

SOLDIER

LYNX EFFECT

Door gunners drilled ahead of deployment

RETURN FIRE

Artillery assets target fourth tour

JUDGEMENT DAY

Army aviators face rules of engagement exam





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SOLDIER

in this issue

MARCH 2011 Vol 67/3

26 Judgement day

Aviators face rules of engagement exam

31 Lynx effect

Door gunners take charge of the skies

35 Practise makes perfect

Phase Two soldiers given taste of life on ops

39 Return fire

Gunners target fourth Helmand mission

42 Get your kit on

Improved personal kit to hit Herrick catwalk

44 Future force

Service adopts agile approach

46 Road to recovery

Army rolls-out programme to help wounded

48 Home comforts

Charity's bedside manner wins plaudits

52 Navigational nous

Orienteering club delivers front-line skills

56 Ranked

Top ten warrior women

93 SoldierSport

Regulars

7 The Informer

61 Talkback

70 Bullet points

73 Home truths

82 Movies

84 Games

86 Music

88 Books

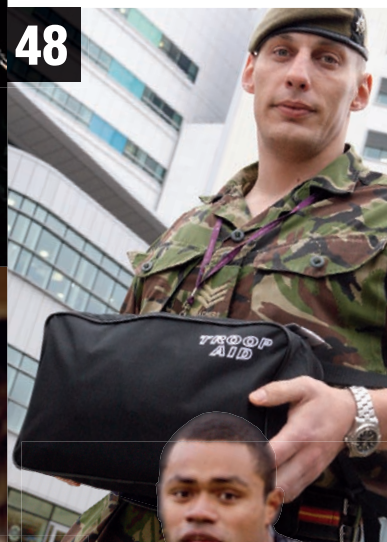
90 Top gear

106 Final word



Cover picture (left): Cpl Glenn Lucas (671 Squadron, 7 Army Air Corps) gets to grips with a door-mounted 7.62mm general purpose machine gun during an intense training course over Scotland Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Members of 3 Commando Brigade prepare for Helmand Picture: Graeme Main





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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"I told you we should have turned left over Salisbury."

● Judgement day – Pages 26-29

Waving the flag for good judgement

SUFFICE to say punditry pariahs Andy Gray and Richard Keys would still be in Sky Sports' gainful employment had one of the stars of this month's *Ranked* been running the line at Molineux on the Saturday afternoon that ultimately brought down the curtain on their television tenure.

Boasting the likes of British battleaxe Boudicca in its line-up, only a very brave – or stupid – man would have dared to suggest to a member of this dream team of warrior women (pages 56-57) that they were not up to the task.

The recriminations for doing so would have been far graver than relegation to Talksport's afternoon airwaves.

As it was, Premier and Football League official Sian Massey – the unwitting subject of Mr "somebody better get down there and explain offside to her" Keys' and Mr "can you believe that? A female linesman" Gray's sexist sledging – did not need to resort to bludgeoning her tormentors.

Aply demonstrating that aptitude and sound judgement are far more important than gender when it comes to officiating a football match, the 25-year-old assistant referee performed with aplomb in the top-flight fixture between Wolves and Liverpool, correctly judging a razor-thin offside decision that led to Fernando Torres' opening goal.

Such qualities are even more crucial in the Armed Forces where lives – and not full-time scores – are often at stake.

As evidenced by LCpl Michelle "Chuck" Norris (RAMC), whose Military Cross-winning exploits in Iraq earn her tenth spot in Rosalind Miles' and Robin Cross' rundown of formidable females,

quick thinking and decisive action routinely avoid the loss of life on operations.

For those patrolling the skies of Helmand province with fearsome firepower at their trigger fingers, the need for such skills and a firm grasp of the rules of engagement are paramount.

While a burst from a .50 calibre machine gun may be just the tool for scattering a Taliban ambush and protecting a British Infantry patrol, it can also endanger friendly forces or result in civilian casualties.

Whether an Apache pilot, member of a Chinook crew (pages 26-29) or Lynx door gunner (pages 31-33), deciding when and when not to engage the enemy is a dilemma encountered on almost every operational flight.

With the insurgency not shy of setting up firing points in close proximity to non-combatants, judgement training is now a vital component of airborne troops pre-deployment preparations.

The need for pinpoint accuracy and clarity of thought in the heat of battle applies equally to those who ply their trade on terra firma.

We caught up with 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery (pages 39-41) as the green-bereted troops were readying themselves for a fourth Op Herrick tour and found a similar focus on split-second decision making.

Laying down precise fire from distance is no mean feat and getting it right every time is a tough job that requires first-class judgement.

Thinking before acting is a necessity across all ranks and arms of the British Army.

With recent on-microphone comments in mind, Andy Gray and Richard Keys need not apply. –

Andrew Simms, Managing Editor ■

Military



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Picture: Sgt Rupert Freire, RLC

Revvng up: Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox insists that British operations in Helmand are delivering tangible improvements to security in Afghanistan

Province progress is picking up pace

THE VAST majority of dangerous incidents in Afghanistan occur in just a small area of the country, it has been highlighted by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox.

Issuing the Government's quarterly report on Op Herrick, the minister explained that 60 per cent of the violence in the state occurs in only nine of its 401 districts – eight of which are in Helmand province and Kandahar.

"We need to remember that Helmand is not representative of Afghanistan as a whole, and that there are many places where progressively a sense of normality and security is returning," he said.

Addressing Parliament, Dr Fox went on to explain that force levels in Afghanistan are regularly in excess of 10,000 when all areas of personnel are taken into account.

He added that due to a boost in the overall number of International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) troops, the Taliban was on the back foot.

"The increase in Afghan and Isaf [troops] has enabled us to take the fight to the insurgency and, understandably, this has led to an overall increase in the number of violent incidents," said the minister. "But over the last three

months, although still higher than in previous years, we are seeing a trend of falling security incidents."

Dr Fox also revealed that there are now more than 152,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) and 117,000 Afghan National Police (ANP) members, which means the target to deliver 305,600 Afghan National Security Force personnel by October this year should be met.

On the issue of transition of security responsibility to the ANA and ANP, he insisted the handover process is on track, stating: "The joint Afghan-Nato transition board is set to deliver recommendations on which provinces will enter the transition process and President Karzai has now confirmed that he will announce the first phase of transition on March 21."

The minister also suggested that the amount of Servicemen and women in Afghanistan might be cutback during 2011 if operations went to plan.

"We keep our force levels under constant review and some reductions this year may be possible, dependent on conditions on the ground and implementation of the security transition process," said Dr Fox. "I want every

member of our Armed Forces deployed in Afghanistan to get the credit for the incredible job that they do, and I know that all those in the House will want to join me in paying tribute to their selfless courage and hard work."

The minister also emphasised that positive change was being brought to the country.

"Real progress is being made at the local level across Afghanistan," he said. "UK-funded teams from the provincial administration in Lashkar Gah have begun to create a district community council in Marjah, which this time last year was an insurgent stronghold."

"At national level, action plans have been developed for the Afghan Government's priority programmes, and we have seen encouraging progress in some areas."

Dr Fox concluded his update by paying tribute to the 356 British Servicemen and women who have died in Afghanistan: "In the face of such sacrifice, we should be in no doubt about the importance to our national security of the mission and our support for it. We have seen progress over the past few months but the need for strategic patience remains."



IN A NUTSHELL

The new-look Personal Clothing System (PCS)

Is this a cheaper solution than Combat Soldier 95 (CS95)?

Since CS95 was introduced, combat body armour has become mandatory wear for troops both training and deploying for operations. PCS has been created to integrate with that kit – providing a better solution for personnel. The design of items also reflects changes from lessons learnt from deployments and developments in material technology. There is a marginal increase in cost over CS95 for an improved, integrated personal clothing system.

How many sets will be issued in total?

The initial supply contract is for approximately 900,000 sets. Three will be issued to each soldier.

Does it have the same size range as CS95?

No. PCS has adopted the industry-standard sizes to provide greater flexibility for individuals and more ranges and variations. The suitability of these sizes have been confirmed through studies of serving personnel.

When will the Reserves, Territorial Army and cadets receive their combat uniform?

Roll-out to the TA will start in early 2012. The majority of issues to Reserves and cadets will be made as items wear out or as new personnel receive their initial kit. Hot weather combat uniform and ancillary items will be given to TA personnel deploying on Op Herrick 15 and to other operations or overseas training exercises from mid-2011.

Will new boots be part of the uniform?

Footwear is not part of PCS but a separate competition to replace the Combat Assault Boot is under way, allowing delivery in 2012. This will provide a choice of commercially-available boots in the same manner that desert pairs are provided for use on ops. These will be in brown as research has shown that black items compromise the performance of MTP camouflage.

Will PCS be available in women's sizes?

The initial-issue size ranges have a larger variation that will meet most women's requirements. Amendments to the design and sizes to accommodate the female form more comfortably are in development.

Major makeover of Army's combat clothing under way

SERVICE personnel are to be issued with a Personal Clothing System to replace the Combat Soldier 95 uniform.

The move has been made in recognition of the increased requirements for protection and the new-look kit will cover three distinct areas – combat uniform, ancillary items and waterproof clothing.

The process of rolling-out the garments started earlier this year and issuing to recruits is expected to commence in early October.

Hot weather combat uniform and ancillary items will be given to personnel deploying on Op Herrick 15 and it is hoped the programme will be complete by April 2013.

The clothing has been designed to integrate with body armour and extremity protection and all camouflage

items will feature the multi-terrain pattern design.

The combat uniform features a new lightweight jacket that includes Velcro and zip fasteners, instead of buttons, and a collar that can be secured upwards to reduce chafing when wearing body armour.

It also comprises combat trousers with angled map pockets and a windproof smock that has a mesh drop liner and armpit vents.

Ancillary items will be available for issue from mid-2011 and will include new-and-improved thermal smocks, T-shirts, underwear, thermal shirts and under body armour combat shirts.

Different designs for waterproof garments are currently being considered and a review of female-fit clothing is also under way.



Currie considers contract changes

AN independent review will investigate whether pricing rules for single supplier Defence contracts can be updated to deliver better value for money.

The study, led by Lord Currie of Marylebone, will look at modernising existing “Yellow Book” rules, under which only one supplier is invited to tender for business and determines in advance both the profits and costs a company can charge the MoD. It will also consider whether the process can be simplified to encourage greater input from small and medium-sized enterprises.

Announcing the review, Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology Peter Luff said: “The Defence landscape has changed substantially since the Yellow Book was originally agreed in 1968 so it is time for a root and branch review of this process, given the current fiscal climate.

“Getting single source pricing right is of great significance, not least to the taxpayer.

He added: “More than 40 per cent of our procurement is subject to these regulations.”

Around £9 billion worth of MoD contracts are currently placed under single source arrangements as national security restricts the number of companies available to tender for the work.

Lord Currie's detailed review is set to last around 18 months and will consult stakeholders from industry, Government and international partners.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

■ THE Armed Forces are at 99.1 per cent of their full-time trained strength, according to the latest MoD Manning Study.

Statistics show that 14,470 recruits joined the UK Regular Forces in 2010, a decrease of 9,540 from the previous 12 months, which is in line with the reduced intake requirement announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The report also showed that the proportion of women serving continued to rise, with 12.2 per cent of officers and 9.1 per cent of other ranks being female. The number of military personnel from ethnic minority backgrounds has remained at 6.6 per cent since July 2009.



Province pit stop promises rapid repairs

A NEW state-of-the-art workshop at Camp Bastion in Helmand province will speed the return of damaged vehicles to the front line and save in the region of £50 million a year in kit rotation costs.

The Equipment Sustainability System facility can accommodate 26 armoured wagons at any one time and is one of the biggest buildings constructed in support of British operations since the Second World War.

The £12 million centre is staffed

by around 130 military engineers and Defence Support Group civilians and will mean that vehicles no longer have to be returned to the UK for deep repair and maintenance.

Lt Col Phil Croager, the project officer at Permanent Joint Headquarters, said: “Front-line equipment is worked extremely hard in tough conditions.

“This facility will allow us to bring vehicles in for deep maintenance, which will help to extend their time in

theatre and increase their availability to operational commanders.”

At the opening of the workshop, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: “Ensuring our troops have the armoured vehicles they need to carry out their tasks is absolutely vital. This will reduce the time taken to repair assets and get them back out on the front line.

“I imagine this is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, buildings in Helmand and it demonstrates exactly what we can do in terms of innovation and excellence.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

TELIC TUTORIALS

■ **THE Lessons Learned** study on tactical land operations in Iraq between 2005 and 2009 is now available on the Army Knowledge Exchange.

It examines the command structure, intelligence, training and interaction with coalition forces as well as looking at the flexibility and adaptability of the Service.

Media and information handling, logistics and equipment also fall under the spotlight.

The report was commissioned to ensure the Army draws all it can from its experience on Op Telic and provides a robust analysis and transparent

conclusions. The study is available at http://tfportal.landforces.r.mil.uk/AKX/OP_In_Iraq/default.aspx

FLAGS OF FREEDOM

■ **BRITISH** troops have helped Helmand villagers make a public show of defiance towards the Taliban by introducing them to the tradition of hanging flags and bunting in the streets.

In less than three months, personnel from 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment and their Afghan National Army colleagues have transformed Chah-e Mirza from an insurgent stronghold to a peaceful and bustling settlement.

Cpl Richie Burwell, who helped organise the flag scheme, said: “These people are from a proud

culture and are really excited about what, to them, is a novel and new way to show pride in their nation and respect for their elected government, as well as defiance and hatred of the Taliban.”

SIX DIVISION SIGNS OFF

■ **THE British Army's HQ 6 (UK) Division** is to be disestablished by the end of the month. The organisation was formed in April 2008 to undertake the specific role of leading Regional Command (South) in Afghanistan from November 2009 to November 2010.

A total of 58 military posts will be redistributed across all three Services, along with six civilian positions.

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**“WE ARE RE-LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE PAST
AND USING MODERN TEXTILES AS CHAIN MAIL”**
– COL PETER RAFFERTY TALKS ARMOUR, PAGES 42-43



Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Dawn of a new deployment: 3 Commando Brigade's mix of marines and soldiers will replace 16 Air Assault Brigade in theatre next month for Op Herrick 14

Herrick on the horizon for joint British brigade

THE next UK units to deploy to Helmand province are determined to provide greater governance, security and justice for the Afghan population, according to Armed Forces and civilian chiefs.

Personnel from 3 Commando Brigade (Royal Marines), supported by elements of 7th Armoured Brigade, are scheduled to take over from 16 Air Assault Brigade in theatre next month.

Brig Ed Davis (RM), who will relieve Brig James Chiswell as commander of Task Force Helmand, is clear on his aims for Op Herrick 14 and told *Soldier*: “We go there to make sure the Taliban do not regain control of Afghanistan. We will be going out with our eyes wide open.

“The progress made is not irreversible and we are not complacent.”

Speaking on the eve of a pre-deployment exercise on Salisbury Plain, the Royal Marine stressed the importance of the Army's role in the upcoming tour.

“I am very much a believer in the power of combinations – everyone brings something to the operation,” he said. “7th Armoured Brigade are very much part of the formation, not only with what they are going to be doing [in Afghanistan] but also because of their help in training.”

The senior officer added: “The central pillar of our approach is to focus on the people first and the insurgents second.

“We will continue to develop the protective communities which our predecessors have built up.”

Operating alongside the soldiers and marines in theatre will be members of

the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) – an organisation made up of more than 200 diplomats drawn from across Government and the UK's international partners.

Explaining his organisation's role, Michael O'Neill said: “It has been built up over time and the range of professional skills we have working with us is impressive.

“The main focus for us is governance and justice.”

The head of the PRT praised the work of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and credited the coalition with significantly

improving freedom of movement within the country.

“We are making a difference in Helmand,” he said.

“We operate completely in parallel with the military – it's only when there's progress in that area that we can put in the foundations of government.

“We function hand in glove with the Services and spend a lot of time working with brigade commanders.

“If it wasn't for the good work of the Army we wouldn't be able to operate in the way we have.”

● **Return fire – Pages 39-41**

Estate evolution to deliver efficiencies

A NEW “one-stop shop” charged with managing military buildings and infrastructure services is to be created as part of MoD plans to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

As of April 1, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) will assume responsibility for overseeing the physical maintenance of assets and equipment and take on the challenge of supporting Service tasks on an overseas estate that spans Germany, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar and operational theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

The move will bring together around 7,000, mostly civilian, staff who are currently working for Defence Estates and as part of infrastructure teams within the three Services.

It is anticipated that the changes will

lead to a reduction of roughly 2,500 posts by 2014 and save the department an estimated £1.2 billion over the next four years through site rationalisation and other efficiency measures.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: “Our Armed Forces personnel and their families deserve the best possible facilities in which to live, work and prepare for operations, within the current financial situation.”

Defence Estates' chief executive Andrew Manley, who is heading up the specialist team tasked with establishing the DIO, added: “This new organisation is being designed to ensure we have an affordable and sustainable military estate.”

The programme represents the first significant change delivered by the Defence Reform Unit.



Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC



■ **TROOPS** on operations in Helmand province are enjoying beef jerky and sandwiches following the introduction of improved ration packs.

Designed for use on patrols lasting 12 hours or less, the new lightweight food boxes weigh less than 1kg and feature items that can be easily carried in webbing pouches and pockets.

Pte Ryan Salmon (2 Para, pictured) said the revised recipes were a “great change” from the regular front-line diet.

“The chemical water heater and main meal are good when you are on short ops, you can get a quick warm scoff and not worry about messing around with a cooker,” he added.

Delivered under a £140 million

contract by Hampshire-based Purple Food Services, the latest meals are nutritionally-tailored to suit troops’ needs and operating environment.

In addition to the lightweight version, new selections have been added to the multi-climate ration packs and the ten-man boxes used by chefs feeding soldiers in remote locations.

The Hindu, Sikh, halal and vegetarian options have also been updated.

Capt Jeremy Rigby (RN), head of Defence Food Services, said: “It demonstrates our ongoing commitment to respond to feedback from our troops in Afghanistan, making sure we give them food they enjoy while maintaining the high-nutritional content.”

Programme of reductions revealed

THE Army has released details of its compulsory redundancy programme as it looks to reduce its numbers to 94,350 by April 2015.

Addressing the recommendations of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, the scheme will comprise of four tranches that will include personnel across the ranks – from brigadier to private.

Redundancy fields will be defined, as a minimum, by cap badge, rank and length of service and will be reviewed on a stage-by-stage basis taking into consideration any further changes to the Army’s structure.

The director of manning will lead the process and individuals will have up to eight weeks from the day the fields are announced to reply.

Each tranche of the programme will consider those who wish to be made compulsory redundant and non-applicants from within the ranges. Personnel from outside the designated redundancy fields will not be accepted.

On current understanding, certain ranks and trades will be excluded from consideration. These include soldiers who are deployed on overseas operations and those who are within six months of deploying.

NEWS IN BRIEF



SIGN OF RESPECT

■ **A NEW** street of council houses in Dagenham has been named after Pte Tony Rawson (1 R Anglian) who died while serving in Afghanistan in 2007.

The Serviceman’s parents, Ann Williams and Alan Rawson, officially opened Tony Rawson Way as colleagues from his battalion looked on.

Mrs Williams said: “I’m so proud to have this new street named after Tony. It would have made him so happy.

“His friends are absolutely delighted as well and it’s so nice for them to have something permanent in Dagenham to remember him by.”

REASSURING TOUCH

■ **A UNIQUE** charity is using hands-on therapy skills to treat ex-Armed Forces personnel – and their families – suffering with post traumatic stress disorder.

The Healing Hands Network, founded in 1996, began working with survivors of the Sarajevo conflict and is now looking to help those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Charity director Tricia Blaxill said: “Our members are all fully-qualified and experienced therapists whose treatments range from massage and reiki to aromatherapy and acupuncture.

“Hands-on therapies can heal the mind as well as the body and our treatments produce positive and encouraging results, allowing people to start to rebuild their lives and move on.”

www.healinghandsnetwork.org.uk

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC



PARATROOPERS have taken to the streets of Naqilabad Kalay to sign up new recruits for the Afghan National Police (ANP).

Personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment stormed into the Helmand town in November, clearing it of insurgents and securing peace overnight. While the British soldiers continue to play a key role in safeguarding the area, they are also focused on training their Afghan counterparts.

The troops are hoping to find up to 40

suitable volunteers who will be educated at the Helmand Police Training Centre in Lashkar Gah, before returning to their community as newly-qualified members of the ANP.

Lt David Donnelly (3 Para) said: “From warfighting one month to recruiting police officers the next, this tour could not be more diverse. The challenges our men face are wide-ranging and not always what people would expect from the Army, but they approach every task with the level of professionalism expected of them.”

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Picture: Cpl Mark Webster



■ A SPRINGER spaniel has established himself as top dog in Afghanistan after breaking the record for sniffing out the most improvised explosive devices and weapons.

Theo, a 22-month-old Army search dog, has been giving the enemy the runaround in Helmand province with 14 finds under his collar in just five months.

The hero hound, part of the Theatre Military Working Dogs Support Unit, is based at Camp Bastion with handler LCpl Liam Tasker.

“I love my job and working together with Theo,” said LCpl Tasker. “He has a great character and never tires. He can’t wait to get out and do his job and will stop at nothing.”

Scottish troops cement security in former Taliban stronghold

BRITISH and Afghan troops have given a further demonstration of their superiority over the Taliban as they cleared and secured a town in Helmand province with no resistance from the enemy.

Personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and their home nation counterparts have now set their sights on establishing long-term security in Sulemanshazi, a settlement previously terrorised by insurgents who had been using it as a base for activities in the area.

After being inserted by helicopter, the two forces searched suspected Taliban locations but found nothing and residents

reported how earlier strikes, together with the growing strength of the Afghan National Police (ANP), had forced the enemy out.

A coalition checkpoint has since been established in the town and a main carriageway has been cleared of improvised explosive devices.

Further developments including major road improvements, the building of a school and job creation and training schemes are now being discussed with residents of Sulemanshazi.

Capt James Collinge (2 Scots) said: “Our hard work has paid dividends with more than 200 people moving back into

the area and a real sense of community spirit emerging. The insurgents are rapidly running out of safe havens from which to operate and we are causing major disruption to their evil activities.”

2nd Lt Matt Alder (2 Scots) added: “The population around the new checkpoint are exceptionally happy to have the ANP and us providing security.

“We sit with them daily to discuss local issues and how we can best improve the future of the area.

“It has been unbelievably rewarding and I can’t wait to see the next phase of development here.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

LEADERSHIP LESSONS

■ **KEY** changes have been made to the Junior Officer Leadership Programme to ensure it better meets the needs of the British Army.

A number of studies over the past 12 months have revealed the system is not working as well as it should and while there is no evidence of failings on operations, it was felt command skills are not being fully developed.

To improve standards, personnel will have to show proof of completing phase two before progressing further and will have to finish all three stages before moving on to the Joint Officers Tactical Awareness Course.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

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1	£10,000	TALL ORDER SSgt Jim Offord (39 Engr Regt) joined scores of other fund-raisers on a sponsored run up Portsmouth's 170-metre high Spinnaker Tower	St Dunstan's st-dunstans.org.uk
2	£6,500	PUB-GOERS' PLEDGES Punters at The Princess public house in Rawdon, Leeds raised more than just their glasses in 2010	SSAFA Forces Help, The Royal British Legion and Honour our Troops
3	£1,000	CHILWELL CHARITY CACHE Personnel at Chilwell Station collected donations during a fun day, big brew up and curry lunch	ABF The Soldiers' Charity soldierscharity.org
4	£450	PAMPERED POSTIES Postal and courier troops from 24 Regiment RLC hosted a ladies evening at Corvette Lodge in Bad Fallingb., Germany	The Royal British Legion britishlegion.org.uk

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IN MEMORIAM



PTE MARTIN BELL (24)
2ND BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA JANUARY 25 – AFGHANISTAN

AN inspirational paratrooper was killed in a bomb blast while delivering life-saving first aid to a critically-injured colleague in the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province.

Pte Martin Bell, of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, displayed "exceptional valour" when he disobeyed a command in order to race to the assistance of a soldier wounded by a separate device.

The 24-year-old had deployed with his multiple to the small village of Spoor Kalay, where he was tasked with engaging the enemy along known infiltration routes to prevent them from attacking the Afghan National Army and intimidating the local population.

WO1 Alan Armstrong (2 Para) said: "He

disregarded the immediate danger which surrounded him in order to give urgent first aid to his wounded comrade.

"This selfless act cost him his life. This outstanding act of bravery was typical of Pte Bell. He was a mature young man, a true paratrooper of the highest order."

Pte Bell completed his basic training in April 2009 and was posted to 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. He moved to 2 Para in July, just prior to their deployment to Afghanistan.

He leaves behind his parents, Simon and Elaine, and his brothers, Oliver and Philip. In a statement, his family said: "He made us all very proud and he will leave behind a hole in our hearts that will never be replaced."



RGR DAVID DALZELL (20)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 4 – AFGHANISTAN

A RESILIENT and trustworthy soldier who took to the field of battle like a natural died just six months into his career with 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment.

Rgr David Dalzell was working at a checkpoint in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province when he was killed in an operational accident.

The 20-year-old, from Bangor, Northern Ireland, made a lasting impression on those around him and had been identified as a man of immense quality.

Lt Col Colin Weir, CO of 1 R Irish, said: "He was perfectly at home in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances and his bravery never wavered under fire. He cheerfully carried the heaviest kit, over the most difficult terrain, in

the most dangerous place in Helmand and when the time would come to fight he was fierce."

WO2 William Roy, of A Company, explained how Rgr Dalzell joined the battalion a week before deploying to Afghanistan but quickly established himself. He said: "His enthusiasm and dedication to provide security to both his fellow soldiers and the local population demonstrated a maturity beyond his years. The courage he displayed during the conduct of his duties was an example to us all."

Rgr Dalzell leaves behind his father Gordon; mother Susan; sisters Kelly, Catherine and Rachael; and his brothers Gareth, Mark and Stewart. In a statement, his parents said: "He was very proud to be a soldier."



PTE LEWIS HENDRY (20)
3RD BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 9 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS from The Parachute Regiment have paid tribute to two comrades who were killed in Helmand province.

Pte Lewis Hendry, of 3rd Battalion, and Pte Conrad Lewis, of 4th Battalion, were on patrol in a small village north of the Nahr-e Bughra Canal when they were seriously wounded in a firefight and later died of their injuries.

The pair had been on an operation to reassure the local population and gather census information when the attack took place.

Norwich-born Pte Hendry joined the Army in May 2008 and was posted to 3 Para from the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

The 20-year-old was soon nominated for service in the prestigious Patrols Platoon and was employed as an intelligence specialist during his tour.

"Pte Hendry had a real aptitude for soldiering and his military career would have taken him far," said Lt Col James Coates, CO of 3 Para.

"Held in high regard, he was always calm and collected, despite the constant threats in the area of operations.

"His courage was undisputed and his superb sense of humour made a real difference to everyday life in his patrol base."

WO1 Richard Hames added: "He was a soldier who could be relied upon to get the job done, however big the call was. Working on the ground under continuous daily contacts, Pte Hendry never let his section down."

The keen boxer died just days before his 21st birthday. In a statement, his parents said: "We

are so proud of him, his smile lit up every room he walked into. A true heart of gold and such a lovely boy to be around."

Pte Lewis was an active individual with a taste for adventure and joined the Territorial Army in August 2008.

He was accepted for a Full-Time Reserve Service appointment in 3 Para a year later and volunteered to be the lead scout for his section within the fire support group.

Lt Col John Boyd, CO of 4 Para, said: "It takes a special sort of individual to join The Parachute Regiment; it takes an exceptional individual to deploy on operations and for that he will always be remembered. Our Reservists are doing an outstanding job alongside their Regular counterparts and although Pte Lewis died doing the job he loved, amongst his brothers in arms, he will never be forgotten."

Pte Luke Flanagan (3 Para) added: "He was probably the loudest bloke in the checkpoint and was constantly having banter with the blokes. An awesome lead scout, fearsome in a firefight, he cared about the men and was always making them scoff and brews."

The 22-year-old all-rounder was a semi-professional footballer, club swimmer and biathlon champion.

In a statement, his family said: "He always considered others before himself, which made him the most fantastic and loving son, brother, boyfriend, friend and colleague. He carried this trait into his work and he knew that together with his unit he was making a big difference."



PTE CONRAD LEWIS (22)
4TH BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 9 – AFGHANISTAN



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IN MEMORIAM



WO2 COLIN BECKETT (36)
3RD BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 5 – AFGHANISTAN

THE Parachute Regiment is mourning the loss of an inspirational and iconic leader who was killed as he attempted to provide cover for his fellow patrol members.

WO2 Colin Beckett was part of an operation to tackle insurgent forces and develop a protected community in the village of Shaheed, near the Nahr-e Bughra Canal, when he was fatally wounded by an improvised explosive device.

The 36-year-old, a company sergeant major in the regiment's 3rd Battalion, joined the Army in 1990 and his outstanding leadership ability saw him swiftly move up the ranks.

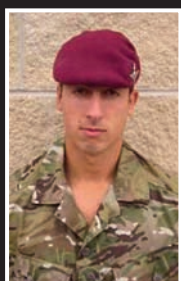
Having deployed to Northern Ireland and Kosovo, he served on the first Op Telic as an anti-tank section commander. He had also

completed two previous tours of Afghanistan.

Lt Col James Coates, CO of 3 Para, said: "He was one of the most talented sergeant majors of his generation. With a long and distinguished career spanning countless deployments, he represented the very essence of a paratrooper; professional to the core, devoted to his men and hugely respected."

WO2 Beckett leaves behind his parents Del and Kim and wife Rachel, who was due to give birth to their first child last month.

"He was a fantastic soldier, a great son, a good brother and friend and a truly special husband," Mrs Beckett said. "May his love for life, strength, humour and strong character live on forever in his baby girl Freya."



LCPL KYLE MARSHALL (23)
2ND BATTALION,
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA FEBRUARY 14 – AFGHANISTAN

AN improvised explosive device claimed the life of an outstanding soldier who displayed natural ability as a leader while on the front line of Helmand province.

LCpl Kyle Marshall, of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, was taking the fight to insurgent forces near the village of Padaka in the Nahr-e Saraj district when he was fatally wounded as he extracted from a compound.

The 23-year-old completed his basic training in August 2007 and had already served in Afghanistan on Op Herrick 8.

Lt Col Andrew Harrison, CO of 2 Para, said: "He mentored, coaxed and taught his soldiers with consummate passion and consistent diligence. He was ever-optimistic, even in the

bleakest of circumstances, and could charm all he met. He is irreplaceable."

In the moments before his death, LCpl Marshall led his team in the discovery of a bomb-making factory, in which 35 devices and a plethora of explosive components were found.

"He died as he lived, at the front, guiding his men, surrounded by friends and at the very tip of the battalion spear," Lt Col Harrison added.

The junior NCO was a passionate Newcastle United supporter and leaves behind his father Gary, mother Olwyn and fiancée Hayley, who he was due to marry at the end of his tour.

In a statement, LCpl Marshall's family said: "Kyle was a very lively, outgoing, loving and much-loved son."



PTE ROBERT WOOD (28)
17 PORT AND MARITIME REGIMENT,
THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
DIED FEBRUARY 14 – AFGHANISTAN

THE Royal Logistic Corps is mourning the loss of two highly-skilled and popular soldiers who were killed in a fire at Camp Bastion.

Pte Robert Wood, of 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, and Pte Dean Hutchinson, of 9 Regiment, were both serving with the Theatre Logistic Group that forms a vital support link to front-line operations.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation, but it is not thought to be the result of enemy action.

Pte Wood joined the RLC as a driver port operator in July 2001 and from the outset he displayed a strong work ethic that was clear for all to see.

Lt Col Simon Hutchings, commanding officer of the Theatre Logistic Group, said: "He was one of our up and coming Stevedores, experienced and committed, he had recently been selected for promotion."

"Volunteering for operations, again, he was keen to do his bit and demonstrate his wider skills. He had that innate ability to make friends easily; was hugely popular and fiercely proud of being a port operator."

The 28-year-old was highly respected among his colleagues and got on well with everyone he met.

LCpl Raj Singh said: "Apart from his professionalism at work, he always loved to be amongst his workmates and was a good friend and guide. I will keep with me the many funny stories of him doing crazy stuff."

Pte Wood was a very recent and proud

father and constantly thought of his new family, gaining strength from the prospect of returning to them. In a statement, his family said: "We are so immensely proud of him and he will live in our hearts forever."

Pte Hutchinson joined the RLC as a driver in September 2004 and was posted to 9 Regiment on completion of his training.

His infectious humour and hard work soon earned the respect and friendship of his peers and he quickly excelled in his area of expertise.

Maj Steve Cornell, OC of the General Support Squadron, said: "A young soldier with real potential, Pte Hutchinson loved his trade and being with the troop."

"He really fed off the energy that comes with being part of a close-knit team. He was a great person and an excellent logistic soldier."

Pte Josh Hallam added: "His attitude for life was to grab it by the horns and enjoy it."

"He was always up for a laugh and was the centre of the troop's morale. As much as he was an Army boy he was a massive family guy."

The 23-year-old was an avid Newcastle United fan and was a loving son, brother and boyfriend. In a statement, his family said: "We were so proud of him when he joined the Army. He will always be in our hearts and thoughts."

Of the pair, Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "These men worked hard to provide the vital logistic support that makes military operations in Afghanistan possible; both were rightfully proud of the part that they played in protecting our national security."



PTE DEAN HUTCHINSON (23)
9 REGIMENT,
THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
DIED FEBRUARY 14 – AFGHANISTAN



Picture: Sgt Rupert Freer, RLC

Foundations for success: Under the command of Lt Col Frazer Ross (left), Task Force Helmand Engineer Group has completed a host of specialist taskings

Sapper satisfaction in tour's triumphs

THE commanding officer of the Task Force Helmand Engineer Group believes his skilled staff can reflect on an operational tour characterised by several notable achievements.

Lt Col Frazer Ross, of 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), Royal Engineers, has led a 650-strong unit responsible for delivering close combat support to the Infantry as well as carrying out specialist tasks that allow them to fight, move and live.

These range from the construction of buildings, roads or bridges while under fire to the finding and clearing of improvised explosive devices.

During their current tour, the sappers have built two support bridges on Highway One, a strategically-important transport route.

The British engineers have also provided five high-risk search teams for the ongoing battle against roadside bombs and played a key role in the

construction of Route Trident, a vital resupply line that leads through some of the most dangerous parts of Helmand province.

In addition, the force offered combat engineering support to Op Tora Zhemay, a mission to clear insurgents from the town of Saidabad.

In their two-month supporting role, the soldiers were involved in the loading and movement of 614 aggregate trucks while under enemy fire on fragile routes that needed continual upgrade.

It also required the construction of a new bridge, patrol base and five checkpoints as well as the demolition of five old outposts.

Speaking on the eve of his return from theatre this month, Lt Col Ross said: "The challenges and subtleties of military operations in Afghanistan, at every level, cannot be overestimated.

"Every soldier and officer in the field

must be at his sharpest every second.

This is a thinking man's war, one of many contradictions and contrasts not widely appreciated beyond the military.

"The physical challenges are extreme, the danger intense, but it is the ability to think and win through uncertainty and complexity that succeeds in the sophisticated and subtle battle for the people and the fight against the insurgency."

The senior officer also found time to praise residents in his unit's hometown of Woodbridge.

"I would like to sincerely thank the community for the marvellous support they give the regiment – those in Afghanistan, the families back in Rock Barracks and my injured soldiers – while we are deployed and when we are at home," he added.

"It is a close relationship that, as commanding officer, I hold very dear and am extremely proud of."

● **MUSICIAN** Kate Whittaker (CAMUS) made an emotional visit to her brother's memorial in Afghanistan during a whirlwind tour of the country with The Band of The Parachute Regiment.

The 21-year-old spent a hectic spell in theatre that included performances at the International Security Assistance Force headquarters and British Embassy, but the highlight was seeing the lasting tribute to her late sibling, Pte Joe Whittaker (4 Para).

"It finally brings all the pieces together for me," she explained. "It felt weird as I knew my mum would be lighting a candle where Joe's ashes are buried in Stratford at the same time as I was at his cross in Helmand."

"It is amazing to see that it is still there and not forgotten about. It brings a certain amount of closure for me and

feels like a weight has been lifted. In some ways it felt like I was doing it for all the families."

Kate auditioned for the Army School of Music three weeks before her brother, a Reservist attached to 2 Para, was killed in action on June 24, 2008.

"Joe had wished me well for the performance, he was so chuffed I was following him into the Army," she said. "He would have hated for me not to join up because of what happened to him."

Reflecting on the band's tour, Musn Whittaker added: "I've really enjoyed the trip.

"It's the least we can do to distract the lads from what they have to go through every day and it's gigs like the ones we have done out in the forward bases that make the difference. It really is what our job is all about."



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

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Picture: Capt Neil Archibald



Force to be reckoned with: British-trained Afghan policemen now regularly mount their own operations

Lawmen lance enemy elements

THE 2nd Kandak of the Afghan National Police (ANP) has shown signs of its rapid development by mounting an operation to crush insurgent activity in Helmand.

Around 400 officers under the command of Col Abdul Sattar Noorzai surged into Pupalzay Kalay, just north of Route 601, clearing Taliban elements in decisive fashion and killing at least five enemy fighters.

Personnel from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland helped coordinate the mission and provided Jackal fire support vehicles and Warrior armoured personnel carriers.

The ANP lost two officers when an improvised explosive device detonated, but the operation was hailed as an overall success and highlighted the ability of national units to stand alongside their International Security Assistance Force partners.

The move followed a shura organised by Col Sattar for those living near Route 601 – a key transit carriageway for trade running east from Lashkar

Gah – to discuss their concerns.

Around 260 villagers attended the meeting, during which the commander urged residents to unite with the ANP in driving the Taliban from the area.

Capt Tom Mobbs, of Delta Company, 5 Scots, said: “This operation was a great step forward for the 2nd Kandak.

“They left the insurgents in no doubt whatsoever that they are a force to be reckoned with.

“Of course, we were deeply saddened to see two of our ANP colleagues fall victim to an IED. They know as well as we do the cost of this conflict but also what’s ultimately at stake and how vital it is that we prevail.

“At the shura it was great to see the locals so motivated about their own security. I get the sense we have made real progress on Route 601.”

Capt Mobbs added: “If the ANP and villagers join together as discussed at this meeting it will become almost impossible for the insurgents to effectively target either the people or the road as they have in the past.”

■ **STUDENTS** in Lashkar Gah received a significant boost to their education thanks to an ongoing campaign to improve security in the district.

Two new blocks have been opened at Tortank High School to provide facilities for 2,000 pupils who had previously been accommodated in tents.

The project, funded by the Danish Government and World Bank, was brought about thanks to the counter-insurgency measures being taken by officers from the Afghan National Police, who have been mentored and supported by troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Headmaster Sediullah Sultani said: “We didn’t have enough room. Youngsters here love learning and our numbers are increasing



NEWS IN BRIEF

MEALTIME MISSION

■ **ARMY** chefs came to the rescue with a hot lunch when a power cut shut the kitchen at a residential home for ex-Servicemen and women in Canongate, Edinburgh.

Responding to a call for assistance from Scottish Veterans’ Residences (SVR), soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland served a choice of meals to 82 appreciative diners at Whiteford House.

“Nothing against the SVR cooks but it was great to have food made by Army chefs once again,” said 93-year-old David Lunan.

“And it was a lot better than the rations we got when I served with the Royal Engineers during the Second World War.”

BEAR NECESSITIES

■ **IF** last month’s spine line competition is anything to go by, the magic of Disney is alive and well in the ranks of the British Army.

Much to the shock of the editorial team here at *Soldier HQ*, hundreds of you correctly identified

that Flaps, Buzzie, Dizzy and Ziggy – the names printed on the side of February’s cover – are the vultures from Walt’s movie adaptation of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*.

This month we have teamed up with *War*

Horse author Michael Morpurgo, www.michaelmorpurgo.com, to offer up two signed copies of his new book, *Shadow* (pages 58-59).

To enter, tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue. Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by March 31.



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THE BIGGER PICTURE

FOR Kuwaitis, March 1, 1991 marked the first full day of liberation from Saddam Hussein's military. The end of February had brought with it a decisive victory for the British and American-led coalition force charged with expelling Iraq's occupying troops and saw the declaration of a ceasefire just 100 hours after the beginning of the ground campaign.

However, freedom for Kuwait was not without cost and, two decades on, *Soldier* salutes those members of the British Army who fell during the Gulf War:

Gnr Paul Patrick Keegan (RA); Cpl David Edwin Denbury (RE); Lt Col Alastair John Wright (RE); Maj James Scott Kinghan (RE); Cpl Steven John Lane (RE); Spr Richard Allen Royle (RE); Pte Thomas

Haggerty (R Scots); Fus Paul Peter Atkinson (RRF); Fus Richard Gillespie (RRF); Fus Lee James Thompson (RRF); Fus Kevin Leech (RRF); Fus Conrad Philip Cole (RRF); Fus Stephen Timothy Satchell (RRF); Pte Shaun Patrick Taylor (Staffords); Pte Carl Moulton (Staffords); Pte Neil Walker Duncan Donald (QOHLdrs); Pte Martin Ferguson (QOHLdrs); Pte John William Lang (QOHLdrs); Pte Robert Gaspare Consiglio (Para); LCpl Terence William Hill (RCT); Dvr Jason Patrick McFadden (RCT); LCpl Stephen Richard Crofts (RCT); LCpl Robert Robins (RCT); Pte Alistair James Fogerty (RAOC); Sgt Vincent David Phillips (RAOC); LCpl Francis Carrington Evans (REME); Sgt Michael James Dowling (REME); SSgt David Clifford (RMP); Sgt Donald Bruce Kinnear (RAPC).

Picture: Mike Weston

JUDGEMENT DAY

Rules of engagement test airborne
personnel ahead of Helmand deployment



Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC
and Graeme Main

THE skies above Salisbury Plain bear very little resemblance to the frontiers of Afghanistan but the UK's premier proving ground has been playing a vital role in preparing the Army's helicopter crews for their impending Herrick tour.

Exercise Pashtun Jaguar saw the Service's airborne assets tested in close proximity to personnel from 3 Commando Brigade during the crucial closing stages of their pre-deployment training.

While the airframes presence in Wiltshire offered experience of the potentially life-saving link between ground and aerial forces, it also gave pilots and gunners an opportunity to rehearse the mission-specific drills required for Helmand province.

Passenger moves, bridge lifts, casualty evacuations and supply runs were among the many tasks performed by the crews, but it was the judgemental training offered in the scenarios that formed a core element of their three weeks in the field.

Teams dressed in Afghan clothing braved the freezing winter conditions to replicate the wide-ranging Taliban threat in theatre as rules of engagement came under close scrutiny.

"What we managed to do was incorporate helicopter serials with the work being carried out on the ground," explained Col Neil Sexton, the assistant director of operations at Joint Helicopter Command (JHC).

"If the troops needed to practise a casevac they would go through their call out procedures and our guys would respond the other end.

"And to make them think more about what they were doing we threw in some judgemental training.

"We had a team dressed as insurgents, mixing with women and children, operating on motorcycles and armed with rocket-propelled grenades. They were doing everything they could to confuse the crews. >>





"They would throw smoke and fire up at the aircraft to make it divert to a new landing site, which is entirely realistic to what happens in Afghanistan."

"They would also try to flummox the Apache crews who were providing overwatch to the Chinooks by having firing points right next to civilians. It was a test to see if they would open fire against them."

Such procedures have been in place for attack helicopter teams for the past couple of years, but Exercise Pashtun Jaguar saw it extended to other rotary platforms.

Col Sexton told *Soldier*: "So far it has gone really well. They thought they knew what to expect but some of it has been a real surprise."

"It gets the pilots in the front working hand in hand with the rear crewman. Quite often as they



come into land the pilot will be looking forward and it is the crewman who sees threats from behind, they really have to cooperate with one another."

The JHC is made up of 15,000 personnel from all three Services and requires them to work together in the joint planning of operations using Sea King, Apache, Lynx, Merlin and Chinook assets.

The training on Salisbury Plain was also extended to headquarters staff.

This had previously been done on an ad hoc basis but now Servicemen and women from junior to senior ranks were receiving instruction from those who have just returned from theatre.

For Apache pilot Sgt Mike Brownlee (AAC), the serials – part of a particularly thorough preparation package – provided an excellent understanding of the challenges ahead.

"This is my third exercise and every year it gets better," he told *Soldier*.

"It is now more Op Herrick style, we have high-readiness camps, tasking camps and the way missions are run is very similar."

"We have been involved in escort tasks and the judgement training has been absolutely brilliant. It is all about getting into your head what you can and cannot do."

"This is something we have always done but we now have a lot more structure. Before it was pretty much ad hoc but now we have specialist teams giving us what we need."

"I think it is a valuable exercise to do beforehand. We have the joys of peacetime and if you do make a mistake it is better to get it out of the way here before going on ops."

The Lynx crews have also endured a hectic build-up to their tour with a full pre-deployment package as well as a focus on the standard operating procedures of a new weapon system, convoy drills and the all-important judgement training.

The exercise on Salisbury Plain allowed them to put a lot of these skills into action.

"We have been doing a couple of hours of top cover each day – practising our drills," explained pilot Sgt Spen Faulkner (AAC).

"Some of our guys have never experienced it

'They thought they knew what to expect but some of it has been a real surprise'



before and others have only done it with the general purpose machine gun.

"We have been trying to get a better understanding of the rules of engagement and how to make judgement calls on the ground.

"It is probably the most important part of the training package, you want to practise it now rather than making mistakes in theatre.

"This is our first and last opportunity to work with other rotary types. We are very much focused on our own procedures so we are limited in terms of the time spent working with other aircraft."

With helicopters continuing to be a key asset for the mission in Helmand province, it is clear that no stone has been left unturned ahead of another very challenging deployment.

Salisbury Plain may not match the environment of Afghanistan but it forms the backdrop for the crucial training needed for operations in the country. ■



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LYNX EFFECT

Door gunners take charge
of the skies in high-speed
helicopters



Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: WO2 Steve Prendergast, RLC

THE coastline, scenery and cold wind chill might be distinctly different to the dusty wadis of Afghanistan, but for trainee

helicopter door gunners the transition from being on exercise to live operations is seamless.

Soldier visited 671 Squadron, Army Air Corps as troops reacted to the realistic battlefield scenarios of Exercise Tiger's Fury onboard the high-speed Mark 7 Lynx airframe.

Personnel on the course at Kirkcudbright in Scotland were in the final stages of a six-month training programme and under constant scrutiny to perform as if lives depended on it, because they will on Op Herrick.

Senior door gunner instructor SSgt Des



Top cover: Soldiers on Exercise Tiger's Fury train to become Lynx door gunners



High speed: Capable of travelling at up to 100 knots, the Lynx is a key support asset



Firepower: The airframe is armed with a general purpose machine gun for training

Pictures: Steve Dock



While travelling at speeds ranging between 80 and 100 knots (92-116mph), short, sharp messages were relayed from the pilot to door gunner Cpl Glenn Lucas on the sortie *Soldier* joined.

"Yellow building being attacked from the south," was the clear instruction.

"Enemy reinforcing from south-east."

With finger fixed on the trigger of his general purpose machine gun and eyes focused on the ground below, Cpl Lucas responded "target at three o' clock, target at two o' clock" before laying down accurate fire on a mock enemy unit.

But mimicking the relentless nature of Afghanistan, there was no time to relax after the successful mission – seconds later another dangerous situation presented itself to the aircrew.

"Target forward, left of the quarry, red building – clear fire," came the order into the gunner's earpiece.

The fast reactions and quick trajectory alterations from Cpl Lucas meant the objective was hit and the threat rapidly diffused.

The training for the door gunners forms part of the new Lynx conversion to role course, which sees pilots and rear-crew exercise together for the first time.

At the end of every serial each trainee was debriefed on his performance and given guidance on where improvements must be made.

"Battle orders must be clear and concise – slow down," said SSgt Matt Mockford, an instructor with 671 Sqn.

"Ask how your pilot is flying, give details of the cabin crew – find out if there are any injuries."

The role of the Lynx door gunner is not solely to engage targets from a bird's-eye view, it is to take complete control of the aircraft and to be aware of the various situations occurring in the sky and on the ground.

"You have to remember your crewmanship skills while taking care of your gun," explained Sgt Leigh Smith.

"You also have to be mindful of where the enemy is at the same time as looking for friendly forces and overseeing aircraft safety."

If the candidates on the course pass the final assessment they will be deemed ready to fire on operations and could be in charge of a Lynx door gun in a conflict zone within six months.

LCpl Steven Nacey described his reason for stepping forward for the high-pressured job.

"I started out as ground crew and unless you qualify as a pilot this is the only way to become aircrew and to change your way of life.

"Everyone in the Army Air Corps wants to be a door gunner as it's exciting and gains

you respect – people rely on you."

He added: "You have to think for yourself and be confident because at the end of the day it's your call whether or not to fire."

With a long queue of soldiers keen on the idea of firing the mounted gun from the holder of the helicopter world speed record, SSgt Sheppard-Clayton said only the best would be considered.

"To be loaded onto the course you need to be a quick learner, have good adaptability and be flexible," he said.

"Door gunners must be able to do one job while thinking about the next and the end product that we send to the field Army has to be of the right standard."

Infantry troops patrolling the ground of Helmand province can rest assured that those providing top cover have passed through rigorous training and that only the best make the grade. ■

Door gunners must be able to do one job while thinking about the next

Sheppard-Clayton (AAC) explained the purpose of having the lightweight aircraft on current operational deployments.

"The job of the Lynx is to move people to and from the forward operating bases to the patrol bases and to support convoys," he said.

"We are out in theatre for self-defence – we can improve the situation for the soldiers on the ground by looking down on the whole area and providing cover."

In Afghanistan the Lynx airframe is armed with the powerful .50 calibre machine gun, but in training the door gunners first get to grips with the 7.62mm variant.

"We train to deal with convoys, approaching patrol bases, fast descents and downed aircrafts because these are all the sort of things happening on operations," said the instructor.

Following methodical and stringent checks on the Rolls Royce-powered helicopter, a continuous stream of trainees were taken in to the sky and ordered to react to changing circumstances.

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Training days: Pte
Andie Milne from 86
Sqn, 25 Trg Regt RLC
provides cover from
the main gate sangar
at Forward Operating
Base Alexander on the
Deepcut Training Area

Picture: Steve Dock

PERFECT PRACTICE

Soldiers under Phase Two training
hone skills to prepare for Afghanistan

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

A TRAINING establishment is preparing tomorrow's front-line troops with up-to-the-minute guidance and an ethos of perfecting basic military skills.

Soldier caught up with 25 Training Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps at Princess Royal Barracks in Deepcut as the current crop of soldiers under training (SUT) carried out Phase Two of their Army career.

The location was leafy Surrey but the large Hesco walls topped with barbed wire and protected by sharp shooters in high sangars provided an environment synonymous with Afghanistan.

Prior to his determined subjects setting off on a reconnaissance patrol, Capt Mike McGaun, training officer at 25 Trg Regt, said: "Everything we do has to have an operational focus and right now the Army is in Afghanistan and we are working out of this compound, Forward Operating Base (FOB) Alexander.

"The reality is that once the soldiers under training finish here they could soon find themselves in FOB Edinburgh or similar in Helmand province.

"We emphasise the need to work on 'new basics' because it doesn't matter what ISTAR [Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance] assets and high-tech gadgets you've got, when you step out of the gate you need to use basic skills and your eyes and your ears."

Personnel on the programme are required to carry out the exact roles that Servicemen and women perform on Op Herrick, from Vallon-sweeping and meeting Afghan nationals to learning how to deal with a mortar attack and receiving ammunition resupplies from a Combat Logistic Patrol (CLP).

"Because of the operational focus there is more emphasis on this type of training than anything else," said Capt McGaun.

"In six to eight weeks these soldiers could be in 50-degree heat with 100lbs on their back doing the job for real – so they have to be ready."

Fresh from up to 26 weeks of foundation training in Phase One, the next generation of Army personnel – classed as "potentials" for a trade – are thrown into the reality of life as a soldier.

The men and women of the RLC are expected to look after themselves, carry out precise orders and operate as a slick unit at the same time as passing the required tests for their respective trades.

"The main effort is the trade training as well as the military skills as we need to make sure people leave with all the licences and qualifications that they need," said Maj Lucy Giles, OC 86 Sqn, 25 Trg Regt.

"We are the gateway to the Field Army for people from the corps and the mission of the regiment is to teach military skills, trades and individual training to best prepare soldiers.

"Here it's not about sitting in a classroom stripping weapons – we look to get personnel putting skills into practice."

In order to ensure the Army continues to produce high-standard soldiers, the instructors in charge of their tuition are hand-selected for the training wing by senior officers with an eye for talent.

Cpl Ian Harvey (RLC), currently on the permanent staff at 25 Trg Regt, was posted to his role straight after returning from an operational tour.

"I was brought in to filter my experience down into the training," said the section commander.

"I was on Op Herrick 10 in 2009 and spent four months in FOB Nalay so I can put what I know into serials for the SUTs to learn from."

Lt Karl Beck (RLC), also on the training staff, added: "I was commanding CLPs in Afghanistan last year so it's good to be able to inject what I learnt out there into the Phase Two process.

"This kind of programme means the soldiers here don't see things for the first time when on live operations – they're not like rabbits in a car's headlights."

With exercises mirroring events on the front line it is a fact that the students involved will become tired, dirty and uncomfortable, but those on the receiving end of it were happy with the process.

Pte Andie Milne (RLC), a potential ammunition technician, said: "It's certainly a step up from Phase One, it's a lot more intense and realistic.

"The conditions are exactly as they will be in theatre and I'm learning a lot, so it's good."

Pte Ben Briard, a potential driver, added: "You are given responsibility and if you don't keep yourself up to speed you won't get through.

"It's much better than Phase One."

Pleased with the effectiveness of the training system, the commanding officer of 25 Trg Regt, Lt Col Alison Curnow, said: "The RLC is doing us really proud with the standard of troops coming through.

"I need to be able to look other senior officers in the eye and know that the people I'm sending them will be able to fit into their job straight away and I can do that."

With an emphasis on life-saving basic skills, the Phase Two programme at Deepcut is furnishing the Army with strong soldiers for the not-too-distant future, ensuring the production line of battle-winning Servicemen and women remains in working order. ■



**“I need to be able to look
other senior officers in the
eye and know that the people
I’m sending them will be able
to fit into their job straight
away and I can do that”**

– Lt Col Alison Curnow



Back to basics

Main picture, Clean sweep: Pte George Kirk (left) and Pte Ryan Reeves check the ground for IEDs as they leave Forward Operating Base Alexander
Left, Gate keepers: Pte Ben Briard and Pte Andie Milne on sentry duty in the purpose built sangar at the Deepcut training area

Picture: Mike Weston

Right, Getting away: Two soldiers from 86 Sqn, 25 Trg Regt RLC extract safely from a simulated danger zone under the cover of an orange smokescreen





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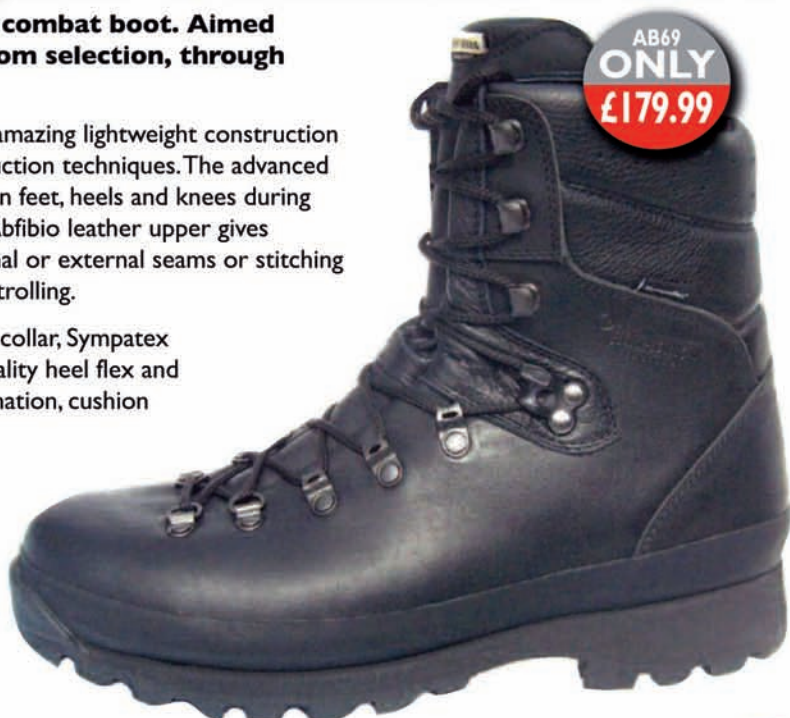
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RETURN FIRE

Gunners target fourth Helmand mission





Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

SINCE British troops first deployed to the front line of Afghanistan for Operation Herrick 1 in 2002, the nature of the mission in Helmand province has seen a pattern of continual change.

With the focus now firmly on partnering and mentoring home-grown security forces, personnel from 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery will embark on a diverse role when they touch down for their fourth tour of the country.

Working alongside their Afghan counterparts will be one of the key objectives for this highly-skilled unit but the gunners are also thoroughly prepared for the rigours of their day job, having just completed a gruelling pre-deployment training package.

Soldier met the Plymouth-based personnel during a live firing exercise on Salisbury Plain to learn more about the challenges that lie in wait.

"The guys here will be going on various gun positions in Afghanistan as well as training the Afghan National Army artillery capability," explained commanding officer Lt Col Richard Smith.

"This is the last live firing opportunity in the UK but the training has given us a lot of experience.

"The nature of the gun deployment is constantly changing. Task Force Helmand lays down those changes, they have altered twice during training and will shift again when we get out there.

"But the majority of guys will be manning light guns, providing close-in 24/7 fire support to the ground-holding battlegroups."

On their earlier tours, 29 Cdo Regt saw a high degree of mobility involved in their work, as they were required to move batteries between different locations in theatre.

Op Herrick 9, their last deployment, had a more kinetic feel while the upcoming tour will follow the all-important hearts and minds mantra.

Lt Col Smith explained: "There is an increasing emphasis being placed on precision and the application of fire certainty.

"Any form of high explosive being delivered has to be in the right place at the right time, while avoiding damage to civilians and infrastructure.

"On Op Herrick 5 we were involved in mentoring the Afghan infantry.

"This time round the brigade advisory group will be working with the Afghan artillery.

"They started with the infantry and now they are

building to brigade size with engineer elements, artillery and other capabilities to prove they can stand by themselves without UK support."

Training for the tour culminated with Exercise Pashtun Fire in Salisbury, a mission that saw personnel tested on the loading, aiming and firing of the 105mm light gun.

It also gave the regiment's fire support teams an opportunity to rehearse their "danger close" procedures as they coordinated fire from trenches just 150 metres away from a target.

"If you speak to any of our people they will say 'let's go now'. Everyone wants to get out there and get the job under way," Lt Col Smith said.

"It is a long lead-in period. Last year we started in Norway and we have been to the east coast of America. Like other units in the Army, we have been a busy organisation.

"The focus has changed since September and things have really ramped up.

"Each of the batteries will operate in close support of the ground-holding battlegroups.

"The trick is to deliver precise fire in support of those teams as quickly as we possibly can.

"When battlegroups are in a sticky situation the fire we provide is a way for them to extract quickly."

The commander also explained how the intense training has fostered a competitive spirit among his soldiers.

He said: "Each gunner will be asked to fire ten rounds for effect.

"The speed at which they work is a sign that they are trying to

beat the other teams in the detachment but they are also getting the weight of fire on the ground.

"It is a race to see which is the first detachment to report ready for action and they are all trying to beat one another."

The regiment forms an integral part of 3 Commando Brigade and the gunners have all passed the arduous All Arms Commando Course, which earns them the right to wear the much-coveted green beret.

WO1 Jamie Powell told *Soldier* that every effort is made to fully prepare Royal Artillery personnel for the programme and ensure they meet the high standards required.

He said: "They receive training prior to going on the course. It can last for ten weeks but we aim to do it in four and it is all about conditioning them progressively.

"By the time they get to the Royal Marines training centre in Lympstone they are good to go, so when they start the course they are at peak fitness and should pass."

Lt Col Smith added: "The core of what we do is artillery. We do the same job as any other gun regiment but being Commando-trained means that we can work intimately with the Royal Marines. We have a common ethos and there is a mutual respect because we have earned the green beret." ■

● Final word – page 106.

The regiment welcomes soldiers interested in transferring from other units, regardless of cap badge, and more information is available by writing to the 29 Cdo Regt Recruiting Team at The Royal Citadel, Plymouth, Devon PL1 2PD.



Cold war: Preparing in Norway's sub-zero climate

ARAFT of life-saving measures are being introduced to standard-issue kit in an attempt to build on the protection offered to soldiers by body armour and helmets.

In a bid to reduce injuries to hands and knees, as well as safeguarding other areas such as the eyes and arms, MoD scientists have been working on a number of adaptations to the shirts and sunglasses worn by personnel in theatre.

"We can't really put any more heavy kit on the guys but we are adding extra soft protection wherever we can – reinforcing the hard armour offered by Osprey," said Col Peter Rafferty, the personal combat equipment team leader at Defence Equipment and Support in Bath.

He told *Soldier* how the widening of focus beyond the head and heart was a direct result of the prevalence of victim-operated improvised explosive devices in Afghanistan in recent years.

"The nature of these bombs means that a lot of dust and dirt gets blown up, so protection from small fragments and blast abrasions is now very important," the senior officer added.

"It has meant the extremities have been affected more than in the past."

The technical team is working hard to perfect protective accessories such as the goggles, glasses and gloves worn by those operating on the ground in Helmand province.

"Medics treating those injured in Afghanistan have told us that people wearing such items suffer significantly less injuries and heal quicker," Col Rafferty said.

"In a way we are re-learning lessons from the past and using modern textiles and synthetic fibres as chain mail and putting hard armour on top of that."

Upgraded knee pads with extra bump and blast shielding have been issued to troops serving on Op Herrick 13, while ballistic eyewear has been a standard feature for some time.

Included among the kit due to be delivered later this year are new gloves with knuckle protection and a weapon-friendly grip, and an updated version of the under body armour combat shirt (UBACS), which incorporates reinforced material in the collar and cuffs and stronger pads in the forearms.

More immediately, troops preparing for Op Herrick 15 will soon be issued with the latest version of the sunglasses and goggles, so they can get used to using their weapons while wearing the modified items during pre-deployment training.

"None of this will stop a bullet – that is why they wear the hard plates to protect the critical organs – but soldiers will be more secure if all parts of the body are covered with the issued equipment," said Col Rafferty.

"It is the best chance they have of minimising injuries while still maintaining mobility and the ability to do their job."

Developing cutting-edge protective kit will only help safeguard British soldiers on the ground in southern Afghanistan if they know how and when to use it properly.

And this message is something that Col Rafferty's team of experts is working hard to embed in pre-deployment briefings, unit tactics, techniques and procedures and, most importantly, in theatre. ■

IMPROVED KIT IN BRIEF...

GONE BALLISTIC

EYEWEAR issued to deploying soldiers has been updated to offer clearer vision and a better fit while maintaining the same level of ballistic protection.

The goggles have been designed to the high specification of their predecessors and will continue to deflect blast fragments, dust and dirt, but have been completely reconfigured so they can be comfortably worn underneath the Mark 7 helmet.

Changes to the sunglasses are less obvious, however, the shape and fit have been improved and the frame has been significantly strengthened.

As with the existing models, both the goggles and sunglasses come with three different lenses – clear, amber and dark – offering higher levels of UV protection for brighter light conditions and optimum visibility at night.

SUNGLASSES

- Strengthened tensioning bar
- Shape gives a tighter silhouette around the eyes that is less intrusive when firing a weapon
- Contoured and adjustable arms for improved comfort
- Three types of lenses:

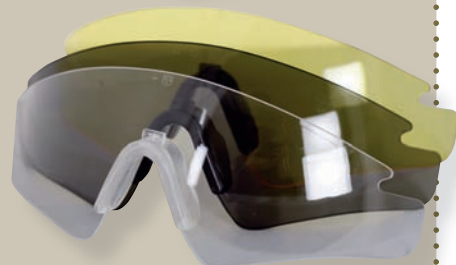
Amber – optimised for clarity of vision in high sunlight, with anti-glare properties to help soldiers when moving from high to low light or looking through weapon sights

Dark – highest UV performance but less helpful when firing or identifying ground signs

Clear – for use in poor light conditions, minimal UV protection

GOGGLES

- Improved wrap-around vision profile
- Better flexibility for added comfort
- Air vents above the lenses to improve demisting
- Better fit to face when worn with a combat helmet



JOINT SERVICES ON OPS

THE improved knee protection is already in service, having been handed to troops heading out to Helmand in September 2010.

The addition of a hard outer shell has dramatically improved bump and blast protection for the leg joint and rear-fastening Velcro straps mean the new design is much more likely to stay in place once fitted.

KNEE PADS

- Soft inner lining for comfort
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TREATING
THOSE
INJURED IN
AFGHANISTAN
HAVE TOLD US
THAT PEOPLE
WEARING
PROTECTION
SUFFER
SIGNIFICANTLY
LESS INJURIES
AND HEAL
QUICKER’

Picture: Sgt Rupert Fene, RLC

UPPER-BODY STRENGTH

THE under body armour combat shirt – or UBACS – is in line for an upgrade and the next generation will come with ballistic protection in both the collar and cuffs, as well as improvements to the padded inserts worn in the lower arms.

Using a similar material to that found in the recently rolled-out protective pants, the shirt will not change in appearance but will be better placed to defend against dust and debris.

The latest design will be in theatre for Op Herrick 14 and enhancements to the lower arm region are set to follow in September.

UBACS

- Ballistic material added to the garment's collar and cuffs
- Two upgraded foam pads in each forearm will offer further protection
- Improved cut with angled arm pockets for easier access while operating

HANDY ACCESSORY

THE leather gloves currently in service are set to be replaced with a medium-weight combat model better geared to the dismounted soldier. Featuring improved grip and dexterity, the new design will boast a higher level of protection

from physical impact in the wrist and knuckle areas.

Trials are currently taking place in theatre with several commercially-available gloves being put through their paces.

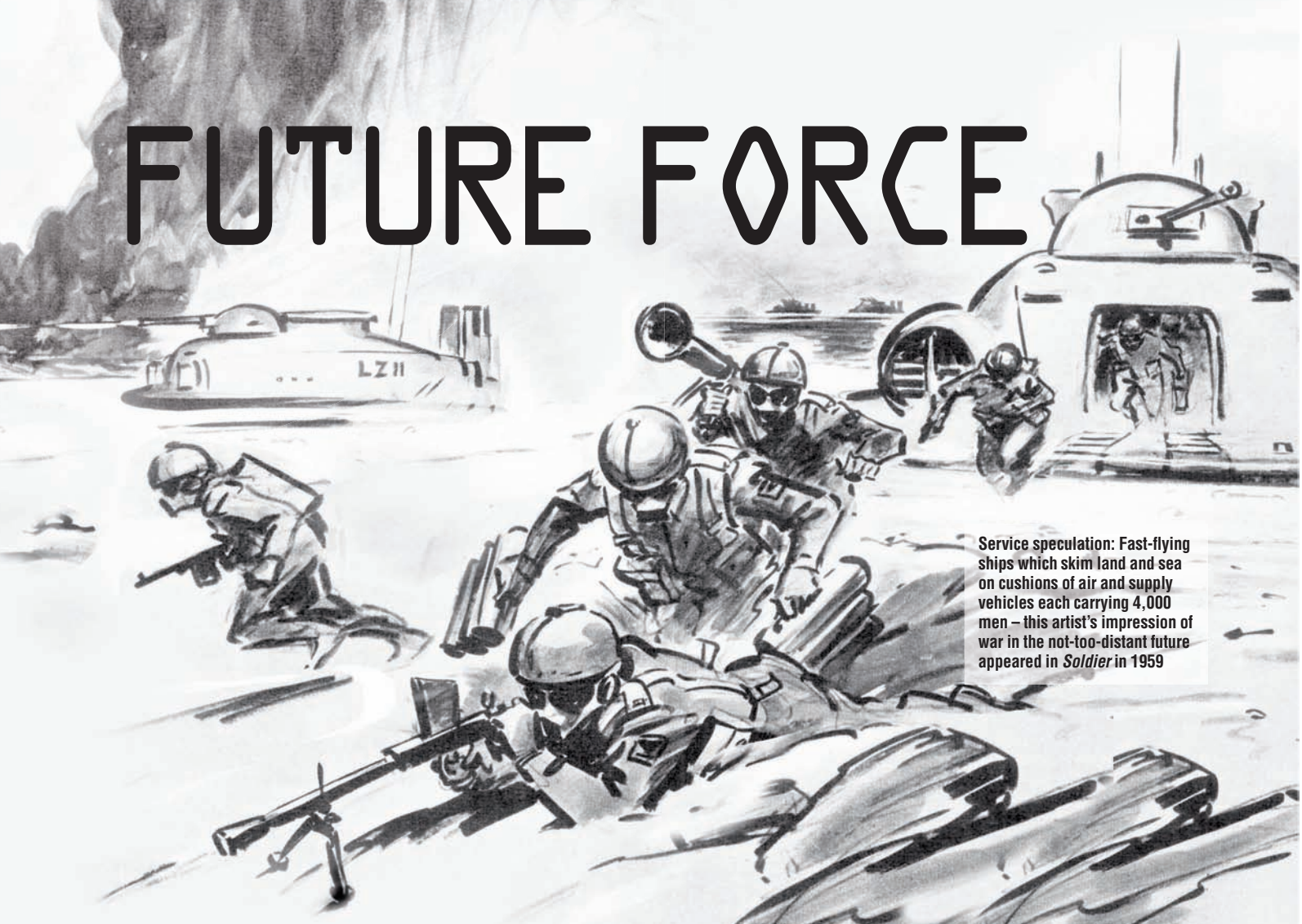
GLOVES

- Wristband padded with ballistic material
- Kevlar knuckle bump and blast protection
- Reinforced main grip area for improved weapon handling
- Abrasion resistant leather patches

GET YOUR KIT ON

GOGGLES, GLASSES AND GLOVES SET TO HIT HERRICK CATWALK

FUTURE FORCE



Service speculation: Fast-flying ships which skim land and sea on cushions of air and supply vehicles each carrying 4,000 men – this artist's impression of war in the not-too-distant future appeared in *Soldier* in 1959

ARMY'S AGILE APPROACH TO CONQUERING TOMORROW'S THREAT

Report: Sharon Kean

WHILE Op Herrick remains top of the Army's to-do list, military commanders already have one eye fixed firmly on the future.

A small team at the Land Warfare Centre in Warminster is close to finishing the first of what will become an annual set of tests exploring the threats, challenges and demands that British Forces may have to deal with post Afghanistan.

Launched last October, Agile Warrior aims to second-guess potential operational theatres by predicting the enemy tactics of tomorrow and collect evidence to support any suggested changes to the way the Army is structured and run.

"We've learned important lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan that will last for a long time but we need to prepare for future operations," said Brig Kevin Abrahams, the officer in charge of the programme. "This will mean changing our training and equipment because it won't necessarily be like the Green Zone in Helmand."

Mirroring the US military's Exercise Unified Quest, the British initiative is considering everything from the way soldiers are recruited to the type of tanks they use on the battlefield. Key themes already emerging from the group's work include the use of cyber technology in warfare and the prospect of troops having to fight in busy cities.

"We've always tried to avoid operating in this type of environment but our future adversary will have seen through this and knows that he can get an advantage by fighting in underground tunnel

networks and places of worship," said Lt Col Christopher Beattie, the officer tasked with planning next year's Agile Warrior workshops.

"Winning wars will be about convincing populations – as it is now in Afghanistan – but in years to come this will have the added complexity of operating in a large crowded space.

"This will mean learning how to resupply and use artillery and offensive air support in this setting. The capabilities we have were developed to beat the Russians in North West Germany but we now need to adapt and reconfigure to urban conflict."

Lt Col Beattie said that such a switch would not spell an end to the role of armoured vehicles, but would affect the manner in which they are deployed. He explained: "We're seeing evidence that future conflicts will require their use but in a very different way.

"Weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades and improvised explosive devices mean that you still need that protection but in smaller packages – twos and threes rather than a formation of 14."

While none of the theories discussed to date will come as a major revelation to troops, Agile Warrior's assistant director Col Roger Lewis said that the programme would unearth bright ideas which will reap real benefits for those in uniform.

"You can go into the Naafi and ask a soldier for his opinion and he will be blunt and probably have

the right answer, but we need to work out how to prove it," he said. "Instead of bragging rights in the bar we need evidence to effect change and produce an Army that can achieve what we need it to in the years ahead.

"And it's not just about test tubes, Bunsen burners and blowing things up, it could be a big exercise with lots of people out on the ground, trying different ways of being organised, or a group of people in a room discussing a problem."

Senior military officers, staff from non-governmental organisations, civil servants, police, aid workers and BBC journalist Caroline Wyatt have all been invited to have their say.

"We leave no stone unturned when looking for evidence," said Lt Col Charlie Barker. "We must

test different climatic conditions, geographical areas and communications scenarios – and there's no limit to the vehicles or tactical techniques that we could use. It could be an exercise in a field, two boffins in a shed or a computer simulation."

Reflecting on Agile Warrior's own future, Brig Abrahams insisted it would continue to be an inclusive programme and that the soldiers of today would help form those of tomorrow.

"We want opinions and different views from senior officers and junior ranks alike," he concluded. "I know soldiers don't always get heard but this is their opportunity to express their views and we want them to do so." ■



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Report: Richard Long

FOR personnel who are injured while serving their country, the recovery process can often be long and challenging.

With a return to duties or a successful transition to civilian life being the target for the vast majority of such soldiers, the Army is doing all it can to ensure these dreams become reality.

Building work has just got under way on a state-of-the-art Personnel Recovery Centre in Colchester that will provide vital medical, welfare, education and rehabilitation facilities for wounded Servicemen and women.

The project marks the start of a concerted effort to dramatically boost the care and support on offer within the Army, with two similar establishments in Catterick and Tidworth set to follow.

The Colchester build began exactly 12 months after the very first centre was

opened in Edinburgh and will be completed early next year, when it will provide residential accommodation for 29 Service personnel and 31 day attendees.

Adjutant General Lt Gen Mark Mans is a fierce advocate of the project and said the purpose-built site will create a new level of care for wounded, sick and injured troops.

"Over the last ten years we have seen soldiers deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and have become familiar with the demands placed on them in meeting the challenges of modern combat operations," he added.

"A reality of these operations is that people from all three Services are sustaining serious life-changing injuries that mean they will need a great degree of medical care over a long period of time.

"But treatment is just one part of the jigsaw and there must be appropriate long-term command and support during that period and beyond.

"Together we will get them through a process that helps personnel explore the

options available to them, both inside and outside the Army, so they can make informed choices about their future and take charge of their own recovery.

"For some it means a return to full duty while others realise a restricted career in the Army is not for them.

"Whatever the outcome they will be supported by the Army Recovery Capability with individually-catered plans."

The new centres are being built by military charity Help for Heroes and will be run jointly by The Royal British Legion (RBL) and British Army.

They are aimed at providing a residential base for those who need it and will be located inside or close to Service sites, allowing access to existing medical, educational and other garrison facilities.

MoD bosses have committed £35 million to recovery projects over the next four years, with Help for Heroes pledging a further £70 million and the RBL £50 million.

For those already engaged in the process



Building blocks: An architect's impression of the front elevation of the proposed Personnel Recovery Centre at Colchester Garrison

the benefits have been obvious.

Rfn Daniel Wildman (3 Rifles) broke his arms and legs on operations in Sangin in December 2009 and was treated at Selly Oak Hospital on his return to the UK.

"After being discharged I was just sat at home," he told *Soldier*. "Someone would come and see me every couple of weeks but that was about it.

"When the Personnel Recovery Centre was built in Edinburgh I was moved up there.

"I did not know what my future was and I was spiralling downwards but now I know what I'm doing, I have some stability."

Unfortunately, the nature of Rfn

Wildman's injuries means he will be leaving the Army in August but he is already looking ahead to a new career as a plasterer.

"I am still going through my medical

treatment, I am concentrating on that at this stage but I have also been doing a lot of educational work," he added.

"I had no GCSEs when I joined the Army but I've now got my English and maths and the future looks bright."

Cpl Vincent Polus (3 Scots) was injured in Iraq in 2003 and had been based with his unit

before moving to the facility in Edinburgh.

He believes the specialist care offered at the Personnel Recovery Centre has played a crucial role in his rehabilitation.

"Together we will get them through a process that helps personnel explore the options available to them, both inside and outside the Army"

– Lt Gen Mans



"They really focus on what I need," he said. "There was not much for me at the unit as they were always so busy.

"I went up to Edinburgh in June as the training NCO. I was getting the guys up to speed on their military skills as well as boosting their confidence and building their project management skills."

Cpl Polus added: "I came in as a resident in November and I am teaching while going through the recovery process at the same time.

"I am still in the early stages. I was sitting in the battalion not knowing what I was going to do, but since coming here I now know there is something out there for me – it has opened my eyes."

With Edinburgh already boasting such inspired success stories, there is no doubt that the good work will continue in Colchester Garrison and the other centres that follow.

Injured military personnel are receiving the very best in terms of care and support and that is totally deserved for the sacrifices they have made. ■



Report: Sharon Kean
Picture: Steve Dock

A CHARITY set up and run by Forces families is boosting the morale of wounded troops by providing home comforts to military bedsides.

Ex-Servicemen Al Sutton, Derek Joss and Ray Warren founded Troop Aid in 2006 after realising that soldiers arriving on the wards of UK medical centres often had none of their personal belongings with them.

"They discovered the guys and girls coming back to Selly Oak Hospital didn't have any clothing of their own as often the kit they were wearing had been cut off," explained Al's wife Pam Sutton, who is now the charity's secretary.

"So they started raising money to give patients a holdall containing things like shorts, T-shirts and toiletries."

Inspired by the US military's Wounded Warrior initiative, the rucksacks evolved into more manageable-sized grab bags, which are now custom-made and packed with essential overnight kit such as razors, toothbrushes, flannels and flip-flops.

"Troop Aid has found a niche by providing good quality gear and the guys really appreciate it," said Maj Ian Cheesman (RLC), the officer in charge of the military-staffed patient support branch at the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham.

A team of senior NCOs from the tri-Service unit meet with wounded troops and their families, dealing with non-clinical needs and bringing the familiarity of the Forces bubble to the beds used by soldiers.

Military liaison officers await every

ambulance that arrives in Birmingham carrying an injured Serviceman or woman and it is they who hand over the Troop Aid bag and any other personal items needed.

"The guys obviously like to wear something with a name on it because it's nicer than the T-shirt you would have been issued by the QM in the past," said Maj Cheesman.

Sgt Mark Sutcliffe (2 R Anglian) has been part of the team for nearly three years and brings to the role his own experience of being wounded in action, having lost a leg in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Iraq.

"Every soldier gets a bag and we tailor it to them, so if their injury means they can't wear flip-flops then we will take them out," he said.

"The charity does a fantastic job for our lads who deserve the gold standard."

Troop Aid also provide pay-as-you-go phones with £10 credit for every patient arriving at the hospital from Afghanistan, as personnel are unable to take mobiles with them to Helmand.

"It's worth its weight in gold because we can pass the number back up the chain of command so they can get in touch with the guys in their FOB [forward operating base] in theatre," said Sgt Sutcliffe.

"Troop Aid also supplied a coffee machine for the soldiers and their families using the day room here – that went down really well.

"It's little things like this that really make the difference."

Funded entirely by donations and staffed by volunteers, the organisation is well-practised in procuring items such as trousers with zips on the legs for those with injuries requiring them to be fitted with wire frames and loose-fitting sandals for soldiers with foot injuries.

"If they need something bespoke for the first days and weeks that they are here, we get in touch with Pam [Sutton] at Troop Aid and they will go out and source it," said Maj Cheesman.

Last year alone, the charity sent out some 1,200 grab bags to the field hospital at Camp Bastion and a further 360 to Selly Oak.

"It could be for someone with a broken leg in Bahrain or a guy taken ill in the Falkland Islands, they all get treated the same," said Sgt Sutcliffe.

"If they're non-operational then they tend to have more kit but if they need something we will always assist them.

"Troop Aid has stood the test of time and it is needed – it adds value to the gold standard that we always try to achieve."

And despite keeping a relatively low profile on the wards, the tireless work of the charity's staff doesn't go unnoticed by those who benefit from it.

"A lot of the parents of the young soldiers we've helped send messages of thanks, saying how grateful they are for our help and they often go on to raise money for us," said Pam Sutton.

Delivering a few simple home comforts to those injured in the line of duty may not sound like much, but this service of kindness has won Troop Aid an army of admirers. ■

www.troopaid.info



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NAVIGATIONAL NOUS

ARMY ORIENTEERING CLUB DELIVERS
FRONT-LINE SKILLS FOR PERSONNEL

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

I NFANTRY patrols in Afghanistan invariably require soldiers to navigate round unfamiliar territory as they plot a route through what can be a challenging and potentially-dangerous environment.

While these skills are taught at an early stage in a Service

career, personnel can never have enough experience when it comes to working accurately with a compass and map.

The British Army Orienteering Club (BOAC) provides the ideal backdrop for troops to develop their understanding of this art by staging weekly events that test physical fitness along with the intricacies required for successful navigation work. >>



Soldier travelled to Bordon to learn more about this activity as Servicemen and women took to the surrounding woodlands for the Infantry Orienteering Championships.

Event secretary Maj Paul L'Estrange (R Irish) said skills used in the sport are part of the vital bedrock of the Army but are even more relevant to those who have to operate at the forefront of Helmand province.

He added: "It is important to all soldiers but for the Infantry it combines fitness, the ability to navigate and read the shape of the ground with a better understanding of how the terrain shapes you and the enemy.

"The most fundamentally-important part is it makes you more adept at making decisions under pressure.

"It allows you to better prepare for ops and if you are put in a difficult position it enables you to react quicker, rather than wondering what is going to happen next."

But it is not just the traditional cross-country variant that soldiers experience, with the BAOC hosting events all year there is huge variety in terms of the challenges on offer.

"One aspect that is now becoming more popular is urban orienteering,"

Maj L'Estrange added.

"Whether it is a small village or large town, an ability to understand a map and know where the alleyways and dead-ends are will make them more effective for the situations they will face in Afghanistan."

The Army events also have a competitive edge and the weekly exercises form part of the Military League South.

However, Maj Lucy Giles (RLC),

the former Army orienteering captain, was quick to stress the activity is used as a Service training tool, rather than an out-and-out sport.

"It is an excellent opportunity for soldiers to do the practical side of map navigation and learn the skills to be an orienteer," the officer explained.

"There is that competitive element but primarily this is about training them in the competences that are essential for ops.

"Every regiment has

to deliver annual military tests, of which navigation is a part. The league events help to support that.

"Map reading is covered in every soldier's basic training but orienteering and competition fixtures come at unit level.

"It is about finding the time to get away and take part and Army events are often used to foster team spirit within the units.

"Troops are used to physical training almost as a chore, it is quite predictable.

"Orienteering is all about conditioning while learning valuable skill sets that will hold them in good stead for the future."

Each tasking features a variety of courses for entrants depending on their ability and experience.

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Checkpoint Charlie:
Pte Henry Wright (25 Trg Regt, RLC) – pictured above left – joined other competitors in action during the Infantry Orienteering Championships, which were hosted by the BAOC at Bordon. The club organises weekly events to help personnel develop key Army skills such as map reading, decision making and physical fitness – all of which can be transferred to the front line of Helmand province



BOAC oversees a series of training programmes for beginners through to advanced competitors.

WO1 Dave Rollins (PWRR) runs the five-day course for novice soldiers and believes the lessons learned under his tutelage have obvious benefits in terms of the day job.

"It fosters self-belief and confidence and that is a good tool for anyone commanding other people," he explained.

"We take young soldiers with little or no orienteering training. In the space of five days they gain the confidence to become navigators.

"They can take these new skills away and transfer them to say a map of a compound in Afghanistan.

"People are a bit nervous of navigation if they've never done it before. But once they get over the fact it is not that difficult they really enjoy it."

For Gdsm James Worthington (1 WG), the beginners' programme delivered obvious benefits to the role he performs within his unit.

"I volunteered to take part in the course as I wanted to get better at important skills such as map reading," he explained.

"It is good physical exercise and I have learned a lot in the space of a few days.

"I'm in a recce platoon so I need to be spot on with my navigation. I was not very good but coming here and doing this has made me that bit quicker and better at putting ground to a map."

While novice personnel are happy to master the basics, the more experienced competitors have loftier

aims and objectives.

Maj Mark Whitehouse (Rifles) said: "I like the challenge and it is good for fitness. It is quite rewarding when you navigate accurately and get a good time.

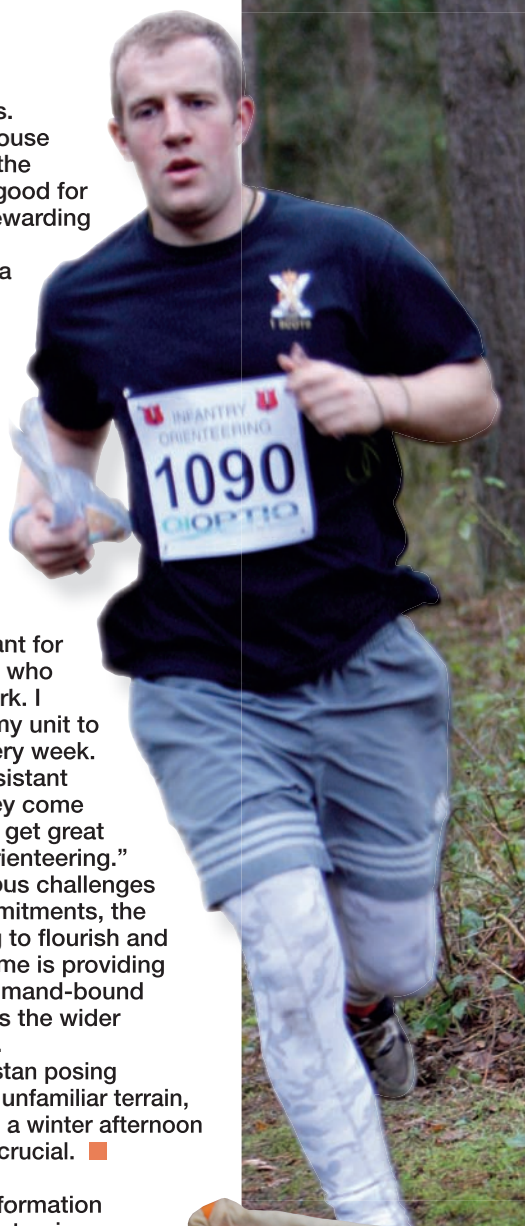
"I am an Infantry officer and navigation is a fundamental part of what we do. Applying a compass to the map, the map to the ground and making the right route selection all come into it.

"It is very important for junior commanders who do that detailed work. I take a group from my unit to different events every week. A lot of guys are resistant to start with but they come along and find they get great satisfaction from orienteering."

Despite the obvious challenges of operational commitments, the BAOC is continuing to flourish and its weekly programme is providing vital training for Helmand-bound personnel as well as the wider Service community.

And with Afghanistan posing a vast landscape of unfamiliar terrain, the skills learned on a winter afternoon in Bordon could be crucial. ■

● For more information on Army orienteering visit www.baoc.org.uk



1 BOUDICCA

B OUDICCA was a military comet who blazed briefly and then burnt herself out. Dubbed “The Killer Queen”, she was both a warrior and – in the eyes of her Celtic tribespeople, the Iceni – a goddess. The Roman occupiers of Britain, however, accorded women no legal status. On the death of her husband Prasutagus, Boudicca’s lands (most of modern East Anglia) were seized by soldiers who flogged her before beating and raping her two daughters. Boudicca rose in revolt, ransacking Colchester, St Albans and London. With her red hair, booming voice and billowing robes, she cut a terrifying figure, but within months was defeated by the Roman governor Gaius Suetonius Paulinus in a pitched battle in the Midlands. It was in the wake of this military loss that Boudicca is thought to have taken her own life.



Chariots of fire: Thomas Thornycroft's bronze statue of Boudicca and her daughters on the Embankment, London
Picture: Graeme Main

RANKED TOP TEN WARRIOR WOMEN



Authors
Robin Cross and Rosalind Miles are the writing duo behind *Warrior Women: 3000 Years of Courage and Heroism*, which is published by Quercus and priced £20



2 WU CHAO

CHINA'S only female emperor, Wu Chao was a general's daughter and inherited from her father a warlike temperament and mastery of ruthless tactics. Given to the Emperor as a concubine at the age of 13, she fought her way from this lowly position to make herself the absolute ruler of China, using and taming its military with ceaseless campaigning. She held power for more than 50 years, wielding it with a piquant blend of enlightenment and savagery, and in 696 had herself proclaimed “Supreme God”. Over a thousand years later her career remains a phenomenal achievement in a country where women were explicitly forbidden to govern and female infanticide is still rife.

3 MATILDA OF TUSCANY

THE daughter of an Apennine warlord, she was taught as a child how to ride like a lancer and wield battleaxe and sword. A contemporary account describes the young Matilda as “armed like a warrior” and declares that “courage and valour in mankind is not a matter of sex but of heart and spirit”. In the struggle between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, the Tuscan became the right-hand woman of Pope Gregory VII; and it was at Matilda's impregnable castle at Canossa, in northern Italy, that in 1077 the Emperor was forced to prostrate himself before the Pope. Fighting for the Supreme Head of the Church of Rome provided this warrior with opportunity to fulfil both the spiritual and martial sides of her indomitable spirit.

4 JINGA MBANDI

THE West African tribal queen, described by the Dutch leader of her bodyguards as a "cunning virago", fought an ultimately unsuccessful war against the Portuguese for the control of her kingdom. She wore male attire for ritual sacrifice, was festooned fore and aft with animal skins and carried a sword, axe and bow and arrows. Her chief henchman said: "When she thinks she has made a show long enough, in a masculine manner, then she takes a broad feather and flicks it through the holes of her bored nose for a sign of war." When sacrificial victims were beheaded their blood was drained into a cup which Jinga downed in a great gulp. After her death, the old warrior was buried with a bow and arrow in her hand.

5 DEBORAH SAMPSON

IN 1782 Sampson enlisted in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment of the Continental Army and fought in the American War of Independence disguised as a man. Like many women before and after her, she tended her own wounds to avoid revealing her sex. She later became a friend of Paul Revere who petitioned Congress for a military pension for Sampson: "...every person with whom I have conversed about her... speaks of her as a woman with handsome talents, good morals, a dutiful wife, and an affectionate parent." Sampson was tough but no Jinga Mbandi.

6 HARRIET ROSS TUBMAN

TUBMAN'S unique life and achievement as an abolitionist, union spy and supporter of the struggle for women's suffrage will ensure that she remains one of the greatest of all Americans. In 1863 she organised a network of scouts (and spies), a task for which her work on the "underground railway" ferrying slaves to freedom was the perfect preparation. The same year she led a mission to disrupt the Confederacy's interior lines, prompting her commanding general to observe: "This is the only military command in American history wherein a woman, black or white, led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted."



7 LILYA LITVAK

DURING the Second World War, the Soviet Union's armed forces did not shrink from employing women in the front line. Litvak, pictured left, was a Red Air Force fighter ace on the Eastern Front, initially with the all-female 586th Fighter Regiment and, from September 1942, the otherwise all-male 437th Regiment. After a spell in the 9th Guards Fighter Regiment she transferred to the 296th Fighter Regiment,

flying "free hunt" missions against targets of opportunity. Slim and fair-haired, she was a natural, albeit reluctant, poster girl for Soviet aviation, eventually scoring 12 individual kills and three shared victories, the great majority while flying the rugged Yakovlev-1 fighter. She was shot down and killed by eight German aircraft in August 1943, and in 1990 was posthumously made a Heroine of the Soviet Union.



8 PEARL WITHERINGTON

ONE of the heroines of the British Special Operations Executive's F [France] Section during the Second World War, Witherington eventually commanded a Maquis army numbering some 3,000 men. As head of the "Wrestler" network, she was so effective that the Germans placed a bounty of one million francs on her head. In the run-up to D-Day, her agents virtually disabled the main railway line running from Paris to Bordeaux. Awarded a civilian MBE in 1945, she rejected it on the grounds that her wartime service was anything but civil. The bureaucrats also failed to decorate Witherington with her parachute wings until more than 60 years after she had first dropped into France. She thought of herself as "an ordinary person who did her job during the war".



9 MARTHA MCSALLY

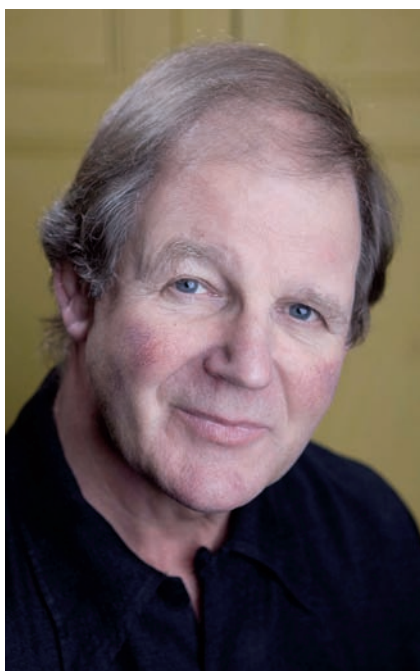
UNITED States Air Force pilot Martha McSally has scored two notable firsts. She was the first woman in the Service to fly combat operations and subsequently became the first to command an air combat unit. She took on the USAF over a directive that she had to wear a head-to-toe abaya when not flying her A-10 attack aircraft from her base in Saudi Arabia – and won. In 2004 she took charge of the 354th Fighter Squadron, later flying many missions in Afghanistan, and became a full colonel in 2006. McSally does not consider gender an issue within the USAF. She declared: "I hope I am a role model to both men and women because we are a fighting force and should not be concerned with the differences between us."



10 MICHELLE NORRIS

NORRIS was the first woman in the British Army to be awarded the Military Cross for bravery in action in Iraq in June 2006. While serving as a medical orderly with The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, the Warrior armoured vehicle in which she was travelling came under heavy fire that wounded her commander, CSgt Ian Page, who was standing with his head above the turret hatch. Norris – then a private – climbed on top of the vehicle to pull Page to safety as sniper bullets flew around her. The pair were subsequently evacuated by helicopter. Now a lance corporal, Norris, who is only five-feet tall, remarked of her award: "I know that some people doubt we [women] can work in the front line. I hope I've proved we can."





Interview: Stephen Tyler

FOR a children's book, renowned author Michael Morpurgo's latest work *Shadow* does not pull any punches.

The title's depiction of Taliban brutality, people trafficking and Britain's immigration system gives young readers a warts-and-all look at the realities of life for their less-fortunate peers trying to survive in Operation Herrick's heartland and beyond.

But for kids with parents serving in the very places brought to life in *Shadow's* pages, the book provides an even greater insight. Filling his tale of canine courage with gritty accounts of insurgents, the work of British troops and even the effects of roadside bombs was a brave move, but one that Morpurgo is happy to have made.

"I think it's difficult," the 67-year-old said after reading *Soldier* a letter of thanks from the mother of two boys who tackled *Shadow* while their father and Godfather were serving in Afghanistan with 2 and 1 Scots, respectively. "There is no doubt that you are sailing near the edge when the story is so close to the life of a child, but I think books are

supposed to do that, to trouble and comfort us a bit and make you feel you are not alone.

"I think that a child reading *Shadow* must feel that they are not alone and that there are other kids out there going through the same things and dealing with the same issues.

"Providing one writes about it realistically and in a way that is not patronising, it's wonderful for children to feel that they are at the heart of the story. Too often the kids left behind have no place in it and that's a shame because they are the ones going through it."

That *Shadow's* military content – ranging from troops on patrol to life in a forward operating base and the work of Service sniffer dogs – comes across so authentically is no surprise considering Morpurgo's background.

A child of post-Second World War Britain, the author grew up with stories of bravery all around him and the exposure to all things Army enticed him to enrol in officer training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

And although he ultimately decided against pursuing a career in combats, Morpurgo (pictured left) credits the experience for bringing an added edge to his writing.

"I think that it gave me an understanding about soldiering that you can't really have until you've done the training and been put on the square and shouted at nose-to-nose by a Coldstream Guard," he explained. "Then you know exactly what it is to look after the guy to your left and right.

"I was born in 1943 and grew up in a society where every man you met had been in the Services and most families had someone who hadn't come back. In mine it was my uncle Peter who was in the Royal Air Force when he was shot down in 1941.

"For young boys at that time, we grew up thinking of these men as heroes."

In a literary career that has spanned more than 100 titles to date, Morpurgo has carved out a particular niche in writing stories around the subject of war.

While books such as *Private Peaceful* and *War: Stories of Conflict* have earned critical acclaim, it is

the runaway success of *War Horse* that has brought his work to a whole new audience.

Well-received on its release in 1982, the story of a young boy's steed being sent to serve in the First World War exploded back into the public's consciousness during the last decade when it spawned a West End show.



EQUINE EXPERTS

IT may be about to be unleashed on Broadway, but the hit stage adaptation of *War Horse* would still be moving at a canter without the help of the British Army.

With the show's director and actors unaccustomed to the military and its use of steeds, Morpurgo tapped into his Service contacts and arranged for the cast to visit the St John's Wood home of The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery.

He said: "Everyone in the audience has to believe that the horses in the show are real and the soldiers' hospitality and knowledge has been invaluable in that.

"Most of the actors had never been near a horse – or a soldier – so The King's Troop have helped them to get under the skin of their parts. They have played a major role and been very generous with their time and the Army should be very proud [of them]."

***War Horse* is currently being staged in London's West End. For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.LondonTheatre.com**

And with the play about to be staged for the first time in New York and Steven Spielberg directing a Hollywood adaptation, Morpurgo believes its renewed universal appeal lies in the strength of human responses to military conflict.

"Children ask why I write so much about war and it's because I'm interested in what it does to people, both those who fight and those left behind," he said. "When *War Horse* came out in 1982, some people thought it was irrelevant coming as it did in the time of the Cold War, where conflict was distant, and after Vietnam which was

WAR STORIES

Theatres of conflict inspire award-winning author



regarded as somebody else's war.

"What has happened now is that we are at war again and see soldiers coming home in coffins and that touches people in a way that they haven't felt for a very long time.

"I wrote *Shadow* because I have seen the planes flying in carrying coffins and have known that there are entire families left dealing with the consequences and asking the question of whether it is all worth it."

The former teacher's latest release joins a growing number of children's books tackling the tough topic of war and providing young readers from Armed Forces households with a new line in emotional support.

With the likes of rhyming picture book *Soldier Oli* and *My Daddy's Going Away*, which was written by serving officer Chris MacGregor, also filling this important role, Morpurgo argues that, aside from talking to their parents, reading is "the best therapy" for children going through tough times.

"It grows [them] up to be able to deal with a range of issues themselves," he explained. "The worst thing to do is to treat a child as if they are stupid or don't understand; they do understand,

they know what the deal is and books can help them cope with any anxiety and give them a sense of perspective.

"For children with parents in the Army, it can give them some idea of what mum or dad is fighting for."

With his stock very much on the rise, Morpurgo is continuing to juggle his writing with other commitments as *War Horse* gallops onto Broadway this month.

But given the part the Army has played in his life – and the help the Force has given in bringing added reality to the stage production of his theatre hit (see inset panel above) – the author was keen to pass on his praise to the men and women currently serving their country.

"I think they need to know that people back home are thinking of them a lot and of the situation they are in," he said. "We are hugely admiring of what they are doing on our behalf and how they are doing it. Like them, I think that huge numbers of people want the war to be over so that they can come home and the sooner the better.

"There is lots of goodwill flowing out from this country to those young men and women." ■

COMFORTING WORDS

Foreword by Michael Morpurgo

Good Books for Tough Times



Books for children aged 9-12

Partnership for Children

INTERNATIONAL charity Partnership for Children has listed two Michael Morpurgo titles, including *Shadow*, in the latest edition of its *Good Books for Tough Times* pamphlet.

The publication, which is aimed at parents, teachers and librarians, contains reviews of hand-picked books that can help five-to-12-year-old children deal with a range of difficult emotions and situations, including bullying, change and loss and death.

All of the featured novels can be ordered from the charity's website with a percentage of each purchase price going back to Partnership for Children.

For more information or to order a copy of the booklet, visit www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/GBTTHome.html

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TALKBACK

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



Picture: Sgt Rupert Fiere, RLC

Gallant goes on: Troops from the Counter-IED Task Force join British-trained Afghan National Army personnel in a search for roadside bombs in Helmand

'Don't forget about the REST of our heroes'

I AM currently serving in 33 Engineer Regiment and previously deployed to Afghanistan as part of a Royal Engineers Search Team (REST).

Consequently, on reading the operational honours and awards list for Herrick 11 I was deeply dismayed to see the lack of recognition for these units' searchers (of which I am not).

These sappers, who make up the bulk of the search teams, are – as their name suggests – responsible for seeking out improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

I was pleased to see so many Ammunition Technical Officers (ATOs) decorated with high and prestigious medals, their jobs are hugely dangerous and it is only right that they are recognised for their bravery.

However, it is worth remembering that without the RESTs they are embedded with, these personnel would not have any bombs to dispose of.

The IED is at its most deadly when it lies concealed and its location is unknown.

The task of going into the most high-risk areas to pinpoint these hidden menaces is the lot of the searchers.

From my experience, these were the guys being blown up multiple times, often

receiving injuries, but getting back out on the ground without a word of protest.

With so many awards – such as the Queen's Gallantry Medal – being given to ATOs, we should not lose sight of the fact that this work is a joint effort and that the spotlight also needs to be shone on some of the junior soldiers who make up the RESTs.

It is these young men who are the first to see IEDs up close and personal. – *Name and address supplied.*

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

Thank you for your balanced letter.

On a personal note I have immense respect for what you and every member of the Counter-IED Task Force does in Afghanistan; indeed I would widen that to every soldier who sets foot outside our forward operating bases.

Having spoken to the Engineer in Chief I know this is a subject he is personally dealing with and that at this level there is concern at what is perceived as a lack of recognition for what you and your fellow REST sappers are doing on a daily basis on operations.

The challenge, as with any act of bravery, is that it can simply become the norm when so many people of all cap

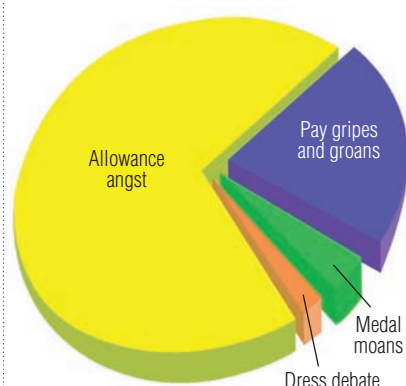
badges are doing amazing things everyday.

By being printed, I hope your letter will serve to focus your commanders, indeed all commanders, on looking that bit harder at everyone in the "team" and presenting citations for consideration by the chain of command.

At least then they can be judged against their peer group who are committing similar acts of gallantry.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



March 2011 - New Sculptures
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& Afghanistan Patrol



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We'll advertise in 'Soldier' again in March so please look out for our new featured design.

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Picture: Sgt Corinne Buxton, RAF

Divided by deployment: WO1 Rendell argues that the nature of the operation in Afghanistan means that families have little choice when it comes to being apart

'No sense to separation status in theatre'

BEING a married unaccompanied soldier in the UK, I get various allowances to assist in the cost of travelling home at weekends to see my loved ones.

However, I have deployed on Op Herrick and recently attempted to process a Concessionary Families Travel (CTF) claim in relation to a journey made by my family.

The Joint Personnel Administration system rejected the request for payment and on seeking further advice at Camp Bastion I was informed that I was classed as voluntarily separated while deployed in theatre and not eligible for the allowance.

This is ludicrous. How can an operationally-deployed soldier be considered to be voluntarily separated?

Working within an infrastructure team, I would be aware if Service Families Accommodation builds were in the pipeline to allow personnel to have their loved ones accompany them on ops and this is not, and should not, be the case.

I would argue that all those married soldiers in theatre should be categorised as involuntarily separated. – WO1 P Rendell RE, Op Herrick.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: CTF is designed to support those who serve accompanied at their permanent duty station. In doing so, the regulations recognise that families undertake repeated moves and have limited opportunity to maintain links with their

wider family or to establish support networks within a wider community.

Although units do provide welfare support, the importance of maintaining family relationships is recognised, hence the entitlement to CTF.

Where individuals choose to settle their loved ones and to serve unaccompanied, it is considered that they have taken the opportunity to establish a stable lifestyle closer to their family and friends.

In these circumstances, claims of CTF are inadmissible.

You remain voluntarily separated from your family as you have elected not to have them accompany you at your permanent duty station. You are therefore not entitled to CTF.

'Fair treatment for fathers, please'

AS the lone parent of a very young daughter, I have noticed that women in a similar position to myself are given a lot more leeway in respect of balancing family and soldiering commitments.

The single dads I know seem to get told to get on with it and that, if they don't like it, they know how to sign off.

With everyone fighting for equal rights, surely gender should not be relevant. Why is there not one rule which applies to both mums and dads?

In some regiments those with sole custody of a child are exempt from duties. I have never asked for this but have noticed that single mothers (and those in families in which both parents serve and one is deployed) have their work hours adjusted to suit childcare.

Please could you offer some guidance to those single dads in uniform who want to carry out their duties as a soldier as best as possible while still being the best parent we can be. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I know that you (and all other serving lone parents) have to carefully balance soldiering and family life.

Our position on the soldiering part is quite clear. All personnel are expected to fulfil a full range of military duties including deployment, but where possible we will try to balance both the needs of the Army and individual.

There is literature available [*Guide To Employment and Deployment Of Serving Parents And Carers*] which provides advice for the chain of command and serving parents and carers, and the policy applies regardless of gender.

If you have any concerns about discriminatory behaviour you should bring them to the attention of your immediate chain of command. If you feel that this is not possible then please call the Bullying and Harassment Complaints Line on 94391 7922 (01264 381922) for advice on what further steps you can take.



"D-Day anniversary is it, lads? We don't do discounts for veterans, card or not!"

■ I NOTICE the coalition has opted not to implement the previous Government's veterans' identity card. Instead they plan to introduce a cheaper, cardboard option – a privilege pass entitling ex-Forces personnel to a so-called discount on goods and services. What a joke, another card. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has lost faith in our political leaders. – William Webster (ex-RA), Bognor Regis.



Picture: Graeme Main

Time to take brakes off delay in cycle scheme

IN light of the significant and wholly justified reaction to the reduction of Home to Duty Travel fuel allowance, please allow me to raise a perennial request and indeed one I have previously posed to *Soldier*.

Why is the MoD not engaged in the Government's Cycle to Work scheme?

The obvious benefit being that during this time of austerity, the savings made by the department in National Insurance contributions (up to 12 per cent) for those enrolled in the initiative would be significant.

This obvious advantage, coupled with improvements to the soldier's own fitness and personal finances, identifies the current policy makers as ludicrous and lacking foresight.

Surely established financial incentives such as these, that benefit both the employee and employer, should be the first item on a post pay-freeze agenda. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Thank you for your continued – and passionate – engagement in the Cycle to Work (C2W) debate.

The current policy makers have studied this issue in considerable depth and recognise that there are potential savings to be made in respect of National Insurance contributions.

However, there are valid reasons why

C2W is not appropriate for the MoD. The initiative is a salary sacrifice scheme which would require the department to either oversee and operate the system internally or utilise a contractor to provide and manage a fleet of bicycles.

The individual would then hire the bicycle via salary sacrifice.

At the end of this hire period, the employee would still not own the bike and provision would need to be made for its purchase or disposal.

In the current environment, with the requirement to manage and deliver a redundancy programme as well as implement Strategic Defence and Security Review measures, there is little appetite among the three Services to introduce a resource-intensive scheme such as C2W.

There is also no evidence to suggest that such an initiative encourages additional people to cycle to work; rather it is those individuals who already opt for that form of transport who tend to make use of the opportunity.

The prospect of interest-free loans of up to £1,000 for individuals to purchase bicycles has also been discussed. This would be viewed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs as a "benefit in kind" and individuals would probably be subject to tax; hence it is extremely unlikely to be considered further in the current financial climate.

PS . . .

■ I AM writing in response to a letter published in the February issue, "Mum must be the word during Minimise", by an (unsurprisingly) anonymous author.

The unknown writer stated that they were based at Kandahar Airfield, which is hardly the centre of combat operations in Afghanistan, and that it was possible – if so desired – to use civilian facilities on the camp to access multimedia services to talk with loved ones back home during Op Minimise [the communications freeze imposed in theatre in the event of a critically-injured soldier]. Lucky them.

The correspondent also claimed that the first they hear of a casualty or death is from Sky News. If that is the case, the author should look towards their own chain of command for an explanation as to why they are not receiving daily sitreps from across theatre.

The author then goes on to complain about the financial cost of "getting around" Op Minimise, a sentiment which I, and assume many others, find deplorable.

The individual in question should visit some of the more remote patrol and forward operating bases in Helmand province and speak to those posted there. In these locations there is often no access to the internet and satellite phones are the only means of contacting home, and Op Minimise brings with it the distinct possibility that somebody you know has been injured or killed.

The communications blackout serves a purpose – to prevent those at home from getting second-hand bad news – and I for one do not begrudge losing a few hours of internet or phone time in order to allow the welfare system to carry out its work.

I am sure the loved ones the author so desperately needs to talk to every time Op Minimise is imposed would hate to hear of any incident involving their son or daughter from a neighbour or ill-informed individual.

Whoever penned that letter should think about this the next time they are sat in Burger King waiting for Op Minimise to be lifted! – **Cpl J Dyson, CIS PI, 2 RRF.**

■ THE long-awaited presentation brief on cuts to allowances has been made and there were no surprises.

Let's be honest, we all knew it was going to happen and anyone who was shocked by the lowering of payments must have been living in a dream world.

While it is now just a case of getting over it and moving on, there are a couple of points I would like to make out of principle.

Firstly, we were told allowances were being lowered to cut the national deficit and yet the UK is still going to gift £750 million to foreign nations for aid and development. Charity starts at home.

Secondly, the reduction in Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) seemed to cause the most uproar. Let's be realistic here shall we.

The payment is not being cut, just lowered, and soldiers are not missing out on that much.

The rate is dependant on rank, but as a corporal the change will see a fall of just £3.15 a month in LOA. – **Cpl Kirkwood, 1 LSR**



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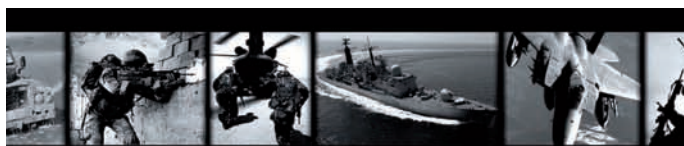


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Chindits comparison is comical

WHILE on Exercise Bright Star in Egypt in 1997, Maj Gen Tim Evans – then a major – put on a fantastic comparison of life in the desert for a 1940s' Infantry section and a contemporary unit.

Putting aside the continual German hail of mortars, the striking fact was that the men of yesteryear were expected to cook, drink and shave with a single canteen of water a day.

Latterly, I have eaten pizza at Camp Bastion and been on numerous smooth shaved shuras outside the wire. In both cases I did not see any hardships equal to those suffered by Monty's men. I did, however, see plenty of poor turnout.

If the anonymous SNCO from February's issue, "Focus on beards causes irritation", thinks life on Op Herrick is in any way similar to life on Op Longcloth – carried out by the Chindits – he is poorly informed and it is a shameless comparison.

I support the view of the nameless female officer, "Cut back on the beard growing" (December), who I hope was as forthright face-to-face with the soldiers in question as she was when writing anonymously to *Soldier*.

In addition, I wonder what century the "Right Reverend" WO1 Owens (*Talkback*, February) is from; being so conclusive of a female's or anyone else's role within the modern deployed force.

I offer both WO1 Owens and the nameless SNCO a big hanky straight from the men of the conscript 8th and 14th Armies to stop them crying into their historically- and operationally-questionable facial hair.

Those in charge at all levels should re-evaluate hardship, austerity and be honest about the cultural credibility of a beard. The fashion for going unshaven and looking scruffy out of context is quite simply weak leadership. – Maj I Ballantyne, R Signals.

Talk isn't cheap for ever-shifting soldiers

IN the past 18 months I have twice had to move Single Living Accommodation – changes in address that have come at a cost of £250 in phone line reconnections.

Following my most recent relocation, I was informed by BT that these charges could be reclaimed but, having spoken to the clerks at my unit, no one seems to be able to tell me how to go about doing so.

Is there an allowance for single soldiers I don't know about? There is, I believe, such a payment for married personnel. – Sgt N Cory, 104 FS Bn.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: The simple answer to your question is no there is not. A contribution to the reimbursement of such costs is factored

into Disturbance Allowance (DA) for both single and married personnel.

In the case of SLA moves since April 1, 2010, this payment has only been afforded to those first joining a unit or when a formation completes a formal move to a new location. It is no longer paid for internal barrack moves – either between or within accommodation blocks – as it is simply unaffordable.

Commanding officers are aware of this and have been asked to reduce the amount of such changes, which are often referred to as "churn".

If you believe your moves fit into one of the two former categories above, I recommend you approach your unit HR staff for further advice.



"Don't you think that getting married solely on the grounds that you might attract more Disturbance Allowance is a little extreme?"

PS...

■ I JUST wanted to voice my opinion on the subject of the potential issue of a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal (QDJM) in 2012.

Unfortunately, it is highly likely that a number of individuals, who would otherwise have been eligible for the decoration, will miss out as a direct result of being medically discharged after being wounded on operations.

I hope that these former soldiers, who in principle still serve Queen and country day in, day out by virtue of their ongoing battles with injuries, are presented with a QDJM despite now being out of uniform.

To do so would be a fitting tribute and go a long way to reassuring our wounded that their monarch, nation and fellow soldiers have not forgotten their sacrifices. – WO2 Hereford.

Cashback does not extend to Cyprus

I FOLLOWED the advice given by Lt Col Andrew Purdy in a *Talkback* letter last year and contacted my local authority with a view to claiming a 50 per cent discount on my council tax bill.

However, I was told that, as a Serviceman, I was not eligible. Is there any way of getting a definitive response to this matter?

In my case, I have a furnished flat in Falmouth that has been unoccupied since November 2009 (tenants moved out) and have been based in Cyprus, living in a quarter and paying contribution in lieu of Council Tax, since August 2009. Any help or guidance would be very much appreciated. – Capt J Mansell, BFPO 53.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: My staff have spoken to the appropriate MoD personnel. Lt Col Purdy's response is

correct for those assigned to England, Scotland or Wales, however, this concession by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has not been extended to personnel assigned and living overseas.

In short, I can confirm that you are not eligible for a Council Tax discount in relation to your current circumstances.

For Forces personnel, the reduced rate may be claimed where Service accommodation is provided by the MoD in Great Britain and the private property is elsewhere in England, Scotland or Wales.

It does not include property in Northern Ireland as household rates are paid there instead of Council Tax and there is no equivalent rebate.



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PS...

■ I HAVE noted of late how many of the letters published by *Soldier* are not signed off personally and instead opt for "senior NCO" or "name and address supplied" and the like.

While this may not be a pressing matter in the grand scheme of things, it rather depressingly suggests writers feel the chain of command may look unfavourably on their comments and also encourages some (like the unnamed female officer in the December issue) to whinge without revealing their identity – a cowardly action most undeserving of a commission in my eyes!

I appeal to all readers to quit this most ungentlemanly behaviour and have the courage to publish and be damned! – Maj J Fuller, HQ NRDC-ITA, BFPO 61.

■ MANY thanks to all those recent letter writers who have reminded us that National Servicemen responded to the call, trained as they were ordered and went where and when they were told.

As one of those lads (who migrated from the Middlesex Regiment to the Intelligence Corps), I am proud to be able to say that I served.

I don't need a medal to prove that I was there, but I don't begrudge those who would like to have a public memento of their service.

Now, in the twilight of my days as it were, I don't think we should turn this medal business into an ongoing and somewhat vitriolic debate. Just ease springs, lads, and draw strength from the knowledge that we were British soldiers once. – John Sansom (a former die 'ard), Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

■ I WOULD like to comment on Brig Mike Griffiths' [DPS(A)] reply to a letter in the last issue, "Pay freeze is fine but fall in salaries will lead to losses", and in particular his point that "the senior soldier retention problems you refer to do not exist within the Army as a whole".

As one of those who will be affected, I would like to reply with two words – pension trapped. I am very bitter that for the next two years I will lose money as a reward for my service.

I am currently on pay scale seven of seven so will not benefit from an incremental rise as many soldiers will.

Anyone who is capped in their respective rank will be hit in the pocket. – Sgt W Graham, 5 Rifles.

'Knickers on flagpoles and horses in the mess... why the long faces?'

It is with delight that I receive my monthly copy of *Soldier* and turn immediately to the *Talkback* pages.

Who is writing about what and why used to be a good source of Service humour, however, it now seems to be a place for people who take life far too seriously.

Sorry Mr-wannabe-Military-Support-Function-job-holder, "Give troops a fair crack at Civil Service" (January), the system changed to ensure that vacancies were filled under open and fair competition.

We all know direct entry officers who were useless when they were serving and even worse when the old practice of "jobs for the boys" gave them a red carpet welcome into the MoD.

The only "protectionism" involved in the current set-up is that when someone is appointed in such a role, the taxpayer actually gets value for money.

To SSgt Barnett (*Talkback*, January), I'm sorry that you are not happy with a scanned signature on your Royal Warrant. Here's a thought, let's cut out this unnecessary production of a parchment, the associated packaging and posting costs and the inevitable disappointment of the recipient by scrapping the scrolls altogether.

Well done – you made warrant officer, you are paid handsomely, now get on with it.

And in reply to Brian Kirkwood of Canada, sorry that the slovenly troops of today's British Army should disappoint you enough that you had to write to Gen Sir Mike Jackson in 1999 and again to *Soldier* in 2011. Those currently serving spend so much time beneath a combat helmet while preparing for operations or deployed overseas that the wearing of the humble beret is almost a forgotten art.

Yes, discipline is required within the Forces and that encompasses standards of dress, but please do not

believe for one moment that soldiers from the pre-1991 era can have any idea whatsoever of what life has been like for those who have served with honour since.

Finally to all readers out there, be they serving or veterans, bring back the stories of knickers on the flagpole, horses in the mess or anything else that will give us a good laugh. Let's have some of the humour that we used to know and love. – A beretless Military Support Function civil servant.



■ WITH the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) allowance cuts set to bite; soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines should remember to take advantage of any tax relief they are eligible for.

Too many of the personnel I meet have never filed a tax return or applied for a rebate for the kit and equipment they have bought for work.

If you have ever purchased a sleeping bag, waterproofs, pair of boots or a GPS for duty reasons or been charged for lost kit, you can reclaim some of that spend.

Those on the lower tax band are



entitled to 20p in the pound back and this figure doubles to 40p for those on the higher band.

Submitting a claim dating back to 2005 (the earliest permissible year) could provide a SDSR-busting payment.

Personnel who do not complete a tax return each year will need to contact HM Revenue and Customs to explain the nature of their expenses.

It is also possible to file a P87 [tax relief for expenses of employment], which can be downloaded from www.hmrc.gov.uk

This is money you are entitled to and it's better off in your pocket than elsewhere. – Lt J P Boardman, 3/215 Bde Advisor Group, Op Herrick 13.



DIRECTORY

Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre: 01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

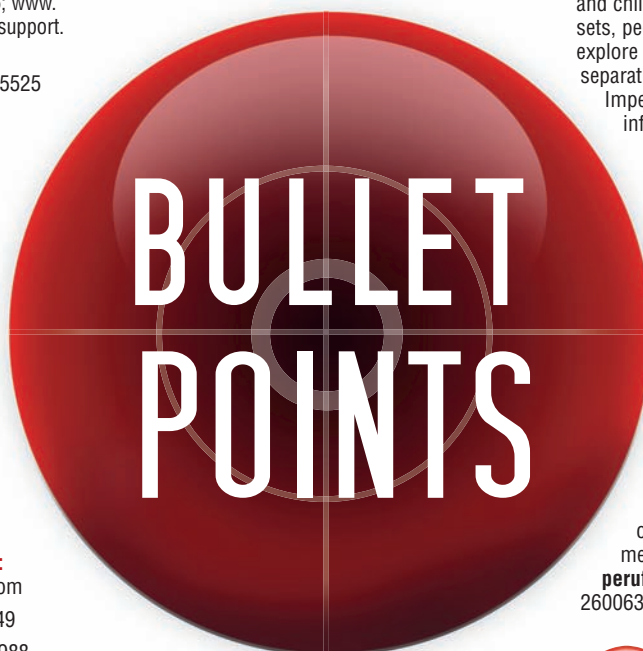
Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)



DIARY

March 1 onwards: The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes. The world's largest collection of Victoria and George Crosses. The new gallery examines the concept of bravery and the personal stories behind the decorations. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London



SE1 6HZ. Telephone 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

March 11-27: Ideal Home Show at Earls Court, London. Servicemen and women (or those who have been medically discharged since 2001) can apply for free entry via the Tickets for Troops website, www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

April 15: ABF, The Soldiers' Charity are holding a counter-IED talk at ATFC Winchester's chapel. 1800 for 1845 start with drinks and canapes. Tickets £15 each – send a cheque payable to ABF to Maj M Webster, Coopers Farm, Hartley Wespall, Hook RG27 0BQ.

May 1 onwards: Exhibition of War Correspondents – Reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to us at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk

May 12-15: Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo. Held in the grounds of Windsor Castle during the evening. The Royal Windsor Horse Show takes place at the same venue during the day. Tickets available from the box office on 0871 230 5570 or booked online at www.windsortattoo.com

Until further notice: Classic War Stories for Children. *Once upon a wartime* delves into the pages of well-loved books, bringing five stories of war dramatically to life. Adults and children can wander through life-size sets, peer into intricate scale models and explore the stories' themes of loyalty, separation, excitement, survival and identity. Imperial War Museum, London. For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk

May 25-29: Forces March 2011. One of the UK's top challenge events. Participants attempt to complete five marathons in five days. Entries from military personnel, ex-Forces and emergency services welcome. Minimum of four people in each team. Visit www.forcesmarch.org.uk for further information and application form.

May 28: Blues Brothers Tribute Band. In aid of Help for Heroes. Performing live at Hatherley Manor Hotel, Gloucester GL2 9AQ. Tickets cost £30, include a three-course meal and are available online at www.peruforh4h.co.uk or by phoning 01452 260063.



SEARCHLINE

Where are you **chef John Clark (aka Clarky)?** Last known whereabouts was 16 Regiment, Woolwich in 1999/2000. Wendy Hennell is trying to find you. Email wendy.hennell@hotmail.co.uk

Leonie Hawking from Australia is trying to locate a lost pen friend, **Hilary Pickering, wife of military policeman Elwyn Pickering.** The family was stationed in Germany 1992/1993. Leonie visited the Pickerings in the South of England in 2002. Email leoniehawking@hotmail.com

Ex-Rhodesian Army engineer (Patrick McCosh) is trying to find former colleague **Michael Peters** who joined the British Army in 1980 when he left Zimbabwe. Michael was a sergeant in 1993. His parents were Ron and Margaret Peters. Contact Patrick by email patrick@west.co.zw



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Janet Taylor, Cambridge.

Mr Nice winners: L Newport, Oxford; WO2 A Samuel, AFCO Cardiff; Capt M Claxton, MoD St Athan; Miss S Jackson, 201 Tpt Sqn RLC; WO2 J Keogh, Loan Service Team, BFPO 11.

The Girl Who Played with Fire winners: Ms

R Denyer, Aldershot; J Dickinson, 217 Tpt Sqn RLC; Cpl C Brister, 1 RSME Regt; Ms S Witney, Taunton; Col P Madej, Warsaw, Poland.

Death Race 2 winners: B Barton, Colchester; Mrs J Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison; Ms M Britt, Camberley; Capt B Exley, 265 Bty RA; D Walker, Castleford, West Yorkshire.

The Town winners: R Crispin, Plymouth; WO1 N O'Leary, 158 Tpt Regt RLC; Maj A Fisher, HQ GSG, BFPO 140; A Davies, HQ Land Forces,

Andover; Maj C Powers, 1 Yorks, BFPO 17.

Splice winners: Sgt Stockman, AFCO Inverness; SSgt W Bennett, 40 Regt RA; Cpl R Hood, 4 MI Bn; WO2 P Yates, BEW, Gibraltar Bks, Blackwater; J Holliday, DMC Bath.

The Last Exorcism winners: Sgt D Cummings, 7 Signal Regt; Cpl A Duncan, 3 CS Bn REME; J Card, SSU Beaconside; Ms A Francois, 100 Regt RA (V); M Woods, HQ Defence Log School, Deepcut.

101 FS Battalion REME requires Territorial Army volunteers for Op Herrick 15. The deployment will cover a 12-month mobilisation period with tour dates between September 2011 and April 2012. Anyone interested should contact the ROSO, 101 FS Bn REME via their company PSAO. The next selection weekend will be **March 25-27**.

Rhoda Kirkpatrick is seeking information about her cousin, **23917491 LBdr David Edward Tilbury**, who was killed in action on October 27, 1971 in a bomb attack on an Army observation post at Rosemount RUC in N Ireland. If you have any information, contact Mrs Kirkpatrick by email at kirkysgirl@yahoo.com

Simon Thomas has recovered a Territorial Army efficiency medal while metal detecting. The decoration was awarded to **622413 Sjt M James RHA**. The medal was found in Bridgend, Wales. The soldier is believed to have lived in the Neath area. Owner or family of Sjt James should contact Simon by email thomas.s31@sky.com

A new charity for ex-Service personnel called **SPEAR** is aimed at supporting and helping veterans and their dependents who live, or have links, within Merton, Richmond, Hounslow and Kingston in south-west London. The range of guidance and advice is broad and includes referrals, health, social inclusion, homelessness and family. If you need help and live in the areas mentioned contact Veterans' Support Team, SPEAR, 89 Heath Road, Twickenham TW1 4AW or call 0207 036 9775.

David Stewart is trying to trace fellow comrades of his late father, **22722258 Cpl Robert Muirhead Wilson (RAOC)**, from his National Service days. Cpl Muirhead served from October 2, 1952 until October 24, 1954. He served in Tripoli from January 1953 to September 1954. Contact David at 9/12 Smithfield Street, Edinburgh EH11 2PG or phone 0131 477 6387.



REUNIONS

Gloucestershire Regiment 28/LXI: Reunion for 2011 will mark the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Imjin, Korea. The all-ranks dinner of Bristol/Gloucestershire RGBW Association Back Badge will take place on April 2 in Gloucestershire. For full details and booking forms visit www.glostest.org/bb2011 or send an SAE to Back Badge and Imjin 60 Reunion Team, 45 Coleridge Gardens, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 2QA.

77th Artillery Clerks: Reunion and dinner at Larkhill, Salisbury on May 6-8. Details from reunion secretary Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regt RA, Bhurtore Bks, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7AS, or phone 01980 656550 or email ian.constantine758@mod.uk

Gordon Highlanders: Waterloo lunch at the London Scottish Headquarters, London SW1 on June 18. Ladies welcome. Further details from Bob Harman on 0208 642 7192 or honorary secretary John Spoor on 01634 231070 or email jspoorrewigmore@tinyonline.co.uk

Operation Lecturer-Cambodia: Reunion at Commando Forces Sergeants' Mess, RM Barracks, Stone House, Plymouth on July 22. Any serving or former RM/RN/Army or attached civilian personnel who served in Cambodia 1991/1992 as part of the UNAMIC/UNTAC mission and is interested in meeting, email Tony Jacka for details anthony.jacka219@mod.uk

45 Field Support Squadron RE: Reunion on September 3 at the Chiltern Hotel, Luton. Tickets are £36 each and cover a meal, disco and memento. Room rates at the hotel are £49 inclusive of breakfast. Former members of the squadron should contact Gordon Brady, 51 Whipperley Ring, Luton, Beds LU1 5QS or phone 07929 167451.

Calday Grange CCF: 60th anniversary on October 1, with a parade and black-tie dinner. Information from Maj Adcock by email at ccf@calday.wirral.sch.uk

19 Regiment, Royal Artillery: Regimental reunion to be held in late 2011/early 2012. Update of the All Ranks Old Comrades database. If you served with the Highland Gunners or wish to register or modify contact details, including length of service with 19 Regt and sub units, write to Maj LeFeuvre at 19 Regt RA, Bhurtore Bks, Tidworth, SP7 7AS or email welfare19@hotmail.co.uk

57 (Bhurtore) Bty, 32 Regt RA: Reunion dinner on January 21, 2012. Bty medals parade will also be held on the same day at 32 Regt, Larkhill. Ex-members, serving or retired, are welcome. Contact Steph Manning on 01980 845577 or email bty_57@live.co.uk asap in order to gauge levels of interest.



ROADSHOWS

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

March: 29, Oldham; 30, Sale; 31, St Helens.

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TEN details have been changed on this photograph of a pilot's view over Salisbury Plain during Exercise Pashtun Jaguar. Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 832, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by March 31.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the May issue.

January competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **LCpl Robinson**, HCR, BFPO 792. Runners-up **Mr D Mabb**, Downpatrick, Co Down and **Miss Mavis Kirk**, 38 (Irish) Bde, Lisburn, each win a £25 gift voucher.



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www.armyandoutdoor.co.uk

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www.spearlondon.org

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www.erskine.org.uk

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www.veterans-aid.net

Providing direct and immediate help to veterans who are in crisis, homeless or likely to become homeless. Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.veterans-uk.info

A wealth of information about pay, pension and support services to both military personnel and the veterans community.

www.oswaldstoll.org.uk

Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation provides appropriate housing with support to vulnerable and disabled ex-Service personnel, including those who have been homeless.

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.tnauk.org.uk

National talking newspapers and magazines. Difficulty reading the printed word? *Soldier* can still be enjoyed in audio format. To receive a free audio sample of *Soldier* contact the National Talking Newspaper Service on 01435 866102 or email info@tnauk.org.uk

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families.

MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

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Triangular bond: Proposals for an Armed Forces Covenant would mean a mutual agreement between the Government, the nation and the UK's defence force

Cautious over covenant's clause

THE Military Covenant is an Army invention which the Government and MoD is seeking to make tri-Service.

Some colleagues representing the other two Services think that this will be particularly challenging for the coalition politicians in power.

Under the proposed legislation in the Armed Forces Bill, the Armed Forces Covenant will not be enshrined in law but will be a moral obligation on the Government, the nation as a whole and the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Binding this triangle together is a mutual contract which honours the commitment made by the soldiers, seamen and airmen to protect the country.

What will be committed to law – as part of the Bill's Clause 2 – will be the requirement on the Secretary of State for Defence to report on "progress" to Parliament.

On Prime Minister David Cameron's request, Professor Hew Strachan, a military historian at Oxford University, led an independent task force to develop ideas to rebuild the covenant. This report, published in December, looks at support that can be provided across Government and throughout society.

In relation to Clause 2 I was recently asked by the Armed Forces Bill Committee what impact it would make on military families and I said that in essence it would make very little difference.

It sets out no minimum standards for

housing, health, transition into civvy street, mental health or any part of military life.

Some would say that this allows flexibility and ensures that the system can meet the current priorities but I would have to strongly disagree.

If one of the report's key headings is to be housing it would seem logical to me that the minister must measure the provision of Service accommodation against a minimum performance indicator.

Similarly, the Bill proposes that the minister will report on education.

This year he could report on the £200 pupil premium for Service children (a great step forward) but will he also document that it is not yet available in the devolved administrations, that there is no guaranteed method of identifying Forces children in education and that (most importantly in my opinion) there is to be no monitoring of what schools spend that money on?

I do not expect that he would report on the review into Continuity of Education Allowance, which is ongoing at the moment, and the worry and upset that the uncertainty over the future of this entitlement has caused to thousands of Service parents.

I also doubt that he would make reference to the impact of the wider allowance cuts on personnel and their families, which I wrote about in my column last month.

It is a further bone of contention for me that the minister will write the report.

With the External Reference Group to the Service Personnel Command Paper, there is already a mechanism for making an independent report on the progress of commitments both in that document

and against the coalition's commitments to Defence.

While half of this group is formed of advocates from other ministerial departments and so cannot be defined as independent, the other half truly are.

Made up of the families federations, charities and academics, these independent members can hold the Government and MoD to account and are able, with no political objectives, to make unbiased judgements on progress.

So will Clause 2 make a difference to Service personnel and their families? Well it's a start.

It is not those within the Services who have asked for the covenant, rather it has, in recent times, been used as a stick to beat the Government with.

But if that stick can be used to improve the provisions for Service personnel and their families either through this report or other methods, then I would definitely not stand in its way.

I would want to see it be made much stronger though. ■

‘It is not those within the Services who have asked for the covenant’

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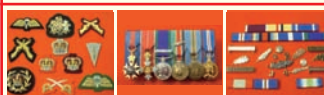
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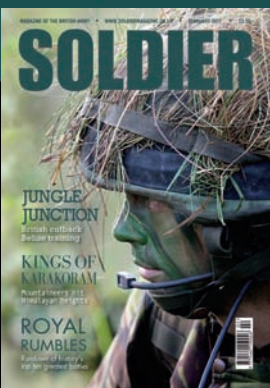
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MARCH'S MUST-HAVES

P82 MOVIES **HANGOVER CURE**

P84 GAMES **POLE PLAYMATE**

P86 MUSIC **DEBUT DELIGHT**

P88 BOOKS **FITNESS FIRST**

P90 GEAR **SATELLITE SAVIOUR**



Fame hungry: *Due Date*, the must-watch road-trip movie, is out now on Blu-ray and DVD, courtesy of Warner Home Video

Great *Hangover* cure

The unique Zach Galifianakis is brilliant again in his latest shock-laugh venture

Review: Joe Clapson

IN the aftermath of *The Hangover's* global success, expectations for director Todd Phillips' latest film were sky-high – and *Due Date* delivers in spades.

Uptight architect Peter Highman (Robert Downey Jr) is rushing home to be with his expectant wife but his efforts to get back are thrown into chaos when he crosses paths with wannabe actor Ethan Tremblay (Zach Galifianakis).

The disaster-zone that is Ethan first smashes off Peter's car door and steals his bag, before getting him shot by a taser gun and banned from flying home.

Highman has no alternative but to accept Tremblay's offer to share an awkwardly long, uncomfortable journey across America, in time for his wife Sarah (Michelle Monaghan) to give birth.

Yes, the similarities with Steve Martin and John Candy in *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* are obvious to see, but despite the lack of originality there is plenty of entertainment here.

We watch through our fingers as Ethan fails to appreciate personal boundaries and Peter is

repeatedly driven to breaking point.

Fresh from his mesmerising success in *The Hangover*, Galifianakis is once again hilarious as the man-child who unwittingly ruins plans. His character is Hollywood-bound, devotedly carrying his father's ashes in a coffee can.

Some critics claim the hairy-faced actor has typecast himself as a foolish oaf, but no one in the movie business is currently providing as many laugh-out-loud moments.

Here he scores particularly highly on the shock scale along with his French bulldog, Sonny, when the pair simultaneously indulge in a pastime more in keeping with the *American Pie* franchise.

Speaking about the difference between himself and Ethan as a character, Galifianakis said: "When you're doing stand-up, you're kind of doing, 'Hey, thought of this. This may be funny'. But Ethan has no idea he's being funny and I think people that are not self-aware and kind of a truck with no brakes are really kind of funny."

At the other end of the scale, Peter comes across as obnoxious and even vicious – at one point he punches a small boy in the stomach – but Downey Jr plays the role with class and keeps the audience on-side.

Even when he spits in the preened Sonny's face

we sympathise with him and it is another example of how Phillips enjoys breaking taboos and testing his viewers.

In his customary blunt manner, Downey Jr voiced his pleasure at being part of the film as it was an opportunity to explore weird and dark aspects of the human character.

"It was an invitation to me to get in touch with everything that annoys me about everyone and all the fear I have about everything that everybody can relate to," he said.

"I'm not a method guy. I can't be bothered to have a method."

"I just want to be part of a good movie and I can't stand being surrounded by morons."

As well as all-action comedy, the movie strikes a sensitive chord, dealing with the emotions of fatherhood.

Despite handling more serious issues than *The Hangover*, with some moments of real poignancy, this film rivals and probably beats its predecessor in the comedy stakes.

Every move of Galifianakis is worth watching and whether he continues to play similar roles or not, he will bring barrels of laughter. ■

● *Due Date* is out now on DVD

From World Cup dreams to teens in an aeroplane shocker, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Africa United out now

AFRICA United is a real feel-good film that follows a group of football-obsessed Rwandan children on a 3,000-mile journey from Kigali to the World Cup finals in Johannesburg. It is definitely the poor relation of *Slumdog Millionaire* but nevertheless will leave you feeling uplifted and humbled by the genuine good that sport can do. With a dangerous jungle, HIV and prostitution thrown into the mix, the film has a seriousness at its core and gives you plenty to think about. Football often receives – usually deservedly – a bad press but this movie shines a light on how much it means to people in difficult situations.

Robert Blake, civvy



Gun out March 14

THERE are at least three twists to this tale, written by and starring **Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson**. Armed with a 0.5-inch hand cannon he nails the role of the vindictive and remorseless street arms dealer determined to take his franchise "to the next level". Recently released ex-con **Val Kilmer** co-stars as a new gang member, watching Jackson's back with no regard for the fragility of the group's temperament. This is never going to end happily. Inter-police department rivalries are standard fare in this genre and some of the supporting cast lacks conviction, but the overall package is simultaneously entertaining and disturbing.

Capt Neil Johnson, AAC



71 – Into The Fire out March 14

THIS film is based on a true story centred on a group of 71 South Korean "student soldiers" who were left behind to "defend" the Pohang Girls Middle School against a Division of North Korean Regulars on August 11, 1950. Despite being subtitled in English (this is a South Korean production), it is easy to follow and action packed from start to finish – culminating in a final battle which I would say could easily rival the opening of *Saving Private Ryan*. I was quite surprised by this film, it started with a bang and was quite a compelling watch right through to the very end. Big thumbs up.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE





Off the rails: Robert Downey Junior's short-tempered Peter is forced to travel alongside Zach Galifianakis' social hand-grenade Ethan and his pet dog

Altitude out March 14

THE film *Altitude* revolves around five American teenagers and a dangerous plane trip. After a malfunction sends their aircraft spiralling out of control, the rookie pilot and her four friends find themselves trapped in a deadly showdown with a supernatural force. This film is a fantasy/horror/sci-fi offering with a romantic sub-plot thrown in to make it utterly confusing and unenjoyable. The visual effects do not make up for the terrible storyline in the slightest, with poor camera footage and overacting to name just a few of the problems. I would recommend *Altitude* to those who like *The Twilight Saga*, but not many others.



Daniel Crowder, Greater Manchester ACF

Win... RED

BASED on the DC graphic novels by **Warren Ellis** and **Cully Hammer**, *RED* is an explosive action comedy about a team of "Retired and Extremely Dangerous" former CIA operatives played by **Bruce Willis**, **Morgan Freeman**, **John Maltovich** and **Helen Mirren**. After a hit-squad attempts to kill former black-ops agent Frank (**Willis**), he reassembles his old team and sets out to settle the score. Entertainment One is offering five readers a chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us what RED stands for. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: March 31

Win... Due Date

FROM *The Hangover* and *Old School* director **Todd Phillips**, this latest gem of a comedy follows a mis-matched pair as they try to survive each other on a cross-country journey. Starring **Robert Downey Jr.**, **Zach Galifianakis**, **Michelle Monaghan**, **Juliette Lewis** and **Jamie Foxx**, the film is filled with nail-biting action, awkward moments and spit-your-popcorn-out laughs. *Due Date* is out now on Blu-ray and DVD courtesy of Warner Home Video. For a chance to win one of five copies of the movie, tell us who directed the film. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: March 31



Start your engines: *MotoGP 10/11* offers an all-new control system that creates hours of fun as you take charge of your favourite team

From the pits to pole

Motorcycle racer learns lessons from the past to find winning formula on the track

Review: Richard Long

WITH the link between mainstream sports and their gaming spin-offs growing ever stronger, it is no surprise to see the adrenalin-fuelled action of the MotoGP series following the well-trodden path of its forebears.

The high-octane racing offers endless thrills and spills and often proves to be far more exciting than the encounters between drivers on the high-profile Formula One circuit.

But does success on the track equate to a winning platform for the gaming fraternity?

Well, *MotoGP 10/11* certainly delivers on the authenticity front as a raft of the sport's top riders and circuits are skilfully recreated for battle on the small screen.

And it appears that developers Monumental Games have learned valuable lessons from the title's predecessor.

Soldier was less than impressed by the controls on the 09/10 variant as we spent more time skidding along the tarmac than racing for the chequered flag due to the appalling handling.

So it was our absolute pleasure to see a new

system introduced for this follow-up in what may well see our steering issues confined to the pit lane once and for all.

Customisable player assists allow fans of both simulator and arcade racing to set the game to their exact requirements.

Those wanting to take less of a risk with their riding technique can switch the technical support on for a more forgiving style of racing, while purists can take to the track unaccompanied for a more realistic experience of life in the fast lane.

With the controls seemingly mastered there is a vast array of gameplay options to keep thrill-seekers entertained.

A new co-op mode allows a second rider to join the fray and, through the help of a split screen, is able to work alongside a fellow racer and propel their team to pole position.

The exacting career mode is also back, along with the classic championship and time trial options, while a revised challenge format allows players to pose as their motorcycle hero from the start in all three disciplines.

As with any modern release, the online capabilities are a key selling point and *MotoGP 10/11* does not disappoint.

Up to 20 riders can compete at one time thanks

to the wonders of the web and gamers also have the option of a spectator mode to check out the competition and gain that all-important advantage before pulling up to the start line.

With the release pre-dating the launch of the new track season, the game opens with content from the 2010 campaign.

But shortly after the championship rumbles into life on the Losail circuit in Qatar later this month, downloadable updates will be available to ensure you have the very latest teams, riders and data at the click of your fingers.

New and improved audio featuring real-life MotoGP bikes adds to the authenticity as the brains behind the title take you as close as you can get to the action without wearing leathers.

On the whole this is a vast improvement on what has gone before and offers hours of fun for stalwart petrolheads and those who want to sample some pure escapism.

The well thought-out game modes offer great variety, while the presentation and graphics are simply spot-on, giving *MotoGP 10/11* a well-deserved place at the top of the podium.

● *MotoGP 10/11* is released on Xbox 360 and PS3 on March 18. ■

From ball game home runs to puzzled Russian dolls, we check out what's hot and what's not in the gaming world...

MLB 11 The Show for PS3

BILLED as the most authentic baseball game available, the latest instalment of *MLB The Show* captures all the action from the heart of the diamond. Among the many highlights on the 2011 offering is the addition of the pure analogue control system that provides improved accuracy for hitting, pitching and throwing. A newly added co-op mode gives up to four players the chance to battle it out in offline or online competition, while weather elements, jumbotrons and fireworks add to the spectacle. If you like your sporting action from the other side of the pond, this may well strike a home run.

Out on March 8



Stacking for Xbox 360

GAMERS who balk at handing over £40 for a new title have been the prime benefactors of the Xbox Live Arcade. The download service's titles to date may have been more miss than hit, but *Stacking* falls very firmly in the latter camp. Taking charge of a chimney-sweeping Russian doll, players navigate a well-presented world as they enlist the help of similarly cute wooden characters to rescue their parents from an evil land baron. This is a point-and-click puzzle title in the mould of *Monkey Island* and it more than matches its illustrious forebear. Presenting cerebral challenges aplenty this is a must-have offering.

Out now



Dragon Age II for all formats

THIS hotly-anticipated sequel sees players taking the role of Hawke, a refugee who survives the destruction of his homeland to become champion of Kirkwall. His rise is shrouded in mystery and is the driving force behind a story that spans ten years in the *Dragon Age* universe. The adventure is based on the decisions you make when facing deadly enemies and tough moral choices, options that cater for extended gameplay. Featuring fast-paced action, striking new art direction and gripping storytelling, it successfully builds on the impressive foundations from one of the top role-playing releases of 2009.

Out on March 11





Chasing the chequered flag: *MotoGP 10/11* boasts an impressive roster of online features as well as adrenalin-fuelled challenge, career and time trial modes

Test Drive 2 Unlimited for all formats

THE trend of taking driving games off the track and building social experiences around them reaches new heights with *Test Drive Unlimited 2*. This hi-octane sequel allows gamers to invite friends to race and interact in a massive – 3,000km of massive to be precise – open-world environment. Single players are treated to an evolving storyline requiring them to complete tasks and gain licenses to unlock new areas and cars, but the timescale in which they do so is entirely up to them. Although not the best-looking release, this title handles well, offers variety and has so much depth it demands repeat plays.

Out now



NASCAR The Game 2011 for all formats

HAVING been rebuilt from the ground up, *NASCAR The Game 2011* offers a thoroughly new experience of America's number one motorsport. The title's developers have used fan interaction to vividly capture the teams, drivers and officials that form the backdrop for players chasing glory in the Sprint Cup Series Championship. The undoubted highlight is the opportunity to inflict sheer havoc on the track in the form of multi-car pile-ups. All 22 real-world tracks are included and drivers also face a stern test of their skill behind the wheel in an impressive 16-player online format. All in all, this is a welcome addition to the grid.

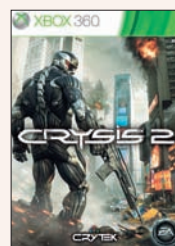
Out now

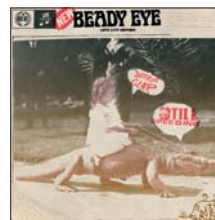


Crysis 2 for all formats

THE aliens return with a full invasion force focused on nothing less than the total annihilation of mankind in *Crysis 2*. Set in New York, the invaders stalk the streets, attacking residents with epidemic speed and ruthless ferocity. With law enforcement authorities and the US military unable to stop the rampaging enemy, you must wield the combat technology of the Nanosuit 2 in a last-ditch attempt to save humanity. The kit features a raft of brutal weapons to utilise in the fightback as this title proves to be an action-packed sequel that will have players hooked on a mission to save mankind from the very outset.

Out on March 25





All about the music: Beady Eye made a rapid return to the studio to record debut album *Different Gear*, *Still Speeding*, which is out now

Back in the fast lane

Oasis survivors emerge from wreckage to fire new assault on music's mainstream

Review: Richard Long

WHEN the curtain finally fell on an era of musical dominance for Oasis, a firm spotlight was fixed on these rock icons as they pondered what to do next.

Instead of standing still, the group – minus warring sibling Noel Gallagher – took a couple of weeks off before heading straight back to the studio under the new guise of Beady Eye in what ultimately proved to be a smooth transition from one band to the next.

"It was important not to sit and dwell on the past," explained singer Liam Gallagher.

"We'd just come off an Oasis tour and we were on fire, if we'd said 'let's do something in a few months or next year' the flame would have burned out and we would have got the fear.

"We've got these songs, we go in and we do them. We're fired up, not because we thought we'd show everyone it could happen without you know who, we're fired up because we're doing music."

New album *Different Gear*, *Still Speeding* was inevitably going to be compared to the triumphant Oasis back catalogue, but guitarist Andy Bell has

not been fazed by the pressure this could have easily yielded for the group.

"It wasn't scary because we kept it really close to our chests, no one still knows what's going on," he said.

"The maddest thing now is to think it is about to go out into the world and people's heads are going to be pickled, hearing all these new songs that they've not heard before, it will be like 'what was that?'."

"Coming to see us live, they'll recognise our faces but it will be all new tunes."

The record features 13 tracks and the band's plan for success is simple – release three singles, an album and then play non-stop.

"There was never any fear with Oasis," Gallagher said. "You knew people were going to dig it because it was Oasis."

"We've been rehearsing the live set and it is sounding great."

"When you start out fresh, it's all about the tunes. We're a new band, we're not going to get above ourselves and start thinking we can play stadiums and arenas, we really don't want to jump the gun."

"We want to go out and do small gigs, get back into that vibe then do another album, take

it gradually and stay in the moment of being in a new band."

On the whole, Beady Eye prove themselves to be a somewhat stripped-down version of the once-mighty Oasis.

Their sound has a slightly raw and exciting edge to it but at the same time they retain the steady influences that guided their former outfit.

They openly admit to the inspiration taken from bands such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The La's and by calling one of their tracks *Beatles and Stones*, which ironically sounds more like The Who's *My Generation*, their direction is clear and concise.

Four Letter Word offers a triumphant opening as Gallagher's vocals growl into life and the impressive *Bring The Light* is reminiscent of the piano-thumping Stones' classic *Let's Spend The Night Together*.

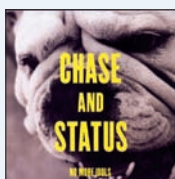
The tributes continue on *The Morning Son*, which fades into blissful Beatles psychedelia as the album closes.

As with the later Oasis releases there are a few lows, such as *Standing On The Edge Of The Noise*, but this is an inspired first attempt from a band determined to escape the shackles of their former life. ■

From deafening drum and bass to a triumphant return from the kings of synth pop, we check out the best of the rest...

No More Idols by Chase and Status

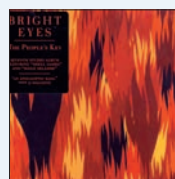
NOT being a big fan of drum and bass, and admittedly having never really heard of **Chase and Status**, I thought I should listen to a bit of their older work first off. I was quite impressed by the back catalogue and with this in mind I fired up *No More Idols* to see if the trend continues. Although I haven't been converted to a die-hard fan, I must say a few tracks really did catch my ear, particularly *End Credits* featuring **Plan B** and the **Clare Maguire** collaboration *Midnight Caller*. I wouldn't necessarily buy this myself but I can easily imagine it blasting out in the block on a Saturday evening without too many screams of protest and would definitely recommend it to hardened followers of this genre.



LCpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para

The People's Key by Bright Eyes

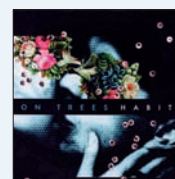
SINGER-songwriter **Conor Oberst**, the brains behind **Bright Eyes**, has been conspicuous by his absence recently, but he has truly pulled it out of the bag this time. *The People's Key* has some definite highs and lows, the particular peak for me being *Jejune Stars*, which is both catchy and memorable and is the sort of song that sticks in your head for the entire day. The riffs and rhythms are utterly absorbing and almost hypnotic at times, although some of the lyrics could easily be dismissed as haunting emo self-absorption. Although I really enjoyed this album I am not inspired to delve further into their back catalogue on the strength of what I have heard here.



Capt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish

Habits by Neon Trees

THIS debut offering from Utah-based outfit **Neon Trees** has already topped the alternative rock charts in the USA and it's not hard to see why. *Habits* is full of well-crafted catchy tunes and anthemic choruses, yet still manages to maintain a raw, rock edge. For those of us old enough to remember, their music evokes memories of the 1980s. Their sound reminded me of **The Cult** and **The House of Love**. The music press is predicting big things for Neon Trees and on this evidence they could be right. *Habits* is a very good album packed with strong tunes and memorable riffs. Whether or not this is a one-off or the start of a great career only time will tell, but I really enjoyed this.



Pat Jordan, ex-RAMC

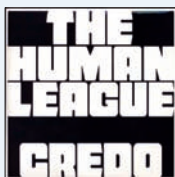


We're watching you: From left, Gem Archer, Chris Sharrock, Andy Bell and Liam Gallagher make a welcome return in the shape of new band Beady Eye

Credo by The Human League

NEW wave act **The Human League** have never been about resting on their laurels or relying on past glories to see them through. Their ninth studio album *Credo* represents a refinement of the approach first adopted 30 years ago, when they led an experimental art-school insurgency of radical ideals into the top ten. This record bears all the classic League synth pop hallmarks but is as modern as the sharpest 21st century chart tunes. Having grown up with the band, their sound is instantly recognisable from the first track, however, I'm not quite sure how today's youth will welcome the old-school style which remains their forte. If you know them, you'll love this album, if you don't, you won't.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



Rolling Blackouts by The Go! Team

AFTER a three-year hiatus **The Go! Team** make a welcome return with their customary blend of pop, hip-hop, hand claps and drum beats. While this is nothing groundbreaking compared to what has gone before, the Brighton-based outfit deserve praise for sticking to their uplifting approach, which is guaranteed to put a spring in your step. Opener *T.O.R.N.A.D.O* launches the listener into the familiar old-school style while *Back Like 8 Track* showcases their almost cheerleader-like approach to vocals. The usual interlude of xylophone-fused instrumentals is also on hand to add to the mix. All in all *Rolling Blackouts* is a worthy addition to the band's collection of feel-good anthems.

Richard Long, Soldier

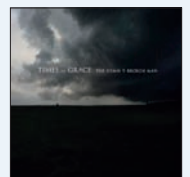


The Hymn of a Broken Man

FORMER **Killswitch Engage** vocalist **Jesse Leach** teams up with the band's current guitarist **Adam Dutkiewicz** to form **Times of Grace**.

The duo have moved away from their common roots to take a new approach that could never have been created, until now. With Dutkiewicz performing guitar, drums and bass, as well as bringing backing vocals to the table, the former bandmates seem to be recreating the sound of metalcore with this incredible clash of pure aggression and soulful melody. *Strength In Numbers* and *Where The Spirit Leads Me* define this release, while *The Forgotten One* makes you wonder what Killswitch could have sounded like had Leach not left in 2002.

Pte Stephen McManus, 1 Yorks





Tough text: Devised by former Army officer Sam McGrath and published by Osprey, *The Para Fitness Guide* is priced £12.99

Fight flab Para style

Former premier of P Company devises exercise guide fit for civilians and soldiers

Interview: Joe Clapson

A WAR veteran who presided over one of the world's toughest military selection courses has penned a fitness guide he believes can knock everyone from doughnut-lovers to elite troops into shape.

Sam McGrath, a former OC of The Parachute Regiment's Pegasus Company, spoke to *Soldier* about his inspiration for writing the book.

"The Army gave me opportunities and friendships that money cannot buy and I wanted to do something to recognise that," explained the author of *The Para Fitness Guide*, which shifted 10,000 copies during its first week on sale. "This was an opportunity to write a tribute to paratroopers and the training of an elite organisation."

However, the veteran of Afghanistan, Iraq, the Balkans and Northern Ireland was quick to emphasise that his simple exercise regimes are as much for civilians in love with the sofa as those in the military.

"From training to lose the Christmas pounds to preparing to climb Everest, there is something for everyone," he said. "There are a lot of different

exercises which have been graded from beginner up to advanced, so you can decide your level.

"I don't think there's anyone in the world that could do all of the advanced programmes using the advanced techniques," he added. "But maybe there is someone who can do 100 handstand press-ups, who knows?"

McGrath's last job in the Army was to ensure the next generation of paratroopers met the exacting standards of the maroon beret and the soldier-turned-author has transferred his knowledge onto 192 motivating pages.

The book's no-nonsense ethos is "your body is our battlefield" and uses the way The Parachute Regiment prepares for operational missions as a metaphor for training schedules.

"A lot of people confuse getting fit with not drinking beer for a month or something similar, but if that's how you're approaching fitness, in your heart you know you won't get in shape," McGrath said. "You have to change the way you conduct your life, which is a major battle that requires a lot of careful planning and determination."

The man who was made a platoon commander aged just 21 added: "I have outlined how the Paras tackle a mission. Although here it might not be about knowing where your air support is

coming from, it might be getting the support of your wife and family.

"I have never seen this approach in a fitness book before and think it could be successful."

Since leaving the Army last April, McGrath's sought-after skills have been snapped up by a prestigious banking company and although his remit is now business rather than a military theatre, he stressed the striking similarities.

"If you look at what the Army does, it is risk-management in its rawest form," he said. "It's a performance-driven team which succeeds on the quality of blokes and the training they have."

Explaining his motivation for swapping camouflage for sharp suits, McGrath said: "I'm now working as an investment banker and I'm feeling a bit guilty that I'm not in Helmand."

"But I had achieved everything I wanted to and an opportunity came up in the civilian world."

"Now I look at my peers and there are very few people who have got experiences that are comparable to mine." ■

● All royalties from *The Para Fitness Guide* are being donated to the Fairbridge Charity (www.fairbridge.org.uk) and The Parachute Regiment Afghan Trust (www.afghanistantrust.org).

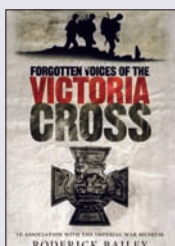
From Victoria Cross winners to a sniper's cross hairs, a flick through this month's literary releases...

Forgotten Voices of the Victoria Cross

RODERICK Bailey masterly collates the "forgotten voices" of soldiers who have been decorated with, or were present at the time of the actions that led to the subsequent award of, the most coveted bravery medal – the Victoria Cross.

Recalling the feats in the first person brings the amazing events to life in a way that few authors could hope to deliver themselves. Bailey leads the reader through the heroic deeds of the First World War and on to the Korean War and recounts some of the finest hours in military history. The voices speak with a humility that is inspiring and a vibrancy that make this book a treasure to read.

Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



General 'Boy' by Richard Mead

THIS is a long-overdue book that takes a close look at one of the most controversial British commanders of the Second World War. The popular view of Lt Gen Sir Frederick Browning has been influenced by Dirk Bogarde's portrayal of him in the classic film, *A Bridge Too Far*. The author sets out to penetrate the myth and give a balanced insight into the true character of the father of British Airborne Forces and reveals much more of the story beyond his role as the architect of Operation Market Garden and husband of Daphne du Maurier. It is a very personal account of the complex life of one of our most talented leaders.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



A Fighting Spirit by Paul Burns

A QUICK glance at the back cover told me that I probably wasn't going to enjoy this book as it deals with a reality of operations that serving soldiers would prefer not to think about – the loss of a limb. However, I couldn't have been more wrong. Focusing on the positives and setting aside guilt and regret, this down-to-earth account tells the story of paratrooper **Paul Burns** who lost his left leg to an IRA bomb but has gone on to lead a remarkable life filled with adventures that most only dream of. With good use of the Army's "gallows humour" and concise storytelling, *A Fighting Spirit* is full of optimism and hope. I highly recommend it.

Lt Neil Dickie, 105 Regt RA (V)





Physical peak: Sam McGrath, pictured centre, describes his new fitness guide as “a tribute to paratroopers and the training of an elite organisation”

The Art of Action by Stephen Bungay

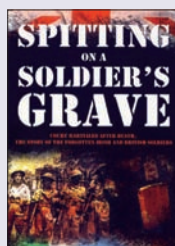
THE author, who is clearly fascinated by military history, believes that business can learn from the Prussian army of the elder Moltke and its German successor. Auftragstaktik means specify the mission and leave the junior officers (or executives) to use their initiative to achieve it. Few could disagree with this. Each chapter of **Bungay's** book begins with military examples. The last, showing how to move from principles to business practice, starts with the over-prescriptive plan of Rawlinson's 4th Army for the disastrous first day of the Somme – a demonstration of how not to do it.



Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian

Spitting on a Soldier's Grave

THIS meticulously-researched and well-written book is the story of Irishmen who deserted the Irish Defence Force during the Second World War. For many different reasons they joined the British services to fight against the Germans, Italians and Japanese. Some died in battle and others were wounded. After the war the Irish Government court martialled the deserters en masse and in absentia. They were dismissed from the Irish army and banned from all state employment. **Robert Widders** met and interviewed some of these men when penning his book. Easy to read but difficult to put down.



Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals

Red Sniper on the Eastern Front

IT is probable that the memoirs of **Joseph Pilyushin** would have achieved a wider readership under their original title of *At the Walls of Leningrad*, as this book is thankfully not preoccupied with the sniper's art but records in detail the ferocious close-quarter fighting against a relentless and courageous enemy for possession of the city. The translation is excellent and the narrative flows well, although a map would have helped, as the combat is extremely localised. The author avoids communist rhetoric and provides a stimulating account of a bitter struggle for survival from a rare perspective.



Lt Col (Retd) Nick Sim, ex-PWRR



Dream machine: The Garmin Dakota 20 offers a lightweight handset and touchscreen technology for weekend ramblers

The price is right

Garmin combine affordability and navigational excellence in new handheld model

Review: Richard Long

WHEN it comes to investing in gadgets and technology, decisions are often based on the damage such kit will do to your wallet.

While you can invariably live without the product on offer, the unique selling point is the fact it can make life so much easier for the grateful owner.

In the world of handheld navigational systems it is no different.

With blustery winds testing the patience of most walkers during their attempts to fold an Ordnance Survey Map on a cold hillside, the welcome practicality of these devices soon springs to mind.

But the price of such luxury can be off-putting. Some systems cost several hundred pounds, which is money that may stretch the budget of the occasional Rambler or weekend hiker.

However, Garmin has introduced a new product that combines affordability with the distinct advantages these devices deliver.

The Dakota 20 comes in at just under £200

thanks to its smaller, lower-resolution display but still offers the touchscreen capabilities of its market rivals.

While it is considerably smaller than other products it is also lighter, weighing 149g compared to the standard 193g. With the weight of your load a consideration on any expedition, this is a clear advantage.

The slight frame is not lacking in ruggedness either. It has the same robust build as other models and its waterproof qualities can withstand half-an-hour submerged in a metre of water.

But it truly comes into its own out in the field.

Whether covering high mountain ranges or down in an abyss, the highly-sensitive receiver and satellite prediction helps you find your location both quickly and precisely.

A built-in worldwide base map makes exploring new terrain easy and a three-axis electronic compass provides accurate readings even when the handset is not level.

The system's barometric altimeter can track changes in pressure to pinpoint your exact altitude and can even be used to keep an eye on changing weather patterns.

Family fun is also available in the form of a geocaching option that allows you to download

caches with information such as location, terrain, hints and descriptions.

This can be put together as a paper-free treasure hunt and the routes, waypoints and tracks can be shared with like-minded ramblers owning compatible devices.

These features provide definite advantages but the Dakota 20 does have some drawbacks.

The smaller display can be hard to read at times and the lower resolution can make it more difficult to get an overall picture of the surrounding terrain.

It also comes with a very basic world map that only includes a few major roads, so adding a few upgrades will be necessary before venturing off the beaten track.

However, Garmin's Ordnance Survey-based GB Discover maps are supported and you can upload more information to the onboard memory.

On the whole this is a welcome ally for those seeking a lightweight and compact unit. The price cannot be argued with and the Dakota 20 is a good option for those who love the outdoors, but not enough to take a hefty hit on the bank balance.

● For more information on the Garmin Dakota 20 visit www.satnavcompany.com ■

We check our bearings with the latest GPS technology, from tough touchscreens to hands-free ski kits...

Memory-Map Adventurer 2800

THIS rugged handheld GPS device displays real-time positioning information on a highly-detailed, full colour topographical map and is suitable for walking, mountain biking and off-road 4x4 driving alike. The Adventurer 2800's award-winning software allows you to plan and log routes on a PC, including details such as the time, speed and distance covered. The portable navigation system also comes with the built-in bonus of a host of aviation, historical and marine charts that cover the vast terrains from a variety of countries around the world.



www.satnavcompany.com

Garmin Oregon 450T

WITH a tough touchscreen that is readable in sunlight, this sat-nav system comes equipped with preloaded 3D maps that can be viewed through high-resolution images. The hi-tech gadget also features an electric compass, altimeter and a highly-sensitive GPS receiver. The Oregon 450T allows you to swap tracks and routes with like-minded people carrying similar units, using geocaching technology to interact with other systems. The durable, handheld device is designed for outdoor use in all weather conditions with a user-friendly interface for maximum accessibility.



www.satnavcompany.com

Garmin Forerunner 310XT

WORN as a lightweight watch, the Forerunner has been designed as a training aid for triathletes, being waterproof to a depth of 50m and featuring multiple sport modes. The sensitive GPS receiver ensures results whatever the conditions and the HotFix satellite prediction capability calculates position quickly and precisely. A recent software update means it can accurately estimate an open-water swim distance and average speed. It can also be clipped to the handle bars of a bike, enabling it to record the vital metrics for every aspect of a race, from entering the water to crossing the finish line.



www.satnavcompany.com



All-weather operator: The rugged Garmin Dakota 20 offers a robust frame that is capable of repelling rainfall during gruelling expeditions in the great outdoors

Garmin Foretrex 401

A WATERPROOF, slim-line tracking system that fits onto the wrist like a watch leaving the user with both hands free. Perfect for skiers, but equally well-suited to hikers and campers, the Foretrex 401 keeps tabs on altitude and bearings with its electronic compass and barometric altimeter, and enables information to be shared easily with other devices via USB or wireless technology. It also has the capability to save locations as waypoints on a route, pinpointing important places on the piste, such as campsites or vehicles. Other helpful features include a trip computer and sunrise/sunset times.



www.satnavcompany.com

Snooper S430 XI Shotsaver

A USEFUL addition to any golf bag, the S430 XI Shotsaver comes pre-loaded with more than 4,500 courses and has the capacity to store information about up to 20,000 greens from across Europe. It is a waterproof, hardy handheld device with a large 3.5-inch display and is fitted with the latest GPS technology to provide accurate distances to the front, middle and back of the green, with additional details on hazards such as bunkers, trees, and ponds. Golf courses are plotted on foot to ensure maximum accuracy and distance readings and hole information is displayed in a large easily readable format.



www.satnavcompany.com

Snooper My-Trak WPT250

THIS compact, waterproof and lightweight training tool monitors and examines your progress whatever your sport. My-Trak Sport allows you to review your route and statistics online at any time, displaying details such as miles travelled, top speed, average speed, altitude and trip times at the touch of a button. You can also see your current location or view your statistics by accessing the My-Trak Live web tracking service. Alternatively you can text My-Trak from any mobile phone and it will send you a reply stating the device's position.



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Picture: Graeme Main



A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN: ARMY BEAT SERVICE RIVALS IN CARNEGIE CHALLENGE CUP SHOWDOWN

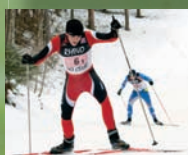
ALSO IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE...



P96 **RUGBY UNION**
REDS OVERCOME
STUDENT CHALLENGE



P97 **HOCKEY**
WORLD CUP ACES
LEAD THE WAY



P103 **SKIING**
LOGGIES SHINE ON
FRENCH SLOPES



P105 **FOOTBALL**
RISING STARS
OUTGUN NAVY



“PROGRESSION IS
NICE, BUT WHAT WAS
MORE PLEASING IS
THE FACT WE BEAT A
STRONG RAF SIDE”

– SSGT SEAN FANNING

Army face Rovers return

Rugby League powerhouses down Service rivals to set up Featherstone clash

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

AN emphatic display of pace and power guided the Army to a comfortable win over the Royal Air Force in the second round of Rugby League's Challenge Cup.

The Service stars eased through the gears to run in four second-half tries as they put a cagey opening spell behind them to record a fine 27-16 victory against their Forces rivals at Aldershot's Rugby Stadium.

Playing in far from ideal conditions, the home side were happy to adopt a containing role in the first period before mounting an impressive attacking onslaught that set up a third-round clash with Championship high-flyers Featherstone Rovers, who inflicted a heavy defeat on the Reds' team in the 2009 competition.

Wing Cpl Marcus Turaga (RLC) gave the Army an early lead against the RAF when he collected a pass from centre Pte Josh Lyons (RLC) for an easy score in the corner.

But the hosts failed to build on their initial impetus and their well-drilled opponents came roaring back with two unanswered tries to establish a 10-4 interval advantage.

The Army looked a rejuvenated side after the break and a poor defensive clearance gifted them a way back into the tie.

Sgt Andy Gray (RA) collected the ball infield and some clinical passing allowed Turaga to ghost home for his second score of the afternoon.

The flying winger punched another hole in the visitors' defence just moments later when his electric pace carried him on a fine run down the touchline before he offloaded to Gnr Sam Speight (RA), who crossed for a simple try under the posts.

Light Blues centre Gaz Evans briefly stopped the rot but a penalty from Cpl Stu Butters (RE) brought the sides level and the powerful LCpl Colin Marangon (REME) crashed home to regain the initiative.

Tpr Danny Hunter (LD) kicked a drop goal to stretch the lead and Gnr Eppy Naulamatua (RA) capped a fine afternoon's work as he received a pass from Gnr Andy Kay (RA) and flew to the line to complete the scoring.

Head coach SSgt Sean Fanning (RAMC) was delighted with the result and is now looking forward to what will

undoubtedly be a tough assignment in the next round.

"Progression is nice, but what was more pleasing is the fact we beat a strong RAF side," he told *SoldierSport*.

"They were pretty much at full strength and had a couple of new players who have just signed semi-professional contracts.

"With the weather conditions being quite blustery we wanted to keep it as simple as possible.

"The lads showed they can be patient, even at half time when we were slightly behind we told them to look for completion in the game.

"We wanted to suck the life out of them and in the second half it certainly paid dividends.

"We have discovered a new half-back pairing in Andy Kay and Danny Hunter. They are working well together.

"Danny played a lot of Rugby League before coming to the Army and he really stood out.

"Cpl Andre Zwijnen (4 Rifles) was my man of the match though. He was outstanding in the first round, we moved him to the second row for this game and he was superb again. He is one to really keep an eye on."

Fanning is well aware of the challenge posed

by an impressive Featherstone team but hopes his side will be able to give another strong showing.

"Once you get to the third round you start to get excited, but with us being out of season we cannot build our hopes up," he said.

"We got knocked out in the second round last year and were annihilated by a Featherstone side featuring Iestyn Harris in 2009.

"This is probably the worst draw we could have got, with the exception of Widnes and Leigh, and we will be playing away from home.

"But we will make the best of it and will hope to take something from locking horns with a side from a much higher level.

"We will look to be competitive. It would have been nice to get a home tie against a team from lower down the ranks but we'll see what happens."

The Featherstone clash will be played on the weekend of March 5 and 6 at the club's Post Office Road ground.

The West Yorkshire outfit topped the Championship table in 2010 with a 100 per cent away record and claimed the

League Leaders' Shield.

They went on to reach the Championship Grand Final but lost to rivals

Halifax by an

agonising

23-22

scoreline

in extra time. ■



Ruthless Reds expel students

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army's Rugby Union stars have started building momentum towards this year's Twickenham showpiece with back-to-back wins over Cambridge and Oxford Universities.

With a host of players looking to impress new head coach Capt Andy Sanger (1 RSME), the matches served as a proving ground for those hoping to establish themselves in the squad ahead of the Inter-Services.

After a convincing 34-8 victory on the road at Cambridge, the Reds returned to Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium in confident mood ahead of their second student showdown.

However, staunch defence from the visitors proved to be a stumbling block for the hosts, who struggled to bring any fluency to their play, particularly in the first half.

Promising attacking moves were often thwarted by a surrendering of possession but once the Army settled into a steady rhythm their class started to shine through.

A penalty from Oxford fullback Charlie Marr opened the scoring after some lacklustre exchanges early on, before the superb Cfm Matt Bowman (REME) smashed his way to the line for a try on the stroke of half-time.

The assured Capt Ian Martin (3 Yorks, pictured) slotted the extras to give the Army a slender interval advantage and he extended the lead with a well-struck penalty shortly after the restart.

Oxford hit back with a try just minutes later but the home side took a firm grip on proceedings courtesy of some powerful forward play.

Flanker LCpl Maku Koroiyadi (RE) capitalised on the Army's strategy of kicking penalties to touch, with the subsequent line-out eventually creating an opportunity to score.

Replacement forward Capt Alex Whittaker (3 Yorks) sealed the victory after some fine attacking work from Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots) unlocked the students' defence.

Scrum half Martin combined controlled distribution with deadly

accuracy from the boot, while flanker Bowman battered the opposition forwards in both attacking and defensive play.

"We have got to give a lot of credit to Oxford University," Sanger told *SoldierSport*. "In the first half they defended well and had beaten the Navy quite convincingly before this game.

"We made a lot of changes and that was always going to bring some disruption. There are areas to work on but overall I was happy with the performance on the night.

"Our conditioning is coming along very well and we still have to integrate some of our bigger players into the squad. The set pieces were very good

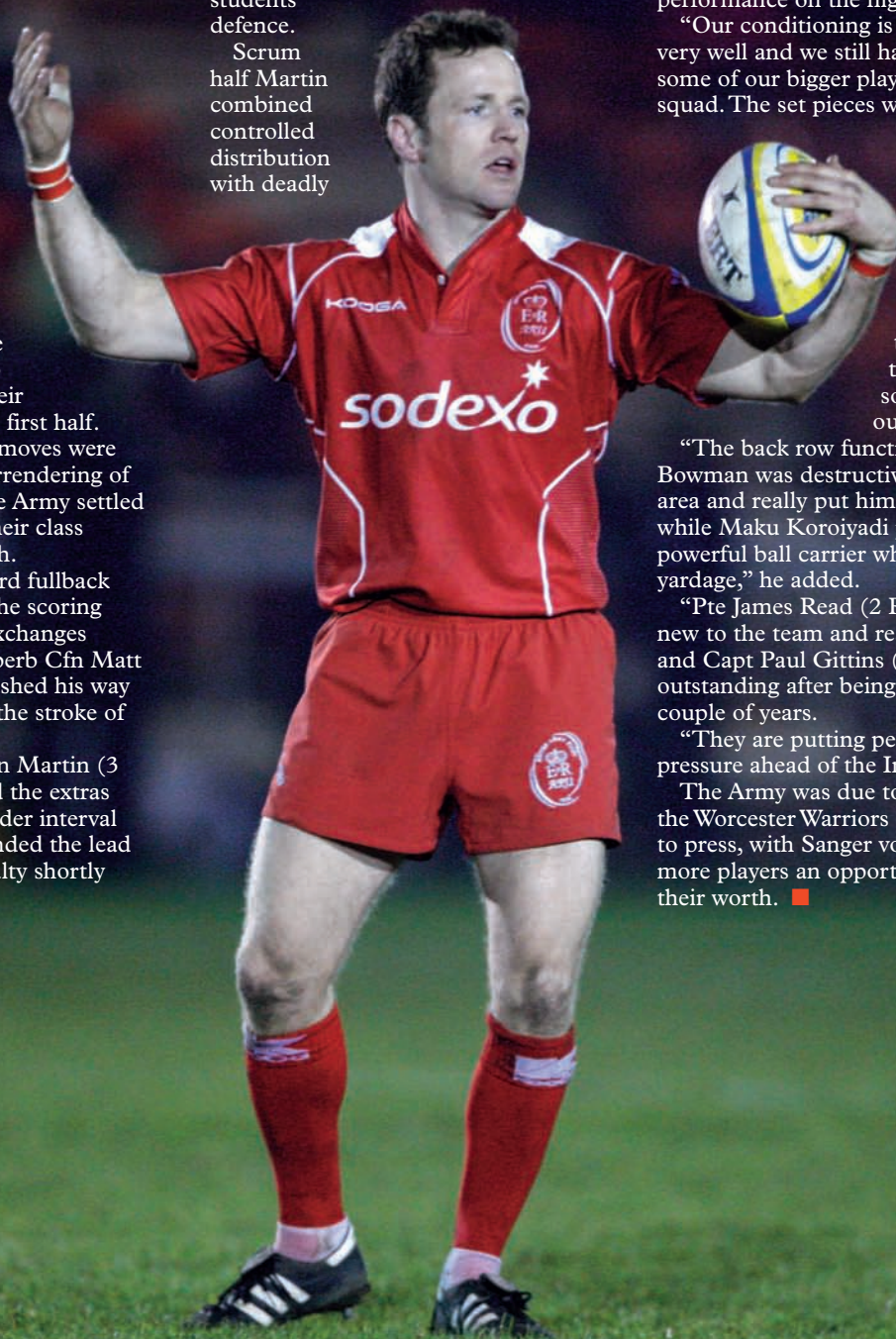
but our contact skills at the breakdown were slightly disappointing. "We need to be more clinical there and recycle the ball quicker so we can utilise our backs more.

"The back row functioned well. Matt Bowman was destructive in the contact area and really put himself about, while Maku Koroiyadi proved to be a powerful ball carrier who made good yardage," he added.

"Pte James Read (2 R Welsh) is new to the team and really stood up and Capt Paul Gittins (RAMC) was outstanding after being away for a couple of years.

"They are putting people under real pressure ahead of the Inter-Services."

The Army was due to lock horns with the Worcester Warriors as this issue went to press, with Sanger vowing to give more players an opportunity to prove their worth. ■



SPORT SHORTS

ARMY officer Capt James Kayall (LD) is among a four-strong team planning a record-breaking rowing expedition across the Indian Ocean this summer.

The crew is planning to cover the 3,100-mile route from Australia to Mauritius in less than 68 days, 19 hours and 40 minutes, which will represent the fastest-ever crossing time.

Only 11 boats have successfully completed the demanding course before and the rowers face the prospect of extreme fatigue, mental stress and intense isolation during their journey.

Brothers Oliver and Ed Wells and friend Tom Kelly will join Kayall onboard and they will row in two-hour shifts on a 24-hour basis for almost ten weeks.

The officer, who has completed two tours of Afghanistan, will be raising money for the Light Dragoons fund and for the charity set up in memory of a close friend who was killed in action – The Mark Evison Foundation.

He said: "If there's one thing Mark taught us, it was to seize every opportunity. He was a great friend to us all and would love to have been part of this adventure."

For more information on their quest visit www.indianocean3100.com

STARS from the Indy Car 500 team made a special visit to RAF Honington to thank Servicemen and women for their support to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The group included former world champion Mario Andretti and Sarah Fisher, who became the first female to secure a podium place after finishing third at the Kentucky Speedway.

The track stars gave a presentation and short question and answer session before staging a ticket draw in which 20 lucky personnel won a free ride round the airfield in one of the famous race cars.

A DAREDEVIL soldier with a fear of heights is set to become the first person to represent the British Forces and Australia at the famous high-dive contest in Mostar, Bosnia.

Capt Boz Zamboni (RE) will dive 25 metres off the Stari Most bridge into the Neretva river in aid of the military charity Combat Stress.

The worried fund-raiser said: "Despite my chronic fear of heights and against my better judgement, I have received a special entry place from the Mostari Diving Club and will carry out both a traditional feet-first jump and a lasta swallow dive.

"My old unit, 61 Fd Sqn (EOD), is working in difficult circumstances on Op Herrick and I'm doing this as a show of support to them."

Antipodean Zamboni will make the jumps on Sunday, July 31. For more information on the fund-raising challenge, or to make a donation, visit www.justgiving.com/team-zamboni



Expert advice: Capt Paul Robinson (AGC, left) perfects his skills with England player Barry Middleton

England's helping hand

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Graeme Main

COMBINED Services hockey players were given a taste of elite-level action during a training session hosted by the England team ahead of their World Cup campaign.

The international stars took time out from their pre-tournament camp at the Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre to lead a series of drills aimed at improving passing, shooting and attacking play.

The squad, which travelled to Poland for the indoor tournament last month, used the Army asset as a key part of its preparations and invited the Service players to join them in recognition of the growing bond between the two outfits.

"These facilities are simply excellent," England coach Andy Halliday told *SoldierSport* during a break in training.

"You expect high standards at military establishments and that has very much been the case. We have been extremely well looked after.

"This is all new for us. We are always on the lookout for good facilities and this session is a way of saying thank you.

"There has been a real improvement in the Combined Services players, you can see that by the way they are playing.

"They have picked up the technical concepts very quickly and that is great to see."

The England women's team has also used the site in recent times and Halliday highlighted how the centre

provided a welcome alternative to the frozen winter pitches.

For the Army players, the coaching formed an important tool ahead of this month's Inter-Services competition, when the Reds will aim to wrestle the trophy away from the Royal Air Force.

Forward Sig Shane Vincent (R Signals) said: "It has been a good session. We've been mixing in with the England lads, picking up some useful tips from them.

"There was a strong focus on offensive play, which was good for me as an attacker.

"It has been great to listen to their opinions and hopefully that can help me with my game.

"The Inter-Services are coming up and I will be playing for the Army so this will be a huge boost for me ahead of that."

Capt Paul Robinson (AGC) added: "It has been really good to get some expert tuition. We have individual Army, RAF and Royal Navy sessions so to come together as the Combined Services is very beneficial.

"It was all about technical skills and looking at smaller details of play. Your touch has to be perfect at their level and we now know what we need to do to progress even further.

"This has been very positive and if we can do more of this we will be moving in the right direction."

The Inter-Services competition will be hosted by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth on March 15 and 16. ■

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Walker joins world elite

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

ARM Y bobsleigh sensation Cpl Paula Walker (R Signals) has continued her remarkable rise in the sport by lifting the Junior World Championship crown in the United States of America.

The 24-year-old finished more than half a second ahead of a strong field at Park City in Utah in what proved to be an emphatic victory for the Service star and brakewoman Rebekah Wilson.

Walker and her teammate were consistently among the top crews in the training runs before the competition started and coach WO2 Peter Gunn (AAC) told *SoldierSport* he had high hopes for his protege ahead of the opening day.

"We spoke about targets and were sure Paula could finish in the top three," he said.

"We both knew that if everything came together we could go and win the race, this was something I was sure of and strongly believed in."

Walker, who nearly missed the competition because her father was in hospital, added: "I'm ecstatic with

the result. We have been aiming at this competition since the summer and to finally see the Union Flag rise as number one is brilliant.

"This has always been a dream of mine and I couldn't have done it without my coach and the support of everyone at the British Bobsleigh Association."

After an opening time of 50.04sec, Walker steered the bob through a stunning second run, which was clocked at 49.74sec.

In doing so she became the only driver to break the 50-second barrier on the day and her efforts saw her finish six-tenths of a second ahead of her nearest rival.

Gunn believes Walker's rivals may have underestimated the quality of the

Army athlete as they concentrated on each other, rather than the British duo.

"The Germans felt the USA were their main threat, while the Americans were

watching the Germans," the coach explained. "So we slipped under the radar and this left Paula with no

pressure as she went into the race.

"I was at the top of the track when they finished their race and I was

jumping for joy, along with the British performance director Gary Anderson.

"It was more nerve-racking for me in between runs than the athletes.

"They were preparing for the second attempt, whereas I was just thinking of ways we might throw away the lead and how we could avoid this.

"It is great for the Army that after investing in Paula they now have a junior world champion in bobsleigh.

"This is the first time Great Britain has won this title and I am very proud to have been the coach when it happened."

Walker has enjoyed a superb debut season on the World Cup circuit, finishing in the top ten of all five races.

The current Army sportswoman of the year was due to compete in the full World Championship as this issue went to press, with a place in the top eight her target.

Gunn is planning further progress next year in what he sees as a stepping stone to a medal position at the 2014 Winter Olympics. ■



● Cpl Paula Walker

'We both knew that if everything came together we could go and win the race'



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Davis dreams of title 28

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARM Y fighters take to the ring this month for the gala fixture on the boxing calendar – the Combined Services championships.

With 27 consecutive titles to their name, the Reds will be targeting nothing but absolute perfection when their Forces rivals visit Aldershot's Combat Sports Centre on March 10.

For coach Sgt Tony Davis (RAPTC), the encounter forms yet another opportunity to showcase the considerable skills of his ever-improving squad.

Last year's Services showdown saw the masters of the ring secure a superb victory on bouts, rather than walkovers, and a record four fighters went on to compete in the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) finals.

The success has continued this term with Pte Shaun Khan (RLC), LCpl Alex Mansfield (1 PWRR) and Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) all winning in the Senior Novice ABA championships.

"I was expecting at least five to get through to the finals, but you have to be pleased with three out of three, it is amazing," Davis said.

"Last year we only had one Army guy in the semi-finals. This year we had ten, with three champions, and that shows our coaching ideals are shining through.

"One or two may get the call for the Combined Services but it all depends on how our preparations go.

"There are spots up for grabs. The guys are asking about the box-offs and we have a couple of contenders at each weight. Competition breeds success and whether it is a run or sparring session, they are always looking to impress."

As part of the preparations for the big night the squad has travelled to Tenerife for a gruelling spell of altitude training.

On their return to the UK they will be involved in a series of sparring camps featuring fighters from top amateur clubs.

Davis implemented similar tactics ahead of last year's event, when his fighters were invited to work alongside Team GB.

Such attention to detail, along with impressive results in the ring, helped the former England international land the official of the year accolade at the 2010 Army Sports Awards.

And with his attention now focused on the showpiece event, Davis is going all-out to ensure the success continues.

He said: "The Royal Navy will be our main rivals. On one hand we are hearing they may not have many fighters due to the deployment of the Royal Marines, but on the other we are told they have a squad in the double figures.

"Last year our preparations were second to none. It was the first time we won on competitive bouts and that is a much better way to do things; it gives you the feel-good factor. It is easy to get to the top, but staying there is the key.

"The altitude training will give us a better fitness foundation and the sparring camp will give us a real edge.

"By the time the Combined Services comes round it should be a case of dotting the i's and crossing the t's." ■



Moving forward: Army athletes hit the ground running in the cross-country championships at Sandhurst

Service runners right on track

A RECORD number of athletes took to the salubrious surrounds of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for the annual Army cross-country championships.

More than 400 male entrants assembled at the start line for the 10-kilometre race, with LCpl Craig Williams (REME) leading the field home in a time of 31min 29sec.

SSgt Gary Watkins (RE) was a close second and SSgt David Branfoot (AGC) finished third.

The men's major unit title was lifted by 11 (RSS) Signal Regiment, with athletes from the Army School of Physical Training taking the minor unit crown.

In the women's five-kilometre race, LBdr Amanda Jones (32 Regt RA) was the star performer.

The distance runner, who had trials for the Welsh squad ahead of

last year's Commonwealth Games, recorded an impressive time of 22min 18sec to take top spot.

Newcomer Cpl Danielle Hodgkinson (AFC Harrogate) continued her fine form with a second-place finish, while Sgt Shan Morgan (RAPTC) was third.

The Army School of Physical Training celebrated another win in the ladies' unit competition.

Maj (Retd) Jim Wood, secretary of the Army Athletics Association, told *SoldierSport* he was thrilled with the turnout and believes the event will continue to grow in popularity.

"It has been my desire to get more bums on seats in terms of the numbers participating in cross-country and athletics," he said.

"Other sports within the Army enjoy such a high profile and we want something similar."

SPORT SHORTS

THE Territorial Army cross-country championships will be held at St George's Barracks in North Luffenham, Leicestershire on Saturday, April 2.

The event features inter-unit and individual competitions. Instructions and entry forms are available from WO2 Jock Castle at Castle@armymail.mod.uk

THE Gunner Rugby League team will take on a Castleford district select side next month as part of a tribute to the late Bdr Craig Hopson (RA), who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009.

The match will be played at the famous Stoop stadium ahead of the Super League clash between Harlequins and Castleford on April 15.

Players will be competing for the Hopson Trophy, while also raising funds for ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

The game starts at 1700 and Harlequins will be offering a discounted ticket price of £10 for both matches.

A CHARITY Rugby Union match is being staged at the Westcombe Park ground in Orpington, Kent in memory of the late Rfn James Brown (Rifles).

The clash will see the Westcombe Colts take on the Borough Baas Baas on Saturday, April 2, with proceeds being divided between The Royal British Legion and The Rifles Care for Casualties fund.

The match starts at 1130 and there will be an admission charge of £3.

BOXERS from The Light Dragoons will challenge Norfolk's best amateur fighters this month to help raise money for charity.

The event will be held at the Royal Norfolk Showground on March 5 and will feature as many as 15 explosive bouts across a variety of weight categories.

All proceeds from the night, which includes a performance from the Light Cavalry Band, will be divided between The Light Dragoons Colonel's Appeal and the Norfolk Amateur Boxing Association.



Thomas raises the bar

ARMY strongman Capt Neil Thomas (AGC (SPS)) has been appointed as president of the British Drugs Free Powerlifting Association.

The officer was seen as the prime candidate to fill the prestigious role and successfully emerged from a shortlist of four contenders.

Thomas has competed on the international stage for the past seven years and having served as championship secretary, Services liaison officer, drugs control officer and divisional representative, as well as hosting events from Army to World Championship level, his selection is well deserved.

The position is considered to be the highest accolade outside of competing and this is the first time a member of the Armed Forces has

been named as president of the organisation.

Along with being responsible for the sport within the UK, he will have a seat on the permanent world council for drugs-free competitive powerlifting.

A delighted Thomas, who has been at the forefront of the Army squad for a number of years, said: "I am delighted. This is a fantastic opportunity for myself and the sport within the wider Forces community.

"This appointment has come on top of some very promising projects such as working in conjunction with the British Paralympic Team and will further complement the efforts of all those involved in Service powerlifting and the promotion of drugs-free sport."

SPORT SHORTS

A TEAM of runners from 16 Medical Regiment will tackle dust, soaring temperatures, open desert and high altitude when they take part in a unique Afghanistan marathon later this month.

The gruelling 26-mile course will take the athletes round Camp Bastion and into the American-owned Camp Leatherneck on March 13.

The group is staging the full and half-marathon races in support of military charities Toe in the Water, the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association and Combat Stress.

"This event is a challenge for everyone; it will test people but in doing so, will remind them all of why they are participating and how important it is for people to support such charities," said commanding officer Lt Col Jez Hair.

To sponsor the team's marathon quest visit www.virginmoneygiving.com/Bastion-Marathon

ENDURANCE ace Andy McMenemy is hoping to raise more than £1 million for ABF The Soldiers' Charity by completing 66 ultra-marathons in 66 days.

The son of a former soldier starts his attempt in Leeds on March 16 and will follow a route taking in all official cities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland before finishing in York on May 20.

McMenemy hopes to set a new Guinness World Record for consecutive ultra-marathons without rest and is appealing for former Servicemen and women who have recently left the Army to join his team.

For more information on running in the event and how to donate money to the cause, visit www.challenge66.org

ULTRA-fit athletes are being invited to take part in the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help Triathlon at Wattisham Airfield on May 21.

The event features a 300-metre swim followed by a 20-kilometre cycle course and a five-kilometre run.

Competitors of all levels are welcome to take part on the day and entry costs £25 for individual athletes and £40 for relay teams.

For more information visit www.wattishamtriathlon.co.uk

THE Football Association has reaffirmed its support of Tickets for Troops by including the organisation in its ongoing charity commitments up to 2012.

Service personnel received 5,000 tickets for matches including England fixtures and the FA Cup semi-finals last year and further donations will be made as bosses look ahead to the European Championships.

England Under-21 coach Stuart Pearce announced details of the continuation during his recent visit to Afghanistan.

For more information on the scheme visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

Picture: Sgt Mark Nesbitt, RLC



On the piste: More than 300 Servicemen and women took to the Alpine slopes for Exercise Pipedown

Loggies find French flair

ALPINE stars from 1 Logistic Support Regiment have been celebrating another dominant display on the French slopes during Exercise Pipedown.

The German-based unit have reigned supreme at the annual 1 (UK) Armoured Division skiing showpiece in recent years and the 2011 campaign was no exception.

The all-conquering squad had the honour of being crowned overall divisional combined ski champions as well as the best team in the men's Alpine and Nordic disciplines.

The men also won the military patrol race, a sporting event designed to test the key operational skills of marksmanship, map reading and physical endurance.

More than 70 per cent of the 320 soldiers competing at Les Contamines de Montjoie, near Mont Blanc, were novices and they enjoyed some unseasonably warm conditions that created icy fast ski runs for what proved to be an exhilarating week of action.

Sgt Grant MacPherson, of the Joint Services Parachute Centre, finished as the best individual men's Alpine skier after winning the combination event,

the giant slalom, super giant slalom and the downhill.

However, the flying Scotsman from Inverness was denied a clean sweep of the silverware by Cpl Chalkie White (1 LSR), who took the honours in a hard-fought slalom contest.

In the women's competition, 1 Medical Regiment was named overall Nordic team champions.

Speaking at the end of another high-octane tournament, Brig Richard Dennis, vice chairman of the Army Winter Sports Association, said Exercise Pipedown had provided a "physically and mentally demanding" challenge for Service personnel and that he was delighted to see the event going from strength-to-strength.

He added: "The number of novice skiers taking part this year has been extremely encouraging.

"Any personnel thinking of having a go should ask their superiors to find out more about what the Army Winter Sports Association has to offer.

"You can go from novice competitions to national level.

"In every Winter Olympics there has been someone who was introduced to the sport in the military."

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Wing wizard: Cfn Will Rowell (REME) picks his way through the Royal Navy defence during the Army's 3-1 win at Farnborough's Rushmoor Stadium

Youth stars shine brightly

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE Army Under-23 side took a giant stride towards regaining their Inter-Services football crown with a commanding 3-1 victory over the Royal Navy.

After seeing the title slip from their grasp last season, the Reds produced a dominant display at Farnborough's Rushmoor Stadium to ensure the 2011 campaign started in fine style.

The hosts mastered the slick conditions to produce some good passing football and could have easily increased their lead with more composure in front of goal.

Forward Gnr Steven Coombes (RA) had an early penalty shout waved away by the referee but the Army didn't have to wait long to open their account.

A lofted clearance eluded the flat-footed Navy defence, leaving Pte Woody Woods (RLC) with a clear run through. As the striker moved into the area he was brought down by the onrushing goalkeeper, leaving Cpl Bails Bailly (R Signals) with the simple task of scoring from the spot.

The Army should have extended their lead when LCpl Liam Shaw (RLC) headed wide from a superb free kick by Cfn Gavin Meacham (REME, pictured right), before LCpl Adam Norton (RLC) blazed over as the Navy appealed for offside.

However, Shaw made amends for

his miss on 68 minutes. Meacham intercepted a slick passing move from the visitors and the flying fullback played a superb ball to winger Cfn Will Rowell (REME).

The wide man delivered a sublime cross to the back post, where the unmarked Shaw nodded home to double the Reds' advantage.

With the Senior Service chasing the

game, the Army sealed the win from a well-worked counter-attack.

The Navy reduced the arrears in injury time but the goal failed to take the gloss off a solid display.

Centre back pairing Norton and Pte Malcolm Oxbrow (RLC) marshalled the defence superbly. Pte Bill Turner (Infantry) and Bailly ran the midfield, while Woods was a constant threat.

Coach SSgt Sean Cochrane (RADC) was delighted with the result and said there was only going to be one winner.

"The players were slightly nervous in the first 20 minutes but once they settled down and relaxed they started to play," he added. "As soon as that happened we were always on top."

"We try to play football the way it is intended. It is not about big lumps over the top, we use skill and technical aspects of the game."

"I was a bit annoyed about conceding in injury time. With young sportsmen it comes down to decision making and we made a rash choice. But on the whole I am very pleased."

The Under-23s were in action against the Royal Air Force as this issue went to press.

● The women start their Inter-Services campaign against the RAF at Aldershot Town Football Club on March 10 (1400 kick-off). The senior men's side face the airmen at the same venue on March 16 (1900 kick-off). ■



final word



We quizzed personnel from 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery about their upcoming Op Herrick tour and for their thoughts on pre-deployment training

INTERVIEWS: RICHARD LONG
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Bdr Duane Marlow (RA)

We will be liaising with the Afghan National Army and manning a forward operating base. This is the first time I have done any mentoring, it will be challenging and interesting. We have completed a lot of live firing and that has given us confidence in ourselves and the kit. We have got language courses coming up and it will be good to get up to date with our Pashto.



Gnr Peter Maina (RA)

We have been taking part in a lot of training and the preparations have been going really well, focusing on the operational side of things and the work we will be doing with the guns. I think we'll have a similar role to our last deployment to southern Afghanistan. I'm looking forward to going out there now, it is a chance to put the training into practice.



Bdr Kees Muntion-Willis (RA)

We started off with Exercise Helmand Gunner, which was more to do with the infantry side of things. We have also been learning about what has changed and the new tactics, techniques and procedures. I'm going to be working on the deck command, a role that involves taking a step back, maintaining communications and the management of manpower.



Gnr Jack Cockerton (RA)

I have done all the training. It is good to transfer your skills from the classroom, get on the ground and pull it all together. I'm going to be working in the command post and am looking forward to the tour, I'm more than ready and I want to get out there. I'm also a bit nervous; I recently got married so being away for six months is going to be tough but it is part of what we do.



LBdr Chris Wood (RA)

The build-up has been challenging. We did a one-month exercise in Northumbria where the conditions were harsh, it was very tough but you have to be pushed hard. On our previous deployment we fired lots of rounds but were isolated so didn't get to see much of the people. I want to meet the local population and get involved in the hearts and minds side of things.



Gnr Scott Appleby (RA)

I have mainly been involved in gun exercises, getting ready for what we will be doing. I have really enjoyed it, this is what I joined the Army to do and this is my trade. We have had briefings and an insight into what is going on. This is my first deployment and I'm a bit worried, but anyone would be and I'm looking forward to getting my first tour under my belt.



Gnr Brendan Hickinson (RA)

I have been filling in on different slots and working on the gun. The pre-deployment training has not been too bad this time and it has given the guys plenty of experience. We have looked at a lot of different scenarios, it has been very realistic and specific to the role we perform in theatre. Going on tour is all about working with the lads and putting the training into practice.



Lt George Tulett (RA)

I will be working as a gun position officer. We have done a lot of training, we deployed on the infantry-based Exercise Helmand Gunner and did gun exercises with the fire support teams. I am really looking forward to the tour. I think everyone just wants to get there and get stuck in. I have a lot of confidence in my battery, we are very close and work well together.



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