

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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TRAINING
UPDATE P28



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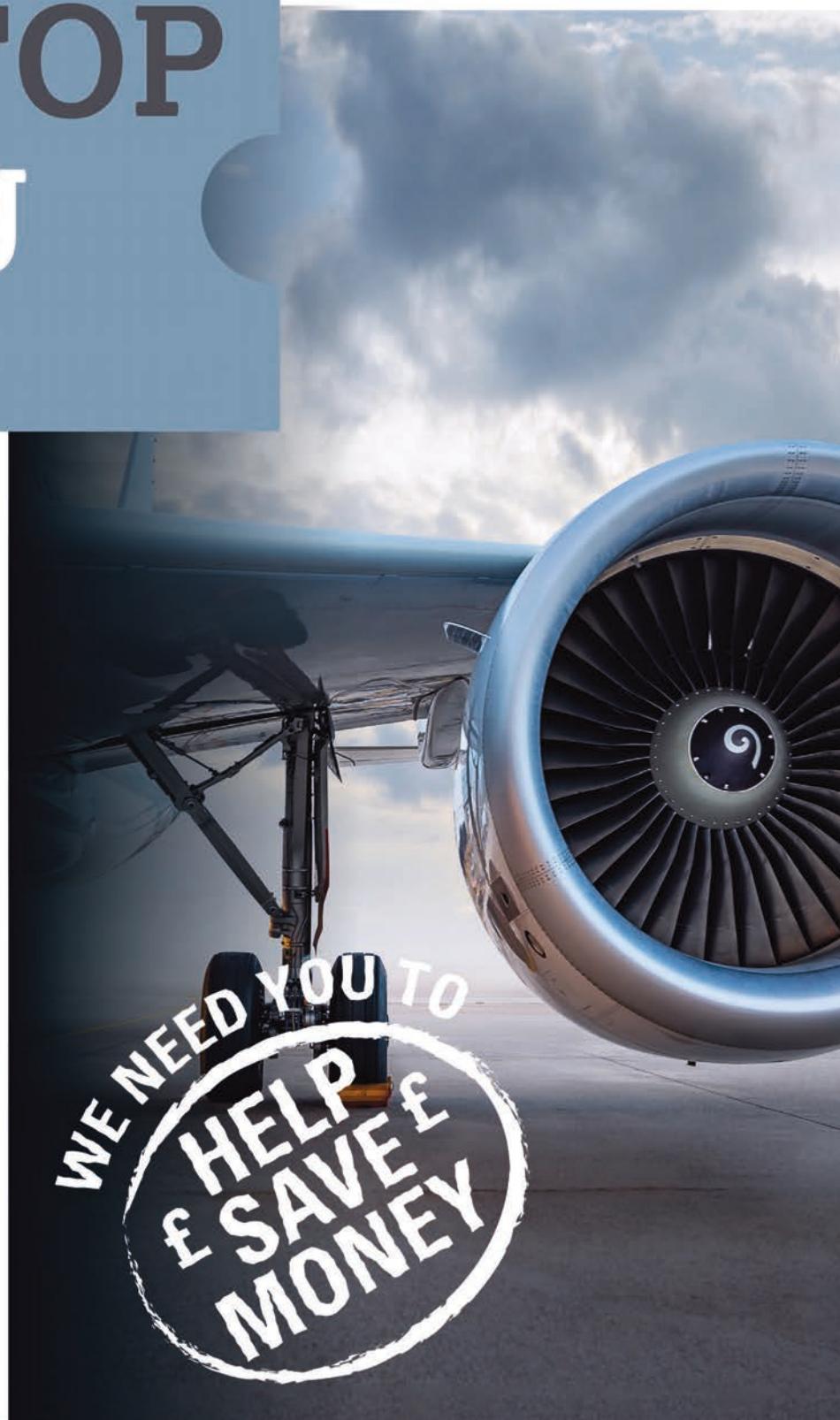
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The price of commitment



SOME sobering reads mark out this month's magazine. From the latest on Op Interflex (pages 28 and 32) to the powerful

account of Sgt Sarah Mimmagh (AGC (RMP)) and her lifesaving mission in Turkey (page 47), these articles serve as a potent reminder of the impact our readers have in the day job.

Combat operations are not the only way soldiers influence human life – rescue work, skill sharing, kit development and the general effort to keep the wheels of the military turning play a part too. But when day-to-day frustrations prevail, it's easy to overlook any bigger picture.

"Every time my son gets dressed he has to walk across wet carpet," one Serviceman tells us of his quarters this month (page 11).

It's embarrassing to read against the backdrop of personal, professional and sporting excellence on display in this (and every other) issue of *Soldier*.

As miserable housing maintenance, high living costs and the relentless pressure of doing more work with fewer troops abound, all eyes are on politicians to see what they do next with this organisation (page 12).

Meanwhile, personnel showcase the very best of human values.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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THE SHAPE OF WHAT'S TO COME

Picture: Graeme Main



'Urban basics' is being added to the individual training requirement

REGULAR and Reserve soldiers and officers in combat roles must now complete an urban warfare module as part of their individual training requirement (or ITR).

Combat support and combat service support units have until March 2024 to develop the in-house capability for delivering the package by sending personnel on the urban operations instructors' course (UOIC) at the Infantry Battle School.

Assurance of the urban basics package has to be undertaken by a UOIC-qualified trainer or a close quarters battle instructor.

The syllabus covers nine lessons (see opposite panel) that can be delivered alongside existing fieldcraft training activity.

Maj Shaun Clarke (Para), head of the Urban Centre within the Combat Manoeuvre Centre, explained that the new module "would ensure personnel deploy on operations with the right kit and training, and are well prepared to fight and win in an urban environment".

He added: "The newly-developed basics course is the first step in ensuring just that."

The move is a reflection of the British Army's sharper emphasis on fighting in built-up areas since chief of the general staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, delivered his Op Mobilise keynote address last year.

In it, the senior officer said:

"Deterring Russia means more of the Army ready more of the time, and ready for high-intensity war in Europe. So we will pick up the pace of combined arms training, and major on urban combat."

Maj Adrian Kingston (AGC (ETS)) from the Land Warfare Centre said: "As the world becomes increasingly more urbanised, and as modern conflicts from Fallujah, Mosul and through to the current war in Ukraine have demonstrated, urban warfare is almost certainly going to play a key part of any future war."

For more details on the change read **ABN 009/2023**. ■

Urban basics: training objectives

- ◆ Employ urban camouflage and concealment
- ◆ Give urban fire control and target indication
- ◆ Employ movement in the urban environment
- ◆ Demonstrate house clearing techniques
- ◆ Employ building defence
- ◆ Demonstrate positions of rifle carriage
- ◆ Employ doorway entry methods
- ◆ Clear stairs and employ ladders
- ◆ Explain the employment of NLAW (part 1 all arms, part 2 combat arms only)



“
It's almost certainly going to play a key part of any future war
”

SOLDIER

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SOLDIER – Magazine of the British Army
Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Walstead (Roche) Ltd.
Print contract managed by CDS.
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A taste of Army activity across the world

GLOBAL SITREP

1. GREENLAND SAILING SNAP STANDS OUT



THIS is the winning shot from the landscape category in the 2023 National Geographic Traveller Photography Awards, taken by Capt Sam Davies of the National Reserve Headquarters, Royal Artillery.

Snapped during Exercise Arctic Express in Greenland, the drone image shows a military yacht from the Joint Services Adventure Sail Training Centre navigating icebergs.

A former Regular in The Light Dragoons, Capt Davies is now a travel photographer and filmmaker in civvy life. He said he was shocked but proud to have his work recognised.

2. CANADA FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS

A TRANSATLANTIC partnership between British and Canadian service personnel is set to be strengthened this month during joint drills in Ontario.

Members of The Royal Regiment of Scotland's 4th Battalion will cross the pond to work with counterparts from The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa during Exercise Maple Resolve.

The visit follows a stint on Salisbury Plain for the Canadian outfit, when its soldiers embedded

with 5th Battalion's Balaklava Company on Exercise Wessex Storm (shown below).

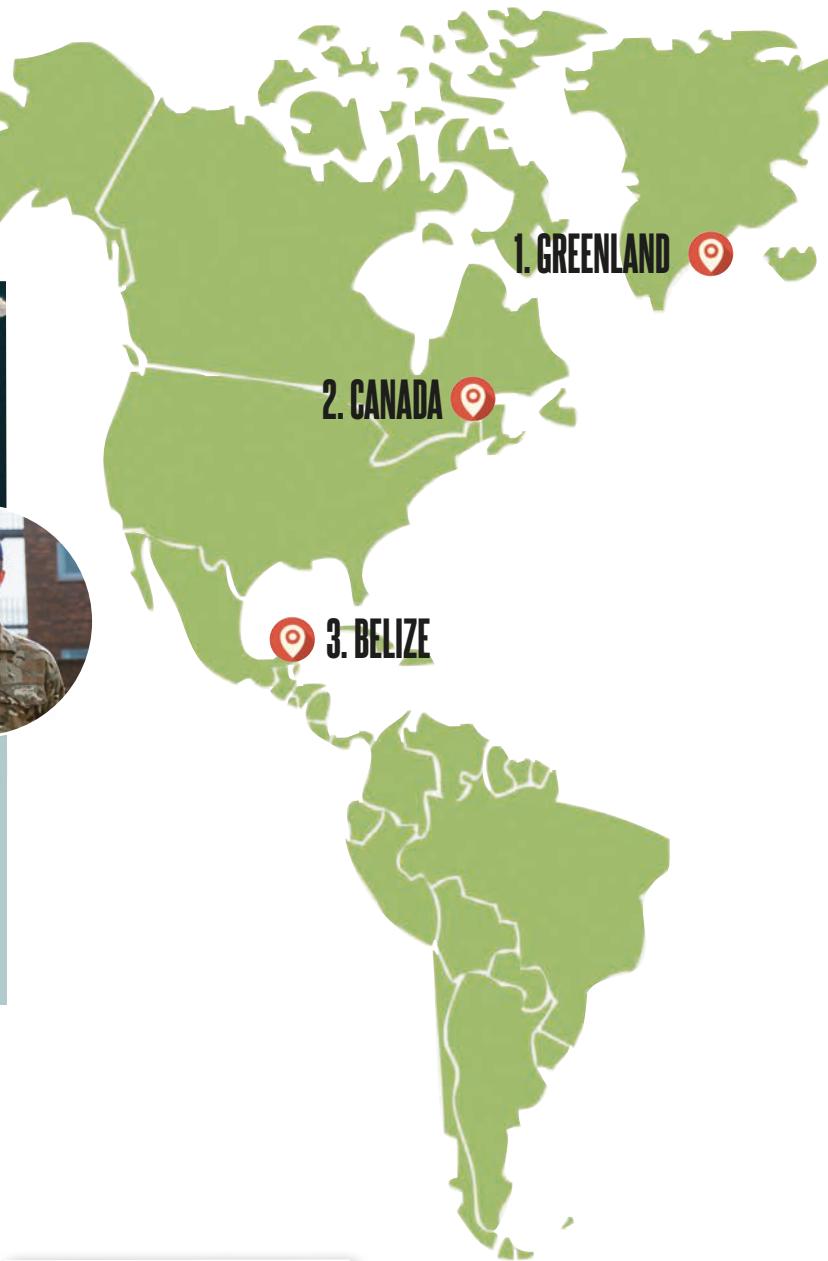
Discussing the Wiltshire-based package – which was part of the 4 Scots battlegroup's preparations for high readiness duties for Nato – Maj Robert Weir (Scots) said: "Working with the Canadians has been rewarding as the learning goes both ways.

"They're keen to be here and very enthusiastic. Morale is high and we are quietly confident against the enemy.

"With the Canadian and Scottish aggression I think we'll get through the exercise quite well."



Picture: Cpl Dayli Knott, Scots



3. BELIZE A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

MILITARY and civilian colleagues from British Army Training Support Unit Belize teamed up to take on a gruelling annual canoe race.

Eleven staff entered the 280km, four-day Belikin La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge, facing off against rapids, the heat and hundreds of fellow paddlers from around the world.

4. THE GAMBIA AFRICAN ASSIGNMENT

MEMBERS of The Royal Gibraltar Regiment swapped the Rock for West Africa to help upskill their Gambian counterparts.

Staged in Serrekunda – some 10km from the capital Banjul – the train-the-trainer package covered topics such as fieldcraft, first aid and the handling of captured persons.

Having learnt how to prep and deliver similar lessons, the 61 host nation personnel will now return to their units to instruct new recruits and boost their colleagues' preparedness for UN missions.

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Picture: British Gurkhas Nepal

7. NEPAL A GYM FIT FOR A KING

A NEW fitness centre thought to be the first military building named after King Charles III has been unveiled in Pokhara.

The gym replaced a previous hall and will be used by staff of British Gurkhas Nepal and their families, as well as recruits.

Built to withstand earthquakes, it will also serve as an emergency shelter in the event of a natural disaster – while its sustainable air source heat pumps will provide hot water with a low carbon footprint.

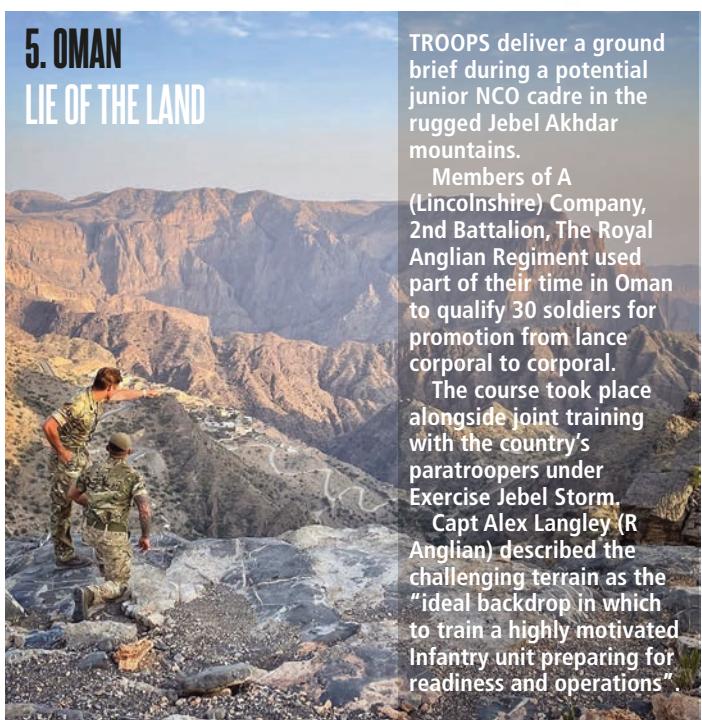
6. ESTONIA ROLE REHEARSAL

MEMBERS of B Company, 1st Battalion, Scots Guards are back on home soil and reflecting on lessons learnt on Op Cabrit.

Having been assigned as the Army's first anti-tank company since the Second World War in early 2022, the six-month deployment gave them the opportunity to hone their procedures while working alongside allies including the French (pictured right).

Capt Tom Gordon (SG) said they had used the mission to master a "multi-layered approach" informed by events in Ukraine and combining varied vehicles and weapons platforms in an extreme cold weather environment.

"The tour has been a resounding success, with the company establishing and proving modern anti-tank doctrine," he added. "Later this year the concept will be tested in a desert environment when the battalion deploys to Oman."



TROOPS deliver a ground brief during a potential junior NCO cadre in the rugged Jebel Akhdar mountains.

Members of A (Lincolnshire) Company, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment used part of their time in Oman to qualify 30 soldiers for promotion from lance corporal to corporal.

The course took place alongside joint training with the country's paratroopers under Exercise Jebel Storm.

Capt Alex Langley (R Anglian) described the challenging terrain as the "ideal backdrop in which to train a highly motivated Infantry unit preparing for readiness and operations".



Pictures: Sgt Vinnie Price, SG

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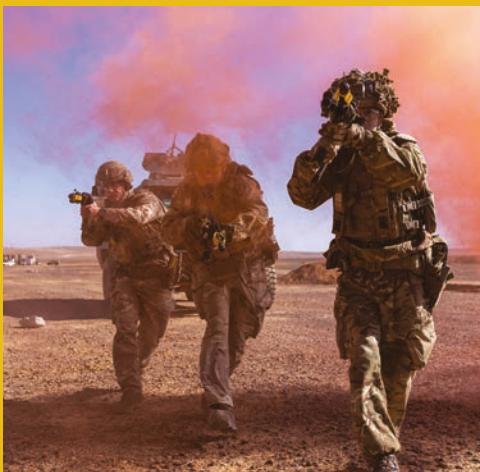
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JOB DONE IN JORDAN

■ SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment partnered with Jordanian allies at the Abu Salem urban training village as part of Exercise Olive Grove. Working alongside fellow light-role infantry, the Burma Company troops practised live-firing and anti-armour drills as well as night ops, while coping with the likes of sandstorms, rugged ground and temperature extremes. The British outfit recently took over duties as the Cyprus-based Regional Standby Battalion.



Pictures: Cpl Alexander Morris, RLC

'It's been a constant bugbear'

Wait for home repairs drags on for Service families

HOUSING maintenance tasks dating back more than a year are still going unresolved, according to at least one Service family.

Cpl Phil Pegram (RE) spoke to *Soldier* about his quarter in RAF Wyton, where he and his wife endured a string of issues with broken heating and mould.

While the pair were initially pleased with the standard of the property – their first military home as a married couple – problems began shortly after the birth of their second child, some 15 months ago.

"The boiler broke and we were given two portable heaters while they fixed it, which took about three weeks," explained the geographic technician.

"Something went wrong when they were working on the plumbing system and water flushed out across the ceiling, throughout the hallway and our bedroom, where the baby also sleeps – all of the plaster was damp and a radiator started leaking downstairs.

"Then mould started to grow on the walls and carpet."

The couple treated surfaces with anti-fungal spray and removed the carpet so it could air outside, but the mould would always return.

"It's been a constant bugbear," Cpl Pegram continued. "My daughter has had a persistent cough and we're never sure if it's just a normal infection or to do with the mould, so that has been stressful."

"Every time my son gets dressed he has to walk across wet carpet."

"There are a few other people on

camp with similar issues. We kept reporting it, but I think they decided there was no point doing anything until we move out."

With the NCO due to start a new posting, the family were preparing to vacate the property as this issue went to press.

Reflecting on their first insight into Army housing, he added: "For the most part it hasn't been too bad, when you consider value for money."

"And there does seem to have been a shift in how helpful the call centre staff are after the recent negative publicity – they are listening more."

"But for whatever reason they weren't able to rectify our problem. You just expect more from a large company with a fleet of service vehicles flying round the estate." ■

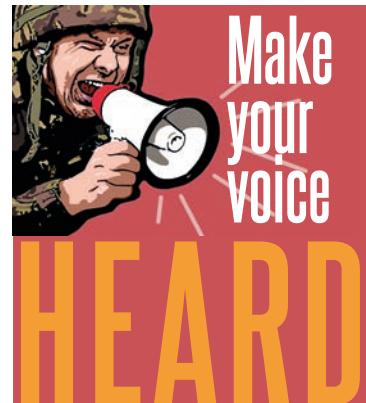
WE
ASK...

Why not use a self-help system, where families find their own repairer if contractors can't respond?

"The challenge is twofold – first, around the control we have over the quality of work that's done, and second, there would have to be a process for reimbursement. The first priority has absolutely got to be to get the main contractors to do the work in a timely fashion, but we are looking into alternative arrangements."

Air Commodore James Savage,
Head of Accommodation,
Defence Infrastructure Organisation

“
My daughter
has had a
persistent
cough
”



HEADACHES around housing and the cost of living mean there's never been a more important time to fill out the families' continuous attitude survey. That is the message from the team behind the annual assessment.

Speaking to *Soldier*, Army occupational psychologist Annabel Parkyn said: "People sometimes say there's no point filling these things out, that nothing changes."

But she explained how recent policies for wraparound childcare and Forces Help to Buy (*Soldier*, February) showed that survey results did make a difference.

"Nothing alters without soldiers' help and input," the expert continued. "And the more we hear about families' experiences, the more something can be done to improve them."

"It's a particularly important time for people to share these views."

"This is the main survey that policy makers refer to when it comes to Army family initiatives."

"And responses are anonymous – no one from the chain of command is able to read individual replies."

This year's Famcas has been sent to 9,500 Service personnel. It takes around 20-25 minutes to complete, and the deadline for submissions is May 9 or April 24 for the paper version.



IN NUMBERS



550

UNOCCUPIED quarters outside the wire that will be made available to house Afghan nationals whose previous work for UK Forces forced them to flee their country in 2021 after Nato's withdrawal (shown).

So far 70 Service family accommodation homes have been filled, but the figure is expected to rise.

In a letter to military families, chief of defence people, Vice Admiral Phil Hall, said personnel and their dependents would not be disadvantaged by the scheme, which could last up to five years.

"The intent is only to do this where there is surplus SFA taking account of the demand from entitled and eligible Service families," he wrote.

"Afghan families may move in from the UK bridging hotels or directly from their overseas location and both cohorts will have been subject to security checks."

The senior naval officer highlighted the debt owed by the UK to the Afghans concerned and praised the defence community for the "warm welcome" it had already extended.

To support Afghans relocating in your area visit gov.uk/help-afghanistan

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



BLISTERING EFFORT

A FOOTSORE Cyprus-based infantryman has been counting the cash after a punishing 154-mile tab in memory of his mum.

Cpl James Kirby (Lancs) hauled a 59lb pack on a nonstop 48-hour trek, during which he was joined by troops from other units on the island.

The distance represented how far the NCO had to travel from his

Catterick home to visit his mum, Denise, in hospital before she died, while the weight reflected her age.

"It was a hard tab but I kept thinking of my regimental motto 'difficulties be damned' so I was never going to give up," he said. Visit gofundme.com/march-for-denise-2

What lies over the horizon?



Picture: Cpl Alexander Morris, RIC

“
**We will fortify
our national
defences**
”

BOLSTERING ammunition stockpiles will be among the priorities for ministers as they carry out a top-down rethink of defence.

Politicians said increasing the number of rounds would be top of the list as they refreshed the *Integrated Review* – which shapes military policy – to meet emerging threats from the likes of Russia and China.

Armed with an £11 billion cash windfall from the spring budget, they said the latest probe would focus minds as the international picture changed – particularly in light of the Kremlin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Full details of how the money would be spent had not been released as this issue went to press, but several priority areas were identified, including modernisation of the UK's "nuclear enterprise" and more investment in new technology.

Meanwhile, Britain will lead discussions on more effective working across Nato at a summer summit.

Prime minister Rishi Sunak said the review would ensure the UK could "stand its ground" while working effectively with a range of partners.

"We will fortify our national defences, from economic to technology supply chains and intelligence expertise, to ensure that we are never again vulnerable to the actions of a hostile power," he said.

"By investing in our Armed Forces for the long-term, we will be ready for the challenges of today and the future."

The spending – which will be rolled out over five years – follows a recent £24 billion injection.

The budget also pledged some £33 million to help veterans with injuries and housing – a move welcomed by military charities. ■





Pictures: Graeme Main

SCIMITAR BOWS OUT

Long-serving vehicle to go this month ahead of controversial Ajax replacement

IT WAS set apart by a distinctive profile, saw action in foreign theatres and was the vehicle in which pop star James Blunt penned hit songs.

Now after five decades as a workhorse, the Scimitar has finally bowed out.

Having entered service back in 1971, the combat reconnaissance vehicle (tracked) has served a legion of soldiers from the Balkans to Afghanistan.

But the Army icon rolled into history at the end of last month with recce troops now using Warrior as a stopgap before the arrival of Ajax (see right).

Designated the FV-107 and named after the curved Arab sword, the Scimitar was designed with a Cold War backdrop in mind and as part of a family that included the Spartan troop carrier and Samaritan ambulance.

It proved impressive from the outset – with speed and agility matched by the potency of a 30mm Rarden cannon.

The vehicle has since been modified for actions ranging from warfighting to peacekeeping. The current 5.9-litre diesel engine delivers a 50mph top speed while armour packs can offer sound protection.

Troops who served with the platform said they would fondly remember a robust asset, and would be sorry to see it depart.

Retired major Alex Owen, who commissioned into The Blues and Royals, said the vehicle proved a formidable force, even during its later years on Op Herrick.

"It was, without doubt, the best long-barrelled weapon we had in Helmand," the former officer, now a director of the Household Cavalry Museum (pictured right), told *Soldier*.

"I was a lieutenant then and my troops used it to great effect – the optics were amazing, while you could set it up anywhere."

"However, you'd end up getting to know those with you quite well because space was tight – you had to learn to live in that environment."

Owen added he had been particularly impressed by Scimitar's versatility on missions.

"I heard it had been invented for Malaya but it went on through the years, from the first Gulf War to the Balkans and Afghanistan," the ex-Serviceman concluded.

"It was an extraordinary vehicle that was in service for a long time." ■

It was an extraordinary vehicle



WORKHORSE: THE SCIMITAR CVR(T)

Armament: 30mm Rarden cannon; co-axial 7.62mm GPMG

Crew: 3



Length: 4.90m

Width: 2.24m

Height: 2.10m

Powerplant: Cummins BTA 5.9 diesel engine producing 190hp

Max speed: 50mph



WOMEN UNITE

THE voices of female personnel are a powerful agent of change, delegates at the Army Servicewomen's Network conference heard.

Hundreds of troops gathered at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for the event (shown) – the first for three years due to the pandemic.

As well as panel discussions and an address from the chief of the general staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, the audience was briefed on policy updates such as zero-tolerance towards unacceptable sexual behaviours – many of which were brought about after official reports highlighted widespread harassment and ill-fitting kit.

Commander Field Army and Service gender champion Lt Gen Sir Ralph Wooddisse said: "Today has shone a light on some of the things that have been done in support of women, but most importantly what needs to be done still."

"I'm not so naive to think that the Army is in any way perfect, but there is a determination in ways that I have not seen before at the senior end to make good those wrongs."

Final word – page 74



AJAX CRAWLS ON

THE Army's next generation of recce vehicles are set to enter service in two years after a revised timetable was confirmed by defence chiefs.

The first crews are now expected to be deployable with Ajax between July and December 2025, with full capability reached four years later.

The new schedule was drawn up after issues with noise and vibration were identified. Trials at Bovington Camp are now said to be progressing well.

Some 589 vehicles are being built by US firm General Dynamics, with most destined for the combat teams of 1st Deep Reconnaissance Strike Brigade and 12th and 20th Armoured Brigade.



SPACE APLENTY

Training areas are busy, but there is still enough capacity to meet everyone's requirements...

COMMANDERS should not be discouraged from requesting exercise slots on the training estate despite it being a busy time for the Army, it has been stressed.

Senior officers say all applications will continue to be determined in order of priority – with units earmarked for deployment at the top of the list.

And while accepting that some capacity is being taken up by the Op Interflex package for Ukrainian personnel, these courses are only occupying “a small footprint” that is not significantly affecting schedules.

The clarification was made after this magazine received reports of exercise slots being at a premium on Salisbury Plain.

Lt Col Vance Worsley (RA), commandant and senior training safety boss on the training area, said that he did not believe there was any major bottleneck.

But he stressed the Army was currently busy, and that units heading on operations always had first refusal.

The commandant added: “JSP 907 provides the selection criteria for all training across the defence estate and allows us to plan accordingly.

“Obviously, those units being readied for deployment are given the highest priority.

“Each week my colleagues and I also hold deconfliction meetings – these are essential as the plain can be an extremely busy place, which is not only used by troops but assets including armour, artillery and aircraft.”

Allocated units could also share exercise areas if it was appropriate and safe to do so, working out between themselves how to divide up space, Lt Col Worsley added.

He continued: “There is plenty of room for us to continue with the required training programme.”



‘Their will to learn is off the scale’

An AS90 and the Royal School of Artillery's turret trainer, which is helping to upskill Ukrainian troops on the gun

“Artillery is making an impact”



UKRAINIAN gunners were live firing on Salisbury Plain as this issue went to press as plans to send British AS90s to the front line of the fight against Russian aggression moved a step closer.

The serials marked the conclusion of the second three-week training package delivered by the Royal School of Artillery, meaning that 150 Ukrainian personnel now have the skills required to use the asset in combat on home soil.

With soldiers from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers also completing maintenance work on the guns, the AS90s could arrive in country and start firing later this month.

The challenge of training the Ukrainians was welcomed by the Larkhill-based establishment, with instructors compiling an intensive programme that started with basic familiarisation on the platform and concluded with crews conducting live-fire missions of their own.

“They are getting the relevant information they need, and having interpreters makes the job easier,” instructor Sgt Daisy Burnfield, of 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery told *Soldier*.

“We have built a good relationship with them, and they understand the technical information we are trying to get across.

“We have had all experience levels on the courses. Some have fired before, while others are new to the military.

“However, their will to learn more is off the scale and they ask us thousands of questions.”

19 Regt has provided 12 AS90s to Ukraine and the unit is now waiting on the Archer system as an interim replacement after the UK struck a deal with Sweden.

In the meantime, Sgt Burnfield believes the Army’s generosity can make a difference on the battlefield.

“AS90 is another heavy artillery asset for them to use; artillery is making an impact in this war and this platform will certainly add to that,” she explained.

“We are proud and privileged to be part of this. If it is the last time we see the AS90 it will be a nice bookend to my career on the platform.

“We are delivering the best training we can on a piece of kit I’m fond of.” ■

● **The gift of guns, pages 32-35**

125,000

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Ruling the rubble

Light cavalry troops upskill in former Polish ammo compound

SOLDIERS serving on Op Cabrit have been enhancing their dismounted urban combat skills on a joint exercise with Polish and American forces.

Around 70 members of The Royal Lancers used a military-owned disused ammunition dump at Dolna in Poland to create realistic scenarios that, for many, marked a career-first.

"I haven't done anything like this before and I know that a lot of the younger lads haven't either," said Tpr Tyler Harris (RL).

"It's been great working alongside the Americans in particular and learning how they do things."

Over a two-week period, the skills of D Squadron were progressively developed through section and company-level assaults, with some serials featuring opfor and Simmunition.

"The marker round training system was really good to use," lead instructor Capt Ben Politowski (SNIY) told *Soldier*.

"The realism and feedback were superb, and the kit makes troops more conscious of where their barrel is pointing as it actually fires something."

"Tes is good for training in general, but for close quarters stuff this adds more value in my opinion."

The Reservist officer, who completed the urban operations instructors' course at Brecon prior to deploying for the six-month tour, believes the environment also enhanced the exercise's realism.

"This area lends itself very well to urban training," he said. "It's not a sanitised area like Copehill Down; there's rubble, furniture, barricades and equipment lying all around."

While not part of their core role, foot-based urban training is now seen as vital for all combat arms, including mounted units (see page 7).



"The British Army is focusing more on these skills, and that is at all levels and regardless of cap badge," said Capt Politowski, who acts as the liaison officer to the US-led enhanced forward presence battlegroup.

"Observing conflicts over the past 20 years or so has taught us that even as reconnaissance soldiers we need to be comfortable operating in urban areas."

"Fighting the main battle is still an infantry job in the main, but we need to be able to operate on the fringes, providing targeting information, assisting with the isolate and break-in phases of an urban assault or setting up command posts and other supporting measures."

"With the ITR now including an urban module this package has been very timely and will prepare our deployed personnel for that well." ■

AVIATION CASH CALL

ARMY Air Corps aircrews in full-time Regular service have become eligible for a new series of retention payments from this month.

The financial incentive has been introduced following a remuneration review last year, which concluded that aircrew strength across all three Services needed bolstering.

The previous £70,000 retention payment with a six-year return of service ceased on March 31 as part of the move to the new scheme, which ultimately rewards longer stints of duty.

The report said effective retention of military aircrew remained a critical factor in achieving a long-term sustainable workforce due to the lead times needed to grow qualified and experienced personnel.

For details of the new payments read **2023DIN01-016**.

SUPPORT FOR KIDS OVERSEAS

AN MoD "virtual school" has been set up to manage the welfare and education of children accompanying their parents on assignments abroad.

It will include those educated at home but exclude individuals attending Defence Children Services schools, who already get support.

At any one time there are around 4,000 youngsters accompanying their MoD parents on overseas assignments in some 150 locations around the world.

Children moving overseas are automatically enrolled in the virtual school when a family deploys and the system monitors their journey from the UK and back, to mitigate the risk of kids losing out on education.

The school also acts as a contact point for parents who would like advice and support on their children's education.

Read **2023DIN01-012** for details.



Picture: Shutterstock

I haven't done anything like this before

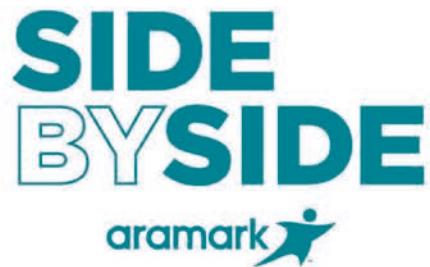
SCANNING FOR SPINELINES?

THE competition to try and decipher clues printed on the spine of *Soldier* – and win a tasty prize in the process – is no more from this month.

Instead, our team will be making sure that the prizes given away in our *How Observant Are You?* challenge are top notch.

Turn to page 55 to find out how to enter this month's draw. But be warned, you will need to bring your A game in observation skills...

Soldier HQ



Our amazing Culinary Team led by Kev Wicks, Head of Culinary, worked in partnership with our Nepalese colleagues and chefs to produce a variety of authentic, great tasting Ghurkha-inspired dishes.

They have been tested and launched under the Kukri Market Counter concept and the response has been excellent. This is just a snapshot of the creativity that Side By Side harnesses to continue to innovate and move together as one.



Aramark are proud to be nominated as Finalists for the Public Sector Catering Awards for the Marketing and Health and Wellbeing Awards.

We are hoping to add to the Green Apple Award we won this year working in partnership with Greenzone.



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We Move Together As One



Ground view

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

THE Queen's Royal Hussars battlegroup is settling into its Estonia tour while, closer to home, soldiers are preparing for the coronation of our new King.

Training of Ukrainian personnel is also continuing under Op Interflex, and it has been great to see those involved in the delivery of this.

With all that has been happening, our day of reflection as part of Op Teamwork a few weeks ago arguably took on even more importance.

It was valuable to take stock and think about the areas in which we could improve, personally and as an Army.

I'm pleased – from all I saw during the day – with the way we are working to uphold our values and standards.

But from the reports I have been hearing while out and about, a key area in which we could continue to improve is maintaining our professional competencies.

I've said this before, but I'm going to flag it again: the chief of the general staff has set out an expectation that **we must be deployment-ready**.

There are no exceptions here – everyone from junior soldiers to senior officers must play

their part.

In short, this means all of us need to be fully prepared for any eventuality – keeping up fitness standards, making sure our kit is packed correctly and staying on top of our admin are among the vital tasks.

I also want everyone to read a document by the Land Warfare Centre that can be found on Defence Gateway called *Facing the Threat – the Top 12 Lessons from Ukraine*.

It sets out some of the latest thinking on the conflict.

All this is core soldiering, but we need to ensure we have the basics absolutely right.

We might not always be happy about the availability of exercise areas or the delivery timelines for next-generation armoured vehicles, but it is important we focus on what we can control and tick these things off.

And this is not something we are doing consistently

Clearly our NCOs have a hugely important part to play here – they need to ensure troops are up to speed and can move quickly should the need ever arise.

Section commanders in particular, please take note.

We cannot afford to be caught out.

It is important we focus on what we can control

Top of the class



Picture: Graeme Main

IT'S great to see the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst maintaining high standards in selecting those to train our next generation of leaders.

Previously known as "the cadre", its instructor aptitude course has been refined, and applications from across the trades are encouraged.

Crucially, the aim over four weeks is now to develop senior NCOs as

well as select them – while giving those who are not chosen advice on other career pathways.

I witnessed the first course and it was impressive – there were individuals from eight different cap badges with 26 out of the 48 candidates picked.

Making sure we harness the best talent to bring on new officer cadets and recruits is key for the future of the Army.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q How is your training for the Cateran Yomp challenge going?

A More PT would be helpful – I'll take any offers from units!

WE SUSTAIN

■ WITH eyes on the training of Ukrainian troops, it's easy to overlook the personnel responsible for ensuring visiting soldiers are in the right place, at the right time and issued with the right kit.



This is an enormous task, given the thousands of personnel who are coming across from Eastern Europe, and it is being very professionally handled by the Royal Logistic Corps.

Currently led by 7 Regiment, RLC these teams are ensuring that visitors are collected on landing in the UK, and moved to the relevant locations.

They are also sourcing the equipment the fighters need to take back with them – including helmets and body armour.

This op would not be possible without their efforts.





THE BIG PICTURE

Bardufoss, Norway

Snowy stealth

SNIPERS from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment move across open ground during Exercise Joint Viking. The military drill is staged every two years by the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) to help train the host nation's armed forces over land, sea, and air. This year around 11,800 personnel from the ten member states and the US Marine Corps took part. The package presented the ideal opportunity for soldiers and officers to hone their skills in bitter winter conditions, as well as enhancing interoperability and unit readiness.

Picture: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

NEED TO KNOW

Secrets of the

Former soldier learns the art of traditional Far-Eastern combat

► WHEN ex-infanteer Matthew Okuhara began learning Japanese, he could not have foreseen how the hobby would result in him enlisting with a new group of warriors.

Serving as a police officer with the Civil Nuclear Constabulary after a four-year spell as a soldier in The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, he had turned to language books as a way of passing time during sedentary night shifts.

But when he met a young woman from the land of the rising sun – and saw an opportunity to put his new skills to the test – the discipline took on a new dimension.

“I thought that I’d check my speaking skills and see if I could arrange a date,” he said with a smile. “She was in the UK on an agriculture course and we had different lives – but we ended up getting married so I must have been passable.”

Now – having quit Great Britain for Japan five years ago – the 38-year-old’s life has taken a further twist after joining a samurai heritage group.

Clad in traditional armour, the Matsumoto Castle Gun Corps demonstrate firearms skills and drills that once made the warriors feared fighters in feudal times. *Soldier* asked Okuhara all about it...

1 Why did you choose to join the group?

I had always enjoyed martial arts and obviously they have a very strong presence here with disciplines such as karate, but this group is unusual because of the weaponry – many do not know that the samurai carried guns. With bilingual skills and the fact that I once carried the SA80 and G36 rifles professionally, I wanted to find out more.

2 What was the enlistment process like?

There was a formal interview and it was agreed that I would help with providing narration in English for visiting tourists

as well as taking part in displays. The group do demonstrations of skill at arms for up to 1,200 members of the public in two seasons in Matsumoto during the spring and autumn. As this is a mountain community the summers are hot while winters can be extremely cold.

3 How demanding are the drills?

We use all kinds of antique weaponry from pistols to a slow-firing 30mm cannon, so you need to practise. It can take a new gunner about 45 seconds to fire their gun and this time needs to be cut to half-a-minute or so. But the aim with the martial art is to perform the manoeuvres correctly rather than quickly.

Samurai

4 Has your Army experience helped you?

Absolutely – I was wet behind the ears when I first joined the Infantry but the experience made me grow up quickly, particularly when on ops in Iraq on Telic 4. You take all that experience with you when you leave.

5 Do you miss the UK?

At the moment, no – I'm enjoying life here and have no plans to return to Britain yet. Japan is a great place and there are a lot of opportunities here. I have made friends, particularly with a couple of Japanese military personnel.



A military nobility, they were an officer caste who held a senior position in Japanese society from the 12th to 19th centuries. They enjoyed high prestige and some special privileges. The silhouette of their distinctive armour has become iconic – and recognisable through the likes of modern films and video games

KNOW YOUR SAMURAI FIREARMS

Hojutsu: The way of the gun

Samuraizutsu: Exclusive gun for samurai

Tanzutsu: Matchlock pistol

Bajouzutsu: Carbine

Banzutsu: Infantry gun

Zamazutsu: Wall gun

Weaponry vocabulary

Tsutsu: Barrel

Dai: Stock

Hizara: Flash pan

Meate: Sight

Hikigane: Trigger

Profile

MATTHEW OKUHARA

Age: 38

Enlisted with: The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment

Military service: 2002-06, leaving at the rank of private

Operational experience: Telic 4

Other uniformed service: Firearms officer, Civil Nuclear Constabulary 2012-16; Combined Cadet Force instructor

soldiermagazine.co.uk APRIL 2023 23

Woodland wellness

How 'forest bathing' could help you find your zen

► THE Japanese believe that spending time among trees is so beneficial they even have a name for it – *shinrin-yoku*.

Roughly translated as "forest bathing", it involves completely immersing yourself in nature and the moment – a tactic that ex-Royal Marine Nick Goldsmith uses when he needs to unplug from life.

His book, *Rewild Your Mind*, explores how to harness the great outdoors to boost mental wellbeing – and as he explains here, woodland is a good place to start...

Less stress

Scientists have found that spending time in a forest decreases levels of the stress hormone cortisol, as well as lowering heart rate and blood pressure. Being in a soothing, non-threatening environment – amongst the trees, birdsong, earthy smells and dappled light – keeps you from entering fight-or-flight mode. For me, it is a safe place where I am comfortable pressing pause.

Better immune system

Another benefit is that your body will be absorbing the organic compounds released by trees and plants – known as phytocides. When we breathe in these antibacterial and antifungal chemicals in the air, our body increases the production of so-called "killer T-cells", which fight viruses and cancerous cells.

Mental clarity

Lying in a hammock allows my brain to start working on things that it wouldn't otherwise get a chance to process. In the modern world, we're constantly stimulated and there's always something to think about, but in nature, everything feels simple again and that gives you the mental capacity to delve into other issues. In a vibrant, majestic forest you can find the clarity and space to see the bigger picture, rather than getting bogged down in the nitty-gritty of your busy life.

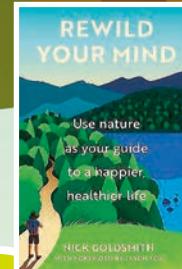
How to forest bathe

1 Find your tree – whether lying in a hammock in the woods or sitting at the base of a tree in a city park, you can practise forest bathing anywhere.

2 Engage all your senses – listen to a stream or the birdsong; take in the smells and notice how they change; look at the way the light is shining through the branches.

3 Free your mind – don't start your forest bathing with an agenda. If you find that hard, calmly tell yourself: "I have nowhere else to be. Nothing else is important in this moment. I'm just going to allow myself to be."

4 Prevention is always better than cure – you don't have to do it for a set amount of time; half an hour two or three times a week, or even just once a month, will enhance your wellbeing.



Information taken from *Rewild Your Mind* by Nick Goldsmith, out now in hardback



Digital drills

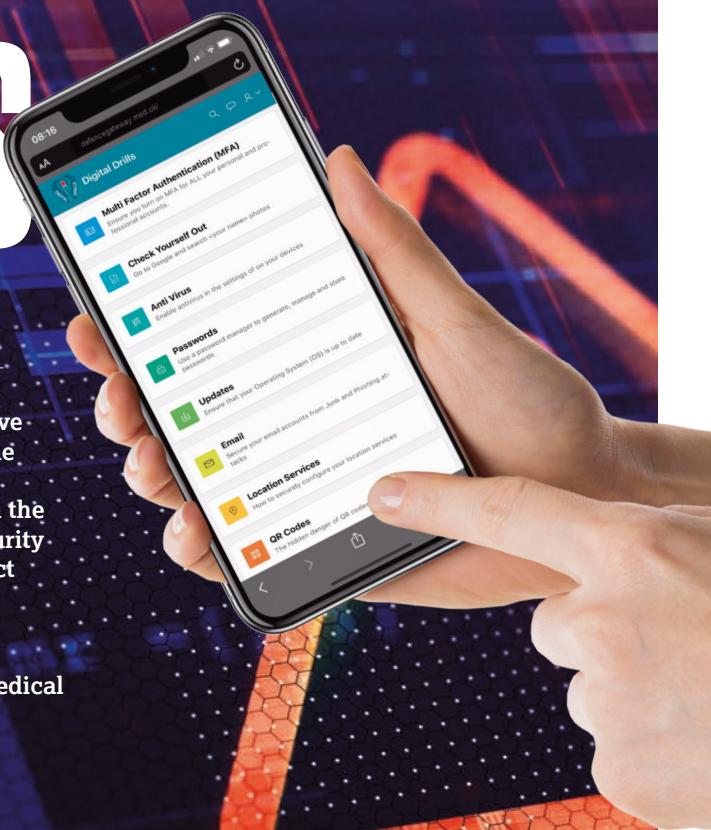
New app helps tackle cyber slip-ups

► WHETHER it's clicking on a dodgy link, accidentally forwarding sensitive material or falling victim to hackers, there are any number of ways to come unstuck online. But how best to respond isn't always obvious.

Enter the Army's new app – *Digital Drills*. Developed by Reservists from the Specialist Group Information Services in tandem with the Cyber and Security Branch at Army HQ, the tool provides advice on how personnel can protect themselves as well as step-by-step guides on what to do in the event of a potential breach.

Easy to navigate and accessible via smartphone, the trouble-shooting section mimics the flow chart troops would use to treat colleagues in a medical emergency – but for incidents such as lost or stolen devices, suspicious messages or compromised login details instead.

Design team lead, Lt Col Simon Hunt (R Signals), explains more...



Drill two: Suspicious message

Was the message received on an issued (work) or personal device?

↓ Issued ↓ Personal

How was the message sent?

↓ Email ↓ Social media ↓ SMS ↓ Other

Did you click on the link or open an attachment?

↓ Yes ↓ No

You must report the incident immediately



“

The app looks very similar to the battle casualty drills aide memoire, with the same coloured boxes, so the format should feel quite familiar.

Let's say you think you've been hacked, you click on that drill and it will ask you a series of questions – and once you've gone through them you will get a red box with the action you need to take, for example contacting your bank if it's your personal account that's affected. Sometimes you don't know if an incident is serious or who to report it to. Working your way through the app will give you the answer.



Digital Drills will be available to anyone with a Defence Gateway account from April 20, including all military and civilian personnel as well as their families

Lt Col Simon Hunt, R Signals

”

'I treated it like any

Veteran recalls journey from homelessness to heading up a property empire



FWithin a short time of leaving, things had gone downhill. I was living in my van with no money, sleeping in an Army doss bag, warming tinned food on a camping stove and freezing my tits off.

I used to knock on strangers' doors and tell them I was an ex-soldier and ask if I could use their shower.

Only once was I turned down – the lady at the door took my phone number and when her husband got home, she called me and told me to come over.

They washed all my clothes and cooked for me, then gave me pretty much all the cans they had in their kitchen cupboards.

But something I learnt in the Army was that feeling sorry for yourself was never an option. So I set out a plan.

► **WITNESSING** a mortar attack in Iraq sparked an unusual change in direction for Nicholas Orton (ex-RAMC).

Fascinated by the chemistry of the explosion, he decided to study for a physics degree, but the path to academia would not be a smooth one.

Having left the Army in 2011 and later gone through a divorce, he found himself sleeping in his van (shown below) and relying on the kindness of strangers...

I pretended I was on exercise – I treated it like any other mission. I wrote down four objectives in a text book: getting my physics degree, more money than I need, a house that felt like home and a job I enjoyed enough to do for free.

Everything from that point was simple, really.

Every day I just had to take one step towards one of these things. It did not have to be a big one, but it had to be in a forward direction and if I fell, I could not feel bad for myself – I had to get back up and start tabbing forwards again.

I hadn't wanted to ask family for help but after a few months I reached out to my stepfather and he loaned me the money to do an offshore medic course,

which enabled me to get a job in security.

As a skinny, well-spoken, slightly camp southerner I wasn't an obvious fit as a bodyguard in Iraq, but I went from earning nothing and eating canned beans from Lidl to having a salary almost double that of my old CO overnight and for the first time in my life I had real money.

I'd also joined the Open University, which allowed me to study in my free time. The fact that five years later, this very dyslexic former lance corporal was awarded a degree in physics and mathematics still brings a smile to my face today.

Buying a house was easy with my new income. I finally felt safe – I was no longer falling asleep every night not knowing if someone was going to break through the window of my



other mission'



On the security circuit,
Ukraine, 2015

van. Most of my salary – which was tax free – I put aside and with favourable borrowing rates at the time I was able to invest in more real estate.

I've now remarried and, together with my wife, I own properties all over Germany, which is where I spent most of my Army career.

They earn us a passive income and I can now be more selective about the work I do.

The reason I want to share my story is because of a guy I used to serve with. We had a similar leaving experience and were unprepared for civvy street, both ending up homeless. However, he actually killed himself about nine months ago.

That gave me the kick in the arse to use the privileged position I'm in now to prevent that happening to anyone else. I hope people can learn from my journey – both the mistakes and the successes.



Quickfire tips

1 Write down your goals at the back of a blank notepad, then work backwards to where you are now, filling the pages with everything you need to do to achieve your objective. Do one thing every day that gets you closer to it.

2 Take a day off from work where you are free from all distractions and use it to think about where you want to be in 20 years' time. Don't be afraid to dream big.

3 I have never thought that there is anything that I could not achieve if I worked hard enough. That was a gift the Army gave me – if you have it too I strongly suggest you keep it and don't let anyone take it from you. It's your most important tool.

4 Don't ignore LinkedIn – it's one of the first things recruiters look at. For example, it was crucial for securing my first security gig in Ukraine. If

anyone reading this wants help creating a profile I'm happy for them to contact me on nicholasortonwork@gmail.com

5 The old Army saying about preparation preventing poor performance is true. While you're serving make sure you gain the qualifications you'll need for the civvy job you want and find out how long it will take to get them. An OU degree for instance will take about six years if you're also working full time.

6 Spend every penny of your learning credits and don't feel bad about taking time away from your role to do as many courses as possible.

7 I was told at the start of basic training that no one who joins the Army will ever be rich. That was 100 per cent in my head, but there are plenty of examples of people who have done that so don't let that inner feeling stop you reaching your goals.

Op Interflex
sees 10,000
Ukrainian
recruits
trained
– with a
further
20,000 to
follow by
the end of
the year

MILESTONE MOMENT

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Graeme Main





UKRAINIAN recruits emerge from the tree line and stealthily make their way behind an abandoned farm building, before going on to seek cover from a stone wall.

Once set, they fix the sights of their NLAW anti-tank weapons on the white fleet vehicle posing as an armoured adversary, electronic sensors indicating a virtual hit or miss.

With the serial complete, they reset and go again.

The drills are delivered at pace, and for good reason.

Army instructors, together with counterparts from partnering nations including Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, have just five weeks to deliver the basic infantry combat course – of which this test is part – that gives the Ukrainian personnel the military fundamentals needed to defend their homeland from Russian invaders.

The latest intake represents a significant milestone in the UK-led training mission – known as Op Interflex – as, once successfully complete, the 10,000th recruit will have passed through the pipeline since it opened in June 2022.

And with a further 20,000 personnel due to follow suit by the end of this year, the tempo is not going to drop any time soon as Great Britain remains firmly committed to the cause.

Sites across the Army's training estate are supporting the effort, with *Soldier* witnessing the work first-hand at facilities in the north of England, where The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment are at the forefront of delivery.

Fighting in urban environment drills are followed by a swift relocation to a wood block, where the NLAW comes into play, and our observations offer a snapshot of the variety covered in the intensive course.

Medical, counter-IED and weapons training are also included, along with live firing and tactical field exercises.

Instructors welcome and teach recruits with vastly differing experience levels.

One of those is Felix, a 35-year-old from the city of Zhytomyr – a major transport hub to the west of Kyiv.

Once Russia invaded in February last year, he joined forces with fellow businessmen to send kit and equipment to those at the sharp end of the defensive effort. He then decided to go a step further by enlisting as a soldier.

"It was important to get supplies to the front line and we sent everything from vehicles to water and food," he said, via an interpreter. "We also created a heating system as the weather at that time of year is not so warm."

"The enemy is in our homeland, killing and raping our people. They have destroyed our houses and homes and I thought 'why wait until they come to my home?'. So I decided to fight the invasion in other territories and protect those who are there."

Felix believes the training offered on UK soil will stand him and his colleagues in good stead for the challenges to come and said morale in the group was high.

"The tactical medical training is so important," he continued. "On the front line it is impossible to know what will happen even in the next couple of minutes because the artillery and shelling is so intense."

"The multinational programme is perfect. It is nice to learn the tactics and techniques of the participating nations. There are a lot of different methods, and we can take the best from each one."

"We have also had a lot of support in terms of supplies, »

» and, thankfully, we have as many blank rounds and tourniquets as we need.

"That is very important for those who have no previous experience – it means we are well trained.

"The instructors have given us a lot of time and it is only when a lesson is learnt that we move on.

"I, and my brothers and sisters in combat, want to liberate our lands and defend them and we will be better prepared thanks to our time here."

Among those involved in mentoring the Ukrainians during their brief stay in the country is Cpl Shaun Carter (PWRR).

He has been delivering training in basic infantry soldiering and trench and urban warfare, as well as running battlefield casualty drills, and said the recruits arrive with determination and an enthusiasm to learn – regardless of previous experience.

"It is inspiring to be here," he added. "From where they have come from to where they are going, five weeks is not a long time, but they take everything on board so quickly. Their general demeanour is so impressive.

"It is nice to be teaching people who want to learn – you tell them to do something and they are there straight away. There is not a lot of opportunity to rest, but when we do they are always asking questions.

"The limited window is difficult, but they are so open to learning quickly and that makes our job easier."

Cpl Carter was not surprised to see the landmark of 10,000 recruits reached given the numbers involved in the programme and said he was excited to be part of the Op Interflex effort.

"It is the first time in my career where I have been able to contribute to the wider picture," he explained.

"We were in Kenya when Russia first invaded and have followed the conflict closely since. When we were told we would be able to provide help it was something everyone was looking forward to.

"It has been a steep learning curve, but I have adapted well."

While teaching those who have left their lives as civilians to fight on the front line has been the primary focus, the sharing of knowledge has been a two-way process.

The visiting contingent included battle-hardened Ukrainian soldiers, who arrived in the UK on the back of direct and brutal contacts with their Russian enemy, and they were able to offer an insight into the situation in their homeland.

Cpl Carter continued: "I have learnt lots from the Ukrainians – they have come here with their own experiences from the war.

"Two of the section commanders come from an anti-tank role and have destroyed Russian armour.

"One of them took out a T72 but a second tank came round the corner and engaged the building he was in. He was medevacked out and now has a scar on his face from a wall falling on him. So they are almost using this as R&R.

"I'm part of the anti-tank platoon, so I have taken a lot from them."

With training on the Challenger 2 also now in full swing, and an ambitious target set for this year's infantry courses, there is no sign of the UK's support to Ukraine wavering any time soon.

And with the war recently reaching its first anniversary, it is the knowledge and expertise being passed on by British troops that continues to help the country's brave front-line volunteers in their fight to repel Russia's illegal and ruthless invasion. ■

Scandinavian soundbites



WHILE the UK is hosting and leading the training programme on Op Interflex, it is a truly multinational affair.

Nine other countries are supporting the effort and here personnel from the Swedish and Norwegian Armed Forces, whose full names cannot be used for security reasons, talk about their experiences of working with Ukrainian recruits on foreign soil...



Capt Rasmus

Captain in the Swedish Army – OC of Tenth Company

Tell us about the training you are offering:

We are preparing them for most of the things they will encounter in Ukraine and to make them the best soldiers possible. There is a set programme delivered by the British and we put Swedish eyes on that.

What is the primary focus?

The most important thing is to make sure they understand what is expected of them as soldiers. We do things like medical and urban training. But we don't just concentrate on these alone, we pull it all together in a scenario where they are tested in everything they have learnt. They then go from being civilians to soldiers who can handle the situations they may encounter in Ukraine.

What background do the troops come from?

Some have previous military experience or have been in areas where there is war, doing their part and helping out.

Others have no experience at all and are volunteers – it is a wide range. The experienced guys can help us with the training and



Cpl Shaun Carter, PWRR

make their fellow recruits better. It is good to have that mix.

Why is it important that Sweden supports this effort?

There is a war in Europe and Ukraine is on our doorstep. It is a concern for everyone, and it is extremely important that we are here to provide the best training we can. We have learnt a lot from the other nations we are working with, and we shared our experience to make the best training possible. We all know what the goal is and, while we have different mindsets, we agree on what the recruits are supposed to look like when they are ready.

How is this training different to what you deliver in Sweden?

We have conscripts back home and the training we do with them is very similar. We do the same thing here but make it more efficient. We take away the parts that are not so important and focus on the prime training, showing them the right way to do things.

What are your thoughts on the milestone of 10,000 recruits being trained?

It is fantastic that we have reached this number in such a short amount of time and hopefully we can at least double that. It is efficient training that is much needed, and we are extremely proud to be part of this. Work-wise, this is the most important thing I can be doing.



**LCpl
Mikkelrev**
Norwegian Armed
Forces' Rype
Company

The 36-year-old has served since 2005 and has trained recruits in his home country for the past 12 years.

Tell us about the training you are offering:

This is different because back home we are training personnel for something

we hope will never happen to us. These guys are going to war, so it is very serious. We have been teaching them basic military skills such as urban and trench warfare, as well as delivering medical training. It is only five weeks, which means it is hectic, and what they are getting usually takes a few months, or even years. It is night and day; we are not skipping corners but making it more compact.

How are the Ukrainian troops performing?

They are very eager and so quick – they want to learn everything. I think the situation sharpens their focus; they know everything we teach them will be of use. They also like competing so we try to make the training a competition, which ensures they do their best.

Why is it important for Norway to support this effort?

For us, it is humbling to be involved. We are a small nation with a border with Russia. We have been training to face the Russians since the Cold War and if what we are doing here can combat that, then that's great.



**Instructor
Gjermund**
Norwegian Armed
Forces' Rype
Company

Previously served in the army's lead infantry unit – the Telemark Battalion – before leaving seven years ago. Was living and working in the United States when he made the decision to return home and enlist once again, with the specific aim of training Ukrainian troops.

Why return to a career in uniform?

When the war broke out, I wanted to find a way to assist. The Norwegian government announced they wanted instructors, and a lot of current and former soldiers came forward. I wanted to commit myself to this and felt it was the most important thing I could do with my life. It took a few weeks until it felt

like I was fully back in, but everything I have been teaching here I have done myself hundreds of times before, so it all came back to me eventually.

Describe the training you are offering.

The programme is intense – we are training for long hours every day and the Ukrainians are extremely focused. Like us, they know how to have a good time in the breaks. We share a laugh and enjoy the training – they are super grateful to be here.

How have the Ukrainians performed?

They train very hard, and I am confident they can go back to Ukraine and make a difference. They learn so fast and I'm surprised by how skilful they have become in the short time we have had them. The facilities here are great and there are a lot of different ranges. The urban village is particularly good and is unlike anything we have in Norway.

Why is Norway supporting this effort?

It is important we take a stance and show what side we are on. In my first year in the military I was stationed close to the Russian border, and we were training with that in mind. To have 10,000 recruits trained is a huge number.



THE GIFT OF GUNS

Royal Artillery personnel ready AS90, and its Ukrainian operators, for front-line action



Sgt Daisy Burnfield (RA), instructor from 19 Regt RA

IN MID-JANUARY the defence secretary announced the most significant package of combat support to Ukraine to date in a move aimed at accelerating success in the war with Russia.

Among the headlines of the deal was the gifting of AS90 self-propelled guns to boost the Ukrainians' artillery capabilities.

While the move represented a generous extension of the UK's support to the war effort, it also created a significant workload for the British personnel charged with readying the kit for action and training the platform's new operators.

Fast forward two-and-a-half months and the Army has put an impressive tick in both boxes.

The bulk of the 32 guns were provided by 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery and 1 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, whose light aid detachments completed an array of maintenance tasks on 20 AS90s to ensure they were battle ready ahead of being shipped from Marchwood.

They also travelled to Germany to complete the same work on seven guns there, with a further five remaining in the UK for training purposes.

Capt Will Barraclough (REME), OC of 1 RHA LAD, told *Soldier* the turnaround took six weeks and said the process was made easier by a similar tasking helping to refurbish other hardware for Ukraine last summer.

"A lot of this was based on previous experience, which meant we were able to get ahead and plan in advance for this," the officer explained.

"The AS90s we have gifted were in various states of repair but

around three quarters of the fleet was pretty much there.

"There were more than 1,200 demands for spares, and we would not normally do that many in a whole year.

"It was about understanding the standard we had to reach early on to give us the maximum time to carry out repairs.

"There were quite a few long nights, with some weekends as well, but overall it was more straightforward than anticipated.

"It has been easy to motivate people on this – everyone knows what the guns are for. We are not at war, but the Ukrainians are so there was no moaning about having to work late."

The AS90s could reach their new firing lines later this month, and Capt Barraclough said the support will continue despite the hands-on work being complete.

He added: "We will have people completing final checks before the equipment crosses the border and individuals will be on standby to answer any questions over the phone on a 24-hour basis.

"The comments we got back after our work on the other guns was that artillery is changing this war, so these guns are going to make a difference."

The Royal School of Artillery took the lead on training, and the second of two three-week courses drew to a close as this issue went to press.

Starting with the basics of the AS90, the programme progressed to low level tactics and manoeuvre and had the end goal of Ukrainian crews taking the AS90 on to Salisbury Plain to carry out their own fire missions. »

“
There was
no moaning
about having
to work late
”



65

PERSONNEL FROM BOTH
LADS INVOLVED IN
MAINTENANCE TASKS

Capt Will Barraclough, REME

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» The school's impressive turret trainer facility proved to be an invaluable learning resource, while drivers completed their own package at Bovington before joining their counterparts midway through the second week. Observer courses were also delivered earlier in the year.

Instructors from 19 Regt and 1 RHA delivered the lessons and Bdr Lee Crown, of the latter, was among the roll call of NCOs on hand to pass on their expertise.

"They are young, enthusiastic and keen to learn – they want to take away as much information as possible," he said of the Ukrainian recruits.

"I would like to have them for a bit longer so we could build their experience up and pass on some more knowledge. However, I am confident in my teaching and believe they will have enough to use these guns in a theatre of war.

"From what I have learnt, the artillery kit they have been using is quite slow so the AS90 will allow them to shoot and scoot and become more manoeuvrable, while still having an impact on the ground.

"They are taking in the information, processing it and asking some very good questions."

With the training complete, personnel from both regiments have said farewell to the guns that have been the mainstay of their military lives.

"I think it is time to move on, but it is also frustrating and a little sad to see them go," Bdr Crown added.

"Some of those guns were waiting one or two years for spares, then suddenly the parts are released and they have been fixed.

"That said, we want to send the kit out in the best possible state to fight in Ukraine."

With the cost of firing a live shell, complete with fuse and charge, coming in at around £5,000 the turret trainer more than proved its worth, with the first course firing 3,500 rounds alone.

Capt Rob Stiff (RA), who was leading drills on the state-of-the-art asset, said it allowed recruits to practise in a safe and cost-effective environment.

He believes the real thing will represent a significant upgrade when it arrives in theatre.

"A lot of their artillery is old," the officer added. "The AS90 carries 48 shells and can stop and fire within 30 seconds.

"It gives the Ukrainians manoeuvrability, it has GPS and navigation systems and is quicker at being brought in and out of the action. It has good survivability, offers greater range and speed in firing, while the precision of the rounds opens a new world to them.

"These people, within weeks of getting back to their country, will be on the front line. They are essentially fighting a world war with Russia, and we have to do everything we can to make this training work.

"Everyone here is immensely proud to be helping them do what they need to do." ■

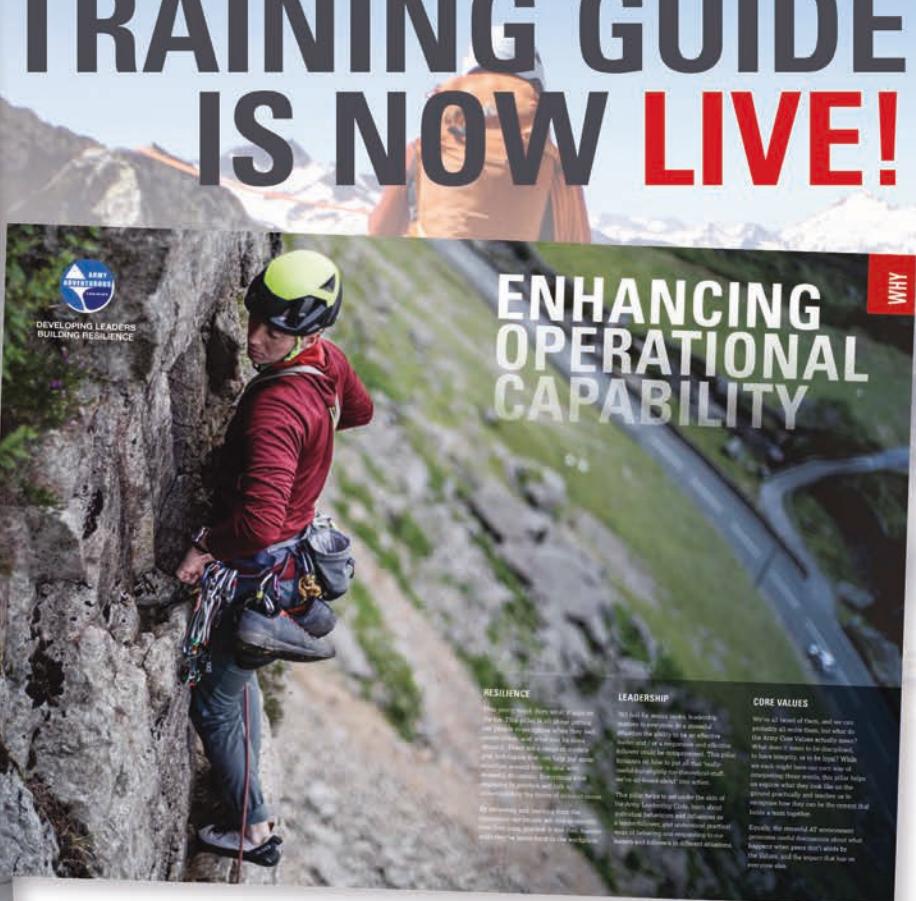
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UKRAINIAN RECRUITS TRAINED
ON THE AS90 AT THE
CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND
COURSE



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DEVELOPING LEADERS
BUILDING RESILIENCE



ROYAL REBADGING

The Army's new identity has been unveiled ahead of the King's Coronation

WHEN King Charles III took to the throne, ensuring the Army reflected the distinct identity of a new commander-in-chief was a priority for top brass.

In a revision that has not been undertaken for seven decades, the cap badges of the Service were amended to reflect the new monarch's cypher and personal preferences.

Changes were carried out with a keen sense of urgency amid ongoing preparations for next month's Coronation.

And the task was completed on schedule – with striking new designs of 46 regimental and corps identities officially approved by the King.

Now being forged in metal, troops at the crowning ceremony will be the very first to wear them.

"These are symbols of immense pride – each is unique and they are worn by everyone from the commanding officer to the newest recruit," Lt Col (Retd) Kestrel Simson, who works in Army ceremonial policy and plans, told *Soldier*.

"A cap badge shapes who we are and is part of the glue that holds our corps and regiments together – you take on the identity from the moment you join."

Creating a new design is certainly taken extremely seriously and is subject to a thorough process. But with a huge amount of work needed to adapt formal regalia following the seven-decade reign of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the King gave his consent for a streamlined approach.

Under established protocol, a watercolour painting would usually be commissioned and submitted to the garter king of arms, who is responsible for royal heraldry.

He would authenticate the design with his signature on the artwork before placing it before His Majesty.

With the tight timeframes in place, however, and a period of restraint on the public purse, in-house designers at Army HQ instead produced the graphics for the King.

"Even submitting single designs is a long process, which can take several weeks, and we had more than 40 cap badges to deliver," Lt Col Simson, who served with The Queen's Royal Hussars in a three-decade career, continued.

"The King gave permission for a change in procedure this time and we received his approval for the designs, which incorporate his crown and cypher.

"Our contractor has been in the process of producing the finished items and there will be just enough made initially for those taking part in the Coronation – replacing all items of regalia with new designs will take several years."

Lt Col Simson pointed out that the King – along with other royal family members with military roles – took a huge personal interest in the Army and the well-being of its personnel and families. Identity was hugely important to monarch and soldiers alike.

"His Majesty – in his former duties as the Prince of Wales – has always been very keenly aware of the troops for which he has been responsible," he added.

"In turn, regiments and corps have always ensured he is kept up-to-date with everything that is happening – the King is held in huge affection.

"The sovereign, too, represents our continuity and constant in the Armed Forces throughout the generations – our cap badges will be worn with pride." 

“A cap badge shapes who we are”

46 new regimental cap badges approved by HM King Charles III



THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY
REGIMENT



THE LIFE GUARDS



THE BLUES AND ROYALS
(ROYAL HORSE GUARDS
AND 1ST DRAGOONS)



ROYAL TANK REGIMENT



ROYAL REGIMENT OF ARTILLERY



CORPS OF ROYAL ENGINEERS



ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY



THE QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS
(THE QUEEN'S OWN AND ROYAL IRISH)



THE LIGHT DRAGOONS



ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS



QUEEN'S GURKHA SIGNALS



GRENADIER GUARDS
- WARRANT OFFICERS AND
AND SENIOR RANKS





ROYAL REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND



THE DUKE OF LANCASTER'S
REGIMENT



THE ROYAL REGIMENT
OF FUSILIERS



THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES



ARMY AIR CORPS



ROYAL ARMY CHAPLAINS'
(CHRISTIAN) DEPARTMENT



THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT



THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT



THE RIFLES



ROYAL ARMY CHAPLAINS'
(JEWISH) DEPARTMENT



THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS



THE QUEEN'S OWN GURKHA
LOGISTIC REGIMENT





ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS



CORPS OF ROYAL ELECTRICAL AND
MECHANICAL ENGINEERS



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(STAFF AND PERSONNEL
SUPPORT BRANCH)



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(MILITARY PROVOST
GUARD SERVICE)



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING
SERVICES BRANCH)



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(ARMY LEGAL SERVICES BRANCH)



GURKHA STAFF AND PERSONNEL
SUPPORT BRANCH



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(ROYAL MILITARY POLICE)



ADJUTANT GENERAL'S CORPS
(MILITARY PROVOST STAFF CORPS)



ROYAL ARMY VETERINARY CORPS



SMALL ARMS SCHOOL CORPS

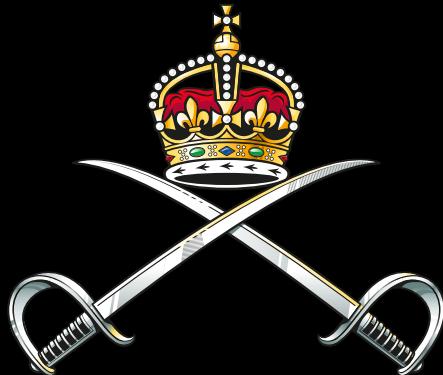


ROYAL ARMY DENTAL CORPS





INTELLIGENCE CORPS



ROYAL ARMY PHYSICAL
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BAND OF THE BRIGADE
OF GURKHAS



THE ROYAL MONMOUTHSHIRE
ROYAL ENGINEERS (MILITIA)



THE ROYAL GIBRALTAR REGIMENT



IN NUMBERS

Regimental cap badges

REGIMENTAL CAP BADGES OF THE BRITISH ARMY



46

Regimental cap badges
redesigned with the Tudor crown



QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S ROYAL
ARMY NURSING CORPS



ROYAL CORPS OF ARMY MUSIC



1,500

Army insignia artworks
in existence



1954

The end of polishing badges and the
year of issue of cap badges, metal
rank and regimental titles made of
anodised (Stay Brite) aluminium



THE ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT



ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY
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'We would have searched every building if we could'

Reservist recounts rescue mission in the aftermath of Turkey's devastating earthquakes

A LONDON firefighter by day, Sgt Sarah Mimnagh (AGC (RMP)) found herself rapidly redeployed to Turkey just hours after 7.8- and 7.5-magnitude quakes rocked the country. Part of the UK International Search and Rescue Team, she was among a 77-strong contingent drawn from 14 services across the country who travelled to Hatay province, where they went on to save 11 people amid scenes of utter devastation.

Now back at work in the day job, she tells *Soldier* about the quest to help, and the specialist training required for such a role...



How do you prepare for a tasking like this?

There are lots of training exercises across the world, as well as in this country. It is quite a tough selection process to get through and once you pass it is about sharpening your skills for the environment you are working in.

Why did you volunteer for the search and rescue role?

Part of the challenge is the fact that very few people make it past selection. I had to go through three stages of pre-selection before I could attempt the final 72-hour test in Cumbria. It looks at how you cope under pressure and fatigue, which is very similar to a lot of military exercises. It assesses how you manage in a challenging environment and perform core skills with no sleep, food or water and when the parameters constantly change. ▶

» **How quickly did news of the deployment come through?**

The earthquake happened in the early hours of the morning and the team was notified at 0500. I was just about to start a shift in Battersea and then had six hours to get to our point of departure in the West Midlands. You always have your bag packed, with your vaccines and passport up to date, so everything is in place. We also had to run the logistics of shipping 20 tonnes of equipment, which includes things like our camp, water purification systems and heating facilities. It all had to be done in six hours and you just don't have time to think.

What was the situation on arrival in Turkey?

We had to get all our kit off the plane in an airport where very little was functioning – we had to beg, steal and borrow the things we needed to do that. We just wanted to get out on the ground and start helping as soon as possible. We were sent to Hatay province, which was the worst affected area. The roads and bridges had all been damaged and the journey from the airport took more than five hours – it would normally be two.

With time against you, was it a case of getting straight to work?

As soon as we arrived, we saw people on rubble piles desperately trying to find survivors. The window for life is very small, and if they have no access to food or water it diminishes by the hour. So we quickly set up our base of operations and got teams out on the ground. I didn't stop from the moment I got the phone call in Battersea until five or six days later. We also had ten to 15 aftershocks to deal with in that time.

Describe the challenges of a mission like this.

There was a lot of asbestos so we were wearing respirators all the time and couldn't really use a lot of power tools as the holes weren't big enough – we were confined to small spaces. The temperatures ranged from minus ten degrees Celsius at night to ten degrees in the day, but it started to heat up after days seven to nine, which is when you get infections and disease.

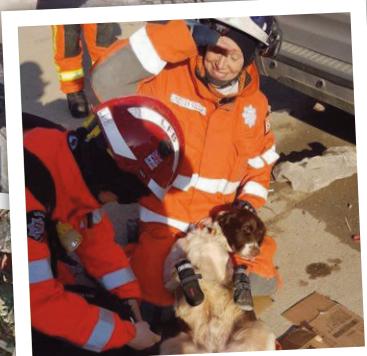
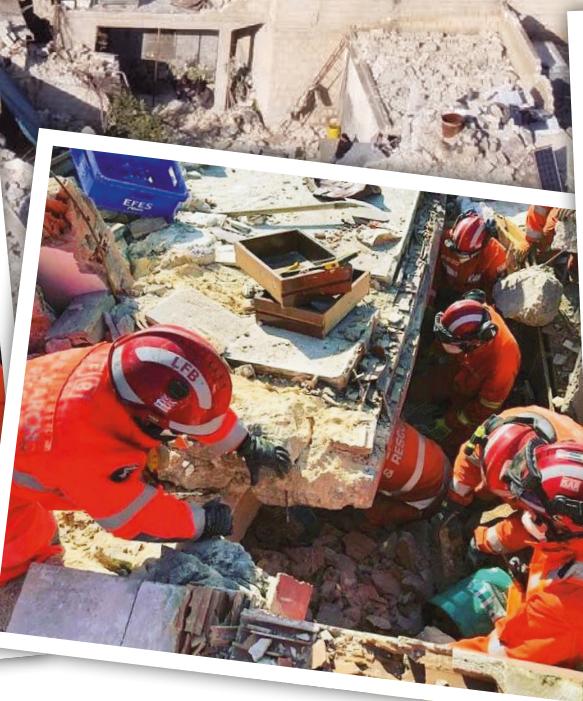
Obviously, people were desperate for help, how did you maintain your focus in such circumstances?

They were coming over the minute we got our boots on the ground. We took a lot of search dogs with us, and they were fantastic – they are the best in the world at what they do. They will bark to indicate life and the locals picked up on that so quickly – they would run to where their homes used to be to see if the dog could indicate where their loved ones were. We were progressively looking for work sites. We would take the risk to save a saveable life, but if it was not saveable, we had to ask if it was worth the risk. Some tough calls were made by the incident commanders.

Did you personally rescue anybody?

Someone ran up to us saying they could hear a voice. We went over with a dog and heard a woman straight away. The entrance was tiny, and it was only me and the dog handler who could fit in. We did ten to 15 metres of tunnelling, following the noise and getting her to tap where she was. Eventually we made it to a small void and all I could see in the rubble was the crown







» of her head – she was completely covered, face down, in concrete and had been there for three-and-a-half days. But she was still able to call out. Aftershocks were happening and there was a risk of becoming trapped ourselves. We had a team outside acting as safety and in a situation like that you really are trusting the ability of others. We worked to break the concrete off her legs, but I could barely swing a hammer, it was so awkward, and in the end I pretty much dug her out with my hands. We got to the point where we could release her legs and she started wriggling and kicking. After that we got her out quite easily. The family were outside the whole time; the doctor checked her over and, amazingly, she only had dehydration.

Describe the moment you found her alive.

I couldn't believe it when her legs started moving and despite the position she was in, she kept smiling, saying hello. We might not speak the same language, but we both had the same feeling of euphoria. The resilience of everyone there was admirable, they are so inspirational. Very few people were coming out of the rubble alive. I am immensely proud of our time spent out in Turkey and feel humbled to have been part of it, working with a fantastic collective that was so successful.

Specialist search and rescue skills are of paramount importance, but did your Army experience help at all?

The big one is personal admin and basic fieldcraft skills. We were working through the night and had to build fires and make shelters so we could keep going for longer. If your field hygiene is not great you are at risk of going down with something like a stomach bug or a foot injury, and you can't afford to do that in a relatively small team. We use a lot of GPS units but because of what had happened there was a huge loss of power and signal, so it was back to the map and compass – which is straight from basic training. And the ability to make a ration pack more interesting was invaluable.

Now, weeks later, how do you reflect on your efforts?

The feeling of pride at being able to help is amazing. This is the thing you normally watch from home, with news reels going over and over, but you are unable to do anything. At least we managed to get there and play a part. We gave 11 people the chance to carry on with their lives and be with their families again, and we would have searched every building if we could. They may no longer have homes but at least their families got them back – a lot of people did not get that. ■



TALK TO US

During these uncertain times, it can be difficult to ask for help.

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Housing's reluctant leavers

MY UNIT has a problem with Army leavers refusing to vacate Service family accommodation (SFA).

A few have been granted irregular occupancy, but this has lasted for 24 months in the two cases on my street.

Personnel moving to the unit are being housed further and further away (in some cases 30 miles) so there must come a point when those no longer serving – and in some cases here even kicked out for drugs – should be made to leave.

The discharged personnel claim they are unable to find or afford accommodation of the same size and quality in the local area.

The requirement for the military to look after the welfare of former Servicemen and women, as well as their families, should not extend indefinitely.

Is a policy not being applied?
– Name and address supplied.

Col Rob Douglas, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Accommodation, replies: The policy states that in order to help with adjusting to civilian life or house hunting, surplus SFA may be allocated to recently retired or

redundant personnel for a maximum period of 12 months on payment of the market rate.

They have to vacate if the housing is required for an entitled Service family, or is for disposal, upgrade or if the local commander's authority to occupy is withdrawn (specifically for SFA behind the wire). The Service leaver will then be given 28 days' notice to vacate.

On March 15, 2023 there were 201 Service leavers occupying SFA. Of these, 43 have now exceeded the 12-month timeframe.

The majority of them settle into their own homes during this period and the DIO's industry partner has, to date, not rigorously served notices to quit.

This is because, where surplus stock exists, the family home being occupied generates income. And it's better for the property to be occupied and maintained as opposed to standing empty.

DIO is currently taking steps to increase SFA supply and reviewing all non-core use, in particular in areas of high demand.

A QUESTION OF HOW TO CORRECT THIS 'BLEMISH'...

● IN HIS otherwise fine review of my biography, *From the Battlefield to the Stage: The Many Lives of Gen John Burgoyne*, Rodney Atwood lists as a "blemish" my reference to Gen William Howe's actions in the momentous 1759 capture of Quebec.

Mr Atwood is correct that Howe did not capture Quebec, nor did I write that he did. Howe, then an army colonel, was a brave officer who led his regiment in that campaign; but

every schoolchild (at least in Britain and Canada) knows that James Wolfe led the force that captured Quebec and that he died heroically in the attack.

Some 18 years later, Gen Howe's abandonment of Burgoyne in the American Revolutionary War was a contributing reason for the failure of the campaign and for Burgoyne's surrender – one of the worst disasters ever to befall the British Army.

– Norman Poser

“
They claim they can't afford local housing
”

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

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CAREERS

SaluteMyJob has launched a cyber career jumpstart programme to attract, train, qualify and place members of the Forces community into jobs. Visit salutemyjob.com/ex-military-cyber-security-career-pathways

JobOppO House is an app containing career resources and introduction opportunities for Service leavers. There are already more than 2,000 people in its community, including veterans who can offer feedback on the civvy job market. It can be downloaded now from the Apple/Google app stores.



COMPETITIONS

February 2023

HOAY (PS5 console) winner: Paddy

Bryden, Scotland

Spine line (K2 soundbar) winner:

Gareth Taylor, Cardiff



SEARCHLINE

Armed Forces charity Little Troopers has opened a therapy programme for teenagers feeling the impact of family life in the military. It offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified therapist for those up to age 18. Referrals can be made by a parent, school, community group or welfare worker. Visit littletroopers.net

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



WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are always a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with

pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

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

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

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

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or
mil 96770 4656
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

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

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support
01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been

introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988

forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111

stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

A network of people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk though your emotions with an understanding compassionate group

supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information

07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support

veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation

afvbc.net

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123

samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services

0808 802 8080

britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address

work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393

mind.org**NHS**nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters**Samaritans**

116 123

samaritans.org**The Ripple Pond**

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured

troops and veterans
0333 900 1028
theripplepond.org**Togetherall**A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health
togetherall.com**RELATIONSHIP
BREAKDOWN/ABUSE****Aurora New Dawn**

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mankind.org.uk**Relate**UK provider of relationship support
relate.org.uk**REUNIONS**The 25th Anniversary of the **Artillery****Clerks' Association** will be held in the Royal Artillery sergeants' mess, Larkhill on June 23-25. Visit artyclerkassn.org for further details and updates.**The Army Apprentices National Association****The Army Apprentices National Association** celebrates 100 years of Army apprentices on May 13-14 at Mickleover Court Hotel, Derby and at the National Memorial Arboretum. For more information on the milestone event please contact info.armyana@gmail.com

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 971

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery during their annual inspection in Woolwich.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 971, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by April 28.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first three correct entries drawn after the closing date will

win a pair of Majority Tru 2 ANC earbuds, worth £49.95.

Given a thumbs-up by our reviewer on page 61 of this magazine, these Bluetooth earphones with active noise cancellation and a waterproof rating of IPX7 stand up to the very toughest workouts and the worst British weather.

Available to purchase on Amazon or via majority.co.uk, they feature powerful stereo sound, fast charging and up to 30 hours of playback that should be enough to serve most flight times or deployment types.

The winners' names will appear in the June issue and all the usual competition rules apply.

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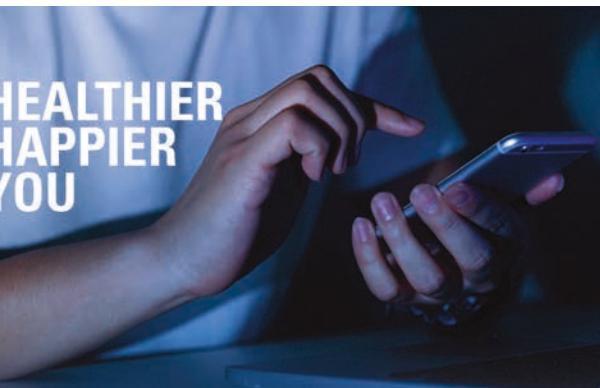
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ADR011088

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Where can I seek help?

Make an appointment with your GP
 Your **Unit Welfare Team** can provide advice and signpost you to further support

All Service Personnel can contact the **Army Welfare Service** directly
 Email: RC-AWS-IAT-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk
 Tel: 01904 882051/2053

Irrespective of faith, your **unit chaplain** can provide pastoral and moral guidance

In a crisis if you are concerned about your health or the health of a colleague contact:

Your Unit MO during routine hours
Your Unit Duty Officer
Samaritans on 116 123
 If in imminent danger call 111 or 999





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10 x	£100



Since its creation in 1993 the Army Sports Lottery has:

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The Army Sports Lottery is a non-profit making organisation that exists to support sport in the Army. For further details visit our web at: www.armysportlottery.com



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REVIEWS



PICK OF THE MONTH

Hurst: The First and Only

Out now on DVD and Blu-Ray

► WITH today's elite footballers earning weekly six-figure salaries and the promise of a lucrative celebrity status well into their post-match careers, it is hard to envisage an era in which the beautiful game's heroes faced hardship.

But back in the 1960s and 70s – when even the top levels of the sport offered far less reward – the end of a life on the pitch often gave way to uncertainty. Sir Geoff Hurst, who scored a hattrick in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, is a case in point – signing on the dole after hanging up his boots before embarking on a new job selling life insurance.

The football legend, who at the time of the release was the only man to have bagged three goals in the Fifa competition's deciding match, is matter-of-fact as he recalls the days in which ex-internationals had to fight for a living after quitting the pitch. "I was out of work and had three children," he recounts. "We had little money and I had to start doing something else."

The reflection is one of many surprising insights in *Hurst: The First and Only*, a documentary charting the personal life and professional achievements of one of the game's greats while shining a light on a past footballing era.



Using the 1966 final's build-up,

MOVIES



Using the 1966 match as its structure, the Sky-produced film – which was first aired on TV last year and has now been released on DVD and Blu-Ray – also explores the legacy of a pivotal single encounter that has arguably set the tone for the English game ever since.

Hurst takes centre stage and forms the prism through which the events are viewed. Modest throughout, he remembers only taking his place in the Wembley line-up after teammate Jimmy Greaves was ruled out due to injury.

He also leads on explaining the principal events of the game which, while well-known, remain gripping in re-telling nonetheless. A nerve-shredding affair of footballing excellence by both sides, the England team finally prevailed in extra time with the striker scoring with both feet and a header.

Iconic images are accompanied with reflections from other football greats including Harry Kane, Gary Lineker, Harry Redknapp and Gareth Southgate. Refreshingly, the commentary also draws on interviews with a couple of the West German players who formed a formidable opposing team.

There are some curious revelations about the game too. After a day in which the England team underscored their country's greatness, each member received just £1,000 as a bonus – around £17,000 in today's money – before returning to their clubs. West Ham mainstay Hurst wryly recalls losing to Chelsea on the first game of the season in a return to business as usual.

But it is the account of the ex-footballer's later life that is perhaps the most interesting – providing an insight into how the sporting scene has changed along with wider society. While elite players are these days rapidly rewarded with Royal recognition for achievement, the World Cup winners faced a different reality – many of them waiting years for the honours system to catch up and hand them the gongs many would say they richly deserved.

As well as facing a struggle to find a purpose after football, Hurst also endured bitter personal tragedy with the suicide of brother Robert in 1974 and loss of daughter Claire Driver after a decade-long battle with brain cancer. He deals with both in front of the camera with quiet reflection and great dignity.

The sum of these parts is a first-rate

documentary that stands out in a crowded field of football films – sensitively handled and well-presented on all fronts, it is as much a social commentary as a biography of an extraordinary and gifted player.

The principal interview with Hurst draws out the best in the World Cup legend, and is conducted with both empathy and an insightful line of questioning.

The background to the era is well explained too, accompanied by well-chosen footage to provide a decent depth of perspective.

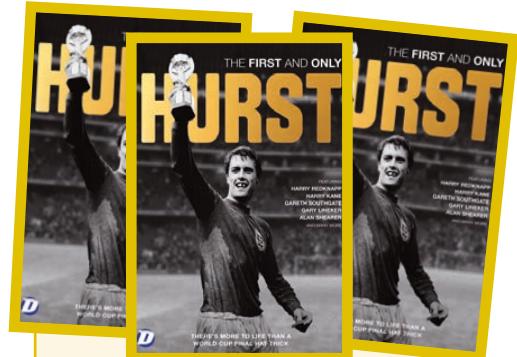
Even for the most lukewarm of football fans, this offering is well worth watching for its historical interest and commentary on the place of sport in wider society. It's an extraordinary story too, and one that continues to transcend the generations. ■

VERDICT:

A multi-faceted story, beautifully told



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER



WIN THIS DOCUMENTARY

CELEBRATING the release of *Hurst: The First and Only* on Blu-Ray and DVD, we have three copies of the film to give away for our readers. To stand a chance of winning, tell us who captained England's World Cup winning 1966 side. Answers to **comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk** Specify the preferred format on your email. Usual rules apply.

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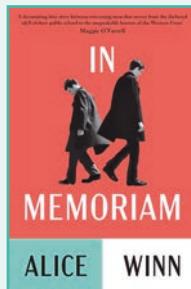


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In Memoriam

By Alice Winn



Leading

Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart grill the big hitters

» A SEQUEL to an earlier title about a lone astronaut sent to find out why a Moon base has gone offline, the red planet is the focus for this latest sci-fi outing.

The game sees players assume the role of young star voyager Kathy who, against the backdrop of an Earth in climate crisis, is sent on a far-flung mission after a distress call is received thousands of miles from home. And it does not disappoint, with a puzzle-based offering that has a cinematic feel as well as a menace akin to the original *Alien* film.

Having had my childhood imagination fired by US Apollo missions, the first *Deliver Us The Moon* game was my title of choice when acquiring a PS5 earlier this year.

Both the original outing and its Martian follow-up have an atmosphere that successfully captures the pioneering spirit of the early spaceflight endeavours.

Throwing switches in sequence, dealing with a malfunctioning airlock in zero-G and the anticipation of riding the lift towards the capsule at the top of a rocket give the games an authentic feel. ■

GAMES

VERDICT:
Atmospheric, playable – definitely one for would-be star voyagers
★★★★★

Review:
Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

TOP GEAR

VERDICT:
There is little to dislike here – they do the job well
★★★★★

Review:
Sgt Robert Weideman, RLC

BOOKS

VERDICT:
Utterly compulsive – just watch out for sleep deprivation
★★★★★

Review:
Becky Clark, *Soldier*

PODCASTS

VERDICT:
Informative and entertaining
★★★★★

Review:
WO1 Mike Owens, RE

» SOLDIERS will know that finding the right earbuds can be a demanding task.

They must be unfailingly durable, have a long battery life, be comfortable enough to wear during PT and easy to carry around.

This pair fits the bill in almost every respect. The kit is built well and feels comfortable enough, while offering a fast recharge time – a full juice will happily provide troops with a day and night of playback while 30min will get you out of trouble for a couple of hours or so.

This is a huge bonus if you're out for

long periods on training or deployment.

The earbuds are lightweight and secure enough to wear for extended phys or relaxation without causing any discomfort.

My testing programme included a ten-mile run, which ticked all the boxes.

Audio quality is excellent and the noise cancelling is decent enough to silence vocal PTIs.

If you're looking for a reliable and durable pair of earbuds in this price range, I would recommend these. The only downside is the flimsy carry case. ■

to the frustration of the reader – until the fragility of life on the Western Front forces them to confront their feelings.

Simmering sexual tension and moments of abject terror drive the narrative along, with themes of class, adventure and poetry woven in. But above all, the title is a study of the devastating effects of conflict, and a lament for the wasted potential of a generation cruelly snuffed out.

While a few strands of the tale wrap up too conveniently to be entirely satisfying, this is an otherwise cracking debut. ■

» WARNING: don't start this book just before bed, unless you want to find yourself 150 pages in at 0100.

Charting the passionate relationship between two public schoolboys – whose misfortune it is not only to be gay in Edwardian Britain, but to come of age at the outbreak of the First World War – the story juxtaposes a forbidden romance with the horrors of the trenches.

Stifled by the conventions of the day, sixth-formers Ellwood and Gaunt hide their love even from each other – much

» OFF the back of their popular podcast *The Rest is Politics*, former Conservative MP Rory Stewart and ex-Labour spin-doctor Alastair Campbell have launched this sister show.

Every week, the pair interview prominent figures about life, leadership and more – with episodes to date featuring US senator Bernie Sanders, Michael Heseltine and Bertie Ahern.

The former Irish Taoiseach's insights on the Troubles will be of interest to anyone who has served in Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, the instalment featuring Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson was recorded prior to the recent furore over Gary Lineker and BBC impartiality, but his thoughts on protest in sport now seem particularly on point.

Those familiar with the hosts will recognise the good-natured, informative debating style. Despite hailing from opposite sides of the political spectrum, the pair find much common ground and even when they disagree, do so in a way that many could learn from. ■



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ARMY

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SOLDIER SPORT



« SAPPERS IN THE SNOW

THE Royal Engineers prevailed over the winter weather, and their rivals from the Royal Logistic Corps, to retain the Inter-Corps rugby union title. The sappers ran in four tries on a challenging afternoon in Aldershot as they claimed a 27-7 victory. Read a full report on page 67...



Picture: LH Juliet Ritsma, RN

EARLY CHARGE PAVES THE WAY FOR TITLE SUCCESS

ARMY fighters hit top form from the first bell as a succession of early victories laid the foundations for another triumph at the UK Armed Forces Boxing Championships.

With the number of walkovers limited to just two – as opposed to five last season – the soldiers' latest victory was reliant on the action inside the ropes, and they did not disappoint on a highly charged night in Plymouth.

Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC) set the tone as he defeated the Royal Navy's AET Terrence McIlroy via a unanimous verdict in the 60kg ranks, a result that was repeated by Fus Rob Jones (RRF) in his 63kg clash with ETME Iwan Thomas (RN).

And the title was secured in the fourth bout of the night, as Pte Jordan Shaw (AGC (SPS), pictured right) claimed another unanimous decision for the Army, this time over Royal Air Force rival AS1 Taylor Andrew at 67kg.

The winning run continued as LCpl James McCool (R Signals) edged a split decision against Mne Lucas France (RM) in the 71kg division, before UKAF development champion Fus Connor Moore (RRF) suffered defeat at the hands of experienced opponent Mne Grant Crookes (RM) at 75kg.

The returning Cpl Nick Wright (R Signals) was unfortunate to miss out on the 86kg honours, losing to Mne Joel Hassan (RM) on a split decision, but the night ended on a high as LCpl Jack Hindmarch (Rifles) downed Mne Gabriel Rands-Silva (RM) in the heavyweight ranks.

Elsewhere, there was disappointment for Cfn Niamh Brooks (REME) and Pte Lily Devlin (RLC, pictured far right), who both suffered losses as women's bouts were included on the bill for just the second time.

And Army captain LCpl Jack Power (RE) again missed out



on action in the ring, as he and Cpl Josh Woods (PWRR) were handed walkover wins. Power suffered the same fate at last year's competition.

"It was good to see all the hard work we have put in, with training camps with the likes of England and Scotland, all come together at the right time," head coach SSgt Shane Sadler (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"Some of our performances were outstanding. We had the spirit, determination and grit when it was one round apiece to go on and get the win. When we needed them to push, they did exactly that.

"Lewis Harvey was named best boxer on the night. He was superb and has so much potential – if he is not a national champion this year he will be in the future.

"Nick Wright came back on the team as a favour to us and lost 14kg in just a few weeks to make

"WHEN
WE
NEEDED
THEM
TO PUSH
THEY DID
EXACTLY
THAT"

the weight. Yes, he got beaten, but the determination he showed was phenomenal.

"I'm just glad all the hard work behind the scenes paid off. Our aim is to give the boxers the best experience possible and to allow them to reach their potential. This win will help them do that."

Attention now turns to this month's National Amateur Championships, with the Army's winners on the night progressing to the next round of the competition. The finals will be held in Gateshead on April 22.

"If they perform the way we know they can there's a chance to progress," Sadler added. "Getting through to the quarter- or semi-finals will be a good achievement; it is such a hard task to get to the final in the men's draw."

"Jordan Shaw has the skill and ability to do well. If we can polish a few things from his two bouts at the UKAF Championships, he has a chance. It all comes down to experience."

The Army will also have three fighters in the female competition – LCpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME), Sig Lucy Kisielewska (R Signals) and Reservist Pte Jerry Lee Palmer (RLC).

"We are looking to see them in the finals," the head coach said. "I would like to think Terri in particular can go far and if they make those finals the titles are there for the taking."



HOCKEY IN NUMBERS

TITLES WON BY THE ARMY – IN THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S MASTERS

2

GOALS CONCEDED BY THE SENIOR MEN AS THEY SUFFERED BACK-TO-BACK LOSSES TO THE NAVY AND RAF

6

NEW PLAYERS INVOLVED IN THE ARMY WOMEN'S SQUAD AT THIS YEAR'S CONTEST

5

TROPHIES LIFTED BY THE RAF AS THEY CLAIMED VICTORIES IN THE MEN'S, WOMEN'S AND UNDER-25S' EVENTS

3



Picture ASCB/Cat Gwyn

FINE MARGIN PROVES COSTLY

GOAL difference proved to be a devastating deciding factor for the Army women as they saw the Inter-Services hockey title slip from their grasp.

The defending champions downed the Royal Navy 3-0 in their opening fixture in Portsmouth but a 0-0 draw with the Royal Air Force – who earlier defeated the Senior Service 5-0 – was not enough to retain the trophy.

Early pressure yielded little reward for the Reds as they failed to take advantage from a succession of penalty corners, and their rivals grew into the contest as the match went on.

Goalkeeper Gdsm Abi Cox (Gren Gds) made two smart stops to thwart the RAF's attack and Cpl Heidi Jolley (AGC (SPS)) wasted her team's best opportunity as she fired wide from a slick corner routine.

LCpl May Percival (RLC) was then denied in a one-on-one with the keeper but further clear-cut chances failed to

materialise – despite prolonged pressure at the death.

"The RAF are a great team," skipper Sgt Lucy Reading (QARANC, pictured) told *SoldierSport*. "This is the first year in a long time that we have drawn a game at this level; it would have been nice to steal it at the death, but it wasn't meant to be."

"We had five new players for this tournament, which is a positive, and we are always looking for more."

The focus now shifts to the semi-finals of the England Hockey Tier Three Championships this month.

"We are hoping to defend our title from last year," Reading added. "We beat Knole Park, who are a new team with a lot of talent, 3-2 in the quarters and are expecting another tough match."

Elsewhere at the Inter-Services, the Army men suffered back-to-back defeats, while the under-25s also missed out on silverware. ■



SQUAD TAKES SHAPE

SKIPPER Capt Stu Cross (Yorks, pictured above) was pleased to see a new-look Army team beat their French rivals on a tough night.

"We made a really good start," he said. "We spoke at half-time about matching that after the break, but the French took it to us in the second period, so we are chuffed with the win."

"There were eight new caps involved tonight and they really put in a shift. There is still lots of work to be done; this is the third game on the bounce where we've had a different squad, so they need time to settle in."

"Those who took to the pitch today are firmly in the frame for the Inter-Services and we have a good pool to select from."

Head coach Lt Col Tim Osman (RA) has used a wide selection of players in the fixtures to date and attention now turns to moulding a squad capable of retaining the Forces silverware.

The soldiers were on a pre-tournament training camp as this issue went to press and face Bedford Blues in the Mobbs Memorial Match on April 6.

The Inter-Services campaign starts in Gloucester on April 15, when the Army face the Royal Air Force, and concludes at Twickenham against the Royal Navy on May 13.



PACK SETS THE TONE IN FRENCH TEST



FORWARD firepower proved to be the difference as the Army battled to a hard-fought victory over their French equivalents in their latest Inter-Services warm-up.

LBdr Nick Murray (RA) gave the Reds the perfect start on a wet night in Aldershot as the flanker crashed over in the opening minute.

A swift move from right to left saw Maj Will Reeve (RGR) draw a French tackler before offloading to LCpl Pita Ratukadreu (REME), whose pass saw Murray run to the line.

Bdr Owain Davies (RA) slotted the extras and then stretched the lead to 10-0 with a routine penalty kick moments later.

The Army capitalised on French ill-discipline for their second try, with Cpl Ifereimi Boladau (R Signals) crashing over while their opponents were temporarily reduced to ten men.

Davies again slotted from the tee to cap an exhilarating opening 13 minutes, but the hosts then failed to trouble the scoreboard further until the

stroke of half-time.

Once more, it was the pack that did the damage with players rolling through the phases in front of the posts before Gnr Senitiki Nayalo (RA) emerged from the melee as a try-scorer.

With a 24-0 half-time lead the soldiers looked set to pile on the points, but their momentum was halted after the break as their rivals found a foothold.

And they were rewarded on the hour mark as Charlie Brun capitalised on the space out wide to cross for a converted score.

The visitors completed their scoring when centre Lilian Delage intercepted a pass from replacement LCpl Nado Cakau (RE) to run to the line.

Mateu Clara missed the conversion before Spr Jack Johnson (RE) slotted a penalty with the last kick of the game as the contest ended 27-12.

The strength and dynamism of the Army pack was the major positive of the night, while Reeve looked assured under the high ball and provided an attacking spark from fullback. ■



TITLE HOLDERS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

THE Royal Engineers overcame the wintry elements, as well as the challenge of the Royal Logistic Corps, to seal another Inter-Corps rugby union crown.

Sleet and snow ensured playing conditions in Aldershot were far from ideal but both sides adapted well as the season's showpiece fixture saw the sappers successfully defend their title from 2022.

Army fly half Spr Jack Johnson opened the scoring for the champions-elect with a simple penalty conversion from close range before the loggies hit back with a stunning first try of the day.

Pte Blaze Bulicokocko collected the ball at the base of a ruck and swiftly jinked inside before kicking over the top and winning the ensuing race to the line.

LCpl Ethan Riley slotted the extras to open a 7-3 lead, but the RLC received double punishment moments later as they were temporarily reduced to 14 players and then conceded a soft try.

After regaining possession from an opposition lineout

deep in their own territory, they hesitated in clearing the ball and Johnson ghosted in to touch down.

However, the sappers' second score had greater style as man-of-the-match Spr Taitusi Qaniuci made a scintillating break from inside his own half before passing to LCpl Phil Graham, who sprinted home on the wing.

Johnson again kicked the extras to stretch the lead to 17-7 at the break and short-range tries from LCpl Marcus Mercer and Spr Lucas Goneqali saw the Royal Engineers run out at 27-7 winners in the second half.

"The boys dug in hard and it was a big result for us today," scrum half Spr Michael McDonald said at full-time.

"A few are now leaving the corps, so to get two wins on the bounce is massive and a good send off for those who are moving on."

Elsewhere, a combined RLC and Infantry team were victorious in the women's final, while the Royal Artillery were triumphant in the men's league two equivalent. ■

INTER-CORPS RUGBY UNION

RE

27

RLC

7



SPORT SHORTS



Riders ace Spanish drills

THE Army Motorcycle Road Race Team completed seven days of arduous testing in southern Spain as part of preparations for the 2023 season.

Starting at Shetterton last month, the riders are now competing in the UK Armed Forces Championships, which features rounds at the country's top circuits in the national endurance and sprint disciplines.

If you are interested in riding or becoming part of the set-up's support crew visit the Army Motorcycle Road Race Team Facebook page or follow [@Armymrtr](#) on Instagram.



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

Date set for second leg

THE Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Race Series stages its second event of the season at Cannock Chase on April 19.

Designed to develop the sport at grass-roots level, each course is set with novice riders in mind, but personnel of all experience levels are welcome to take part. The competition also features individual prizes as well as major and minor unit trophies.

Future legs will be held at Tidworth on May 17, Catterick on June 7 and Pippingford Park on June 21.

Search "British Army Cycling" on social media for more.



Pictures: ASCB/Cat Corry

FINAL QUARTER CHARGE SELLS COURT CLEAN SWEEP

SKIPPER Sgt Ellie Naweles (AGC (SPS), main picture) praised her team's strength in depth as the Army overcame the fierce challenge of the Royal Air Force to retain their Inter-Services netball title.

The Reds headed into the tournament on the back of a five-year winning run but were pushed all the way in this season's deciding fixture, with the scores locked at 30-30 at the end of the third period.

But a final quarter burst – spearheaded by Naweles and Fijian international Cpl Dee Bolakoro (RE, pictured top left) – saw the soldiers prevail 44-36 and seal another trophy.

They had earlier defeated the Royal Navy 51-31.

"We went in with the expectation that the RAF would come at us hard," Naweles told *SoldierSport*.

"Last year they were very strong compared to other Inter-Services campaigns, but we didn't think it would be that way

for the first 45 minutes.

"We had to switch some players round, but that was something we had planned for. We worked on a plan B and had to take it.

"As captain I remained calm throughout; I knew we would pull it out of the bag at some point and that last quarter was the winning quarter."

Naweles praised the impact of defender Pte Amy Howell and wing attack Cpl Maria Matau (both AMS), with the latter being called up for the RAF match after starting the competition in the set-up's development squad.

"She is a really strong impact player," the veteran, who has played at Inter-Services level for 18 years, added.

"We brought her in to be a substitute and when we were going head-to-head with the RAF the coach put her on.

"That move changed our whole gameplan and we were instantly up by five goals, so

hats off to her. She was nervous to be in the open squad but also so glad to have the opportunity."

Howell and Matau were both selected for the UK Armed Forces squad on the back of their performances and the impact of the newcomers underlined the current depth in Army netball.

"We saw so much talent at our first-team trials," Naweles continued. "We have individuals returning from injury and new players coming through that are skilled netballers."

"Every year we find exciting players, which makes selection that much harder."

It proved to be a memorable three days on court as the development and masters' teams won their respective tournaments, giving the Army a fourth successive clean sweep of the silverware.

"It was such a relief when the final whistle went," Naweles said. "With the other teams winning we had to complete the job." ■



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SPORT SHORTS



Trail test awaits

Distance runner WO2 Ben Brookman (RLC) will take on the energy-sapping challenge of the Wild Horse 200 this month.

Starting on April 5, the race gives competitors five days to complete a 200-mile trail run, which features more than 30,000 feet of climbing, across South Wales.

The soldier has an impressive pedigree over the distance after finishing sixth in the event's mid-Wales equivalent last year (pictured).

He is raising money for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. Search "Benjamin Brookman" at [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com)



Picture: Chris Coope

First fixture ticked off

The Army American football team reached another significant milestone as the players took to the pitch for their first competitive fixture.

Despite losing 50-0 to seasoned outfit the Yorkshire Rams, head coach WO2 Abe Day (RA) believes the experience will hold the squad in good stead.

"We deliberately picked a tough team to play against," he said.

"We knew it would be a challenge, but it was more about us seeing what level we are at."

Dates have also been confirmed for the inaugural Inter-Services, with the Army facing the Royal Navy in Abingdon in their opening game on September 22.

REDS FALL AT FIRST HURDLE



STRIKER SLt Jade Widdows enjoyed a night to remember in Aldershot as her hat-trick helped fire the Royal Navy to a 5-2 victory over the Army in the women's Inter-Services Football Championships.

The forward's play was the highlight of a sublime showing from the Senior Service, who bounced back in style following their opening day defeat to the Royal Air Force.

LH Katie Shorter struck the first blow as she headed home unchallenged from a corner, before Widdows converted from the spot after she was bundled over in the area by keeper Sgt Daisy Burnfield (RA).

Further misery followed in the 21st minute as Navy skipper POPT Nat Bavister scored directly from a corner.

The Army had to wait until the half-hour mark for their first attempt at goal, when a speculative effort from distance sailed over the crossbar.

But they soon had something to cheer as Cpl Imogen Fisher (AMS) floated an exquisite chip over keeper LH Eilish Brogan to reduce the arrears.

Widdows' second came midway through the second half as she pounced on a mistake from Cpl Courtney Jones (REME) to find the bottom corner, before Fisher (pictured) pulled another goal back from close range.

The rout was completed in injury time as Widdows rounded Burnfield and rolled the ball into the empty net.

The Army were in action against the RAF as this issue went to press. ■

**"IT WAS
ABOUT
SEEING
WHAT
LEVEL
WE ARE
AT"**



● BROTHERS Sprs Michael (right) and Cameron McDonald (both RE) lined up for Germany in their Rugby Europe Championship clash with the Netherlands. It was the first time in the modern era that two brothers from the Army had represented an international team at the same time. Unfortunately, Germany lost 50-28 to finish sixth in the tournament.

MONTH IN SPORT

April's key fixtures...



WHAT: Rugby league
Inter-Unit Nav 9s
WHEN: April 19
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The new rugby league season gets under way as unit teams from across the Service do battle in the sport's shortened format in this day-long tournament



WHAT: Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships
WHEN: April 19 to 20
WHERE: HMS Temeraire, Portsmouth
NEED TO KNOW: This comes on the back of a successful Army training camp and championships. The soldiers will be competing in the men's A and B team events, as well as the women's draw



WHAT: Inter-Services Basketball Championships
WHEN: April 20 to 24
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: There were mixed fortunes for the Army last season as the under-23s topped the standings, but the men's and women's teams were both defeated. Can they improve their record?



Picture: Daniel De Jong

GROWTH RATE CONTINUES TO SPIRAL



"WE'VE GONE FROM THREE ON THE MAT TO MORE THAN 100"

MORE than 100 athletes took to the mat for the Army Brazilian Jiu-jitsu Championships in another sign of the growing popularity of the sport.

Having claimed three gold medals at the recent European Championships, the set-up has enjoyed a successful start to 2023 and there was no shortage of talent on display at the latest Service-level showdown in Aldershot.

One of those in action was ultra-heavyweight brown belt Bdr Josh Gibbs (RA), whose appearance came on the back of a run of four wins – all via submission – as he claimed gold in Europe.

"It was amazing, and a great opportunity to get out and compete at one of the highest levels of jiu-jitsu," he said, as he reflected on his performance.

"I was not expecting gold. I had just come back from a deployment in Poland, so to win all four via submission was unbelievable."

Gibbs' next big test will come at the World Championships in August but he insisted the annual

Army Championships remain an important fixture on the discipline's calendar.

"It is a chance to bring everyone in the jiu-jitsu family together," he explained. "This event continues to grow, and the senior performers are bringing new people through."

SSgt Mark Badham (AGC (MPGS)) was one of the organisation's founding members back in 2011 and remains heavily involved 12 years later, acting as a referee at the Army Championships and as head coach of his corps team. He also runs his own academy in Shropshire.

"We have gone from having three guys on the mat to seeing more than 100 people here today, and 246 members in total," he told *SoldierSport*.

"The original aim was to start at grass-roots level, and it has spiralled from there. It is massive; we have black and brown belts competing at the upper echelons, a lot of regiments now have their own teams and all our referees have done their courses and are fully trained."

"We are hoping to see more than 150 people next year." ■



Picture: AS1 Emma Wade, RAF

SNOWBOARDERS BOOST MERIBEL MEDAL CHARGE

THE slopes of Meribel again formed a happy hunting ground for Army athletes as they returned to action at the Inter-Services Snowsports Championships.

It proved to be a particularly successful week for the snowboarders, whose efforts saw them secure a host of team trophies – including the combined titles in both the men's and women's competitions.

In the snowboard cross, LBdr Jordan Buckley (RA) and SSgt Chris Marshall (REME) topped the women's and men's standings respectively, although the Army missed out to the Royal Navy in the race for team honours.

And there was further podium joy in the parallel giant slalom, where SSgt Lisa Gibson (AMS) claimed the female gold and Cpl Dan Robinson (REME) the male equivalent. SSgt Dave Grant (REME) took the bronze, while the soldiers also added both team

prizes to their haul.

Gibson captured another individual gold in the slopestyle discipline, with the Army women also sealing the team crown. The rider finished second in the individual combined standings; a feat matched by Marshall in the men's field.

Team manager and senior rider WO2 Tom Etherington (RE) was thrilled with results, especially as a number of newcomers were included this season.

"Chris Marshall has been called up in the past but this year he finally managed to make it onto the snow and he more than proved his worth," the NCO told *SoldierSport*.

"The pressure is always on in your first Inter-Services, but he held his nerve and delivered.

"We had an injury in training, with SSgt Fiona Ross (AMS) flying home and Lisa Gibson replacing her as a substitute. She was at a corps camp in Austria



**"THEY
ALL DID
THEIR
JOB"**

and jumped on a train to come and compete.

"She then finished with two gold medals and was runner-up overall. This is only Jordan Buckley's second season with us; she is really coming on and at 22 years old she has bags of time to develop further.

"Lt Rosie Algar (Int Corps) is another who was on the team for the first time this year, and she helped us win gold in the slopestyle event.

"We had four or five new riders, and they all did their job. We had a pool of solid snowboarders who could dominate the middle ground across all three disciplines and that was key to our success."

Lt Josh Serdet (Rifles) was the star of the show for the Army men's victorious Alpine team, who celebrated claiming the combined honours at the end of five gruelling disciplines.

The officer topped the podium

in the slalom, was second in the giant slalom and third in the super combined as he was named the overall men's individual champion.

Maj Tessa Pirie (RAMC) enjoyed a superb week as she collected five silver medals in five events. However, the Royal Air Force's Fg Off Kirsty Guest went one better by winning gold in the same five races – an effort that helped the light blues to the women's combined team prize.

Meribel represented a welcome return to competitive action for Pirie, who last raced more than 20 years ago.

She represented Great Britain at the World Championships in 1999 and was thrilled to forge a new rivalry with Guest.

"It's great to have someone to jostle with," she said. "You want to do a good run because there is another skier to try and beat. It has been a great rivalry."

And in Telemark, the Army retained their team title from last season. Capt Stefan Hurst (RLC) was instrumental to the success as he won the giant slalom and was second in the sprint, classic and parallel sprint.

Elsewhere, the Army bobsleigh team – spearheaded by Olympian LCpl Nick Gleeson (Para) – were victorious at the Inter-Services Ice Sports Championships in Lillehammer. The RAF won the luge and skeleton events. ■



FIRST-HALF GOAL BURST SETS UP WIN

INTER-SERVICES FOOTBALL

ARMY

3

NAVY

0



THREE goals in the space of 19 first-half minutes ensured the Army men made the perfect start in their quest for honours at the Inter-Services Football Championships.

A brace from striker Spr Scott McCarthy (pictured above) and a penalty by LCpl Sam Atkinson (both RE) sealed a 3-0 win over the Royal Navy in Aldershot as the soldiers took control of the competition.

They were in action against defending champions the Royal Air Force as this issue went to press knowing a draw in Shrewsbury would be enough to seal the silverware.

In a confident showing on home soil, the Reds opened their account in the tenth minute as McCarthy latched onto a pass down the left channel before poking the ball past onrushing keeper Mne Laurence McCormick and into the bottom corner.

The Senior Service gifted a second goal moments later as a loose pass from LAET Nick Glendon saw Gnr Harry Beckley (RA) drive into the area, where he was brought

down by AET Jack Wright.

Atkinson confidently sent McCormick the wrong way from the spot before the Navy handed the hosts a third goal moments later.

A long ball downfield caught the defence flatfooted, allowing McCarthy to break free. McCormick looked to have thwarted the danger as he raced out of his box, but his attempted clearance rebounded off the forward, who was left with the simplest of conversions.

With a 3-0 goal lead at the break, the soldiers survived a huge scare within seconds of the restart as their rivals were awarded a penalty.

However, LPT Elliot Holmes saw his effort rattle the post and they then struggled to create further chances as the Army went on to seal the win.

"We were clinical in the first half," skipper Cpl Luke Cairney (RE) told *SoldierSport*. "It was a bit ropey after the break, but we dug in and kept our shape really well.

"We punished their mistakes and our front two ran them ragged all game." ■



There's more unity for women to get together and create links across defence to see how things are developing – such as better kit and equipment. The availability of sanitary products in the field is also important, as well as being able to speak openly about it to male members of the Army.

Cpl Rebecca McCourt, RAMC



When I joined 13 years ago there was a total lack of understanding among older men regarding women's needs in the field. I didn't realise there's this whole thing about females not going to the toilet and causing themselves problems, so as a senior NCO I've been trying to drive people to talk about it. I'd still like to see more awareness of hormones and their effect on performance.

Sgt Catherine Peel, Int Corps



It's become more acceptable to speak up. Being a woman of colour in the Reserves, I never felt like an outsider – I've always felt respected and part of the team – but if I did have concerns, I think I'd feel more able to raise them, which is really positive. We still need more women in the Armed Forces though, especially from the BAME community.

LCpl Manpreet Maycock, Int Corps



The hair policy was a massive one – I have stress-induced alopecia so being able to plait my hair rather than have it in a tight bun has been really beneficial. I'd now like to see less admin around proving your long-term relationship status if you aren't married, especially if you are both serving, so that it can be taken into account with postings and leave.

LCpl Rhian Goddard, AAC



Something I've noticed following on from the Atherton report on women in the Armed Forces is that everyone seems a lot more invested in making changes to support females, especially when it comes to things like kit and equipment.

LCpl Georgina Smith, AGC (SPS)

We've seen much more open dialogue about what Servicewomen want and their needs being taken into account. The introduction of different sized MTP shirts has been really positive, as well as female body armour and Bergans coming through.

Capt Amy MacDonald, RE

Forward motion

Members of the Army Servicewomen's Network reflect on recent progress... and whether there's more to do

I was on tour when the zero-tolerance policy on unacceptable sexual behaviours was introduced. There were only six or seven females out there, so it was good to hear it's being taken seriously.

Cfn Danielle Davies, REME





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