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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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On Monday 12th June, the Combined Cadet Force organised a promotional afternoon for years 7 - 9 to showcase what activities students could undertake if they joined the CCF. Activities included Flight Simulators, Command Tasks, Paintballing, Laser Target Shooting, Cadet Field Gun and stands showcasing Fieldcraft & Weapon Handling. Current Cadets from both the Army and RAF Sections volunteered their time to run most activities. The afternoon was a huge success with staff and students raving about the afternoon and several students from each year group expressed interest in joining the CCF in September.

It was particularly rewarding to see our current cadets on the various stands and talking about their experiences, and explaining the equipment to their peers as well as describing exercises that they have taken part in.

The event was supported by staff from both the Army and RAF, with three Sergeants (Sgt) from 4th Light Brigade Combat Team & Head Quarters Northeast, (LBCT & HQNE) Cadet Training Team (CTT) and the RAF's Training, Evaluation and Support Team (TEST), Sgt, who brought extra equipment. We were also supported by two members of the Royal Air

Force Air Cadets (RAFAC) the old Air Training Corps (ATC)

A special thank you goes to these individuals for their support in providing such a fun event.

by Capt John Shaw
School Staff Instructor CCF



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“
We will be
more ready and
better trained
as a result
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Storming the streets – p44



Feeling the wind of change

EVERYONE in the British Army is now aware of the major push to modernise almost every aspect of the Service.

Managing expectations around the delivery of new equipment has always been a balancing act but the war in Ukraine has focused minds on the process in a way that has rarely been seen before.

Drones have been fully embraced and personnel are now receiving tailored training packages in their tactical use (page 40).

The Boxer, Ajax and Challenger 3 programmes have gained momentum and a significant project called Zodiac, which by incorporating artificial intelligence will transform decision-making in the field, is now under way. Look out for a full report on that in an upcoming issue.

Older but vital capabilities such as the M3 amphibious vehicle are also getting upgraded (page 35) while challenging new training grounds are being introduced to test cohorts like the armoured infantrymen (page 44).

The appetite for change even extends to housing, with the new family accommodation plan (page 11) creating more flexibility in how troops want to live.

The Service's race to transform itself is barely out of the starting blocks but it will be exciting to see what unfolds in the months and years ahead.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor



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Where to find *Soldier*

> Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the month.

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

> Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at soldiermagazine.co.uk. Just click on the “read it now” tab.

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Pictures: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC



Assault rifle gets green light

Troops give improved night optics and accuracy the thumbs-up in trials

A NEW high precision assault rifle is to be rolled out across the Army Special Operations Brigade (ASOB) in a £90 million contract designed to enhance battlefield capability.

Known as the alternative individual weapon (AIW) system – or the L403A1 – it boasts muzzle signature reduction technology and improved optical sighting and will supplement the current in-service SA80.

Billed as “exceptionally reliable and accurate”, the rifle’s magnified optics mean the user can engage targets from greater distances, while the signature reduction system masks the AIW from detection by sight and sound.

It also has similarities with the models used by a number of UK allies, offering a boost in interoperability.

An initial £15 million order for 1,620 weapons – procured by Defence Equipment and Support under Project Hunter – has already been placed, with the option to purchase up to 10,000 under the contract with Macclesfield-based company Edgar Brothers over the next decade.

The Ranger Regiment will be equipped in the coming months, with personnel from the Pathfinders and 4/73 (Sphinx) Special Observation Post Battery, Royal Artillery also receiving the system. There are no plans to issue it further at this stage.

“This is an alternative individual weapon for the ASOB,” programme manager Lt Col Gareth Davies (Rifles), who has been working with the delivery team at DE&S, told *Soldier*.

“We’ve had positive feedback from the trials to date. It has fired 20,000 rounds to check reliability and personnel have really liked it.”

Lt Col Davies also said the team have been able to bring forward delivery of the rifle, which was originally planned for the next financial year, and believes it will give British troops a distinct advantage.

“It offers a marked increase in lethality, and the system includes one of the most capable day sights currently available,” he added.

“Importantly, it will be further enhanced by our newest generation of night optics, with which the ASOB are already equipped.” ■

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SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP

1. FALKLAND ISLANDS A 'WORLD OF WONDERS'

SEAFARING sappers have completed the third leg of their Atlantic Quest exped.

The 72-foot yacht, Adventure Hornet, safely reached Mare Harbour on East Falkland, having sailed down the coast of South America and navigated the "roaring forties" en route.

Her crew also experienced unforgettable close encounters with humpback and minke whales during the 2,304-mile voyage.

A new team will now set a course for South Georgia, where members of the Royal Engineers Mountaineering and Exploration Club plan to scale the island's remote peaks and carry out environmental research.

Some 100 personnel will have taken part in the venture by the time it reaches its final destination – Grenada – in January, among them Lt Ollie Dalziel.

"Sailing is a gateway to a world of wonders," he said, following his stint.

NAUTICAL INSIGHT

ELSEWHERE down south, troops from 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, also ventured onto the high seas as they joined Royal Navy colleagues aboard HMS Medway (pictured right).

The soldiers – who have taken the lead of the Roulement Infantry Company from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment – spent a week familiarising themselves with the new environment, as well as visiting locals on the less-populated West Falkland.



Pictures: Spr Sameer Raj, Q&E and MoD

Picture: Cpl Lynette Al Dang, Canadian Armed Forces



2. LATVIA GOING ROGUE

A TWO-DAY road move covering 500 kilometres saw The Royal Lancers travel from their base in Poland to take part in Exercise Titan Shield.

The troops from C Squadron, together with supporting elements, left their host country to push across Lithuania in Jackals, Coyotes, Panthers and MAN trucks before arriving in Latvia for the multinational drills.

Once on the ground, they joined forces with Slovakian artillery to play the enemy to a Latvian battlegroup that also featured soldiers from

Canada, Spain, Italy, Albania, Poland, the Czech Republic and USA.

Despite being outnumbered 12 to one, the Brits' specialised recce and light cavalry tactics provided their counterparts with a stern test.

Lt Nick Bennett, who led a dismounted patrol behind enemy lines, said they made the most of the autonomy they had been given by the chain of command.

He added: "At one point we pretended to be Canadian reinforcements to an Italian hideout. They kindly gave us teas and coffees before we told them we were the enemy and, while their coffee was delicious, they were sadly now dead."

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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5. OMAN LEADING LIGHTS



Pictures: Lsgt Vincent Price, SG

SOME 300 personnel from 1st Battalion, Scots Guards have deployed to Oman until November to hone a range of skills for their new light mechanised infantry role.

The unit used Mastiffs until earlier this year, so Exercise Desert Khanjar is the perfect opportunity to practise with their replacement platforms, the Foxhound and Jackal.

"We've been getting to grips with the vehicles and the doctrine and tactics for how they should be employed in a battlegroup context," explained Capt Tom Gordon.

The troops have been rotating between the mounted drills and live firing with pistols, rifles, sniper rifles and machine guns.

Next month they face a week-long battlegroup-level manoeuvre alongside around 1,000 personnel from 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, the Royal Marines, Joint Helicopter Command and support sub-units.

4. GEORGIA LOGGIES GO BACK TO BASICS

A TEST of core soldiering skills lay in store for members of 1 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps during Nato drills near Tbilisi.

Working in the rugged Vaziani and Norio training areas in temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius, the troops honed infantry tactics alongside American counterparts from the Georgia State National Guard and 12th Cavalry Regiment, as well as Bulgarian personnel.

Exercise Agile Spirit was also aimed at developing the capabilities of the host nation, which shares its disputed northern border with the Russian-backed, self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.



Picture: Chris Fletcher

2. LATVIA 3. POLAND 4. GEORGIA 5. OMAN



3. POLAND MINE CRAFT

ARMY explosive ordnance disposal experts have been training Ukrainian personnel in their vital trade.

Run in neighbouring Poland by 35 Engineer Regiment (EOD and Search), the course will help the Eastern European troops tackle one of the deadliest threats they encounter on the front line.

It covered skills such as how to find, identify and disable IEDs, mines, booby traps and trip wires.

Lessons also included how to conduct a threat brief and plan mine-disposal operations as well as clear large swathes of land, trench systems, bunkers and civilian buildings.

The UK has also donated 1,500 EOD kits to Ukraine.

Picture: Cpl Andrew Grayson, Canadian Armed Forces

Picture: Duncan Campbell

Street style:
Exercise Iron Storm breaks
new ground in Germany -
page 44



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Shoulder-to-shoulder with families:
The policy will cater for
households of many types



Picture: Graeme Main

Welcome to the real world

Long-awaited changes to housing rules will recognise modern families

AFTER years of talk – and a three-year pilot – the new accommodation offer for Army personnel has finally been revealed.

Designed to give soldiers more choice over how they live, it will mean some significant changes to Service family accommodation (SFA) rules in the UK from March 2024.

Most drastically, allocation will now be based on need and not rank.

Couples in long-term relationships will also get access to SFA on the same basis as those who are married or in civil partnerships.

And parents whose children live elsewhere, but who visit them for more than 80 nights per year, will also be entitled.

Those without a partner or children will even be able to apply for available SFA as part of the extension.

Personnel whose current entitlement is based on rank need not panic, though, as they will still be able to choose the same sort of home as before. However, this will be subject to availability.

But these individuals will also get three years of “transitional protection” meaning their entitlement will not

change for a while yet.

Opening the doors to SFA in this way may mean that demand outstrips supply in some areas.

So in these cases, the MoD plans to use the private rental sector. But it said any troops sent down this route would be given guidance and various payments to cover the extra cost.

A statement from the Army Families Federation said that it “welcomed” changes to recognise modern life.

“Our surveys consistently show that soldiers and their families really value having access to SFA to support their often very frequent moves, and we will be working hard to make sure this is taken into account as the delivery process is developed,” it said.

“We also need to understand more about who will be able to use the private rental option and what levels of support they will get.”

Defence housing teams are now looking at how the same changes can be made to overseas SFA policy, which for now remains unchanged. However, pilots of the needs-based system are already being arranged.

Read **ABN 043/2023** for more details on the changes. ■

“
This will
give us the
opportunity to
move in
”



EARLY ADOPTERS...

■ **MARCH 2024** will be when the new SFA rules begin for personnel. But troops in long-term relationships assigned to the following locations after October 31 can apply earlier:
RNAS Yeovilton – RMB Norton Manor – Leuchars Station – JHC FS Aldergrove – Palace Barracks, Holywood – Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn – RAF Shawbury – RAF Cosford.



‘IT’S A GOOD IDEA’

SOLDIERS have welcomed the news that unmarried couples in long-term relationships can now apply for Service family accommodation (SFA).

Speaking to this magazine at a families day held by the The Queen’s Royal Hussars in Tidworth last month, they said the changes were a positive move for the Service.

SFA resident Tpr James Wilkes (shown above with family) said: “I think it’s a good idea. It stops people forcing themselves into marriage just to get a cheap house, which is what has been happening.”

Cpl Lloyd Fabri (left) agreed. The 27-year-old is in a long-term relationship and said he would be looking into the rule change with a view to applying for SFA.

“My missus lives with her parents and I have a house up north which I rent out,” the NCO explained. “So this will give us the opportunity to move in together. It gives us more options.”

He praised the removal of rank from housing entitlement.

“I don’t think couples should get treated differently just because the Service person went down a certain career route,” he said. “A lot of people I work with have degrees but chose to be soldiers. Entitlement should be equal, regardless of rank.”

DECODE ARMY DOCTRINE

■ A GUIDE has been written to make tactical policy more accessible to soldiers.

The *Army Doctrine Primer* outlines best practice on how the Service fights in easy-to-understand language.

It was written by WO2 Paul Barnes (AGC (SPS)) from the Land Warfare Centre, as part of a project to make this kind of information more straightforward for the reader.

"Soldiers represent 85 per cent of the Army and yet most education money is spent on officers," he said. "But soldiers too will find themselves in positions where they need not just their training but their education."

"Anyone can read this document in a couple of hours – I was chasing simplicity."

"I've had good feedback on it – people saying they didn't understand concepts like mission command before but do now."

Find the document on the Bringing Doctrine to Life page on the Army Knowledge Exchange.

The section includes an assortment of videos that can be used for self-learning or by instructors as part of courses.



Talkback's on WhatsApp

Put your questions to the top brass on **07973 614782**

TOT IT UP

AN updated pension calculator, which allows troops affected by the 2015 remedy to compare their updated and legacy scheme benefits, is available online at **mod-pc.co.uk**

The tool can now provide pension entitlement information to previously excluded people – including rejoiners and those transferring in from other pension schemes.

For more information read **ABN 036/2023**.

“They were delighted to be here

”



Surge in surgery skills

Army experts support Ukrainians with lifesaving medical training

PLANS to bring more Ukrainian surgeons to the UK to help develop their front-line clinical skills are being considered by defence medical chiefs.

Senior Army doctors have revealed that they are examining the potential for Eastern European colleagues to train with them again amid the mounting numbers of wounded troops and civilians in the war with Russia.

The move follows a four-day course held during the summer in which six Ukrainian clinicians were taught reconstructive surgery techniques at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Birmingham, plus hospitals in Newcastle.

They honed skills such as saving limbs and repairing tissue damage, rehearsing with bodies donated to medical science – a practice off-limits in their home nation.

Reconstructive surgery specialist Lt Col James Baden (RAMC, pictured below left) said the Ukrainian cohort had gained a great deal from the training.

He pointed out that the healthcare system in their country had been developed some time ago, using a model that had roots in the Soviet era.

This was broadly based around general surgery with less in the way of specialisation – while military and civvy medical regimes were entirely separate.

But there is now a greater need for reconstructive skills.

"There is a full-scale conventional conflict under way – the doctors are working around the clock, seeing a range of blast and ballistic injuries," the officer explained.

"As well as teaching techniques,



Pictures: Cpl Daniel Clayton, RLC

we aimed to help with their decision making – recognising, for example, that amputation may sometimes be the best option."

With Ukrainian medics often required to work six days a week, respite from ops could help with learning, he added.

British clinicians also had a huge amount of knowledge to pass on, having learnt a great deal in the specialist area during the Second World War as well as more recent deployments to the likes of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lt Col Baden stressed that UK surgical teams had also benefitted from the experience their visiting colleagues had gained during the conflict with Russia.

He concluded: "The six doctors that we hosted over the summer were delighted to be here and learning has gone both ways – they have seen a lot."

"The visit was certainly a valued opportunity – it was great for us to be able to host them." ■



Reconstructive surgery techniques are shared at The Freeman Hospital in Newcastle



Pictures: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



All the King's horses...

PERSONNEL, steeds and weaponry from The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery and The Honourable Artillery Company marked the first anniversary of Charles III's accession to the throne with traditional gun salutes in the capital.

The day began with preparations at Wellington Barracks (pictured above), before shots were fired at the Tower of London and in Hyde Park (below), with musical accompaniment provided by the Band of the Grenadier Guards.



“If it wasn't for their hard work at the beginning we wouldn't have got to this point”



Army skipper backs retrospective honours for rugby union pioneers, page 68

GENERAL FOR A DAY

How would you use your newfound rank? news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MORE investment in training is the first thing I would tick off as a general. Everyone would benefit. For medics, that would mean things like more resus dolls and cannulation arms for realism.

It's not quite the same trying to find the vein on a sleeve that's already been punctured countless times!

What we do as CMTs is grounded in what we're taught in phase two, but without proper "remind and revise" periods these skills can fade during peacetime.

Safeguarding this sort of training time would also help to progress new troops too. Increasing the quality of our soldiers in this way would ensure an effective fighting force that is fit for purpose.

Another thing I would do is look into some of the outdated equipment that is still being used such as the current issued med Bergan.

This is a piece of kit that many other CMTs will agree is not up to scratch and is typically replaced with non-issued items almost immediately.

A Virtus model would be beneficial, so I would task a team with designing one that can be used with this system.

The final thing I would do is have the juniors and seniors switch jobs for the day, giving them the



“Officers would be able to see the day-to-day lives of their soldiers”

opportunity to see how the regiment runs from each other's perspective.

This would create more understanding.

Junior troops could gain an insight into why things can't always be changed so easily – officers would be able to see the day-to-day lives of their soldiers and what might actually make a positive difference for them.

Name: Pte Millie Butt

Cap badge: RAMC

Role: Combat medical technician

Age: 21

Years in: 2

Deployments: Ops Interflex and Golden Orb



EX-MARINE EYES PREET RECORD



FORMER Royal Marines officer Sam Cox has set his sights on breaking Capt Preet Chandi's (RAMC) world record for the longest solo unsupported crossing of Antarctica.

The ex-Serviceman (shown top), who completed tours of Iraq and Afghanistan in a 13-year military career, will travel to the South Pole next month for the start of a gruelling journey that is expected to take two months and cover more than 2,000 kilometres.

Capt Chandi set a record of 1,485 kilometres earlier this year – a feat that came 12 months after she became the first woman of colour to complete a solo expedition to the Antarctic (shown above).

"This is truly one of Earth's last great wildernesses," Cox said. "It's 14 million square kilometres of frozen desert, with temperatures, including windchill, dropping to -50 degrees Celsius, and unrelenting ice as far as the eye can see."

"Spending two months alone and unsupported in one of the most inhospitable environments on the planet is enough to make anyone nervous, but this is an opportunity to be a true pioneer and make history."

Despite seeing her record at risk, Capt Chandi is supporting her fellow Forces explorer.

"This is a really incredible challenge," she told *Soldier*. "I know Sam has been training hard – I am sure it is a journey that will inspire a lot of people."

Follow the veteran's progress by logging on to frozendagger.co.uk

Picture: Team Forces

“We have to be ready for what may follow”

Boss talks 'pre-war' prep

CGS updates on Army overhaul, with Ukraine and AI featuring heavily

THE British Army is undergoing a period of "renewal" to ensure it can "fight the war it must", the chief of the general staff has said.

Speaking to delegates at the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) trade exhibition in London last month, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders said: "We are the 21st century pre-war generation. This is our responsibility. And for the British Army, it demands renewal to assure enduring excellence."

The boss explained how the overhaul covered Service thinking, training, structures, relationships with industry and its approach to people and data.

"Since the invasion of Ukraine, Putin's Russia is increasingly isolated, and the world is tiring of his disinformation narrative," he said.

"The war has showcased Ukrainian defiance, Nato unity, and provided the most potent accelerant to the changes already evident in 2021."

But he added: "There is no room for complacency or self-congratulation."

"The hard-fought Ukrainian counter-offensive continues, and we must ensure that Ukrainian bravery, sacrifice and skill are matched by our ongoing collective commitment."

"But with around a third of Russian government spending now flowing to defence, they are clearly in for the long haul. We have to be ready for what may follow."



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

Renewal did not require more money, he said, but partnership and cooperation from across defence to "the most ambitious programme of modernisation in our time".

Explaining how data was the Army's second most valuable asset after people, he emphasised how the Service's approach to this would dictate how well it could adopt AI at pace.

"The Army AI centre is already in-being, and there are more than 25 projects underway with more starting each week" he revealed.

"Just last month the Zodiac programme prototype contract was awarded, enabling us to cut the sensor-to-effector loop by previously unimaginable timelines, with AI fuelling this game-changing capability."

Read future issues of *Soldier* for more on the advancement of AI in the Army. ■



THERE were impressive levels of realism when Reservists from 225 (Scottish) Medical Regiment and 205 Field Hospital trained in Altcar camp, Liverpool. Exercise September Serpent saw the clinicians deal with a mock attack against a civilian community along with allies from the US and Canada. The two units were merging to create 215th (Scottish) Multi-Role Medical Regiment as this issue went to press. Picture: LCpl Briony-Mai Reynolds, RAVC

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GUIDANCE WHEN
YOU NEED IT MOST

The AFPS Remedy (McCloud) implementation started on 1st October 2023. From that date it's decision time for many.

Armed Forces personnel who were in service both on or before 31st March 2012 and on or after 1st April 2015 (with any break in service of less than 5 years), will have the option to choose their legacy scheme benefits or equivalent AFPS15 benefits, for the remedy period (1st April 2015 – 31st March 2022).

Eligible members will all receive a Remediable Service Statement detailing their remedy choices, no later than 1st April 2025. Existing pensioner members and those retiring from the Armed Forces after 1st October 2023 with immediate benefits will be asked to make their election. Those with deferred pensions will be asked to make their decision before their benefits become payable.

Be sure to arm yourself with all the information you need to make the best choice for yourself and your family by joining the Forces Pension Society. You will have access to our expert team of Forces Pensions Consultants who will provide the guidance you need. Job done.

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Could compensation time limits be cut?

■ PLANS to scrap the timeframe in which compensation is claimed for injury or illness suffered while in service are due to be considered by the government later this year.

The move follows a review of the Armed Forces compensation scheme, which recommended there should no longer be a time limit on when claims can be submitted.

Under the current system military personnel must make their claims within seven years of being injured or falling ill.

The Royal British Legion has welcomed the proposal, with Director of Research, Policy and Campaigns Angela Kitching saying: "For many their conditions can take years to be diagnosed, or they may not know they are able to claim until it is too late."

NEW HORIZONS



CRAVING an exciting and possibly life-changing opportunity?

Army exchange programme Long Look could be the answer – and it is looking for applications for 2024.

The scheme sends Regular personnel between the ranks of lance corporal and major on short-term placements to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Visits usually last for up to three months, and are designed to broaden troops' experience and knowledge. They coincide with collective training opportunities while also developing closer working relationships with overseas partners.

Anyone interested should send a completed application to Army International Branch through their regimental or battalion headquarters.

Read **ABN 037/2023** for more details and visit the Army International SharePoint site for the application form.

“It can take years to be diagnosed”



Cardboard UAS turning heads after Ukraine outing

LESSONS are constantly being learnt from the war in Ukraine and the latest eyebrow-raiser is the advent of the cardboard drone.

The Corvo Precision Payload Delivery System comes flat-packed and can be assembled in an hour its maker, Melbourne-based Sypaq, says.

The lightweight and durable waxed cardboard frame comes with an easily-insertable propeller unit and avionics system that personnel can programme with a target location.

It is so light it can be launched by catapult or thrown by a single soldier – and each one reportedly costs less

than £3,000.

The drone was designed for reconnaissance and resupply, but following feedback from users in Ukraine has been adapted for intelligence and offensive missions too.

It can carry around six-and-a-half pounds of cargo, making it useful for dropping off medicines, ammunition or carrying a camera, and it has a range of up to 75 miles.

One added bonus of its cardboard construction is that it's extremely stealthy, exhibiting a very low radar signature – something British Army boffins have, no doubt, taken note of.



THE first Archer 155mm artillery system has been delivered to the Army, with all 14 platforms ordered from Sweden due to arrive in the UK by next summer. The schedule ensures BAE Bofors have sufficient time to convert the weapons to meet British requirements. Archer was procured to fill a capability gap and ensure the UK's commitment to Nato is maintained following the gifting of 32 AS90s to Ukraine. The new systems will initially be held by 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery, part of the 1 Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team. As the doctrine for operating this capability develops, the Archers may be reallocated to maximise their effect on the battlefield.

THINKING ABOUT ADOPTION?

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity is a Registered Adoption Agency, covering the whole of the UK and has been rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

We are military specialists, who understand your adoption needs. We promote equality and inclusion, and welcome applications from all members of the serving Armed Forces community.



GET IN TOUCH

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EX RACING ICE 1

Igls, Innsbruck, Austria

Try bobsleigh, luge or skeleton with the Army. It will be an experience you won't forget in a hurry!

This is an annual event run in order to introduce novices to the ice sports of bobsleigh, luge and skeleton. It provides an excellent opportunity to afford soldiers the chance to experience one of these three exhilarating disciplines.

These activities demand concentration, courage, physical fitness and decision making under pressure.

Week 1

15 - 21 Jan 24

Flights from London Gatwick

2 Person Bob	16 places
Skeleton	15 places
Luge	12 places

Week 2

21 - 27 Jan 24

Flights from London Gatwick

2 Person Bob	16 places
Skeleton	15 places
Luge	12 places

£550 for UK personnel | £450 for Germany based personnel

Up to five Army Sport Lottery (ASL) tickets can be used to get £125 off (£25 per ticket) your entry fee. You must become an [ASL member](#) and buy your tickets **NLT by the end of Nov 23**.



apply now



Successful candidates will be informed of their selection by **5 Dec 23** via email. Joining Instructions and Admin Order will be published by 31 Oct 23.
POC - WO2 Graham Holmes on luge@awsa.org.uk

www.awsa.org.uk





Operation recruit rumbles on

...and it's aiming to highlight the values shared by today's youth and the Army

SIX in ten young people do not think the Army is for them, despite the fact they share many of the same values.

That was a statistic firmly in mind of Service recruiters as they kicked off the latest recruitment campaign, "You Belong Here".

Targeting 16- to 34-year-olds, the TV, cinema and social media videos attempt to explain to civilian youngsters how there is a place for them in the military.

Research by the Army found that today's youngsters share the values of respect, fun, hard work and helpfulness with the organisation, so the campaign focuses on showcasing some of these sides to a soldier's work.

"You Belong Here seeks to dispel any doubts that young people may have about fitting in the Army by

speaking to how we're more alike than they think," Maj Gen Tom Bewick, general officer commanding Army Recruiting, explained.

"We hope the new campaign sends the message to all aspiring recruits that they belong where their values mean something – they belong here in the British Army."

Anyone interested in joining the Service can find out more at jobs.army.mod.uk

To sponsor a potential applicant and put yourself in line for a £500 payment, visit rbs.army.mod.uk

The cash, which is subject to income tax and National Insurance, is paid to personnel within eight weeks of the recruit starting basic training. ■

Got a view to share? Email news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

“It seeks to dispel any doubts young people may have”

RESERVE REWRITE

■ **THE Career Management Handbook** – which contains the rules for delivery of career management across the Army – has been revised, including a rewritten chapter on the Army Reserve.

Find version 2.2 on SharePoint. All previous copies should be destroyed.

PIRBRIGHT THE PLACE UP

■ A NEW £11 million welfare centre is nearing completion at Army Training Centre Pirbright in Surrey.

The two-storey building will open in 2024 and will include retail and food outlets plus a modern space for recruits in basic training to sit and socialise in.



SODEXO STAYS PUT

■ **ARMED Forces food supplier** Sodexo has retained its contract for the delivery of catering, retail, mess management and cleaning services at garrisons in Aldershot and around Salisbury Plain.

The deal with Aspire Defence Services will run for 17 years and nine months – with a ten-year benchmarking clause – and is worth £730 million over its first decade.

Mark Carr, Aspire's managing director, said: "Sodexo has proven to be a trusted partner and is committed to ensuring personnel living and working on the garrisons have the best experience possible."

**FEARLESS
FUNDRAISING**

PT PUNISHMENT



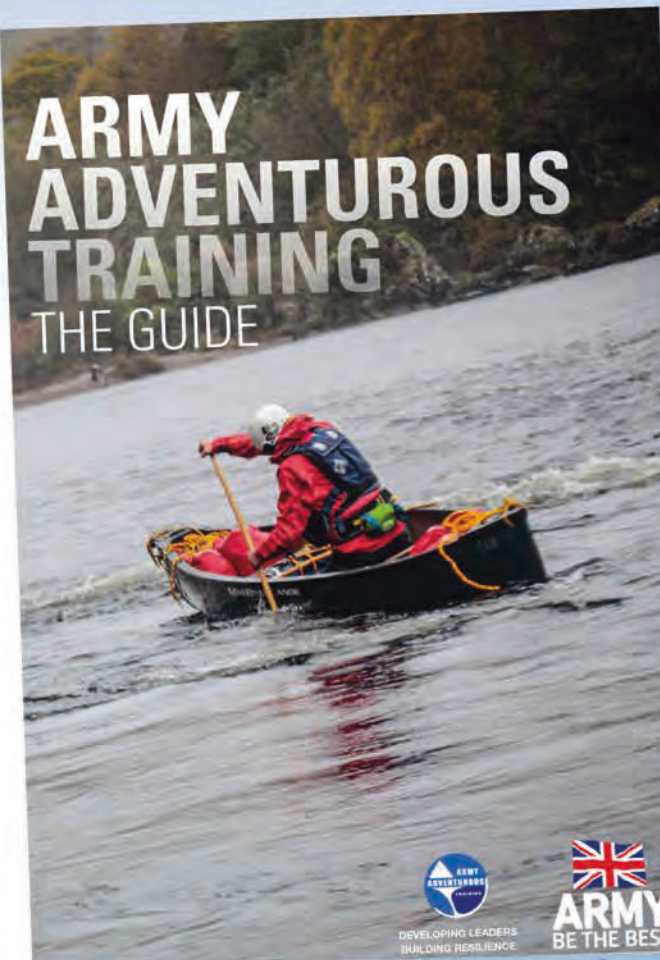
AN ARMY fitness guru is preparing to throw himself into a gruelling physical challenge – in which he is hoping to smash two world records.

Sgt Tristan Willis (RAPTC) is aiming to blast out the fastest mile of burpee broad jumps over the longest distance ever recorded. The ex-Mercian, who is now based at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst,

told *Soldier* he would be pushed to the limit but was spurred on by the prospect of raising cash for Parenting Mental Health, which supported his family and sister, who has a neurological condition. Back the NCO's efforts at justgiving.com/campaign/tristanwillis

Target funds:
£5,000

THE ARMY ADVENTUROUS TRAINING GUIDE IS NOW LIVE!



Packed with information about the courses available, as well as the planning and conducting of Expeditions, this guide is for *everyone* regardless of experience or rank.

Scan the QR code below to see how you could benefit from all that Adventurous Training has to offer.

The Army AT Group look forward to welcoming you on a course soon!

ADRO10238



SCAN HERE TO VIEW AND DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE



DEVELOPING LEADERS
BUILDING RESILIENCE



ARMY
BE THE BEST



Ground view

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

PROMOTION to higher ranks and your future Army career might not be on your mind now but time passes quickly.

It's been well over two decades since I signed up and the years have flown by.

I'm mentioning this because the command sergeant majors and I recently visited the Army Personnel Centre (APC) in Glasgow.

They assure, support, advise and also enable assignments and promotions to enhance the Army's operational capability – and they're doing a great job. However, this is only part of the career ecosystem.

It is a whole Army activity and the visit made me think how we as soldiers and leaders must take more ownership of our own and our subordinates' professional and personal development.

The APC has created some extremely useful tools on Defence Connect to help. The career management portal should definitely be a calling point.

This app provides access to all the information about your career so far and future opportunities, including contract and assignment information and your annual reports – so you can scan back and look in detail at the areas you might need

to develop. It also gives you sight of jobs that are available.

If you want to try something different while staying in uniform – and you have the skill sets and qualifications needed – then the digital transfer app is your starting point.

There are many opportunities within the Service – more than people might think. So my plea is that you regularly use these apps and think more often about how you're going to develop yourself.

As leaders you should also be supporting those under you by setting objectives, coaching and mentoring and producing timely and accurate reports.

We should all be keeping ourselves abreast of our training needs while setting goals and considering where we want our careers to take us.

I've been very lucky during my time in the Service. I was a little naive about my own career prospects but I have been fortunate that there have always been good people around to support me.

Aspire to be one of those who help others and think about what more you can do, so when it's time to head for civvy street you don't end up mulling over what you could have done.

“

We must take more ownership of our careers

”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What's been your best career move apart from the top job?

A Becoming a command sergeant major – it puts you in a great place to help others



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

Weapons ready...

IT HAS been great to see the flow of new kit and equipment continue to progress through the procurement pipeline – particularly an impressive new assault rifle.

The L403A1 (shown) – brought in under Project Hunter – is being handed to the Ranger battalions and Royal Marines first.

It has a raft of promising features,

among them muzzle signature reduction and advanced sighting systems.

Read more details on page 7 of this issue.

The weapon was among the equipment showcased at the DSEI event in London last month, showing that it's not just the likes of armoured vehicle fleets being updated.

WESTERN SPIRIT

■ THE British Army is not alone in the challenges it faces – recruitment and retention issues are being experienced by our close allies too.

Canada is one case in point. I recently spoke at their senior Army leadership symposium in Ottawa, where officers and soldiers were frank about the difficulties while offering some potential ways of addressing them.

These issues will not just be solved at the top end, though. I've said this before but we all have a part in promoting the Army and the many career paths it can offer closer to home.

Let's crack on – and visit rbs.army.mod.uk for details on how to earn £500 in the process.

THE BIG PICTURE

Dusseldorf, Germany

Unbroken spirit

FORMER soldier Gary Callier shows the true ethos of the Invictus Games as he embraces a French opponent after a Team UK wheelchair rugby victory. The 40-year-old ex-lance corporal with the Royal Engineers also competed in basketball and athletics at the sixth Invictus sporting showcase for wounded, injured and sick military personnel and veterans. He was among 59 teammates, nine of whom are still serving, selected to take part in the demanding week of competition.

Picture: PO Joel Rouse, RN





Mastering

3 ways suppleness is key to soldiering success

► **MOBILITY** can be a bit of an afterthought when it comes to phys. But it is as much a part of your overall performance as strength and cardiovascular fitness.

SSgt Tyler Body (RAPTC), one of three exercise rehab instructors at Aldershot's Regional Rehabilitation Unit, explains how it helps you during PT sessions – as well as in the day job...

1 You get more gains in the gym

Ever noticed your heels creeping up during a squat? That's a sign of poor mobility in the hip and ankle. Another common problem area is the shoulder and thoracic spine (the upper and middle part of your back), which limits basic movements such as the overhead press.

A good range of motion is critical to being able to perform foundation exercises properly – and as you improve, you can incorporate more complex movements, adding weights or resistance as you go. We call this “earning the right to load”.

2 You show better all-round performance

Being able to load correctly through a full range of motion gives you greater control during your chosen movement pattern, allowing you to get the full benefit of the exercise. But it's not just about PT sessions – it carries over into your Army role, too. Think of the kneeling fire position, for example. It requires full mobility in the hip knee and ankle. Being able to lower yourself into the pose with more control and hold it with less effort will enable you to focus better on your target.



mobility

Tips for upping your mobility

Incorporate both general and specific mobility into your training.

Your approach should be similar to the implementation of your regular sessions – plan the routine to cater and progress towards your training goal



Frequency and consistency.

Aim for 15-20 minutes each day rather than one or two big 60-minute sessions per week. This can be used as potentiation (mimicking the exercise you are planning to do at a lower load as part of a warmup), as pre-training or as a separate session

Complement other treatments.

The likes of foam rolling, massage guns and dry needling offer temporary mobility and can help movement patterns, however, don't rely on them alone to achieve results



3 You reduce your risk of injury

This one is crucial. Inconsistent and asymmetrical movements can lead to imbalances within the body in the form of weakness and/or overcompensation. The weaker area has a higher risk of injury as it is not able to take the load that is required, while the over-worked side cannot recover due to the extra strain. Ensuring that each joint has full and symmetrical range, as well as strength, is of paramount importance.

Use it or lose it. Joint mobility decreases with age and – more so – inactivity. Maintaining it should be a priority. Don't wait until problems arise before you address them. Remember, movement is medicine.



Need advice?

Speak to your unit's PTI for help planning a routine

Action man



▶ **THIRTY** years on from publishing Gulf War bestseller *Bravo Two Zero*, ex-SAS soldier Andy McNab has more than 45 books to his name, alongside various TV and film credits.

His new non-fiction offering, *The Rescue*, lifts the lid on an as-yet untold Special Forces mission from the Afghanistan era...

Soldier grills Andy McNab on his latest page-turner

Afghanistan there was a similar atmosphere. And it was great being with the lads again, but they were the ones doing it – my time was done.

1 What's the new book about?

A joint operation between the SAS and Seal teams that happened in 2012 to rescue four NGO women. It looks at what was happening on all sides – from Number Ten giving the go-ahead, to what was going on in the intelligence services and the tactical bit on the ground, but also the gangsters who lifted the hostages and the Taliban who were going to come in to take them. It's non-fiction but in a docudrama style.

2 Why this story?

This is one of those operations that got no coverage, but I also knew some of the people on the job, so it wasn't hard to talk to them and get the background.

3 Where do you find the inspiration for new titles?

I find it quite easy – post 9/11 I was working with the MoD for about ten years and there are loads of stories. The question is, can I make it interesting and will readers find it entertaining?

4 Does telling these stories make you miss your time on ops?

Interestingly, no, not really. I always knew it was going to end at some point – that was my inner mindset. Later, when I was working in Iraq and

5 With the Army struggling to recruit, do you think the military still offers youngsters enough adventure?

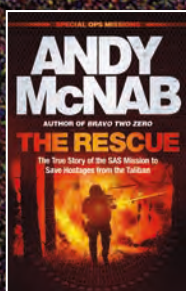
It does, but it's a constant battle around money to do it. The senior level understand the importance of adventurous training and are always trying to get more of it. Yes it's fun, but it's also about overcoming fears, fitness, team building and the sense of achievement.

6 What else can the Service do to sell itself to potential recruits?

I think there's an argument for being much blunter about the offer in adverts. We need to say, 'this is what we're going to give you, this is what we want from you and when you leave, this is what you're going to be able to do'. We tend to be quite apologetic about the Army but it's there to close with and kill the enemy. I'm involved in TV and film production, and action – the 'bang bang' – is what attracts people, rather than helping in a hurricane. Although that is also part of the job.

7 What other projects do you have on the go?

My company is working on a documentary at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst at the moment. We're also script editing one of my young adult fiction franchises – hopefully we'll start filming in Colombia next year. I'm even involved in a Bollywood film called *The Grey Man*, based on a short love story I wrote, so I'll be going over to Mumbai. When these sorts of opportunities come up you'd be mad to turn them down. It's fantastic – why wouldn't I want to be part of it!



The Rescue, by Andy McNab, is out now – published by Welbeck and priced £18.99

Opening the doors

What does the new accommodation offer mean for you?

► **ENTITLEMENT to Service family housing (SFA)** is being extended to more personnel than ever before (page 11). From March 2024, the following changes will be introduced to accommodation...

- **Housing will be allocated on need rather than rank** – for most this will be based on the size of their immediate family
- **Charges will be linked to the property** and won't differ by rank
- **Where availability allows**, personnel will have more **flexibility to choose a property above or below their entitlement**
- **People in established long-term relationships** will be given the **same eligibility** as those who are **married or in civil partnerships**
- Parents whose **children visit them for more than 80 nights** per calendar year will be able to live in SFA
- **Where demand outstrips supply** families will be able to **choose, or may be required to use, the private rental sector**. Support will be given, and the extra cost covered by the MoD

PLUS

- **First-time buyers** will be able to **apply for a refund of legal expenses up to £1,500**
- **Single living accommodation** will be **brought up to an agreed standard** – with the estate now being assessed to see which rooms fall short



RELATIONSHIP STATUS

● For more details on what the new SFA policy defines as an "established long-term relationship" – and the evidence required – refer to **JSP 464**. Service personnel wanting to take advantage of the new rules must register their relationship status on JPA and have it verified by unit HR staff

ANY QUESTIONS?

The accommodation support cell is a dedicated team of civil servants who can answer questions on the new accommodation offer. Contact them Monday-Friday on people-accom-asc@mod.gov.uk

Tough times, huge rewards

Officer's quest to help fellow carers cope

► ANYONE can find themselves confronted with a new reality when a loved one becomes dependent on them.

But support is available through the twists and turns, as Army caring advocate Lt Col Brian Gordon (RAMC) explains...

G You can never prepare yourself for being told that your baby son will have severe disabilities and is unlikely to survive for very long after birth.

But Harry has always been one to go against medical opinion – he's very special.

It is 23 years since he came into our lives now. He's been full of surprises on so many fronts. We were told that he might never walk, but he managed at the age of 11.

And although he cannot speak, he always makes his feelings known, often with a mean sideways look.

He has been through operations and some hard times, and defied the odds at every stage. And all the while he has kept his deeply warm and engaging personality.

Life is full of twists and turns. I could never have foreseen how everything would change when my wife and I were told about the difficulties Harry would face when he was still in the womb. His condition was unique – there is nothing else like it in the world.

It was so hard for us at first – I was then a 25-year-old combat medical technician based in British Forces Germany.

Overnight we had to devote ourselves as a team to caring. We had a young daughter too, and getting the help we needed from the civilian authorities, particularly as we returned to the UK, was not always straightforward.

In the military, we tend to think of caring as being focused on children with additional needs. But this is not always the case – people can find themselves assisting, for example, if a spouse is unfortunate enough to suffer illness or injury. Others could also be responsible for elderly parents.

This is the reason that these days – having risen through the ranks to lieutenant colonel and completed 11 operational deployments around the world – I am the Army carers' advocate. I want to help others.

As well as being a joy to our family, Harry has made me the person that I am today. I'm a better man, father and soldier as a result of having him in my life. Yes, there have been tough times, but there have been huge rewards, too.

And the Army has been great. It can assist, whether you have short- or long-term requirements. There are people who understand the particular pressures our life asks.





Lt Col Brian Gordon

Cap badge:
Enlisted in the
RAMC in 1992

**Operational
experience:**
Includes Iraq,
Balkans and
Northern Ireland

Current role: CO,
215 (Scottish) Mutli-
Role Medical Regt



How to get support...

Establish comms

It's worth telling the Army personnel chain that you might need extra help, and this is a simple task. There is a section of AGAI 81 that confirms you are a family with additional needs and the **Army Personnel Centre will give support**. You can also register your situation with **Defence Primary Healthcare** too. This gives access to specific services for carers – including wellbeing assessments.

Change the picture

It's a lesser-known fact that you can have Service family accommodation adapted. You need an additional needs disability assessment – this starts with ticking a box on the paperwork and initiates a process to make necessary adjustments or find an already adapted married quarter. Over the years, we've had things like access ramps and stairlifts to help Harry.

Call on communities

Military life means frequent moving around – but making friends in the civvy communities where you are based is useful as they can help navigate the complex arena of support available. It is worth knowing that all of our **local authorities have an Armed Forces champion** – often a local councillor – who is a great point of contact and well worth getting to know.

Perfect your posture

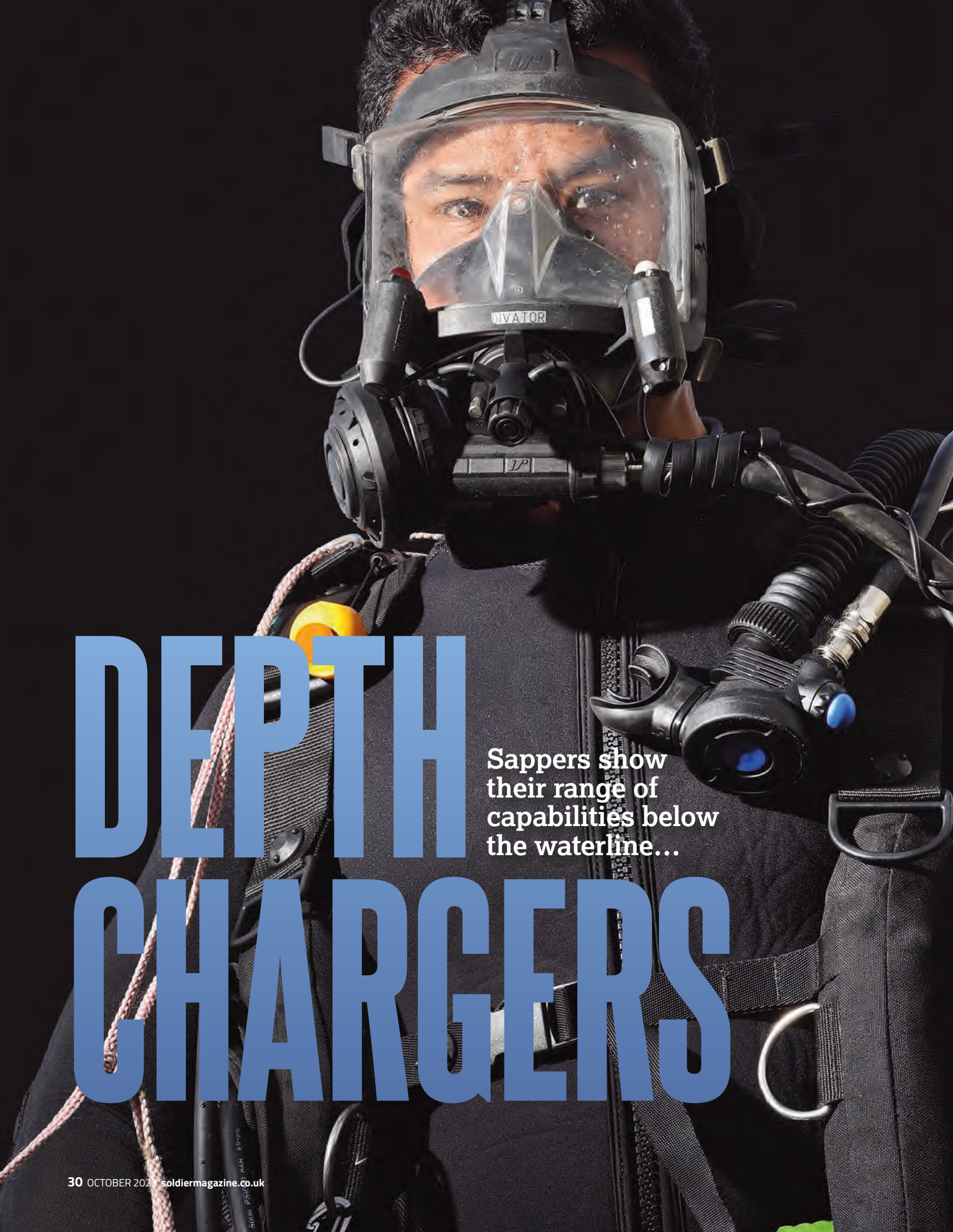
Flexible working has been introduced into the Army over the past few years and it can be particularly useful for those who find themselves with caring responsibilities. Its availability varies from place to place – **speak to your chain of command**.

Use your allies

Do not be afraid to also approach the chain of command and ask for assistance if you need it. In my experience, we have **tremendous backing from our Army welfare officers**. Keep your loved ones and friends close too.

**Need
advice or
support?**

Follow
@ArmyCarersNet on
X, formerly Twitter,
or search on
Facebook



DEPTH CHARGERS

Sappers show
their range of
capabilities below
the waterline...



Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Graeme Main

IN A SURREAL reality – far away from the gaze of the outside world – Army divers have been busy plying their demanding and often hazardous trade.

The sunlight fades quickly under the water; the murky depths cloud the vision and soon suck the body heat absorbed from the last gasp of surface summer.

Here the environment is hostile, strength sapping and strewn with rusting detritus ejected by less considerate members of a distant public.

Nonetheless, the depths of Swansea's harbour, fast-flowing rivers and eerie quarries are a home of sorts to the Royal Engineer diving teams at work in them.

In the past fortnight they have cut up and returned the skeletal remains of old cars for dry land disposal to clear the way for future civilian projects. They have also rehearsed the grim task of recovering human remains – all while perfecting the art of working with other agencies.

Although this might seem a long way from a military operation, the skills and drills the sappers are honing could »

» prove game changing on deployment.

Equipped with expert knowhow, the ability to use a raft of specialist kit underwater and the physical dexterity to stay safe in an unconventional place, they deliver a powerful punch in the British Army's armoury.

This training package – Exercise Submerged Crusader – has certainly been demanding for those involved. An annual outing for dive teams across the Service, this year has seen more than 100 personnel take the plunge to carry out a roster of real-world taskings.

“Everything has come together really well – the troops are taking away a great deal,” says exercise director Lt Col Tony Pick (RE) as the manoeuvres draw to a close. “We’ve had people working across a number of different environments, with the more experienced team members heading to depths of 42 metres, while completing dives of varying durations.

“There have been several lines of work – we have had access to a flooded quarry and the fast-flowing River Tor as well as coastal areas with tasks including the recovery of obstacles and assisting Swansea’s harbour master.

“It has been a completely different type of environment to last year, when we conducted the exercise in Cyprus, but there has been plenty of challenge – we’ve been able to rehearse a comprehensive range of capabilities that we offer.”

Military diving warrant officer WO2 Craig Cardy (RE) – who was involved in the planning of Submerged Crusader – shares the sentiment. Working at altitude in some of the hilly areas around Swansea meant troops had to prepare dives carefully – particularly when coming up from the depths, he adds.

Caused by surfacing too quickly decompression illness, more commonly known as the bends, is a real risk and would require specialist treatment.

“As a result, we’ve had to meticulously plan our casualty evacuation procedures and there has also been an expert from the Gosport-based Institute of Naval Medicine with us to offer advice,” WO2 Cardy explains.

“In this respect, the exercise has been good for our less experienced troops who have also had the opportunity to learn more about multi-agency working.

“Being able to rehearse a range of different skills has been a massive benefit.”

Those at the sharp end of the action were equally pleased.

LCpl Sam Bickerton – of 28 Engineer Regiment – says the variety of scenarios had made for a rewarding outing.

“I’ve been diving for just over a year and this exercise has given us all a good quality of training,” he adds. “We’ve had the chance to go into different situations and use some of our powerful cutting tools, which is great.

“Having joined the Army in 2018, I have absolutely no regrets about deciding to take on this role – it is a great career choice with plenty of opportunities on offer.” ■



Lt Col Tony Pick



WO2 Craig Cardy



LCpl Sam Bickerton

DID YOU KNOW?

The Royal Engineers carry out a range of underwater tasks. We asked Lt Col Pick about the specialist capabilities on offer...

1 Chop shop

Army divers can dismantle obstacles using high-powered cutting equipment below the waterline – including torches generating huge heat

2 Don't look twice

Sharp-eyed sappers are experts at finding stuff in murky places – they’ve been called upon to recover items such as weapons from harbours, fast-flowing rivers and other water-filled areas

3 Check it out

Divers will recce places such as river banks for potential armoured vehicle egress points – useful when planning an op

4 Casualty recovery

Searching for – and recovering – human remains is one of the more testing and harrowing tasks. But the work will often fall to sappers

5 Boom town

Engineers are experts with demolitions – using charges to clear underwater obstacles blocking progress and tackling enemy activity

6 Global reach

Divers can work around the world, and have the knowledge to operate around a multitude of hazards

7 Best selection

Army diving courses (class two, one and supervisors) are considered among the most demanding in the Armed Forces. Only the cream of the crop are picked



Interested in this line of work?

You must first be a sapper, or mariner from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC. Unit diving officers can tell you more

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- Reception services
- Specialist cleaning
- Domestic assistance
- Laundry
- Plus much more . . .



SIDE BY SIDE PODCAST

The New Side By Side Podcast has now launched to listen. In this first episode we speak to some inspiring ex-forces individuals who are Veterans, Reservists and Cadets who have made the transition from Military life to successful careers with Aramark. If you could take some time to take a listen and learn a more about how Aramark can support potential, new and current employees in their careers.

To access the podcast please visit our website or follow the link below:

<https://sidebysidesfm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/side-by-side-pilot-final-v2.mp3>

RECYCLING AWARD FINALIST

We are delighted to announce we have been shortlisted for the Partnership Excellence award at the National Recycling Awards for their project 'The Ministry Of Defence's delivery of the Greening Government Commitments 4 Years Early working in partnership with Greenzone Facilities Management Limited

The NRAs are the largest and most prestigious awards in the recycling and resource management sector and we are looking forward to attending the awards ceremony in November.

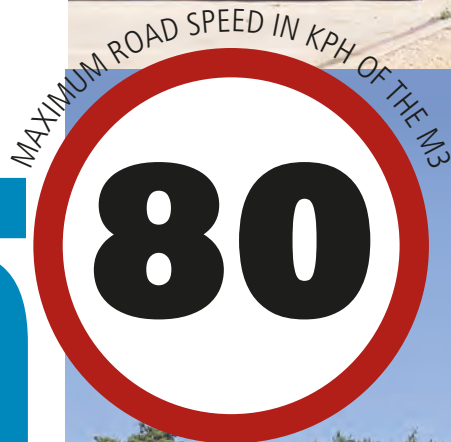


IN NUMBERS

THE

M3

RIG



Time it takes, in minutes, from leaving the riverbank to link up two M3 amphibious rigs on the water as a ferry.



Unsure why this bit of engineering kit is in the spotlight right now? The thousands of river crossings found throughout Eastern Europe may have something to do with it...



WHEN it comes to bridging, the personnel of 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron really know what they're doing. They provide the only wide wet-gap crossing capability in the British Army, after all.

But during Exercise Iron Diabolo they not only spanned some wide expanses of water, they managed to fill in some serious knowledge gaps too.

"It's been a unique situation for us," said Sgt Stuart Ward (RE), a troop recce sergeant with the unit, which combines with Germany's Panzer Pioneer Battalion 130 to form a joint formation that supports Nato operations.

"We don't get to bring the M3 rig to the UK because we are based in and train around Sennelager the whole time and, as a result, personnel here really don't know much about us or what we are able to do."

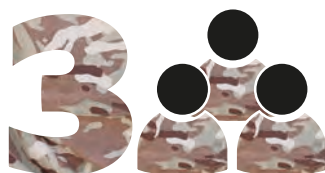
The engineer-focused package formed part of Exercise Iron Titan, the largest training event the British Army will stage this year, which featured the first physical roll-out of the Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team (read our next issue for more).

It enabled 3rd (UK) Division's newly formed divisional engineering group the rare opportunity to come together and integrate on complex technical tasks across exercise areas in southern England, the Midlands and South Wales.

"This has allowed us to understand how our capabilities such as the M3 rig work, appreciate where shortfalls are and identify ways around them or at least understand their impact," Ex Iron Diabolo's main planner, Maj Ed Dickins (RE), told *Soldier*.

"Supporting the Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team is complex," he continued. "It has to cover huge distances and uses Warrior because we have no CVR(T) – so that's 30 tonne vehicles instead of 15 – and when they adopt Ajax that will increase to 40 tonnes. Heavier vehicles create greater demand for engineering support.

"Our tasks also include enabling the MLRS platforms to move forward as »



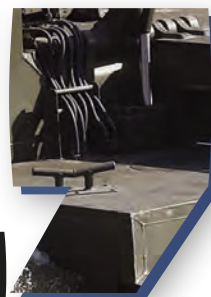
Crew usually operate each platform



Sgt Stuart Ward, RE



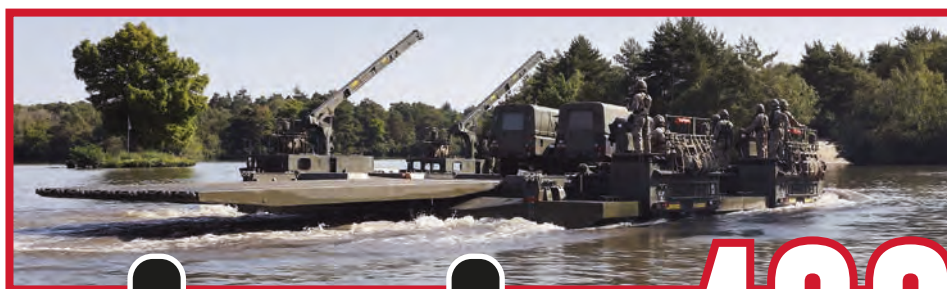
Approximate number of river crossings between northern Estonia and the southern tip of Poland. Around 1,800 of those extend to more than 100 metres wide in places



Sennelager
Germany

Poznan
Poland

Driving range in kilometres on one tank of fuel (roughly Sennelager to Poznan, Poland by road)



400

Horsepower of its diesel engine



Year it was first used on operations, ferrying elements of 3 Commando Brigade across the Shatt Al-Basrah waterway during Operation Telic





EIGHT M3 RIGS

required
to form a
bridge of
100 metres



**Number of M3 rigs the
British Army currently possesses**



Maximum weight in tonnes of a tracked vehicle that two M3s linked up as a ferry can carry. This enables it to transport main battle tanks including the Leopard 2, M1A2 Abrams and Challenger 2.

well as heavy plant and machinery, too, to dig in artillery for example.

“It is only by exercising at this large scale that we can bring together our individual resources and fully understand what implications new concepts such as the Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team have for us.”

As part of this process, the M3 amphibious rigs conducted wide wet gapping in Britain for the first time in more than a decade – on this occasion at Hawley Lake near Minley.

They safely transported numerous vehicles, including heavy plant machinery, across a 108-metre stretch of water in a matter of minutes, impressing with their speed, agility and flexibility – not to mention their relevance.

“We needed to bring up the corporate knowledge of our capability and anyone doubting the requirement for our unit need only look at the geography of Eastern Europe,” Maj Ryan Ingram (RE), officer commanding of 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron, told *Soldier*.

“From the northern tip of Estonia down to southern Poland there are more than four thousand rivers – and around half of those are in excess of 100 metres wide in places.

“It’s no surprise, especially with what’s going on in the world, that there is lots of investment going into this equipment.

“An M3 Evo platform is being developed right now and will be ready from about 2028.

“The Germans have already placed firm orders while the UK is in the process of assessing what numbers it will need.”

The M3 rig’s capacity to quickly be set up as a ferry or joined up in multiples to form a bridge across a major river is seriously impressive to witness.

The facts and figures surrounding this innovative piece of kit and 23 Amphibious Engineer Squadron who operate it are equally striking, and illustrate just why this impressive capability is so important to the British Army going forward. ■



Maj Ed Dickens, RE



Maj Ryan Ingram, RE

WEIGHT OF EACH M3 RIG IN KILOGRAMMES



2

Powerful pump jets give the M3 its 360-degree manoeuvrability in water

3.5

Maximum river current, in metres per second, where the M3 can operate



1.05

Minimum water depth in metres the platform can move safely in



350 METRES

The world record length of the longest floating bridge ever created, achieved in 2016 by eight British and 22 German M3 rigs. It was put together in just 35 minutes, enabling Nato forces to cross the Vistula River in Poland during Exercise Anakonda

DRO

Fast-paced world of tactical flying puts UAS operators to test



ON A DISTANT hillside on the edge of Salisbury Plain a blob of dark green moves into a wood block. Moments later a small unmanned aerial system (UAS) appears, its bird-like silhouette almost impossible to distinguish as it hugs the ground below the horizon.

The two-man drone team confirms the “blob” that was observed is actually a section of heavily-armed “enemy” reconnaissance troops.

As humble as this small serial was, it formed part of one of the most significant new exercises the British Army has introduced in recent years.

The two-day package, dubbed “Dronex”, focused on the tactical flying of UAS, examining how they are deployed and how effective the equipment operators are at completing specific missions.

Drones are becoming increasingly prevalent and important on today’s battlefield, and the Service has introduced a number of initiatives to ensure it is at

the forefront of this fast-evolving element of warfare (see *Soldier*, August).

This exercise is one of the latest and was trialed for the first time in 2022 as an exploratory package to refine its formula. But last month saw the first proper staging of the event, with several combat units providing suitably qualified teams to test themselves against their peers in a competitive environment.

“It’s been a great opportunity – not just because we can compare ourselves against different units but because it’s interesting to see how other teams do things,” says Pte Jack Kenyon (R Yorks).

“We’ve picked up some great tips and have seen how others use different controllers for the same drone we use, so that’s been interesting.”

Pte Levi Brook (R Yorks) adds: “We have probably been using drones for longer than many other units but this kit is now really important to the Army. So anything like this, where regiments can work together in the same environment while sharing how

ONE TAKES SHAPE



they operate is a good thing.”

The exercise was organised by the Land Warfare Centre, which is keen to expand the concept in future to include more teams from across the Service.

Spreading best practice in tactical drone flying is essential, says Sgt Stephen Harvey (RLC), a static camera surveillance specialist and drone course instructor at the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School, which helped run the event.

“This is a great way of raising standards as the troops are being assessed all the time,” he explains.

“As with Cambrian Patrol, we have highly trained personnel who want to test themselves against other units to hone their skills and learn from fellow crews.

“The competitive environment helps that. Like the career courses at Brecon, when someone you’re alongside is doing that little bit better, you always want to raise your standards and beat them.”

» “I think the creation of this package is the latest sign the Army is taking strong steps forward in training for flying small UAS.

“It is rolling out courses to Regular personnel, from Sandhurst to the Infantry Battle School and overseas exercises. The process has been pretty quick and it shows how adaptable the Service can be.”

A sign of that ambition was evident in the final element of Dronex, when troops worked with the tri-Service British military drone racing team.

“The Land Warfare Centre wanted to show soldiers our capabilities so they invited us along,” says Lt Col Karl Eze (RA), who is head of the outfit and also leads the Army squad.

The former Regular who now serves as a Reservist with the Honourable Artillery Company, adds:

“Currently, the Army tends to use line-of-sight but we fly first-person view with a spotter and that gives you a different level of manoeuvrability because you can fly through tiny gaps and around obstacles fast.

“From a military perspective, with line-of-sight flying, if you go behind a tree or building you can’t easily appreciate where the drone is or what’s around it, but obviously with first-person you can.

“The level of control is also higher. You are able to pull higher-speed turns and other intricate manoeuvres, so drone racing is a great vehicle for teaching personnel high-level flying skills.”

Tpr Liam Seckam (RA), another Regular-turned-

Reservist drone racer, demonstrated how they constructed improvised drones and experimented with their design.

“We build ours from scratch with components and upgrade them when new kit comes out,” he explains. “Some of the Army’s UAS get broken and sit on a shelf, but we fix and modify them.

“With the 3D printing that’s now available you can do all sorts of stuff and part of the reason we’re here is to show the troops what’s possible.”

It’s clear the British Army, even at the highest level, recognises how vital it is to develop the Service’s UAS capability – whether that be through new technology, training personnel to ever higher levels or using left-field ideas such as drone racing teams.

As Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders, said during his recent speech at DSEI: “I am struck by the fact that in the evolving Ukraine drone campaign, 40 per cent of losses are attributed to pilot error. When the electro-magnetic spectrum is so heavily contested, automation fails and the skill of the pilot predominates.

“We need ‘war fighters’ – whether they are cyber specialists, drone pilots or infantry soldiers – to be stronger, faster, more intelligent and more resilient.”

Dronex is undoubtedly an important step in such a quest, and this package is set to become one of the most important stops on the annual roster of Field Army training packages. ■

DEEP DIVE ON DRONES

Soldier spoke to WO1 Dave Hird (RE), command sergeant major at the Land Warfare Centre, about organising the first significant UAS-specific exercise for the British Army.

Is this really the first ever training package solely for drone flying?

We staged one last year but it was very low key and focused on developing the concept. This year we invited Field Army units for the first time as well as key stakeholders. We spent one day on the conceptual aspects of employing drones and the second was devoted to bespoke activity. Combined arms manoeuvre instructors designed two stands for the teams to test their capabilities in a tactical scenario and against what we consider to be current best practice.

So is the aim to gauge whether current drone courses around the Army are good enough?

Yes, partly. There is some feedback in that

regard. People can become technically proficient at flying UAS quite quickly but what we need to know is how well they can match technical competence with tactical acumen. This package is partly an opportunity to assess and validate our training process – are we teaching the right people to the right competency level at the right pace?

Presumably all the participants are highly qualified?

Yes, the personnel on the exercise have already qualified, so their units can own and operate small UAS. They will have gone through one of a number of distributed providers such as the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School in Warminster, the Infantry Battle School in Brecon and other locations dotted around the Field Army.

So who took part?

Some 80 personnel attended the first classroom-based day of the package and about 40 troops went through

the two stands. These included teams from The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards; 14 Regiment, Royal Artillery and 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, who are part of the Experimentation and Trials Group. There were also several other units including a small element from the New Zealand Defence Force.

Is there an ambition to grow this package in future?

Yes, but we are still learning what we need to do to deliver a large exercise of this type. As a Service, we have lots of stovepiped activity around operating UAS, but hopefully Dronex will provide a single platform where people meet each other and can share knowledge. We also had presentations from personnel who own policy and assurance – so the Military Aviation Authority were here along with teams from the Land Warfare Centre and officers from the Combat Manoeuvre Centre who own the tactical doctrine. It was a really useful opportunity for





Soldiers honed skills with the help of racing experts using first-person view flying, which may feature on future Army platforms

them to advertise what they do and take questions during a deep dive into tactical UAS flying. A measure of the progress the Army has made from last year is that we had very little documentation to refer to then but now there's quite a lot of it – it's just getting people to read it.

How will you do that?

We've handed out physical copies here, which has been useful, and personnel were signposted to where this material can be found online. Hopefully, they will go back to their units and tell people about it so the Army can start to instil these procedures and standards into everyday thinking and planning.

How important is this exercise to the Army's future, do you think?

Really important. Some people might think human-machine teaming for a 21st century army is a choice, but I don't think it is. It's coming whether we want it or not and we have an opportunity to get familiar with it early, fail fast and learn quickly. We need a procurement model to support that

obviously, but we now have lots of people with enough knowledge, skill and training to progress at a pace of relevance and that's very important going forward.

How do you keep abreast of developments around the globe?

The Land Warfare Centre has a direct feed into the lessons exploitations cell – a team in Warminster who have done some world-class work in looking at what's happening in Ukraine and other theatres. As a result, we have a huge repository of lessons learnt and identified. We take note of them and then decide for ourselves whether we need to adapt our tactics and training as a result.

And presumably any valuable insights are fed into major exercises pretty quickly?

Exactly. They are fed into packages organised by the Land Warfare Centre like this one, Iron Cyclone or Combined Warrior, which have become stable platforms for new technology and tactics to be introduced, where soldiers can try them in an environment that is safe and

assured. There's real value in introducing a new tactic or piece of equipment and telling soldiers to go off and see how they get on with it. The dismounted situational awareness kit was a brilliant example of that. It was given to troops on exercises, they've learnt to use it really effectively but at a pace that, if it had stayed at a school, wouldn't have been matched. The Land Warfare Centre believes exercises are now the place to look at and assess how we should be conducting business in future.

Then why have a drone-specific package and not integrate activities here into an existing exercise?

A bespoke environment allows troops to focus on one thing and raise their level of competence beyond what it might reach in a wider ranging exercise. I still think there is a place for concentrated effort on a single activity to raise skills and knowledge quickly and that can then benefit the tactical manoeuvres of a wider ranging package. As with live firing, this has provided a space where ability levels can be elevated very quickly, safely and efficiently.

STORMING THE STREETS



Armoured infantry face *Crystal Maze*-style challenge on east German proving ground



FOLLOWING a shift away from large-scale exercises on the Canadian prairie, the British Army turned to its old Cold War stomping ground as an alternative venue for armoured battlegroup drills.

But with north Germany short on real estate in comparison to the 2,700-square kilometre wilderness of Alberta, Sennelager-based training staff had to think creatively when designing the new format.

The evolving process has seen them expanding operations beyond the garrison's immediate surroundings to encompass both familiar and unfamiliar territory.

Troops deploying on the recent Exercise Iron Storm found themselves returning to the former British ranges at Bergen-Hohne for live firing.

But the high point came during a foray over the old east German border to the Bundeswehr's state-of-the-art urban training centre in Altmark.

Members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh and attached arms from the likes of the Royal Tank Regiment became the first British battlegroup to use the sprawling facility – the largest of its kind in Europe.

According to Lt Col Andy Husband (Rifles) – commander of the Combat Ready Training Centre (Germany), part of Collective Training Group – the location presents personnel with an ultra-realistic experience reminiscent of a certain 90s gameshow.

“It's like the *Crystal Maze* because it has all these different zones,” he explained. »

» “There is everything, from a rural-urban interface with a farm or homestead-type location, to new and old German town elements in terms of how the buildings are spread.

“It has an industrial area, shanty town, airport, underground system, railway station and autobahn, as well as high-rise buildings. The complexity is unparalleled.”

With a stint as the Army’s lead armoured battlegroup looming, there was rather more at stake for The Royal Welsh than fake gemstones and a chance to enter the Crystal Dome.

The readiness tasking could see them deploy to the world’s hotspots at short notice, and commanding officer Lt Col Edward Willcox was in no doubt that the package had offered a stern test of skills.

“Everyone knows the ability to operate in the urban environment is hugely important in the context of world affairs,” he said.

“I commend all the people involved on their willingness to win. The field training phase is meant to be a most demanding exercise conducted against a live, free-thinking enemy and all the sub-units performed really well.

“They were aggressive, committed – everything we would want them to be in attacking that town. We will be more ready and better trained as a result.”

And with two Iron Storms slated to take place annually, some 3,000 troops look set to benefit from the new format.

Lt Col Husband said staging the package across three venues provided both manoeuvre space and complexity of terrain – while the logistical challenge of moving the battlegroup’s Warriors and Challenger tanks between locations by rail added a further dose of realism for personnel.

“They come to Nato Forward Holding Base Sennelager, pick up the kit and deploy to Bergen-Hohne and Altnord, so it’s a

really good test and something we haven’t done for a while as an army in Europe,” he continued.

“The German training areas provide us with a problem set and environment the soldiers would operate in for real.

“The woodlands have an Eastern European feel to them, while the ability to switch between rural and urban allows us to cater for fighting where the population centres tend to be – as we’re seeing in Ukraine at the moment.

“It’s more relevant training in terms of what we’re delivering.”

Lt Col Husband and his team are now assessing lessons learnt during this iteration and will refine the Iron Storm programme accordingly.

The search for an alternative armoured proving ground may not have been straightforward, but if the German model results in more versatile troops, better prepared for an uncertain world, then the upheaval will have paid off in spades. ■



IRON STORM
IN NUMBERS

AWAY MATCH

Royal Welsh troops share inside intel on Europe's biggest urban training facility

THOSE who have been around the block a few times are no strangers to Sennelager or Bergen-Hohne training areas, but the unknown territory of Altmark is an exciting prospect for personnel deploying on Iron Storm.

Opened in 2018 at a cost of some 220m euros, the ghost town – known as Schnoggersburg – is both impressive in scale and a formidable objective for units tasked with securing it.

Adding to the challenge is its resident opposing force – German troops equipped with Leopard and Marder tanks, who on this package teamed up with members of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment to make life difficult for the visiting side.

As the first British battlegroup

through the gates, the Royal Welsh were the underdogs, up against a combined enemy with both the home advantage and full knowledge of their operating procedures.

Here's what they had to say in their post-match analysis...

“ It's awesome – more than 500 buildings varying from small shacks or slums all the way up to large multi-storey residential flats.

There are subterranean tunnels, a train station, a hospital, a university and embassy-style buildings, so it's more reflective of the various structures you'll see in real life.

We learnt quite quickly – we had to. Because it is so complex you find small things you can improve on immediately.

One of the missions was a deliberate attack into the urban from the rural part of the training area at night, making an already difficult task even harder because you don't have as much situational awareness.



We learnt from that and got better, so when we were later in defence, we looked at what the enemy had done well against us and implemented some of those considerations.

Lt Huw Child,
platoon commander

”

More post-match analysis overleaf »



1,500

TROOPS TAKING PART IN EXERCISE IRON STORM

3

LOCATIONS INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE
NATO FORWARD HOLDING BASE
SENNELAGER, PLUS BERGEN-HOHNE AND
ALTMARK TRAINING AREAS

520

BUILDINGS THAT MAKE UP
SCHNOGGERBURG URBAN
TRAINING VILLAGE

“ It’s very challenging attacking in the urban from a vehicle. When you break in, none of the buildings around you have been cleared so an enemy could pop up anywhere and you don’t know where to look.

Some of the buildings were genuine skyscrapers – they were huge. The opfor can fire down at you from close range, but you can’t get the barrel high enough to return fire.

There are also a lot of choke points, where it’s too tight to get a vehicle through. As a gunner, you

have to watch out for barrel strike – it would be easy to hit the weapon on a lamp post or wall.

Fus Thomas King,
gunner

“ Almost all the buildings and vehicles are Tes-ed up, along with the dismounted troops. So if we put an anti-structural munition such as a rocket launcher through a window it would take everyone in that room out of action.

There are also retractable bridges so they can simulate one being hit by indirect fire, pulling it back so it can’t be used, which I’d never seen before.

The opfor know every nook and cranny, whereas we were going in fresh, so when we tried to take the village initially they kicked our arses.

It’s very difficult when you have a defending force already dug in, but once we got a foothold their armour also found it almost impossible to get back in.

Cpl Keiron Edwards,
section commander

“ The opfor weren’t holding back. It’s not scripted. They are a free-thinking enemy with their own plan – ignorant of ours as we are of theirs.

Transitioning from the rural space into the city is risky and in the process of our initial assault the company commander became a scenario casualty, so as 2iC I had to step up, which I was proud to do.

Professionally and personally,

it was very interesting to go to Germany. For me it was a novel opportunity to go to Sennelager and Bergen-Hohne, the home of the British Army of the Rhine and then to cross the old border to what was a Soviet training ground felt like following in the footsteps of Cold War predecessors.

Capt William Roney,
company 2iC, Canadian
exchange officer



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Medal problems march on

I WOULD like to enquire about the Volunteer Reserve Service Medal (VRSM). I qualify for it under the existing rules but there has been a block placed on issuing this award.

When I've raised the query I was told a defence information notice (DIN) was going to be published on the matter as there had been a Service complaint and the policy was being reviewed.

Now I've heard the delay is due to the workload caused by the issue of the Coronation Medal.

I know of a number of people like me who are unhappy as they qualify for the VRSM but haven't received it yet.

I can't help feeling that if we raised a Service complaint it might trigger some action. – **Name and address supplied**

Maj Josh Moyles from the personnel services policy team replies: This prestigious award is given to members of the Reserve to recognise ten years' of efficient service, in which good conduct is demonstrated throughout.

It is broadly aligned to the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal which recognises 15 years of good conduct during Regular service.

The qualifying criteria for the VRSM was outdated and confusing and therefore needed clarification.

There has been significant work carried out between the MoD and the single Services to progress this issue. The clarification in policy will be communicated in a new DIN which is currently awaiting sign off and is expected very shortly.

This is the reason there has been a delay in processing applications, not because of the introduction and distribution of the Coronation Medal.

The new policy will make certain aspects of the eligibility criteria clearer, and allow applications to once again be processed.

The MoD will be conducting a full review into the VRSM in the upcoming months which will look at rewriting its qualification criteria entirely.

“There has been a block placed on its issue”

'IS WITHDRAWAL OF MY RETENTION PAY UNFAIR?'

● **I HAVE** a problem with my recruitment and retention (RRP) pay.

I joined up in 2002 and have informed the Army of my intention to leave the Service at my 22-year point.

So far, nobody can show me any proof that I signed any document that commits me to serve for 24 years.

I am losing RRP for the final 12 months of my service, which seems very unfair. Can I check that this correct?

– **Name and address supplied**

Maj Gemma Darrington of the remuneration policy team, replies:

These payments are specifically paid to encourage people to join and remain in certain trades and capabilities in the Army.

When a soldier decides to terminate service the logic for paying RRP is removed. As there is no requirement to retain the individual the payments are stopped.

Therefore, in your case it seems correct that payments should cease for the remainder of your time in the Army. The issue may lie more broadly with your terms of service rather than RRP policy.

YOUR letters provide valuable insight but please be brief.

Emails must include your name and location (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 in, you should first try to get an answer via your chain of command.

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
or WhatsApp us on
07973 614782

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



COMPETITIONS

AUGUST 2023

HOAY winner (car care bundle):

Lt Col Stefan Siemieniuch, ARRC

RULES: Winners chosen at random from all valid entries. Except where stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries.

Any winner will be bound by the terms and conditions attached to a prize. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass on your details to any third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.



SEARCHLINE

Calling all Staffords! Did you serve, or know anyone who served, in the 1944 Normandy campaign with the North or South Staffords, 59th (Staffordshire) Division? August 2024 will mark the 80th anniversary of their finest hour, the first successful crossing of the River Orne, which will be commemorated at a parade and memorial in France. Contact Peter Collins on 01543 434394 or curator@staffordshireregimentmuseum.com for more details.



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

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

Forces Pension Society

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

forcespensionsociety.org

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
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GRIEF

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SSAFA support groups

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

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
General mental health support
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage
A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for “Op Courage” on nhs.uk to find your local team.

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
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE
Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816 aurorand.org.uk

ManKind
Support for male domestic abuse victims
01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate
Relationship support relate.org.uk



ROADSHOWS

Changes to the accommodation offer, including the widening of SFA eligibility, will be explained at two roadshows for troops and their families. **October 11 at Catterick Garrison:** 1000-1130, 1400-1530 and 1800-1930. **October 25 at HMS Collingwood:** 1000-1130, 1400-1530 and 1800-1930. Book via people-accom-comms@mod.gov.uk

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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No. 977

TEN details have been changed in this picture of a wheelchair basketball match between Team UK and Team Ukraine at the Invictus Games in Germany last month.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 977, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by October 31.

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

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

The first three correct entries drawn after the closing date will win the new £200 Commando Field watch courtesy of the heritage watchmaker Rotary.

Renowned for its outstanding craftsmanship and exquisite timepieces, this brand certainly doesn't disappoint with this prize – a must-have for any adventure enthusiast seeking durability combined with contemporary style.

The watch features a durable 37mm stainless steel case that is water-resistant up to 100 metres, with luminous hands and a scratch-resistant sapphire glass covering the dial.

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To find out more about the stylish product log on to rotarywatches.com

The winners' names will appear in the December issue and all the usual competition rules apply (see opposite page).

Good luck!





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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

The Great Escaper

Stellar cast tell story of veteran's last wartime adventure

Out in cinemas October 6

▶ A FILM epitomising the "keep calm and carry on generation" that fought the Second World War, this story of a dextrous elderly Serviceman shows how the ethos can drive drastic action later in life.

In the case of *The Great Escaper*, the Blitz spirit is embodied by Royal Navy veteran and all-round cheeky chappy Bernie (Sir Michael Caine), who finds himself at a loss when his care home takes too long to book him on a cross-Channel trip for the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Undaunted, the ex-seaman – who has shrugged off far more danger than most in his long life – decides to dive under the metaphorical wire to make a bid for freedom and head for Normandy.

If all of this sounds a tad far-fetched, it is worth remembering that the script is based on the true story of Bernard Jordan, who fled his Hove care home in 2014 to join his compatriots on the French beaches, wearing a raincoat to hide the medals adorning his chest.

In the cinematic version, Bernie lets his plan slip to frail



MOVIES



and dependent wife Rene (the late **Glenda Jackson** in what would, sadly, be her last role), who reluctantly decides to give him her blessing when she realises his need to attend the event runs deep.

Escaping early the next morning – and with his spouse sworn to secrecy – Bernie begins his epic trip via bus, taxi and finally boat, where he meets Afghanistan veteran Scott and fellow Second World War combatant Arthur, who served with the Royal Air Force.

It is here that some grim experiences begin to emerge. Arthur, who has become an alcoholic, feels responsible for the death of his brother in a bombing raid. Bernie, still hiding something, reveals some harrowing experiences on a Landing Craft Tank en route to Sword Beach.

Meanwhile, it transpires Rene has been keeping her own secret about the fact she is unwell.

All of this adds up to a touching and thought-provoking film which – while handled in a light-hearted way – is also

moving, well-told and provides an insight into a mindset of service and sacrifice.

Particularly poignant are the interactions between the two Second World War protagonists and their feelings when they finally arrive at the commemorations. Meeting German veterans, they have the opportunity to lay some ghosts to rest while decades-old secrets come to light.

Without giving away too much, the final scenes are among the most emotional and hardest-hitting in the film. And as we say a grateful farewell to the Second World War generation, *The Great Escaper* serves as a timely reminder that while we can cope with grief and trauma, nobody can escape old age. ■

VERDICT:

Touching, thought-provoking and funny – don't miss it
★★★★★

REVIEW: SCOTT ROBERTS, EX-RIFLES

BOOK RELEASES



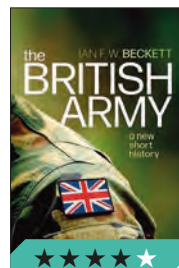
The Savage Storm

by James Holland

IN HIS latest offering, James Holland delves deep into the battle for Italy in 1943. His usual eye for detail and no-stone-unturned approach make this a must for anyone wanting to better understand the brutal campaign.

Littered with the author's signature maps and photos and with a narrative that really draws the reader in, it reveals how the terrain and weather thwarted the Allies throughout the year. Not only battling the Germans, but also the sweltering heat and torrential rains, the so-called "D-Day dodgers" had a hellish time. This exceptionally well-presented title thoroughly deserves a place on the bookshelf.

WO1 Mike Owens, RE



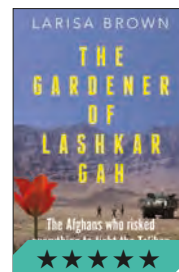
The British Army

by Ian F.W. Beckett

THIS "new short history" of the British Army seems a brave undertaking given the current pace of change. But – as revealed in just 200 pages charting the Service's evolution from the 17th century to today – it has ever been thus.

Each incarnation is placed in the social and political context of the time, making for a detailed, highly informative – if sometimes dry – read. However, this should not deter those seeking a solid understanding of how the institution got to where it is.

Becky Clark, *Soldier*



The Gardener of Lashkar Gah

by Larisa Brown

JOURNALIST Larisa Brown was on the final flight out of Camp Bastion in October 2014 – later leading a campaign for interpreters who served alongside UK forces to be given sanctuary in Britain. Taking up this

theme, her book centres on Shaista Gul, the gardener at the main operating base in Lashkar Gah that many Herrick veterans will remember well. The story offers a unique perspective on the Afghan conflict, shedding light on the struggles of the local citizens and the coalition soldiers alike. It also sensitively recounts one man's unbroken spirit as he cultivates a new life in the UK.

Capt Laurence Roche, QOY

MORE TOP PICKS

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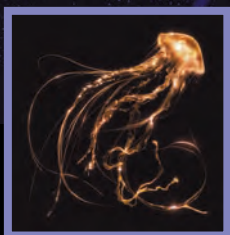
Back to the Water Below

Royal Blood

» AFTER making headlines for lambasting a less than appreciative crowd at Radio One's Big Weekend, Brighton duo **Royal Blood** let the music do the talking as they return with their fourth studio album. Assuming production responsibilities themselves, the power pairing have reverted to the bass-driven sound that made their 2014 debut offering so refreshing and exciting. Opening track *Mountains at Midnight* captures this perfectly and sits comfortably alongside those early highs, a trick repeated on the equally pulsating *Tell Me When It's Too Late*. Royal Blood hit the mark and add a welcome injection of rock to a bland musical mainstream. ■

★★★★★

Review: Richard Long, *Soldier*



GAMES



TMNT: Dimension Shellshock

Out now on all formats

» ANYONE who grew up in the 1990s will have no dramas remembering when the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* were briefly all the rage – their irritating grins dominating the TV and beaming from every other school lunchbox.

Video games were not immune from their influence either and this reviewer spent hours of GCSE study leave downtime feeding Turtle beat 'em up coin-op machines in Aldershot arcades. Now the influence of these classic games prevails for a new generation.

Having released *Shredder's Revenge* last year, publisher DotEmu has introduced the *Dimension Shellshock* DLC with extra characters and new missions. Slick, highly-playable and with seamless multiplayer action, the 2D brawler delivers on every front, from artwork to soundtrack and playability. ■

★★★★★

Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

PODCASTS

One to try

» WHILE a podcast of general interest, *Dan Snow's History Hit* is well worth monitoring for its diversions into some leftfield military areas. Recent examples include an exploration of a Second World War bunker network that would have been used by Home Guard soldiers in a last-ditch effort to thwart a Nazi invasion and an examination of the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan. There are now more than 1,000 instalments in this series, which is led throughout by Snow's accessible presentation style.

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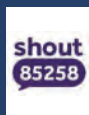
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text messaging support service
for anyone who is struggling to cope.

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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



SOLDIER SPORT



« RUNNING HOT

THE Army women hit top form in the opening match of the Inter-Services Rugby League Championships. The Reds ran in eight tries on their way to a 36-0 win over the Royal Navy – a result that left them primed for another title. Read more about their success on page 73...



TAKE THE STRAIN: FOR MORE DETAILS ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED EMAIL GARETH.WYATT987@MOD.GOV.UK



Pictures: Graeme Main and Grace Sercombe



PULLERS' GLOBAL GAIN

TUG OF WAR TEAM TAKE BRONZE IN END OF SEASON FACE-OFF WITH WORLD ELITE

THE Army women's tug of war team ended their campaign on a high with a medal-winning performance at the World Outdoor Championships in Switzerland.

Representing the Service, the 540kg squad claimed bronze in the open contest before swapping colours to compete for England in the closed event, finishing fourth behind champions Chinese Taipei, the hosts and Sweden.

The results came hot on the heels of a powerful performance at the British and Irish Championships in Scotland, where the soldiers collected two gold medals and a silver.

"This is one of the strongest teams we've had in a decade," captain SSgt Jay Raine (AGC (MPS)) – a mainstay of the set-up for more than 13 years – told *SoldierSport*.

"I competed at the World Championships back in 2016 when we came fourth in the open and sixth or seventh in the closed, so we've obviously done a lot better.

"Going in, our coach, Capt Gaz Wyatt (RA), said he would be happy if we got in the top six, but I thought we could make the top four. We then did that in both competitions, and I was so happy.

"We've had a few girls come back this year who have a real passion for the sport and that plays a big part.

"They've trained so hard, and they really wanted it; we believed we could achieve something special.

"We were all so nervous at the British and Irish Championships as we knew we could win – the gold medals were well deserved. Heading

to Switzerland it was more of a case of 'let's see what happens' and now we are fourth best in the world, which is pretty cool."

With the season running from March through to September and civilian competitions staged on weekends, dedication to the cause is key. This is further highlighted by the fact athletes must maintain a strict diet to make weight limits ahead of each event.

And as a sport, it is far more technical than the casual observer would assume.

"People look at it and think 'you're just pulling a rope'," Raine continued. "But they don't see the training that goes in, which is so hard.

"If you get the technique right you can beat the heavier teams and as soldiers we have a good base of fitness to work from, which we have been able to use to our advantage."

Bdr Stacey Turner (RA) has just completed her third year on the team and said she is "hooked" on the sport.

"It takes over your life," she explained. "I compete in the 500, 520 and 540kg events, so on a Sunday I can be involved in 72 ends and then be back in work the following day.

"And the female weight categories are so competitive.

"When you're going back four metres it feels like the toughest four metres in your life but there is nothing more satisfying when it all comes together.

"I've seen the new girls come in and know the pain they have been in at times, but it is worth it – we have a great spirit.

"There are clichés about females in this sport but if anyone says anything my reply is 'show me your England shirt'



**"I KNOW
THE PAIN
THEY
HAVE
BEEN IN,
BUT IT IS
WORTH
IT"**

and then we can talk."

Newcomer Cpl Ella Murr (R Signals) enjoyed a successful debut season and was part of the 560kg team that won bronze at the National Championships in Bridlington and topped the standings in their Sunday league competition.

The 28-year-old got involved as part of her bid to lose weight and managed to shed 12 kilogrammes over the course of the campaign.

"You have to step on the scales ahead of every competition, so there is no blagging it," she said. "I wanted to lose weight, but I also wanted to get involved in a team sport.

"I previously did powerlifting but was keen to experience that sense of team spirit.

"I've pushed myself to ensure I'm not the weakest and one of the hardest parts has been the fact I'm the tallest on the team – when you get low on the rope, I have to get even lower.

"I had never pulled before so had to work on my rope fitness – it was difficult at the start, particularly on the hands and forearms. If your forearms are hurting, you know you're not holding it properly."

Murr praised coach Wyatt for helping her develop – as well as the team's welcoming nature – and is now keen to taste success on the global stage.

"I went to the worlds in an admin role – our coach was keen to stress it is not just about the eight people on the rope," she added.

"I love the cohesion and getting out on the civvy circuit; there is also a huge sense of achievement in being presented with a medal with everyone watching on." ■



JOIN THE FOLD: FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED – INCLUDING THIS MONTH'S LASER RUN – SEARCH 'ARMY MODERN PENTATHLON ASSOCIATION' ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Pictures: UIPM World Pentathlon/Aiste Ridikaite, Jon Rowley and Nuno Gonçalves



TEAM GB PAIR BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR PARIS PUSH

MODERN pentathlon ace 2Lt Kerenza Bryson (RLC) moved a step closer to achieving her Olympic dream after a bronze medal at the World Championships saw her hit the Games' qualifying mark.

The 25-year-old Reservist finished behind Italian duo Elena Micheli and Alice Sotero on the podium at her home event in Bath and now heads into a winter training programme that will hopefully ensure she is in peak condition for Paris 2024.

While her place is not yet guaranteed – Team GB has four athletes vying for two spots – she is confident she can fulfil her ambition, as long as she avoids any injury setbacks.

"Getting a medal at the World Championships is never easy," Bryson (pictured above) told *SoldierSport*. "I was so pleased to do it this season as everything becomes harder when you're chasing qualification in an

Olympic year.

"It makes my life so much easier, and I can now fully focus on the Games.

"There is a situation where Team GB could have four qualifiers and would then have to pick two to go forward but as I've already reached that mark, and am ranked third in the world, I should be okay. Remaining injury free is now the big thing.

"The pressure is off. I don't have to enter all the competitions at the start of next season, I can do less and be better prepared going into the Olympics.

"I went straight on holiday after the World Championships, and it was nice to have that mental break. I'm now starting back and over the winter it will be about building aerobic volume and getting miles in on the track and in the pool.

"I find it quite difficult, but it prepares you really well."

Bryson, who serves as a



**"IT
MAKES
LIFE SO
MUCH
EASIER"**

troop commander with 165 Port and Maritime Regiment, said competing at the Olympics would be a "dream come true" and believes the World Championships have formed the perfect stepping stone.

"Going into that competition my aim was to medal," she added. "A lot of people say that is a harder event than the Olympics as the stronger countries can take more than two athletes.

"I've dreamt of competing at the Games since I started in the sport at ten or 11 – it means everything to me.

"I watched the modern pentathlon at London 2012 and it was so inspiring. I wish I could have a home Olympics as well, but having the chance to go to Paris will be a real privilege."

Fellow Team GB athlete 2Lt Sam Curry (AGC (ETS)) is also hoping to feature in the French capital and is planning a big winter of training as he prepares

for his qualifying push next year.

Commissioning from Sandhurst and conducting phase two training hampered his performances this season, while a change in format that has incorporated an extra day of competition also played a part.

"I'd been away from the sport for a year," Curry, who finished seventh in the mixed relay at the World Championships and took bronze in the same event at the European Games, explained.

"So it's been a case of getting used to a new performance team and the format change, but I've picked up a couple of good results along the way.

"There have not been many standout displays but I have learnt what is required to do well next year."

Curry (pictured below) hit the qualifying criteria for the Tokyo Games last time out but was ultimately overlooked for selection. Teammate Joseph Choong went on to win the gold medal, with the second GB athlete finishing in the top ten.

"I was gutted not to go but I'd put myself in a position where I was really happy with what I had done," he added.

"I'm now going to throw everything at qualifying for Paris. I want to be in the best position possible and that means grinding it out on the track and in the pool over the winter, and then building my world ranking." ■



PENTATHLON IN NUMBERS

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OLYMPICS COMPETED IN BY FORMER REME SOLDIER JIM FOX, WHO WON TEAM GOLD AT THE MONTREAL GAMES IN 1976

4

GOLD MEDALS WON BY 2LT KERENZA BRYSON AT MAY'S WORLD CUP EVENT IN SOFIA

2

DATE, IN AUGUST, FOR THE OPENING DAY OF THE OLYMPIC PENTATHLON CONTEST IN PARIS

8



Picture: UPM World Pentathlon / Filip Komorous

LASER FOCUS KEY TO GROWTH

THE Army Modern Pentathlon Association (AMPA) is taking steps to reinvigorate the discipline with the launch of a new competition aimed at boosting grassroots participation.

With uncertainty surrounding the future direction of the sport, the Service will stage its inaugural laser run event at Sandhurst on October 11, when personnel will be tested in a combination of running and pistol shooting.

Coaching and equipment will be provided ahead of races in the afternoon and organisers hope the contest will attract a new cohort of athletes as efforts to resolve issues around the long-term future of the traditional format continue.

The usual line-up of running, swimming, shooting, fencing and show jumping is due to change after the 2024 Olympics, when the equestrian element will be replaced by obstacle course racing.

However, there are no guarantees modern pentathlon will feature at the 2028 Games, with a decision due this month.

"There is a big crossroads coming up," AMPA chair Col Will Davies (pictured) told *SoldierSport*. "And there is the potential for huge upheaval if it is not included.

"But we see it as a great opportunity for us to grow via sub-sports such as laser run. It is sensible to start small and then build from there over the next few years."

And speaking from experience, he insists once troops get involved, they can progress quickly.

"My kids did laser run and I thought 'I can have a go at this'," he continued. "I bought myself a pistol and eventually qualified for the British team.

"I won a silver medal in the men's masters at the World Championships – if I can do that in a relatively short space of time, what can other personnel do?" ■

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SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Army Sport/Cat Goryn



Storm sign defensive ace

SUPER League outfit Surrey Storm have announced the signing of Army netball ace Pte Amy Howell (RAMC) ahead of the 2024 season.

Formerly part of the Saracens Mavericks pathway programme, the defender caught the attention of the head coach Mikki Austin with her “fantastic work ethic and ability to wear her opponent”.

Howell said: “I’m so grateful for the opportunity and can’t wait to get started. I’m looking forward to improving and learning from others in the team.”

Elsewhere, Sgt Dee Bolakoro (RE) has been named in Fiji’s extended squad for next month’s Pacific Games.

Picture: John Shirras



Paras power on

FOOTBALLERS from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment confirmed their status as the Service’s premier unit with a convincing victory in the Army Super Cup final.

After defeating 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment to lift the Army FA Challenge Cup for the first time in May, the Paras downed Reserve champions 4th Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment 4-0 to add further silverware to their haul.

EMOTIONAL MONTH FOR UKAF

A RMY players took centre stage as the UK Armed Forces claimed the bronze medal at the International Defence Rugby Competition.

Spr Cameron McDonald (RE, pictured) was among the scorers as the military outfit downed their New Zealand rivals 24-12 in the third-place playoff fixture – which came at the end of a challenging month in France.

Tragedy overshadowed the team’s semi-final build-up following the passing of Royal Navy centre AB Steffan Rees, who died in a fall. The squad then lost an emotionally charged clash with Fiji 41-29.

“It was a tough few weeks,” Lt Col Tim Osman (RA), part of the UKAF coaching team, said afterwards.

“Steffan’s death was a huge shock and really distressing for the whole group.

“Our preparations were clearly impacted and we did what we could to ensure everyone was looked after as well as they could be. Rugby obviously took a back seat for the most part.”

Cpl Ifereimi Boladau (R Signals), Gnr Sai Laudola (RA) and LCpl Mana Cakau (RE) were all on target as the Servicemen started their campaign with a routine 43-14 victory over Tonga.

They faced a tougher test second time out against Georgia, coming from 14-3 down at the break to triumph 24-14, before ending the pool stage in scintillating style.

Rfn Verimi Qorowale (Rifles) scored five tries as UKAF romped to a 128-3 success against Spain – a record winning margin for the team.

Hosts France beat the Fijians 25-22 in the tournament final. ■



"RUGBY TOOK A BACK SEAT"



● **DISTANCE** runner Lt Kate Olding (Int Corps) celebrated a successful showing at the Great North Run, where she finished tenth in the women’s elite field in a time of 1hr 18min 45sec. She was one of 16 Army athletes to compete in the event and her effort followed on from victories in the 800 and 1,500 metres at this season’s Inter-Services Championships.

MONTH IN SPORT

October's key dates...



WHAT: UKAF vs German Bundeswehr
WHEN: October 5
WHERE: EBB Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: This

football double-header starts with the women's fixture at 1400 followed by the men's at 1915 and is the first meeting between the sides in five years



WHAT: Inter-Corps Road Race Championships
WHEN: October 11
WHERE: Gravesend
NEED TO KNOW: This event follows hot on the heels of the Inter-Services Championships and sees riders competing for honours in men's and women's races



WHAT: Mixed Inter-Corps Netball Championships
WHEN: October 17
WHERE: Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: The sport continues to grow in popularity

and organisers will be hoping to improve on the nine teams that competed last time out, when the Royal Logistic Corps beat the Royal Artillery 11-10 in the final



BELATED HONOURS FOR SERVICES STARS



**"WE
WENT
OVER
TO SAY
THANK
YOU"**

RETROSPECTIVE caps are to be awarded to the Army players who lined-up in the early days of the women's Inter-Services Championships but did not receive recognition for their efforts at the time.

The move means that every fixture since the first competition in 2003 will now be recognised as a capped match, creating parity between the women's set-up and the senior men.

Presentations of the honours began in 2008, meaning a number of players missed out during the preceding years.

Current skipper SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS), pictured) has been involved in tracing these individuals and they will receive their caps during a special ceremony at Sandhurst next month.

"We've been through the archives trying to find team sheets from that era," she told *SoldierSport*. "We also contacted old players to see

if they were part of those squads and if they had any memorabilia that could help.

"There are 41 players who never received caps and one of those who now lives in New Zealand is coming over for the ceremony."

Having seen the women's game evolve to the point where the Army now step out at Twickenham in Inter-Services action, Mullen said it was important to acknowledge the efforts of those who paved the way for such progress.

"When we played at Twickenham for the first time some of those 'legends' were there and we went over to say thank you," she added.

"If it was not for their hard work at the beginning we would not have got to this point – they were the ones who pushed the standards.

"In speaking to them they have been surprised and excited by this – they are an inspiration to junior soldiers and officers." ■

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FLEET AVAILABILITY

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- Operational needs of the Army will always be supported

ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY

- If rentals are required, MT departments should investigate off contract rentals in order to achieve the best price

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT

- Book your car as early as possible to enable better planning by the MT teams
- Return your vehicle on time
- Return it with a full tank of fuel
- And make sure you return your vehicle to a nominated individual



The Army has launched a new management system to provide a better user experience and ensure we increase use of our lease fleet. Further information can be found in the new ACSO 4423 using the following QR code.





LOGGIES IN THE LEAD

THE Royal Logistic Corps claimed an emphatic victory in the final of the Inter-Corps Twenty20 Cricket Championships.

Bowling first, the defending champions made short work of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' top order, reducing their rivals to 62-7 before some late blows propelled the score to 121.

The REME sparked hopes of an unlikely victory as they struck with the first ball of the run chase but a sublime partnership between Capt Charlie Bevan and Pte Keddy Lesporis tipped the contest firmly in the RLC's favour.

The latter struck ten fours and two sixes as he finished with an unbeaten 79 from 47 deliveries. Bevan was 43 not out as they raced to a nine-wicket win.

Success comes on the back of their triumph over the Adjutant General's Corps in last season's showpiece (pictured). They also topped the 2023 corps cricket division one standings with six wins from six matches.



Pictures: Army Sport/Geraint Asntion Jones

NINE IN A ROW FOR DOMINANT FORCE



**"THEY
ARE ALL
SUPER
KEEN"**

THE Army's dominance of the Inter-Services Kendo Championships continued as the soldiers hit top form to claim a ninth successive title.

The trio of Maj Chris Jones (RAMC), Maj Mat Frost (AGC (SPS)) and Maj John O'Neill (AGC (RMP)) led the charge with victory in the team competition.

Jones and O'Neill (pictured above) then combined their talents to take gold in the kata pairs ahead of teammates Maj Paddy Nicholls (R Welsh) and SSgt Darren Clarkson (RAPTC).

"It was a very good day and continues a long period of dominance for us," Jones, who also took silver in the individual contest and is OiC of Army kendo, told *SoldierSport*.

"What was particularly pleasing was the fact we had four novices who came through the Army course in June involved.

"One of those – Spr Ethan Richman (RE, pictured left) – made it to the semi-finals of the individual competition. It was a great performance from someone who only started in the sport two-and-a-half months ago.

"We are quite excited. They are all super keen to get involved and did really well in their first Inter-Services – they have a lot of promise for the future."

Given the success of the newcomers the set-up has moved quickly to confirm the dates of its next course, which runs from February 19 to 25 in Aldershot and culminates with the Army Championships. The week concludes with the Army Invitational event featuring top clubs from home and overseas.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the sport should email christopher.jones451@mod.gov.uk ■



● THE curtain rose on a new Army rugby union season with the traditional Corps Festival event in Newbury.

The Royal Logistic Corps crossed for four tries as they beat the Royal Engineers 22-10 in the men's league one final, with the Infantry triumphing in league two and Army Medical Services in league three. Players from across the corps combined to form teams for two women's exhibition matches.



Pictures: Alligun Photography/Cat Goryn



HISTORY MAKERS

A RECORD number of players took to the court as the Royal Signals staged their corps tennis championships in Aldershot.

Sig Faye Worrall (pictured below) made history by becoming the first female champion, a feat achieved with a straight sets victory over Lt Ellie Thorn.

Capt Sam Robbins (pictured above) claimed the men's crown by defeating Cpl Milan Garbuja. Robbins and Worrall then combined forces to take the doubles title.

"In the past we've had one or two women enter, but this year we had the most we've ever seen," said Capt Robert Smith, secretary of Royal Signals Tennis.

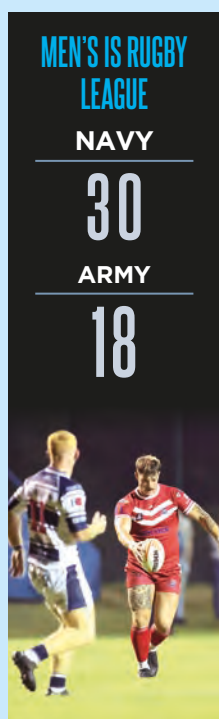
"While seven may not sound like a lot it is for us, and we were able to crown our first women's champion. We had 33 players in total, which is another record.

"It is really positive for grassroots tennis. In the past we've perhaps been a bit casual but we're now trying to professionalise things.

"We are proactive on social media and have organised overseas training trips to France and Croatia to highlight the opportunities available."



NEW-LOOK REDS LEARN KEY LESSONS



HEAD coach Sgt Karl O'Doherty (REME) told *SoldierSport* his new-look squad will benefit from the experience of a mixed campaign in this season's Inter-Services Rugby League Championships.

A 30-18 loss to the Royal Navy in Portsmouth – in which they trailed 26-0 at the break – signalled the worst possible start but the Reds dusted themselves down and went again a week later, when they were justly rewarded with a 36-20 triumph over the Royal Air Force.

The result meant the tournament was being decided as this issue went to press, when the Senior Service and RAF squared off, but regardless of the outcome O'Doherty believes his side is well set for the future.

"We've had five or six players retire since our last Inter-Services games – these were experienced individuals who had represented the UK Armed Forces," he explained.

"We were also missing three or four others that we would have loved to have available.

"Going into the Navy match we had eight players who were competing at that level for the first time. That first half was a bit of a shock for some, with lots of silly mistakes and uncharacteristic errors.

"At the break I told them 'you're better than that', pointed a few things out and they won the second-half 18-4.

"It was good for them to have that experience, and when they faced the RAF they were at it from the off."

O'Doherty praised the performance of skipper Cpl Ryan Watkin (RE) against the Navy and said Rfn Isireli Matea (Rifles) and Sgt Tom Zuger (REME) were instrumental to the victory over the RAF.

Rgr Wame Ratubalavu (R Irish) was another to excel, as he was named "man of steel" for the season.

"Hopefully we are now in a position where we can build with this group over the next five or six years," O'Doherty added. "If we can maintain the continuity we will have a strong squad – the future is looking good." ■



NAVY SCUTTLED ON WAY TO CONVINCING TITLE WIN

A 36-0 demolition of the Royal Navy paved the way for another successful title defence by the Army women in the Inter-Services Rugby League Championships.

The Reds ran in eight tries on their way to a commanding victory in Portsmouth, a result that was followed by a 34-0 triumph over the Royal Air Force as the team lifted the trophy for a 14th successive time.

A stunning solo effort from Gnr Akisi Yaravoli (RA) was the highlight of the soldiers' opening day win as she collected a kick deep in her own half before embarking on a scintillating solo run that saw her sprint the near length of the field to touch down under the posts.

Skipper Sgt Emily White (AGC (RMP)) and vice-captain Cpl Ellie Raines (RAMC) were also on target in head coach Sgt Adam Coburn's (RA) first Services fixture, and he was delighted with what he saw from his players.

"As a team we found it

reasonably comfortable," he told *SoldierSport*. "There are always things to work on after every match, but in this case that is just me being picky.

"It took a few minutes to get into our game and some harsh words from the sidelines got us going. We then clicked into gear and started to move forward in the way we wanted.

"From that point we controlled proceedings and were in their half for probably 90 per cent of the fixture."

Despite having a host of players plying their trade in the Super League, Coburn decided to stick with the squad that has served him so well over the course of the wider campaign.

LCpl Isabel Bibby (AGC (RMP)), Gdsm Manuqalo Komaitai (IG) and LCpl Charlotte Hill (RLC) have been among the standout performers and top-tier scouts were among the spectators in Portsmouth.

The Reds suffered semi-final heartbreak in the Super League

WOMEN'S IS
RUGBY LEAGUE

NAVY

0

ARMY

36



South competition earlier in the year – losing 22-12 to London Broncos – but their efforts paid off as they went on to secure the Services silverware.

"It is a reward for the girls who have worked so hard – they have dug out blind at times," the coach continued.

"This is the culmination of our season and is a chance to hammer the other Services as much as we can – they have 100 per cent earned that.

"The Super League South has massively helped our development and the squad is probably 80 per cent new.

"There are some pretty big teams involved in that and it is nice to go up against them and get a few wins.

"We were together for two weeks before the Inter-Services and that made a difference – there was a real sense of cohesion. The players had an almost telepathic understanding and we're hoping for more of the same next season." ■



It's a weird time at the moment because we've gone from Afghanistan-era counter-insurgency ops to conventional warfare. And a modern Army has to be good at it all, not just one specific thing. Training has already changed because it has to reflect that and be realistic.

Cpl Keiron Edwards



We shouldn't just scrap older kit, like Warrior, and replace it with new stuff – we could upgrade some of it instead. The armoured infantry is a really good capability and gives you things that mechanised battalions don't. If you look at what's happening in Ukraine, Warrior would thrive in that environment. So it would be a shame to lose it.

Fus Thomas King



Modernising is good – making us more lethal, better at communicating and doing our jobs – but as armoured infantry we must also retain the conventional fighting capability. This battalion isn't set to receive Boxer for a number of years, so we are making sure we're really proficient with the kit we have and spending a lot of time looking at integration in the combined arms sense, as well as adding in new bits like drones.

Lt Huw Child



I think working practices could be modernised too. I like the idea of the four-day week when we're in camp – not when we're on exercise, obviously. Other organisations have trialled it and it's worked. So I think that's where we should be going.

Sgt Joedyn Harris



We need to move with the generations, but we already are – for example, with drones now being used more. That's a massive change, even in the six years I've been in, and I think it's really good.

LCpl Luke Franklin

Moving with the times

As the Army's bigwigs focus on modernising the military, we asked members of 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh what that means to them in practice

Modernisation can't happen all at once. We have to work with the equipment we've got while bringing in the new stuff, which is obviously being tested all the time. It's trial and error, little steps at a time.

Sgt Kyle Street



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PEAKS

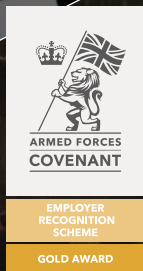
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