

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

HYBRID SOLUTION

Troops mix old with new in training

DOWN UNDER DELIGHT

Footballers triumph in Australia

INSIDE:
RALLYING
CRY FOR
LOCAL
REMEMBRANCE
PARADES



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People
were
shocked
when they
heard it
could be
cancelled
”

On the march – p26



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Holding the memory

WITH family members lost to fighting in both the First and Second World Wars, and my formative years spent alongside the Army in Aldershot, remembrance has always held a special significance for me.

The scale of all we require from our military personnel cannot be underestimated; they put life and limb on the line when their nation asks.

It is a vocation unlike any other, which can demand the ultimate sacrifice.

However, with the generation that gave us the poppy fast fading from view – and most people now having no connection to military life past or present – it crossed my mind whether the act of reflection can retain its relevance in today's society.

Yet with public opinion instrumental in saving remembrance parades from the axe this year (page 26), it is warming to see that those who gave all for our freedom remain important to the nation.

It is a sentiment summed up by the inscription on the D-Day memorial in Portsmouth: *Decades of easy peace may go their way, and tide and time may drift us far apart. But you who share our savage yesterday will hold the highest places in our heart.*

Cliff Caswell
• Assistant Editor

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Sent to Army sites at the start of the month.

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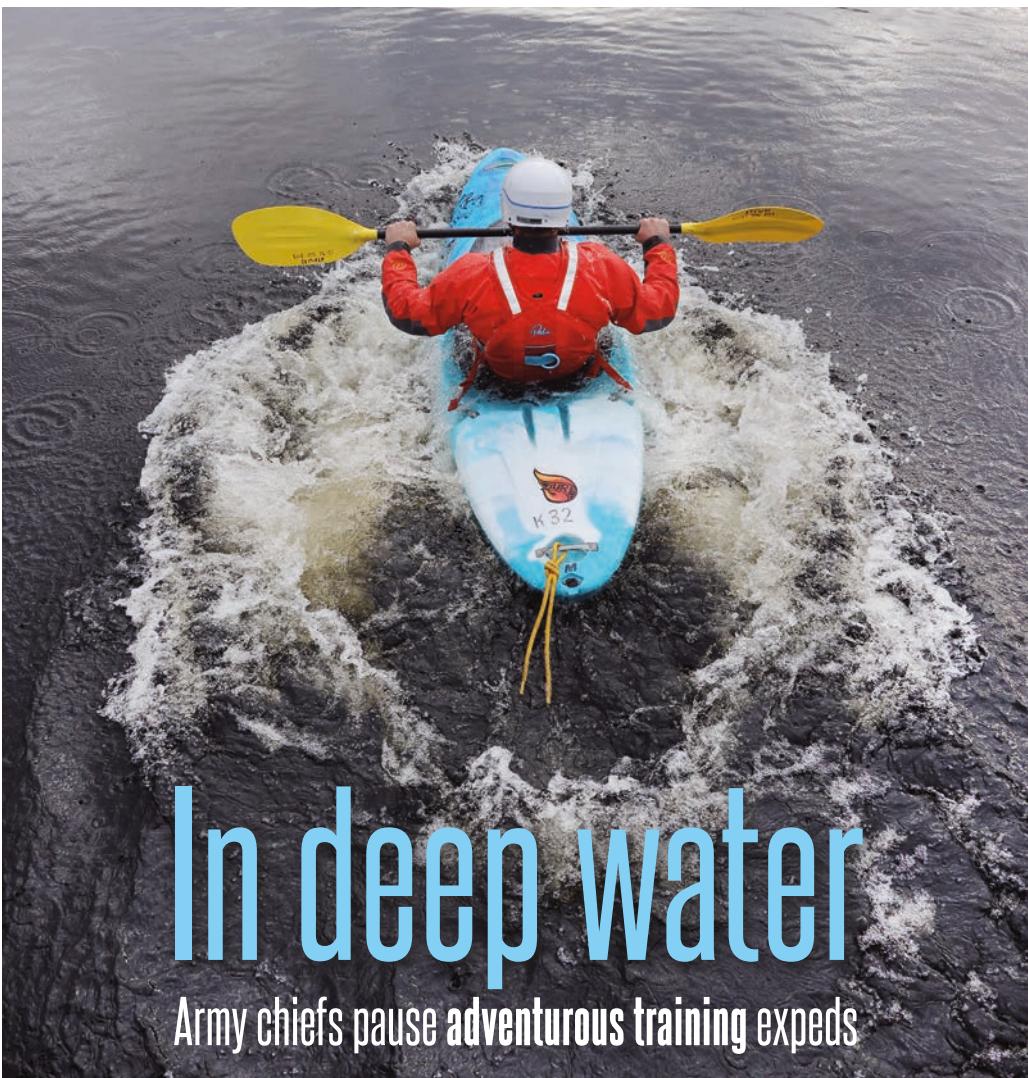
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In deep water

Army chiefs pause adventurous training expeds

Picture: Graeme Main

THE Army has paused new adventurous training (AT) expeditions as the Service battles to balance its books.

After receiving less cash than expected from the Treasury this financial year – and amid rising fuel prices and inflation – savings are needed.

As a result, top brass have come up with money-saving options that allow the Army to continue its core work. These include: slashing the travel and subsistence (T&S) bill by a quarter, stopping new full-time Reserve service (FTRS) recruitment, delaying spending on various research and development projects, selling surplus equipment and halting all new battlefield studies and AT.

The latter two are expected to save around £7m. However, expeds with funds already committed can still proceed – including ski trips this winter, which will see around 4,000 troops take part.

Col Neil Wilson, commander Army AT Group, said the move would have a "heavy impact".

"With AT factoring consistently high among the reasons why soldiers remain in the Service, these measures will not help the vital battle for retention," the officer added.

"It's not just the move to cease all new expeditions that will affect our soldiers; the accumulative effect of all the other measures will

also result in much decreased activity.

"The restrictions on T&S is already being felt with some individuals and units unable to travel to attend courses and expeditions.

"And the inability to recruit into FTRS positions – which make up a significant proportion of AT delivery and logistic staff – will all impact negatively."

However, Col Wilson said exped leaders should continue to plan for beyond April 2024.

Trips that have already had irrecupable funds spent on them can also go ahead, as can unit authorised AT, which is chain of command business.

Army AT Group courses will proceed throughout the winter as normal, with all centres and wings across the UK, Cyprus and Germany remaining open.

However, individuals and units are encouraged to bid early via the online booking system as it is expected that demand will be even higher than usual.

If soldiers are successful in getting a course, it is expected their chain of command will provide them with the necessary T&S to attend.

A statement from Army Headquarters said the Service had taken the savings measures "in a challenging national economic context".

It added that considerable time and effort had gone into finding the "least painful" measures for the organisation. ■

GLOBAL SITREP



Picture: Martin Gamon



1. CALIFORNIA

DRY RUN

TROOPS from B Squadron, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards have headed stateside for a stint in the Mojave Desert – home to the largest military training area in the world.

Working alongside their US hosts in Fort Irwin – and against the station's resident opposing force, the Blackhorse Regiment – they will be using unfamiliar kit and cutting-edge tech to build on lessons being fed back from Ukraine.

The Welsh Cavalry were hitting the ground on Exercise Diamondback as this issue went to press, but had spent the preceding weeks prepping for the challenge with a series of tough drills (pictured).



2. KENYA

GUARDS GET STUCK IN

A BATTLEGROUP commanded by 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards has been going through a warfighting shakedown after setting up shop in Africa.

The outfit – which includes infantry from across the Household Division and wider Army plus a raft of other cap

badges – is now into Exercise Haraka Storm.

Some 880 Regulars and Reservists are involved in the two-month package, which is taking place on training areas around Nanyuki, north of Nairobi, and is set to validate the formation as the light role battlegroup within 4th Light Brigade Combat Team.

The manoeuvres began with a preparation period covering core soldiering skills.



Picture: LSgt Carl Michael McClelland, Gren Guards

3. BELGIUM

LAST POST FOR THE FALLEN

PERSONNEL from The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment travelled to Belgium to lay the remains of three soldiers who died at the Battle of Passchendaele to rest.

Among those to be buried with full military honours was Pte William Meager, a 38-year-old from London, who was reported missing during the early stages of the offensive in August 1917.

With no body recovered at the time, he was commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial at Ypres.

More than 100 years later his remains, as well as those of two other soldiers, were discovered during a commercial archaeological dig, along with various regimental insignia of the former Middlesex Regiment.

Subsequent research and DNA testing by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre led to the identification of Pte Meager.

However the process failed to yield positive results for his colleagues, who were buried as unknown soldiers of unknown regiments.

"We feel extremely honoured to be one of the lucky families whose relative has been found," said Pte Meager's great nephew Alan.



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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4. KOSOVO ROUTING REPTILES

SAPPERS deployed with Nato peacekeepers found themselves facing a fork-tongued menace as they were called on to renovate a playground.

The personnel, from 37 Field Squadron, 32 Engineer Regiment headed out to Abetarja primary school from their base at Camp Bondsteel after arriving in theatre as part of the alliance's strategic reserve force (page 11).

But not only did they find the grounds in need of substantial repairs, they discovered the area had been infested with snakes.

Undeterred, the troops rapidly rolled-out their equipment to create a serpent-free zone – plus a new surface for 200-or-more pupils to play in safety.

Plant operator LCpl Reece Longstaff (RE) said the reptiles

retreated as the task began. He added: "It's been great playing football with the kids – hopefully there will be more community engagement work here in Kosovo."



Picture: Cpl Paul Watson, RLC



5. BRUNEI GURKHAS HOST NEW SOLDIERING TEST

THE jungle equivalent of the Cambrian Patrol has been launched following a successful trial in Brunei.

Exercise Sunda Patrol saw 104 soldiers from six different units put through their paces in survival, navigation, river crossings and close target recce – after first undergoing jungle warfare training by instructors from hosts and resident experts, 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

"Operating effectively in the close country tropical environment is simply not easy," said organiser Maj Som Thulung (RGR).

"With the unique challenges presented by the Bruneian terrain, we believe this offers the toughest patrol competition available."

Next year's event will be open to all British Army units, with teams from Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia also pencilled in.

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Pictures: Paul Crouch; Cpl Paul Watson, RLC

Infanteers step up in Kosovo

BRITISH troops are this month patrolling Kosovo's communities after Nato called in reinforcements amid violence in country's volatile north.

The entire 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment was in the Balkans state as this issue went to press and soldiers were busy establishing a presence on the ground.

Some 400 personnel from the unit – which had been on 14 days' notice to move as the alliance's strategic reserve force – had already been in situ for a planned exercise over the summer.

But Nato last month called for extra support following an attack on local police officers and tensions between Serb and ethnic Albanian communities.

Battalion spokesman Capt Evan Sidwells told *Soldier* that 200 extra personnel had joined those working within the Kosovo Force after being flown into the capital Pristina.

Members of Alma Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment – which includes Foxhound vehicle crews – were assisting with the op.

The Brits, working out of the US base at Camp Bondsteel, also had support from the likes of loggies, medics and sappers.

Capt Sidwells said: "We are living in tented accommodation and the conditions are good – the troops are growing in experience every day.

"They are working in a fully multinational environment and



we have a company of Romanian personnel fully embedded within the battalion."

The unit would remain in theatre until it was stood down by commanders, Capt Sidwells added.

"The original exercise was due to last several weeks but our stay in Kosovo is currently open-ended," he continued. "The deployment has quite a high tempo with a large area of operations, although we are well supported and have the equipment and vehicles we need."

Nearly 30 nations are involved in the Kosovo Force mission. The campaign has been running since Nato intervened to stop violence there nearly 25 years ago. ■

“Our stay is currently open-ended”



SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards and their French Foreign Legion counterparts have become the first British-international team to complete **Cambrian Patrol**. The troops battled hostile Welsh weather as they tackled a series of demanding military tests along the 60km route – finishing with a coveted bronze medal.

TALK TO THE PHONE...

■ SERVICE complaints can now be submitted from soldiers' personal devices thanks to a new app on the Defence Gateway.

My Complaint, which went live last month, allows personnel to raise their grievance from wherever they are in the world.

It can be found by clicking on the *Scio* app on the portal, and is now the preferred way for troops to raise an issue.

However, there is still the option of emailing Annex F of JSP 831.

The move is part of a digitalisation programme that will eventually allow soldiers to check the progress of their case online in real time as well as receive automated notifications.

Maj Ruth Breslin (RE) from the Army Service Complaints Secretariat said the app would give personnel "greater access".

"It's our soldiers' fundamental right to complain if they feel they have been wronged," she added.

The Army encourages all individuals to first contact their chain of command to raise any problems.

However, in 2022 an important change was made that means Service complaint paperwork no longer has to be submitted via commanding officers.

IN NUMBERS

20

Approximate number of Service complaints received by the Army each week

Percentage increase in Army complaints since improvements were made to the system in June 2022

50

Picture: Gavin O'Connor

GENERAL FOR A DAY

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

AS A PADRE I support jocks, NCOs and officers alike – I’m constantly up and down the ranks. That gives me a unique view of the whole organisation, which is a real privilege.

Something I’ve noticed during my three years with the British Army is that there seems to be more isolation the further up the chain of command you go.

Loneliness is a burden that our senior staff carry.

I don’t know if that’s because of the hierarchical nature of the military, or just the stress of the position, but I often see these people at the top and think “wow, it’s just you up there”. The buck stops with them.

So if I was a general for a day I would make sure I was surrounded by really trustworthy, authentic people as my support network.

I would also ban the use of acronyms. How are you supposed to know them all?

I was doing staff training on the combat estimate recently, and there was an appendix that was just unbelievable!

Finally, I would ensure that bags of Percy Pigs were put into all ration packs. It’d be a great bit of morale; I take them with me everywhere I go.

Name: **Rev Ken Jeffrey**
Cap badge: **RACD**
Role: **Padre (Reservist) to 7 Scots**
Age: **54**
Years in: **3**
Deployments: **Op Golden Orb**



“
Competition is getting tighter and people are stepping up
”



Female winner
SSgt Charlotte Spence, RAPTC



Picture: Graeme Main

Warriors of fitness

FAMILIAR faces topped the podium as the British Army Warrior Fitness (BAWF) Individual Open reached its conclusion in Aldershot.

After four punishing workouts that concluded with an energy-sapping effort on the track featuring two 1,200-metre clean fatigue runs, two weighted runs and a D Ball carry (pictured), SSgt Charlotte Spence and WO2 Alex Rees (both RAPTC) claimed the women’s and men’s honours for a third successive year.

Speaking to *Soldier* afterwards, the champions both said the standard was higher than ever this season, making retaining their titles a difficult task.

“It was a really good competition, and the other soldiers push me harder every year,” SSgt Spence added.

“I was first in three of the events and set a new personal best of 90kg in the overhead squat. But the run was so tough, and I had no idea how I would fare, so I was very happy to finish second in that.

“We are introducing more movements, and I’m getting a bit older, so I’m delighted to win three in a row.”

The open featured the top ten female and male performers from a series of online workouts, with advertising on social media fuelling its popularity.



WO2 Rees said: “The competition is getting tighter, and people are stepping up to higher levels.

“I was apprehensive about some of the workouts. I have not done any loaded marches or Bergan training for a few months, so it was a case of sticking in there and hoping I had enough in the tank.

“BAWF is getting more popular, and people are realising what they need to do to compete at this level, which makes it harder to get to the top. It encourages them to train in strength and conditioning, which can only benefit their military careers.”

Attention now turns to BAWF’s team competition, with events running from this month until May 2024, ahead of the finals in July.

Follow @ArmyWarriorFit on X, @british_army_warrior_fitness on Instagram or visit the British Army Warrior Fitness Facebook page. ■



Male winner
WO2 Alex Rees, RAPTC



Troops deployed tactically in Ajax (left) for the first time during the package



Breaking new ground

Titan exercise sees 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team make its debut

THE British Army's largest land exercise for more than 20 years was completed last month, featuring the debut of the 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team.

Around 8,000 troops took part in Iron Titan, which focused on testing the ability of 3 (UK) Division's combat support and sustainment units, including engineers, logisticians and medics, along with deep fires and aviation.

The six week-long package saw troops working out of 22 locations across the South West, West Midlands and Wales.

The last time an exercise of its type took place was in 2001, but the latest iteration saw lessons from Ukraine taken on board around transporting and sustaining forces at reach – including heavy armour, high quality supply and an emphasis on camouflage and concealment.

"The core of the exercise is proving we can deploy a division of 15,000-20,000 people that has all the

individual capabilities to live, move and fight at scale," Maj Ed Dickens (RE) told *Soldier*. "That has been important for everyone to be involved in, from top to bottom.

"Being able to exercise all our personnel and their equipment at this level has been invaluable.

"To the sappers on the ground, for instance, it might have looked and felt like a regular training package for periods. But in other ways it wasn't; they deployed for multiple weeks, travelled between different training areas and saw points where their activity was integrated with the rest of the division, especially the other parts that aren't armoured brigades but are nonetheless crucial to them.

"This included the operational sustainment brigade who provide so much of the lift needed.

"Iron Titan has allowed us to link all our elements together to deliver 3 Div's required outputs in a warfighting scenario for the first time in years." ■

“
It has allowed us to link all our elements together
”



DEEP
THINKING



Soldier talked to Brig Neil Budd, commander of the 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team, after its first physical roll-out on Exercise Iron Titan...

How many soldiers and resources did you commit to the package?

"Around 1,300 troops in total, from 15 regiments and with approximately 800 vehicles. It was not the whole formation but a vertical slice of it."

What were the highlights?

"Demonstrating the DRS concept physically – the culmination of 15 months of work, experimentation and simulated exercises. Other highlights included the Household Cavalry Regiment deploying tactically in Ajax for the first time. It performed really well – in force-on-force it beat the Warrior every time and went over 700km with no mechanical breakdowns."

Why is your brigade such an important development?

"Because it has removed the formation, or brigade, boundaries between sensors, deciders and effectors. This means we can integrate reconnaissance, surveillance, target acquisition and fires capabilities. With the resulting highly agile command and control, this allows us to generate significant tempo. The result is we can find, understand and strike enemy targets faster than ever before and at greater range."

Was DRS created as a result of war in Ukraine?

"It was announced in Future Soldier. But between then and it being established in July 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine with the ramifications we are all familiar with. So we spent a lot of time studying and questioning. As the war there is showing, the ability to find and strike the enemy with massed fires at ever greater range and tempo is battle-winning. DRS has been honed by a clear purpose and threat."

BETTER COURSE BOOKING

A NEW online tool developed by the Land Warfare Centre is set to make searching for, bidding for and booking training courses easier than ever.

Target replaces multiple outdated systems and paper applications.

It will be available for unit training officers to use from the end of this month, and connects to JPA and Muster so that date clashes with other duties and qualification shortfalls are highlighted.

"Statistically, the reason most people are not up to date with training is failure to turn up for a course due to overlaps with other demands or being returned to unit because the prerequisites have not been achieved," Lt Col Kit Philp (Coldm Gds), head of training operations at the Land Warfare Centre, explained to *Soldier*.

Troops can have access to find out what they need for a promotion course.

"And 2iCs and platoon commanders can use it to identify training for their people.

"Personnel who have tried it have told us they believe it's a massive improvement."

'DON'T SUFFER IN SILENCE'

FEMALE soldiers were urged not to suffer in silence at a seminar marking World Menopause Day last month.

The event saw personnel given practical advice about how to manage the symptoms both at home and work, with the importance of honest and open discussion emphasised.

Speakers included health professionals and troops from across the chain of command.

Contact the Army's Menopause Network via Sgt Jodi Stickland (AGC (SPS)) at jodi.stickland748@mod.gov.uk

A BLISTERING RECORD

THREE soldiers from the Military Provost Staff Regiment have set a new world record for the greatest number of countries visited on foot in a week.

Sgt Damian Isaac, Sgt Simon Wright and Sgt Kelson St Rose – all detention specialists at the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester – started their trek in Bosnia and Herzegovina and crossed into Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary and Austria before finishing their marathon effort in Slovakia a week later.

The trio covered a total of 248 miles in seven days.

Team leader Sgt Isaac said: "We wanted to do something arduous rather than quirky – a challenge we would have to train for and be able to say 'we earned that'."



“
We want to understand whether there has been enough change
”

MPs to quiz Servicewomen

FEW female personnel are this month poised to give evidence to MPs after the details of a young soldier's death were made public.

A service inquiry report found that Gnr Jaysley Beck (RA), who was just 19, took her own life after "an intense period of unwelcome behaviour" by a superior. The teenager's body was found at Larkhill in December 2021.

Defence chiefs were told to improve their handling of unacceptable behaviours by MPs two years ago.

Now the cross-party sub-committee on women in the Armed Forces has demanded to know if progress has been made. They have asked for further evidence on the experiences of female personnel and invited soldiers themselves to submit evidence.

Committee chair Sarah Atherton said a hearing would take place on November 14.



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

She added: "My sympathies are with the family of Gnr Beck – her death is a tragedy and we await the news of a date for the inquest into her death."

"The defence committee made a series of recommendations to government in 2021 to improve its handling of unacceptable behaviour, most of which the Ministry of Defence officially accepted.

"We now want to understand whether there has been enough change in practice over the last two years." ■



Picture: Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF



Ground view

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

THE Army has been back in the spotlight over the past few weeks – with the tragic death of Gnr Jaysley Beck (RA) leading us to focus inwards once more.

It would be wrong of me to comment further on the individual case – especially with inquest processes under way. However, issues relating to our values and standards have again been raised. These were also discussed during a recent Op Teamwork event in Andover, so I'm going to share some thoughts.

I have said this already but I'm going to restate it now: we are part of an organisation that demands the highest personal and professional behaviours.

Our responsibility to each other is not only critical to success on operations or any other task we are given for that matter, but it is morally important too.

Those who are not up to the cut – who hurt others and our collective reputation through acts of selfishness – simply have no place in this Service.

Mercifully, these people are few and far between.

Rarely, in my experience, do you find individuals that set

out to harm. But there are times when we can all cause problems unintentionally through our character traits. This is why self-awareness, and a challenge culture, is important.

Some of us in the Army – including me – have formal mentors. They help and encourage us with words that are sometimes tough to hear. But if we take the advice on board it helps us to change, adapt and ultimately improve.

Although not all of us have this type of assistance in place, we can all help each other.

So my ask this month is that we identify individuals in our lives who we know and trust, who are willing to provide helpful feedback.

There are a couple of caveats – firstly, the nominated people have to be completely honest and upfront.

It is no use whatsoever if we are constantly told exactly what we want to hear.

Similarly, the soldier on the receiving end of criticism must respond in a positive way, without becoming defensive or angry about what has been raised.

In short, I want us all to play our full part in bolstering our challenge culture.

Let's sharpen up – and serve one another.

Those who hurt others and our collective reputation have no place



Picture: Cpl Paul Watson, RLC

TALKING TRAILERS

CONCERNs have reached my ears, from visits up and down the country, about our Pinzgauer workhorse – which is used to tow the 105mm light gun.

The fleet has been getting old and – while it has served us well over the years – crews are

constantly telling me that they have been struggling with the platform.

I have been looking into a potential solution and am pleased to say that Jackal and Foxhound are now both being trialled for towing the artillery piece.

Watch this space.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What's the best piece of kit you've ever been issued?

A Definitely the head torch – it was a game changer

Conference call...

■ TRAINING is going to be among the key items on the agenda when senior warrant officers convene for the annual regimental sergeant major's convention.

We'll be looking at issues including how we deal with the problem areas around organising exercises – whether it is operational pressures or paperwork.

I want us to examine how we build in lessons from the war in Ukraine too.

These thorny matters will be the focus of one panel discussion during the day-long event at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as this issue hits your desk; another will box off topics such as pay, allowances and accommodation.

I'll give you an update on the discussions soon.

View from the GROUND



We asked soldiers at the Army Multicultural Network conference what makes them feel like they belong – and what doesn't

✓ Army camaraderie – the feeling that you're all working together and it doesn't matter where you're from



✗ When I got 'best recruit' in phase one I overheard people saying they were surprised. It made me question whether I'd got it for my efforts or to tick a box

LCpl Jasmine Stanley, AGC (RMP)

✓ When leaders show consideration towards my identity and the reality that I may be the only person of colour in the room, and are open to hearing about how I feel



✗ Assumptions people make about my cultural background that may not be true, especially if they don't have a willingness to learn

Cpl India Blissett, Int Corps

✓ Feeling psychologically safe, comfortable and empowered to do my job

✗ The fact that some people wake up in the morning not looking forward to work because they feel stereotyped.

WO1 Sal Salihu, RLC

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



THESE BOOTS WEREN'T MADE FOR WALKING

VETERAN David King (ex-REME, shown) donned a pair of ski boots for a five-mile trek up and down Pen y Fan. The former corporal embarked on the challenge as part of a fundraising drive for the Visually Impaired Veterans Ski Club, which needs £30,000 to pay for its annual ski trip. King, who skis as a guide with the organisation, added



£3,000 to the cause when he completed a marathon walking route in Portsmouth wearing the same boots in July.

"Facilitating the trip is a massive source of pride for me," he said. To donate visit [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) and search "visually impaired veterans ski trip".



Work to be done



Picture: Grahame Main

Troops say more action and less 'talking it to death' needed when it comes to race relations

MORE needs to be done before personnel from ethnic minority backgrounds feel like they truly belong in the Army, the chair of the Service's Multicultural Network has told *Soldier*.

Speaking at the body's annual conference, Lt Col Alf Dewa (RAMC) said there was a divide between inclusion policy and the lived experience of its members.

"We write well-intentioned policies, but in terms of seeing them through into tangible interventions that change the way people are treated there is still a disconnect," he said.

"That's why the theme of this event was 'time to act', with the sub-theme of closing the say-do gap. We talk it to death, but the dial doesn't move."

Topics discussed at the forum included recruitment and retention, leadership and the organisation's race action plan.

Delegates also heard from author and historian Dr David Olusoga, who spoke about belonging.

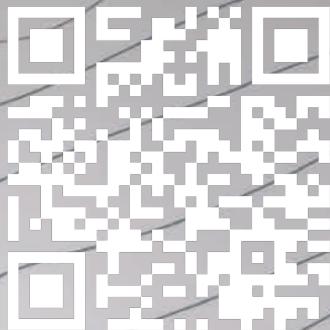
Referencing the Service's latest recruiting campaign, which draws on the same theme, Lt Col Dewa continued: "It is difficult for some of us to say everything is great, 'you belong here', when that's not the experience we have of living every day in the Army.

"We can only speak our truth as we see it now and my personal view is we have work to do.

"Until those who are serving can go back to their communities as walking advertisements for this organisation it's always going to be challenging."

The officer praised younger ethnic minority personnel for showing a more "pronounced degree of urgency" around inclusion than his generation, and expressed hopes that continued dialogue would bring about change. ■

“We can only speak our truth as we see it”



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SIDE BY SIDE PODCAST

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

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

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

RECYCLING AWARD FINALIST

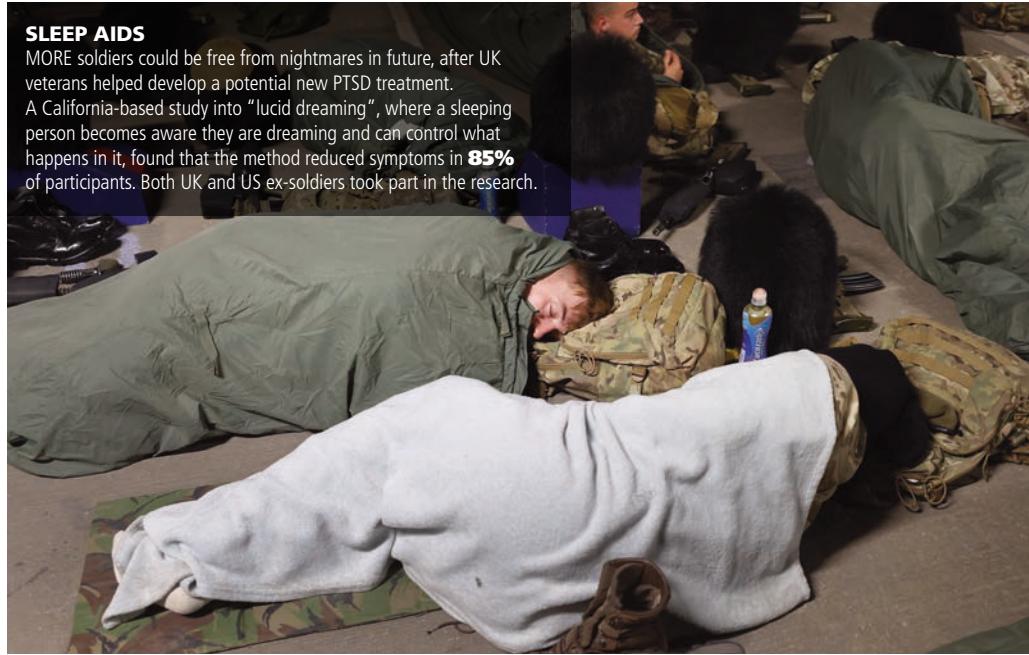
We are delighted to announce we have been shortlisted for the Partnership Excellence award at the National Recycling Awards for their project 'The Ministry Of Defence's delivery of the Greening Government Commitments 4 Years Early working in partnership with Greenzone Facilities Management Limited

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



www.sidebysidesfm.co.uk
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Pictures: Graeme Main



IT HAS been a fulfilling career for 40-year-old **SSgt Phil Armitage (RHA)** but he is finally hanging up his boots after more than two decades as a gunner. Here, the keen cyclist and veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan reflects on a life in uniform and his civvy street aspirations...

How are you feeling about leaving? On the one hand it's exciting to be starting something new, but the Army has been my world for two decades.

What have you enjoyed most about Service life? There have been many high points. I've played lots of rugby and been around the world. It has – without a doubt – made me the man I am.

And the low points? The life has at times had an effect on my mental health and well-being, in common with some other soldiers of my era. But I have received help.

Has the Army changed during your service? Most definitely – and for the better. In particular, soldiers are encouraged to speak up if they see something wrong.

Are you being looked after with resettlement? Absolutely – but the Service could generally help leavers more, particularly if they've completed a long career. You are, for example, restricted with what you can do with enhanced learning credits.

Will you maintain your Army links? Yes – I'm going to join the Reserve. I want to use my experience to help the next generation.

Any thoughts on your next career? I want to start a property business. I've always wanted to work for myself.

What are you looking forward to most? Being able to say no if I don't want to do something.

COMPENSATION CALL

LEGL eagles are calling on former soldiers to sit on the expert panels that determine military compensation cases.

They are asking for ex-senior NCOs and officers to help resolve appeals brought by past and present personnel against decisions relating to their pensions or compensation.

Chosen candidates will form part of a three-strong group responsible for examining evidence as part of the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Tribunal Chamber.

Working alongside a judge and a medical specialist, they will be responsible for providing an opinion based on their first-hand experience of Army life.

Chamber president Judge Fiona Monk said former personnel were a crucial element of the expert panels – helping to inform cases arising from the Armed Forces compensation scheme.

"Those unhappy with the outcome of a claim relating to their military service will see the case come before us," the senior lawyer (right) added.

"Our remit covers England and Wales – and we need people to give 15-30 hours per year."

Candidates must have left service in the last five years and if commissioned should be at the rank of major or above.

They receive training and are paid for their time.

"Serving personnel are also encouraged to come forward," Judge Monk continued.

"Being a member of the panel is intellectually stimulating though also demanding – they could be expected to sit through three or four cases per day.

"Their contribution is vital – they carry out an important public service in providing us with advice based on their experience." ■

FACTFILE: *The War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber*

▲ Tracing its roots back to 1917, it hears matters relating to both serving and former military personnel.

▲ Most of the issues revolve around whether a claimant is entitled to a payment or whether they have been correctly assessed.

▲ Their injury or condition needs to relate to their service but does not have to be as a result of combat.

▲ There are three full-time judges in the chamber, with appeals averaging around **2,500** per year.

“
They carry out an important public service
”



Find out more about the role by visiting:

judicialappointments.gov.uk/vacancies/131

THE BIG PICTURE

Swindon, Wiltshire

Urban operator

A DRONE pilot from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment prepares for a surveillance flight in Swindon town centre as part of Livex 23. As the Army's lead experimentation unit, the soldiers trialled a host of kit and equipment including autonomous vehicles, an uncrewed camera system, night sights and a "game-changing" digital communications suite during the three-week test, which merged the Service's traditional training estate with the civilian realm.

Picture: Cpl Nathan Tanuku, RLC



See page 39 for full story



NEED TO KNOW

SKILLS & DRILLS / CASH / MENTAL HEALTH



CV: Maj Glenn Thomas
Age: 58
Cap badge: R Irish
Period of service:
Regular 1984-91;
Reserve 1991-present

Pictures: Sgt Jimmy Wise, AS1 Jamie Ledger, both RAF

Top tips for Reservists
contemplating an Op
Interflex deployment...



► WHEN the Russian military marched into Ukraine nearly two years ago, Kremlin officials failed to foresee they would soon be facing a Nato-trained army.

As weapons and supplies began to flow eastwards, the UK became the venue for a multinational effort to teach defending troops cutting-edge combat skills.

Since the invasion, soldiers from allied nations have worked hard to bring many thousands of Ukrainian personnel up to speed.

And now a call has gone out from top brass for British Army Reservists to deploy and bring their own expertise to bear (*Soldier*, September).

While many are already involved in this action, more boots on the ground are needed as the relentless pace of training continues.

Those coming forward for a tour can expect a boost to their military careers as they experience full immersion in a critical operation. Trench clearance, fighting in woods and forests, urban serials and live firing are all topics on a packed agenda.

With this in mind, *Soldier* asked Maj Glenn Thomas (R Irish) – leading Interflex Reservists with 19th Light Brigade – for his advice to those answering the call...

EMBRACE THE LEARNING

You'll be doing full-time soldiering, day-in, day-out alongside people from different ranks and cap badges. Make sure you use the opportunity to develop yourself – you'll be able to learn a lot from all those around you, especially the Ukrainian NCOs accompanying the students. They have seen conflict.

PREPARE PERFECTLY

You'll need to be up to the mark with all of your individual training requirements – any shortfalls will be addressed during your period of pre-deployment training, so make sure you are ready. In short, know your basics, and keep yourself physically and mentally in shape.

UNITE WITH NATIONS

I'm the OC of Sphinx Company – where we have Romanian and Finnish soldiers embedded with us. You'll need to have the ability to work alongside troops from other countries.



PRACTISE PATIENCE

Volunteering for Interflex means you will be responsible for turning people from civilians to soldiers in a short five weeks. English is not their first language so you must be patient. Understand that these individuals will be fighting in a real conflict, putting their lives on the line. You are in a unique position as a Reservist training citizen soldiers. But if you cannot show empathy, then there is no place for you here.

STAY FLEXIBLE

Operation Interflex, by its nature, is intense. We do our best to make sure the programme has breaks and downtime without compromising on the training. But it goes without saying that you will be working long hours when needed.

IN NUMBERS

SPHINX APPEAL

48

Per cent of Maj Thomas' troops expressing a desire to extend on Op Interflex

The pension calculator

Why – and how – you should be using it

► IT'S tempting to ignore your pension, but it pays to be clued up on your entitlement – and the Armed Forces pension calculator is a good place to start.

This handy online tool was updated recently to better reflect people's different circumstances, including additional contributions, pension sharing orders and more.

Longer serving personnel affected by the so-called McCloud remedy can also now see how their benefits could change (see box below).

But no matter what stage of career you are at, everyone should check out the calculator, says Cpl Cameron Eden (RLC), whose YouTube channel, The Savvy Squaddie, aims to increase financial literacy among troops.

"It might be way down the line for many people, but the earlier you begin to plan the better," he emphasises.

"The average pension pot of a retiree is currently around £70,000 – but the recommended amount is more than £250,000 – so unless you take an interest, retirement might be a struggle for you."

Still unsure? Check out Cpl Eden's answers to some frequently asked questions...

WHAT INFO DO I NEED TO USE IT?

Having details like rank, pay, dates of promotion, joining date and projected end date will make it quicker. The calculator tailors options based on your service history so the more you provide, the more accurate the forecast will be.

WHY BOTHER? I RECEIVE A YEARLY STATEMENT ANYWAY

The tool offers many more functions than the benefit information statement. It gives predictions for different scenarios, helping you choose the best path. For example, you can input an earlier end date and see how that would affect your overall pension benefits.

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

Because it can be the deciding factor in whether you leave or complete a full career. The difference in benefits can be tens of thousands of pounds. The so-called "pension trap" is real, but that is because the pension is so good. Completing a full career will leave you with a pot over the recommended amount and you'll be able to enjoy your golden years.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT DO?

It gives projections for commutation (your tax-free lump sum) and inverse commutation (when you forego your lump sum to increase your taxable pension income), as well as the early departure payment (see *Soldier*, September). All of these features allow the user to make more informed decisions that will set them up for future financial success and security.

EXPLAINED: MCLOUD REMEDY

Following a court ruling, personnel who were previously on Armed Forces pension schemes 75 and 05, but were forced to transfer to AFPS 15, now have the choice to remain on their old scheme for the seven-year period between April 1, 2015 and March 31, 2022.

Visit the
Armed Forces
pension
calculator
here



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Campfire comrades

How a fireside chat can spark deeper connections

NO JUDGMENT

It's unhelpful to pre-judge others and what's going on in their lives. Understand that you have biases – we all do – but find a way to park it, as only then can you really listen. That means hearing both their choice of words and the larger message behind what they're saying.

GO WITH THE FLOW

You might well have an idea of a conversation you want to have, even a difficult one. But often the best discussions happen when you don't have an agenda.

SHARE EXPERIENCES

Feel free to share some gritty stuff that has happened to you when it's appropriate. This vulnerability shows that you understand how someone else might be feeling. However, use your judgment about when and how much to share. Consider how it may impact the people with you.

► NOVEMBER is the month for gathering around bonfires, but ex-Royal Marine and author **Nick Goldsmith** believes it's an underrated way of boosting well-being all year round.

As he reveals in his book, *Rewild Your Mind*, chewing the fat while gazing into the flames is a powerful way of starting meaningful conversations.

"It's something humans have done since the dawn of time," he points out. "A fire transcends everything – it's a great leveller. It doesn't matter what your story or background is, once you're all gathered around a fire everyone feels connected."

"And you'll have real conversations – they're going to be honest, possibly raw."

This is his advice for making the most of the moment...

DON'T EXPECT EYE CONTACT

For many people the fire will be somewhere to direct their attention to, rather than having to make eye contact with others. This may make it easier for them to have a tricky conversation. Try to ensure your own body language is open and not defensive.

LISTEN AND BE AWARE

If someone is in full flow, respect that and don't butt in. If someone is finding the act of sharing difficult, try asking a leading question. If someone seems to be spiralling with negative statements, try to nudge them off that thought pattern.

HOME OR AWAY

Being in the wild is the ideal scenario for creating better connections with others, but you could create a similar effect in your garden with a fire pit, or by lighting a candle and placing it in the middle of a table.

BUT RESPECT THE FIRE

Move carefully around the campfire, keeping the surrounding area clear of firewood. Dress appropriately and make sure you put out your fire safely.



ON THE MARCH

As a cash crisis threatens local remembrance parades, public pressure is making a difference...



Report: Cliff Caswell | Pictures: MOD; Shutterstock; Sharon van Zelst

JIM Rosenthal still remembers growing up in a family touched by war – a household bearing the loss of a son who was taken well before his time.

Exactly seven decades after the end of the Korean conflict the senior Anglican priest emotionally recalls the strain his half-brother's death placed on his mother and father. In a world then living in the shadow of the Second World War, the UN action in the face of communist aggression left thousands of troops dead and wounded.

"Alfred had been serving with the United States Army and was only 22 when we lost him in 1951," Rosenthal – who was raised in Chicago, Illinois, before settling in the UK after his ordination as a priest – tells *Soldier*.

"Like so many families in our situation, I don't think ours was ever the same again – we did not fully recover from his death and it was an awful thing."

Rosenthal (pictured right) pauses as he surveys the roll of honour in the church near Redhill, Surrey, ahead of the service he will lead on Remembrance Sunday – a time when the impact of a sibling's passing again resonates into the present day. He says being with his local congregation helps him deal with loss.

"Conflict has touched so many of us in different ways, so I think it's important for everyone to come together when we think about service and sacrifice," he adds. "We gain strength from having community around us."

The vicar – a former director of communications with the Church of England – always fields a decent turnout for his service. There will be a parade at a memorial in a neighbouring community too, fronted by Royal British Legion members.

It is a familiar and well-observed ritual that has been carried out around the UK since the First World War era. In an age of austerity, however, many towns and villages have found themselves at something of a crossroads with remembrance. In a society still battling to deal with the legacy of Covid, the cost and admin of holding ceremonies has been proving prohibitive.

But public feeling – it seems – still runs deep when it comes



to honouring those lost in conflict, and this has been instrumental in saving local events from cancellation. Well over a century since the first services were carried out following the Great War, a nation still believes steadfastly in pausing to remember lives lost as well as those changed forever.

It is, ironically, the dry subject of traffic management protocols at parades in England and Wales that has recently brought the depth of feeling to the fore.

Although councils have long had a legal responsibility for the service, often delegated to private contractors, the police have usually provided a helping hand, particularly at some smaller gatherings. But with cash-strapped chief constables now focusing precious resources on fighting crime, the axe fell on some events in 2022 and more have been under threat this year.

The exact number of marches affected is unclear but Knaresborough – a community with a long-established parade – is one high-profile case in point. After North Yorkshire Police said it could no longer provide traffic management, individuals were swift to voice their anger, and as this issue went to press the town council agreed to step in and pay for private marshals.

"It was a bolt from the blue, to be honest – the force wrote to explain their position over the summer, which didn't give us much room for manoeuvre," says David Houlgate (pictured below), vice-chairman of the town's Royal British Legion branch. "We were one of several events affected by the decision.

"Our parade is large – it has a marching band with veterans and trainees from Army Foundation College Harrogate among

serving personnel taking part," he adds. "People were shocked when they heard it could be cancelled and they made their feelings known – particularly across social media."

Some questioned the police action – prompting the force to clarify the reasons for its decision – while others simply wanted local commemorations »

THE LEGION POSITION

The national Royal British Legion has stressed that the organisation of traffic management and road closures at parades needs to be handled by local authorities. A policy update said that the duty needed to be "left to the experts" – adding that "the longstanding position of the Legion is that local remembrance parades are a civic responsibility."



» to continue, according to Houlgate. "The community element is important," he adds.

There was a similar outpouring of support across Wales, where parades faced the chop in the wake of the cash crisis last year.

Communities seethed with anger as the public made it known that remembrance was non-negotiable.

The cancellation of a 2022 event in Caldicot in Gwent proved particularly contentious.

Following the withdrawal of police support, councillors found themselves grappling with cash questions over paying for private contractors.

As a community hit back, the depth of feeling saw the town become news in one national tabloid. "Disgusts me: Fury as town's Remembrance Day parade scrapped as road closure too pricey", read the

headline. But Gordon Hill, county secretary of The Royal British Legion in Gwent, says that local authorities have shown backing for parades in 2023, with most commemorations going ahead as scheduled this remembrance season.

"It clearly still means a huge amount to people," Hill, who served as a Reservist with the Royal Military Police, adds. "Yes, it is about the community coming together but there are also individuals who know the names on our memorials – they have a personal connection to those people.

"The towns and villages lost so many of their number during the First World War in particular – here in Wales hundreds died in the pals battalions alone so communities want to come



ROAD RULES

Local authorities have long held the responsibility for road closures under the Traffic Management Act 2004. This has often meant paying private companies to oversee safety at remembrance parades.

While the police have helped at smaller events, national guidance issued to forces from their professional bodies, the National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing, has stressed they should not enforce road closures except in an emergency. It has also been suggested that chief constables focus resources on dealing with priorities such as crime and antisocial behaviour.

This has led some forces such as North Yorkshire to pull back from policing parades. The organisation's assistant chief constable, Elliot Foskett, emphasised that this did not mean shunning support for the commemorations, pointing out that officers would be involved with activities including wreath laying: "We will still be attending services in uniform," he added.

together and honour the fallen.

"We have a very good relationship with our councils here – they have grasped the nettle and are tackling the issues around parades really well."

Serving soldiers, it seems, also believe the local element of remembrance is important. Community is crucial for LCpl Jess Cutter (REME, pictured left), who maintains that being with friends and family is very much her preferred way to reflect.

"Although I've served in the Army for the last ten years, I'd still rather go home than be at a large military parade – it's just more personal," the 26-year-old NCO, who is based at Larkhill, adds.

"I come from Basingstoke in Hampshire, and remember attending services as a child – the community element, in particular having people that you know and are close to you around, has always been important for me."

The response is certainly heartening. In an age where many do not have a link to the Armed Forces, even among their older relatives, it is extraordinary that people still connect with remembrance – and want the time and space within their own town or

village to reflect on lives lost in conflict.

While pressures on the public purse are set to continue for the foreseeable future, and parades are likely to come under further scrutiny, it seems those with today's democratic voice still want to honour the troops who died fighting to preserve it. ■



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HIDDEN CAMP

Croatian exercise brings impressive training return

DEEP HIDE



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main

ON THE face of it, Exercise Sava Star was like any other annual camp for the 90-odd Scottish Reservists who descended on it this year.

With time away from their day-jobs squared – and some seriously questionable weather lined up for them out in the field – Eastern Croatia could easily have been Otterburn Training Area. Or any other UK location, for that matter.

But as the boots of 7th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland hit the ground in the mosquito-ridden Balkan outpost of Gasinci, it soon became clear this two-week package had a few surprises in store.

“In some ways a training area is a training area,” exercise company commander, ex-Regular Maj Christian Jetuah (Scots), told *Soldier*. “But there are always little differences, wherever you deploy.

“For a start, the conditions here are a little different.

“Over the last few days we have gone from 28 degrees Celsius and sun to 15 degrees and pouring rain. So the personnel have had to adapt to that, which made life a little difficult.”

However, it wasn’t just the environmental conditions that gave food for thought to 7 Scots and the colleagues accompanying them from the 3rd (Regular) and 6th (Reservist) Battalions...

Nato knowhow

Two infantry platoons – plus a mechanised infantry company from the Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) – worked their way through a series of manoeuvres that tested both their fieldcraft skills and their ability to operate under Croatian command.

“Everyone’s been working hard and this has been a great chance to understand how other cultures and organisations work,” continued Maj Jetuah.

Learning more about how the host nation does business took several forms on the training area, which is a former refugee camp from Croatia’s not-too-distant fight for independence.

This era is still recalled by many of the Balkan country’s soldiers on Sava Star, some of whom shared their first-hand experiences of the Homeland War during a cultural visit to a national memorial in the city of Vukovar on the Serbian border.

“That definitely brought it all to life,” recalled HQ Company 2iC, Capt Mike Dunnigan.

Pte Scott Hutcheson added: “It’s good to understand the context of the troops you are working with.”

This – along with the fact several soldiers from 7 Scots were deployed on Op Interflex – underscores how fictional Nato operations may not always remain so. And the lessons from their allies didn’t end there.

“We had to make sure we balanced our TTPs when working together,” Maj Jetuah continued.

“For example, they have different weapon safety distances. Everything like that had to be factored into the planning.”



“

You don't always
like it at the time
but then you think
about what you
have achieved and
it's fantastic

”



Battlecraft

Serials ranged from the establishment of patrol harbours and defensive positions, to fighting in woods and forests and urban raids. Thanks to a Croatian-led opfor, a drone threat was also introduced.

Use of the Tes laser training system allowed for some constructive after-action analysis. But due to the remote nature of the training area, lessons around good personal admin were just as constructive.

"On training weekends you can almost arrive and leave in what you're wearing," Capt Dunnigan commented. "But here the troops have had to admin themselves properly. I think they really enjoyed it; they relished the opportunity to work on these things."

For LCpl David McAulay, a Reservist of more than 23 years, the Croatian landscape had brought a new depth to forest fighting drills.

"The woods here are really dense and thick with bushes – unlike in the UK, where you can see pretty much from head height down because it's managed by the MoD," he said.

"The copse have less visibility, too. That makes it more real."

"At one point we even encountered a small trench system in one of them and that threw a spanner in the works because we weren't expecting it."

It is these kinds of challenges, the catering assistant says, which keep so many civilians excited about the demanding side-hustle that is Reservist life.

"You don't always like it at the time, but at the end you think about all that you have achieved during the training

and it's fantastic," he added.

For Pte Hutcheson, the chance to develop the necessary aggression to "push through" was also appreciated.

"Honestly, you're fighting the ground as much as an enemy at points," he said. "There was some really difficult terrain."

Regular/Reserve

With a cohort of Regular soldiers forming the backbone of one of the exercising platoons, there was plenty of opportunity to share perspectives from different sides of Army life. And the lessons were not as one way as some might imagine.

Pte James Bruce, a Regular with 3 Scots for three years, said: "It's been good to learn from the Reservists.

"There's a lot of different experiences there – and that helps out in the field, including with tactical things. It blew my mind that some of the Reserves had thought of things that we hadn't at one point."

"They are so keen."

The benefits were obvious to Reservists, too.

For Pte Alistair Macleod the exercise represented his first stab at close-quarters battle drills, which although intimidating at first proved to be a huge learning curve.

"Being surrounded by people who really knew what they were doing was hard at first," the stonemason and dry-stone waller admitted.

"But the support from everyone around you is fantastic."

"This was my first time coming up against a drone threat, too. When there's an asset overhead that you know can see you, it makes you very aware of everything you're

“

It blew my mind
that some of the
Reserves had
thought of things
we hadn't

”





» doing. That's motivational.

"My civilian profession is not fast-paced. But in this job it is about speed as well as endurance. So that has been good to work on."

Logistical lessons

With Op Mobilise and the prospect of real-life operations never too far from the organisers' minds, it was decided to move some of 7 Scots' kit to Croatia by road.

Speaking to *Soldier* just before the return to the UK, QM Maj Brian Cooper said there had been valuable lessons in navigating all the red tape required to get a bunch of vehicles, GPMGs, sharpshooters and personal weapons across the continent in good time.

"It would have been so easy to throw the kit on a plane, but with what's happening in Ukraine this was about proving we can still move dangerous goods and equipment from A to B over a long distance.

"Despite my years of experience – I joined in 1982 – you still have to rely on a lot of people to make this kind of thing happen.

"But Afghanistan was a long time ago now, and so that pool of experience is getting less and less.

"Skills we had before are fading, so everyone needs to take up this kind of opportunity.

"And it is the same logistical challenge with half a dozen vehicles as it is with hundreds of them.

"The fact you are going through Europe when you are not part of the EU anymore is another hurdle, as is working within driving hours and with fuel cards etc.

"Some bits of the paperwork we didn't get quite

correct, and we've learnt lessons from that."

Medical marvel

For 7 Scots RMO Maj Andrew Gilmour (RAMC) – a GP for NHS Highland in civilian life – Sava Star was an opportunity to incorporate a regimental aid post into a Reservist exercise, something that has not been done for quite some time.

With nine medics on standby to provide real-life care to those on the training serial, this constituted an impressive set-up on many fronts.

"This is the first assured GP-led Reserve unit aid post deployment in 1 Div ever," Maj Gilmour explained.

"It's been the culmination of months of work to make it as compliant as possible. We worked with both 19th Brigade and 1 Div to provide what is NHS-standard care in the field."

One big benefit of that for commanders, he said, was peace of mind.

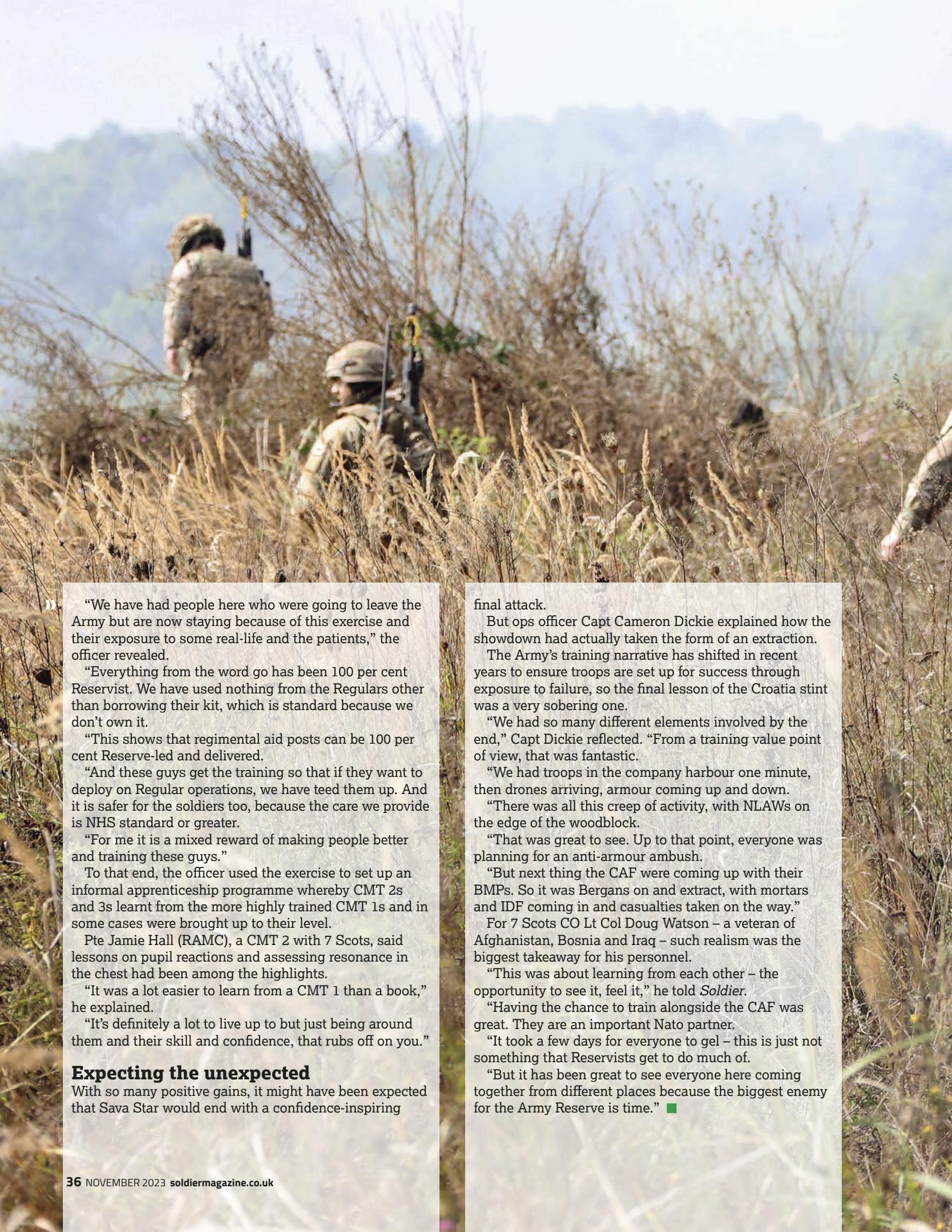
"There's less time wasted because we can mend most soldiers on site," the doctor added.

"And we can probably also train harder because we have a stronger safety net in place.

"It also gives the CMTs a runout, who are used to being classroom-based.

"We have tens of thousands of pounds' worth of kit with us too, some of which these guys will never have seen before – defibrillators and suction units among other things."

And the benefits of creating such a professional set-up extend further than a single training effort.



"We have had people here who were going to leave the Army but are now staying because of this exercise and their exposure to some real-life and the patients," the officer revealed.

"Everything from the word go has been 100 per cent Reservist. We have used nothing from the Regulars other than borrowing their kit, which is standard because we don't own it.

"This shows that regimental aid posts can be 100 per cent Reserve-led and delivered.

"And these guys get the training so that if they want to deploy on Regular operations, we have teed them up. And it is safer for the soldiers too, because the care we provide is NHS standard or greater.

"For me it is a mixed reward of making people better and training these guys."

To that end, the officer used the exercise to set up an informal apprenticeship programme whereby CMT 2s and 3s learnt from the more highly trained CMT 1s and in some cases were brought up to their level.

Pte Jamie Hall (RAMC), a CMT 2 with 7 Scots, said lessons on pupil reactions and assessing resonance in the chest had been among the highlights.

"It was a lot easier to learn from a CMT 1 than a book," he explained.

"It's definitely a lot to live up to but just being around them and their skill and confidence, that rubs off on you."

Expecting the unexpected

With so many positive gains, it might have been expected that Sava Star would end with a confidence-inspiring

final attack.

But ops officer Capt Cameron Dickie explained how the showdown had actually taken the form of an extraction.

The Army's training narrative has shifted in recent years to ensure troops are set up for success through exposure to failure, so the final lesson of the Croatia stint was a very sobering one.

"We had so many different elements involved by the end," Capt Dickie reflected. "From a training value point of view, that was fantastic."

"We had troops in the company harbour one minute, then drones arriving, armour coming up and down.

"There was all this creep of activity, with NLAWs on the edge of the woodblock.

"That was great to see. Up to that point, everyone was planning for an anti-armour ambush.

"But next thing the CAF were coming up with their BMPs. So it was Bergans on and extract, with mortars and IDF coming in and casualties taken on the way."

For 7 Scots CO Lt Col Doug Watson – a veteran of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Iraq – such realism was the biggest takeaway for his personnel.

"This was about learning from each other – the opportunity to see it, feel it," he told *Soldier*.

"Having the chance to train alongside the CAF was great. They are an important Nato partner.

"It took a few days for everyone to gel – this is just not something that Reservists get to do much of."

"But it has been great to see everyone here coming together from different places because the biggest enemy for the Army Reserve is time." ■



“
The skills we had
before are fading
so everyone
needs to take
up this kind of
opportunity
”



YOU BELONG HERE

WITH retention being a hot topic, *Soldier* asked 7 Scots what – or who – had helped to keep them in the Army



THE SUPPORT OF THE PADRE

“My role is sometimes about trying to find a bit of humour, to lighten the situation,” said padre Rev Ken Jeffrey (RACD). And on Sava Star, this meant donning his Gore-Tex and walking the harbour area to offer a friendly ear.



In one case, a soldier thinking of canning the exercise was given the opportunity to chat things through. And that proved as beneficial to the training as it did the individual.

“We talked, and in the end he decided to stay,” the chaplain continued. “He seemed grateful for the chat.

“My role is about being available, and building trust with the soldiers so that when situations arise they are willing to share those with you.”



A SUGGESTION

For 30-year-old Reservist Pte Steven McLean, the Regular Army had been his planned career. But after a drawn-out joining process that kept him waiting three years, and becoming a father in the meantime, he opted for a job on civvy street.



“I wanted to join but kept getting knocked back on the medical,” he told *Soldier*. “Eventually my appeal was upheld, but it was too late by then.

“They said to me ‘what about the Reserve instead’ but I’d never looked into that. I went down to my local unit to see the craic and it went from there.”



A CASH BONUS

It was the £10,000 cash incentive for ex-Regulars joining the Army Reserve that first brought Cpl Lee McFarlane into spare-time soldiering with 7 Scots. “When I left the Army I thought ‘I’m not doing this again’,” he said. “But then I missed the military. When you are in you don’t realise how easy life is. A lot of things get sorted for you. I joined the Reserve, got the £10k, and still got to do this sort of thing as well!”



REMEMBER! Serving troops can pocket £500 for sponsoring a new recruit in the Reserve. The cash, which is taxable, is paid when the newcomer starts basic training. Visit rbs.army.mod.uk to enrol someone.



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GOING LIVE

Troops merge tradition with innovation in their mission to experiment

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Graeme Main and Cpl Nathan Tanuku, RLC



“

IHAD never trained like that before; it offered a whole new aspect of complexity,” Cpl Sam Elliott (R Yorks) told *Soldier* as he reflected on the high points of Livex.

The serial in question was a night attack on Swindon’s disused Debenhams store, where the NCO and his fellow soldiers systematically fought their way across three former retail floors to clear the building of enemy forces.

The backdrop was far removed from the challenges posed by the traditional military training estate, but those at the sharp end were not surprised by the unconventional approach.

As the Army’s lead experimentation unit, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment has become accustomed to thinking outside the box and Livex, which was staged on Salisbury Plain and sprawled into the public realm beyond, allowed them to do exactly that. ▶

» The three-week test was a welcome window for the personnel, who had the opportunity to perform a thorough examination of the cutting-edge kit they have been charged with trialling.

Autonomous vehicles, unmanned aerial assets including the Parrot Anafi and Black Hornet, uncrewed camera systems, night sights and a “game-changing” digital communications suite were among the innovations in the spotlight, and the varying settings ensured they received the vigorous workout required.

As well as fighting through Debenhams, soldiers performed a raid on Arkell’s Brewery, conducted a vehicle ambush on the streets of Swindon at night and mounted attacks in woodblocks on private land.

A more familiar feel was found on Salisbury Plain, which included urban drills at Copehill Down village (pictured).

Consultations with landowners, local authorities and police, among others, meant the Army’s Experimentation and Trials Group (ETG) spent nine months pulling the exercise together, but it was time and effort well spent according to those on the ground.

“We came here with an understanding of the kit and equipment, but not much hands-on experience with it,” said Cpl Elliott, a Parrot Anafi UAS operator with the mortar platoon.

“You do what you can in the classroom, but an exercise is a totally different ball game – everything comes together when you deploy.

“The vehicle ambush was a pretty exciting event. We set up the uncrewed ground





“

It is a very unconventional exercise. It has been nice to shake things up with a different training estate and orbit. Some of the tech struggled in the urban setting – as soon as you step in the civilian area there is a lot of clutter from things like copper wiring in buildings, which made it difficult to fly the drones and it affected our comms. But it is great to be at the forefront of something like this.

Lt Michael Chattaway

”

vehicle camera system at a Peugeot garage to give us eyes on the area and had to blend into the environment.

“Everything about that was so different to what we are used to, and members of the public were asking what was going on.

“Debenhams was another good scenario. We had three sections trying to clear the enemy and while you had cover from view, you did not have cover from fire – it offered a whole new aspect of complexity.”

Cpl Elliott highlighted the Parrot Anafi and enhanced dismounted situational awareness (EDSA) system as the star performers and said the work being done by his unit is crucial in terms of the Service’s future direction.

“This is an important job, and quite a cool one when you get your hands on the equipment for the first time,” he added. “We have a massive say in what moves forward.

“It is the right approach for the Army to take, having a battalion like ours deciding what is good and bad in terms of kit.”

The MRZR semi-autonomous light patrol vehicle was another asset to impress. Light and manoeuvrable, it was used to rapidly transport recce elements, snipers and mortar fire controllers forward and its self-drive feature meant it could drop troops at the desired location and then return from danger.

Boasting a potent electric battery, it is self-charging but can also power up equipment such as radios and UAS.

At Copehill Down, *Soldier* witnessed an eight-wheeled unmanned ground vehicle weave its way through the streets and tight alleyways. Remote controlled by a junior

»

» soldier from the relative safety at the rear of the fight, it offered a casevac function and simultaneously moved kit and ammunition forward. And the EDSA was front and centre as troops moved through the village, clearing building after building.

The suite provides the location of personnel to commanders with pinpoint accuracy and can mark and share enemy positions.

It features overlays and mapping – blueprints of the Debenhams store were uploaded to help plan the attack in the earlier scenario – while it highlights dangers such as IED locations, and comes with a live text function similar to a mobile phone.

"It is game changing," explained Lt Col Mike Wade-Smith, commanding officer of 2 R Yorks. "It gives shared situational awareness at the lowest level and that generates the tempo needed to defeat a peer enemy.

"We have also used the Carl-Gustaf weapon for explosive entries and an anti-armour capability – it has proven to be extremely manoeuvrable and lethal.

"UAS platforms have allowed commanders to look over the initial horizon and form an understanding of what is in front, while unmanned ground vehicles have enhanced the casevac process.

"The Steed robotic wheelbarrow has been particularly impressive in this. One person can move a 100kg soldier down three flights of stairs without suffering any fatigue and leaving others in the fight.

"These systems are about giving choice – we



“

We have been looking forward to this – it is an opportunity you do not get every day. Going into an abandoned store was quite cool and we had a 36-hour mission on public land which was totally different to a normal training area, where you have some prior knowledge of what is there. The EDSA means everyone can receive information instantly and the NV33 night sights have offered better depth perception, meaning we have been more aware at night.

”

LCpl Isaac Baker



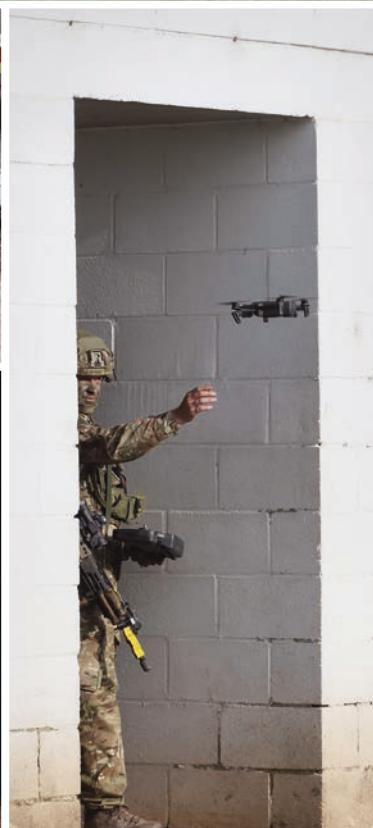
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This has been a valuable exercise, especially with everything that is happening in Ukraine. The EDSA is next level. It takes away so many factors in terms of planning and everything happens so much quicker. The commander can do all the planning on the system, and it is then pushed out to the sub commanders – it is nipped. If they need to go back and check anything it is all there. A message is like sending a text, it stays on the screen.

”

Cpl Sam Elliott



are not proposing that they are all integrated in the fight at the same time.

“We are trying to take the structures the Service has in place and adapt them with current and future capabilities to be more manoeuvrable, survivable, and lethal.

“The work we have been doing provides evidence and a waypoint for the Army as it looks at how we will fight in the future. It is a unique and privileged position for the battalion and is something we wear with immense pride.”

Lt Col Wade-Smith said having industry partners on the ground allowed them to gather a plethora of information on the kit, and its performance levels.

And while he praised the experimental nature of the exercise, he insisted a fusion between innovation and tradition offers the perfect approach moving forward.

“The ETG have really dug out blind to set the conditions for a challenging and rewarding experience,” he added.

“I think the future is a hybrid solution. Testing soldiers on unknown terrain is imperative but it is also essential to have somewhere like Copehill Down, where you can do the sets and reps that are required and work on the low-level TTPs to build teams.”

The skills of 2 R Yorks will be further tested at the upcoming Army Warfighting Experiment, ahead of their participation in the US equivalent early in the new year.

The wheels of change are rapidly turning when it comes to the Service’s future kit and equipment, and these free-thinking personnel are helping to steer the course. ■

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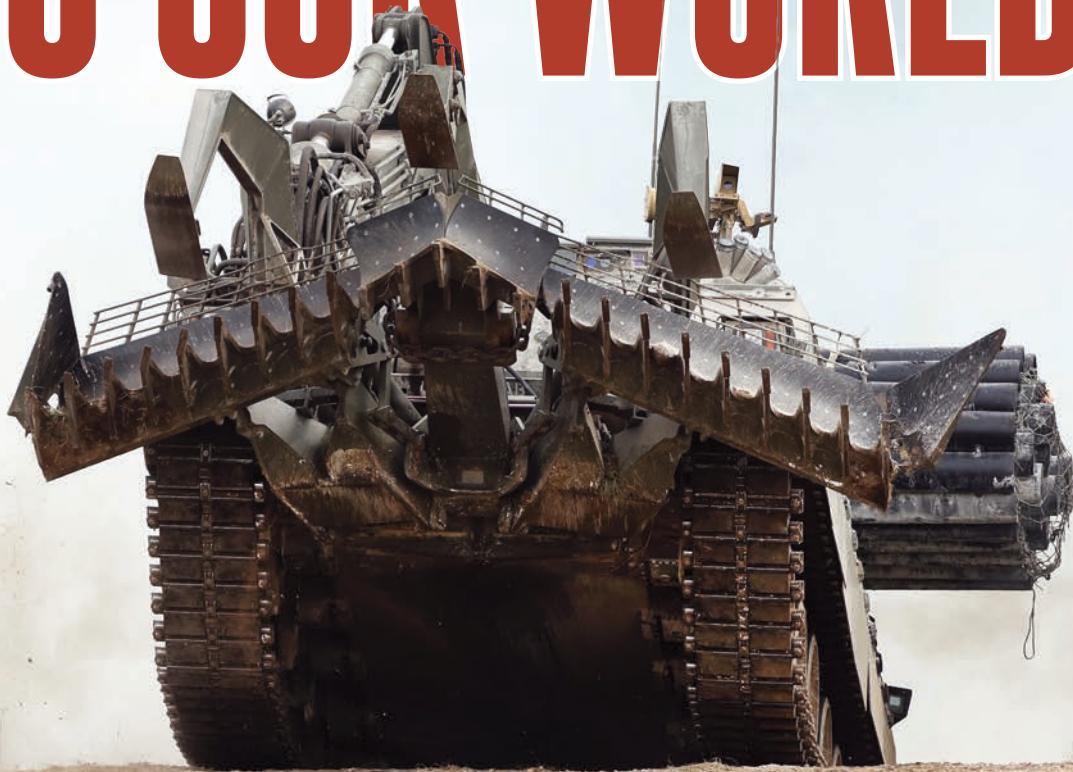
Accessories





Troops give outsiders an eye-opening taste of the job

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD



Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main

“

SOLDIERING is a physically and emotionally draining experience and we wanted people to go away with an appreciation of that, not just a Hollywood-style reference from a big screen showing action on a distant hillside,” Brig Henry Searby, commander of the 12th Armoured Brigade Combat Team, told *Soldier*.

The senior officer was explaining the rationale behind this year’s Land Power Combat Visit which, like many parts of the »



IN NUMBERS: ASSETS EMPLOYED IN THE LAND POWER COMBAT VISIT

6

CHALLENGER 2S

6

WARRIORS

1

TROJAN ARMOURED
ENGINEER VEHICLE

3

REMOTELY PILOTED
AIR SYSTEMS

1

WILDCAT
HELICOPTER



**4****CHALLENGER ARMoured REPAIR AND RECOVERY VEHICLES****265****SERVICE PERSONNEL**

» Service, has been modernised.

The goal for the annual event is always the same: demonstrate, in one day, what land power in the British Army looks like to a mixed audience – in this case a few hundred scientists, engineers and analysts from government defence organisations, as well as tri-Service and foreign students from Shrivenham's advanced command and staff course (ACSC).

And this year it was decided that a more immersive experience was required to show how the Army is preparing for a broad spectrum of tasks and threats.

Personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment who deployed on Op Pitting conducted presentations, focusing on their harrowing experiences in Kabul, while troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment revealed the various challenges associated with training Ukrainians on Op Interflex.

Later, during a mock assault on an enemy force ensconced in Copehill Down training village, guests watched on as Challenger 2s from the Royal Tank Regiment and Warriors carrying Royal Welsh soldiers advanced through the streets.

The visitors were allowed to move with the stars of the show to observe their tactics and how they used their kit.

“The morning witnessed some extraordinarily powerful stories from our troops who'd been on operations that really resonated with the audience and helped convey the complexity of soldiering,” explained Brig Searby.

“Then during the warfighting demo we had 'casualties' treated right at people's feet, not in the distance, and you could feel the explosions, with armoured vehicles passing so close you could smell them and feel their vibrations.”

The showcase was designed to leave a lasting impression on the audience and the first indications are it achieved its aim.

“This was the first time that government defence employees had been invited and they had a rare chance to talk with troops directly and see what we do up close; we've had some great feedback from them,” added Brig Searby.

“Also, it was a valuable opportunity for British officers on the ACSC who may not have seen anything like this since Sandhurst, as well as the foreign students.

“About 70 international personnel from 20 partner and allied nations were here and they will form the next generation of military leaders in their respective countries, so this event contains some significant investment around influence and engagement.” ■



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‘Why are special guardians disadvantaged?’

WOULD like clarity regarding the provision of leave for those becoming special guardians.

Recently, my wife and I were placed in a no-notice position of becoming the guardians of a newborn judged to be at risk.

I was surprised that **JSP 760** excludes personnel who have become special guardians from any form of specific leave or entitlement, or other forms of support, regardless of personal status or rank.

The role involves all of the upheavals, changes, responsibilities and logistical burdens that natural birth or adoption entail.

Often, this obligation begins with little or no notice and involves a child who has already been through the mill emotionally.

During the last few months my wife and I have been struggling to cope but I have been lucky to have an understanding and sympathetic chain of command.

Does the Army have any plans to stop disadvantaging us and put in place the necessary entitlements and update its policies?

Signposting to welfare bodies is not the same as having procedures equivalent to birth or adoption leave and support. – **Name and address supplied**

Maj Joshua Moyle, Personnel Policy Branch, Army Headquarters, responds: Leave policy and entitlement for special guardians is managed by the MoD.

Specific leave is not a statutory requirement but special guardians can be accommodated and supported through applying existing leave policy – for example compassionate leave, annual leave or authorised absence. Please speak to your admin staff or your chain of command to explore all the options available to you.

WORDS THAT SPEAK THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH

THE recently released **2023DIN01-075** directs staff to actively remove obsolete language from documentation and policy.

Included in this is the word “dependant” to describe the partner of a serving soldier.

But if we continue to force people to move every two years, deploy on operations with no additional childcare for the family left in the UK, and allow overseas postings where there is a lack of work, we are forcing partners to become exactly that – dependant.

What is the Service actually working on to change the way we live to ensure partners of personnel can have full careers and become independent?

– **Name and address supplied**

Maj Joshua Moyle, Personnel Policy Branch, Army Headquarters, replies: Mobility is a key tenet of

Service life, but it can also impact on family stability, especially for those on overseas assignments.

The Armed Forces family strategy aims to reduce these impacts wherever possible.

Some examples include access to wraparound childcare and opportunities to serve more flexibly, but we are also working to ensure personnel interested in overseas employment fully understand the implications on children’s education, medical issues and partner employment.

Mobility is one of the draws for those wishing to join the military and we would not wish to remove it entirely. We also know that the priorities of our people change over time, so work is ongoing to better understand how we maintain appropriate balance.

“
We are forcing partners to become dependant
”

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers’ agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won’t publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

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BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

COMPETITIONS

SEPTEMBER 2023

HOAY winners (Gel Blaster Surge): WO2 Richard Hood, East Yorkshire; Douglas Briggs, Chepstow; Pte Harka Gurung, Lydd.

RULES: Winners chosen at random from all valid entries. Except where stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by the terms and conditions attached to a prize. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass on your details to any third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

SEARCHLINE

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

WELFARE

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

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

Army Hive

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

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

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

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

Defence BHD Helpline

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

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

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

Flexible working has been

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

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

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

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

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

stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

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

supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120

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

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

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

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

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

afvbc.net

Samaritans

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

samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

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

0808 802 8080

britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

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

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

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

work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll



REMEMBRANCE

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393

mind.org

NHS

General mental health support

nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage

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

Samaritans

116 123

samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

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

0333 900 1028

theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously

togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking

02394 216 816 aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims

01823 334244

mankind.org.uk

Relate

Relationship support relate.org.uk

Royal British Legion

events are being held across the UK as the nation joins together to reflect on service and sacrifice. The centrepiece festival will be held at the Royal Albert Hall, London on **Saturday, November 11** with the annual wreath laying and parade at the Cenotaph, Whitehall the following day. Find a full programme of events at britishlegion.org.uk

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EIGHT details have been changed in this picture of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers on parade at Invicta Park Barracks in Maidstone, Kent last month to celebrate 75 years since their formation.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 978, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by November 30.

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

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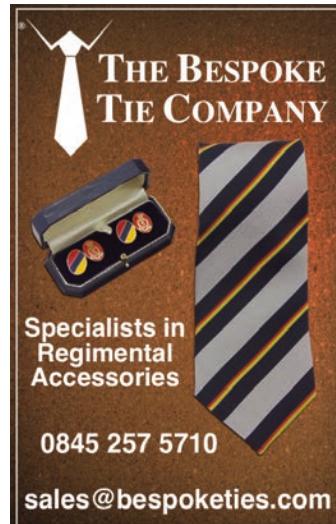
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REVIEWS



PICK OF THE MONTH

Gurkha Warrior

Out at Vue, Cineworld and Showcase cinemas across the country from November 10

IN THIS month of remembrance it seems fitting we focus on a movie that not only celebrates the bravery of the Gurkhas – who've earned an incredible 13 Victoria Crosses during their association with the British Army – but will be donating a significant portion of its takings to military charities.

Gurkha Warrior is a fast-moving flick set during the Malayan Emergency in 1949, when UK troops were deployed to combat a communist insurgency against colonial rule.

The Nepalese soldiers' expertise in jungle warfare proved invaluable in eventually defeating the enemy in 1960, but this picture focuses on the true story of a small platoon who were dropped behind enemy lines to conduct a daring rescue mission.

Their journey sees them trek through countless miles of dense rainforest while fighting off numerous ambushes as they attempt to liberate a group of captured comrades incarcerated in a makeshift prison.

The plot was driven by memories passed down through the families of some of the soldiers involved in the original operation, and corroborated by noted Gurkha historian and serving officer Maj Dillikumar Rai (RGR).

With a Nepalese cast, crew and director – the award-winning Milan Chams – and with dialogue in the native tongue (there are English subtitles), this film is more Bollywood than Hollywood in flavour.



MOVIES

Pictures: The Gurkha Museum



British Army Gurkhas during the real Malayan Emergency; their expertise in jungle warfare was decisive in defeating the communist rebels



➤ This genre is hugely popular in Nepal and heavily influences the thriving domestic movie scene.

Rest assured, there are no sudden breakouts into extended song-and-dance routines but you can expect villains who seem (very) angry pretty much all of the time, lots of blood and gore (one soldier kills his communist enemy by biting through his jugular) and plenty of dramatic zoom-ins on tortured facial expressions.

Ironically, the star of this action-packed jungle romp lives in a quiet suburb of Reading. So *Soldier* took the chance to chat with Gurkha veteran Ritesh Chams (no relation to Milan) about the significance of the movie and his transformation from British Army soldier into one of Nepal's most prominent actors... ■

PREVIEW: STEVE MUNCEY, *SOLDIER*



Q&A: Ritesh Chams, star of *Gurkha Warrior*

What took you from soldiering to acting?

I had been a child actor in Nepal but never pursued it because in my late teens I joined the Gurkhas. When I left the Service I decided to get back into the profession. I met the director, Milan Chams, in 2015 when I heard about his project because I thought I would be perfect for the lead role of Cpl Birkha Bahadur Rai (see above in promotional poster), but I was only shortlisted. It wasn't until 2019 that I secured the part after completing a screen-acting course at Pinewood Studios and the director learning of my martial arts skills – I'm a tae kwon do black belt – as well as my military experience.

Tell us about your time in the Army.

More than 11 years in total, first as a soldier with The Royal Gurkha Rifles and then with 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment. I did two tours of Afghanistan and was shot in the lower back while serving on Herrick 12 in 2010. I was in hospital for four months and was medically discharged in 2015.

How much did you draw on your time in uniform for the movie?

Quite a lot. But Milan Chams is an ex-Gurkha too and the producer, Suman Rai, is a former Gurkha's son so that meant we could all help to make the actors look and move like the real thing. What helped with my own acting was the bravery and loyalty I experienced in Afghanistan. Getting shot during a clearance operation was on my mind a lot. I was just about to board a Chinook when we were attacked by the Taliban and the air was full of sand and bullets. I got hit and went

down. You couldn't see a thing and my colleagues could accidentally have left me behind. But one of them came off the heli and looked for me in the huge clouds of dust and then dragged me on board. You never forget the bravery of someone like that, and it's that sort of courage and camaraderie that *Gurkha Warrior* is about.

How challenging was the filming?

Nothing like real soldiering, of course, but we trained the cast to act like personnel during a six-month boot camp in Nepal, which I helped to manage. We then filmed on location in the jungles of Nepal and Malaysia and that was challenging in itself, partly because it was winter time. The river crossing scenes stand out for me because they were done in the early morning and we were in the water for one or two hours to get all the takes done which meant we were freezing by the time they finished.



Is it important to you that military charities benefit from the film?

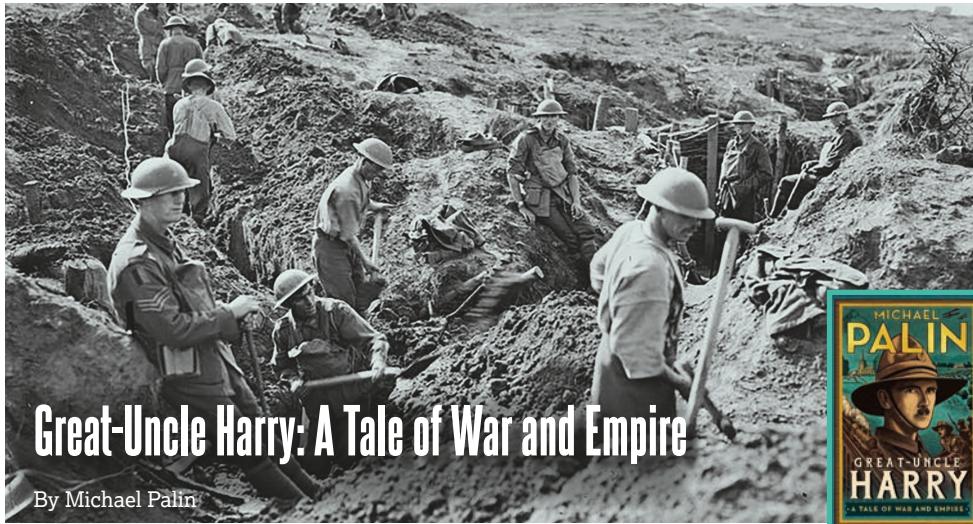
Yes, very. Causes like the Gurkha Welfare Trust and Walking With the Wounded do a huge amount for soldiers and they helped me a lot after I was injured in Afghanistan. I took part in two mountaineering expeds – first to Manaslu in Nepal, the world's eighth highest peak, and then to Everest, which we eventually had to abandon due to bad weather. I can't tell you how important the training and camaraderie were to me, both for my physical and mental recovery.

Do you feel Gurkhas get enough recognition in general?

I wouldn't like to say, but I think it's great the film is set during a part of our history when Gurkhas made a real difference. That can only shine a light on the good qualities these soldiers have. My grandfather was a Gurkha and he actually served in Malaya, so doing this film and having a leading part felt really important to me on a personal level as well as a professional one. ■

MORE TOP PICKS

Picture: IWM



Great-Uncle Harry: A Tale of War and Empire

By Michael Palin

» BOOKS about the ancestors of celebrities tend to be hit-and-miss affairs.

While an individual's role in world events is always fascinating to relatives, it is often less relevant to a casual reader, no matter how famous the author.

The Great War is a case in point. Thousands fought around the world, and the archives are awash with testimonies of courage and tragedy on all sides. Most – by their nature – express a similar sentiment and sense of place.

Yet, as always, the art of captivating a reader lies in the writer's skill, and the ever-versatile **Michael Palin** delivers in this moving reflection on his great uncle Harry, who was killed in 1916 during the Battle of the Somme.

Carrying out a phenomenal range of detective work while drawing on family history and diaries, Palin charts his relative's thoughts and feelings as he fights through campaigns from Gallipoli to the Western Front.



His great uncle's musings, captured in his own journal, are particularly poignant – all-the-more for the understatement of the brutality he is enduring; the horror of seeing friends killed and his battalion's strength decimated by the day.

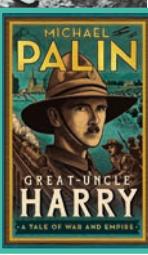
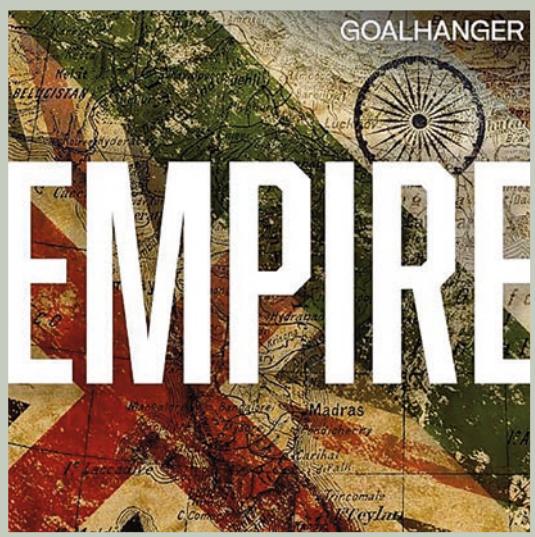
Reflections on personal life are equally moving, from kindly entries about family and friends to his sorrow at a spurned marriage proposal to a woman he never saw again.

Palin interweaves his personal thoughts throughout in a powerful account that is as much a snapshot of a generation and way of life lost to the years as it is a personal history.

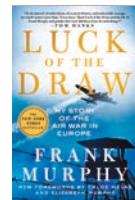
Clearly a project driven by love, *Great-Uncle Harry* is worth getting to know. Palin's reading on Radio 4 – available via the BBC Sounds archive – is a good way in.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



BOOKS



Luck of the Draw

by Frank Murphy

» REPUBLISHED ahead of the much-anticipated TV series *Masters of the Air*, this is the real-life story of one of the US Air Force pilots who inspired the project. Written in the first person, it details the author's early life, military training and role in the costly fight over occupied Europe. It is easy to feel you are there with Murphy as he recalls the terror and longing for each sortie to be over – as well as lighter moments on "RnR" in London. The inevitable eventually happens and he crashes, ending up as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III. This book is one for Second World War aviation enthusiasts. The personal detail is interesting but is eclipsed by the staggeringly long list of battle losses suffered during the campaign.



Review: Paul Merry, ex-R Signals

Empire

PODCASTS

» AS THE latest surge of violence in the Middle East underlines the extremely complex history of the region, it is well worth revisiting the episode of this podcast in which its hosts – authors William Dalrymple and Anita Anand – explore the origins of the conflict. Hugely knowledgeable and engaging, they discuss the consequences of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and ensuing British mandate for Palestine. It's a good place to start for anyone wanting to better understand the current situation – while the series' back-catalogue deals with the long-lasting impact of British imperial ambitions and those of other nations. This reviewer finds himself muttering "I did not know that" multiple times in each instalment.



Review: WO1 Mike Owens, RE



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SOLDIER SPORT



Picture: Phil Rodham

« HIGH FLIERS

ARMY and corps level mountain bikers headed off road as the Inter-Services Downhill and Enduro Championships were staged in rural Wales. Despite strong showings from the soldiers, it was the Royal Navy who celebrated team success. Read more on page 72...



TALENT SEARCH: THE ARMY MEN'S TEAM IS HOSTING AN OPEN SELECTION CAMP LATER THIS MONTH – VISIT THE ARMY CYCLING UNION FACEBOOK PAGE FOR DETAILS



PERFECT ON THE PLAN

PLANS EXECUTED TO A TEE AS RIDERS CLAIM FORCES CROWNS ON HOME TURF

T WAS business as usual at the Inter-Services Road Race Championships as Army cyclists claimed a third successive double over their military rivals.

Sgt James Bevan (REME) secured another individual title in the men's event, finishing ahead of teammate Cpl Sean Dodsworth (Lancs) in second and the Royal Air Force's Flt Lt Edward Calow in third.

However, as team manager WO2 Stefan Glyn (RE) explained, the duo were indebted to the hard work of Pte David Bolland (RLC), whose decisive break on the second lap stretched the field and paved the way for victory.

"We knew the other teams would be watching James and Sean, so David was the ace in the pack," he told *SoldierSport*.

"He launched earlier than was planned but they let him go and he had a two-minute gap at one stage.

"When Ed attacked he took James and Sean with him. But at that stage the RAF were in an impossible situation as they were outnumbered three to one.

"It was perfectly executed. While David went a bit early, he read the race well – you have to think on your feet in events like this and he did exactly that."

Glyn also said the gruelling Chitterne course, in the heart of Salisbury Plain, worked in the Army's favour, as did their preparations in civilian competitions earlier in the year.

"It was a challenging circuit – the Inter-Services is a challenging event, so it should be," he added. "There was a long climb, and the wind coming in played a part.

"Being the event organisers,

we picked where we wanted to race and we knew a hard course would suit our team as we have greater strength in depth.

"This year our focus has been on regional level events. We've done six of those, with at least four riders in each, so they've been able to practise riding as a team. A few also went over to Belgium to compete.

"Around half of the squad are quite inexperienced so our goal was just to get them out racing; it has worked really well."

While Bevan and Dodsworth claimed the Inter-Services headlines Glyn acknowledged the swift progression made by Bolland over the course of the season and highlighted the efforts of Lt Seb Tyrie (REME), who returned from injury to finish fifth in the Forces clash.

"He was going really well at the start of the year and then suffered a horrific accident," he added. "He ended up having surgery on his shoulder but managed to return after three months out and looked so strong in what was his second race back. He is a rising star."

Injuries have also been a feature of Capt Eve Newton's (RLC, pictured right) season but, like Tyrie, she put her setbacks behind her to shine in the key fixture of the year.

The officer pipped teammate Capt Bexy Dew (RAMC) to the line as the Army dominated the women's competition, with Lt Col Christina Murray (Int Corps) completing a clean sweep of the podium placings.

The soldiers claimed seven of the top-ten spots as the team crown was claimed in emphatic style and manager Capt Rachel McKenzie (RAPTC) was quick to praise the collective effort.

She said: "It was a fantastic performance showing teamwork really pays off. The riders did an outstanding job, all conducting their roles to perfection.

"The strategy was to get as many people up the road as possible who could then work together to increase the gap to the RAF and Navy.

"But as we all know, no plan survives first contact. The initial aim was for four riders to gently squeeze up the hill and try and create that space, then get others to bridge the gap.

"However, the RAF kept chasing down any gaps that formed. In Bexy we had a race captain who was there to adapt the plan when required. Two riders then attacked to form a solid lead and they were followed by another two going clear of the group.

"The tactic then was to make the other teams do all the work and sit in till the finish. It worked perfectly and we took all three podium places, as well as positions one to six."

As with Glyn, McKenzie has welcomed a number of newcomers to the fold and they have shown clear signs of progress during the campaign.

"They have committed to training and racing and have all made significant improvements, with a number achieving their cat two licence," she added.

"We've had six new riders this year, proving the talent is still coming through. The key now is to ensure that women who show an interest in cycling are supported at unit and corps level to gain the experience in riding and racing which will allow them to develop towards getting on to the Army team in the future." ■





Pictures: Cpl Jacob Joseph, Australian Defence Force

TOURISTS BUILD TEAM SPIRIT AHEAD OF FORCES TEST

ARMY footballers stepped up preparations for this season's Inter-Services campaign with a successful tour down under, where they lost just one match against their Australian rivals.

The men's, women's and masters' squads made the long journey south for fixtures against all three branches of the host nation's military, with a total of 66 players and staff involved in the two-week tour.

Women's skipper Bdr Anna Birtwhistle (RA, pictured right) told *SoldierSport* the trip came at the perfect time for a group that has welcomed a host of new faces for 2023/24.

They began with a 2-1 defeat to the Australian Army before bouncing back with a 4-1 victory over the Royal Australian Navy and a 7-1 success against the Royal Australian Air Force.

"We made a slow start against the army," she added. "We were not in the game in the first half but did well after the break; the

result did not reflect how good our performance was.

"But we grew as the games went on, beating the navy and finishing with a fantastic victory against the air force.

"We've had a number of development players come through and have a new manager, so it was nice for him to get his first win.

"From the start of this camp to the end we have seen real progression, and we know what we want to achieve this season."

The men's team returned home with a 100 per cent record – the highlight of which was a 10-0 drubbing of the air force in their final fixture.

"First and foremost, this has been a fantastic opportunity," said skipper Fus Leigh Phillips (R Welsh). "It has been a chance to bring in new faces and see what we have in terms of competition for places.

"As a team it is hard to get everyone together due to deployments and courses, which



**"WE
GREW
AS THE
GAMES
WENT
ON"**

are the priority. To get this time is so valuable.

"It is a big reward for the people who represent the Army and can only be good for recruitment – tours like this are something to work towards."

After drawing their opening game 1-1, the masters' side went on to claim 10-1 and 4-1 victories in a tour that was aimed at giving opportunities to as many people as possible.

"The big match for us was against their air force," explained defender SSgt Steven Ward (RAPTC).

"We knew they had good players, so to win 4-1 was great. At our age it is all about game management and rotating players to give everyone minutes on the pitch."

"Masters football is taking off in the Army. We won the European Masters Games earlier in the year and have now won here – it shows that football does not have to fizzle out just because you are in your 40s." ■

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READY FOR ACTION

THE Army American football team will look to end their season on a high when they face the Royal Air Force in the Inter-Services decider on November 3.

A walkover victory against the Royal Navy gifted the soldiers the perfect start to their title bid and they are confident of completing the job at Abingdon's Tilsley Park (1400 kick-off).

With the Senior Service fixture falling by the wayside the squad locked horns with national second tier outfit Bristol Apache (pictured) and despite losing 30-0 there were plenty of positives in the display.

"It was 0-0 at the break, and I thought we were the better team," Army head coach SSgt Abe Day (RA) told *SoldierSport*

"But their experience showed in the second half and we also made a few mistakes, which cost us.

"Games like this are all about gaining experience. We are trying to play good opponents and have cut our teeth against some of the best teams in the country.

"In terms of the RAF match, we are more ready than we have ever been. We are going in with confidence and know what we have to do."



TOP TEAM SET FOR FURTHER HONOURS



**"IT HAS
BEEN
YEARS
IN THE
MAKING"**

THE Army women's tug of war squad will be rewarded for a sensational season on the rope when they travel to Sandhurst this month for the annual celebration of the Service's athletic achievements.

Gold medals at the British and Irish Championships, together with a bronze on the world stage, were the highlights of a stunning 2023 campaign that has culminated in the soldiers being named team of the year ahead of the Army Sports Awards.

They will collect their honour at the ceremony on November 16 and captain SSgt Jay Raine (AGC (MPS)) told *SoldierSport* it is richly deserved.

"This is absolutely fantastic, and I am so proud of the entire team," she added. "It is not just about what we have achieved this season – it has been years in the making.

"It is great that our sport is being recognised, along with all the hard work that goes into it.

"Hopefully this will inspire others to come and have a go."

Team coach and secretary of Army Tug of War, Capt Gaz Wyatt (RA, pictured left), is in contention for the official of the

year prize, along with WO1 Ben Hood (AGC (RMP)) – chair of the UKAF Association of Cricket Officials – and Army Boxing Association referee SSgt Gordon Bruce (RAPTC).

A hat-trick of tries in the Army-Navy game at Twickenham, together with caps for Germany in sevens and rugby union's full code, has seen Spr Cameron McDonald (RE) shortlisted for the sportsman of the year accolade.

He faces competition from Welsh amateur boxing champion Gdsm Joe Wright (WG) and modern pentathlon ace 2Lt Sam Curry (AGC (ETS)), a bronze medallist in the mixed relay at the European Games.

Victory in the finals of the England Boxing National Amateur Championships has seen Pte Jerry-Lee Palmer (RLC) included among the nominees for sportswoman of the year.

2Lt Kerenza Bryson (RLC), a former winner of the rising star award and bronze medallist at modern pentathlon's World Championships, and Fijian netball star Sgt Dee Bolakoro (RE) are also in the mix.

See next month's issue for reaction from the winners. ■



SHOOTERS TARGET BRIGHT FUTURE AFTER DEBUT YEAR

THE Army Medical Services have made moves to expand the sport of clay target shooting among the ranks with the formation of its own corps team.

Novice events have been staged throughout the year to grow the discipline at grassroots level and the effort paid off as the set-up welcomed more than 35 personnel to the stands of the Barbury Shooting School in Wiltshire for its inaugural championships.

The event represented a successful step in the sport's progression and team captain SSgt Ed Kingsland (RAVC) is hoping to build on the momentum in the coming months and years.

"We have multiple AMS soldiers and officers on the Army team and Maj Miles Malone (RAMC) has been included in the Olympic development squad," he told *SoldierSport*.

"But we started this as we don't have our own corps team. We began in April and have had numerous novice events at grounds around the country.

"We've had a good turnout, going from ten to 12 at our first shoot and culminating with more than 35 at the AMS Championships.

"It is about getting the diversity across the corps to come and participate in a new and exciting sport. You do not need to be physically robust or be able to run a three-minute mile, you can just turn up and have a go.

"There is a view that this is a typical officer's sport, but it is open to all, we have everyone from a private to lieutenant colonel on the team."

The organisation has been heavily backed by the corps regimental sergeant major and the AMS Sports Union, who covered the cost of entry fees for the recent championships, and



**"WE
WENT
FROM
ZERO TO
HERO IN
NO TIME"**

treasurer Maj Victoria Gordon (RAMC) said that support has been vital.

"It is an expensive sport," she explained. "The help they have given has made this more accessible and affordable.

"The short-term aim is to build on this momentum and encourage more people to get involved. In the medium term we will look to organise an overseas visit and in the long term we want to field a competitive corps team at the full Army Championships."

Sgt Nadine Cooke (RAMC, pictured left) has been among those to excel and has been talent spotted by the Army team.

She came into the sport as a total novice and got involved after seeing an advert for one of the development days.

"I had never picked up a gun before and was a little nervous at first as this is a whole new world," the NCO said. "When

I came along everyone was so welcoming and the coaches took us from zero to hero in no time.

"It is a sport with so much room for improvement and every time you come back you want to do better than before.

"It is also nice to represent the corps – I did not finish last at the Army Championships, which is a bonus.

"I came in wearing the 'Army Clay Target' branding and felt like a Walter Mitty, but I learnt so much from experiencing a real competition. The aim now is to keep going and eventually wear the Army vest."

Fellow newcomer Pte Simon Glazebrook (RAMC) has attended three novice events this year and the AMS Championships represented his first taste of competitive action.

"The quality of instruction has been fantastic, and the venues are amazing," the Reservist said. "I would have pursued this on civvy street, but not at the level I am at now."

"It is subsidised through the Army and would be an expensive hobby otherwise. I am grateful for the opportunity to try a new sport, with the chance of one day being good enough to represent my unit or corps."

"I've put in for my shotgun licence and that will allow me to shoot regularly and attend more events like this."

Read the next issue for updates on the Army's Olympic and female development squads. ■



BOXING IN NUMBERS

TEAMS DUE TO FACE THE ARMY IN A ROUND ROBIN CONTEST IN ALDERSHOT LATER THIS MONTH

4

BOXERS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT SQUAD EARMARKED FOR PROMOTION TO THE ELITE RANKS

5

MEMBERS OF THE TEAM NOMINATED IN THIS MONTH'S ARMY SPORTS AWARDS

2

BOUTS WON BY SERVICE FIGHTERS AS THEY DEFEATED THEIR GERMAN MILITARY RIVALS AT ATR WINCHESTER

4



BOXERS BRACED FOR BAHRAIN

THE Army boxing team face their second international test of the season this month as they head north to showcase their skills at ITC Catterick.

Having already battled the German Bundeswehr, the fighters will square off against their rivals from Bahrain as preparations for the UK Armed Forces Championships step up a level.

"Taking on the likes of the Bundeswehr and Bahrain is great experience," head coach SSgt Shane Sadler (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*.

"We will also run a training camp while we're in Catterick and it will be a tough workout ahead of the championships."

"The boxers came back fit after the summer; they followed their programmes and progressed to open sparring ahead of facing the Germans."

"The UKAF competition is still the main focus, everything builds towards that."

Former England youth

international LCpl Leon Moulds (REME) is among the newcomers to join the fold, while LCpl James McCool (R Signals) has assumed the role of team captain.

Several boxers from the development squad are also in contention to make the step up having impressed under the guidance of three-time national amateur champion Cpl Martin Stead (RLC).

"They have been really strong this year," Sadler continued. "They have built on their experience from last season and we will look at how many can come through to the elite squad."

"We are in a great place in terms of development."

As well as leading the Army, Sadler has accepted the role of UK Armed Forces head coach.

He explained: "The key aim is to try and bring everything together a bit more. After the championships I would be keen to have a training camp and then box as UKAF." ■



SPORT SHORTS



Guba makes gains

MARTIAL arts star Sgt Yamikani Guba (RA) added another medal to his haul as he claimed bronze in the veterans' +80kg division at the British Taekwondo National Championships.

The soldier also captained a UK Armed Forces team comprised entirely of Army players at the event, which was staged at the English Institute of Sport.

"The fighters competed with indomitable spirit and benefitted from the step up in class," he said.



Picture: Fairy Nuff Photography

Panthers pushed

NOTTINGHAM Panthers ice hockey team were given a taste of military training as they stepped up preparations for the new season.

Personnel welcomed the players to Chetwynd Barracks in Chilwell, where they faced a series of command tasks before attempting parts of the Army's fitness test, including pulling 110kg bags over 20 metres in 35 seconds.

They also got hands on with an explosive ordnance disposal robot before finishing with a gun run.

Panthers' CEO Omar Pacha said: "There are a few new faces this season and the importance of teamwork came through loud and clear."

HIGH WINDS FUEL TROPHY RUN



THE Army's windsurfers celebrated a successful return to the water as they claimed their first Inter-Services title in more than a decade.

A combination of the Covid outbreak, a lack of wind and Op London Bridge meant the competition had been cancelled for three successive years but the arrival of near perfect conditions at Thorney Island ensured the 2023 event was staged in style.

A strong Army squad ended the dominance of the Royal Navy, with Lt Col Nick Jeffery (RAMC, pictured) pipping teammate Maj Marti Jerrard (RAMC) to the individual honours by the narrowest of margins.

"Beating the Navy was the result we cared about," champion Jeffery told *SoldierSport*. "Everyone was going for it."

"In the past we have perhaps had one guy who does well, with the Senior Service finishing second, third and fourth. It was not like that this time - it was a team effort."

"There was some close racing with a real buzz out on the water. We were lucky to get high speeds, and averaging 25mph meant it was pretty punchy."

"This is a sport that is so dependent on the weather and it was fantastic to be out there."

Jeffery was modest when it came to his individual achievement and admitted that on another day Jerrard could have easily been crowned champion.

"We come from the same corps and he is a really good friend," the winner added. "He made a wrong decision on one of the races which meant he couldn't make the start line, and that was the difference."

"After that he was on fire, winning the last three races. He should have beaten me." ■

**"THERE
WAS A
REAL
BUZZ
OUT
ON THE
WATER"**



ARMY star SSgt Carrie Roberts (REME) helped York Valkyrie to victory in the Women's Super League Grand Final. A record crowd of 4,547 fans saw the team seal a 16-6 win over a Leeds Rhinos side that included Pte Jenna Greening (RLC) and new Wales captain Bdr Beth Dainton (RA).

Picture: Craig Hawkhead/York RLFC

MONTH IN SPORT

November's key dates...


WHAT:

Inter-Corps Squash Championships

WHEN:

November 7 to 9

WHERE:

Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW:

Considerable efforts have been made to grow the sport in recent years and a strong turnout is expected as players battle for corps honours


WHAT: Inter-Services Indoor Hockey Championships

WHEN: November 8 and 9

WHERE: Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: Having dominated this event for two decades the Army women will try to down defending champions the Royal Air Force, who also won the men's and under-25s titles in 2022


WHAT:

Inter-Services U23 Rugby Union

WHEN:

November 22

WHERE:

Portsmouth

NEED TO KNOW:

The Army will be looking for revenge after losing this fixture 44-3 last season. The soldiers conclude their campaign with a home test against the Royal Air Force a week later



HONOURS EVEN IN REMEMBRANCE TEST

GAMES OF REMEMBRANCE

UKAF MEN

0

B'WEHR

0

UKAF WOMEN

1

B'WEHR

1

GOALS were in short supply as the UK Armed Forces welcomed the German Bundeswehr to Aldershot for football's Games of Remembrance.

An injury-time strike from the Royal Navy's LET Ciara Boylan salvaged a draw for the women's team in the opening match of the double-header, the fullback rifling a shot past keeper Gina-Marie Mitschke after cutting inside the area from a short corner.

The goal secured a deserved 1-1 draw for the hosts, who fielded six Army players in their starting line-up.

In a first-half of few chances the Germans' best effort fell to Sarah Begunk, who rose unmarked to meet a cross from Jessica Schlegel before heading wide.

Army forward Cpl Olivia Dixon (AGC (SPS), pictured) then released Cpl Demi Edwards (RAMC) for a run on goal but the midfielder blazed over from the edge of the area when a return pass looked the better option.

The visitors took the lead in the 56th minute as UKAF looked to play out from the back via AS1 Abi Hayes (RAF). However, her pass across the area struck Anna-Lena Wassermann, who lashed the ball home via the crossbar.

AS1 Lucy Farrow (RAF) tested Mitschke at the near post as the Brits pushed for an equaliser and they were duly rewarded in the dying embers of the contest with Boylan's magnificent strike.

While the women's contest provided late drama there were no such fireworks in the men's encounter, where hard work and endeavour was to the fore in a showdown between two evenly matched sides.

In a game lacking clear-cut opportunities, Army goalkeeper Cpl Luke Cairney (RE) was a virtual spectator until midway through the second period, when he prevented a deflected cross from dropping into the net with a finger-tip save.

Sgt Sean Thomson (REME, pictured left) also lined up in the UKAF midfield. ■



Pictures: Phil Rodham

NAVY RIDERS HIT TOP GEAR IN WELSH WILDERNESS

THE performance of the Royal Navy's SLt Emma Wood proved decisive as the Army missed out on the team prizes at mountain biking's Inter-Services Downhill and Enduro Championships.

On a challenging course at the Caersws Bike Park in Wales, the rider excelled on two wheels to top the women's individual standings in both disciplines.

And with the fastest female in each squad contributing points towards the collective effort, it was the Senior Service who celebrated a team double at the end of three days of action.

However, the competition was not without its plus points for the soldiers. Capt Jess Greenhalgh (R Signals) was runner-up to Wood in both events and was also crowned Army champion in each.

LCpl John Riddell (RLC) pipped teammate LCpl Tom Nisbet (REME) to downhill's Inter-Services individual title, a result that was mirrored in the

race for Army honours.

"The Navy beat us by just five seconds," SSgt Dan Masters (RA), secretary of Army Downhill, told *SoldierSport*.

"But there was a 28-second difference between the top two females, and that's where they won it.

"It is all part of the sport, and we've got to come back faster and stronger next year."

The line-up for the 2024 squad was being finalised as this issue went to press and Masters is keen to widen the talent pool moving forward.

"The more personnel we can get involved the better, particularly when it comes to females," he added.

"Downhill is quite small; a few of our riders do enduro as well and if we spot people with talent there is a platform for them – it is a natural crossover."

The Welsh test represented enduro's first official Inter-Services and with the sport growing in popularity the future

is looking bright.

Around 150 riders took part in each of the four rounds in this season's Army Cycling Enduro Series, while eight corps teams have also been testing their skills on a regular basis.

The Army Medical Services were victorious over the six rounds of the corps series, while the Army took top spot in the Inter-Services series ahead of the Royal Air Force.

"We have around 150 personnel regularly taking part in national series events, either with their corps teams or the Army," explained Maj Martin Peak (REME), Army team manager and rider.

"Enduro is such an accessible sport, with trails across the country – you pedal to the top and come back down again."

"It is also very inclusive; ten per cent of our participants are women and it is great that we had female representation across all three teams at the Inter-Services." ■



**"WE'VE
GOT TO
COME
BACK
FASTER!"**

Army Benevolent Fund



WINNER: GOLD

O P E R A T I O N
B L E T C H L E Y

Y O U R C O D E B R E A K I N G C H A L L E N G E

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Since its launch, over 13,000 people have taken part from all over the world, walking nearly 860,000 miles while raising nearly £550,000 for soldiers and veterans in need. With a thriving Facebook community, Operation Bletchley has also won a gold award after being voted 'The most innovative event in the UK'.



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Registration is £15 per mission (£15 with fundraising or £40 with no obligation to fundraise). Registration open now. Your mission must be completed between 1 – 31 January 2024. To find out more and to register for this event visit armybenevolentfund.org/operationbletchley or email events@armybenevolentfund.org or scan this QR code to go straight to the sign up page.

EVERY £ RAISED WILL HELP SOLDIERS AND VETERANS – PLEASE SIGN UP TODAY

The Army Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146420) and Scotland (SC039189) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (07974609).



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Final Word



It was really hot when we arrived, then the rain came and changed the dynamics of the exercise. The terrain went from dusty and hard to muddy and water-logged. That was challenging. You join the Reserve to visit places like this and get tested.

LCpl David McAulay
Reservist



We had three Reservists attached to our platoon and one of them told me he learnt a lot working with us. The main reason I joined the Army was to see the world but it's a while since I've been properly out in the field, so that's been good.

Pte Murray Taylor
Regular



I took a lot away from it. Reservists work completely differently to us; they have another life and do their own line of work. That means there's a lot of experience there - including the tactical side of things.

Pte James Bruce
Regular



If you can have a laugh together you can get through anything. It's been interesting training with the Croatians as well. They are really friendly and the joint working created a decent understanding of each other.

Pte Steven McLean
Reservist



I was really impressed with most of the Reservists I worked with. Some had taken two weeks' annual leave to come here. They are keen.

2Lt Callum Barrie
Regular

I have never trained with Regulars before. They are a great bunch of guys, and good craic. They really know what they're doing and it was interesting to see how, when it was time to go, they just switched on and that was it. They were in the zone.

Pte Alistair Macleod
Reservist

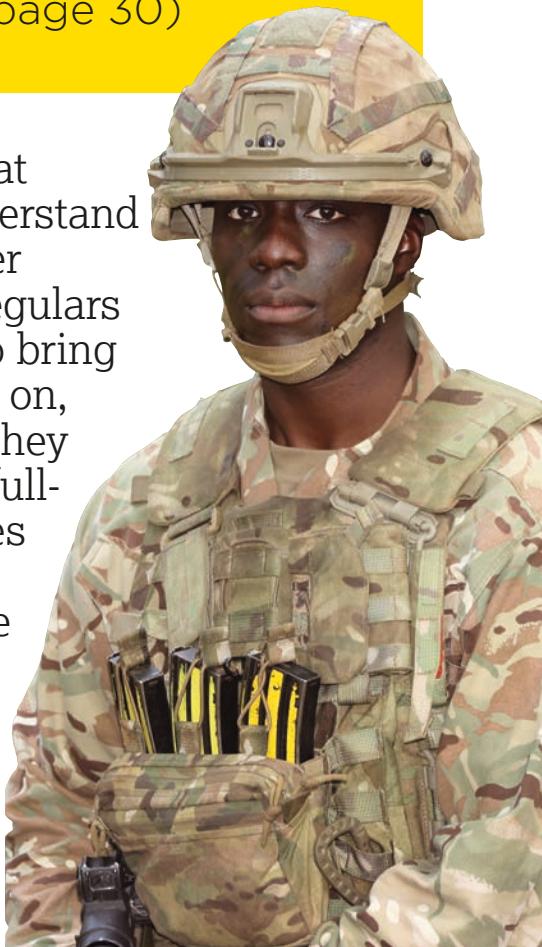


Mixing it up

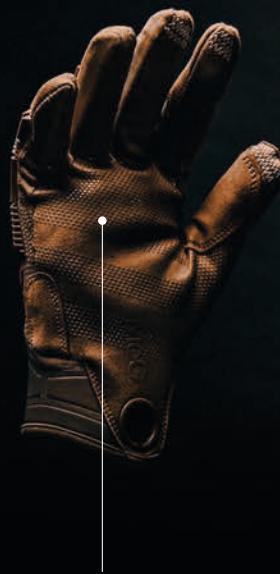
Regulars and Reservists from The Royal Regiment of Scotland ponder the highs and lows of working together on Exercise Sava Star in Croatia (page 30)

It's been a great chance to understand how each other works. The Regulars have helped to bring the Reservists on, and in return they have allowed full-time colleagues to learn more about what life is like in the Reserve.

Maj Christian Jetuah
Reservist (ex-Regular)



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LEVEL
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To find out more about our work visit
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