEOUS** bomb disposal expert put himself at huge risk to ensure the safe passage of a vital convoy through Helmand.

Capt Liam Fitzgerald-Finch (RLC) had been deployed as an ammunition technical officer to FOB Zebrugge in support of the road move of a hydro-electric turbine to Kajaki power station in August last year.

With sole responsibility for clearing an eight-kilometre section of the route through key Taliban strongholds, he was under extreme pressure to deliver. But he remained undeterred despite the searing 40C temperatures and pressed ahead with his job, finding and eliminating 13 lethal IEDs. His courage and selfless commitment earned him the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Capt Fitzgerald-Finch's citation said: "The decision to continue approaching and dealing with IEDs in the dark to ensure the route was cleared for the convoy was solely his. Throughout he was acutely aware that if any of the cunning devices functioned, they would almost certainly kill him."

The citation said Capt Fitzgerald-Finch's efforts had been crucial to the success of the mission, adding: "His level of moral and physical courage was astonishing."

● **THE** exemplary bravery of an improvised explosive device disposal operator helped shed new light on an increasingly sophisticated Taliban bombing campaign.

SSgt Stuart Dickson (RLC) played a key role in helping to shape British tactics with his expertise in diffusing enemy ordnance for analysis.

His outstanding performance in the face of significant danger, and the lives saved by the information that he helped to gather, earned him the George Medal.

SSgt Dickson, who was attached to the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group during his tour of Helmand province, in Afghanistan last year, collected nearly 40 IEDs for examination.

In four months from February to July, he dealt with 32 so-called victim-operated IEDs, designed to explode when direct pressure was applied.

● **A MEDIC** who raced over 300 metres of ground suspected to be littered with landmines to reach an injured colleague has been awarded the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

In early May 2008, Cpl William Owen (3 Para) was part of a battlegroup in Qaleh-Ye-Gaz in the Upper Gereshk Valley who were patrolling an area overlooking the Green Zone.

Covered with old Russian landmines, the area was being used by the Taliban to launch attacks in and around the areas of Sangin and Gereshk.

The group were split into teams, each with a pair of vehicles, when one struck an anti-tank mine causing a catastrophic blast which flipped it onto its roof. Two soldiers managed to drag themselves from the twisted wreckage but a third was trapped underneath and badly injured.

Cpl Owen drove over the minefield to get to the soldier, dragging him out and giving first aid.

He then turned to the other two casualties and tended to their wounds.

"Owen did not wait for orders or look for assistance, he acted immediately," said his citation.

"His professionalism in the most dangerous of locations was an inspiration to the platoon."



● Cpl William Owen



IRAQ

● AN officer who had little experience in combat commanded a casualty extraction from a Basra rooftop while being fired on by small arms and RPGs.

Capt Jeremy Crossley (Rifles) was despatched to the Basra Operational Command to help Iraqi Security Forces who were being attacked by Sadrist militias between March 25-30, 2008.

His Military Cross citation calls his performance as a forward air controller "outstanding" and refers in particular to one incident where he was directing a Tornado and Apache to a logistic base being overrun by insurgents.

Three rounds of mortar fire landed 20 feet from Crossley and three others as he spoke over the radio, leaving one soldier with severe shrapnel wounds and striking the captain's helmet.

Despite being momentarily dazed and amid intense firing, Crossley got back on the radio and told the pilots to cover the extraction of the casualty by two US Blackhawks. Three days later the officer was himself evacuated following injury to his face and eyes.

His citation read: "Capt Crossley never once thought of his own safety, his priority was to remain on the roof, drawing increasingly accurate and heavy fire and ensuring that the casualty was successfully extracted, at the same time seeking to neutralise those enemy who were intent on causing him harm."

● A TANK commander whose vehicle was hit by several IEDs while providing an armoured shield for an Iraqi force has been given a Military Cross for his unflinching leadership.

Sgt Paul Richards (RDG) led the strike to arrest a key Iraqi commander in Basra on April 4, 2008.

Identifying a roadblock made from a burnt-out car and concrete blocks he moved his tank forward, triggering an IED which struck his vehicle and attracted small arms fire.

As he advanced, and despite trying to dislodge two potential enemy positions by firing on them, his vehicle was hit by another four blasts.

The final one blew open his hatch, temporarily blinding him and detonating another bomb, which hit the Warrior behind. Despite the significant attacks, his tank continued forward and the objective was successfully completed.

"In spite of significant threats, Sgt Richards performed an act of leadership with outstanding nerve, determination and exemplary gallantry in the face of the enemy," read his citation. "Without his resolve to continue the advance, the operation would have ground to a halt before it had started."

Operational honours and awards

Afghanistan

CBE: Brig M A P Carleton-Smith, late IG; Col N A Hutton, late Para.

OBE: Lt Col S J B Warner, REME; Lt Col H S Williams, Para.

MBE: SSgt R E Barr, RLC; Maj M Biggs, RLC; Capt S P Boardman, AGC(SPS); Maj Hon C L Broughton, Gren Gds; Maj A J Fitzpatrick, Scots; SSgt J P Guthrie, REME; Maj P W Kimber, Mercian; WO2 P F Law, AAC.

ARRC: Capt M Cadman, QARANC (V).

DSO: Lt Col N R M Borton, Scots.

CGC: Cpl R W K McClurg, R Irish; A/Sgt A J Stevens, R Irish; LCpl J B Toge, R Irish.

MC: A/Capt R Archer, RE; Maj R M Armstrong, RA; 2nd Lt A B C Barclay, Scots; Maj N G Calder, Scots; Pte P J Coleman, Para; Cpl J S Cooke, IG; Maj A G Dawson, Para; Pte S L Fraser, Para; Maj R D Lewis, Para; Sgt S McConnell, R Irish; Maj J S McDonald, Para; Cpl N J A Noakes, Para (V); Rgr A W Owens, R Irish; Capt G D B Rainey, R Irish; Cpl S Whitehead, Scots.

Bar to George Medal: WO2 G J O'Donnell, RLC, (killed in action).

GM: SSgt S W Dickson, RLC.

QGM: Capt L C Fitzgerald-Finch, RLC; SSgt J A McCormick, RE; Cpl W G Owen, Para.

MID: Lt J P Adamson, Scots; Lt S Aiken, Para; WO2 B D Allen, AAC; Sgt H J Benson, R Irish; Capt J W Brown, RLC; LCpl A R Cairns, RAMC; Maj M T Cansdale, Para; Cpl C I Carter, AGC (SPS); LCpl D J Cox, RE; Cpl A H Cree, R Irish; Sgt L E Davies, RE; Maj N A Den-McKay, Scots; 2nd Lt S A C Du Boulay, Scots; Sgt D J Esdale, R Irish; Rgr D R Flanagan, R Irish; Maj J E Fossey, RE; Cpl T B Hawthorne, Para; Capt R J Hay, RA; LCpl A D Haywood, Para (V); 2nd Lt C J Hesketh, Scots; WO2 J A M Hilton, RA; Spr S Holmes, RE; Pte A R Irvine, Scots; Cpl H P Keir, Para; Pte D J Kinnell, Para; LCpl K K Knight, RE; CSgt D B Leitch, Para; LCpl S J Lewis, Para; LCpl C A Loftus, AGC (RMP); Spr J D Luton, RE; Pte R S Maclellan, Scots; Rgr S D Manning, R Irish; LBdr G L Martin, RA; CSgt J A Mason, R Irish; Cpl M R McCord, R Irish; LCpl R J McKee, R Irish; Cpl D S McMennamin, Scots; Sgt C J Meadows, RLC; SSgt A R Meek, RLC; LCpl J J Newlands, Scots; Cpl J Nixon, R Irish; Pte R A North, Para; Lt D M Robertson, Scots; WO2 W Roy, R Irish; Cpl G S Russell, Para; Pte C M Sharpe, Para; Cpl K M Terry, REME; WO2 S G Tidmarsh, Para; Pte L D Verity, Scots; Capt D I D Watson, Scots; Pte T Wilson, Para.

QCB: Cpl I R Leeming, RE; Cpl A P Meacham, RLC.

QCVS: SSgt M P Atkinson, RE; Cpl S J Ball, R Signals; Maj I R Bayliss, RLC; Cpl P G Berry, Para; WO2 A Billington, Para, TA; Maj J Boyd, Para; Capt A L Brown, RAMC, TA; Maj E C Coram-Wright, QRH; Maj L J N Daley, RLC; Maj J O Jansen, RAMC; Maj D B Kenny, R Irish; Lt Col J J Learmont, RA; WO2 A R Lindley, AAC; Sgt B W Lively, Para, TA; Capt B A O'Neill, Scots; Maj D G Shannon, R Irish; Capt M A Swann, Para; Lt Col D Wilson, RE.

Iraq

CMG: Brig R M Iron, late KORB.

CBE: Brig J R Free, late RA.

OBE: Lt Col G C Deakin, Lancs; Lt Col C L G Herbert, Scots.

MBE: WO2 R D Allen, R Signals; WO2 P R Howson, R Signals; WO2 S R McGuckien, R Signals; Maj T G S Perkins, Scots; Capt H L Searby, 9/12 L; Maj G A P Taylor, SG.

RRC: Maj T J Grieves, QARANC.

CGC: CSgt L J Durber, Para.

MC: Cpl S J Barry, Para; Capt J A Crossley, Rifles; Sgt C P Richards, RDG.

MID: Cpl S Beaumont, Para; Cpl W A Crowcroft, Lancs; Pte J A Winn, RAMC; LCpl S M Walker, Para.

QCB: Cpl G M Jones, REME.

QCVS: Maj O C C Brown, R Anglian; Capt D R J Calder, RE; Col I J Cave, late Mercian; Capt M A Fletcher, RE; Maj P A Herbert, RLC; A/LCpl C K High, RAMC; Maj T F C Laws, RLC; Maj R J McConnachie, RE; A/Lt Col S M McGrory, R Irish; LCpl E T O'Brien, Int Corps; A/Sgt N S Preisner, R Yeomanry, TA; Maj A Rennie, Scots; Pte S Tingay, RLC; Maj D T H Wilson, R Signals.

National operations

MBE: SSgt J W Fawcett, R Signals.

QCVS: Col M N S Urquhart, late R Irish; Sgt P V Wade, R Signals; Col M C Whiteside, late AAC.



Community service: A police mentoring team drive around the Lash Kagar region to visit Afghan National Police checkpoints to discuss local issues and concerns. Picture: Steve Dock



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Interview: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Graeme Main

IN A world where the British soldier is busier than ever on operations, you could be forgiven for thinking that sport had taken a back seat in military life.

Based in far-flung destinations such as Afghanistan and Iraq and heavily committed at the sharp end of the action, today's troops face an unenviable workload. But against all odds, the flame of competition is as bright as ever thanks to an Aldershot Garrison-based charity.

The Army Sport Control Board (ASCB) has been responsible for the development of activities in the Service for more than 90 years. In that time it has overseen the introduction of a raft of new events, provided grants for overseas sport tours and, most recently, assisted injured troops in taking on new challenges.

"The sporting opportunities in the Army are a key reason given in recruiting surveys for why people join up," said Lt Col (Retd) Chris Harris, the secretary of the ASCB who runs the organisation with director Maj Gen Christopher Elliott.

"Sport is all to do with the lifestyle of the Army in the same way as adventurous training. It is part of what the military is all about. You get team building and comradeship and it has many recruitment and retention benefits."

The ASCB, which raises money through its popular Army Sports Lottery, has a wide remit. It oversees the 42 different disciplines played in the Service, from mainstream events such as football, rugby union, netball and boxing to more niche events such as tug of war, rounders and paragliding.

The sports are divided into three categories – Synopsis, which reflects all the major team games and attracts full funding; Recognised, which make up the vast majority of the administered activities and Approved for up-and-coming events.

While anyone can formally apply for their sport to come under the ASCB's umbrella, aspiring events must first be scrutinised to establish their standing and popularity.

"We are aware that new sports are cropping up all the time, but there is a formal process to go through and I would suggest anyone who has an idea discusses it with me first," Harris explained.

"The applicant has to demonstrate that the activity has a management plan, that it is sustainable and will not be here today and gone tomorrow. Of our current sports, ice hockey is growing very quickly – although it is still what I would call a minority sport – and angling is also incredibly popular.

"There are other activities that do not have status with us but are

being played. We are aware, for example, of kabaddi (*SoldierSport*, March) although we are not involved."

With the countdown under way for the 2012 London Olympics, and with Aldershot hosting Team GB's preparation camp, Harris is confident that sporting soldiers will learn a lot from the best of Britain's athletes.

And having been involved in the Battle Back initiative, which encourages injured personnel to get involved in adaptive sport and adventurous training, he believes the Forces could eventually taste success at the Paralympics.

"We played a significant part in getting this scheme off the ground," he explained. "I know the British Paralympic Association are hoping that serving and ex-Service personnel will have a strong presence at the 2012 Games."

Harris said he was delighted that Aldershot

would be at the centre of Team GB's efforts. He concluded: "It is a great opportunity for us to showcase Army sport."

"I'm very positive about the future and the work that we are doing here. Like adventurous training, sport is good for all concerned and, with 42 to try out, there's plenty going on." ■

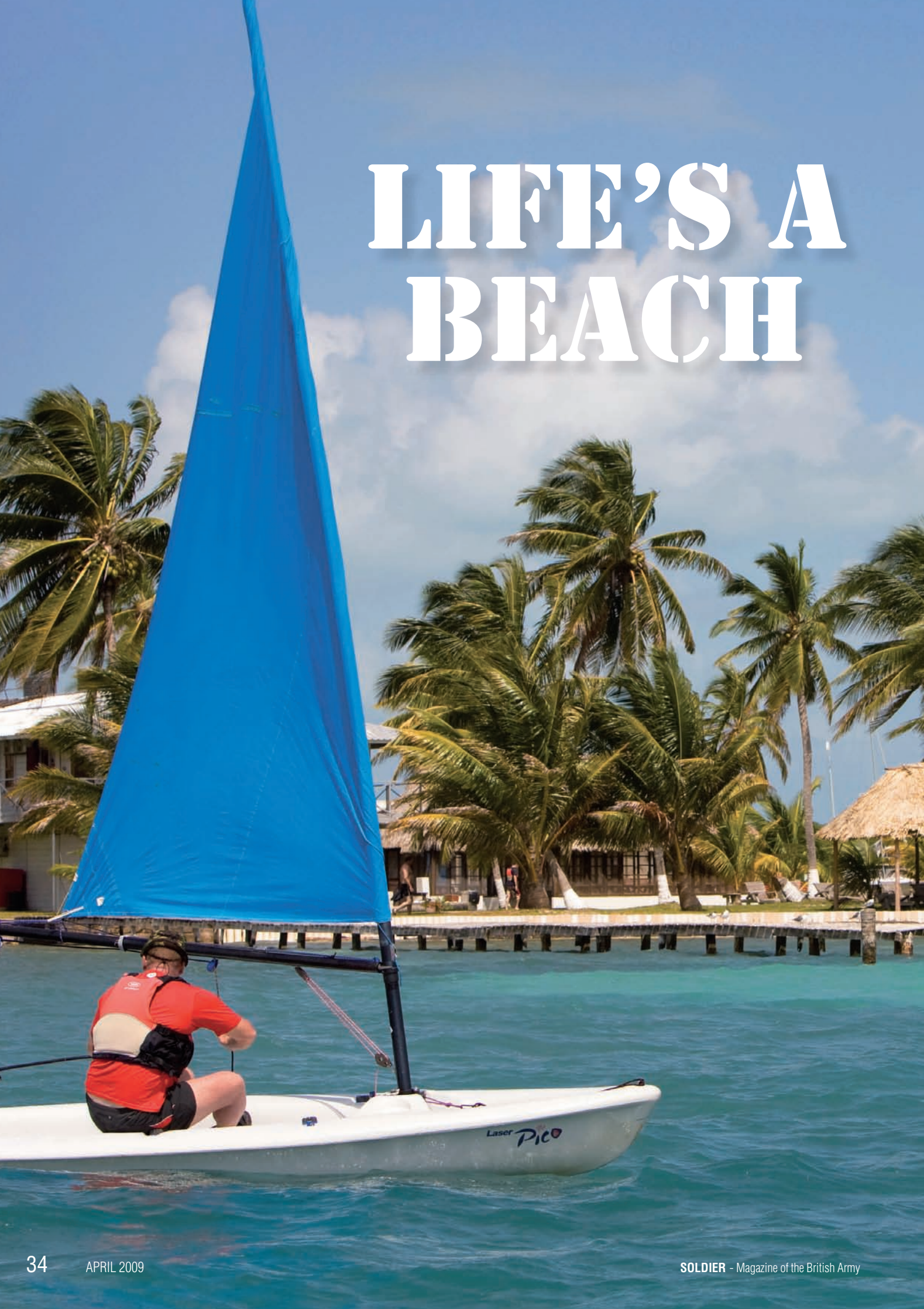
'I'm very positive about the future and the work that we are doing here. Like adventurous training, sport is good for all concerned and, with 42 to try out, there's plenty going on'

Sport for all

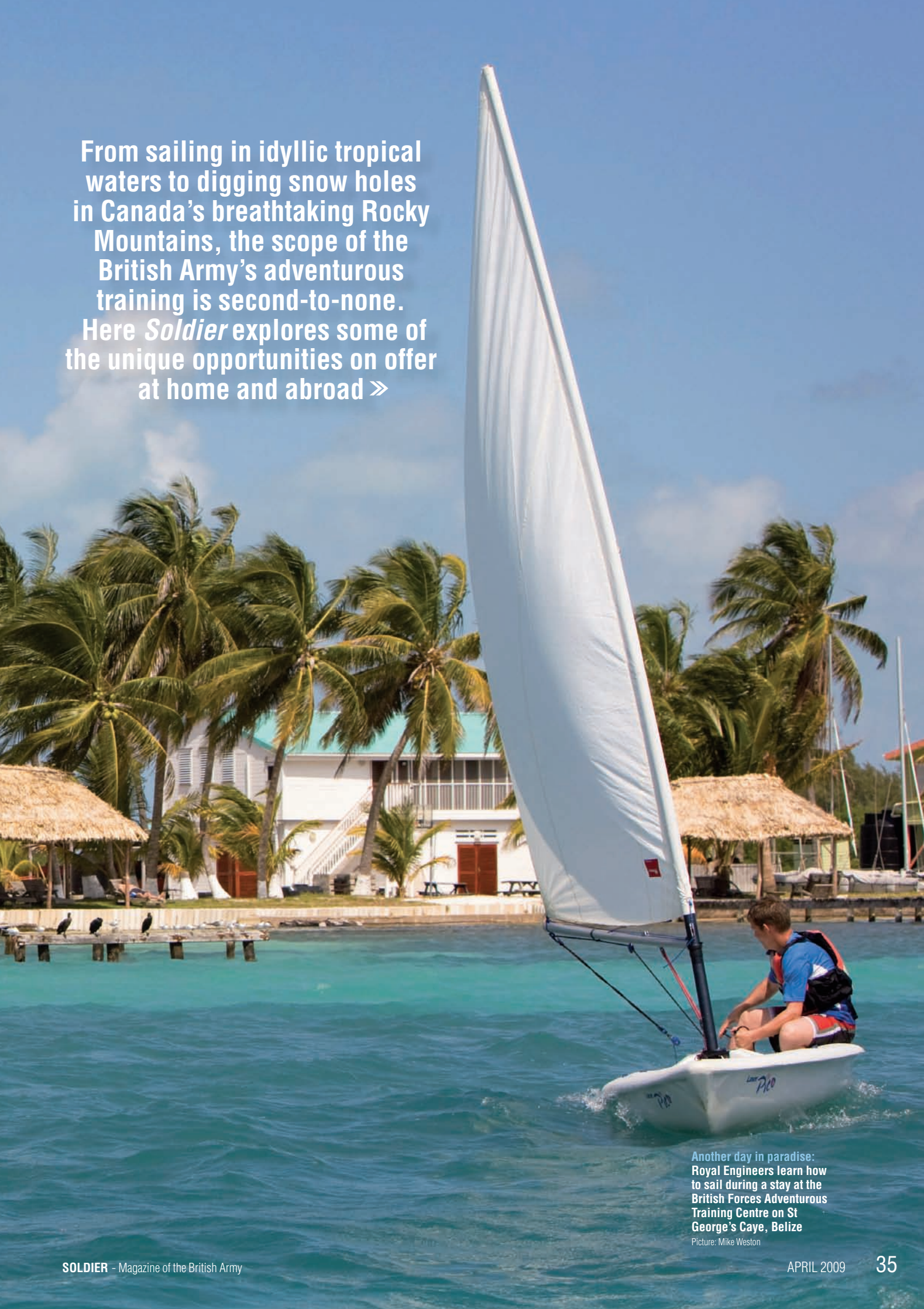
Aldershot charity sets the gold standard in helping Army athletes reach the top of their game

Good sport: Lt Col (Retd) Chris Harris plays a key role in ensuring soldiers are given every opportunity to strive for as much success on the playing field as they achieve on the battlefield

LIFE'S A BEACH



From sailing in idyllic tropical waters to digging snow holes in Canada's breathtaking Rocky Mountains, the scope of the British Army's adventurous training is second-to-none. Here *Soldier* explores some of the unique opportunities on offer at home and abroad »



Another day in paradise: Royal Engineers learn how to sail during a stay at the British Forces Adventurous Training Centre on St George's Caye, Belize

Picture: Mike Weston



School of hard rocks

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

WHEN Britain ground to an all-too-predictable halt due to the snow and ice earlier this year, London cemented its place as the laughing stock of the winter season.

As cities across the world battled through record-low temperatures and several feet of the white stuff, England's capital slammed the brakes on its public transport, shut up shop and collectively dug in until the pitiful couple of inches had melted.

The ease of the city's capitulation to the weather was brought sharply into focus for *Soldier* during a visit to Trail's End Camp (TEC), the adventurous training centre for staff at the British Army Training Unit, Suffield (Batus) in Canada.

From the camp's headquarters near the foothills of the breathtaking Rocky Mountains, students and staff have been throwing themselves into adventurous

training ranging from alpine skiing to ice climbing in a winter that has seen thermometers drop well below -30C.

But rather than giving in to the conditions as easily as those back home, everyone at TEC has soldiered on to make the most of the centre's incredible courses.

"Batus is unique in that it has very distinct summer and winter seasons which both present a huge amount of different opportunities," TEC chief instructor WO1 Nick O'Shea (APTC) said. "It is not a holiday coming here – the troops all have to put the effort in – but when they look at what they are able to achieve then it is definitely worthwhile."

The harshness of Canada's winter makes the lure of the bright lights of Las Vegas over the United States border too much to ignore for some soldiers when deciding what to do with their R&R period.

For those who choose to make the journey across the prairie from Suffield to TEC, which lies west of Calgary, however,

the ultimate rewards are much greater.

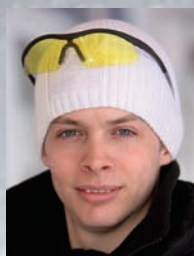
The activities on offer throughout both seasons are as varied as they are exciting. The heavy snow that falls over the many resorts in the Rockies during the winter – which officially lasts until May 19 – makes for perfect conditions for Exercise Snow Drift, a Joint Services Adventurous Training scheme in skiing and ski-touring, while frozen waterfalls create challenging pitches for Exercise Ice Climb.

Cfn Sheldon McNeil (REME), who was taking part in an advanced skiing course, said: "I didn't think I would ever get the chance to do this and now I'm going down black runs and moving out of my comfort zone. Adventurous training gives a lot of different opportunities and this is one of the best things I have ever done."

The opportunity to try something new was also handed to ice climber ATpr Ruan Esterhuizen (AAC). "I think the opportunities for adventurous training are very broad in the Army," he told *Soldier*. "It brings



● Cfn Sheldon McNeil



● ATpr Esterhuizen

everyone together in an environment where rank doesn't matter."

When the sun comes out, soldiers can appreciate the amazing Albertan scenery from a parachute in Exercise Fast Air, a canoe in Exercise Ghost Run and even from horseback in Exercise Rough Ride.

TEC officer commanding Maj Sulle Alhaji (APTC) admitted that although some troops arrive at the recently-refurbished camp wishing they were somewhere else, it does not take long for their moods to change.

"I would like to see a video of the groups when they come in and then another of them after five days here," he explained. "The buzz they get from taking on whichever activity it is they are doing is fantastic. It wins over even the most cheesed-off soldier."

"Adventurous training levels the deck. You can have an outspoken sergeant major and a quiet private who are equal here because each responds differently to the same activity which is stretching them."

"I can't speak highly enough of what we provide."

Through its network of civilian guides who know the twists and turns of the Rockies better than anyone else, TEC provides courses up to level four of the Joint Services Adventurous Training classification scheme, meaning that successful students can train to become instructors themselves.

Cfn Joe Sullivan (REME) was part of a group of soldiers making use of one of the expert trainers to learn how to ski-tour. "Adventurous training is good depending on where you are in the world," he said. "Sometimes you don't get the opportunity to do it, but it is really good when you do."

Whichever level the soldiers passing through TEC are training at, O'Shea believes his charges leave the camp with a lot more than new-found "hard" skills.

"The biggest thing to understand is that these guys are not just learning how to ski or to climb," he said. "They are also developing transferable skills like courage

and mental robustness.

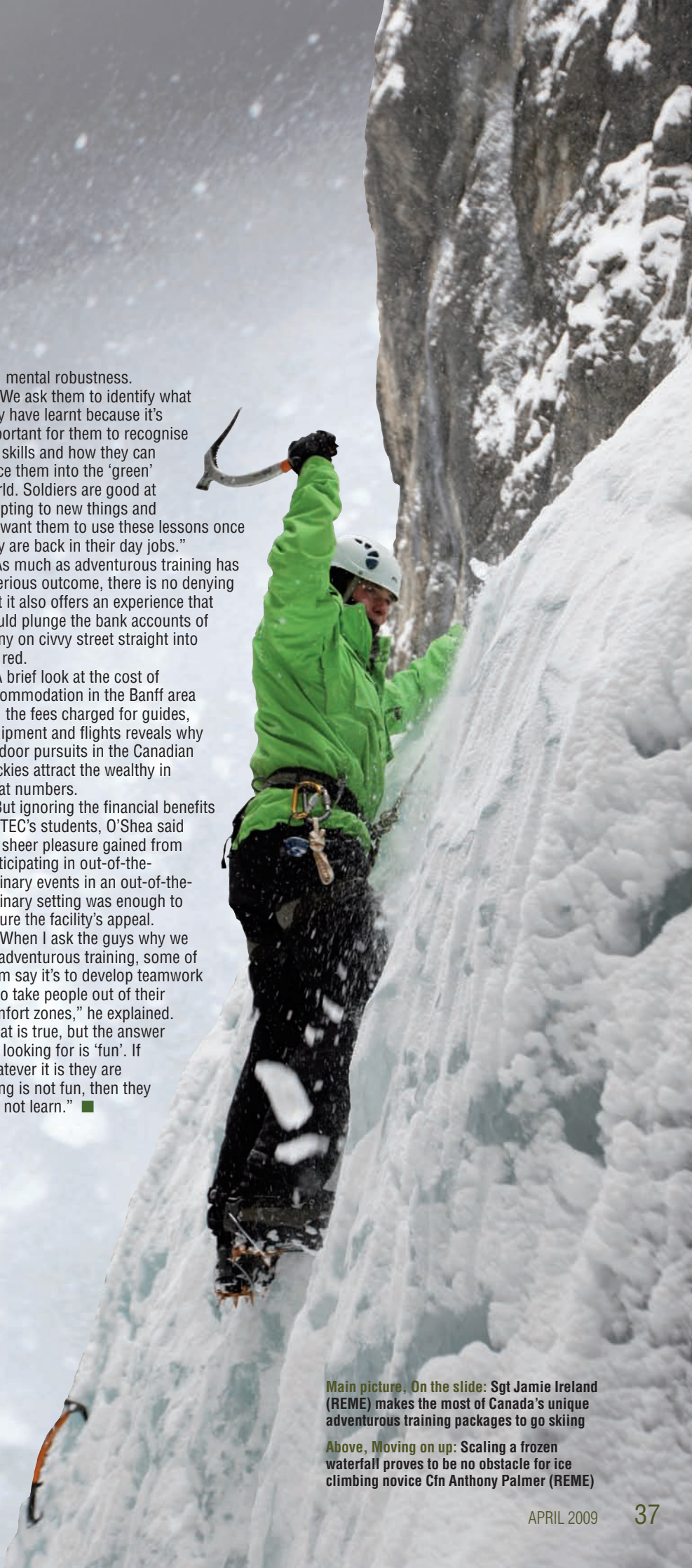
"We ask them to identify what they have learnt because it's important for them to recognise the skills and how they can place them into the 'green' world. Soldiers are good at adapting to new things and we want them to use these lessons once they are back in their day jobs."

As much as adventurous training has a serious outcome, there is no denying that it also offers an experience that would plunge the bank accounts of many on civvy street straight into the red.

A brief look at the cost of accommodation in the Banff area and the fees charged for guides, equipment and flights reveals why outdoor pursuits in the Canadian Rockies attract the wealthy in great numbers.

But ignoring the financial benefits for TEC's students, O'Shea said the sheer pleasure gained from participating in out-of-the-ordinary events in an out-of-the-ordinary setting was enough to secure the facility's appeal.

"When I ask the guys why we do adventurous training, some of them say it's to develop teamwork or to take people out of their comfort zones," he explained. "That is true, but the answer I'm looking for is 'fun'. If whatever it is they are doing is not fun, then they will not learn." ■



Main picture, On the slide: Sgt Jamie Ireland (REME) makes the most of Canada's unique adventurous training packages to go skiing

Above, Moving on up: Scaling a frozen waterfall proves to be no obstacle for ice climbing novice Cfn Anthony Palmer (REME)



**Report: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Mike Weston**

ON first impressions, the Servicemen and women learning how to scuba dive in the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea off the coast of Belize have struck adventurous training gold.

With the sun shining down and a gentle breeze ruffling the fronds of the palm trees on the shoreline, the soldiers aboard the boat appear to have an easy life in the Central American hot spot.

But as they fall backwards one-by-one into the water to begin their course, the hidden dangers of their chosen activity are brought sharply into focus.

Tropical setting aside, sub-aqua diving requires participants to willingly descend into a claustrophobic, alien environment where everything from running out of oxygen to developing decompression sickness poses a very real threat.

Add in the possibility of coming face-to-face with some of the Caribbean's least-friendly marine life and it becomes apparent that the adventurous training package in Belize is anything but a holiday.

Instead, the British Forces Adventurous Training Centre (BFATC) on St George's Caye – an island 30 minutes by boat from the mainland – designs all of its activities to rip soldiers from their comfort zones and stretch them to the limit to develop skills that will come in handy both on and off the battlefield.

Although it provides an undeniably exciting package, BFATC – like all Army



Paradise found

adventurous training centres – ultimately aims to develop troops' military skills.

"If you take a soldier and place him in a situation he perceives is dangerous he will then need to create coping strategies to deal with the hazards and dangers he faces," said Andy Aspinall, the BFATC training officer in Belize.

"If the soldiers think they are in danger then they have to make quick decisions. This transfers into the 'green' army."

But former Army PTI Aspinall added there must always be an element of fun factored into the training hosted by the hideaway.

Fun it certainly is, with a wide range of water-based activities including sailing, windsurfing and scuba diving on offer along the picture postcard coastline. The centre also affords soldiers the opportunity to spend five days canoeing and kayaking on the rapids of the Mackal River.

The British Army Training Support Unit Belize, which facilitates the adventurous training centre, plays host to several annual



● LBdr John Beamson



● Cpl Steve Avis

in the Belizean jungle, but they are also available to units who organise expeditions up to level three of the Army's adventurous training scheme.

In recent years the training in Belize has undergone a gradual evolution to reflect the high operational tempo soldiers currently face and therefore adapts courses for Service personnel ready to decompress.

"Taking people from their comfort zone prepares the guys and girls for the shocks and strains of war as they learn to deal with pressures," said WO2 Ady Durrands, the BFATC centre manager who co-ordinates all of the training. "Post-operations we still expect soldiers to achieve that same base aim. It may be in an environment where they want to enjoy themselves but we are still decompressing them."

exercises with approximately 2,000 troops passing through its doors each year.

The activities are primarily provided for soldiers who have completed warfare training

The centre's NCO, LBdr John Beamson, added: "Adventurous training in Belize should be pushed a lot more. In the current climate the lads should be given an opportunity to chill out and take it down a few gears."

With plans to host participants in the MoD's Battle Back scheme for wounded troops in the pipeline, BFATC is hoping to play its part in the rehabilitation of soldiers recovering from serious injuries.

And for Servicemen and women who have already experienced all that Belize has to offer, adventurous training is a very welcome break from the demands of modern-day soldiering.

"The team and I were always going to be away for six weeks and the water-based activities have been weaved into our programme so it doesn't keep us away from home any longer than we need to be," said Cpl Steve Avis (42 Engineer Regiment, RE).

"I think adventurous training is important because there are good times and bad times in the military and you have to compromise. This is one of the good times when the Army gives you a release and you can have some fun." ■



PEAK PRACTICE

**Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Steve Dock**

THE jagged peak of a towering mountain provided an awe-inspiring backdrop to the climbers as they battled to check their equipment in an intensifying blizzard.

Amid a cruel wind chill and on treacherously slippery rocks, they remained focused on their safety drills, abseiling one-by-one to the ground below.

This might be a world away from the frigid Canadian prairie and the steaming jungles of Belize, but the majestic beauty of Snowdonia National Park in North Wales masks a lethal bite that has taken more than its fair share of lives.

For the group of instructors at the Army's adventurous training centre in Capel Curig, near Llandudno, this unforgiving area is the perfect location to teach soldiers a diverse range of activities and hone a raft of useful military skills.

The destination has also been proving popular for post-operational recreation, providing returning troops with an exhilarating decompression package and the opportunity to let off steam in a controlled environment.

"Activities such as climbing, kayaking and mountain biking are great ways to chill out when you come home," said adventurous training instructor Sgt Jonah Jones (RA), whose favourite disciplines include rock climbing and potholing.

"Soldiers are definitely under a lot more stress these days and you can come here to relax – it does help to get away from the working environment.

"But it is an education too because you're developing new skills and building your confidence all the time.

"You can often spot leadership potential and it is great to see people trying out all kinds of different activities."

Using adventurous training to help troops readjust to life after ops has certainly proved valuable in the recent past. In 2006, Brig Patrick Marriott (QRL), then the commander of the 7th Armoured Brigade, took the Desert Rats out on Exercise Red Rat Diamond immediately after returning from their Op Telic 7 tour.

The manoeuvres, which were held in the Bavarian mountains of south Germany, aimed to rejuvenate leadership skills in junior NCOs, bolster the numbers of adventurous training instructors and provide

an antidote to the strains of Iraq.

Based in the shadow of Snowdon, Capel Curig is well-placed to provide a similar experience. Certified to deliver level two adventurous training, which gives troops the opportunity to enjoy basic and intermediate activity programmes, the instructors can help with anything from climbing challenges to kayaking through mountain rapids.

Catering for weekly intakes of up to 60 personnel from all three Services, the 12-strong team at the venue is made up of staff from The Guards Adventurous Training Wing and the Royal Artillery Adventurous Training Centre.

"You get a great deal of benefit from doing this kind of thing, there's no doubt about it," said instructor Cpl Anthony Kelly (1 WG), a 21-year-old veteran of Bosnia and Kosovo. "Guys coming back from Afghanistan can come into a peaceful environment and have some great opportunities with us.

"I'm the newest member of the team here at Capel Curig and am on a two-year posting. I have been particularly enjoying my climbing, and it gives me a great sense of achievement to help others overcome their fears."

For those taking part in the adventurous

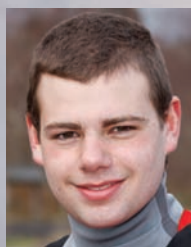
training packages, the activities on offer around Snowdon can often lead to further courses to gain recognised military and civilian qualifications. There is also the added bonus that soldiers have free access to experiences costing many hundreds of pounds on civvy street.

"Adventurous training was definitely something that I wanted to do when I joined the Army 18 months ago and I love to get out and do it whenever I can," admitted Gnr Danny Sansom (RA). "The instructors here have helped with my map reading skills this time – before I came they were poor but I feel I have improved a lot."

Tpr Lloyd Carrigan (Blues and Royals) was equally impressed with his package of activities, which included rock climbing and canoeing.



● Sgt Jonah Jones



● Tpr Lloyd Carrigan

"It is great to have a break from work and to build up our team skills – everybody has enjoyed themselves despite the cold weather," he said.

"The instructors put up the risk factor, which gets your adrenalin going to the point where you are uncomfortable, but it gets you used to the buzz that you feel when you are afraid and that does help you with military situations."

The adventurous training experience is certainly an invaluable opportunity

to develop core attributes that are as applicable on the battlefield as they are in the leisure arena.

But with high-intensity operations now the norm, centres such as Capel Curig are key in providing the environment needed to wind down after demanding tours. Away from the workplace troops are rewarded with one of the key perks of Army life – a benefit which makes the Service the envy of civilians everywhere. ■

Left, On the ropes: Climbing instructor LCpl Gordon Legg descends a rock face in Snowdonia National Park

Below, Across the lake: The mountains of North Wales provide a spectacular backdrop for canoeing



● **Trail's End Camp**

The Army's centre in Canada caters for a wealth of outdoor pursuits, including skiing, ice climbing and dog sledding in the winter and parachuting, rock climbing and horse riding in the summer

● **St George's Caye**

Arguably the most exotic of the Army's adventurous training locations, the centre off the coast of Belize offers an impressive range of activities on and in the water, including sub-aqua diving, kayaking, canoeing and sailing

● **ATG (Germany)**

● **Kiel**

Offshore sailing; Sub-aqua

● **Bad Lippspringe**

Parachuting

● **Bavaria**

Mountaineering; Canoeing; Skiing; Paragliding

● **Adventurous Training lodges**

Harz (2); Alps (3)

Action stations

Soldier's guide to the British Army's world of adventurous training

HQ ATG (Army)

- **Netheravon**
Parachuting

- **Northern Ireland**
Mountaineering; Rock climbing;
Mountain walking; Canoeing; Kayaking

- **Capel Curig**
Rock climbing; Canoeing;
Mountain walking; Kayaking

- **Castle Martin**
Mountaineering;
Rock climbing

- **Indefatigable, Anglesey**
Mountaineering; Rock climbing;
Canoeing

- **Ripon**
Mountaineering; Canoeing; Caving

- **Ballachullish, Scotland**
Mountaineering; Rock climbing;
Canoeing; Winter mountaineering;
Winter rock climbing

- **Norway**
Skiing (Nov to Apr)

- **Cyprus**
Offshore sailing; Sub-aqua; Canoeing;
Parachuting; Mountaineering



European Parliament and local elections



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The
Electoral
Commission

Interview: Samantha Chapman
Picture: Steve Dock

TUCKED away in a leafy corner of Berkshire lives an Army sporting legend whose dedication to fitness has spanned more than six decades.

John Moore, a former lieutenant colonel in the Royal Artillery and commandant of the Army Physical Training Corps school, was an Olympic skier and founding father of the Army's adventurous training as we know it today.

Crowned British cross-country ski champion in 1955, Moore competed in three Winter Olympics in 1956, 1960 and 1964, attaining the title of sixth best in the world.

In 1958 he took part in the first World Biathlon Championships at Saalfelden. Also a prolific fencer, Moore was the first and only sportsman to have ever won the Champion at Arms title an astonishing five times in a row. On his final win, and following his father's death, he hung up his blade and vowed he would never compete again.

"I have had a fabulous life," said the 75-year-old, whose cabinets and walls are filled with medals, trophies and an OBE for services to sport as a civilian – an enormous array of accolades for just one man.

"I went to Sandhurst in February 1952 and joined the Royal Artillery as a gunner. In those days you had to complete four months at a private's level before you could even start your officer training. I loved it, it was a great life."

While continuing to play the sports he adored, Moore took a keen interest in his troops' fitness and encouraged them to always be at their peak.

Quickly rising through the ranks, he was soon promoted to Lt Col and asked to be put in charge of adventurous training – a very loose term for a few centres run by enthusiastic soldiers on a volunteer basis.

"Basically if someone could climb they might take a

few people with them to teach, but back then it wasn't official and they wouldn't have had the proper equipment," explained Moore.

"I wanted to build on this concept and make it more permanent."

Moore threw himself into his new idea, fine-tuning centres in Wales, Scotland, Norway, England and Germany and establishing new services in Cyprus, Hong Kong, Belize and Canada. Having chosen the correct equipment, sports and staff, Moore's vision saw adventurous training grow into an integral part of a soldier's experience.

Having worked hard to get the APTC involved, he was delighted when 2,000 soldiers were off on expeditions around the world by his third year in post. His dream was becoming a reality.

"We had got to a stage where the British Army was not very fit," he said. "The adventurous training countered that. It still gives Servicemen and women the skills to deal with any situation and increases their ability to cope with danger."

Moore left the Army in 1978 to work for Lillywhites – a sportswear and equipment company – and four years later was headhunted by the Pakistani Army to set up ski centres for their soldiers. Soon after he started his own company named after wife Ida and has equipped schools and centres across the country to give children the best sporting opportunities.

So what's the secret to his vitality? "I work out every day and have remained at 80kg my entire life," he said. "I am careful with food and I have never touched a drop of alcohol. I would not know what beer, wine or spirits taste like."

That omission, despite a life in the Army, is merely another accolade to add to the list. ■

A SPORTING CHANCE

Former officer and Olympic athlete John Moore tells *Soldier* of his mission to get a sense of adventure back into the British Army

Legendary skier: John Moore, pictured left at the Army and BAOR championships in 1956 and today, above right. His love of sports has created a lasting legacy for the 21st Century's Servicemen and women. Picture: Soldier Archive





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Marathon man

Injured officer paces through the pain barrier to take on 26.2-mile capital city challenge

Interview: Stephen Tyler

AS Maj Phil Packer tentatively took his first unaided steps since suffering spinal damage in an accident in Basra in 2008, it was difficult to envisage the officer taking his place on the start line at this month's Flora London Marathon.

Under the care of physiotherapist Kate Sherman, Packer used crutches to gingerly advance along a four-metre walkway at Headley Court less than a year after doctors said he would never walk again.

It was a slow and tiring start but, in line with a man who has confounded medical staff with his resilience and recovery, Packer is convinced he will be able to finish the 26.2-mile slog through the capital in aid of Phil's Million, his personal quest to raise £1 million for Help for Heroes.

Starting with the bulk of the competitors on April 26, Packer aims to complete the challenge at the rate of roughly two miles a day and is appealing for sponsors to help bolster his seven-figure appeal.

"It will be strange to be on the start line and have everyone run off leaving me on my own," he told *Soldier* as he embarked on the gruelling physio programme required to prepare him for the marathon. "It will be a long two weeks, but I hope it will spread the word of what I'm trying to achieve."

"I'm convinced if it's done in the right way then I can get to £1 million. The support is out there and it's just letting people know what I'm doing."

"I'm hoping with the marathon that I can enthuse people to donate or to do things to support me. If a school wants to do a sponsored swim or if people want me to go and give a talk then it all helps."

As reported in last month's *Soldier*, Packer is inviting the public to challenge him to take on various sports. The proud officer has already rowed across the English Channel and will climb the 3,000ft El Capitan rock face in California soon after taking on the Flora London Marathon.

His participation in the prestigious race came about when Paralympian Paula Craig lent him a racing wheelchair after the pair met during Packer's stay in hospital. But as he regained some of the feeling in his legs, Packer's military grit and determination came to the fore and he decided that completing the marathon in a wheelchair was not enough of a challenge.

"When things started to improve, it suddenly didn't feel right to sit in a chair and push around the marathon when I knew I could stand," he said. "This is about using the disability as a strength to send a positive message."

The news that Packer wanted to take on the epic race came as a shock to the medical team treating him and the former RLC soldier has been warned of the potential risks involved.

But Lt Col Alan Mistlin, a consultant in rheumatology and rehabilitation medicine who has treated the major, said the marathon would act as a "positive goal" in the recovery process.

"Phil has come a very long way from some very serious injuries, probably further than anyone thought he would six months ago," he added. "The thought of even contemplating the marathon was not really on anyone's radar."

"It will show a lot of people with a spinal cord injury that life doesn't have to end." ■

● To make a donation to Phil's Million or to read more about the challenge, see www.philpacker.com. For more inspiring Flora London Marathon stories, visit www.memory-joggers.co.uk

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Winning run

Humble Holmes uses Army experience to develop next generation of British athletes



War face: Dame Kelly Holmes celebrates winning the first of her gold medal haul with victory in the 800m at the 2004 Athens Olympics

Picture: Nick Potts, PA Photos



Interview: Stephen Tyler

AMONG the sporting stars to have risen from military ranks to take the world by storm, few have shone brighter than Dame Kelly Holmes.

The former physical training instructor reluctantly left her Army job in 1997 to pursue an athletics career that culminated in a double gold medal-winning display in the 800m and 1,500m at the Athens Olympics seven years later.

International acclaim and an eternal place in the hearts of the British public followed and Holmes was set for a comfortable career as an occasional media celebrity as a result of her success.

But sitting back and relaxing is not in the genetic make-up of the Kent-born athlete and, since hanging up her spikes, Holmes has taken it upon herself to nurture the next generation of runners.

After watching several of her contemporaries lose interest with sport at an early age, Holmes is keeping the cream of athletic talent on track for success through the On Camp With Kelly programme.

The Aviva-sponsored scheme was launched four years ago to provide promising youngsters with top-class coaching and has already pushed several athletes into the senior international set-up.

And although British middle-distance running still has some way to go before it rivals its past successes, the former-Army judo champion is happy to be involved in the sport at grassroots level.

"You can't compare athletics to other sports because there are so many physical and tactical demands," Holmes told *Soldier*. "I think people underestimate how demanding it is."

"The sport has been going through a difficult patch because we haven't had enough depth across the board or enough big performers to act as focal points. Despite that, we have a lot of potential so it's just a case of whether that is realised."

"When I was a junior, a lot of athletes left the sport because they didn't see a future in it and I thought then that we should try harder to encourage them to stay."

"Now, some of the young people I work with are

already breaking through to the senior ranks. The support from Aviva has been brilliant."

Holmes's desire to push herself and those around her to achieve bigger and better things made her an ideal candidate for life as an Army PTI.

After joining up as an HGV driver in the now-disbanded Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC), her athletic prowess soon became apparent and she was invited to attend training at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot.

After successfully passing out, Holmes's postings to various units presented her with the challenge of bringing the soldiers under her charge up to her advanced fitness standards.

Remembering how some of her friends had fallen out of love with physical activity, however, the middle-distance supremo tried her best to make training enjoyable rather than intimidating.

"I always found the soldiers pretty good," continued Holmes. "I went to a few different units where personnel were enthusiastic and had a hands-on approach, but there were also a couple



Golden girl: Holmes has launched The Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust to help sportsmen forge new careers after they stop competing. Visit www.dkhlegacytrust.org

Picture: Graeme Main

with soldiers on remedial programmes.

"I enjoyed the challenge because I believe there is always something you can do to help. I never let anyone off, but I also knew that I had to engage them so that what they were doing was fresh and fun and not just hard work. I am not the tallest individual, but I would turn up at units and win people over because I was such a strong person.

"If there was a perception about what I was going to be like from people that didn't know me, I soon changed it when I showed what I could do."

Away from her work with the 45 girls and eight boys enrolled in On Camp With Kelly, Holmes is also the National School Sport Champion – a Government-backed role in which she tries to enthuse a love of sport in children and teachers.

Despite her passion for middle-distance running, Holmes is the first to admit that the discipline does not suit everyone and is pleased to

see schools offering up a diverse sporting menu for their pupils.

"We are trying to get 100 per cent participation and schools are trying to provide five hours of sport every week, but to keep the young people involved you have to offer variety," she said.

"Not everyone enjoys traditional sports and that's why they have things like cheerleading, street dance, martial arts and even boxing.

Children are always going to be enthusiastic if you give them the right opportunities."

After all the success she has enjoyed out of uniform, it is the experiences from Holmes's time in green that play the biggest part in shaping the messages she delivers.

The Olympian told *Soldier* that she places a high value on the leadership and communication skills she developed from taking part in adventurous training and military exercises.

"I loved being a PTI and I still say today that the Army enables you to find yourself. You grow as a person, it opens your eyes and you are always challenged to push yourself and to try new things.

"A lot of what I use post-athletics is based around my Army experiences and the knowledge I got from serving rather than what I have learned since. I have been out for 11 years now, but it's still a massive part of what I do and how I do it."

Holmes added that her time in the Forces has given her an insight into the bravery of the soldiers deployed to operational front lines and she was quick to heap praise on their efforts.

"It goes without saying that you are doing a fantastic job," she said. "Everybody in Britain is proud of you and if you see the support for charities like Help for Heroes you will know the public is grateful for what you are doing for your country.

"Keep up the great work and I hope you all come back home safely." ■

'A lot of what I use is based around my Army experiences'



LAGER LAGER LARGER

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A full-page photograph of boxer Joe Calzaghe celebrating a victory. He is shirtless, wearing red and white boxing trunks with a large gold championship belt around his waist. He has a black and silver cross necklace. His arms are raised in triumph, wearing red, white, and green boxing gloves. The background shows a crowded boxing ring with spectators and photographers.

The real DEAL

World champion hails injured troops as Britain's true heroes

Prize fighter: Joe Calzaghe celebrates beating Roy Jones Junior to win the *Ring Magazine* Light Heavyweight Championship in New York

Picture: Nick Potts, PA Photos



Interview: Stephen Tyler

FOR sportsmen and women reaching the end of their career, choosing the best moment to finally call it a day is vitally important.

Some get the timing right – see former *Soldier*-interviewee Martin Johnson's international retirement shortly after guiding England to Rugby Union World Cup glory – and are forever remembered as heroes.

Others, sadly, get it wrong and a lifetime of effort and achievement is replaced by the sad spectacle of a star plummeting back to earth as they try – and fail – to live off past glories.

Then there is Joe Calzaghe. The Welsh boxer unlaced his gloves for the final time in February after a glittering career that took in 46 unbeaten fights and an 11-year stint as a world champion.

Rather than risk tainting his unblemished

record by extending the run, Calzaghe decided to concentrate on matters outside of the ring and believed he had earned a break after nearly three decades of military-style dedication to training.

"At the end of the day I have been training like a professional since I was 11 or 12-years-old," he told *Soldier*. "I have been doing it two or three times a day for 27 years and that has made me tremendously fit.

"I have had to be dedicated to make sure that I made the weight ahead of a fight, but that's the same dedication that soldiers show."

The Italian Dragon, who made his name as a super middleweight before stepping up to light heavyweight for the final two bouts of his career, was speaking during his first visit to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court in Surrey.

After meeting patients at the world-renowned

facility, Calzaghe presented the centre with a Counter-Punch boxing system. The hi-tech training aid measures the speed and quantity of a boxer's punches and comes complete with sometimes-scathing audio feedback from Calzaghe's father and coach Enzo.

The visit was one of the former BBC Sports Personality of the Year's first appointments since his retirement, but Calzaghe was proud to have been given the opportunity to attend.

"I was touched by the plight of these guys and inspired by the job that they do," he said. "I thought it would be good to come down [to Headley Court] and present them with the Counter-Punch for them to use as part of their rehabilitation.

"We had lunch and I spoke to a few of the guys. The great thing about them is that they don't talk about themselves. They are not negative and don't



Box clever: Calzaghe breaks through Roy Jones Junior's guard on his way to a 118-109 victory at Madison Square Garden

Picture: PA Photos

feel sorry for themselves and it's incredible really. "Some of them even talk about wanting to go back out [to theatre].

"Again that's very humbling because you would think it's the last place they would want to go."

Although Calzaghe never entertained an Army career, he crossed paths with the military during his time as an amateur, beating a Royal Marine in his first welterweight fight in 1991.

The points victory came against an opponent Calzaghe remembered as being "pretty fit" and the world champion was given another insight into Service personnel's physical ability at Headley Court when members of the current Army boxing team showed off their prowess on the Counter-Punch system.

He also spent time with soldiers undergoing

intensive rehabilitation packages and was quick to play down his achievements – including beating the legendary light heavyweight Roy Jones Junior at New York's Madison Square Garden in his final fight – in comparison.

‘These guys are the real fighters and are much braver’

"I may be a boxer and I'm a brave guy, but these guys are the real fighters and are much braver," he explained. "I personally didn't realise that so many soldiers come back from Iraq and Afghanistan with such

serious injuries because it's not always in the news, so I hope that coming here has lifted their spirits a bit.

"It's humbling to see how well they cope despite everything that they have been through. This is the first time I have been here and I have to say that I'm very impressed. The facilities are

incredible and it's nothing less than the soldiers deserve for what they do for their country."

With the gruelling training regime finally over and his status as one of Britain's greatest boxers secured, Calzaghe plans to use his experience – as well as the promoter's and coach's licences he holds – to remain involved in a sport he insists is "in his blood".

But wherever his resettlement takes him, it is certain that Calzaghe will be lending his support to the military men and women fighting their own battles on operations.

"It's their job, but they are very brave," he concluded. "I couldn't do it and I'm a world champion. The way that these guys get knocked down but still manage to get back up is the ultimate in courage.

"Keep up the good work and stay strong while you are away. We appreciate what you do." ■

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Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding RLC

UNIFORMITY is the name of the game across the Household Division – it's official.

In a recession-busting move, MoD bosses have drawn up a package of cost-saving measures to cut back on material and time needed to make the Foot Guards' historic ceremonial attire.

Currently the tunics of the Grenadier, Scots, Welsh, Irish and Coldstream Guards all have their own distinctive button formations that make them instantly recognisable.

But Defence chiefs claim that introducing a one-button-fits-all approach will slash production costs by up to a third and give the division a more standard identity.

The move has already angered traditionalists, who have long cherished the individuality of the guards' uniforms, some of which date back hundreds of years.

A spokesman for the MoD admitted: "We fully understand that this is likely to be an emotive issue, but the fact remains that the UK is in the middle of the worst recession for more than 20 years and we have to make savings where possible.

"By introducing a simple measure such as targeting buttons on the guards' uniforms, we can make production cheaper and easier as well as give the division a smarter appearance."

Production of the new uniforms will be steadily ramped up in the coming months, with all Foot Guards taking on the five-button formation from next April.

While the cavalry of The Life Guards and The Blues and Royals are unaffected, the MoD is refusing to rule out further changes to attire, including the introduction of a standard plume in a colour that is "less expensive" to produce.

"There are other cost-cutting measures that we could take across the uniform spectrum and discussions are under way at a senior level," the spokesman confirmed.

"However, we remain sensitive to the history and traditions of the British Army and no decisions will be made without the required consultation."

Military enthusiasts, historians and regimental associations are already hot under the collar at the proposed amendments to the Foot Guards' attire and have called for the immediate and unconditional scrapping of the move.

Leading the tirade, retired officer Maj Vincent Smythe-Ogilvy, a former member of the Grenadier Guards, said that "tinkering" with years of tradition would be a blow to morale for serving soldiers.

He added: "This move strikes at the very heart of a national institution in which the public has considerable pride. Nobody is denying that money needs to be saved, but the MoD should see sense and stop this mad decision from going forward." ■

Button-up: The Major General Commanding the Household Division and London District, Maj Gen William Cubitt, inspects the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards parading the new standard-issue Foot Guards tunic at Victoria Barracks, Windsor

Changing the Guards

Defence budget tightens its belt and hits the historic red tunics of the Household Division's Foot Guards

WHEN the United States launched a military-inspired drive to put a man on the moon in the 1960s, the programme brought a raft of benefits for civilian life.

Galvanised to beat the former Soviet Union in a race for space, scientists, technicians and defence contractors pulled together to realise an ambition of huge proportions. The spin-offs from their efforts, which included strong metal alloys, guidance systems and computers, would form the basis of new consumer products.

Fast-forward to the early 21st Century, however, and the tables have been turned. With a generation that has grown up with mobile phones, MP3 players, games consoles and laptop computers, it is now civilian technology that is a key driving force behind a new wave of military equipment. And the MoD has been quick to realise the exciting potential of this new and emerging relationship.

Enter the Defence Technology Plan, an initiative to encourage business to feed ideas directly to department officials. Through an internet site, www.science.mod.uk, civilian companies can now tap directly into the Army's future wish list and pitch suggestions to the top.

Military chiefs hope the fresh input will particularly help with their priorities of reducing the weight burden on dismounted troops, creating new armoured vehicle and aircraft concepts, reducing fossil fuel dependency and combating the spectre of cyber terrorism.

For the companies who have so far been granted funding by the MoD to push ahead with projects, providing the most user-friendly civilian technologies is vital to success. By emulating commercial games and entertainment products, they believe operating Army kit will be more instinctive for soldiers.

"If you look at the era that followed the Second World War, the military was at the hub of the new technologies," said Ken MacLauchlan, a project director at Portsmouth-based firm Mindsheet, which makes the Testudo robot vehicle.

"But then something changed during the 1980s with the debut of the home computer and again with the arrival of mobile phones – the capability of the very latest generation mobiles is actually better than a military radio of just a few years ago."

The Testudo project, which has just received a £28,000 grant from the MoD, is testament to the crossover between the military and consumer markets.

Built on a remote-controlled buggy platform available from a model shop and capable of achieving 30mph, the equipment is fitted with a powerful optical system and driven via a touch-screen device coupled with a console-style thumbstick.

It is designed to roll along Afghanistan's compounds spotting threats.

"People that have grown up using the PlayStation are already used to controlling games with their thumbs," said MacLauchlan. "And we have tried to make the on-screen icons that control Testudo similar to those on a digital camera."

The military's use of mainstream innovations is not confined to the latest electronic technology. Clothing and survival items have also been imported from civvy street, most famously the impressive Camelbak hydration system.

Richard Palmer, chief executive of Sussex-based D30 Lab, which has recently been developing a new shock absorbing material for military helmet linings, was convinced there were strong links between military and leisure products.

His firm's innovation, a patented luminous orange compound, uses so-called intelligent molecules that flow with the wearer as they move but lock together on impact. The material provides strong armour while allowing an impressive freedom of movement and has already been used in ski suits worn by Olympic athletes.

"Soldiers and sportsmen are not dissimilar – they want the same things but need to use them in different ways," Palmer said. "We make kit for the snowboard

and motorcycling sectors and people there want strong protection and good mobility just like troops.

"Extreme sports have been growing in recent years and they require that you have the agility to react while minimising injury risks. In the same way, our product offers anti-ballistic potential for soldiers – it is not a solution on its own but could be very effective when it is combined with other materials."

With battlefield mobility another of the MoD's key themes, equipment experts have also been looking to the civilian motor industry for inspiration in economy and fuel efficiency. Technologies such as fuel cells and hybrid fuel-electric drive systems – which have already been successfully marketed by Honda and Toyota – could cut down on consumption as well as reducing emissions.

"We're looking for ways to reduce costs as well as addressing climatic issues," said MoD science and technology director Paul Stein. "This includes examining the potential for creating robust fuel cells as well as making fuel in operational theatres. We are examining other technologies and want solutions for a variety of issues."

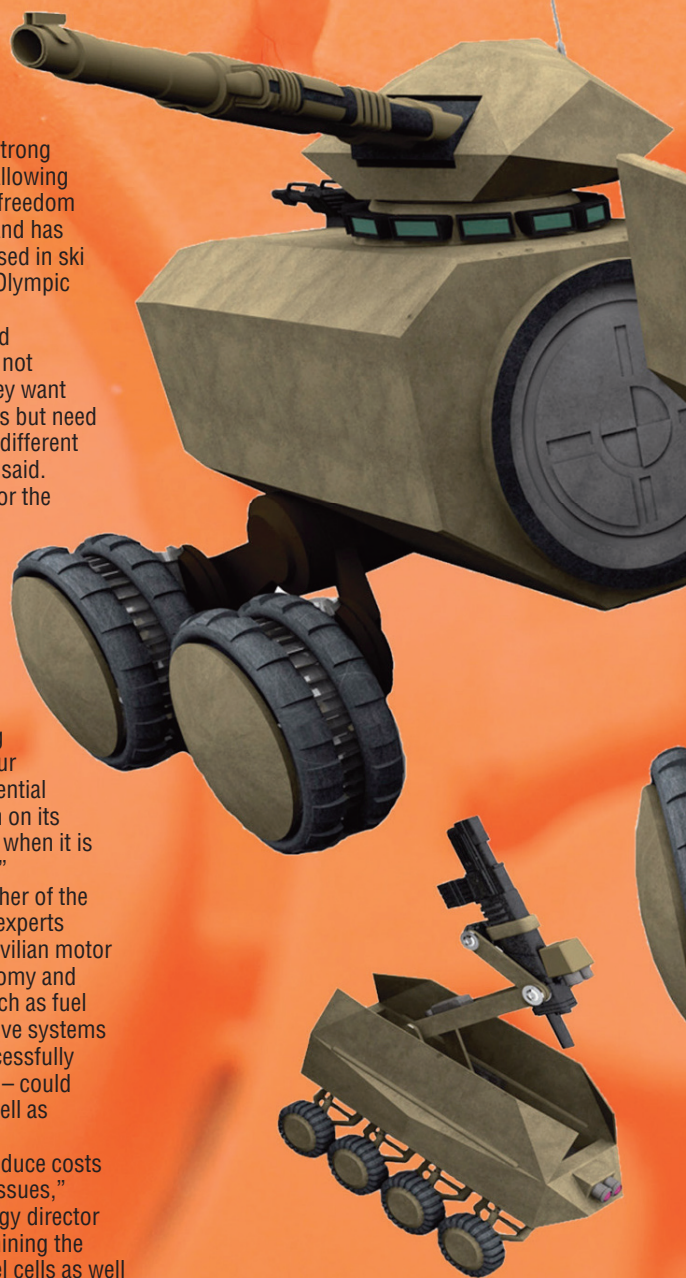
The MoD's relationship with civilian companies will certainly be important in

providing these solutions. With British soldiers still engaged in two major campaigns, making sure they have the best and most up-to-date kit on offer is as important for their morale as it is for their operational effectiveness.

While Op Telic will be drawing down in the coming months, Service personnel will still be heavily engaged in Afghanistan where the weather conditions are extreme, the operating environment unpredictable and the fighting often intense.

Crucially, the military needs the help of civilian thinking in a way it has not previously. With soldiers learning the basics of their craft on gadgets while still at school, making use of their instinctive abilities with the latest technology is key. ■

**'PEOPLE THAT
HAVE GROWN
UP USING THE
PLAYSTATION
ARE ALREADY
USED TO
CONTROLLING
GAMES WITH
THEIR THUMBS'**



Main picture, Wheely good: The lightweight Future Protected Vehicle Concept is designed to offer the effectiveness and survivability currently associated with a main battle tank Pictures: MoD

INSPECT A GADGET

Designers look to civvy street to inspire
next generation of military kit

INNOVATIONS ON THE ASCENDANCY

...MASS ATTACK...

WHO: Swarm Systems, London
WHAT: Concept of a co-operative
swarm of micro-UAVs
DEAL: Contract worth £115,000 to
develop the idea

...STELLAR IDEA...

WHO: Team Stellar
WHAT: Saturn UAV and
ground robot
DEAL: Contract worth £1.3
million to develop system

...VISION EXPRESS...

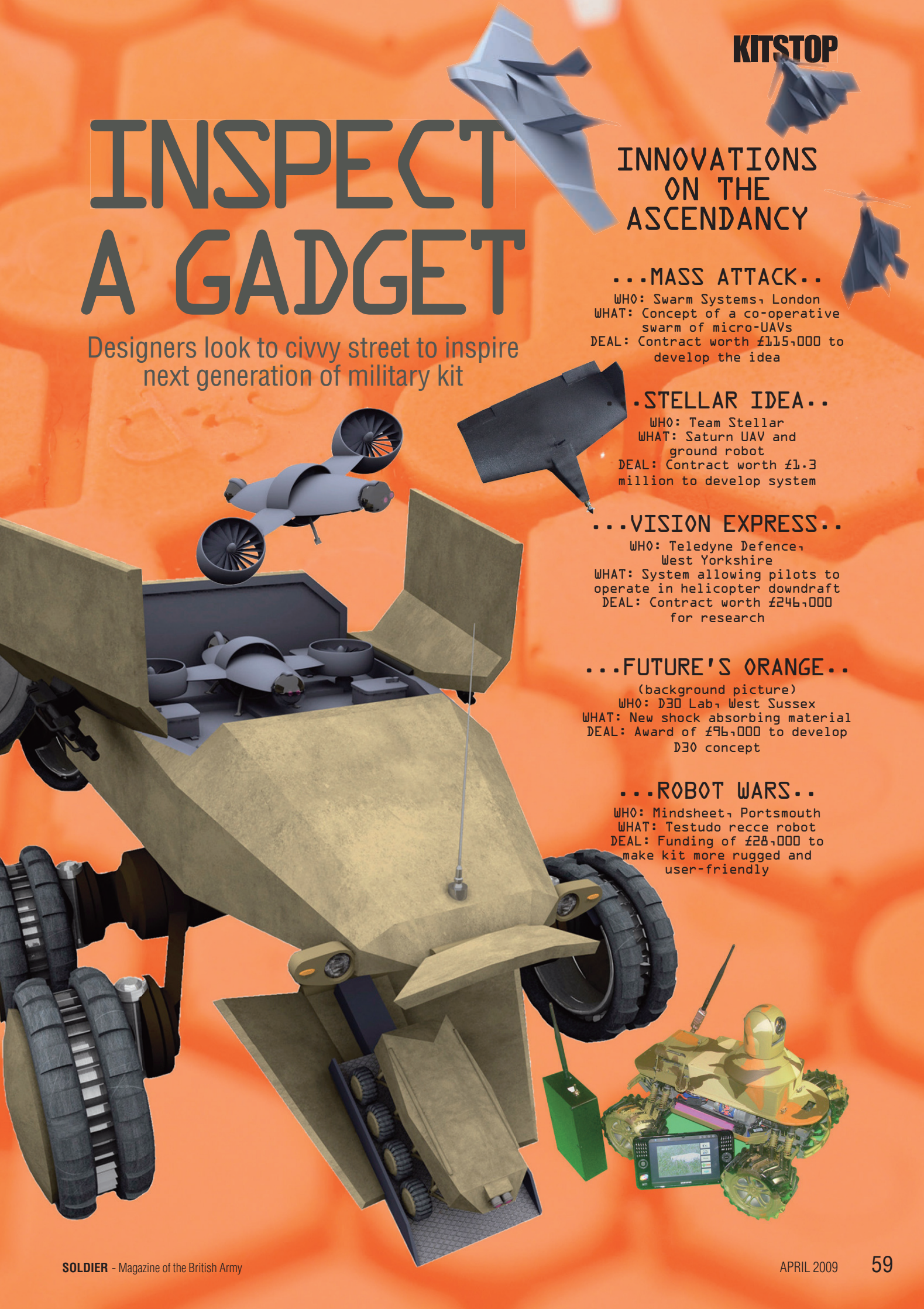
WHO: Teledyne Defence,
West Yorkshire
WHAT: System allowing pilots to
operate in helicopter downdraft
DEAL: Contract worth £246,000
for research

...FUTURE'S ORANGE...

(background picture)
WHO: D30 Lab, West Sussex
WHAT: New shock absorbing material
DEAL: Award of £96,000 to develop
D30 concept

...ROBOT WARS...

WHO: Mindsheet, Portsmouth
WHAT: Testudo recce robot
DEAL: Funding of £28,000 to
make kit more rugged and
user-friendly



Report: Cliff Caswell

IT WAS the realisation of a lifelong dream – a moment of high emotion in an extreme environment that had claimed the lives of many aspiring adventurers.

Arriving at the exact spot where Sir Ernest Shackleton decided to abandon his race for the South Pole a century ago, Lt Col Henry Worsley understood how courageous a call the explorer had made. Despite coming within 100 miles of his goal in the 1909 Nimrod expedition, Shackleton had put the lives of his men before personal ambition. Yet he had also managed to trek further south than anyone had been before.

“I had always wondered how it would feel to actually stand at that place,” the 47-year-old veteran of Bosnia and Afghanistan told *Soldier*. “My own expedition was utterly exhausted by that stage, but how we were feeling must have paled into insignificance compared to those on that pioneering polar adventure.

“With the weather as bad as it was, there was no way they would have made it to the South Pole, but by then the team had travelled 840 miles and were nearly there, so turning around was a brave decision. Shackleton later wrote to his wife Emily and said that he thought she would rather have a live donkey than a dead lion.”

Lt Col Worsley’s 2009 journey to the Pole would, however, complete the unfinished business of his 20th Century contemporary. Having followed in the legend’s footsteps across a demanding route during this year’s Matrix Shackleton expedition, there were jubilant scenes as the officer’s team of three arrived at the bottom of the world.

Leading explorers Henry Adams and William Gow across Antarctica in support of the Shackleton Foundation, a charity they created to promote individual leadership qualities, was a true test of Worsley’s

military skills and discipline.

But the trio were also spurred on by a deep personal interest in their mission as they are all related to members of Shackleton’s original team.

Worsley is a great-cousin of the navigator Frank Worsley, Gow is a descendant of the explorer’s brother-in-law Herbert Dorman and Adams is the great-grandson of Jameson Boyd-Adams, the second-in-command on the Nimrod trek.

“I was always very interested in Shackleton’s leadership style and I had long wanted to go on a polar journey myself,” said Worsley, who is currently serving with The Rifles and based at the Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, north London.

“About six years ago I was introduced to William through a mutual friend and he had wanted to do something to celebrate the centenary of the Nimrod expedition. He was



looking for people who were willing to join him in his endeavour.”

Even with the benefit of modern technology and communications, retracing Shackleton's steps promised to be a particularly dangerous undertaking. Only a handful of people had successfully completed his difficult route taking in the vast Ross Ice Shelf, treacherous Beardmore Glacier and imposing High Polar Plateau.

Capt Robert Scott, of the Royal Navy, reached the South Pole by following the route three years after the Nimrod expedition, but his team all died on their luckless return journey. Robert Swan managed the feat 25 years ago.

A demanding training programme lasting more than five years prepared Worsley's explorers for the physical and mental demands of their journey, but as they set out for 70 days in the wilderness the

extreme conditions began to take their toll.

Pulling 300lb sledges in temperatures of -52C was punishing enough, but the dangers presented by the hidden traps of the environment were a frequent threat to life and limb for the team.

“One place where we were wobbly was when we were crossing the 120-mile Beardmore Glacier,” said Worsley. “It was an area where Shackleton lost his final pack pony and we fell into a lot of crevasses. Thankfully our training prepared us well.

“While this wasn't a military operation, I took over the leadership of the expedition at an early stage because of the training and

‘While this wasn't a military operation, I took over the leadership at an early stage because of the training and experience the Army has given me’

experience the Army has given me in 28 years. I was also quite a bit older than the other two in the team.”

In the spirit of the original pioneering explorers, the three men carried Shackleton's compass with them on the trek and they stopped for reflection at the spot where the adventurer had turned his team around exactly 100 years ago to the day.

The pause also provided the opportunity for Worsley and his men to meet a fellow team made up of David Cornell, another great-grandson of Boyd-Adams, Tim Fright, a great-nephew of Shackleton's colleague Frank Wild, and Andrew Ledger, who won a place on the expedition after entering a national competition.

Despite the hardships, Worsley – who is now planning further expeditions in the deep south – said the elation of reaching his goal had far outstripped the pain of 70 days of extreme trekking. And he admitted that he had a new admiration for the man who was there first.

“The Nimrod expedition tends to be less-well-known than other adventures of that era, but at the time it was a historic achievement which happened two years before the Pole was finally conquered,” he added. “Shackleton took the decision to turn his team around with glory staring him in the face, a very brave thing to do.

“As a boy I had hero-worshipped this man and it was a huge privilege to have followed in his footsteps – I'm very proud to have had this extraordinary opportunity to trek across Antarctica.” ■

● www.shackletonfoundation.org

Advancing on ice

Army officer leads polar team to centenary glory for Shackleton

One hundred years on: Lt Col Henry Worsley (centre) poses with fellow explorers Henry Adams and Will Gow after following in Shackleton's footsteps

The return of the southern party: Pictured left to right are Frank Wild, Ernest Shackleton, Eric Marshall and Jameson Boyd-Adams safely on-board ship after the Nimrod expedition Pictures: Shackleton Foundation



Interview: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Cpl James Williams RLC

TELEVISION personality Gethin Jones admitted to being "a bit embarrassed" when *Soldier* quizzed him on the reason why he found himself on Basra's Contingency Operating Base (COB).

The Welshman, famous for presenting *Blue Peter* and waltzing his way to third-place on *Strictly Come Dancing*, made his

operational debut last month and spent three days with British troops deployed in the Middle East.

And although Jones said he would have jumped at the chance to get out to theatre anyway, he was left with little choice after a personal army of female fans demanded to see him.

"Before Christmas the Ministry of Defence decided that although a lot of people were coming out to see the lads here, there were not many coming to see the female troops," he explained.

"I don't know what seeing me dance does to people, but the ladies here were asked who they wanted to come out and I was invited. I am delighted to be here and it's an honour and a privilege to see what they do and find out what it's like for them to be out here away from home.

"There is no difference between what they do and what the men do. Obviously there are regulations on the battlefield, but the girls do the job and are very good at it."

The 31-year-old's introduction to military deployment began at RAF Brize Norton, from where

Jones boarded a TriStar and flew to Kuwait.

A delay of several hours between landing and moving on to Basra ensued, but Jones – who has a pilot's licence – did not mind the wait as he knew his reward would be a flight on a Hercules.

"Coming here was taking a complete step into the unknown for me, even at Brize Norton when I got onto a charter plane with a bunch of guys in uniform," he said. "It was just an Army experience and it was great for me as I had never done it before.

"Being on a Hercules when they cut the lights and you're knee-to-knee with a soldier was also amazing as I'm an aviation nut."

Back in the UK, Jones makes a concerted effort to keep abreast of the latest developments in both operational theatres.

But despite his thirst for the latest news, he was amazed to find that the situation in Iraq is vastly different to that being reported in Britain's broadcast and print media.

"I had a briefing

Welsh regards

Former *Blue Peter* man 'honoured' to meet female fans from the Forces during first trip to theatre

when I arrived to explain what British troops are doing here and what they have achieved and in an hour I learnt more about the situation than I had done in the previous six months.

"The media seems to spend a lot of time looking at the past and dwelling on why we went to war, but here everything is geared to the future.

"We can deal with the 'why' after we leave, but for now all that matters is that these guys are doing a fantastic job. The Army is all about getting the job done and you can see why they didn't withdraw."

Listening to Jones reel off some of the challenges he has taken on in the name of *Blue Peter*, it is easy to see why he has such an affinity with the Armed Forces.

The action-fan flew with the Red Arrows and in a Second World War Supermarine Spitfire, took on the Royal Navy's submarine escape training and even completed the Royal Marine's 30-mile

"yomp" for the children's TV show.

And while his professional stock has continued to soar, Jones admits that he would not have written off a career in combats had it been suggested to him when he was younger.

"When I was at school it wasn't something I ever really thought about," he explained. "If I had known more about the Armed Forces when I was growing up then maybe I would have followed that path.

"I loved everything I did with *Blue Peter* and I have been lucky enough to see a lot of the military on the training side. Coming to Iraq and seeing them put it into action gives me the realisation of exactly what they do."

Rugby Union fan Jones, who captained his university's first team and almost became a professional player, was treated to an evening watching the Welsh national team defeating Italy in a Six Nations clash during his time on the COB.

With many of the female contingent of the crowd gathered around the television in Basra calling for a visit from the successful squad, Jones has pledged to raid his celebrity contacts book to try and get more well-known names out to theatre.

"I asked who they [the women soldiers] wanted to come out next and they suggested the Welsh rugby team training with their shirts off," he said. "That might

be a bit difficult, but I know that a lot of people would love to have the opportunity to visit and I will work out what I can do to help that along." ■



Full attention: Gethin Jones deep in conversation with (from left) LCpl Stacey Evans, Sig Lindsey Manche, Sig Sarah Clarke, Sgt Amie Burt, Lt Alison Sergeant and LCpl Laura Roberts (all R Signals) during the television personality's visit to Basra's Contingency Operating Base.



1 Dame at the double

ARMY athletics' favourite daughter, Dame Kelly Holmes was rightly hailed as one of the all-time great Olympians after winning gold in both the 800m and 1,500m at the 2004 Games in Athens. The former AGC sergeant became the first Briton for 84 years to achieve the middle-distance double and was the only Team GB athlete to claim individual track and field gold in Greece.

Dame Kelly, who finished 3m clear of her closest rival in the 1,500m and set a British record of 3:27.90sec en route to her second gold, is only the third woman in Olympic history to win both events. The magnitude of her achievement is highlighted by the fact that British track heroes Steve Ovett, Steve Cram and Sebastian Coe all failed to win the 800m and 1,500m double.



2 Ruck star

WORLD Cup winner. Three simple words – so rarely associated with the English – which make Sandhurst graduate and Rugby Union international Josh Lewsey a must for this list of sporting greats.

Two years after marching off the parade square of the Royal Military Academy for the final time, the Wasps fullback/winger played an integral part in his country's first major team sport success for nearly 40 years.

In the side that lifted the Webb Ellis trophy after a famous extra-time victory against the home nation in Sydney, Lewsey enjoyed an impressive 2003 World Cup campaign which included scoring a record five tries in the 111-12 drubbing of Uruguay.



3 Desert oar-kid

HAVING sowed the seeds for his sporting success by putting in hours of practice on a rowing machine while serving on Op Telic 5, Capt Alistair Heathcote helped Great Britain's men's eight power their way to Olympic silver in Beijing last summer.

The Blues and Royals officer – one of two Army oarsmen to compete in the 2008 Games – played his part as the British crew set out their stall in the heats by beating 2004 winners USA and reigning world champions Germany.

But in an enthralling final, the Canadian crew were a length ahead at the halfway stage and the GB boat were unable to overturn the deficit, eventually finishing just over one second behind the gold medallists.

7 Ice queen

BOBSLEIGH'S second showing in this month's *Ranked* comes courtesy of double Winter Olympian Cpl Jackie Gunn (3 Div Signal Regiment). Since making sporting history at Salt Lake City in 2002 as one of the first women to represent Great Britain in an Olympic sled, the former Army rugby star has been an ever-present on the ice sport's international circuit.

Crowned the world's fastest brakewoman in 2004, Davies powered civvy slider Nicola Minichiello to a hat-trick of World Cup podium finishes in 2005, a rich vein of form on the ice which saw the British duo finish ahead of all bar Germany's defending champion Sandra Kiriasis. That season Team GB's ice queens went on to become the first British women to win bobsleigh World Championship medals, securing silver after finishing a slender 0.28sec behind the Germans.

8 Medal soldier

WHILE Sgt Kelly Morgan (APTC) has recently been throwing jabs in the boxing ring, it is the sporting all-rounder's efforts with a javelin that warrant her a place on the *Ranked* winners' podium. Despite being hampered by a shoulder injury and chest infection, the then-British record holder threw through the pain barrier to win bronze at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester. Morgan's performances in 2002 saw her climb from 104th to sixth in the world rankings – the biggest global advance made by a female British athlete that year.

Multi-talented Morgan, who won her first international vest for javelin at the age of 15, became a dual international in 2001 when she was selected to play netball for England.



RANKED

ARMY'S GREATEST SPORTING MOMENTS



4 Nagano nod

QUITE who deserves bobsleigh bragging rights is a tough call considering the British Army's long track record of Olympic success. Great Britain's four-man bobsleigh in the inaugural 1924 Winter Games at Chamonix in France was piloted by two majors, a colonel and a captain, and won silver.

In St Moritz in 1928 the Army made up one fifth of the only five-man bobsleigh ever to feature in the Games, and in Innsbruck in 1964 Capt Robin Dixon (Gren Gds) won gold in the two-man bobsleigh with Tony Nash (RAF).

But despite Dixon's superior finish, *Ranked* rates the achievement of Para pairing Dean Ward and Sean Olsson at Nagano in 1998 as the pick of the bunch. Competing in a more professional and faster-paced era of the sport, Olsson's driving and Ward's propulsion edged the American sled out of the medals and clinched bronze – Great Britain's first non-skating Winter Olympic medal in 34 years.

5 Golden gloves

BOXING'S record books acknowledge WQ2 Chris Bessey (RLC) as the most successful amateur light middleweight England has ever had. Discounting his win at welterweight in 1993, he won five Amateur Boxing Association titles at his preferred weight – surpassing the hat-trick of championships won by Roderick Douglas between 1984 and 1986. Only John Lyon, who fought his way to eight championship medals at light flyweight and flyweight during the 1980s, has enjoyed more domestic success than the current Army boxing coach.

Blessed with an unerring jab and one of the sturdiest defences seen in the amateur ring, his finest hour came at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur.

Captaining the England team, Bessey led by example out-pointing Canadian Scott Macintosh 20-15 to win gold in the light middleweight final. A precocious talent, Army boxing's golden boy has rubbed leather with some of the sport's best and, had he turned pro, would have undoubtedly fared better than his fellow gold medallist in Kuala Lumpur – Audley Harrison.

6 Taylor-made move

WHEN it comes to soldiers-turned-soccer stars, Maik Taylor (ex-SEME) gets the nod as the first name on the *Soldier* team sheet ahead of former Pompey hotshots Guy "Corporal Punishment" Whittingham and Lee Bradbury.

The Northern Ireland and Birmingham City number one has enjoyed an expeditious rise through the footballing ranks since Ray Clemence, the former Liverpool and England keeper, bought him out of the Army in 1995 for the princely sum of £700 and signed him to keep goal for Barnet.

Less than three years after turning pro the former lance corporal, who once combined working on tanks with playing part-time for Farnborough Town, moved to Fulham, where then-manager Kevin Keegan paid £700,000 for a goalie he described as "the best taker of a cross in Britain".

His greatest sporting moment? Take your pick from the countless saves he has made at the feet of Premiership royalty. >>

Author

SPORTS hack-turned-Defence Editor, Andrew Simms joined *Soldier* in 2000 and earned his proverbial stripes reporting from the front lines of Kosovo, Macedonia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

After having his dreams of playing in the Premiership thwarted by a shattered knee cap and distinct lack of footballing talent, and discovering he possessed neither the jaw or bottle for big-time boxing, Simms sought solace in journalism and spent six years editing *SoldierSport*.

● Next month in *Ranked*, we examine the Army's top Telic triumphs. To have your say, email suggestions to styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Left, From SEME Borden to stardom: Maik Taylor was once described by Kevin Keegan as "the best taker of a cross in Britain"



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9 Melbourne master

ARMY Rugby Sevens sensation Pte Apolosi Satala (Scots) rarely strayed from the attacking action as Fiji marched to Commonwealth Games glory in front of a 50,000 sell-out crowd at Melbourne's Telstra Dome in 2006.

Blessed with explosive pace, the flying Fijian was among the try-scorers during the top-seed's 63-0 thrashing of a hapless Niue Island in the tournament's second round and secured bragging rights over Scotland's Capt Mark Lee (AGC) by becoming the first name on the scoresheet when the two Army caps' home nations went head-to-head.

While Fiji's path to the gold medal was eventually barred by a Matthew Tait-inspired England, it was Satala who received the biggest cheer of the semi-final showdown when he swan-dived over the heads of two defenders to close the scoring.

Denied the right to battle it out for gold with eventual champions New Zealand, Satala's bronze medal – which he dedicated to the soldiers of The Royal Scots – arrived courtesy of a famous 24-17 victory over the Australian hosts.



10 Old man Winter

DUBBED

the Steve Redgrave of winter sports, Mike Dixon (ex-35 Engineer Regiment) clinches the final spot on our winners' podium in recognition of not so much a great sporting moment, but for an enduring career on the Winter Olympic stage.

From Sarajevo to Salt Lake City, the skiing Scotsman was an ever-present in the Great Britain biathlon squad for more than two decades and flew the Army-flag at the Winter Games on six successive occasions.

So what that he hung up his skis and rifle without ever having won an international medal? Imagine sprinting up 25 flights of stairs and, once at the top, trying to thread a needle five times in a row without missing the eye once, and you will begin to have some understanding of the relentless physical and mental demands of biathlon.

Besides, Dixon's top-of-the-field finish at the Albertville Games in 1992 remains the British biathlon benchmark.



Last month

GREATEST BATTLEFIELD BREAKTHROUGHS

1. Penicillin
2. Chain Mail
3. The Rifle
4. Gore-Tex
5. Bowman
6. Bailey bridge
7. T34
8. Polygonal fortress
9. Barbed wire
10. Gaming

IN common with, I suspect, many infantrymen I must take issue with Maj Neil Powell's claim that the rifle was first fired in anger during the American Civil War. Rifles had been around and in action long before then. Of these, undoubtedly the most famous was the Pattern 1800 Infantry Rifle, commonly known as the Baker Rifle. The Baker Rifle was used in the Napoleonic Wars, principally the Peninsular War, as early as 1801. The accuracy of the Baker Rifle was demonstrated by Rfn Plunkett of the 1st Battalion, The 95th Rifles, who is credited with shooting Gen Colbert at a range estimated to be in excess of 800 yards. To show it was not a fluke, Plunkett proceeded to shoot one of the general's aides. – *Gordon Henderson.*

I MAY only be a civvy but even I spotted a couple of errors in last month's *Ranked*.

The rifle may have come to battlefield prominence during the American Civil War but it had been in service for more than half a century before that. Quite apart from the famous Green Jackets there were even breech-loading rifles in service with Crown forces fighting in the American Revolutionary War under Patrick Ferguson.

Chain mail was ancient by the 14th century, and warriors of Celtic, Roman and Saxon and Viking times were all familiar with it. It was revived by the Royal Tank Corps during the Great War when tank crews wore veils of mail to protect their faces from scabs of metal flying around inside the vehicle when it was taking fire.

I do, however, support Maj Powell's thoughts on Bowman. It was once said to me that the British experience on the Somme would have been entirely different if a couple of dozen mobile phones had been available.

Finally, I would have offered aerial photography as one of my choices, as they not only aided the military throughout the 20th Century but also assisted in accurate data gathering and map-making in the civilian world and, in my own specialism, revolutionised the study of historic landscapes. Incidentally, the father of archaeological air photography was OGS Crawford, who learned his craft in the RFC (so thank you again, Army). – *Martin Brown.*

CHAIN Mail was not invented in the 14th Century. It was worn by Roman soldiers and throughout the Middle Ages. It was beginning to be superseded by plate armour by the 14 Century.

As for the rifle, the concept was first developed during the Seven Years War by Frederick the Great and was issued to the newly formed Jäger Corps.

The British took up the idea and first issued a rifle to light companies during the American Revolutionary War and, during the Napoleonic Wars, the Rifle Corps were issued with the Baker Rifle. The first general issue rifle – known as the Needle Gun – was adopted by the Prussians two decades before the American Civil War.

– *Tristan Brown.*



Man Down

Taking on the role of a combat medic, Heidi ‘Danger’ Mines learns that no one is left behind

Report: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Graeme Main

MY heart is pounding in my chest as the casualty's urgent screams for a medic ring loudly in my ears.

The ground is uneven and muddy and the sheets of rain make dropping face-down on the ground difficult and tiring. The body armour and webbing is heavy and dragging myself to my feet becomes harder and harder.

I advance towards the enemy but I'm afraid of the carnage that awaits me. I press on though because I am the medic – I am the person the desperate voice is calling for.

One last sprint and I reach the casualty rolling on the ground, clutching a bloodied mess where his right leg should be. I feel queasy. He is pleading with me to help and for a good few seconds I do absolutely nothing.

Just hours before I had been chatting to the victim – actor Colin Thorne from specialist company Amputees in Action – and I know that he comes from Hayes and hates shopping with his wife. Thankfully, I also know that the drama unfolding at Keogh Barracks, near Aldershot, is not real.

However, I am still tasting the white smoke thrown to create a screen between the enemy and I, and I have been hit by a few of the hot cases recoiling from the soldier providing covering fire next to me.

The sight of so much blood surrounding Colin's wound makes me feel uncomfortable – and this is what makes me panic.

“Ladies and gents, remember that you will flap,” one of the instructors had warned during my briefing. “Keep your kit in a prepared order so you don’t waste time trying to find it.” >>





As I desperately scabble around for my tourniquet and bandages I realise that I am wasting valuable seconds.

In this scenario Colin has between three and five minutes before he will bleed to death if he does not receive treatment.

I look around at the nine tri-Service students who are about to complete their 20-week course to qualify as combat medical technicians. Included in their number is Gdsm Eddie Guile.

The Irish Guard has been appointed as our team leader for the care-under-fire exercise and with an Iraq tour under his belt, he co-ordinates the group and myself to grab the casualty and secure the area.

Our 20-year-old overseer tells me that although he will not be assessed on his infantry prowess, proving his soldiering skills are up to the task is "a matter of pride". I stick close to Gdsm Guile, whose face is immaculately covered in cam cream, and when he hits the deck I do the same.

I am flat on my stomach, covered in dirt when I reach Colin, his glasses splattered with mud. But before I can begin first aid, Gdsm Guile gives me and Smithy (a Royal Naval medical assistant) orders to drag our patient to a safe spot before beginning any major life-saving treatment.

Luckily for me Smithy is well over six feet-tall and although I feel a painful pull in my left



FAILED
ARMY 3 SOLDIER 1

shoulder as we haul Colin through a stream, I'm certainly not dragging the full weight.

By this point I am exhausted, shots are still being fired, I can hear shouts that a second casualty has been discovered and I catch my leg on a sharp branch. But I am not alone. I have a calm but firm voice guiding me through my challenge to save the life of a casualty who has a catastrophic bleed.

I try to place the tourniquet onto what is left of his leg but it is not easy because of the amount of fake blood being produced. The make-up artist's work is very good and causes me to slip and waste more precious seconds.

While tightening the tourniquet Colin grabs me so forcefully that he pulls me away and I

have to struggle to get back into position.

I try again to stop the blood flow, placing a pressure bandage on the wound and pushing all my weight behind it.

Thanks to the expert guidance of the Army Medical Services staff I complete my challenge, although my hesitancy results in a narrow fail.

I shake Colin's hand and he returns to his position behind a bush to be found by another unsuspecting group of medics. But does he enjoy his role?

"I love it and if it ultimately saves lives then I'm doing a good job," said the enthusiastic 50-year-old.

Having completed his training, Gdsm Guile will now prepare for an Op Herrick deployment where the infantryman from

Bermondsey will have his medical skills truly tested.

"I have been in the Army for four years now and I have always wanted to do this course – but it's difficult to get on," he said.

It is a well-publicised fact that the Army Medical Services are third in the pecking order for clocking up Victoria Crosses with 31 awards. This is not surprising – medics selflessly place themselves in real danger in order to treat fallen soldiers.

During my challenge at Keogh Barracks I expected to gain a greater understanding of the work of Army medics, but what stuck in my mind was the exceptional level of training from the instructors and the dedication and hard work of their students. ■

‘Medics do get injured or killed while treating their patients’



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Degree in decompression

HAVE heard on the grapevine that there are concerns about soldiers on operations, especially those who face the majority of enemy action, who go on Rest & Recuperation (R&R) without first going through a period of decompression.

The British Army has a duty of care to its troops and if decompression is deemed necessary at the end of a tour, why is it not also done during it?

I have an idea which could help alleviate the problem and involves using education as a "decompressor".

All Infantry battlegroups deploy with a Unit Education Officer (UEO) to deliver basic skills and junior command leader management courses while at the front line. I have no idea why this is done – a UEO is not trained to be stuck in a forward operating base (FOB) delivering education and in my mind represents an added distraction and potential burden – but that is a separate issue.

These UEOs could instead deliver education packages at rear bases such as Bastion or Kandahar, which although not holiday camps have facilities that can assist with returning to a degree of normality after being on the front line.

This change would give soldiers a five-

PRIZE LETTER . . .

day period (the time allocated to basic courses) to wind down before returning home on R&R. Camps like Bastion are surely a more conducive environment in which to learn than a FOB. – Name and address supplied.

Brig David Wilson, DETS(A), responds: Observations on educational support in Infantry battlegroups would carry much more weight if they reflected the views of the individuals and units involved.

This scheme has been universally well-received. While the learning environment is obviously not ideal, many thousands of soldiers have gained qualifications and completed courses that reduce the "stuff in-between" burden once the tour is over.

Should the soldier wish to learn more, he is invited to HQ DETS(A) and/or to visit a Theatre Education Centre. No doubt his nearest Infantry unit would also be pleased to host him.

As for the suggestion to use education as decompression, battlegroup COs are



best placed to judge and are free to use their supporting assets, including Unit Education Officers.

Additionally, units and Theatre Education Centres have already exploited the availability of "passing trade" by surging provision during R&R and relief in place windows. While this is first and foremost about education, it does contribute to decompression.

PS . . .

THE header at the top of your *Talkback* section claims that readers' letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas. It is with this in mind that I write to you regarding a matter of the utmost importance to Defence.

I refer, of course, to the demise of the "Marmite Potato". This tasty accompaniment to any main course played a vital role in maintaining morale throughout the Cold War but seems to have been taken as a savings measure in one of the many Defence Reviews of the 1990s. The result of this "peace dividend" has been a staple but bland offering of mash, boiled and roasties – hardly cutting-edge culinary capability.

Now that the Army is back on a campaign footing, is it not time to dust off the recipe and put a bit of battle-winning potato pizzazz back on the plates of Tommy Atkins? – Lt Col Lambert, CO 6 Regt AAC(V).

Time for a Korea change

LATE last year Dr Mike Kelly, Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, announced a review dealing with the recommendations for the striking of a new Australian General Service Medal (AGSM) Korea and the Returned from Active Service Badge.

In both cases, the eligibility criteria for former Australian Defence Force personnel who served during operations in Korea in the post-armistice period from July 28, 1953 to April 19, 1956 is 30 days. The cut-off date of April 19, 1956 was chosen because it was on that day the last Australian combat troops were withdrawn from Korea. The last British combat troops, from 1st Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, were not withdrawn until July 26, 1957.

Of the AGSM Korea, Dr Kelly said: "The conditions under which these people served were at least as arduous and dangerous as the many subsequent operations which have attracted similar recognition, and 18 members lost their lives while engaged

in this service. These proud Servicemen deserve the gratitude of our nation for their contribution to world peace in one of the more dangerous international situations since the Second World War, which had the potential to escalate into a nuclear confrontation. I salute them and am delighted that the Rudd Labour Government has been able to help them achieve resolution to their cause, which should have happened long before now."

Canada, New Zealand and the United States have also awarded medals to their Armed Forces personnel who served post-armistice. Only Great Britain has failed to accord the same or similar honour to its Armed Forces – even though they served alongside their Commonwealth and American allies in Korea during this period – and, more remarkably, has no intention of doing so. – Richard Farrar (ex-1 Royal Sussex Regiment), Ontario, Canada.

● Do as they do Down Under – Page 79

Bestow us 'long in the tooth' troops fair treatment, please

A RECENT routine visit to a Defence Dental Services (DDS) establishment didn't quite go the way I expected.

Having been informed of the orthodontist procedures available to me as a serving member of the Armed Forces during a garrison health briefing day and, after giving nearly 15 years to my country, I thought I would ask for something in return. So during my next annual check-up I asked for a referral to an orthodontist in order to have my bottom teeth straightened, a procedure that normally costs in the region of £2,000.

I was told that an assessment would need to be carried out to detail the severity of the current state of my teeth and that referral works on a scale of 1-5, with only serving soldiers who meet the top end of the scale

(four and five) being granted treatment.

The outcome of the assessment placed me on the upper end of three and consequently with no referral. Much to my annoyance, I was told that had I been a 15-year-old dependant my score would have secured an appointment with an orthodontist.

Throughout my career I've heard of dependants having expensive and unnecessary procedures, such as breast enlargements and although I'm not saying the hypothetical 15-year-old shouldn't receive treatment, I'm not alone in feeling aggrieved that the system is arrogant enough to think that it automatically has a hold (the old pension scheme) on soldiers who have served in excess of 12 years. – [Name and address supplied](#).

Sgn Capt M W Weston, DDS Assistant Director Clinical Delivery, responds: DDS aims to provide a service that is at least the equivalent to that available from the National Health Service (NHS).

Your reader is correct in stating that, in line with the NHS, the DDS use an index of treatment need to assess individual orthodontic cases and that only those above an agreed threshold are offered free treatment.

They are, however, incorrect when they infer that the treatment denied to them would be available to a dependant patient with similar treatment needs.

The same threshold is applied to all cases irrespective of whether the patient is a child dependant or a serving soldier.

PS...

COULD somebody please tell me why, as a military nurse, I have to pay £76 a year in professional fees to practice? MoD civilian nurses get the entire amount paid by the department and our counterparts within the National Health Service (NHS) can now claim back £38 of this fee from their employer as part of the Agenda for Change agreement.

This surely is inequality and is an injustice I believe also applies to my military physiotherapy colleagues. – [Capt J Williams, SO3 Trg, Catterick](#).

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: The reimbursement of professional body fees is currently being debated as part of the MoD's financial planning round.

While the sum of £76 may not sound excessive, when the fees for all unformed professionally qualified personnel are added together the total is significant.

I would add that, as a military nurse, your terms and conditions of service will not be the same as your MoD civilian and NHS colleagues. Your salary, leave entitlement, pension, travelling expenses and many other factors will also be different.

Most personnel who pay professional body fees should be able to claim tax relief, providing the body is recognised by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and membership is necessary for them to carry out their job.

One size does not fit all

I'VE been told that the option of specialist fitting boots is not available to those in the Territorial Army. How does this fit into the "One Army" concept?

As a female with narrow feet I am not being supplied with suitable equipment for my role.

All the insoles and taping in the world will not address the fundamental problem that issue boots are too wide and I cannot complete a combat fitness test without losing toenails and gaining blisters.

Why is this policy in place and if I was mobilised would I have access to specialist boots? – [Name and address supplied](#).

WO1 Radford, WO Future Army Dress, replies: The following regulations have a bearing on this case:

- Army Dress Regulations (ADR) Pt 7 Sect 4 Annex C;

- JSP 886 Vol 6, Pt 5, Sect 4.

The ADR gives the scaling for each TA soldier as two pairs of Combat Assault



"Oversize boots or not Jones, you're still more than ten minutes late for guard duty."

Boot. JSP 886 states the regulations for an individual that does not fit into a stock size boot to have pairs made for them.

Address me properly, MHS

AS petty as it might sound, I take exception to being referred to either as the Licensee or The Householder in mail that I receive from Modern Housing Solutions. Such titles are a further denigration of our conditions.

Initially, I discarded mailings believing them to be circulars. If loan sharks, charities and sellers of junk can write directly to me using my correct name and title, I am sure it's not too difficult for Modern Housing Solutions. – [Name and address supplied](#).

● Tired of paper chase – Page 79

Air of annoyance over flights

MY son is in the REME and until recently was enjoying his first tour with British Forces Germany. Having only been there for approximately two months, he was told that he would be joining Op Telic in a few weeks and that he could take some pre-deployment leave.

He was told that air travel home had been booked on his behalf. However, the flight to the UK was scheduled to arrive in London late on a Friday evening and, as we live in North Yorkshire, he wouldn't arrive home until the follow morning. The return flight to Germany was booked for the Monday morning – meaning he would have to travel to London on the Sunday.

The itinerary would have allowed our son to spend just two half-days out of a possible eight days with us.

My wife was so distraught that I decided to go online in search of better flights. However, I was beaten to it by my son who rang back to tell us he had booked flights to/from Manchester, which would give him the full eight days in the UK.

The only downside to the change in travel arrangements was that it cost in excess of £350, which my son has since been told he can't claim back. Is this correct?

This is one of a number of problems he has encountered and although he loves his job he's already talked about leaving the



"Yes, yes, Cpl Eccles . . . I appreciate you could only get a business class seat, but you only qualify for a standard economy class refund."

REME on completion of four years of service.

I've read with interest the number of complaints about problems with leave and problems retaining skilled personnel beyond the four or six-year point and remember the

same things happening 30 years ago.

I have witnessed life as an NCO, as an officer and now as a civilian who occasionally deploys with the military, and I know there is no magical answer. At least, in *Soldier*, the masses now have a way to communicate their problems to the higher echelons. – Ian Barnes, North Yorkshire.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

From what you have written I sympathise with the situation you found yourself in and can understand entirely why your son booked and paid for his own flights.

Without the background of why he was selected at short notice for deployment, why the flights were booked so inappropriately and why and who told him there was no opportunity to claim I cannot take this forward. As a retired officer a letter to your son's commanding officer may go a long way to resolving this issue.

The policy on leave flights is quite clear. Your son is entitled to one return journey to the UK per year; personnel are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and if civil air flights are used they will be reimbursed the actual costs for a standard economy return up to the published country specific MoD flight allowance. This is covered under the Get You Home (Overseas) provisions.

PS...

AFTER nine months in the Military Provost Guard Service I have been promoted to lance corporal and have moved from pay band level four to level five.

There are privates I work with on level seven (where they are capped) and although I can rise to level nine, it will take three years before I am earning more than them. As a JNCO I now have more duties and responsibilities but not as much pay as these privates. How can this be? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: Pay 2000 rewards soldiers for seniority as well as rank; it allows personnel to progress their pay both through time served, within limits, and also through promotion. While in the short term you earn less than a seven-year private you have the potential to earn much more in the long term as you progress further up the ladder.

Save for the annual Armed Forces Pay Review Body increases which we all receive, a seven-year private will not receive any further pay rises until he or she is promoted.

Parity of 'new' trade pay in short supply

I AM currently serving as a supplier (formerly a supply specialist) following the amalgamation of the specialist and controller trades.

As a result of the change I find myself on pay band level seven, earning £3,000 a year less than former supply controllers who now do exactly the same job as I do. How is this fair? – Cpl J Hubble, 132 Avn Sp Sqn, Wattisham Airfield.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: The supplier trade was formed in April 2006 from the former supply controller (Sup Con) and supply specialist (Sup Spec) trades. At corporal and lance corporal, Sup Cons were in the Higher Pay Band and Sup Specs were in the Lower Pay Band.

The Joint Services Job Evaluation Team decided that the evidence indicated that, pending a formal evaluation of the new trade, all Cpl and LCpl suppliers should move onto the Lower Pay Band.

The new supplier trade was formally

evaluated in 2008, which confirmed the original pay bandings proposed in 2006.

For former Sup Specs like yourself this adjustment meant no change, but Sup Con Cpls and LCpls were faced with a drop in pay band and loss of income – through no fault of their own. As is normal in situations like this, affected personnel were given three years of reserved rights, which allowed them to remain in the Higher Pay Band, including annual increments, until April 2009.

At the end of this period of reserved rights, their rate of pay will freeze on a mark time basis. With the exception of the annual increases, which we all get, their pay will remain static until either they promote, or the supplier (Lower Band) pay rate overtakes them. I can see why you are frustrated, but you have not been disadvantaged in any way. Your colleagues have been given a cushion to protect them from the effects of the reorganisation which will be removed this month.

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Bothered by brevity of breather

I'M currently deployed on my third tour of Iraq and, like all good operations, had expected to receive an entitlement of two weeks of Rest & Recuperation (R&R), a 14-day break during which I could go home and relax with friends and family before returning to duty to "slog out" the remainder of the tour.

However, I've recently been told that four of the 14 days will be spent travelling, which is frankly not on considering the nature of the job out here.

My understanding of the situation is that the first day of R&R will actually be spent in theatre waiting for an evening flight to a nearby destination and the second day on a flight to Brize Norton via stops in Germany and Teeside – and that's before having to find my way home.

On the return journey, it will be necessary to set off on the penultimate day of R&R in order to arrive back in theatre on the 14th day. Why are we only getting ten days at home? What has happened to the old RAF Tristar flights which went direct to RAF Brize Norton? – Name and address supplied.

Capt Rachel Booth, PJHQ, responds: R&R is granted by the operational commander and is not part of an individual's annual leave entitlement.

The maximum permissible period is 14 nights inclusive of travelling time and includes the time spent travelling to and from the individual's chosen destination.

The planning of R&R is not an exact



science and with the exception of unforeseen delays, R&R flights reach their end destination within 24 hours of departure. Clearly, competing priorities determine the flight programme. 20th Armoured Brigade's deployment on Op Telic has resulted in flights being

scheduled directly to the home base in Germany; with UK-based brigades the opposite applies. It's also worth noting that the aircraft which transport our personnel on R&R are Defence Aid Suite Tristars, which are limited in number and serve both Operations Telic and Herrick.

Injustice of more work, less pay

I'M an Army Air Corps sergeant with two-and-a-half-years' seniority and 15 years of experience. As of April last year, AAC corporals were advanced onto the higher pay band. This change put me and many

other AAC sergeants promoted within the last four years in an unenviable position. As things stand I would be £1,535 a year better off if I were to relinquish my rank and revert to being a corporal.

Being promoted to sergeant and entering the mess was one of the proudest days of my career and while I didn't join the Army for the money (who does?), this discrepancy has led me to feel disadvantaged, undervalued and seriously considering asking to be reduced in rank.

I have seven corporals working under me, five of whom earn more than I do despite having fewer qualifications and less responsibility. I also work alongside a newly-promoted sergeant who is two pay bands above me (due to the individual's previous higher pay band status and subsequent two per cent pay rise on promotion). While I understand that they will now mark time for the next two years, they will still benefit from 24 months of better pay.

I'm not suggesting that corporals should lose their pay rise as I believe all AAC NCOs

should be on the higher pay band, but is it possible for sergeants promoted before April 2008 to be given an accelerated increment jump to put us back above our subordinates? This issue is having a significant effect on my overall contentment. – Sgt P Leah, 651 Sqn, 5 Regt AAC.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: You raise concerns centred on the construct of Pay 2000 which, while remaining broadly fit for purpose, has a number of weaknesses. Your circumstances are made worse by the re-evaluation of AAC NCOs employment resulting in JNCOs, on promotion to SNCO, dropping to the lower band with a mandatory, minimum two per cent pay rise, yet still overtaking more senior colleagues.

However, the answer to your specific question on receiving an accelerated increment jump is no. You will continue to have pay increments each year and potential earnings as a SNCO outstrip those of a JNCO. Your current predicament will improve over time.

PS...

HAVING watched ITV's documentary on medics in Afghanistan, *Doctors and Nurses at War*, I was surprised that our troops are not issued with a pouch of Celox each.

This product is a powder which you just pour into a wound, apply pressure and it stops all bleeding – even from major arteries. It is inexpensive and does not require training or any great skill to use. I'm in no way connected with this product, but as an ex-Serviceman would rather have this taped to the butt of my rifle than a field dressing. Our guys deserve the best. – Geoff Charman.

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Do as they do Down Under

TO say that medals are only awarded for campaigns and bravery – as suggested by WO2 Dobner (*Talkback*, January) – is simply not true. A quick check on the criteria for the General Service Medal, which was issued to all ranks and arms at the end of the Second World War, proves otherwise.

The warrant officer's assumption that medals are of no consequence is also fallacious, as has been shown here in Australia. The Australian National Defence Medal has been acclaimed to such a degree that it has been applied for posthumously by relatives of deceased veterans. Once verified, these awards have been made with due ceremony if required.

Surely if it's deemed appropriate to award an 85p bauble to all UK veterans, it would be far more indicative of real appreciation if a National Defence Medal were issued.

How would such a medal, given in recognition of loyal service, demean any other award? On the contrary it would ensure all ranks participated in the wearing of medals instead of just a select few.

Britain's Nato allies have a Defence Medal, while Commonwealth nations such as Australia and Canada were so determined to have one that they opted out of the Imperial awards scheme to ensure that one was granted. The Queen was gracious enough to honour the wish of the governments concerned without demur or delay.

WO2 Dobner is of course entitled to his opinion, but it is one that I believe belittles those that have had to stand to for Queen and Country. As does the rather sneering comment about the "Ski Lodge Cross" for service in the British Army of the Rhine.

Think for a moment of those unfortunates that are suffering because of exposure to radiation from the nuclear tests at Maralinga and Christmas Island. Don't they warrant a medal?

I myself served in situations where I was fully aware that my poor backside was sat right at the very top of the Warsaw Pact's hit list. It is not for me to say that I deserve a medal, but I can certainly say that I want one. – **Mr G Peck, Queensland, Australia.**



"He's been there for a week now and people are starting to talk. Come up with something and get rid of him, Smithers."

PS...

AS a TA medic, building surveyor and domestic energy assessor (DEA), I smiled at Defence Estate's assertion – in response to Capt Taylor's letter, "Heat rising over insulation issue" (March) – that it takes energy conservation seriously.

In my experience the Army is very good at putting up signs asking us to save energy, but rarely do I see thermostatic radiator valves fitted in all but the newest buildings. Instead the temperature is often controlled by more traditional means – opening a window! As to there being only 50mm of insulation in Capt Taylor's loft, the Building Regulation's requirement for a minimum of 100mm was brought in decades ago so it would appear that this issue hasn't been high on DE's priorities for many years.

Of course, in civvy street you can get grants for this sort of thing – perhaps DE can advise whether these apply to Service Family Accommodation?

I would suggest that Capt Taylor approaches a local DEA and pays for an Energy Performance Certificate (usually less than £100) – armed with this report he/she will have a good idea of where, exactly, their heat is being lost and a list of recommendations needed to bring the property up to current standards. – Sgt Oliver St John, RAMC(V).

Tired of paper chase

I AM writing to *Soldier* as a last resort after months of emails, letters and phone calls to Defence Estates (DE).

After marching out of my quarter in Harrogate last spring I was duly billed more than £1,000, and although not entirely happy with what I was being asked to cough up for, I paid in full through JPA.

Following payment I requested receipts for the work done and was told by Defence Housing to contact a firm called DGFM Financial Group.

I did so and received no reply. Three letters (one of which was sent registered delivery) later, I received a phone call informing me that I was entitled to a copy of the receipts if I could provide proof of payment, which I forwarded in the form of a faxed pay slip.

A few weeks later I was posted a generic invoice but no receipts, and after another chasing phone call was redirected to the DHE helpline, who advised me that they were not required to produce any receipts to a billed customer.

Is this true? How do I know the work has even been done?

Most insurance companies require receipts before they will pay out. – **Name and address supplied.**

Nicki Sly, Defence Estates, writes: We understand that some individuals may want confirmation that work for which they have been charged for has been

undertaken, but this is not always possible because of the following factors:

- Work may not be undertaken at the time the charge is raised, but instead done at the time the property is next occupied by Service personnel;
- The procedures for charging for damage to carpets and furnishings are such that the individual is billed for the estimated reduction in value as a result of the damage rather than the actual cost of replacement;
- Some contracts do not enable us to break down invoices to the level of repairs to individual houses.

We are always ready to help personnel who need supporting information to make claims on their insurance policies and will provide information wherever possible but we manage in excess of 40,000 SFA, of which approximately half change occupants every year.

To produce receipts for every item of expenditure for every repair would be a significant administrative load.

There are approximately 250,000 invoices raised each year by the Modern Housing Solutions supply chain relating to barrack damage repairs.

Should the occupant feel that this is not satisfactory they should put their concerns in writing to: Complaints Manager, Defence Estates Operations Housing, Room S112, Building 351, RAF Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2EA.



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You may still be able to claim ordinary compensation even if you have had an AFCS pay out. A civil claim can often bring about much higher payouts than the AFCS payment. You should seek expert legal advice to make sure you don't lose out.

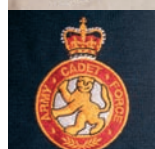
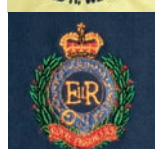
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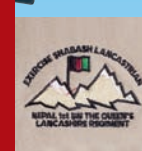
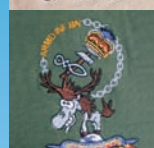
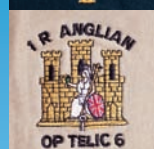
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Picture: Steve Dock

Jobs for the girls, please

ASERVING friend of mine is due to be re-posted in a few weeks and is making all the usual plans for moving such as removals and his job handover.

Yet his wife of nine months has to weigh up a difficult decision. She has a good job, which she loves and wants to keep doing, but it would mean a lengthy commute from her new home.

Therefore they must also make a decision on whether to live apart or stay together and for her to suffer the arduous drive.

When I was interviewed for this job I was asked what was the one thing I was the proudest of achieving during my career. My answer was working.

Despite nine moves I had held on to my career, and while I didn't progress as I would have liked, I had stayed in my chosen field and enjoyed it. I'm sure to the civilian on the interview board this sounded like a strange thing to be proud of, but two Army wives who were sat there smiled and nodded in agreement.

The recent Families Continuous Attitude Survey highlights how strongly people feel about this issue. I was initially surprised by the results – 57.4 per cent of spouses who answered the questionnaire were in either full- or part-time employment, much higher than I would have thought.

However the employment rate for women across the UK is 70.4 per cent so

statistically Army wives are well below the national average.

Of the low points of military living, the impact of Army life on career/employment prospects featured at the top of the list. This does not come as a surprise.

Being re-posted every two years means wives take a month or two to settle, then they look for a job and, if lucky, a few months later they might start employment.

But once in the new workplace, having made friends, learnt the job and got into a routine, along comes an assignment order and it's moving time again having managed a not-so-grand total of 18 months in employment.

It's no wonder CVs take up three or four pages and, of course, employers know that as an Army spouse you won't be staying long. A third of respondents said they had experienced discrimination when applying for a job and 90 per cent of those had not done anything about it.

When a move or operational tour reduces or removes a second income there is a necessary period of adjustment for a family, both in financial and emotional terms. For example, the spouse loses a certain amount

of independence and there is a reliance on the soldier's wage that can cause tension.

Income and outgoings also adjust with every move, and so how people manage their finances has to change during an already unsettling period. If you've just moved from England to Northern Ireland, families get different allowances but also have to pay upfront for a tankful of fuel.

When you've been spreading the cost of

bills with utility companies in England, this can be a shock. Add to that the loss of a second income and it's an even bigger issue.

I don't mean to sound like a prophet of doom – I have always worked, so it is possible to hold down some semblance of a career and for me it helps keep me sane.

Army spouses are a very employable group –

independent, strong-minded and capable. We can cook, clean and do minor DIY, we're children's entertainers, we run the household finances and we support our communities. But if you're reading this then I don't need to tell you – you're married to one. It's the employers out there who should sit up and take note of our special, and highly employable, working skills. ■

‘Along comes an assignment order and it's moving time again having managed a not-so-grand total of 18 months in employment’

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TEN details have been changed on this action shot from last season's Army v Royal Navy rugby union showdown at Twickenham.

Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 809, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by April 30.

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 June issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

February competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Cpl C Barnes**, Horndean, Hampshire. Runners-up **Mr B M Crouch**, Earl Shilton, Leicestershire and **Rfn Dilipkumar Rai**, 1 Mercian, Catterick, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: front smoke dispensers; indicator (front); pistol grip on machine gun; black support bar; driver's seat belt; green webbing strap; rear head rest; black label on box; side indicator; rear hand grip on upper machine gun.



IN keeping with the diminutive stature of David Cameron's right-hand man, the majority of entries into February's caption competition (picture below right) were a little on the short side.

Focusing on William Hague's height, or lack of it, *Soldier's* satirists were blunt in their assessment of the standing of the Conservative Party's deputy leader.

Simon Harrison's double assault – "**The medal ceremony went ahead despite the Lancers not having an orange box handy**" and "**The VIP looks grumpy? That's not Grumpy, it's William Hague**" – set the tone for the majority of offerings.

However, our prize copy of *The Good Soldier*, Gary Mead's biography of Douglas Haig, goes to Malcolm Burgess of South Yorkshire for aptly penning "**A spelling mistake by the military secretary leads to the wrong Haig being sent to the front**".

A mention in dispatches must also go

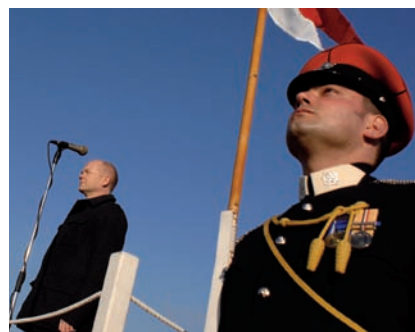


Much to Millsy's disappointment, the Tommy Cooper impression that had first endeared him to the Labour Party masses was proving to be far less of a hit on the streets of Basra city

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by April 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *The People's War*, Felicity Goodall's coffee table tribute to those living on the home front during the Second World War.

to Sgt Keith Chapman (GS UOTC), who poetically proffered "**These lancers are just chancers, giving the mike an extra hike**".

● Up next in the *Freeze Frame* firing line – Foreign Secretary David Miliband. Be kind.



Picture: Cpl Anthony Stinson RAF

Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

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Medal Office: 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600
Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis support 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 2360058; www.rfea.org.uk
Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725
RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk
St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk
South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577
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DEFENCE DIARY

Until September 09: Remembering The Great War. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.
May 13-15: Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo. Tickets from www.ticketsbreaks.telegraph.co.uk or 0844 871 1517.
May 17: Duxford's Spring Air Show. Tickets from 01223 499 353 or online by visiting www.iwm.org.uk/duxford
June 26: The Heroes' Festival. Call 07957 958188 or visit www.theheroesfestival.co.uk

Jim Blues is writing a book on military humour and is looking for funny stories about things that made you laugh during your time in the Armed Forces. Anecdotes can be based around any Service-related subject. Contact Jim by email at jts.blues@tesco.net

Valerie Waring bought a WW1 medal in an antique shop in Rhyl, North Wales 40 years ago. She would like to pass it on to the family of **10111 Pte H O Etheridge, Manchester Regt.** Email Valerie at db.waring@ntlworld.com

The Adjutant General's Corps Museum in Winchester is putting on a summer exhibition entitled *Soldier Mums*. The aim is to investigate the Army's changing attitude to pregnancy and how those that continue to serve balance their military and home lives. The museum is keen to hear from Servicewomen who have had a family and left or who are still serving and would be willing to share their experiences. Phone Ian Bailey on 01962 877826 or email agc.museum@milnet.uk.met

Calling all **ex-drummers** and **Corps of Drums** enthusiasts. If you would like to make contact with other ex-drummers throughout the UK, would like to visit the website of other Corps of Drums or The Corps of Drums Society, or would like to download any manuals then please visit www.yorkshirecorpsodrum.com

Terry Parker (previously Huggins) is searching for **Albert**, stationed in Aldershot in 1964, possibly in The Parachute Regiment. Albert, now around 64 years old, is aware of Terry's existence as he visited him when he was a year old. Email deniseparker4@aol.com

Mike Boxall is trying to find old school friend **John Clark**, from Aldershot, who joined the Army between 1958 and 1960, served in the Intelligence Corps and spent time in Germany, Borneo and Northern Ireland. Email mike.mjbprint@virgin.net

Were you in **43 Bty (Lloyd's Company) RA**? 43 Bty will come out of suspended animation and join 32 Regiment RA's Order of Battle on April 1. Old comrades who wish to return Bty property for display in the Bty lines/history room or to have their details added to the Bty database for reunions should contact WO2 C Cable on 01980 845468 or write to 46 (Talavera) Bty, 32 Regt RA, Roberts Bks, Larkhill, Wilts SP4 8PP.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet. Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

April: 21, Weymouth; 22, Bristol; 23, Warminster.
May: 5, Dundee; 6, Edinburgh; 7, Glasgow; 13, Aberystwyth; 19, Wrexham; 21, Cardiff; 27, Maidenhead. **June:** 9, Abingdon; 10, Basingstoke; 23, Darlington; 24, Newcastle; 25, Hull.

REUNIONS

Corps of Drums and Bands of the Old Welsh Regiments: Reunion for all former members of the bands will be held on April 18, at the WOs' and Sgts' Mess, Maindy Barracks, Cardiff. Details from Denis Sparey on 02920 882823 or Eric Kellett-Hillier on 02920 216503.

132 Bty (Bengal Rocket Tp) RA: All ranks reunion April 25. Details from Battery Office on 01912 393439 or email bengals132bty@hotmail.com

University of London OTC: Parade and reception to celebrate the group's centenary on May 9. All ex-personnel and their guests are welcome. Visit website at www.ulotc.co.uk/alumni to register.

Air Formation Signals Association: Reunion May 8-10, at Stoke-on-Trent. Open to all personnel who served in Air Formation or Air Support Signal units. Enquiries to Chris Collier on 01902 338662.

Combined Cavalry Old Comrades Association: Annual parade and service May 10, at Hyde Park, London. Sponsor Regiment **Royal Scots Dragoon Guards**. All ranks of the cavalry and yeomanry are welcome to attend. Details from Tim Rayson on 07753 747051.

Royal Engineers: 60th Anniversary of the Freedom of Ripon. May 15-17 inclusive. Further details are available from Ken Hart by emailing shortwalker@tiscali.co.uk.

723 (CS) Kings Squad RM (1959/60): 50th Reunion at the RAFA Club, Exmouth on May 21-23. Partners welcome. Details from Taff Prichard on 02920 790233.

11th Hussars: PAO reunion May 22-24 at the Park Inn Hotel, Telford, Shropshire. Details from Lawson Kent 07854 973602 or email lawsontheferryman@hotmail.co.uk

Commando Engineers: Reunion June 12-13 at Royal Marine Bks, Chivenor. To enable all personnel to attend and update address database, contact Clare Howard, Reunion Secretary, at 24 Commando Engr Regt, RMB Chivenor, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4AZ, ring 01271 857229 or fax 01271 857827.

Royal Engineers "Greenlantern" Hameln: Reunion June 25 in Hameln, Germany. Invitation to all who served there with the Royal Engineers in the 60s, 70s or 80s. Details from George Bird on 0049 5151 821137 or visit www.greenlantern-hameln.de

Royal Pioneer Corps: Reunion at St David's Barracks, Bicester on July 3-5. Details from Norman Brown on 01869 360694 or email royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

144 Para Med Sqn/144 Field Amb/23 Para Field Amb (PFA): Reunion past and present dinner to be held at the TA Centre, Hornsey, London N8 7QT on July 4. Details from WO2 Bill Hounsborne on 07762 490583 or email bill_hounsborne@hotmail.com

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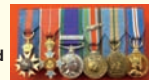
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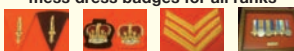
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REVIEWS

A full-page photograph of Leonardo DiCaprio in a military-style setting. He is wearing a grey bucket hat, dark sunglasses, a black tactical vest over a grey long-sleeved shirt, and grey cargo pants. He is captured in a dynamic running pose, moving from left to right. The background is a dusty street in what appears to be a conflict zone, with blurred figures of people and buildings in the distance.

TERROR TRAIL

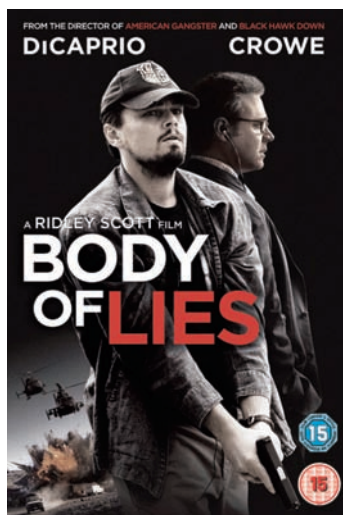
British actor helps DiCaprio track radicals

CAR WARS

Vin Diesel hits the gas for Spanish demolition derby

KANDAHAR CASE STUDY

Lessons learned from British general's Afghan campaign



Terror trail: Dapper security chief Hani Salaam (Mark Strong) keeps a watchful eye on CIA agent Roger Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) in *Body of Lies*, out to own on DVD and Blu Ray now



Strong arm of the law

Brit actor tackles terrorist threat in star-studded Ridley Scott blockbuster

TRY as they might to break the mould, some actors find themselves pigeonholed into taking on similar roles in all their films.

Will Ferrell, for example, looks unlikely to escape from playing the zany comedy characters seen in *Anchorman* and *Blades of Glory*. Likewise Owen Wilson seems doomed to a career as a loveable sidekick.

Now British star Mark Strong appears to be heading down the same route. Despite the prodigious acting talent displayed in the likes of *Stardust* and *The Young Victoria*, Strong has bizarrely made it to the top of the list for casting agents' looking for torturers.

After inflicting pain on George Clooney in *Syriana*, Strong plays the shady head of Jordanian intelligence in new DVD-release *Body of Lies* and only narrowly stops short of doing the same to fellow-A-lister Leonardo DiCaprio during the course of the gripping espionage thriller.

"They're going to be asking for 'that guy'," laughed Strong when asked

if he was systematically working his way through Hollywood's top actors. "They're going to be asking to be menaced by 'that British guy'."

"The character in *Syriana* certainly led to the possibility of doing this one. He was a Lebanese Muslim and the idea was that he was second or third generation and had grown up in the States and went to university there.

"The fact that it's happened again is perhaps something to do with my Mediterranean background that lends itself to Arabic parts."

Exploding into action when a terrorist device explodes in a Manchester street, *Body of Lies* follows CIA agent Roger Ferris (DiCaprio) as he tries to track down notorious insurgent Al Saleem.

The hunt takes Ferris to Jordan where he has to earn the trust of steely security chief Hanni Salaam (Strong).

The agent's movements are guided by handler Ed Hoffman (Russell Crowe), who uses a unmanned aerial vehicle to keep a watchful eye on Ferris wherever he ventures.

The technology on show in the film may be familiar to *Soldier's* readers, but Strong admits to being amazed by the advanced kit deployed by the world's major military forces.

"I asked Ridley how true all this surveillance stuff was. He thinks not only is it pretty accurate, it's probably developed even more than we show in the movie.

"What I thought was interesting about it was the immediacy of some guy on the ground, in the desert, trying to make decisions on the basis of advice from somebody pointing his small son in the direction of the toilet," he said, explaining how Hoffman helps Ferris while performing mundane tasks such as toilet-training his children. "I imagine there's a lot of truth in that."

Born to an Italian father and Austrian mother in London, 45-year-old Strong is a familiar face on British television having appeared in *Prime Suspect* and *Our Friends in the North* as well as earning his military stripes as Colonel Brand in *Sharpe's Mission*.



A starring role in 1997's *Fever Pitch* launched the actor's movie career and he has gone on to work alongside some of the industry's biggest names.

But although he is gradually getting used to life at cinema's top table, Strong admits that he still finds himself in situations where he has to pinch himself.

"The day after the birth of my son I was sitting around a table in Rabat, Morocco with Ridley, Leo and Russell, my bags next to me thinking 'life is strange'."

Compared to the scruffy appearance of Ferris, Hani Salaam cuts an imposing figure with his dapper tailored suits.

The character's sartorial elegance came about after Strong and the film's costume designer paid a visit to one of Saville Row's most-exclusive tailors and came away with a lot more than they had originally bargained for.

"The idea was to get something off the peg," he said. "While we were there the manager ran downstairs and came back with these six suits and a blazer."

"The costume designer noticed that they weren't quite English the way that tailor normally makes his suits. This Arab billionaire had ordered 30 suits, paid for them and passed away." ■



North Face, out to own on DVD now

THE North Face of the Eiger is often referred to as the "Murder-wall". First ascended in 1938, the 1,800 metre-high cliff has claimed the lives of more than 100 climbers. Based on true events, *North Face* follows four climbers that find themselves in peril high above the Swiss valley floor. Filmed on location, the landscape is at times heart-stopping and changeable weather makes for a dangerous climb. A fitting tribute to the original climbers and those who have followed in their footsteps.

LCpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps



The Warlords, out to own on DVD now

CHINA is once again the scene for war and political upheaval in *Warlords*. **Jet Li** stars as one of three generals who take a blood-oath to bring peace and stability to their province at all costs. As the aggressive Taiping are conquered by sword and musket, the question is raised as to whether the end justifies the means and rifts begin to appear in the blood brothers' relationships. The sets and epic battles keep a good pace to the film and balance out the weaker dialogue.

LCpl Paul Thomas, Int Corps



Lakeview Terrace, out to own on DVD now

RACIAL tensions come to the fore as Abel Turner (the excellent **Samuel L Jackson**) tries to drive away the interracial couple who move in next door to his California home. *Lakeview Terrace* does a commendable job in tackling a tricky subject with tact and without trying to take viewers on a trip to the moral high ground. Turner's constant provocation into his newly-wed neighbours' lives is unnerving and the tension is ramped up until an almost inevitably explosive climactic scene. A big hit in the USA, this film deserves a similar reception on these shores.



Quarantine, out to own on DVD now

BASED on Spanish-language original *Rec*, *Quarantine* uses a *Blair Witch*-style hand-held camera to tell the story of a television reporter quarantined in a small apartment building during an evening following a Los Angeles fire crew. Although not as gritty as its European counterpart, the film does well in portraying the claustrophobic atmosphere inside the locked-down building. The action is well-paced and ramps up throughout the film and – unlike other movies – *Quarantine* has lost nothing in its Hollywood translation.



An Empress and The Warriors, out to own on DVD now

IF there's one thing that Asian cinema knows how to do, it's unbelievably epic battle sequences. Luckily for fans of the region's movies, *An Empress and The Warriors* makes other film's fight scenes look positively small-scale in comparison. Telling the tale of empress Yan Feier's quest for revenge after a failed assassination attempt, this feature also has a romantic interest between the ruler and a forest-dweller who nurses her back to fitness. The slightly over-done acting may not be to all tastes, but this is certainly worth watching.



Al Murray's Road to Berlin, out to own on DVD from April 6

ORIGINALLY broadcast on the Discovery Channel, this ten-part documentary follows the affable Pub Landlord as he retraces the final steps of the Allied advance that finally brought down Nazi Germany. Showing a completely different side to his character, Murray is genuinely engaging as he shines the spotlight on some of the Second World War's most-important moments. Interviews with veterans of the conflict add a further air of authenticity. Not one for military history buffs, but a fascinating insight for the less well-informed.

Games

A P R I L R E V I E W



Petrolhead: Hollywood A-lister Vin Diesel is the digital lead character for an impressive interactive action movie



Hell on wheels

Barcelona is the venue for road rage warfare with the criminal underworld

Preview: Cliff Caswell

BURNING rubber has always been a popular pastime in the video game world.

In the past few months we've had a new instalment in EA's *Need for Speed* series while the likes of *Burnout* and *Grand Theft Auto* have provided players with all manner of driving experiences, from track racing to bank job getaways.

Thankfully, French publisher Ubisoft's latest title offers a different take on this well-worn road that could potentially breathe some welcome new life into the genre.

Starring digitised Hollywood hardman Vin Diesel in the leading role (the actor's own company Tigon Studios was closely involved in the game), *Wheelman* is squarely influenced by the American action movie. Without pretensions, extremely fast and with a heavy dose of violent mayhem at its core, this is a driving game that packs a host of new features.

Set against the backdrop of Catalonia in Spain, the game allows players to assume the role of Milo Burik, a shady character who has arrived in Barcelona on a mission to find out information about a covert heist. In doing so, he inflames a turf war with unpleasant rival gangs and puts himself on the most wanted list of the local police.

Using his driving skills to his advantage, Burik's life involves carrying out an endless string of errands in different vehicles, usually in nightmare traffic and under fire from heavily-armed lunatics taking pot shots from pursuing cars and bikes.

While all this may sound familiar, *Wheelman* is set apart from the competition by an impressive system of vehicle combat, which allows players to perform aggressive barging manoeuvres and smash large chunks off enemy kit.

They can also use a variety of weaponry to target the critical points of an opponent's car, creating colourful fireballs by zapping their fuel tanks or

sending them careering into the street furniture by taking out the steering.

"The vehicle melee system is very effective in this respect," said Shaun Himmerick, the executive producer of *Wheelman*. "Your car is your weapon and it doesn't matter what vehicle you are in, it is how you use it that counts."

"You can shoot while you are on the move too, aiming to ignite the fuel or blasting off the tyres. And if you want, you can get out of your vehicle and go on foot. We wanted to give the player a choice about how they do the missions."

And there are certainly plenty of missions to tackle. The single player incarnation of *Wheelman* has an abundant amount of gameplay potential and features a core storyline and 100 other activities around town. The open world environment is hugely impressive, with the spirit of Spain captured well.

"We wanted to create a unique experience in our recreation of Barcelona as well as allowing players to see great action sequences in the city



during the game,” said Himmerick. “For the cinematic feel we worked with professional scriptwriters and also have a custom-written soundtrack composed by guys who write movie music. It is dynamic and responds to what you are doing in the game.”

Soldier sampled a late-build Xbox 360 demo of *Wheelman*, which was hitting shelves as this issue went to press, and was suitably impressed with all aspects of the game, from the outstanding graphics to the slick gameplay.

The unique selling point – the vehicle-to-vehicle combat – is near-faultless and using the controller’s left and right buttons to perform aggressive barges is particularly satisfying when successful.

Good performance in the game is rewarded with a feature giving players the ability to slow down time, similar to that in *Max Payne*, and target critical points of vehicles.

Overall, *Wheelman* is one of the best titles *Soldier* has seen of late.

Even if you are not a fan of driving games it is worth a look as the emphasis is more on first-person combat than your prowess behind the wheel.

With plenty of missions to get your teeth into too, this one is a definite winner. City traffic will never seem the same again. ■



Mad World, Nintendo Wii only

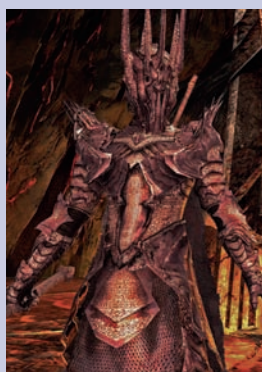
PITCHED squarely at the adult market and making a bold statement that the Wii is not just for kids, this awkward customer from Sega landed us in a quandary. Set in a future where people get their kicks from a violent TV game show, the aim is to dispose of opponents in gruesome ways, including chopping them up and impaling them on road signs. *Mad World* looks superb and is technically sound but the levels of violence are very serious and bordering on the unhealthy. Not one for *Soldier*, but if you can stomach the gore you may think differently.



Resident Evil 5, PS3 & Xbox 360

A NEW country, partner and hideous beings all point to *Resident Evil 5*. Set in a quarantined African village, Chris and Sheva are investigating a terrorist threat but things go badly wrong. In true *Resident Evil* style the enemies are many and ammo is sparse. Gameplay is smoother than previous titles in the series and there are no cut scenes when opening doors or climbing stairs. The graphics are superbly fearsome too, but be warned – this is pretty scary stuff and not one to play on your own in the dark.

Anthony Fletcher



Lord of the Rings Conquest, Xbox 360

BACK for another console outing, the fantasy world of Tolkien’s Middle Earth is again the backdrop for players to step into the boots of their favourite characters and fight the most memorable battles from the movies. The *Lord of the Rings* series has always been a mixed bag, but *Conquest* definitely hits the mark. While the controls can be difficult at times, especially if you’re playing an archer or mage, the game looks the part and delivers the goods overall. With the ability to go to war with up to 16 players online, you should have a fun few hours.



Empire Total War, PC

THE fifth war game from Creative Assembly is set during the great imperial conflicts of the 18th century. In *Empire*, players do battle with huge forces and you need to seriously concentrate on the tactics of the era if you are to stand any chance of winning. In one campaign I managed to have the cavalry regiment I actually serve with in the British Army completely wiped out by Prussian light infantry. But *Empire* is so good that I’m hooked. It keeps you coming back for more and is the perfect partner on your laptop while you are out on deployment.

WO2 Craig Turner, LD



Elite Force Unit 77, Nintendo DS

AN interesting mixture of action and strategy, this counter-terrorism-themed offering works reasonably well with the handheld console’s double screen and stylus format. Players control a team of military specialists, each with their own skills and attributes, and have to use them to best effect as they work their way through a series of increasingly complex anti-insurgency missions. *Unit 77* has echoes of the old Sinclair ZX Spectrum hit *Enigma Force* with its useful icon driven control system matched with fast-paced and slick action.



Tom Clancy's Hawk, Xbox 360 & PS3

ONCE again Ubisoft has come up trumps with its latest offering, a Tom Clancy-branded first-person shooter (FPS) in the skies. If you ignore the unrealistic element of being armed with pretty much unlimited ammunition, *Hawk* is an exceptional title. Fantastic graphics and superb gameplay make this a welcome change from recent FPS offerings. In the past, console flight sims have tended to become very boring very quickly but in this case the manufacturers have managed to combine great playability with mission variety and a plausible storyline.

Maj Neil Powell, AGC

Music

APRIL REVIEW



Chilled out: Riding high in the charts, James Morrison has just embarked on his latest tour to promote new album *Songs For You, Truths For Me*



Soul searching

Singer recalls father's career in uniform as he salutes Brit troops

JAMES Morrison's soaring singing career suggests the gravelly-voiced star was right to ground any plans to follow his father into a career with the Royal Air Force.

The musician's distinctive tones and obvious song-writing ability helped him to climb into the top ten of the UK charts in 2006 with *You Give Me Something*, a catchy single which helped to turn the then-21-year-old into a household name almost overnight.

Morrison followed this with debut album *Undiscovered*, which went on to sell more than two million copies in a matter of months, and the diminutive singer's success vindicated his decision to steer clear of a life in fatigues.

"My dad used to be in the RAF. It was never really an option for me. I'm not really a fighter, I'm too small," said the 24-year-old, explaining why the military was not for him.

Now the soothing soul artist, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Coldplay frontman Chris Martin, is

back and touring with his second album *Songs For You, Truths For Me*.

And although his latest offering has had to creep up the charts, compared to the flying-off-the-shelves success of his first album, Morrison is taking it all in his stride.

"I think second albums are more difficult because people expect more than from the first one," said the singer, who observed that the credit crunch could also be affecting the way people are buying music.

"There are a lot of artists releasing albums and people haven't got as much money or they're downloading more.

"People think a little bit more about if they actually want to buy an album, whereas when I released the first one everyone was caning their credit cards."

The artist has toured and performed with a long list of stars including Corinne Bailey-Rae, John Mayer and Cat Stevens.

And the latest album contains some truly A-list quality in the shape of

superstar singer Nelly Furtado, who duets with Morrison on the hit track *Broken Strings*.

The pair teamed up after Morrison, from Derby, launched a search for a contemporary female singer to record the track. After a look at who was available, Grammy Award-winning Furtado seemed the perfect choice.

"She had *Maneater* out and I just thought she's so versatile she can pull off any style really," said Morrison, who was beaten to a Brit Award by Paul Weller earlier this year.

"I thought it was so cool when she said she was up for it and she's so grounded and down to earth. Really great to work with."

Although his pairing with Furtado was a great experience for the star, he would also welcome a duet with his childhood idol Stevie Wonder who Morrison admits left him star-struck when he met him at a Royal Naval College gig.

Once described as a housewives'



favourite, the singer has proved that he appeals to all generations and in equal measure with both sexes.

But while flattered by the acclaim he has received, Morrison said that his new dad-status had helped to make him a much calmer person.

"I just don't get any sleep," he admitted. "But apart from that it's just prioritising my daughter really. It's not all about me, it's for her now you know – I'm relaxed more to be honest."

Now in the middle of a busy tour, he is also looking forward to playing the festival circuit later in the year where he will be performing alongside major acts including Kings Of Leon.

At the moment Morrison is riding high with his latest single *Please Don't Stop The Rain*, which is receiving lots of airplay, and is planning a third album.

But the singer, known for his soul-searching and meaningful lyrics, also spares a thought for military personnel deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"They must be going through a lot of emotional stuff when they're out [in Afghanistan] and if my music helps them get through all of it, then that's wicked.

"I've got a lot of respect for anyone who joins the Army and fights for their country." ■



Invaders Must Die (The Prodigy)

NEARLY 20 years after their appearance with the single *Charly* at the height of the early 1990s rave scene, the appeal of **The Prodigy** shows no sign of waning. After a succession of strong records, their fifth studio outing, *Invaders Must Die*, maintains the same energy and freshness that the group had when they first formed. There is more than a hint of the retro rave sound in tracks such as *Take Me to The Hospital*, *Omen* and *Thunder* but the arrangements are testament to the band's maturity and progression over the years. The Prodigy should definitely win a few more converts with this one.



Years of Refusal (Morrissey)

LET'S face it, you don't listen to **Morrissey** if you want cheering up. But, you've got to hand it to this lyrical doomsayer, no one sounds quite like him. *Years of Refusal* is his latest studio-recorded album and is part of a world tour that kicked off across the pond earlier this year. Despite the negative connotations of many of Morrissey's lyrics, you can't help wanting to sing them at the top of your voice when he starts. From the opener *Something Is Squeezing My Skull* through to the single *I'm Throwing My Arms Around Paris* the album's tempo is rarely able to rest. Buy it.

Capt David Greaves, REME



See The Light (The Hours)

THE Hours debuted in 2007 with the excellent *Narcissus Road*, which included the *FIFA 08*-featured single *Ali In The Jungle*. The template remains on this follow-up. It's piano-led indie rock but there is one thing missing – the spark. Too much of what's on offer sounds like it would have been fillers on the debut. The tracks *Car Crash* and *Think Again* raise expectations with song construction and execution that work a treat but these moments are very much in the minority. This sounds like a band going through the motions and, at best, represents an album of consolidation.

Sgt Charlie Lloyd, RLC



Two (Miss Kittin & The Hacker)

HAVING been a fan of **Miss Kittin** since her late 1990s collaborations with **Felix Da Housecat**, I was delighted to review this album. Since working with **The Hacker** things have just got better and better for the feline singer. Kittin fans will be familiar with the trademark techno sound that the *Two* album boasts. Newcomers to techno will also find this a fantastic album. From the **Blue Monday**-esque *1000 Dreams* to the fantastic Euro-cover of *Suspicious Minds* they manage to hit every techno-lovers spot. No one does techno like the Belgians, and Miss Kittin and the Hacker reign. All hail.

Capt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



Paranoid: Deluxe Edition (Black Sabbath)

OSZY Osbourne and the gang have digitally remastered their seminal 1970 LP *Paranoid*, which is widely regarded as the first ever heavy metal album. Its influences are drawn from the industrial sounds and rhythms of Birmingham in the late 1960s where the quartet earned their crust before hitting the big-time and has inspired a multitude of bands ever since. This re-issue comes in a three-disc special edition which includes the re-mastered eight-track album and previously unreleased recordings. If you haven't already got the original, it's well worth a purchase.

Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC



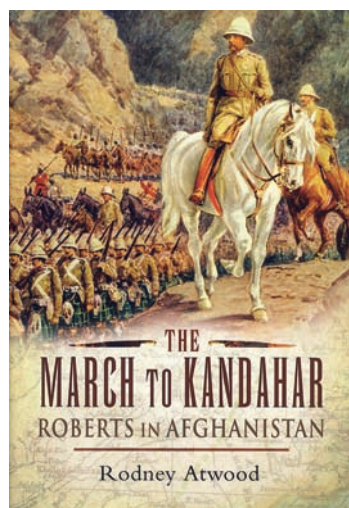
The Crobar Vol One (Various)

THE Crobar in Soho, London is the home of beer, whisky and rock'n'roll. A selection of music has been taken from the jukebox and stuffed into this double CD with bands such as **Motorhead**, **ZZ Top** and **Judas Priest** being just a few of the cutting-edge giants of rock that you can expect to hear. It's a shame that it doesn't include tracks like *Ace of Spades*, or the hard-rockers **Blue Oyster Cult**. But the album still delivers such an outstanding array of rock talent that this can be overlooked, and who knows – they may well be included in volume two.

Ray Kalaker, ex-RETDU

Books

APRIL REVIEW



Familiar territory: Rodney Atwood's warts-and-all homage to Lt Gen Frederick Roberts – “the only general to have emerged with flying colours from an expedition into Afghanistan” – draws parallels with current operations



Kandahar clash

Afghan campaign case study holds many lessons for soldiers of today

The March to Kandahar: Roberts in Afghanistan by Rodney Atwood (Pen & Sword, hardback, £19.99)

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

LIEUTENANT General Frederick “Bobs” Roberts emerged victorious from the dust and heat of the Second Afghan War as a national hero and remains one of Britain’s most distinguished and yet misunderstood military leaders.

At the start of this century he was known as “the only general to have emerged with flying colours from an expedition into Afghanistan”.

And such was the allure of his campaign that when Tony Blair agreed to commit British troops to Afghanistan for the fourth time in 2001, it was Roberts’s biography the then-Prime Minister was seen carrying onto his flight to Kabul.

In *The March to Kandahar*, Rodney Atwood sets out to explain the instrumental role played by Roberts in

the Army’s most successful campaign in Afghanistan to date.

The book focuses on the events surrounding the successful relief of the besieged British garrison of Kandahar, an audacious mission that began in August 1880, only a few weeks after a catastrophic defeat had been inflicted on an isolated British Army brigade at Maiwand by Afghan forces.

With another disaster seemingly looming at Kandahar, where Ayub Khan’s army had surrounded the city, trapping the British garrison inside its walls, there seemed to be little chance of saving Britain’s position in Afghanistan.

There was however one man who believed that all was not lost and that the Afghans could be beaten. Lt Gen Roberts was hungry for revenge for the defeat suffered by the British in the First Afghan War. His own father had been part of the ill-fated campaign of 1839-1842 and had recorded his experiences in a commentary of what was a badly handled war.

Armed with his father’s journal, a determined Bobs began assembling a relief column of 10,000 British and Indian troops. The force, which set off on an epic 300-mile march from Kabul to Kandahar, was made up of the pick of the Indian Army and spearheaded by elite cavalry regiments, Highlanders, Sikhs and Gurkhas.

The author draws on unrivalled access to the commander’s own correspondence and the descriptions of the seven-mile long dust-shrouded British column are particularly fascinating. So too are the tales of fighting an enemy who fired with religious fanaticism and fought with suicidal bravery one minute and chose to melt away into the terrain the next.

One of the British officers in the column wrote of his bewilderment at “the rapidity with which large numbers assembled for battle in Afghanistan were able to disperse in flight”.

“Men who had been engaged in hand-to-hand combat disposed of their



Picture: Cpl John Scott Rafoss, USMC

arms in the villages they passed through, and would meet their pursuers with melons or other fruit in their hands, adopting the role of peaceful inhabitants.”

The bold 23-day march made by Roberts and his men resulted in the relief of Kandahar and the subsequent defeat of Ayub Khan.

As a result of the bravery of his men, his leadership and personal example, Bobs emerged from the war as a hero.

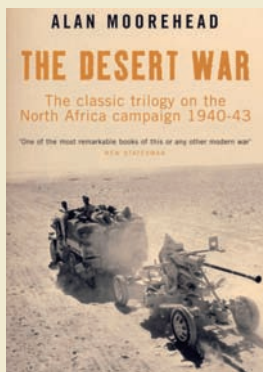
The British public, prompted by the media, credited him with eradicating the shame of the ignominious defeat of the first war in Afghanistan and securing India from Russian influence.

The victory at Kandahar marked the beginning of a 39-year period of peace in the region and relative stability on the normally volatile north-west frontier.

The conduct of Lt Gen Roberts and his brave 10,000 still holds many lessons for the soldier of today, and this book brings them all to the fore.

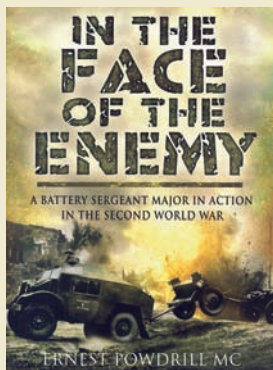
If you are looking for some in-depth historical background on Afghanistan, *March to Kandahar* is well worth a look. ■

To join the ranks of our reviews team (books, movies, games, music) email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk



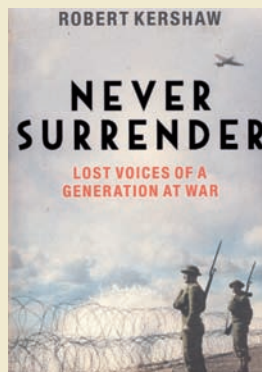
The Desert War by Alan Moorehead

RIGHTLY regarded as a classic when first published in 1944, this reprint has lost none of the originality of the reporting of renowned journalist **Alan Moorehead**. With considerable personal risk, his extensive travels captured the close combat of desert warfare for the ordinary soldier and brilliantly documents how slowly, lazily and naively the British in Africa switched from policing the Empire to fighting modern armies. It was only at Alamein, three years after the war started, that a partial transition and refocus was completed.
Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



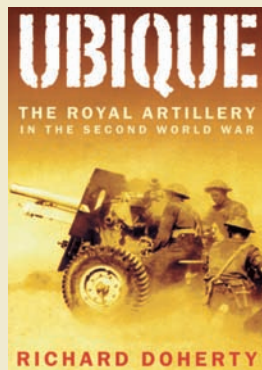
In the Face of the Enemy by Ernest Powdrill MC

COVERING his retreat from France in 1940 and the Normandy landings through to Germany in 1945, **Powdrill** uses company detail to supplement his memories as he narrates his story of a battery sergeant major at war. While his anecdotes stand out, there is too much reliance on the more mundane documentation. Being bombarded with place names and grid references is an unwelcome distraction. An interesting read, but at £19.99 I'd recommend waiting for the paperback.
Maj Jonathan Craig, PWRR



Never Surrender by Robert Kershaw

ALTHOUGH not intended to be a social history of the Second World War, the vignettes in *Never Surrender* serve well as snapshots of the unique characteristics of this wartime generation. The author captures the authentic voices of the ordinary heroes with first-hand accounts and creates an extraordinary portrait of people fighting for survival. Similar to **Max Arthur's** *Forgotten Voices*, but also featuring interviews with veterans from Britain, the Commonwealth and Germany. An insightful and candid offering.
Maj Matt Hayward, Scots DG



Ubique by Richard Doherty

A MUST for gunners and recommended for all those interested in the Second World War. **Doherty** writes with a compelling narrative that combines historical fact with some fascinating personal accounts. From the prologue in which Gen Montgomery's gushing praise for the gunners is recounted, through many victories and close scrapes, the gripping story of the Royal Artillery is told with both military insight and human interest. *Ubique* also features the often forgotten anti-aircraft batteries, county Yeomanry regiments and HAC.
Capt Shaun Fardy, AGC



Zulu Hart by Saul David

WRITTEN by renowned historian **Saul David**, this title is the author's first foray into fiction. Chronicling the life of George Hart – a young officer of mixed ancestry with a gift for soldiering and getting into trouble – the novel charts the character's passage from England to South Africa, where he locks horns with the lethal Zulu hordes. Well-written love interests, epic locations and a moulding of historical fact and fiction, *Zulu Hart* is a great fictional debut. Fans of **Bernard Cornwell's** *Sharpe* series will love it.

LCpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps



We Gave Our Today by William Fowler

IN this detailed narrative of the Second World War's longest campaign, **Fowler** does an excellent job of describing the background, tactics and operations of jungle warfare in Burma 1941-1945. Last on the list for equipment, the men of the "forgotten Army" who fought the Japanese are often overlooked. *We Gave Our Today* tells the stories of those soldiers and officers, and of the enemy they encountered in this tough jungle theatre. An interesting, well-researched read for those who have little or no knowledge of this hard-fought campaign.

Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH

Languages at War: Using Foreign Languages in Peacekeeping (Bosnia)

The University of Southampton is conducting a study of the use of foreign languages in Bosnia during Operations Grapple 5-7 (UNPROFOR: 1995), Resolute (IFOR) and Lodestar (SFOR: to 2000). We would like to interview military linguists and interpreters as well as anyone who received language training before/during deployment, served in a unit with a locally employed civilian interpreter attached or came into contact with foreign languages during service. We are interested in contact with any foreign languages, not just the local language.

Participants will be offered the opportunity to contribute their interviews to the Imperial War Museum sound archive but this is not a requirement of participation.

If you would like to take part in our research, please write to Dr Catherine Baker (Department of Modern Languages, Building 65, Avenue Campus, University of Southampton, Highfield Road, Southampton, SO17 1BJ) or e-mail c.baker@soton.ac.uk.

www.reading.ac.uk/languages-at-war/



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The TA Pool of Linguists (TAPOL) is looking to recruit Reserve and Ex-Regular personnel and civilians wishing to join the TA who have high-level skills in one or more foreign language(s) and are interested in using those languages in support of Defence. TAPOL personnel are available to support UK or Allied Forces in a broad spectrum of tasks both in the UK and abroad.

The Pool is open to personnel from all cap badges and from the rank of Pte to Maj. Applicants must have relevant academic language qualifications (degree, MoDLEB SLP3 or equivalent) or can prove language proficiency due to family background or other experience.

The TA Pool of Linguists is a Specialist Unit administered by CVHQ AGC. The annual training commitment is a minimum of 19 days to qualify for bounty.

For further details contact:
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Email: ets2depops@detsa.co.uk

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SOLDIERSPORT

DYNAMIC DUOS

Army on top as
two-man bob
crews triumph
in Turin



Slide away: Sgt John Hillman (3 Para, front) and Capt Henry Nwume (RAMC) at the Inter-Services bobsleigh championships in Italy

Picture: Graeme Main



Blast off: Pte Hannah Williams (RLC) and driver Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) make a great start in Italy. Inset: Walker (back) and Cpl Jackie Gunn (R Signals)

Dynamic duos

Two-man Army crews claim clutch of titles at Inter-Services bobsleigh

Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Graeme Main

ARMY two-man bobsleighters sharpened their blades and mastered the track to take no less than six trophies at the Inter-Services championships in Cesana, Italy.

Proving the worth of their world-class training, three of the six prizes were awarded to novices who had only joined the teams this season, and a further four went to the women's teams.

The ladies outperformed the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy to take home the Inter-Services women's team bowl, the individual champion trophy, the fastest push trophy and fastest novice team trophy in one of their most successful seasons on record.

Their male counterparts won the fastest push and fastest novice team trophies on one of the hardest and quickest tracks in the world.

Lt Col Matt Perkin, bobsleigh chief of race, said: "The ice sports are one of the toughest and most intense winter sports. This is not a holiday – it is all about racing and beating the next man or woman you are up against.

'This is not a holiday – it is all about racing and beating the next man or woman'

"Over the years military events like these have ensured that a large percentage of Britain's Olympic ice events contingent have come from the Armed Forces."

Pte Hannah Williams (RLC) picked up two prizes – one for the fastest push and the other the individual women's trophy along with driver Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals).

Despite being new to the sport,

Williams beat seasoned professional Cpl Jackie Gunn (R Signals) and her brakewoman Cpl Carice Allen (Int Corps).

Gunn, who recently returned from Lake Placid, where she was the squad reserve as Team GB were crowned world

champions, praised the winning duo.

"I am really pleased for Paula – she is a fantastic driver," she said. "It's all about the team and I am so proud of how this season has gone so far."

Cpl Walker, who has been touted as the heir to Army ice queen Gunn's throne, said the season had exceeded all her expectations.

"It has been an excellent year for us – it has definitely been a good time for female bobsleighters," she said.

"Here our times have been really

good – in fact they've been brilliant."

The week before the Inter-Services competition, Walker and Gunn formed the ultimate duo as they stormed the Army championships, taking the gold with a fabulous display of strength.

"It was a really good feeling," added Walker. "Jackie was the brakewoman and I was driving. We just worked really hard. Jackie was injured so for us to win was brilliant – I was really pleased and for us now the only way is up."

Gunn, who was the reserve at Lake Placid after newcomer Gillian Cook beat her to qualify as the team's brakewoman, said she was now gearing up for the Olympics.

"I was disappointed not to be pushing at the World Championships but when it came to it Gill was quicker than me," she admitted. "However, there were only 200ths of a second between our fastest push times and I was injured so it has really spurred me on and forced me to make sure I improve."

Also on a high were Pte James McLaren and Pte Paul Clarke and Capt Charlotte Peters (RA) and Capt Belinda Robson (R Signals) who won the fastest novice team titles.

Lt Col Perkins added: "By including novices, the competition is helping to produce the next generation of British winter sports champions." ■

Rally good start

BRITISH Forces Broadcasting Service reporter Jon Knighton played a starring role as the Armed Forces Rally Team opened its season at the Rallye Sunseeker in Bournemouth.

The *BFBS Reports* sports editor, who was filming for a fly-on-the-wall documentary, served as co-driver for team director Maj Alan Paramore (RLC) and had a winning debut as the pair finished the 14-stage race nearly five-and-a-half minutes ahead of their nearest competitors.

Starting with a 1.8-mile blast along the south coast town's promenade, the event covered a mixture of wide roads and narrow lanes and Knighton did well to master the co-driver's road book, time card and pace notes.

Following a successful qualifying day held at the specialist course at the Combat Support Trials and Development Unit in Aldershot in January, this season's rally team has real strength in depth and Sgt Ross Cookman (RE) helped guide driver Flt Lt Steve Partridge (RAF) to second place in their category.

Army duo Cpl George Morrison (REME) and Cpl Curtis McKie (R Signals) also had a good showing and might have challenged for the lead had their Land Rover not run wide on a corner and ended up in a ditch, costing the team three minutes.

● For more information, visit www.armedforcesrallyteam.co.uk ■

SPORT SHORTS

EIGHT soldiers went Down Under and conquered the Australian opposition during a tour with the Combined Services U23 hockey team.

Gnr Danny Morgan (RA) was on target twice as the British contingent beat the Australian Defence Force 3-2 and scored again in a follow-up victory against Sydney civilian side Easts Hockey Club.

The Combined Services team capped a memorable tour with two matches against the Australian Navy.

Morgan continued his good form with another goal in a 4-3 win in the opening match and was a thorn in the side for his Commonwealth counterparts once more, finding the back of the net twice in a resounding 6-3 win for the tourists in the two teams' closing encounter.

SPORT SHORTS

SOLDIERS are being invited to try their hands at one of the most varied sports played in the Services.

The Army Modern Pentathlon Association, which helped Capt Charlie Unwin (RHA) train hard enough to win the British open championship in 2008, wants more people to pit their skills against the Olympic event, which is hugely popular across Europe.

Featuring a three-kilometre run, 10 metre air pistol shoot, epee fencing, 200 metre swim and horse riding, modern pentathlon provides a true test of any sportsman or woman's skills and endurance.

For more information about the sport, contact AMPA secretary Capt Mark Wilson (REME) on 9491 62558 or email 40RA-Wksp0C@mod.uk

Army holds court

REIGNING champion Pte Jonnie Abosi (2 Mercian) produced a powerful performance to retain the Army indoor tennis championship title with victory over LCpl Joe Levey (Int Corps).

The talented pair battled it out in the competition's final at Aldershot for an hour-and-three-quarters, Abosi edging the first set 7-5 before turning on the style and beating Levey 6-2 in the second.

In the women's competition, 2008 champion Maj Sam Jennings looked odds-on to make the final, but a spirited performance from opponent SSgt Hilary Greig saw the senior NCO progress into the last round.

Capt Charlotte Goldsmith's consistently strong form then helped

her to ease past Lt Cornel Oosthuizen to set up a showdown against the impressive Greig.

But the much-anticipated tussle failed to live up to expectations when Goldsmith, who had been suffering from a chest infection and high temperature, was unable to cope with her opponent's powerful attacking play and Greig went on to win the title.

Held over three days, the indoor championships attracted 20 men and eight women who played more than 1,100 games across 90 matches.

Army tennis players will return to Aldershot from July 18-22 to take part in the Service's summer championships, which will include a full line-up of singles and doubles events.

THE OFFICIAL BRITISH ARMY FITNESS GUIDE

THE PULL-UP

Pull-ups (or "heaves" in Army speak) are a key aspect of military physical training. Being able to lift your own body weight off the ground is a crucial skill.

Stand beneath a pull-up bar with feet together and take hold of it with an underhand grip.

Pull yourself up towards the bar, bending at the elbows and keeping feet and legs locked together. Your chin must clear the bar for the rep to count.

Slowly lower and repeat.



MAKE IT EASIER

If you cannot manage a full pull-up, use a block or partner to help you get into the raised position (elbows bent, head

above the bar) and slowly lower. Working through the downward phase will strengthen the muscles and help to get you fit to do the full heave.



MAKE IT HARDER

Pull-ups can be done with either an overhand or underhand grip. While an overhand grip is more functional, in terms of the position we might be in when we need to lift our body weight off the ground, it is also more challenging than the underhand grip used in Army tests. Try it when you're comfortable with the underhand version.

Soldier readers can buy the *Official British Army Fitness Guide*, published by Guardian Books, for the discounted price of only £8.99 plus postage and packing (RRP £12.99). Visit guardianbooks.co.uk or call 0845 606 4232 and quote "Soldier"





Table service

Former-Olympian plots final course for airmen's quarter-century run

**Interviews: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main**

WHEN the Army attempts to end the Royal Air Force's 26-year Inter-Services table tennis winning streak later this month, there will be few with a cooler head than Ghanaian prodigy Eric Amoah.

While other Service players may crack under the pressure at the Portsmouth tournament, the RLC private can call on his experiences at Olympic, Commonwealth and World Championship tables.

But despite the skills Amoah has gained since entering the sport's elite by winning his country's national championships at the age of 16, he is as fired up as anyone else at the prospect of breaking the RAF's dominance.

"The sport is doing well in the Army now because we have more people playing," he told *SoldierSport* at the Army championships. "This is my first time playing in the Inter-Services, but I

am aware that the RAF have won for 26 years in a row.

"We all believe we can beat them and that has been my main focus. If myself and Wally Mahaffey [former Army champion and Northern Ireland international] are playing then we will win the trophy. I am certain of that."

Amoah, who serves with Bicester-based 23 Pioneer Regiment, warmed up for the Inter-Services showdown by sweeping to victory at the single Service championships, beating Army Table Tennis Association (ATTA) secretary WO2 John McFaul (AGC (RMP)) in the final.

The win, at Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre, was entirely expected of a man who has travelled far and wide to pick up the paddle at some of the world's biggest tournaments.

Aside from a host of World Championship appearances in Manchester, Holland and France, Amoah won bronze at the 2003 All-African Games in Abuja, Nigeria and

competed at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

Three years ago, the Army man went Down Under to represent Ghana at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne and he has now set his sights on repeating the trick by qualifying for the next tournament, which is being held in India in 2010.

"I hope to make the Commonwealth Games next year. If I get the chance to practice then there is no doubt that I will be there. I know what it takes to be a good player.

"When I was 16 I was in the national championships as a junior. I was moved into the seniors and won the tournament and people were saying it was a miracle that I was beating fully-grown men at such a young age."

With top-level table tennis games zipping along at a frantic pace, Amoah insisted that players have to be in top physical condition to compete.

The Army champion told *SoldierSport* that he practised "every morning and

Eyes on the ball: Pte Eric Amoah (RLC) will call on his extensive experience when he competes at this month's Inter-Services table tennis championships

every evening" when he lived in Ghana, but has had to curtail his sessions to fit in with the military way life.

Despite the decrease in time at the table, Amoah said that his Army training was proving to be a good substitute in keeping him match-fit.

"A lot of people don't understand the game," he said. "But it is very fast and exciting and you need to be fit to play.

"You need to practice all the time. That's the key. When I compare myself now to when I was in Ghana, there is a big difference, but I do a lot of physical fitness with my regiment so I am in good condition and ready to play."

With 11 new competition-standard tables and a "robot" – a machine that spits balls at a player to allow them to train on their own – among the ATTA's arsenal, things are looking up for Army table tennis.

McFaul, himself a former Army champion, praised current ATTA chairman Maj Bob Meldrum (CAMUS) for reinvigorating the sport and joined Amoah in predicting a change of fortune in this year's Inter-Services competition.

"The RAF have always had strength in depth," he explained. "This year we have one of the strongest teams we have ever been able to field, however, so we are quietly confident.

"It will definitely be close and if we are on form then who knows? We are hopeful we can take the advantage and start a new chapter."

● For more information, email atta-chairman@freeuk.com ■



Big hit: Cpl James Allen (RA) in action at Portsmouth. Inset: Six Army boxers won through byes

Pictures: Graeme Main

Navy no-show taints boxers' record year

THE Army won the Inter-Services boxing title for a record 26th consecutive year before the first punch was thrown after the squad's rivals were unable to field enough fighters.

Six bouts featuring some of the Red's top talent, including lightweight Pte Martin Stead (RLC) and flyweight Spr Adam Whitfield (RE), were awarded to the Army as byes during the finals night at Portsmouth.

The Royal Navy won four of the remaining six contests – including three victories in their five match-ups against soldiers – but the Army retained the Noble Stauette.

After a procession of the "winners" of the walkover bouts across the ring at HMS Nelson, Cpl James Allen (RA) earned the night's first point, stopping AB Russ Murray in the third round of the pair's bantamweight fight.

Allen used his tactical nous to catch Murray on the counter attack throughout a cagey opening round and a low-scoring second period ended with both boxers chalking up one point.

With time running out in the final three minutes, Allen unleashed a flurry of punches in the corner, knocking Murray to the floor before the Navy boxer's coach threw in the towel.

The competition's most-impressive performance came courtesy of England international LCpl Steve Turner (R

Signals). Capping a memorable season, Turner completely outclassed a strong opponent in AB Mark Flowers to record a thumping 7-2 win.

The light welterweight's exemplary defensive work was matched by deft timing when moving onto the front foot and his performance drew a deserved ovation from the partisan crowd.

LCpl Gareth "Stan" Jones (R Welsh) was next into the ring and he had every right to be disappointed after losing his light heavyweight bout with AET Paul Ormston by seven points to one.

Although Ormston deserved the win, the margin of his victory was harsh on Jones, who had successfully broken the Navy man's guard on several occasions throughout the fight.

Tpr Lee John (RDG) was neck-and-neck with Mne Nick McGarry in the competition's penultimate match-up before a rush of blood in round three led to his disqualification.

With John pressing McGarry in the corner, the referee stepped in to separate the pair. The marine lowered his guard and John unleashed a hammer blow which knocked his opponent out but was judged to be illegal by the man in the middle.

Defeat for Pte Tiny Robanakadavu (RLC) in the super heavyweight bracket brought a close to an entertaining event hampered by a lack of competition. ■



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**Our readers are proud to have helped
raise more than £16m for Help for Heroes**

SPORT SHORTS

TEN British soldiers are completing their training ahead of taking on a marathon challenge along one of the world's most iconic structures.

The team, which is primarily drawn from the Falcon medium armour squadron of 2 RTR, will head to China to test themselves against a 26.2 mile slog along the country's Great Wall on Saturday, May 16.

As well as taking in large parts of the wall, the marathon route also covers sections of the foothills surrounding it and is so testing that it is expected to add an hour onto most runners' average finishing times.

Each of the runners will be raising money for the Joseph Clarke School for the Visually Impaired in Highams Park, London.

A DISABLED former-soldier is taking on three marathons in three days to raise money for Help for Heroes.

John Dixon, who served for 20 years before being medically discharged in June 2006, will use two walking sticks to complete the triple challenge in West Sussex over April 5, 6 and 7.

To make a donation or to see the routes Dixon will take, visit www.threemarathons.co.uk

A MILITARY flautist is pitting her wits against the Flora London Marathon to raise money for Battle Back, the MoD organisation that provides adventurous training and sport for wounded troops.

LCpl Rachel Smith, of the Coldstream Guards band, decided to complete the race in support of the group after visiting the British Disabled Waterskiing Association at Heron Lake, near London.

Battle Back was formed in 2008 and has already run successful expeditions in skiing and kayaking as well as running regular waterskiing training.

To make a donation, visit www.justgiving.com/rachelsmithflute

More information about the Battle Back scheme can be found at www.battleback.mod.uk

FORREST Gump's fictional run across the United States is being brought into reality by an intrepid quartet.

Former Army PTI Frankie Parr will join two Royal Marines and a civilian firefighter for the Gumpathon, a race stretching over 3,630 miles, three deserts and ten mountain ranges.

Starting in New York on April 1 2010, the team plan to run to Los Angeles by June 24, with all of the money raised being split between Help for Heroes, the US Wounded Warrior programme and the Firefighters' Charity.



Picture: Graeme Main

Breakthrough: Number eight Pte Kitione Rawalai was instrumental in 1 Scots' Premiership Cup victory

Great Scots

Borderers slay Welsh in enthralling cup final

Report: Stephen Tyler

A FIJIAN core helped 1 Scots edge past 1 WG to take the honours in an Army Rugby Union Premiership Cup final with a truly international feel.

The pace and guile of the Scots was countered by the guards' power and brawn in an enthralling match that the Borderers edged by 29 points to 20 in front of a full house at Aldershot's Military Stadium.

Speaking after the match, Scots captain and number eight Pte Kitione Rawalai said: "It was a good game against a very strong Welsh team. We knew we would need to run them around the pitch and we did it well. I am proud to lead this group of players."

With their supporters in full voice, the Welsh opened brightly and posted the first points with a penalty after the Scots held onto the ball on the floor.

Pte Matthew Raikoso responded with the opening try and sponsor's man-of-the-match 2nd Lt David Duffus added a brace from the conversion.

The Welsh clawed the gap back to three with another penalty, but their wastefulness in possession afforded the Scots the time and space they needed to play to their strengths.

Boasting Gloucester star Pte Apo Satala and Fijian international Pte Jack

Prasad among their flair players, the Scots were in no mood for charity and set about chalking up a significant lead.

Prasad crossed after squeezing through the narrowest of gaps in the Welsh defence after a sustained period of pressure and Pte Tui Lekutu benefited from a charged-down ball in the 22 to add a third five-pointer before the break. Duffus made it three conversions out of three.

Chasing a 15-point deficit in the second half, the Welsh displayed the grit and determination that saw them reach the cup final and deservedly earned

a penalty try following some undisciplined Scots' defending.

Duffus steadied the ship with a superb penalty from the left touchline, but the Welsh refused to lie down and survived a late scare when

Satala breezed past three players only for his try to be disallowed for a forward pass.

With just minutes left, LCpl Melvyn Lewis barrelled over in the corner for a converted try which brought the score to 24-20 in favour of the Scots.

But any hopes of a famous comeback were ended by the lively Prasad who stole possession straight from the restart to score his second try of the game.

The Pacific Islander told *SoldierSport*: "We were focused on the game and all we wanted to do was to pick up the trophy. The Welsh are a good team and they gave us a difficult game." ■

'It was a good game against a very strong Welsh team'

SSGT Roberta Dornan (QUOTC) completed a hat-trick of Territorial Army half marathon titles with victory at the 2009 championships at Fleet. The senior NCO crossed the finish line in a respectable 1hr 26min 27secs to take the top honour.

The men's race finished with a clear victory for Sgt Richard Gannon (131 Ind Cdo Sqn RE (V)), with OCdt Ben Yates (QUOTC) in second.

SSgt John Foster, who finished third in the men's competition, Sgt Steve Muntzer and LCpl John Callaghan guided 151 (I) Tpt Regt RLC (V) to glory in the team event, finishing six points clear of 81 Signal Squadron.

The Reservist distance running community was due to compete in the Territorial Army cross-country championships at Warcop, Cumbria as this issue went to press.

THE Army completed a clean sweep with a dominant performance at this year's Inter-Services cross-country championships at Tweseldown.

With six runners inside the top ten, the women's team made light work of dispatching their rivals from the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy.

Their male counterparts faced a sterner test, eventually finishing three points ahead of the RAF.

THE UK's largest climbing club is inviting more soldiers to join its ranks.

New members can join the Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) for just £15, for which the club offers discounts on new kit, entrance to AMA meets across the UK and Europe and access to walking and climbing instructor courses.

To join, download a form from www.armynet.mod.uk/ama or email membership secretary Helen Smith at amamembership@armymail.mod.uk

GEORDIE legend Peter Beardsley competed in a national newspaper-sponsored football tournament in aid of Help For Heroes.

The former England international joined a host of other retired players for The Sun's five-a-side competition in Newcastle. An afternoon of horse racing helped to bring the total amount raised for the Forces charity to more than £1,190.

Speaking after competing in the football tournament, former Newcastle United left back Robbie Elliott told *SoldierSport*: "It's an incredible job the Forces do and it takes a special person to put themselves forward for it.

"I certainly wouldn't fancy it myself so I have a lot of respect for the men and women who sign up."

Price targets straight eight

Army coach aims to continue Rugby Union run

Preview: Roger Thompson

ARM Y Rugby Union head coach WO2 Andy Price insists that victory in the upcoming Inter-Services championships will cement his team's place at the top of the sport for years to come.

The Reds take on the Royal Air Force at Aldershot's Military Stadium on April 15 before the traditional showdown against the Royal Navy at Twickenham on May 2 as they look to wrap up an unprecedented eighth straight title.

But Price (WG) told *SoldierSport* that his focus throughout his successful three-year tenure has been on developing rugby throughout the Army so that the Service's conveyor belt of talent continues to churn out top-quality players long after he vacates the Army hot seat.

"I want to leave a small legacy which in time might grow into an extended era of Army success," he said. "The key lies in regenerating ourselves, which at present is not easy."

Looking at the strength in depth across the Army, Price's philosophy appears to already be paying dividends. The loss of powerful number eight Pte Joe Kava (RLC) to operational deployment would have been a major blow in the not-too-distant past, but today's set-up has ensured a string of ready – and able – replacements are waiting in the wings.

Before jetting off for a tour of South Africa, Price picked 11 apprentice players to join his squad and develop by training and playing alongside more-experienced counterparts.

The system will see the likes of record-cap holder Cpl Ben Hughes (RE) taking relative newcomer Cpl Dave Bates (R Signals) under his wing, while the combined experience of LCpl Chris Budgen (R Welsh) and LCpl Melvyn Lewis (WG) should be enough to get the best out of hooker LCpl Matt Dwyer (WG).

Likewise Cpl Ceri Cummings

(REME) – who had a stand-out season for the Army's Rugby League side before switching codes and joining up with Price's team – will be able to build on his already-promising Union form by working with Army stalwart WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC).

And with more team members – including Price himself – due to deploy on Operation Herrick shortly after the tournament, the coach believes the time is right to introduce some of his talented youngsters to the fray.

"By the end of the Twickenham match I think we will have three players with more than 25 Army caps which is

massive experience," said Price. "Only the Army can boast that.

"I believe we have cornerstone players who can go on a bit yet, but now is the time to get them rubbing shoulders with young blood and playing a

part in grooming their successors.

"I know our senior players want to help the next generation. We are already a young side but we must always be wary of the unexpected."

Although Price's professional approach means the Army squad will not look to Twickenham until they have dispatched the RAF, he was at pains to point out that his players will not be taking the Royal Navy lightly.

"They are an accomplished side with some very good players in key positions, and in Josh Drauninui on the wing they have one of the best finishers in England," he said.

"We will have to be on our toes, stay patient and play like we have done during the build up. We have our own international stars in Pte Apolosi Satala (1 Scots), Pte Isoa DamuDamu (RLC) and Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots), the pack is hardened and we look to play exciting rugby. We must not get ahead of ourselves."

● The Inter-Services Rugby Union tournament will be raising money for Help For Heroes. For more information about the Babcock Army v Royal Navy match, including ticket arrangements, visit www.armynavymatch.org ■

'I want to leave a small legacy which in time might grow'



Shot down: Rfn David Etale (3 Rifles) on the ball during the Army's 2-1 Carrington Cup defeat against the Royal Air Force

Picture: Steve Dock

RAF GROUND REDS

SLOW starts to the Army football team's two Inter-Services matches left the Reds bringing up the rear in this year's event.

A noisy crowd at Portsmouth's Fratton Park watched a disjointed Army side struggle to get into the game against the Royal Navy. The Reds trailed 2-0 and Cpl Andrew Cottam's (RE) goal proved to be little more than a consolation in a disappointing 2-1 defeat.

Things looked little better in the Carrington Cup match against the Royal Air Force at Aldershot, but a deft finish from Sgt James Lavelle (APTC) from a LCpl Danny Haley (R Signals) pass put them a goal to the good.

With ten minutes remaining, the Army needed one goal to win the tournament on goal difference but were found wanting and the RAF deservedly equalised with seconds to go.

The result meant that the airmen retained the Constantinople Cup for a third successive year with the Royal Navy finishing as runners-up.

MASSEY TROPHY LATEST

DIVISION 1

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
R Signals	8	7	0	1	21	21
REME	8	6	0	2	11	18
RLC	9	5	0	4	-6	15
RA	7	3	1	3	3	10
Infantry	8	3	0	5	-3	9
RE	6	2	1	3	-3	7
Int Corps	8	0	0	8	-23	0

DIVISION 2

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
APTC	6	5	1	0	15	16
AGC	6	2	3	1	4	9
AAC	6	1	1	4	-9	4
AMS	6	1	1	4	-10	4

Mark cooks up Big Curry

FORMER All Black Mark Robinson has vowed to spice things up in the kitchen ahead of this month's Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) Big Curry.

The charity is asking members of the public to cook a curry for themselves and guests and donate any money they raise to help Britain's soldiers.

And Robinson, who currently plays for London Wasps, told *SoldierSport* that he is looking forward to getting involved.

"Anything I can do towards helping the soldiers I will," he said. "Us Kiwis have a great bond with the Forces and I

have a lot of friends in the military.

"The ABF is a great cause and I'm looking forward to cooking. I've been to Thailand a few times and I like the food there, so I think I'm going to make a Thai green curry."

Robinson said his teammate and former Army officer Josh Lewsey had a big say in Wasps's involvement in the event.

"He's definitely a guy you wouldn't want to cross," he explained. "He is very pro-

Forces and was extremely keen for the club to be involved."

● www.bigcurry.org



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SOLDIERSPORT has teamed up with Sweatz Sportz to offer 15 lucky readers the chance to win an amazing non-surgical weight loss product to help shift extra stubborn pounds.

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In addition, the sweating helps to detoxify the body, eliminating chemicals stored in fat cells and making weight-loss easier. A pack of eight vests, which are available in both male and female sizes, costs just £9.98. For more information, visit www.sweatzsportz.com

To stand a chance of winning, simply tell us how much a pack of eight Sweatz Vests costs.

● Answers by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk or by post to Sweatz Vests Competition, *Soldier Magazine*, Parsons House, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU. Usual competition rules apply.

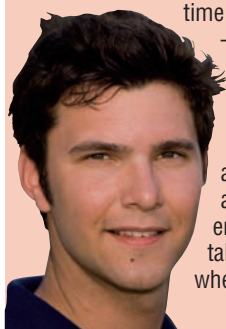


Great outdoors

We asked soldiers taking part in adventurous training activities in Wales, Belize and Canada what they thought about the opportunities on offer

Sig Joel Daugreilh, R Signals

Adventurous training has given me the opportunity to hone my diving skills. I think it is really good, because it gives you time away from work – you can't spend all your time in the garages. I believe there is always room for adventurous training and my bosses encourage me to take part in activities where possible.



Cpl Anthony Kelly, WG

I'm a new instructor at Capel Curig but I've quickly seen the benefits of adventurous training for soldiers. It helps them get rid of fears they have. I joined the Welsh Guards five years ago and have already served in Bosnia and Kosovo, but this is a superb posting for me and I have a great quality of life.



LCpl Gordon Legg, Coldm Gds

I'm an instructor based at Capel Curig in North Wales – I've done the job for three years and enjoy my climbing in particular. It is very rewarding for me to see a soldier get really competent and it is great to see a group of people getting closer together as their course goes on. They really chill out here.



Cpl Stuart Issitt, REME

The Army taught me to dive and now I have the bug and try to do it as much as possible. I think that it is good to get out of the green life and relax. When you are 30 metres down in the water you have to look out for your teammates and make sure they are ok. I really think that adventurous training is a necessity.



Cfn Scott Eusden, REME

Ice climbing has been a completely different experience. There aren't many jobs that give you time off to do this, and it costs civilians an arm and a leg to do the same thing. I have been rock climbing and wanted to see if there were skills I could carry over. The Army has allowed me to do some amazing things.



WO1 Zammo McBain, REME

There are a lot of opportunities out there, as long as the individual takes the responsibility and gets among it. The Army makes these things available and the guys and girls have to take on the challenge. I have been skiing here in Canada and it's been a good time to concentrate on getting rid of any bad habits I have picked up.



Spr Darren Hutchinson, RE

I think that adventurous training is a good way to get to know your mates who will be deploying with you to theatre. Obviously you won't be kayaking in Afghanistan, but the skills that you pick up on adventurous training, such as teamwork, can only help when you are on operations.



Sgt Jonah Jones, RA

You cannot beat adventurous training to develop core skills, leadership and confidence in soldiers – all of these qualities are relevant to operations. As an instructor at Capel Curig, it is really great to have so many activities. The soldiers try different sports and find ones they like.



Cfn James Sanders, REME

I have done a few bits of adventurous training before, like rock climbing back in the UK, but to get the chance to leave work for two weeks and come skiing in Canada is amazing. I have a work hard, play hard attitude and courses like this teach you teamwork and leadership and give you the chance to meet new people.



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