

# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

## GURKHA MILESTONE

- Troops mark 200 years of service
- The truth about selection in Nepal
- 'Face-to-face with our VC hero'



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ARMY

# Bravest of allies

**E**VERY year in Nepal thousands of men put themselves through a gruelling and quite often soul-destroying selection process in a bid to join the ranks of the British Army.

So as the Brigade of Gurkhas marks 200 years of Nepalese service to the crown, *Soldier* decided to spend some much-overdue time in the country to discover what motivates these potential recruits to push themselves to their limit (pages 24-31).

What we found was humbling. A career in the UK Armed Forces may spell a significant cash boost for youngsters of the Himalayan foothills, but in reality the kind of grit and courage it takes to live up to the Gurkha name is something for which it is impossible to remunerate adequately.

One encounter that defined the reputation of these soldiers as some of the bravest allies Britain has ever had came during the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

Members of the 2nd Goorkhas, as they were then known, proved their loyalty by holding a key position in Delhi that came under continuous fire for more than three months – taking a staggering 327 casualties out of a total strength of 490.

From that century onwards, these troops would repeatedly prove themselves to be champions of the very best military values and possessors of the most astonishing battlefield tales ever heard.

Here's to another 200 years. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

*S. Goldthorpe*

**TRES BIEN!**

Ski championship  
success – page 87



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Picture: Graeme Main

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# Marking 200 YEARS OF GURKHA SERVICE



**“His actions always motivated me to look after my colleagues”**

Veteran's bravery inspires today's troops

p33

**“I want to achieve the same things as my ancestors”**

Nepalese recruits speak of life-changing goal

p90

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Auf wiedersehen: British personnel take part in a freedom parade in the German town of Xanten in 2013

## Soldiers braced to march off

Army will face 'really big' logistical challenge over summer

**T**ROOPS in Germany are preparing for a busy few months as more than 5,000 personnel pack up and return to the UK.

Most of the soldiers and their families will relocate this summer – the biggest period of moves in the Army basing programme so far.

It follows the conclusion of phase one of the plan last year – which saw a total of 15 base changes, mostly within the UK – and will result in the closure of Elmpt, Bergen-Hohne, Fallingbostel and Herford stations by the end of December.

Speaking to *Soldier*, the senior military officer overseeing the change conceded that troops may encounter issues during this period.

"Rebasing has happened relatively quickly and it was always going to be a challenge," Col Neill Page said.

"Phase one occurred successfully but there were some issues.

"For example, we had to make a couple of adjustments to the plan where it was obvious the facilities that needed to be delivered by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) weren't going to be ready in some areas."

He continued: "The return from Germany is a really big logistical challenge in its own right and we can't guarantee there aren't going to be issues. Some of those might be contractor-related.

"For example, it would only take one or two removal vans to break down to cause problems as there is little flexibility in the schedule."

To try and address any potential setbacks a rehearsal exercise is being staged by garrisons alongside the

Army Basing Team, the DIO, Support Command, British Forces Germany HQ and contractor Agility.

This will test out timings and plans for all the moves.

With much speculation on the quality of accommodation troops can expect in the UK compared with that overseas, Col Page emphasised that there would be differences in both Service families' accommodation (SFA) and single living properties.

For example, SFA in Britain does not usually feature cellars or large attics.

However, only properties at standard one or two for condition will be handed to returning personnel.

"There are many people involved in planning quarter allocation and there is nothing to suggest we can't do this," the officer continued.

"We want to try and move the majority of personnel between June and September and the intention is to comply with the normal notification period of ten weeks.

"There's a lot of understandable personal concern, especially where families are involved.

"We realise that people want certainty and when we can give them it we will."

After Germany's stations close at the end of this year the programme will move into phase three, with an emphasis on development in and around Salisbury Plain.

For more updates on the Germany moves search for "Army basing programme" online or visit the Army Basing Team's defence intranet page

“

We want to move the majority between June and September

”



**Leading the charge:**  
Col Neill Page is helping to oversee the Army basing programme

## Q&A



### OVER TO YOU

**The Army Basing Team take your online questions about this year's moves from Germany to the UK...**

**f Where exactly are all the returning troops going to live? On aircraft carriers?**

In a combination of existing, new-build, new-purchase and rental properties. Unless the right solutions are in place the Army will not move you.

**f Can I keep my family in Germany until the end of school? Why move us before the academic year ends?**

The intent is to move units over the school summer holidays and this will be the case for the vast majority. We have prioritised those families with school age children. In accordance with JSP 752 early mover status may also be granted should your youngster be at a critical stage in their education.

**f What will the quality of single living accommodation (SLA) be like? Will we poor "singlies" be getting substandard digs again?**

SLA will be a mixture of existing, new-build and, where required, temporary rented substitute accommodation. As a result quality will vary. Every effort will be made to provide the best possible, though, and charges will reflect grade and condition.

**f Why have the rules on garden furniture changed? They have refused to move mine back, even though I brought it from the UK.**

There has been some confusion over this but the rules are clear. You are allowed to move garden tables and chairs as part of your unaccompanied baggage but there is no entitlement for sheds because they are generally too heavy for two people to carry. Details can be found in JSP 752 or from an unaccompanied-baggage surveyor.

**f What happens to the empty buildings we leave?**

They will be handed back to the German authorities, who donated them as part of a Nato agreement.

1 UK

## MORTAR MINDSET

RESERVES from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers have tested their mortar skills on the Otterburn ranges.

The soldiers spent two weeks alongside their Regular counterparts on the exercise, which saw them firing in freezing temperatures.

"This is a new experience for me," said Reservist Rfn Liam Hart.

"It has given me an opportunity to see exactly what the mortars do and learn the skills for myself. I've found communication is very important."

The trip also saw personnel working on reconnaissance patrols while others focused on pioneering tasks including building bridges and mastering a range of power tools.



“  
This is a new  
experience  
for me  
”

2

## USA

## ON FIRE IN ARIZONA

PILOTS and ground crew have deployed to the US to hone their skills on the Apache attack helicopter.

As this issue went to press 656 and 664 Squadrons of 4 Regiment, Army Air Corps were set to embark on Exercise Crimson Eagle, where their serials will focus on contingency operations for the first time since Op Herrick.

The package will see a select group complete a final conversion-to-role exercise at El Centro, California in order to qualify as Apache pilots and a live-firing serial at Gila Bend in Arizona.



Picture: Steve Docks

3 AUSTRIA

## ALPINE AMBITION UNDER WAY

TROOPS have embarked upon the first military expedition to cross the entire length of the Alps.

Exercise Alpine Arc is seeing more than 70 personnel take turns to traverse the mountain range in 11 ten-day stints. The route will take the soldiers from Puchberg in Austria to Menton, France over three months, with members of host nation military units joining in for each stage.

As this issue went to press the team were expecting to have reached Matrei in East Tyrol, Austria.



## BIG YEAR FOR BASE MOVES

– page 7

## DELVING INTO DARTMOOR

Coldstream Guards tackle Exercise Baskerville Star – pages 22-23

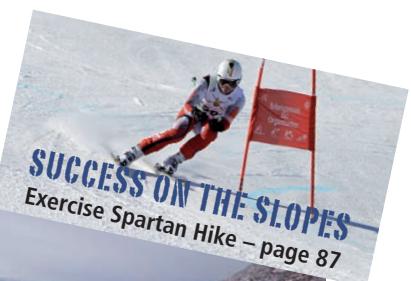
4 FALKLANDS

## HERCULES HEROES

SUPER-FIT soldiers from Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment pulled a Hercules aircraft 200 metres as part of the Mason Plate competition.

The challenge was conducted on the main apron of Mount Pleasant Airfield and was designed as a test of endurance and team spirit.

Troops from second platoon posted the fastest time of 1min 56sec.





## OVERSEAS LOAN SERVICE

Kuwait troops talk career dilemmas  
– pages 39-41

“  
We  
will be  
working  
in  
difficult  
terrain  
”

### 5 UGANDA

#### ‘NO ROOKIES HERE’

UGANDAN soldiers have received expert training from the Army ahead of a dangerous mission in Somalia.

Reservists from 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment conducted the three-week package to drill African officers in the art of military planning.

Two infantry battalions were also put through their paces in serials ranging from a shopping centre suicide blast to a crowd demonstration.

It was the fifth time in three years that members of 4 Mercian have trained the country’s troops for peacekeeping duties.

“They were very willing and eager to learn,” said Sgt Alex Perryman, a veteran of three Afghan tours.

“Their kit is nowhere near what we have but they were no rookies. They are battle-hardened having completed a two-year deployment to South Sudan and the Central African Republic.”



### 6 MALAWI

#### FIT TO FIGHT REBELS

TROOPS have travelled to Malawi to prepare its soldiers for a major peacekeeping deployment.

The 20-man team from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and 2nd Battalion, The Rifles will spend two months in the country to help members of the Malawi Defence Force develop the skills needed to repel fighters in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“We will be working in difficult terrain and to a tight schedule with a vast amount of operational expertise to pass over,” said Maj Alasdair Hempenstall (1 Scots).

“The Malawian soldiers are well organised, highly trained and keen to play their role in bringing peace across the Congo.”

Their efforts follow a similar deployment by personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment last year (pictured).



Picture: Graeme Main

### 7 AFGHANISTAN

#### KABUL CHANGEOVER

MEMBERS of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment are on their way to Afghanistan’s capital this month.

Some 280 troops from A and B Companies have started deploying to Kabul to relieve soldiers from The Rifles in carrying out force protection and enabling duties in the city and the nearby Afghan National Army Officer Academy.

Meanwhile, 40 officers and NCOs from the formation’s C Company will spend six months in Mali working alongside the Irish Defence Force on the European Union training mission in the country – a role previously held by 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.



Picture: Steve Dodek

### 8 BRUNEI

#### TRACKING IN TROPICS

PERSONNEL in Brunei are approaching the end of a five-week operational tracking instructors course.

The package trains selected officers and NCOs in the tactics and techniques of military tracking in a variety of environments, as well as how to operate as part of a combat tracker team.

Some 22 students are participating in the current course – one of two run every year by Training Team Brunei.

For more details check out *Soldier* later in the spring.



## “IT'S HORSES FOR COURSES AND MAYBE IT'S NOT FOR SOME PEOPLE”

- LOAN SERVICE LIFE, PAGES 39-41



### TREAD THE BOARDS

■ THEATRE company Bravo 22 is set to stage a follow-up to its critically acclaimed military production *The Two Worlds of Charlie F.*

The show (pictured), which was created, produced and performed by wounded personnel as part of their recovery, achieved five-star reviews and was seen by nearly 35,000 people in the UK and Canada.

A new pilot project will be based at the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre in Buckinghamshire and is open to all injured and sick Servicemen and women, veterans, Reservists, their families or those who are moving into civilian life.

Participants will be asked to create a play based on their own stories.

Email [bravo22company@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:bravo22company@britishlegion.org.uk) for details.



Picture: Steve Dolk

### NEW TESTS HELP FIND BEST FUTURE RECRUITS

■ TWO new tests have been introduced to the Gurkha selection process in Nepal to ensure all future troops are in top physical condition.

For the first time, the 2014/15 intake was required to undertake so-called functional mobility screening (FMS) – various stretching and balancing exercises – to examine muscle flexibility and strength as well as an ECG to check for possible heart problems.

Maj Mike Cameron-Smith (RAMC), the military doctor based at Brigade of Gurkhas Pokhara, commented: “FMS tests were initially used by the US Delta Force, and the potential recruits in Nepal are the first Infantry unit to use them in the British Army.

“They give us an understanding of whether men are ‘functionally fit’ when they start training.”

He added that the ECG had been introduced because one of the most common causes of soldier deaths is sudden cardiac arrest.

“IT'S A WONDERFUL WAY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MILK SERVICE PERSONNEL”

Ticked off in *Talkback* – pages 53-56



## Reservists' virtual world

THE Service has delved into the world of virtual reality as part of a campaign to attract greater numbers to the Army Reserve.

Oculus Rift headsets have been used at recruiting events in London and Manchester to offer potential soldiers experience of life on the front line in a Challenger 2.

The wraparound technology sees wearers assuming the role of a crewman in a live-firing exercise, where they are tasked with surrounding the enemy alongside other tanks.

Maj Gen Chris Tickell, Director-

General of the Army Recruiting and Training Division, said: “By using virtual headsets people will be able to step straight into an exciting real-world scenario of volunteering with the Reserves.”

Meanwhile, Service bosses have launched a new advertising drive to tackle misconceptions about the role played by Reservists.

The “Normal Day” campaign, which is running on TV, print and digital channels, highlights the variety of roles carried out by soldiers at home and abroad, including three documentary-style case studies of individual personnel.

It comes as new figures reveal that a quarter of 18- to 34-year-olds believe that the Army is less relevant now than ever before.

## Gurkhas kick off 200 anniversary

THE Army has begun celebrating 200 years of Gurkha service with a schedule of celebratory events across the world.

The bicentenary festivities will kick off on March 26 with the launch of Expedition Arctic Gurkha – an attempt to circumnavigate Ellesmere Island in Canada.

Capt Jon Armstrong and Cpl Arjun Limbu (both RGR) are taking on the 1,500-mile challenge this spring in a bid to raise the profile of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Other events will include a special party – known as a bhela – for ex-Servicemen at the Nepalese Army Club in Kathmandu and an

attempted summit of Mount Everest by serving troops – known as Exercise Himalayan Odyssey – in May.

Another highlight on the calendar will be the Gurkha 200 pageant on June 9, which will include performances by hundreds of Nepalese soldiers and their families in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London.

For more details on the events visit [www.gurkha200.co.uk/events/](http://www.gurkha200.co.uk/events/)

### Gallant Gurkhas

Blood, selection and tears – p 24-31

‘We could be heroes’ – p 33-35



Reason to smile: Victoria Cross winner Rambahadur Limbu visits Gurkhas in the UK ahead of this year's 200-year anniversary celebrations – see pages 33-35

Picture: Greene Main

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# "I HAVE RECEIVED WONDERFUL COMPLIMENTS FROM SOLDIERS"

- KAJAKI SINGER EYES FAME, PAGES 72-73



## Soldiers take seat at top table

New post will see troops' views put to defence bigwigs

THE creation of a new position that will allow soldiers' views to be represented at the highest level and more variation in the length of operational tours are two changes on the cards for troops this year, the chief of the general staff has said.

Speaking at the Army Conference at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), Gen Sir Nicholas Carter explained that he wants to make the Army more flexible.

As a result, the six-month rotations that marked the Telic and Herrick campaigns won't be standard in future. Instead, every mission will be assessed on its own merits and tour lengths set to fit the job.

"The character of conflict is changing and we have to have a new approach," Gen Carter added.

"Tour lengths may, for example, extend to a year where troops need more time to establish relationships with indigenous populations and defence forces."

The top officer also revealed that a new mission training and mobilisation centre will be developed at Bassingbourn to help troops better prepare for tasks abroad.

Other measures designed to make the Service more adaptable include the introduction of the post of Army



sergeant major.

The individual appointed in this role will become the most senior soldier in the British Army and provide the troops' perspective at the top level, advising Gen Carter himself.

They will also become a member of the executive committee of the Army Board, working with the secretary of state for defence, Armed Forces ministers, top civil servants and generals to shape Service policy.

RMAS sergeant major WO1 Glenn Haughton (Gren Gds) will be the first to take up the role from this spring.

For more details on the Army Conference read [ABN 008/15](#).

Something to shout about: From spring a new sergeant major position will see troops' views represented among defence chiefs  
Picture: Graeme Main

### IN NUMBERS

# 6

Professional fights by Army boxer LCpl Lewis Jones (RE). Read about his upcoming title bout on page 80.



One of many: Capt Fleming is one of 71 Army personnel to be honoured

## RIGBY VISITING OFFICER HONOURED

A RESERVIST who supported the relatives of murdered soldier Fus Lee Rigby is among the 71 Army personnel to be recognised by the Queen in this year's New Year Honours list.

Capt Tim Fleming (Para) has been awarded an MBE after repeatedly being called upon to act as casualty notifying or visiting officer to the loved ones of deceased personnel.

The former lorry driver won particular praise for the help he gave to Fus Rigby's widow in the wake of her husband's shocking death in Woolwich in May 2013.

Capt Fleming's citation stated that he had been "simply superb" in unimaginable circumstances.

The 56-year-old works on a full-time Reserve service contract as regimental operations support officer at the HQ of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment in Leeds.

## Personnel bring First World War to life

SOLDIERS have been visiting youngsters across the country to help them learn more about the First World War.

The support to schools scheme is part of the Army's ongoing efforts to commemorate the conflict's centenary, allowing teachers to invite serving personnel to give presentations in their classrooms.

Troops in the West Midlands are among those to have taken part so far.

They have staged six visits across the region, with five more scheduled for the coming months.

Describing the talks, regional coordinator Capt Ash Edwards (RY) said he had spoken to pupils about the origins of the war and why nations were prepared to send so many to fight.



pertinent to where I am."

Among the 21 Servicemen assisting Capt Edwards in the West Midlands is LCpl Dan Holbrough (Londons), whose task includes taking children through a comparison of kit used then and now.

"It's great to see the students gain a better understanding through equipment," he said.

"Many didn't realise the facts behind the life of the soldiers in the trenches."

One site visited by the Army team was Regency High School, a special needs institution in Worcester.

"Some of our students can find listening difficult but today you could have heard a pin drop," said teacher Mike Eglesfield after the presentation.

“

Many didn't realise the facts behind the life of soldiers

”



"I introduced a 'would you volunteer' exercise, which went down a treat and made the students think about the pressures faced by young men in 1914-15," added the officer. "I also try to use a little local history to make the talks more



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**- ON-TRACK WITH WARRIOR, PAGES 36-37**



## Beware the pension sharks

Warning as personnel lose money to 'swizz' schemes

**S**OLDIERS are continuing to watch their hard-earned money go down the drain by cashing in their pension pots early.

According to the Forces Pension Society (FPS) so-called liberation schemes, which promise to release lump sums to troops before charging large administrative fees, are still targeting Service personnel.

"Soldiers need to know that these people are sharks," said Mary Petley, a consultant for the watchdog.

"The temptation is to get money upfront but many don't realise the hidden costs and risk of this.

"Pension liberators are mostly unscrupulous and what they often don't tell you is that they could take up to 30 per cent in fees and around 55 per cent could go in tax.

"It's a swizz and you hear all sorts of terrible stories."

The warning comes ahead of a

rule change in April, which will limit the type of schemes that military pensions can be transferred into – including those overseas or outside the public sector.

In a separate warning, the FPS says that moving cash into other pots may also be a bad idea.

"You have to ask yourself all sorts of questions when doing this," Mrs Petley continued.

"For example, an Army nurse on Armed Forces pension scheme 75 with benefits due at the age of 60 and 65 might be minded to transfer to the NHS scheme.

"However, in that one he or she would have to wait until OAP age to receive their money, which we think could soon be 70.

"It's normally a bad idea."

For more advice on Forces pensions contact the FPS on 020 7820 9988 or visit [www.forcespensionsociety.org](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org)

**“The temptation is to get money upfront”**

### ARMY NOT TO BLAME OVER BASSINGBOURN

■ THE British troops charged with training Libyan soldiers at Bassingbourn Barracks last year did "extremely well in working with a very challenging cohort", an MoD report has concluded.

The package, designed to improve the foreign force's infantry and leadership skills, hit the headlines when a group of more than 300 cadets being trained by 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland were sent home early after five were charged with sexual offences.

However, the document said that little could have been done to prevent breakouts from the base that occurred at the time the crimes were reported.

It concluded that, should similar training occur in the UK again, more thought should be given to "group cohesion" and better communication with local authorities.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "We are now carefully considering how best to implement the report's recommendations.

"We have been clear that this training will not be repeated at Bassingbourn Barracks."



## Billions to be spent on British Army fleet

AROUND £15.4 billion will be spent on land equipment such as tanks and armoured vehicles over the next ten years, the government has announced.

The figure was revealed in the third annual update to the defence equipment plan and the money will support a variety of platforms across the Army, with a focus on four main areas.

Investment will be made in the programme to enhance Warrior and extend its service life, a similar scheme for Challenger 2, modifications to kit purchased for Afghanistan and Scout and utility vehicles.

Funding for helicopter capabilities will remain broadly unchanged, with another £11.1 billion earmarked for upgrades to existing airframes and investment in new ones and the long-term sustainability of Chinook, Merlin, Apache and Wildcat.

● THE Army is set to reduce its vehicle maintenance costs by some £500 million. A new contract will see engineering firm Babcock International overhaul the way ground assets are serviced, repaired and stored. Money saved will be ploughed back into equipment support.

### IN NUMBERS

**1/3**

Amount the Babcock contract will slash vehicle repair costs by – at least.





**"WE ARE HERE TO SECURE OUR FUTURE;  
I'M DESPERATE TO KEEP TRYING"  
- AIMING HIGH IN NEPAL, PAGES 24-31**

## 'Don't lose your vote' troops urged

**W**ITH three months to go until the general election, soldiers are being urged to make sure they get their say on who runs the country.

Anyone who is not on the electoral register must sign up by April 20 if they wish to vote on May 7 and a new online system makes this easier than ever.

Personnel who are based in the UK and unlikely to change address in the next year can sign up as ordinary electors at [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

Others can visit [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote-armed-forces](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote-armed-forces) to be recorded at a fixed address for five years, even if they move around.

Pte Matt Dean (Mercian) is one of those who will be heading to the polls.

"If they don't vote troops lose an important chance to have their voices heard by politicians," he told *Soldier*.

"These people make the decisions to deploy us to hostile places across the world and choices made in parliament affect everyone serving."

Registration days will be held at Army units over the coming weeks and personnel can also elect to vote by post or proxy, meaning another person visits the polling station on their behalf.



Picture: Graeme Main

# 46

Rank achieved by the Army in gay rights group Stonewall's annual list of top 100 employers for gay, lesbian and bisexual staff. The Royal Navy secured 56th position and the Royal Air Force 91st.

### NO APPETITE TO FIGHT

■ ONE in four British civilians would be prepared to fight for their country, a survey has revealed.

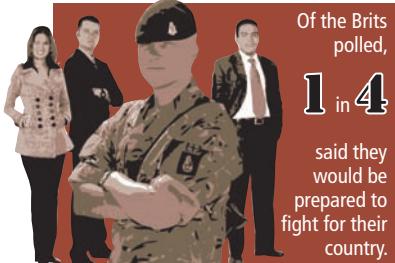
The research by polling organisation WIN/Gallup found that only 27 per cent of respondents said they would take up arms, against a global average of 60 per cent.

With 2014 marking the centenary of the start of the First World War the company decided to include the question in its annual global end of year study.

The trend among Britons was mirrored across Western Europe, with Germany scoring particularly low at 18 per cent.

These figures were in sharp contrast to those in Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa, where 77 per cent of people would be prepared to fight for their nation.

The USA result was 44 per cent.



## FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Picture: Newquay Activity Centre

### MAKING WAVES FOR WARRIORS

THRILLSEEKERS from across the country braved cold Atlantic waters for a coasteering challenge around the Cornwall coastline.

The annual adventure, organised by Newquay Activity Centre, saw more than 20 people launch themselves from cliffs, swim through waves and float into whirlpools near Fistral beach.

Rob Barber, the centre's director, said: "Winter coasteering gives you a real sense of achievement, as you brave the elements and step out of your comfort zone.

"It was a great way to start the new year and we are so pleased to have raised money for The Royal British Legion, which is such a good charity."

**Money raised:  
£500  
For:  
The Royal British Legion**



### GOT AN EVENT?

[news@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:news@soldiermagazine.co.uk)  
 [@soldiermagazine](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine)



ABOVE & BEYOND



## Fighting talk from Aaron Long as he introduces Military Discounts at Westover Land Rover

Westover Land Rover in Salisbury is one of just two Land Rover showrooms in the UK approved to sell discounted Land Rover vehicles to serving military personnel. With a strong military community in place and an influx of troops about to return to Salisbury Plain, the Old Sarum-based showroom has appointed a dedicated specialist to handle its military business.

Aaron Long, the showroom's new military contact, comes with a strong pedigree. He's worked with Westover Land Rover for more than 12 years and has been chosen as one of Land Rover's top 10 showroom staff many times in recognition of his commitment and professionalism, so there's no question over his attention to detail or his knowledge of the Land Rover range.

Forces reductions of up to 13 per cent are available across the Land Rover range, on all Defender, Discovery, Discovery Sport and Range Rover models, from Westover Land Rover in Salisbury. The special military prices are available to all military personnel, not just those posted overseas.

Westover Land Rover service facilities are second to none. Our manufacturer trained technicians using only genuine Land Rover parts are your guarantee of a first class job, every time. We also offer discounted servicing rates to all military personnel and a complimentary collection and delivery service – so there's no need to worry about fitting service and MOT appointments around time spent working away from home.

"The reduced prices apply universally to all servicemen and women, including



those who are currently – or are about to be – posted overseas," says Aaron. "It's a genuine reduction that seeks to bring a cash benefit to members of the British Army, Navy and Air Force – we can help with registration, delivery and shipment paperwork, so the process is just as straightforward as any other car purchase.

"This is a simple opportunity to own one of the most iconic vehicles on the road at a big discount and we're trying to spread the word so that members of the Armed Forces can make the most of the chance we're offering.

"The vast majority of members of the Armed Forces will have come into contact with a Defender during their military career, so they know all about the robustness

and capability of our vehicles already. Many are surprised by how luxurious the civilian models are though!"

With a strong local heritage spanning many years, Westover Land Rover is ideally located just to the north of Salisbury with easy access to the A303.

The showroom supports local charity, Help for Heroes, as well as Race2Recovery, an organisation providing opportunities for servicemen and women who have experienced life changing injuries to participate in a professional off-road rallying team. You can also see Westover Land Rover supporting military point to points around the Salisbury area, as well as at Tidworth Polo Club.



Call today and find out more

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Bovington:	30 Mar - 10 Apr	Paderborn:	13 - 24 Apr
Aldershot:	04 - 15 May	Maidstone:	11 - 22 May
Larkhill:	11 - 22 May	Tidworth:	18 - 29 May
Catterick:	01 - 12 Jun	Paderborn:	01 - 12 Jun
Kinloss:	01 - 12 Jun	Chester (NW)	15 - 26 Jun
Southampton:	22 Jun - 03 Jul	Colchester:	29 Jun - 10 Jul
Barnstaple:	13 - 24 Jul	Didcot:	13 - 24 Jul
Nuneaton:	20 - 31 Jul	Tidworth:	27 Jul - 07 Aug

### NEBOSH National Certificate in Fire Safety and Risk Management (£900 +VAT)

Tidworth:	16 - 20 Feb	Paderborn:	02 - 06 Mar
Colchester:	09 - 13 Mar	Maidstone:	23 - 27 Mar
Barnstaple (RMBC):	13 - 17 Apr	Aldershot:	27 Apr - 01 May
Tidworth:	15 - 19 Jun	Paderborn:	22 - 26 Jun

### NEBOSH National Certificate in Environmental Management (£900 +VAT)

Tidworth:	09 - 13 Mar	Aldershot:	22 - 26 Jun
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Tidworth:	29 Jun - 10 Jul	Tidworth:	26 Oct - 06 Nov

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# "IT BRINGS IN GREAT TALENT AND DELIVERS BUSINESS BENEFITS"

## - BANKS CASH IN ON EX-TROOPS, PAGES 46-48



### IN NUMBERS:



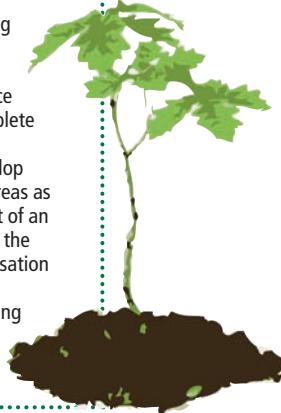
# 53,000

The amount of new trees being planted to help soldiers exercising in Catterick.

The programme to introduce the saplings is due to be complete by the end of this month.

It will allow troops to develop their skills in using wooded areas as cover during battle and is part of an ongoing partnership between the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the Woodland Trust.

Together with recent planting by tenant farmers, the area will become home to some 120 hectares of new trees.



# HOME TRUTHS



A personal view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation...



## Ticked off with tag

**A**RMY family members have traditionally been referred to as "dependants" – a term widely used in policy documents.

But am I alone in finding this word rather derogatory?

I first proclaimed my distaste for the term at the 2009 Army Families Federation Germany conference but it has remained in use, despite growing opposition from loved ones.

So why should we change it?

To me, the word implies that spouses or partners are financially and emotionally reliant on soldiers – inferior, helpless and something of a liability, incapable of earning or contributing to the home.

It is a disempowering phrase, which seems wildly out of step with the Army's desire for equality and diversity and the recognition that partner employment is essential.

The word's continued use devalues the considerable role played by loved ones in supporting Service personnel.

And it is especially misplaced in that it is actually the military which is dependent on families to continue making compromises and sacrifices so that a soldier can remain in role.

In my house, for one Serviceman there is a line of family members (me, three children, four grandparents, nieces, nephews and siblings) giving up a great deal to enable him to serve Queen and country.

I therefore object to a phrase that seems to have come out of a Victorian census.

Perhaps "entitled family member" would be a better choice of words. This at least denotes the responsibilities of the MoD.

[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

“  
Am I alone in finding this word derogatory?  
”

### MENTAL HEALTH HELP

■ A FREE service has been set up to offer support and information to Armed Forces personnel, their friends and families who are dealing with mental health problems.

The pilot project – which is being run by Mind Wiltshire, medical firm Healias and the Army Families Federation – is open to anyone over the age of 18 from the military community. It can provide service users with up to 12 individual 40-minute sessions with a clinician.

For more information on the initiative or to access support contact Healias on 03303 350603 or email [office@wiltshiremind.co.uk](mailto:office@wiltshiremind.co.uk)

### CALL TO THE COAST

■ A CHARITY that provides support to children who have a parent in the Army is asking families to join them on a fundraising trek along the Jurassic Coast.

My Daddy is a Soldier Adventures is staging the 14-kilometre walk on Saturday, April 25 and participants can choose between two routes at the World Heritage Site.

For more information and to receive a challenge pack email [fundraising@mydaddyisasoldieradventures.org](mailto:fundraising@mydaddyisasoldieradventures.org)



Picture: Shutterstock

### HAVE YOUR SAY IN 2015

■ SOLDIERS are being urged to voice their opinions on Service life by filling in the Armed Forces continuous attitude survey.

The annual questionnaire allows policy makers to understand troops' thoughts on issues such as morale and living conditions.

It has been distributed electronically and in hard copy and those asked to take part have until February 16 to respond.

Troops who received the Army Reserve version must return it by March 27.

“  
I HAVEN'T SEEN SUCH UNBALANCED REPORTING FOR A LONG TIME  
”

*Talkback takes offence – pages 53-56*



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**“YOU COULD PACK LIGHT AND BIKE  
RIGHT ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS”**  
- ADVENTURE UP NORTH, PAGES 42-45



**WIN**

## ...More than £300 of outdoor gear

LAST month's spine lines clues would be familiar to our army of *SoldierSport* readers.

(Sean) Fanning, (Capt Paul) Greenwood, (WO2 Mark) Scorgie and (Charlie) Walker were all winners at the new-look Army Sports Awards last year.

This month, courtesy of the outdoor clothing supplier Tog 24 ([www.tog24.com](http://www.tog24.com)), we are offering one lucky reader a bumper pack of winter clothing. The set includes a men's winter three-in-one jacket, breathable softshell coat, high performance fleece and pair of fleece-lined winter trousers.

To be in with a chance of scooping the lot, tell us what links the words on the spine of this issue. Answers to the usual address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by February 27.



## Family tragedy prompts trust

Couple call on Service community to support their cause

**T**WO Intelligence Corps soldiers have set up a charity in memory of their son who died from a rare neurological disorder.

Sgt Paul Sagar-Gray and his wife Sgt Emma Sagar-Gray lost three-year-old Matthew to a form of spinocerebellar atrophy type 7 – a degenerative condition that gradually impairs sufferers' motor control and vision – in May 2013.

The Matthew Seren Trust will raise money to help support families with children facing complex and life-limiting illnesses.

“Matthew was probably 18 months old when we first realised something was wrong,” his mother recalled.

“Paul was away in Afghanistan and my mum, a paediatric nurse, noticed he was getting unsteady on his feet.

“It took hold quite quickly. He went from talking and walking to going back to a baby but worse.

“He couldn't speak or eat. He lost his sight. Everything just shut down.”

Throughout the course of Matthew's treatment his parents battled to ensure he got the right care, even funding some specialist equipment themselves.

Now they want to make life easier for families in a similar position.



Picture: Graeme Main

“We hope that we can get people the kit they need more quickly without them having to go through hoops,” continued Sgt Sagar-Gray. “It takes so long to go through the system.”

With hospice spaces in short supply, the trust also aims to fund home nursing care so children can be in familiar surroundings in their last days.

Another goal is to establish a specially adapted holiday home for families to use.

“If people in the military community are looking at raising any money for charity, especially children's causes, we would love their support,” the Servicewoman added.

“We want to help other families but we also want to make sure Matthew isn't forgotten.”

Visit [www.matthewserentrust.com](http://www.matthewserentrust.com)



## GET BIKING FOR FREE

■ READERS of *Soldier* are being offered the chance to win one of three free spaces up for grabs on a moonlit charity bike ride through London.

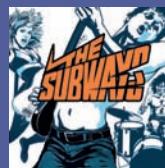
The annual Nightrider event sees participants cycle a 100-kilometre route past the capital's iconic landmarks.

This year's ride has a film and music theme and begins late on the evening of June 6, finishing early the following day.

Individual entry usually costs £99 but for the chance to ride free of charge for a charity of your choice email [nightrider@classictours.co.uk](mailto:nightrider@classictours.co.uk) quoting “*Soldier magazine*” by February 20.

Those who are unsuccessful can find further information on how to register at [www.nightrider.org.uk](http://www.nightrider.org.uk)

## IN MUSIC...



“Better than anything they've ever offered”  
★★★★★



“The songwriting and musicianship are sublime”  
★★★★★

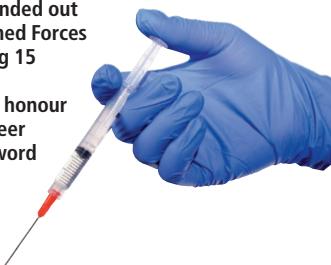
PAGES 72-73

## MEDICAL MARVELS

■ ANAESTHETISTS from the Royal Army Medical Corps have been honoured for their distinguished service in Afghanistan since October 2001.

The Pask Award, named after the late military anaesthetist Prof Edgar Pask, was handed out to a total of 21 Armed Forces specialists including 15 Army personnel.

On receiving the honour Maj Sukumar Sudheer (RAMC) said: “My word to all anaesthetists who would like to join the military is – do!”



## ROAD TO REMEMBER

■ THE family of a soldier killed in Afghanistan is calling for a major road to be renamed in honour of the 453 British personnel who lost their lives in the conflict.

As this issue went to press relatives of WO2 Sean Upton, who died in a grenade attack in 2009, were in discussion with local authorities to agree a new title for the A453 near Nottingham.

Ideas include Heroes Way, Helmand Way or Bastion Way.



# THE BIG PICTURE

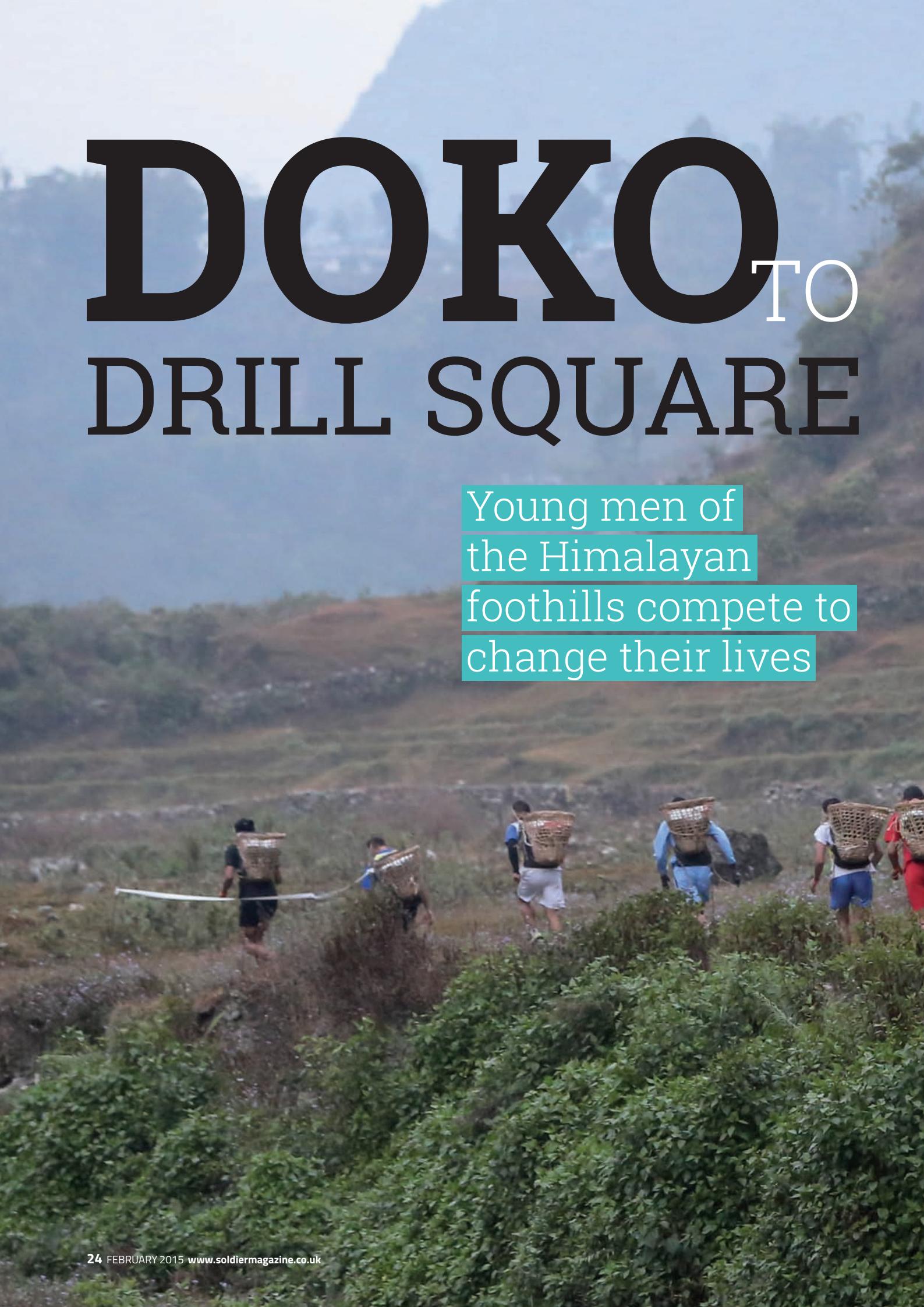


> DARTMOOR, DEVON

## TAKING THE PLUNGE

MEMBERS of 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards brave the chilly waters of a Dartmoor quarry during Exercise Baskerville Star, a back-to-basics package for 60 personnel. As well as river crossing drills the soldiers rehearsed day and night navigation skills and section attacks, with support from the Royal Navy's Sea King helicopters in what was one of the airframe's final military exercises before it is removed from service. Picture: Graeme Main

# DOKO TO DRILL SQUARE

A photograph showing a group of young men walking away from the camera through a hilly, green landscape. Each man is carrying a large, woven basket on their back. The terrain is uneven and covered in low-lying vegetation. In the background, there are more hills and a clear sky.

Young men of  
the Himalayan  
foothills compete to  
change their lives

**Report: Joe Clapson**  
**Pictures: Steve Dock**

I

T is fitting that the vast Annapurna mountain range seen from Nepal's second largest city is rugged and remarkable because the military selection process that takes place in its surrounds could be described in exactly the same way.

As the Brigade of Gurkhas celebrates 200 years of Nepalese service to the British Army, *Soldier* visited its recruitment ground in Pokhara to find out what it takes to be enlisted in the formation's revered number.

"There is about a 30-to-one chance of getting through selection here and competition is extremely fierce," explained Maj James Arney (RGR), officer commanding the Brigade of Gurkhas Pokhara (BGP).

His team is responsible for hunting out the best wannabe soldiers Nepal has to offer in order to provide a constant stream of elite operators to units back in the UK.

The annual process, renowned as one of the most difficult initial military selection courses in the world, begins with the Army's team spending six weeks visiting rural communities to highlight what life in the British military is like.

The opportunity to serve – and earn roughly four times the average Nepali annual salary in just one month – is widely advertised across the districts and the latest six-week registration window saw 7,865 individuals apply for 230 places.

"Most people in Nepal know about the Service but we have to explain to their faces what selection is like and details of the criteria," the officer explained.

"We have ex-Gurkhas who travel into the villages to support us and they are vital in spreading our message."

As well as a good education, the 17- to 21-year-old men who apply must be able to demonstrate astounding levels of fitness.

After being put through a series of physical and classroom tests at two regional camps, the hopefuls are whittled down to around 500 and sent on to BGP for a gruelling two-week central selection process – many walking hundreds of miles to get there.

"All the regional tests are rigidly watched to make sure we get exactly the right people attending final selection," continued Maj Arney. "If we get a decision wrong we are messing up someone's whole life."





Bishal Sunuwar was one of the most recent potential recruits to be put through his paces and the 19-year-old explained what the opportunity meant to him and the rest of his cohort.

"We came to secure our life and future," he said. "This only happens annually so you have to take your chance."

"I tried to pass selection two years ago but failed at the regional stage so I am desperate to keep trying."

Such perseverance is a familiar story in Pokhara, where English tests, medical examinations and – of course – plenty more physical punishment is on the cards.

Ganesh Chand travelled to the city from the hilly region of Dailekh in the west of Nepal, where there is no electricity or road access.

"Our forefathers have done so much to build the reputation and history of the Gurkhas and now it's our turn to let the world know what we can do," he commented.

"If I am chosen it will be a very proud moment."

"I love that the British Army selects people irrespective of your caste or what you have done before."

He continued: "I am the only person here from my village and the others at home have no idea about the Army or what it means because they don't have television."

"I have never been on an aeroplane so travelling to England would be a major thing."

"I know that if I am selected I will be so proud because I will be able to send money home to my family – this is my chance to make them happier."

Success in this game is hard-won, however.

One of Pokhara's most feared serials takes place in the pool, where potential recruits are asked to complete two lengths – something that may not sound intimidating to UK troops, but for many here it is their first attempt at swimming.

It is not a pass or fail test but those who can complete it are awarded an extra mark for their total selection score.

Other assessments, though, must be passed with flying colours.

"The enthusiasm and commitment to learning here is excellent and I wish there was the same attitude in the UK," said Maj Jonny Taffs (AGC (ETS)), the officer in charge of educational testing.

"We need to make sure the recruits are up to speed with the rest of the Army so we tell them to practise their English by listening to radio programmes such as the BBC World Service."

New to 2014's central selection process was something known as functional mobility screening.

Developed for US special forces operatives, this sees candidates undertake several short exercises to give assessors an understanding of how "functionally fit" they are – that is, how primed they are for the physical work expected of a soldier.

# TEST FOR THE BEST

How the selection process works for Nepal's hopefuls...

## VILLAGE VISITS

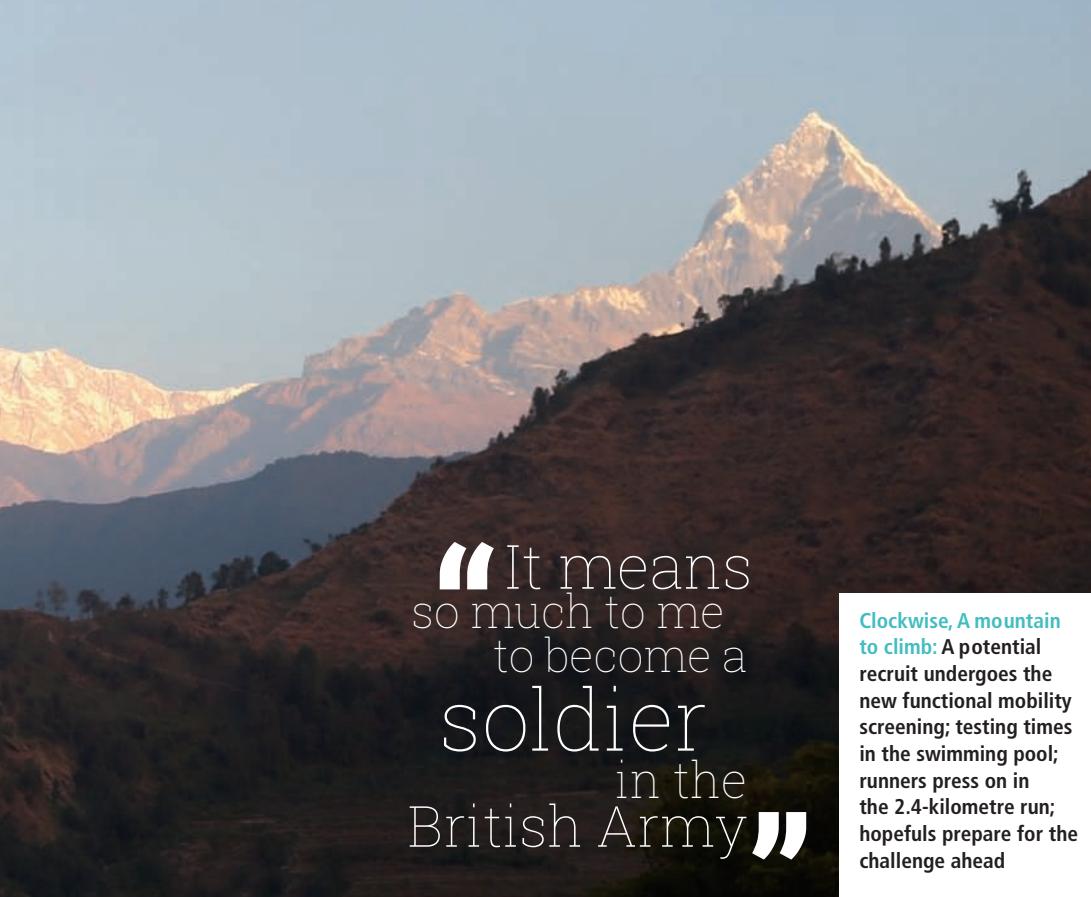
Members of the Brigade of Gurkhas Pokhara visit mountain communities around the country to educate young men about the opportunities available in the British Army.



## REGIONAL SELECTION CAMPS

Thousands of applicants are whittled down to 500 at two camps, one in Pokhara and one further east in Dharan. Tasks include educational, medical and physical tests – as well as the requirement to sprint 800m in under 2min 40sec and blast out 70 sit-ups in just two minutes.





**Clockwise, A mountain to climb:** A potential recruit undergoes the new functional mobility screening; testing times in the swimming pool; runners press on in the 2.4-kilometre run; hopefuls prepare for the challenge ahead



#### CENTRAL SELECTION

Instructors tick boxes and register scores for the nervous young men as they are put through further gruelling physical challenges, medical and dental exams, and an English conversation assessment (pictured). A final interview is then held in Nepalese.



#### ATTESTATION

Those who have been successful swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen – the final stage of the recruiting process.



#### CATTERICK-BOUND

The troops travel to ITC Catterick to undergo combined phase one and two training on the combat infantryman's course.





“It’s a true measure of grit and determination”



In a further development, ECG tests check the electric activity of the recruits' hearts to make sure they can withstand extreme tasks.

“More and more we are treating soldiers as elite athletes because they train in the same way,” said Maj Mike Cameron-Smith, regimental medical officer for 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

“The medical side is as stringent as the physical and we probably have as many fail here as in other aspects of selection.”

Another mean assessment comes in the form of a 2.4-kilometre run, which must be completed in less than 9min 40sec.

But the apex of central selection is the iconic and somewhat unbelievable Doko Race – a five-kilometre run up the daunting Bhalam Hill carrying 25 kilograms of sand in a bamboo basket known as a doko.

With the heavy load strapped to runners' heads, the challenge is every bit as tough as it sounds (see page 31).

“It's an absolutely fantastic test; incredibly demanding physically and a true measure of grit and determination,” explained Maj Arney.

“Most people could probably walk up the hill if they had a whole day, but these guys have to do it with a heavy weight.”

“It's very symbolic of where they come from because they would be doing this sort of carrying task every day in rural villages.”

Capt Ed Withey (RGR), operations coordination officer at BGP, added: “This is worlds apart from what the UK's line infantry is asked to do on day one.

“As a result of their way of life, the fitness and functional mobility of the Nepalese is absolutely outstanding.”

Looking out to the sacred Mount Machhapuchhre, potential recruit Suraj Rai revealed what powered him through to complete the task successfully in the allotted time.

“The uphill parts were the toughest – especially the steps and it made my stomach and leg muscles very sore,” said the 20-year-old.

“But there was no point at all where I thought I would not make it because it just means so much to me to become a soldier in the British Army.

“I want to be in the organisation where my ancestors have served and to keep the prestige going – Gurkhas are well known and I want to become one.”

With no room for sentimentality, individuals who do not complete the Doko challenge within 48 minutes are cut out of selection.

For the 2014 intake 33 of the 450 candidates who had made it that far met with failure.

One Serviceman who understands the harsh realities of the Gurkha selection process as well as anyone is

Maj Manoj Mohara (RGR), the most senior Nepalese soldier at BGP, whose job is to assist with recruitment and ensure that local cultural needs are upheld.

“I enlisted 30 years ago with 7th Gurkha Rifles and the motivation I had then was the same that the boys have now; opportunity to travel and financial incentives but most importantly a connection to ancestors,” he said.

“Even if their family didn't join, they are influenced by friends or someone from their village.”

At the end of the fortnight the young men are lined up in civilian clothes and sent one of two ways: on the despondent journey back to their communities or to Gurkha Company Catterick for initial military training.

“The 230 who are successful swear their oath to the Queen and are marched off,” revealed Maj Arney.

“All of their families will come to see them off and within two weeks they will be at Catterick.”

Nepal is the UK's oldest ally in Asia and its Gurkha soldiers have served Britain with distinction since 1815.

If the selection process in the country remains as arduous as it is today, there should be no doubt that the calibre of new recruit arriving for training in North Yorkshire will continue to be first-class until the next bicentenary. ■



Read more about the Doko Race on page 31

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# STRAIN OF THE STAMPEDE

Nepal's Doko challenge up close...



THE first platoon of D Company line up. They might have trained for months for this moment but their anxiety about what lies ahead is visible.

With the sun yet to rise and a cold bite still in the air, the start commander barks out three questions to the assembled troops.

"Any injuries?"

"No sir."

"Are you happy?"

"Yes sir."

"Everyone fit?"

"Yes sir."

Seconds later the hopefuls head off in a stampede with necks straining on doko straps and legs propelling them up the first of many harsh inclines.

The Khali Khola waterway runs beneath the gravelly route, which is scattered with locals from the foothills who have stepped out of their huts to cheer encouragement to their fellow countrymen.

As muscle-fatigue kicks in and sweat pours into the competitors' eyes, cries of "shabash" (well done) from the elders serve as further motivation.

The course follows a pre-existing track, but as if by cruel design a set of steep steps marks the rough halfway point and ensures each man has a painful build-up of lactic acid surging through their muscles for the last section of the challenge.

Without ever stopping to catch a breath, the potential recruits persist onwards and upwards until the final downhill 400 metres, which remarkably sees the runners sprint to the finish.

"The last bit is just as tough because they are going at serious pace and it's difficult for their legs to hold up the weight," says Capt Ed Withey (RGR).

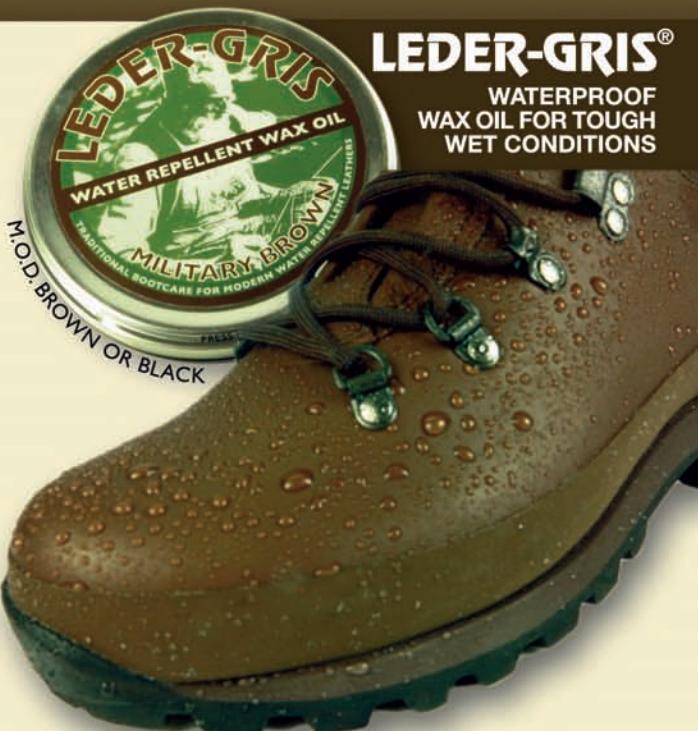
"Sometimes someone who has led the whole way can be sent reeling because they fall down."

Of the 450 super-fit candidates who made it to the stage of the Doko Race, 33 failed. Only the elite can succeed here.

» **Final Word – page 90**

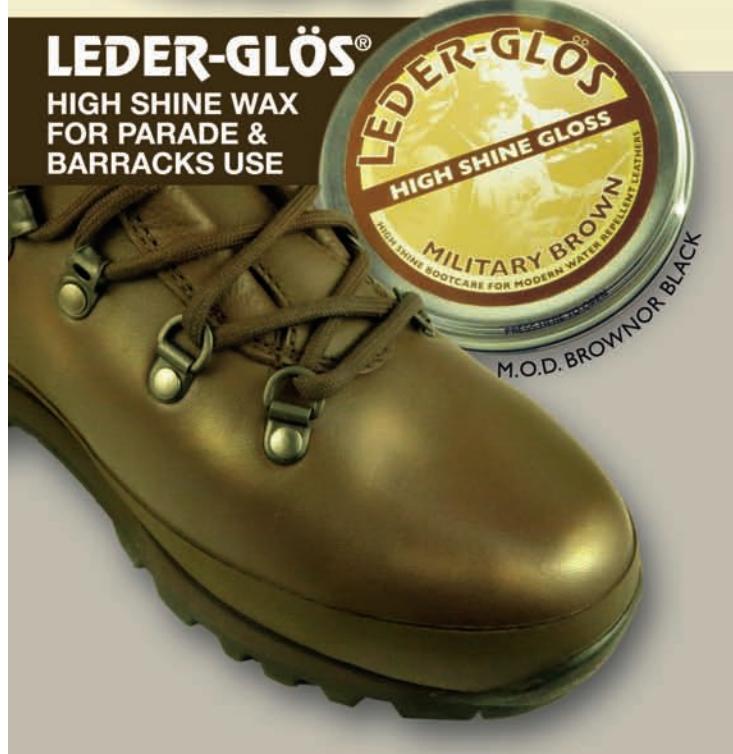


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# HIMALAYAN HERO

**How would Nepalese soldiers react when they met the man whose legendary story has inspired them since childhood?**

Report: Joe Clapson  
Picture: Graeme Main

**T**HEY say you should never meet your hero.

For many people, their celebrated icon has achieved such impressive sporting feats or become so feted in the world of Hollywood film that they are effectively a figure of myth.

As a result, the individual underneath this intimidating persona can prove to be something of a disappointment or, at best, a reminder that you could never hope to accomplish such things yourself.

No such story, though, for members of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles when they received a famous visitor they have long put on a pedestal.

Rambahadur Limbu is the only surviving Gurkha winner of the Victoria Cross and he recently travelled back to the UK from his home near the Indian border in Nepal to speak to junior soldiers about his experiences during the Indonesia Confrontation in the 1960s.

Pristine uniforms, wide eyes and a tangible air of excitement awaited the 75-year-old as his car arrived at the gates of Sir John Moore Barracks in Folkestone.

However, rather than leave the troops feeling inadequate about their own achievements, the influence of this brave veteran seemed to inspire the young Servicemen into believing that, with the right approach to their job, they too could one day find themselves wearing the highest of all military decorations.

LCpl Rajesh Chemjong, who has served in the battalion for three years, explained how the retired captain had inspired him and his fellow personnel.

"Before I was even recruited for the Army I was taught about the Gurkhas at school," he told *Soldier*.

"As a child I knew these troops had done remarkable things but Capt Limbu stood out above them because he won a Victoria Cross.

"It was really important to me to have him here.

"I have read so many things about him and how he won his honour and to hear his experiences first-hand was one of the proudest moments for me but also for the regiment."

The story of how the veteran of 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles won his medal during a hillside battle in Borneo in 1965 is certainly enough to stop most personnel in their tracks.

Then a lance corporal, his company had discovered and attacked a strong enemy force near the Indonesian border. It was on top of a sheer-sided

hill that was only accessible via a knife-edge ridge.

Determined to press ahead, the Serviceman led his support group forward and inched himself up until, ten yards from the enemy, he was spotted by an opponent who opened fire with a machine gun, wounding one of his comrades.

Rushing forward to kill his attacker, Limbu gained a strong foothold for his force before once again coming under heavy fire in the trench he was occupying.

Undeterred, he left the comparative safety of the ditch and, with total disregard for the hail of bullets showering down on him, gathered his fire group and led them to a better position.

Two colleagues were seriously wounded in the attack but the soldier proceeded with three incredibly gallant attempts through open fire to rescue them.

He then returned to the fight to give his support in the final stages of the assault – a bitter and bloody hour-long battle that was eventually won by the UK troops.

"Before we joined the Army, this was the person we all looked up to," explained Cpl Pralon Kulung Rai (RGR) after listening to the respected ex-Serviceman describe the events that led to his award.

"To see this man in person actually gave me a rush to the brain; being in the same room as him was amazing.

"It's a much greater experience than meeting a famous singer or actor," he continued.

"This man was willing to sacrifice his life by putting himself in danger for his men and for the Queen.

"He has earned his respect."

After signing prints of a specially-commissioned painting depicting his gallant act for the Gurkha Museum, the modest veteran explained what it meant to him to be a source of pride and inspiration for today's junior personnel.

"I am delighted to meet the current personnel in the regiment," he said in his native tongue.

"Other VC winners, my friends, are dead now so I am pleased to be able to be in the company of the lads and tell them about my story."

Switching from a lively demeanour to a solemn and composed one, he told the assembled troops: "The good reputation we have as Gurkhas is in place because of our forefathers and the young soldiers need to learn from that.

"You must be well disciplined and loyal to the regiment and the country you serve.

"At the same time you must never forget where you have come from – loyalty to your home country is

## AGAINST THE ODDS

### Rambahadur Limbu's Victoria Cross citation reads:

*... His outstanding personal bravery, selfless conduct, complete contempt of the enemy and determination to save the lives of the men of his fire group set an incomparable example and inspired all who saw him...*

*... He displayed heroism, self sacrifice and a devotion to duty and to his men of the very highest order...*

*... His actions on this day reached a zenith of determined, premeditated valour which must count amongst the most notable on record...*



important as well.

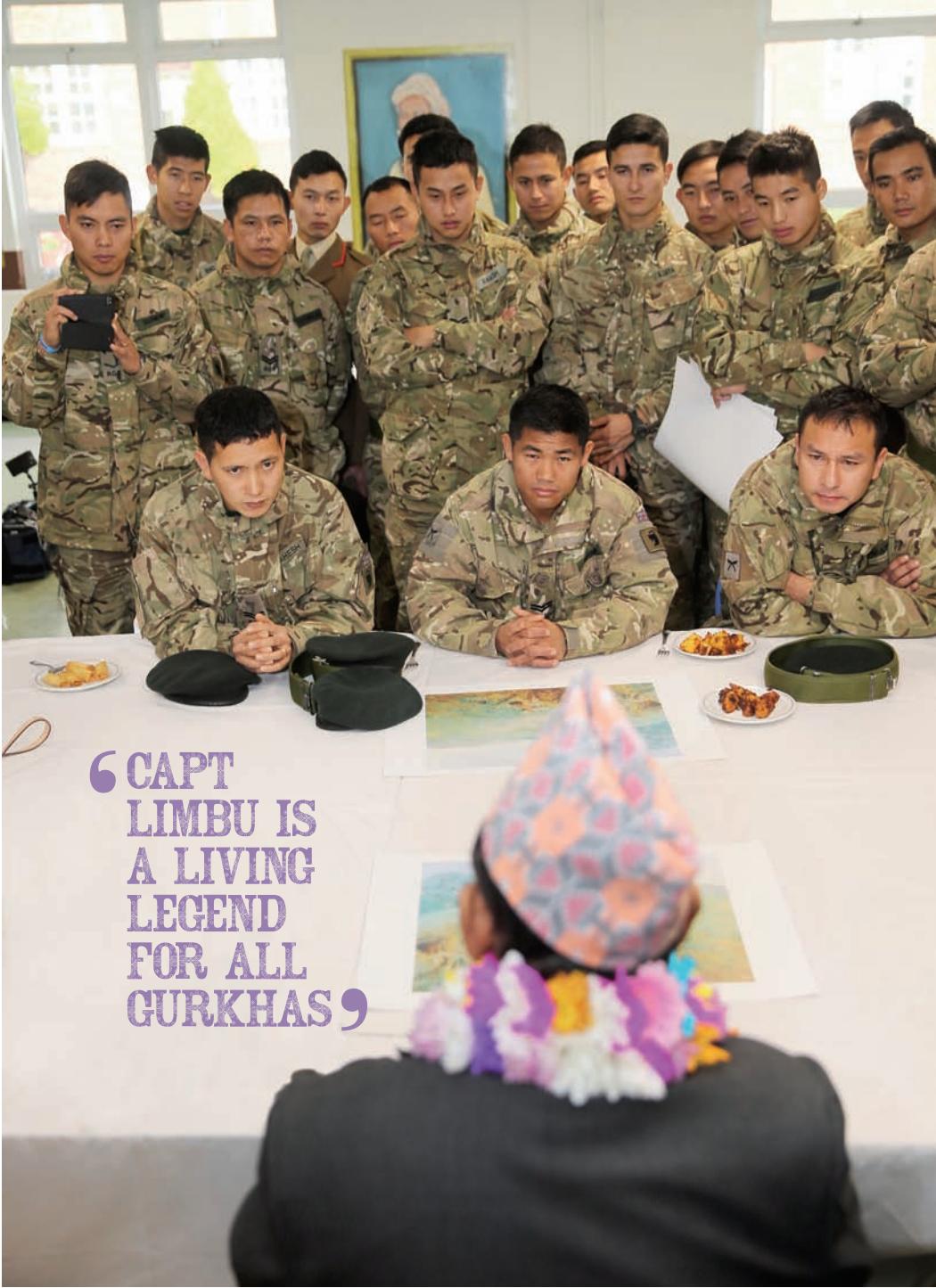
"When you compare the infrastructure of the UK with Nepal's it is not the same so try to bring something back, such as your skills, so that it too can prosper."

As the Brigade of Gurkhas marks its 200th anniversary this year, the words of its most celebrated living veteran will be engrained in these soldiers' minds for a long time to come.

Moreover, the stories he had to tell are likely to remain in their minds next time they find themselves deployed on combat operations.

"What Capt Limbu stood for then still applies now – he is a huge inspiration to us all," added Cpl Bimal Rai (RGR).

"When I arrived at my battalion for training I learnt of his story and found out that he was from near my family's village in Nepal. That made me proud and want to get closer to him."



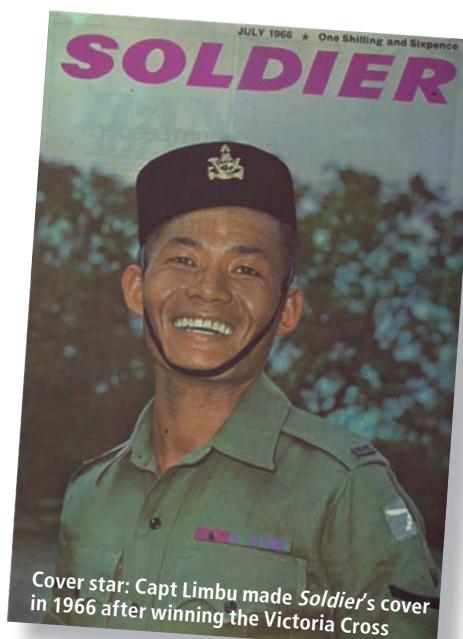
"The story about how he protected his colleagues by putting his own life in danger has inspired me in my career.

"I have been to southern Afghanistan three times and his actions always motivated me to look after my colleagues.

"Even though the Army of today is very different to the one that fought in Malaya we can still learn from the way our ancestors conducted themselves back then."

Although former personnel are always held in high esteem by British soldiers, it seems this particular elderly man symbolises something more for the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Finally coming face-to-face with their hero not only seems to have given a huge boost to their morale, but spurred them on to try and emulate such courage and sacrifice next time Britain requires it. ■



# MEDAL MOTIVATION

Troops of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles reveal what the Victoria Cross winner means to them

“I have been in the Army for 12 years and I know that Capt Limbu is a living legend for all Gurkhas; he has inspired countless soldiers like me.

Being honest and recognising his own culture was important to him and I will carry that on in my own career. ”



Cpl Bimal Rai

“When I was young I used to hear my relatives talking about Gurkhas and the VC winners, and it was learning about men like Capt Limbu that encouraged me to join the British Army.

It was very important for me to meet him because I wanted to see him in real life and he was no different to how I'd imagined.

As he was talking you could see that he was picturing the moment he won his medal – it was still fresh in his mind.

Listening to a real hero speak showed me that being a soldier is about fighting for the person next to you. ”



Cpl Pralon Rai

“I had heard so much about all of the Gurkha VC winners but to meet one face-to-face was the best – Capt Limbu is the greatest person in our history who is still alive.

The actions that earned him the award are exactly how a Gurkha should behave and many soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown similar feats.

Following in the footsteps of people like Capt Limbu makes me very proud. ”



LCpl Rajesh Chemjong



Report: Joe Clapson  
Pictures: Steve Dock

**T**HE bone-shuddering rumble of tracked wheels fills the air over Salisbury Plain as a fleet of 24-tonne machines rolls across the horizon in formation.

The menacing sound of the British Army's Warrior vehicles moving onto a target, coupled with the jarring cracks of machine gun fire, is one that most civilians would probably rather not hear.

But *Soldier* is visiting the training area to find out more about the inaugural tactical turret commanders' course, launched to instruct junior NCOs in utilising the platforms to their best advantage on combat operations.

"This is the first time there has been a package to tactically equip our young commanders rather than expecting them to pick it up on the job, which is obviously a good thing," explains Capt Chris Groves (Mercian), organiser of the pilot programme.

"People have been talking about the need for this type of training for years and now we've got it – the first formalised course on Warrior."

The two-week exercise is open to soldiers of the rank of lance corporal and above once their units request a place on it. During its serials, personnel operate a fleet of 16 Warriors to fight against a mock enemy in platoon- and company-level advances.

And although members of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment who make up the first intake already know how to operate the armoured asset, this experience sees them coordinating themselves as a proper fighting fleet while remaining inconspicuous to the enemy.

Such drills are especially beneficial given this unit has recently been given a new tasking.

"Under Army 2020 1 Mercian changed from having a light role to becoming armoured infantry and I am new to Warrior so this training has given me insight into all the necessary tactics," LCpl Daniel Browning comments.

His comrade, LCpl Arthur Bush, agrees.

"Our previous role was the total opposite to this – we'd never even been in these vehicles before – so it is a case of getting used to a new way of doing things and this course is definitely assisting personnel with that adjustment," he adds.

The powerful Warrior, which is loaded with a turret-mounted 30mm Rarden cannon and can destroy light armoured vehicles within a range of 1,500 metres, has a strong reputation among Servicemen and women as a multi-terrain monster, able to sweep into virtually any kind of location and situation.

On the bumpy, wet ground of Salisbury Plain the programme's students practised manoeuvring the powerhouse into different formations to deal with various types of threats.

"There could be 500-600 metres

between the vehicles as they advance forward," explains CSgt Anthony Moore (Yorks) from the Reconnaissance Armoured Training Division.

"The tactic of having wide spaces between platforms allows you to cover a lot more ground and get a wider range of vision across the area."

Troops are told that, following an assault by tanks on a combat operation, Warriors are usually the first asset sent in to clear enemy positions and put boots on the ground.

In other scenarios where wheeled vehicles are left redundant by difficult terrain, the 550bhp diesel platform could also be relied upon – as proved in Afghanistan when the likes of Ridgback and Mastiff were sometimes left stranded by the desert conditions.

To ensure it remains just as versatile on missions of the future, Service personnel are tasked with operating the machine in both gunner and commander roles so that they can get to grips with all the aspects of its capabilities.

"This course needs to be sold to all battalions because everybody working with Warriors must understand how to use them effectively," CSgt Moore continues.

"Out on operations it really shows when people are asked to jump into the commander or gunner's role without having done it before."

With scenarios also mocked up to drill the troops on communicating effectively with other vehicles and launching simultaneous attacks, there can be no doubt about its intensity.

But in the instructors' minds the tough lessons learnt here are vital, and will pay dividends on the battlefields of the future.

"I want senior officers to understand how important and useful this training is," CSgt Moore says.

"The idea is that platoon commanders won't have to be worrying about everything for everyone when it comes to Warrior because soldiers will have the ability to think for themselves."

This new programme might be located in the English countryside but the Warrior vehicle is as effective there as it is in the desert or a complex urban environment.

For that reason, it surely won't be long before the new generation of highly knowledgeable vehicle commanders graduating from this course are tasked with putting its lessons into practice for real. ■

**Right, Track to the future:** Soldiers practise drills learnt on the two-week package and course commander Capt Chris Groves (Mercian, right) discusses tactics and manoeuvres with CSgt Anthony Moore (Yorks) during a serial



## FRONT-LINE FLEXIBILITY

LESSONS from the tactical turret commanders' course will prove to be crucial in combat, according to Maj Christopher Somers, officer commanding A Company, 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment.

"It is an invaluable opportunity for junior NCOs to get important experience as armoured infantry," he explained.

"When young soldiers know what they are doing it gives the platoon commander space to breathe and buys time to plan on the battlefield.

"After this training lance corporals and corporals will be able to make their own decisions using their own initiative."

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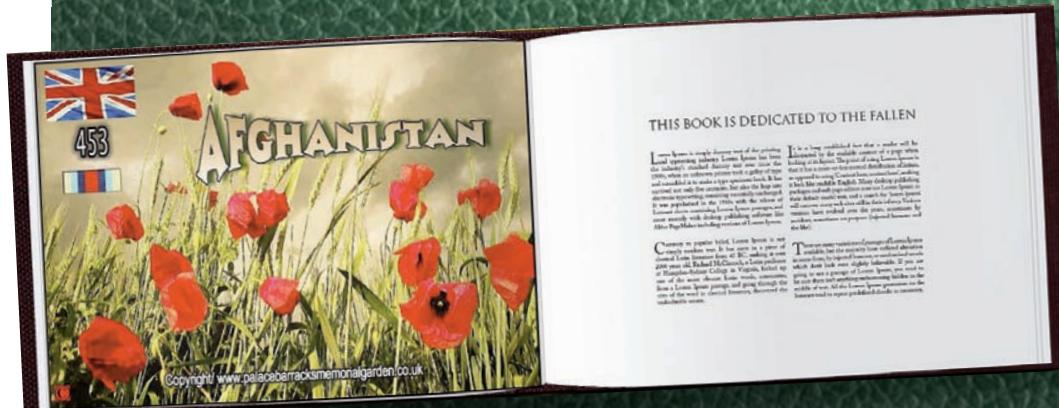
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# OVERSEAS AMBITION



Picture: Shutterstock

## Why volunteering for a posting abroad could prove to be a canny career move

**Report: Steven Muncey**  
**Pictures: Steve Dock**

OVERSEAS loan service seems to offer everything soldiers and officers looking to add some pizzazz to their daily routines could want; a chance to broaden horizons, tackle completely different challenges, work with foreign armies and become immersed in interesting – and probably rather exotic – cultures.

But many personnel never even consider applying for one of these positions and it is often for one reason: concern over the supposed damage it could do to their promotion prospects.

"Loan service is still considered by many to be stepping off the mainstream and that

will continue for a time," Brig Ed Brown, commander of the tri-Service British Military Mission in Kuwait, told *Soldier*.

"My boss, for example, sits in London and doesn't see me very often but my equivalents back in the UK are working in brigades or headquarters and are much more visible."

However, that situation could be starting to change thanks to the Army's increasing emphasis on cooperation with foreign defence forces.

"These types of appointments were once considered career-negative," explained Brig Brown. "That's no longer the case but if in some people's minds they still are then that's got to improve."

"What we do here is complex, important and extremely valuable to Britain's

relationships with other countries.

"As our defence engagement work grows there will be an increasing enthusiasm for these posts and we need to stock them with troops of the highest quality so they can deliver results and deal with the challenges these set-ups present."

The senior officer currently has 35 British military personnel under his wing, 23 of them drawn from the Army, and is looking to expand his team in the near future.

It's one of the largest loan service commitments in the Middle East, outstripped only by the 39 officers and soldiers attached to Oman's armed forces.

The team in Kuwait is employed to help the nation's military in three specific areas. They help to run the Joint Command »



**Y** and Staff College, which is modelled on the Defence Academy at Shrivenham, by training senior officers who come mainly from Kuwait and other Gulf states plus a handful of nations such as Canada, South Korea, Pakistan and Australia.

They are also employed at Kuwait's Land Forces Institute, based near the country's second city, Jahra, advising on infantry training, engineering and counter-insurgency tactics.

The third strand of their work is to staff, develop and supervise English language classes for the 200 or so home-grown personnel who attend military training courses in Britain every year.

However, the country's ministry of defence also requires UK soldiers to help out in other areas as and when they are needed.

"There's a terrific appetite for the British way of doing things here, as there is in many Arabic countries," commented Brig Brown.

"Our experienced troops are highly valued by the Kuwaitis."

Recently, a group of officers and senior NCOs who had originally been appointed to advise at the Land Forces Institute were transferred to the country's Sandhurst equivalent, the Ali Al Sabah Military College, to boost British involvement in the training and development of its cadets.

At the behest of the facility's commander they took complete charge of one platoon for a few weeks to run comparison tests against those who were under the command of the Kuwaiti tutors.

"The challenge for us was to make the students better than they were before," explained one of the instructors, WO2 Carl Camlin (Rifles).

"The standard of recruit here is different to ours back home so we observed their training methods and made some recommendations.

"For example, I suggested they improve the pupil/tutor ratio and that they should create a more competitive environment between the platoons to raise standards and breed a strong team ethic; stuff that's tried and tested in the UK."

This tasking, undertaken at short notice, is an example of the degree of flexibility that's required of personnel on overseas loan service.

"There's no strict programme here and the great thing is that every morning you wake up and don't really know what the day will hold," explained Brig Brown.

"It's tremendous fun but at the same time challenging and our people have to use their initiative every day.

"Very often we're dealing with issues which, if we get it wrong, aren't just a problem for us but can become one for the embassy too.

"There's potential for them to escalate so you need to have your wits about you."

Altogether, there are more than 170 British soldiers on loan service around the world in locations as diverse as South Africa, Brunei, Czech Republic, Jordan, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, but the one constant among them all is the need to be adaptable.

"These outfits have to evolve to meet the requirements of the host nation, so being flexible is absolutely key," said Maj Rupert Lewis (RHG/D), a member of the MoD's loan service department in London.

"The Kuwait team is a pretty typical combination of advisers and mentors, some now operating at very senior levels within the country's military structure and others conducting low-level tactical training.

"It's a pattern that's repeated around the globe and there's a huge mixture of abilities and trades called for overall – we even have a detachment of dentists within Brunei's sizeable loan service set-up."

With defence engagement now high on the Army's agenda, Maj Lewis believes many more soldiers – even those with high ambitions for promotion – are seriously considering a spell overseas.

"These teams have become a key element of the Armed Forces, offering personnel the opportunity to serve abroad in more than 15 countries," he said.

"Not only that, the roles are interesting and demanding, are located in very different environments but at the same time provide Service families with some stability." ■



View from Kuwait:

# 'It's a big commitment'

Troops in the Middle East reveal their opinions on overseas loan service...

#### WO2 Carl Camlin (Rifles)

If you spend too long on one of these postings then your peers could climb over you because they are back in the UK in higher profile jobs.

If I stay for more than two years it's a risk but if I do just that term and then filter back into the regiment I have plenty of time to make up for it.

When you get on the plane you must fully understand the implications on your career, and if you don't you're a mug. Make sure you do your research.

I discussed the effect this posting would have on my career progression with my commanding officer before I applied.



#### Lt Col Ian Hunter (R Signals)

I'd already completed two spells in Saudi Arabia before coming here so Kuwait didn't hold many surprises for me.

It's horses for courses and maybe it's not for some people – those with very young kids perhaps – but there are financial perks and the weather is great.

I'm really happy living in the Middle East and I think our work does a lot for Britain's standing in this region.

#### WO2 Gary Collins (R Signals)

There are lots of benefits for family life here. My kids are attending a private school and they have had to adjust to that but it's been good for them to experience a new culture.

After all, how many young children can say they've spent two years living in the Middle East and learnt Arabic?

It's a great lifestyle and we have access to a beach club.

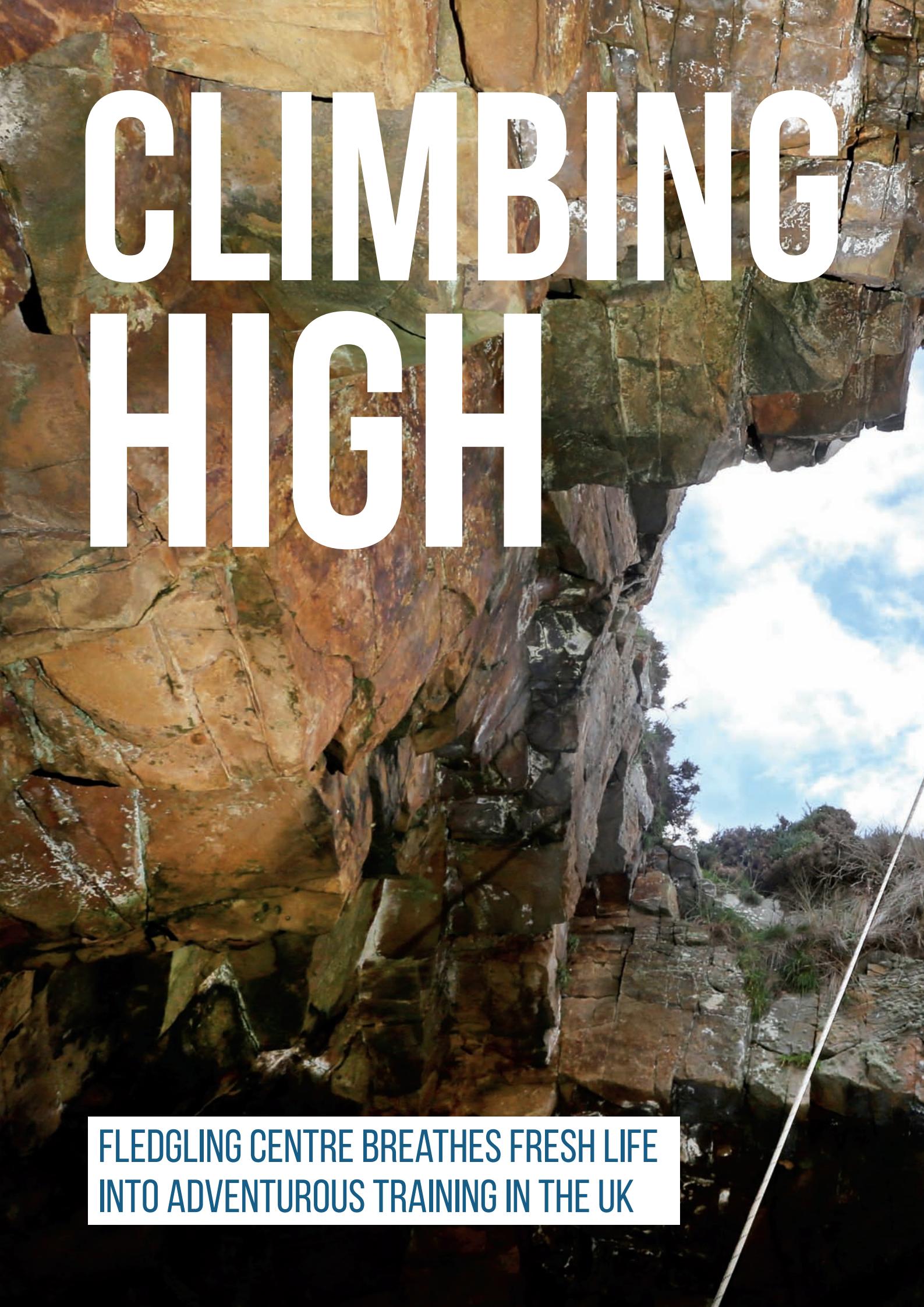
We also have good accommodation. All the warrant officers live in the same complex and there's a real community feel.

If you do more than one stint in a role like this I believe you'll be marked down, albeit unfairly, as someone who wants an easy life.

But the truth is anything but. These roles provide challenges of their own.



# CLIMBING HIGH

A photograph of a massive, layered rock face, likely sandstone, with various shades of brown, tan, and green. The rock surface is rugged with numerous vertical and horizontal fissures. In the lower right foreground, a white climbing rope is visible, extending diagonally across the frame. The sky above the rock face is a bright, clear blue with a few wispy white clouds.

FLEDGLING CENTRE BREATHES FRESH LIFE  
INTO ADVENTUROUS TRAINING IN THE UK



Report: Joe Clapson  
Pictures: Graeme Main

**A**NEW dawn has begun in the world of outdoor pursuits north of Hadrian's Wall. With state-of-the-art kit and a breathtaking Highland setting, the Adventurous Training Centre Scotland in Inverness will no doubt be shooting to the top of many soldiers' travel wish lists in 2015.

The hub might have only been up and running for ten months but its nine-day courses in mountaineering, rock climbing, kayaking, canoeing and mountain biking are already making a big impact and are set to put the country on the map for the Service's many adrenalin junkies.

With the aim of producing a fresh generation of leaders who are not afraid to take risks, the big advantage of attending a course in this part of the world is that few places are off-limits.

Scotland has a longstanding tradition of access to the open countryside and, as such, everyone has a right to roam free across its rivers and mountains.

In response, adventures here put a focus on getting troops to oversee their own excursions.



## THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Members of the Coldstream Guards give their verdict on a recent rock climbing course they attended at the newly-created Adventurous Training Centre Scotland:



LCpl Oliver Thompson

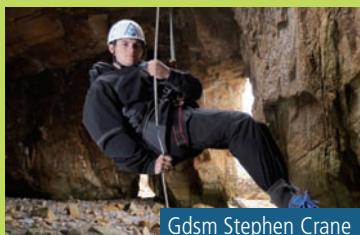
“It was the first time I'd attempted rock climbing and it was tough. I'm not used to it so I had some fear but I was able to trust that my mate would hold the rope. I've been in the Army for four years and AT is absolutely brilliant – it's definitely not R and R, though, because we're being worked hard and taken right out of our comfort zone.”



Gdsm David Cramman

“The specific skills of rock climbing may not be needed as a soldier but the leadership and discipline that are used certainly are.

Techniques in self-control and being mindful of the terrain are also vital for our jobs and completely transferable.”



Gdsm Stephen Crane

“Being in the Army you don't often see the type of landscapes you get in the Highlands so it's brilliant to come up here – I just love the outdoors.

On AT you build up your confidence and get to work with colleagues, which means relationships get stronger.

Having to trust your mate with your life, like when he's taking the strain on the rope, is something very powerful.”



FOR A REAL  
ADVENTURE YOU  
COULD PACK LIGHT  
AND BIKE ACROSS  
THE MOUNTAINS





"Personal growth in the legendary Highlands is what we want to give people," explained Maj Rab Black (RAPTC), officer commanding ATC Scotland.

"We are trying to empower soldiers to plan their own journey through expert guidance. Students are given knowledge and skills before being offered free rein to organise a challenging excursion.

"For example, for a real adventure you could pack light and bike right across the mountains."

The creation of the centre at Cameron Barracks followed a Service directive in March 2013 that one third of the troops in every unit should participate in a minimum of five days' adventurous training each year.

And activities like cycling to the west coast, rock climbing in Fort William and kayaking down the River Ness are seen as invaluable for developing leadership, teamwork, physical fitness and courage in military visitors to the region.

"At this new facility it's not about tying a knot or getting the right paddle stroke – it's more about decision-making, values and standards, and team cohesion," continued Maj Black.

"We've got something special here and it's a place where I really think troops will be developed.

"The key thing is that it's less about the activity itself and more about the soldier and his or her personal improvement."

Every package delivered at Inverness is foundation-level, with the aim being to encourage future instructors to pass their experiences on rather than becoming experts in a particular field.

Martyn Stott, an adventurous training development adviser at the centre, was drafted in to increase the "emotional control" in those who visit – a skill that can then be applied in any setting, operational or non-operational.

The civilian has developed the mantra of "get a grip" (see panel on right) to help soldiers conquer their fears in all sorts of situations.

The basic ethos of the motto is to make a plan, stay calm, visualise your success and remain positive.

"We don't approach things in a wishy-washy style and as soon as troops realise that these process skills can be related to soldiering they are on-board," commented Mr Stott.

"It's not about sitting in a room and talking about feelings, it's all very relevant to the sharp end.

"Whether you are stomping up a hill, hanging off a crag or in a firefight on combat operations, it works."

Given the varied deployments and training exercises facing soldiers in 2015, the coping methods and courage developed on a short but energetic trip to Inverness could prove infinitely useful.

The kind of activity they use to develop such skills is purely a matter of choice.

WE'VE GOT  
SOMETHING  
SPECIAL HERE

95

Maj Rab Black



## INNOVATION IN INVERNESS

Found yourself in a tight spot up a mountain or on the water? ATC Scotland's "get a grip" mantra may offer a solution...

**G** OAL SETTING  
Create a proactive plan about how to deal with the challenge you face.

**R** ELAXATION  
Focus on something useful, such as slowing your breathing, in order to calm yourself physically and psychologically.

**I** MAGERY  
Visualise conquering a situation – it allows you to prepare to take it on.

**P** OSITIVE SELF-TALK  
Fill your brain with positive rather than negative thoughts.





Report: Sarah Goldthorpe  
Pictures: Graeme Main

**W**HEN British taxpayers were forced to bail out some of the country's banks to the tune of billions of pounds in 2008, the wealthy employees populating the industry could not have been plunged into worse regard.

Against a backdrop of redundancies, public sector cuts and financial gloom, a City culture of greed, bad behaviour and undeserved bonuses was exposed.

After attempting to manipulate the Libor rate between 2005 and 2009, Barclays certainly had its part to play in the crisis.

The bank was fined £290 million for distorting the data used to set interest rates on transactions, meaning that homeowners and businesses could have paid over the odds for loans.

So how would the organisation recover its reputation among customers and bring some much-needed integrity back to its business?

Part of the answer, it seemed, lay with the troops returning from Afghanistan.

In 2010 – as the UK started to sit up and take notice of the various health and welfare difficulties faced by ex-soldiers after combat operations –

“  
**People  
are  
curious  
about  
what I do**  
”



Barclays launched its Armed Forces Transition Employment and Resettlement (AFTER) programme.

The idea was to get more former military personnel onto the bank's office floor while benefiting from the values and considerable leadership skills instilled in them.

Respect, integrity, service, excellence and stewardship are words that have become central to the working ethic at Barclays since the banking crisis – ones that have a clear overlap with the British Army's own principles.

And following a 13-year war, there was certainly no shortage of potential candidates through which to learn more about such standards.

But how these individuals would move across from a world of self-sacrifice and courage to one revolving solely around money was anyone's guess.

Never to be daunted by a challenge, though, the 68 ex-soldiers who have since found full-time work with the bank via the scheme are playing a significant role in changing its culture.

James Cumming (pictured left), an ex-captain in The Royal Regiment of Scotland, is one of them. He works as a project manager, having previously served in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Despite admitting that his opinion of banks was "fairly standard with the general public" at the time he took up the position, the ex-Serviceman relocated from Edinburgh to London, where he has since carved out an interesting and rewarding



# in the CITY

career in a very different working environment.

"The opportunity came along and I thought I would be a fool not to take it," said the 33-year-old, who was medically discharged after being injured.

"The city can be very lonely and I miss the fresh air and being outside, but I am enjoying it."

Having competed as a cyclist at the Invictus Games last year, Cumming soon found a way to balance his love of the great outdoors with his life as a city slicker.

Previous applications to other banks had been rejected during online CV screening because of his perceived lack of experience. But after a nine-month placement with Barclays through the AFTER programme, he went full-time.

"It is a very interesting place to work at the moment as banking is going through a number of changes," the former Serviceman continued.

"A lot of people are curious about what I do, and have said that they didn't see me as a banker. And many colleagues here ask about what life is like serving on operations."

"I have had some very interesting discussions with civilian colleagues about our different approaches to leadership."

"Trying to change the culture of banking and instil some new values in people is rewarding."

But as Cumming soon discovered, not all of the military ethos can be mirrored in the world of money-making.

"The idea of camaraderie and watching each other's backs cannot be replicated, and my message to the Forces community is not to be naive about that fact," he added.

"You can't approach this sort of working environment with the same degree of loyalty as you would in service; it is not recognised and doesn't get rewarded. »



## COMBAT TO CANARY WHARF...

**The world of civilian work can seem like an alien place for ex-soldiers. Like entering a forest for the first time, it can be daunting and lacking in clear paths.**

**Here are some tips from the Barclays Army veterans on how to navigate the job-hunting jungle:**

**1** Do lots of networking with employers. It is one of the best ways to learn about what roles are available and can help to open doors.

**2** Complete short work placements. Even a little industry experience reflects well and will help you to decide exactly what you want to do. Start learning corporate language and drop the military acronyms.

**3** Use what you learnt on work experience to match your military skills with civilian job requirements and reflect this on your CV and at interviews.

**4** Remember that "time spent in reconnaissance is seldom wasted". The harder you work at finding a job, the better your chances of finding a role that suits you.



» "But I find it interesting that Barclays is trying to bring in more individuals who come with a very strong value set.

"People think you have to be good at maths to work in the financial sector, but there are a great deal of roles here that don't revolve around that."

"The Army is about supporting the Infantry to get into the right position and banking is about helping to make money whether you work on the trade floor, in a branch or in security or leadership."

As well as creating job opportunities, the Barclays initiative has seen hundreds of work placements, CV writing workshops and interview lessons held for wounded personnel. In total, some 2,861 veterans have been assisted by the scheme since it launched in 2010.

Stuart Tootal (pictured right), who commanded 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment during its ferocious encounters in Helmand province back in 2006, heads up the programme.

He became Barclays' global head of security in 2008 and so knows first-hand the odd experience troops face when they move into the world of office work.

"The military is very structured and is set up in such a way that when you come into the civilian world it can seem very strange," the former officer admitted.

"When an Army recruit goes into the jungle for the first time they get a jungle warfare instructor. But outside of the military you don't get that kind of support. The AFTER programme fills those gaps."

Difficulties facing those entering civvy street are the same for personnel of any rank.

"When you join the military you do so with a cohort of your peers and you get very clear instructions," Tootal continued. "But you usually join a firm alone and those folk might not have an understanding of where you're coming from."

"Whether you are an officer or a very junior soldier, everyone needs a degree of encouragement."

"I bet the vast majority of those working here never considered a career with Barclays."

Thanks to the scheme, Forces personnel looking to work with the bank can access extra support and civilians across the organisation are encouraged to attend military network meetings to learn more about their colleagues' battlefield experiences.

Unsurprisingly, Barclays is not the only financial institution to have realised the benefits of employing former Servicemen and women.

Nationwide is another company that, as well as signing the Corporate Covenant to offer more support to military customers, works with the Career Transition Partnership to highlight the opportunities available to ex-soldiers.

Nevertheless, those who remain angry about the behaviour of British banks in recent years may maintain that such schemes are simply PR stunts.

"Does this programme enhance Barclays' reputation? Yes," Tootal conceded.

"But we set it up because it was the right thing to do given what has happened with the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in recent times."

"It brings great talent into the bank and delivers great business benefits too."

"The military is regarded very highly but even so, most commercial organisations do not understand what ex-soldiers can bring."

Thanks to schemes like the AFTER programme at Barclays, however, it seems that the civilian world is slowly starting to learn.

And at a time when there is no such thing as a career for life, the financial industry seems as good a place as any for a Service leaver to start.

If that job move helps to bring some of the British Army's fine values and standards to a sector badly in need of an image change, all the better. ■



## LEADERSHIP LESSONS

Former Army officer Stuart Tootal offers his five top tips for making your military leadership skills work in a civilian role:

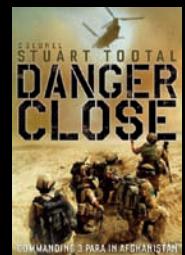
**1** Have a vision of what you want your team to achieve and make sure they are clear on it and buy into it.

**2** Empower your colleagues to fulfil your intent – mission command can work in the commercial world.

**3** Know your people and look after them.

**4** Lead by example.

**5** Have the moral courage to do the right thing.



● **Read about**  
Stuart Tootal's  
experiences in  
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# MISSION COMPLETE

Prize donors help *Soldier* readers to start 2015 in style

**M**EMORIES of the festive period may have been reduced to the scars on our bank statements, but a handful of *Soldier* readers continue to enjoy the season of goodwill.

Operation Reindeer's Hoof, as our annual Christmas giveaway used to be called, may be no more but efforts to bring some December cheer to our readers continued with a bumper giveaway in 2014.

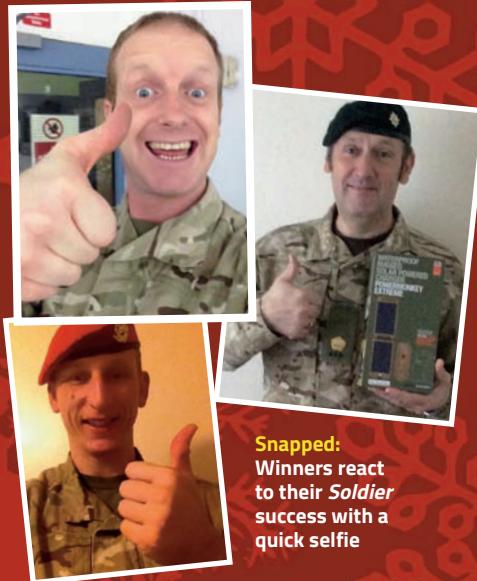
After entering the competition at the end of last year, winners have now been notified and are enjoying a selection of prizes worth almost £5,000.

Among the gifts distributed were a week's stay at a French ski resort, a three-day luxury mountain getaway and a glitzy weekend for two people in London.

Jewellery, the latest outdoor kit and footwear were also up for grabs.

If you know a company that is interested in donating a prize towards next year's competition – or any other *Soldier* promotion – contact Editor Sarah Goldthorpe via [editor@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:editor@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

In the meantime, our sincere thanks to the following organisations for their generous donations to the 2014 giveaway, which allowed us to spread some cheer to Service personnel, their families and friends across the world:



**Snapped:**  
Winners react to their *Soldier* success with a quick selfie



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## » SNUGPAK

British outdoor clothing and kit manufacturer.

[www.snugpak.com](http://www.snugpak.com)



## » VICTORY SERVICES CLUB

Military membership club and accommodation in London.

[www.vsc.co.uk](http://www.vsc.co.uk)

» TURN TO PAGE 59 FOR A LIST OF THE COMPETITION WINNERS.



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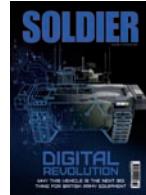
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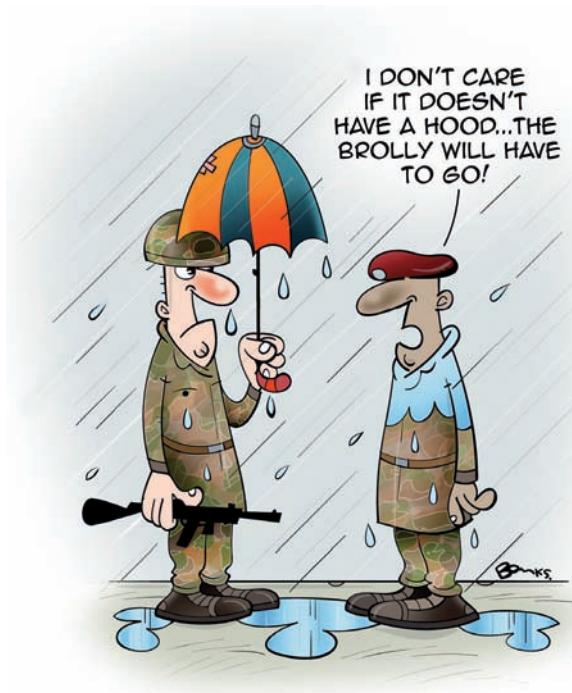
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“

# TALKBACK

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

”



## ‘Are we being hoodwinked?’

- CAN you tell me why the multi-terrain pattern waterproof jacket doesn't have a hood?

It is designed to be worn with a helmet on operations but we spend most of our time in the UK.

So does that mean our only option when it rains is to wear this garment with a helmet on?

If the camouflage pattern itself is designed to be multi-purpose then why can't the jacket's actual design be as versatile and function well in various situations?

It would seem lessons from the past and, in particular, what was good about the old Combat 95 clothing system have been forgotten. — **Cpl Tristan Munro, REME**.

**Lt Col Simon Blake, SO1 Availability Management, Logistical Support, responds:** Your observations on the current lightweight waterproof jacket and, in particular, the lack of a hood are understood.

However, the garment was brought into service originally as an urgent operational requirement for Operation Herrick.

It has since been rolled out as standard issue.

The item was designed for the most exacting dismounted close-quarter combat role, where a hood was deemed inappropriate because it restricts hearing and situational awareness.

A waterproof cold wet weather hat, subject to final funding approval, is scheduled to become standard issue for field wear.

In addition, the use of the jacket and its overall design will be the subject of further research and development work.

“

IT LOOKS AS IF I'LL HAVE TO PAY FOR NEW ONES MYSELF

”

## Putting the boot in

I AM sure I'm not the first, and nor will I be the last, to complain about the lack of issued boots.

I am still waiting for a pair ordered in August 2014. I was told they would arrive by November.

I simply can't see why it is so hard for these relatively low-tech items to be supplied to us.

To make matters worse, I have just received instructions for a winter course I wish to attend and it requires me to have two suitable pairs of issued footwear.

However, I am still wearing hot climate theatre boots that are virtually worn out.

It looks as if I will have to pay for new ones myself if I'm going to be able to attend the course. — **Name and address supplied.**

**Lt Col Simon Blake, SO1 Availability Management, Logistical Support, replies:** I understand your frustration and there is no denying the introduction of the brown combat boots since 2012 has not been without its challenges.

The sheer weight of demand in the earlier months put undue pressure on supply, with a disproportionate number of people ordering the Altberg style.

Quartermasters, with the assistance of their logistic support staff, have the ability to seek out stock of both black and brown combat boots – the former still being an acceptable form of footwear.

Furthermore, they will soon be told to review all brown combat boot demand and not to be constrained by specific makes such as Altberg and Haix.

As a last resort – where a local purchase of a boot is the only option – this should only be done in conjunction with the unit quartermaster in accordance with JSP 886.

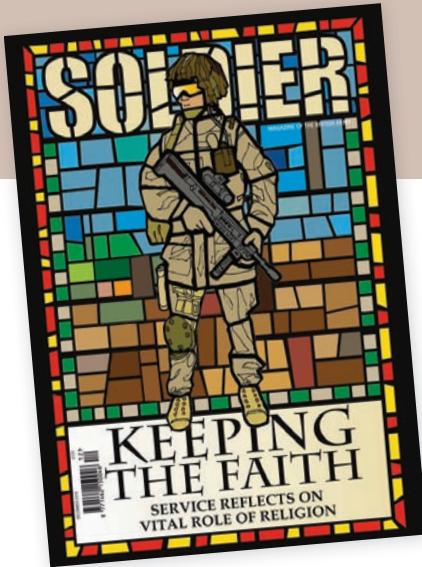
No soldier should ever be expected to buy and self-fund entitled footwear and uniform.



Handle with care: This item is so rare it's being put in a museum

Picture: Graeme Main

## Were we living on a prayer?



Our look at the role of religion in the Army in the December 2014 issue caused quite a stir...

### 'INCLUSIVITY IS KEY'

I WAS so pleased to read your debate about the dominance of the Christian faith in spiritual events in the Army, and agree wholeheartedly with Lt Col Laurence Quinn's concerns.

If we believe what we preach – that the Service welcomes people from all backgrounds – then we have to start making sure our core spiritual events are inclusive for people of all religions and none, and not directed to any one faith.

If the chaplain general's view is correct – that he hears no evidence that soldiers' faith needs are any less – then just think how much more successful he could be if faith-focused occasions such as Remembrance Day were constructed to allow all of our personnel to feel involved, not just the Christians. – **Maj Michael Collie, Mercian.**

### No room for debate

I READ the December issue of *Soldier* with incredulity and don't think I have seen such unbalanced reporting for a long time.

The line on the front cover set the pace – "Service reflects on the vital role of religion".

So no room for debate there.

You have missed out all those people who have beliefs but don't follow a religion.

Why not lead with, "Service reflects on the vital role of belief"?

Also, you have not looked very hard for any views that counter the religious perspective.

You found only one – Lt Col Quinn – and even then he was someone who admitted to praying!

Next time, I suggest you find proper atheists to provide an alternative view.

The Army has many of them among its ranks, as well as rationalists, secularists and humanists.

The article reached a low for me when the Bible was quoted as an authority for doing good by Cpl Afriyie Frank (RE).

I suggest he reads 1 Timothy 2:12: "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man", or Psalm 137:9: "Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rocks".

It might give him a new perspective on his faith. – **Maj Tarquin Shipley, R Signals.**

### Humanists ignored

YOUR lack of balance in the recent article on religion is concerning.

It struck me as a thinly disguised marketing exercise on behalf of the chaplains to justify the continued privilege they have over those, including a substantial proportion of serving soldiers, who have no faith.

The cover of the magazine even included a line referring to the "vital" role of religion.

Could you not have referred to the crucial role of humanists and atheists too, or do we not have such a vital role in your opinion?

The graphics and imagery used within the main article were all, without exception, supportive of Christian beliefs.

You took time to interview a number of Army padres for the feature.

I'm sure they are all honourable in their views, but why did you not ask for an interview with a representative of the UK Armed Forces Humanist Association as well?

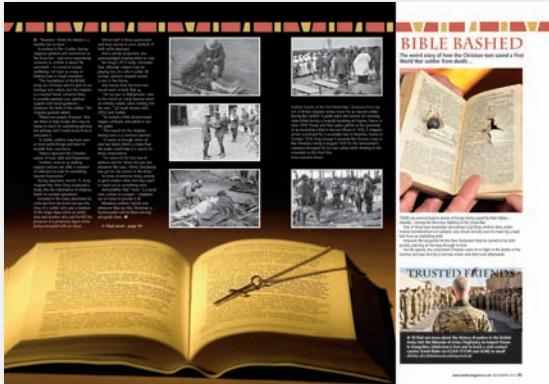
Your own editorial referred to "trusted padres".

But why did you not acknowledge in your editorial that secularists could also be on hand to help and maintain the morale of personnel?

The answer to which is, of course, that chaplains are fighting tooth and nail to prevent humanists from being appointed to serve our soldiers in that way. – **Michael Kinney, Hartlip, Kent.**



**“** YOU HAVE MISSED OUT ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BELIEFS BUT DONT FOLLOW A RELIGION **”**



# GOT A GRIP?

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk  
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## Jewish perspective

■ AS chairman of the Jewish Committee for the Armed Forces, I would like to add the voice of Jewish personnel to the debate on religion.

We have had more than 80 commissioned Jewish chaplains since 1892 and the important role played by them cannot be overstated.

Their presence and availability has been welcomed in war and peace by troops of all shades of Judaism.

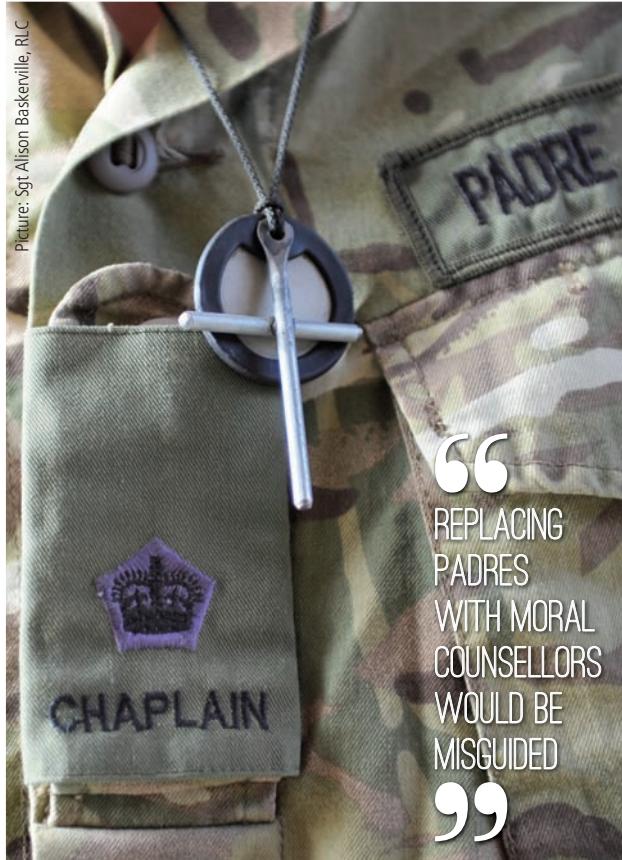
We have just returned to uniformed chaplaincy after a gap of some 20 years and the difference has proved to be noticeably positive.

Our tri-Service chaplain, Padre (Rabbi) Reuben Livingstone, has also found that he is approached by personnel of all faiths.

The fact that his cap and collar badges depict a star rather than a cross is not a barrier to the soldier who wants to unburden his problems on a friendly and independent party.

A Christian-based ethos for our chaplaincy does not present members of the Jewish faith with any problems whatsoever as we recognise this as having Judeo-Christian roots in any case.

Similarly, I believe members of other non-Christian faiths wouldn't have a problem with this either as they too are represented within chaplaincy, albeit by civilian chaplains at the moment. — **Martin Newman, Manchester.**



66  
REPLACING  
PADRES  
WITH MORAL  
COUNSELLORS  
WOULD BE  
MISGUIDED  
99

## Moral guidance required

■ THE debate about the possible future need and role of padres in the Armed Forces will be long and difficult and there are no straightforward answers.

The Dalai Lama once wrote, "I am a man of religion but religion alone cannot answer all of our problems" but replacing padres with moral counsellors, as Lt Col Quinn suggested in your article, would be misguided in my opinion.

They would have to tread a very difficult path full of potential ethical hurdles.

Perhaps, regardless of any decision to remove or keep padres, the Army should formalise its own ethical values and beliefs to inform and guide personnel rather than even consider having "morality minders". — **Paul Doughty, ex-RLC.**

**The editor, taking to the lectern, replies:** Thanks for all your letters on this emotive subject.

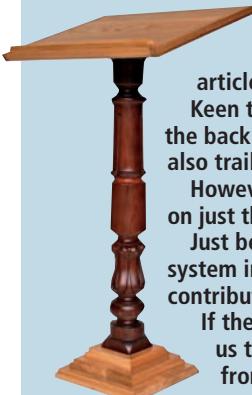
When compiling material on what we knew would be a hotly-debated topic we asked some tough questions of the chaplain general and, as such, I think it is a tad unfair to call the resulting article a "marketing exercise".

Keen to represent the other side of the debate, we dedicated *Final Word* at the back of the magazine to showcasing troops' views on this matter and we also trailed the piece on Facebook, where a fascinating debate took place.

However, I make no apology for a feature about the role of religion focusing on just that.

Just because we did not go into detail about the role of any other belief system in particular on this occasion isn't to say that they do not have a valid contribution to make to the diversity of Army life.

If the Armed Forces Humanist Association or any other group would like us to feature their work or ideas in a future issue we would love to hear from them using the details at the top of this page.



## DIGITAL DOSSIER

Your views from the web...



@soldiermagazine

### #GURKHAS (P 24-35)

**@MahatoDilip**

If a man says he is not afraid of dying, he is either lying or is a #Gurkha

### #MUSIC (P 72-73)

**@Richmond161095**

Can't stop listening to *All Of My Life* at the moment, that song really is something else :)

### #BOOKS (P 74-75)

**@macca\_united**

#WalkingtheNile was superb again. Immersed in culture. Proving also that there are many good Muslims in the world.

### #MASTERS RUGBY (P 88)

**@armyrugbyunion**

Well fought contest in dreadful wet and cold conditions well played to both teams.



www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine

## HERRICK LESSONS

**Nic Anderson**

Wash your hands thoroughly and carry your own bog roll. Also, diarrhoea and vomiting can help you lose weight as part of an uncontrolled diet.

## DIARY ROOMS BOOK

**Hugh McNeill**

Your words mean more than you can imagine, your hopes more than you can believe, because they are from your heart.

## SAPPER BOXING (P 80)

**Lewis Jones**

Full weekend of training done. I WILL be bringing that title home on February 21!

## Call for more help to buy

THE government is supposedly assisting us with the Forces Help to Buy scheme, but I'm not sure it's working.

For a start, what a wonderful way for the government to milk Service personnel thanks to every loan exceeding £10,000 being liable for income tax.

Then, my understanding of JSP 464 is that if I were to borrow £25,000 I would pay the Treasury around £6,000 in the first year alone in income tax (40 per cent on £15,000).

Also, what if I'm posted away and want my family by my side?

If I decide to rent out my new house I have to pay interest on the full amount of any outstanding scheme advance.

And finally, there is the issue of house prices.

The average semi-detached three-bedroom property in Surrey, the area in which I am currently posted, costs well over £250,000 so even the full loan is not sufficient for a 90 per cent mortgage. — **A/Maj John Roberts, RE.**

**Brig Donnelly, DPS(A), replies:** Help to Buy means eligible personnel can apply for an interest-free loan of up to 50 per cent of their salary, capped at £25,000.

This limit has been set to ensure individuals do not borrow what they cannot repay.

The scheme can be used in conjunction with other affordable home purchase initiatives including Help to Buy equity loans and shared ownership.

Under Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs regulations if you borrow more than £10,000 you are

liable for taxation on the benefit of not paying any interest.

This is known as the "cash equivalent" and is calculated by multiplying the average loan amount by the HMRC official interest rate, which is currently 3.25 per cent.

For example, a Help to Buy loan of £20,000 over the previous tax year attracts a cash equivalent of £650 (3.25 per cent of £20,000).

The tax payable is determined by your tax code.

A higher rate taxpayer would pay 40 per cent of £650 in income tax, amounting to £260.

Once the outstanding loan balance falls below an average of £10,000, you are no longer liable for tax on the cash equivalent.

However, you are correct about letting out the property you used the loan to purchase.

If you are given permission to do this you will be charged interest on the loan amount at the HMRC official rate.

You will also have to inform both your mortgage provider and the taxman.

Full rules of the Forces Help to Buy scheme are detailed in JSP 464, part one, chapter 12.

You can also read more in ABN 23/14 and DIB 07/14, which includes a comprehensive question and answer section.



### SLICE OF SERVICE LIFE

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



## CORPORAL 'CRATED'

• THANK you for publishing a photo of one of our Royal Tank Regiment corporals in January's magazine ("Corporals up in arms", *Talkback*).

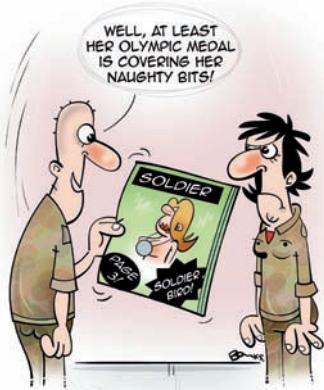
The image had obviously been taken from file and may have misled your readers into thinking the disgruntled soldier in question was from our formation.

You may rest assured that an enjoyable evening was had by our corporals' club at the expense of the photo's subject.

Despite not being a requirement under Queen's Regulations, our new club is thriving with one successful function under our belts and another on the way.

The majority of the regiment's corporals are members despite this being entirely voluntary, and all at an affordable and worthwhile price. — **Cpl Lance Rugg, Royal Tank Regiment.**

“  
WHAT  
A WAY  
FOR THE  
GOVERNMENT  
TO MILK  
SERVICE  
PERSONNEL  
”



## Where are the women?

• BROWSING through a rack of *Soldier* magazines today, something struck me: going back over three years of issues I could find just three editions that clearly featured a woman on the cover.

The last – a group of competitive boxers – was in February 2013 and the others were from 2012. One showed Capt Heather Stanning (RA) and another Her Majesty the Queen.

I suppose this demonstrates that females can get on your front page if they can manage to (a) cover themselves in sporting glory or (b) be the reigning monarch.

There is, I believe, a serious point here. Many of your readers are women; they wear the uniform and they serve, fight and die for their country.

*Soldier* features some excellent articles but I just think you could do a better job of representing your readership overtly on the cover. — **W01 Carl Wick (AGC (SPS)).**

**The editor replies:** Your letter comes as debate over *The Sun's* topless page three photos rages on.

If you had gone several decades further back in your research, however, you may have been shocked to learn that this publication has also printed images of questionable taste in the form of "Soldier bird".

Thankfully, most of society has moved on to judge women on their abilities rather than cup size.

Therefore, placing a female on our cover simply because she is that, or enforcing a 50/50 gender balance that does not exist, seems counterproductive and crass.

We will of course welcome more female cover stars when the artistic and editorial reasons merit it.

Crowns are not a prerequisite.

# We've helped secure pension rights for all Armed Forces widows



## Join us and see how we can help you



After seven years of careful and thoughtful campaigning we have finally **succeeded in persuading the government to change**

**the rules** so that all Armed Forces widows can now retain their pension on remarriage or cohabitation from April 2015. This will affect the lives of an estimated 400,000 women over the next 40 years.

As the pension watchdog for the Armed Forces community, **we exist to protect your interests and help you get the most from your pension.**

### HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

Armed Forces Pensions are complex and we can **help you by advising** when to leave (and when not to), commutation, how to deal with pension troughs, the impact of AFPS2015 from April, the implications of redundancy, divorce, how you might be able to top up your pension; and if you are a reservist, **what the new pension rules mean for you.** Help is available from our acknowledged Pension Advisory Service experts.



### VALUABLE MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Our Members also have access to **valuable through-life services** with significant discounts from trusted affiliates in Travel, Legal & Financial, Healthcare and Motoring.



Major General  
John Moore-Bick CBE DL

General Secretary of the Forces Pension Society

### NOW IS THE TIME TO JOIN

April 2015 sees the introduction of the new Armed Forces Pension Scheme and you need to know how it affects you and your family. And if you join us online now (membership for you and your partner costs just £35 p.a.), **we'll send you a City Break voucher worth £100 (T's & C's apply); just visit our website at [www.forcespensionsociety.org](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org) quoting Promo Code SLD2015.**



## JOIN US AND GET THE MOST FROM **YOUR PENSION**

### Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London, SW8 1RL

Tel: 020 7820 9988 - email: [memsec@forpen.co.uk](mailto:memsec@forpen.co.uk) - [www.forcespensionsociety.org](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org)



# Independent Education

Boarding School - Girls & Boys, 5 to 19 years

Ranked by the Daily Telegraph for A level and equivalent qualifications 2013:

## Queen Ethelburga's College

- Top northern day and boarding school
- UK's 4th day and boarding school

## The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's

- 2<sup>nd</sup> northern day and boarding school
- UK's 5th day and boarding school

For the fourth year running we have pegged your contribution per child, per term, at £795. Childcare Vouchers also accepted. This now means we rank as one of the most competitively priced schools for Forces in the UK.

Over £80m invested in new facilities in the last eight years. Our boarding facilities are the best in Europe. Every bedroom has its own private shower and toilet plus telephone, voice mail, large plasma TV/DVD player with gaming port (on timer), a Sony PS3, fridge, microwave, trouser press and hot drinks facilities. House staff are friendly and caring.



We understand the needs of service families with staff who are married to serving members of the Forces. With years of experience in ensuring our 200+ Forces children settle well, are confident and highly successful.

Easy to get to by road, rail and air. We work hard, we play hard. Top of the line academic facilities and resources with an amazing range of out of hours activities.

Dedicated, professional, friendly and helpful staff go the "extra mile" to ensure your child is happy and doing well. We have Forces families from all over the UK, not just the North. One new pupil described our Estate as 'imagine Hogwarts meets American Campus'.

Successful CCF unit. Huge range of sports plus £6m new Sports Centre, new 100 station £1m gymnasium health club + music and drama. Wide range of abilities accepted. A full range of A-Level & BTEC courses.

Over 98% of our Year 13 students went on to University with majority to Oxford, Cambridge, Ivy League or Russell Group universities.

See how we are into Sport: [www.SportsVillageQE.org](http://www.SportsVillageQE.org)

"Our son read your prospectus. Wonders will never cease. He soon found the piece about all the things you put in a boarding bedroom including a mega plasma TV and PS3, plus all your sports facilities, now he is all smiles!"

## Queen Ethelburga's

Thorpe Underwood. Yorkshire. [www.QE.org](http://www.QE.org)  
Tel: 01423 333 330 Email: [info@QE.org](mailto:info@QE.org)

### UK's Top 140 Independent Boarding Schools - 2014 Daily Telegraph % A\*/A-Levels and equivalent qualifications

= Ranking of Boarding Schools
= % A*/A-Levels & equivalent qualifications
= Overall National League Table Ranking

1	95%	Cardiff Sixth Form College	1
2	91%	Wycombe Abbey School	2
3	81%	Concord College	9
4	80%	Queen Ethelburga's College	10
5	76%	Faculty Queen Ethelburga's	18
6	75%	Brighton College	24
7	74%	St. Swithun's School	27
8	74%	St. Mary's School, Ascot	28
9	70%	Wellington College	33
10	70%	d'Overbroeck's College	34
11	69%	Ruthin School	35
12	69%	City of London Freemen's	38
13	68%	Headington School	43
14	66%	Queen Margaret's York	47
15	65%	St. Mary's Calne	49
16	65%	Caterham School	50
17	65%	Badminton School	51
18	65%	St. Catherine's, Bramley	52
19	64%	Oundle School	54
20	64%	Marlborough College	55
21	64%	Hurtwood House	57
22	62%	Dulwich College	60
23	60%	Benenden School	64
24	59%	St. Leonards-Mayfield	72
25	59%	Warwick School	74
26	59%	Rugby School	75
27	58%	Bromsgrove School	82
28	57%	Malvern St. James	84
29	57%	Canford School	87
30	57%	Bishop's Stortford College	88
31	57%	Loughborough Grammar	91
32	57%	Royal School, Haslemere	93
33	56%	King's School, Canterbury	94
34	56%	Kingswood School	97
35	55%	Maymount International	98
36	55%	Ockbrook School	99
37	55%	Chigwell School	101
38	55%	Queenswood	102
39	55%	Uppingham School	103
40	55%	Woldham School	105

41	54%	Royal High Sch Bath	108	91	43%	Talbot Heath School	206
42	54%	St. Peter's School	110	92	43%	St. George's Edinburgh	208
43	54%	Sherborne Girls	116	93	43%	Downside School	209
44	53%	Mount School York	119	94	43%	King's Ely	210
45	53%	Haberdasher Mon. G	120	95	42%	Ipswich School	213
46	52%	Merchantiston Castle	121	96	42%	Queen's College	214
47	52%	Dauntsey's School	123	97	41%	Bradfield College	218
48	52%	Christ's Hospital	124	98	41%	Chetham's Sch. Music	220
49	52%	Bury Grammar Girls	126	99	41%	Harrogate Ladies' Coll.	223
50	52%	Leweston School	127	100	41%	Stamford High School	226
51	52%	Bedford School	129	101	41%	Kimbolton School	227
52	51%	Prior Park College	131	102	40%	St Margaret's Bushey	228
53	51%	Christ College	134	103	40%	Lincoln Minster School	230
54	51%	Clifton College	141	104	39%	Kirkham Grammar	231
55	50%	Ashford School	142	105	39%	Royal Russell School	232
56	50%	Burgess Hill Girls	146	106	39%	Wellington School	236
57	49%	The Leys School	147	107	39%	Loretto School	237
58	49%	Bootham School	148	108	38%	The Oratory School	239
59	49%	ACS Cobham Int.	149	109	38%	Leighton Park School	240
60	49%	Merchant Taylors' B	151	110	38%	Royal Sch. Dungannon	242
61	49%	Wells Cathedral Sch	152	111	38%	Ashville College	244
62	49%	Surbiton High School	156	112	37%	Stamford School	248
63	48%	Kent College	158	113	37%	Trent College	249
64	48%	Bellerbys Brighton	160	114	36%	Battle Abbey School	250
65	48%	St John's School	164	115	36%	St. Edmunds Cantbury	251
66	48%	Cheltenham College	165	116	35%	Bede's Senior School	254
67	47%	Roedean School	169	117	35%	Langley School	255
68	47%	Haileybury	172	118	35%	Ratcliffe College	257
69	47%	St. Teresa's, Effingham	173	119	35%	Sutton Valence Sch	258
70	47%	St. Leonards	174	120	35%	Worksop College	259
71	47%	New Hall School	175	121	34%	Box Hill School	263
72	46%	Oakham School	176	122	34%	Hampshire Collegiate	265
73	46%	Brentwood School	177	123	34%	Glenalmond College	266
74	46%	St. Mary's, Shaftbury	180	124	34%	Wrekin College	267
75	46%	St. Mary's, Cambridge	181	125	33%	Woodhouse Grove	269
76	46%	Bellerbys Cambridge	182	126	33%	St. George's Ascot	270
77	46%	Ampleforth College	183	127	32%	St. Edmund's College	274
78	46%	Moreton Hall	184	128	32%	Barnard Castle Sch	276
79	45%	The Godolphin Sch	185	129	32%	St. John's College	277
80	45%	Gresham's School	186	130	31%	Pocklington School	279
81	45%	Reed's School	187	131	31%	The Purcell School	280
82	45%	Mill Hill School	189	132	31%	Saint Felix School	281
83	45%	Welbeck College	190	133	30%	Stonyhurst College	283
84	44%	King William's College	192	134	30%	Culford School	285
85	44%	St. Francis' College	193	135	30%	St. Bees School	287
86	44%	Kelly College	198	136	29%	St. James Senior B	290
87	44%	Lord Wandsworth Col	200	137	29%	CATS College London	292
88	43%	Monmouth School	201	138	29%	Tring Park Perf. Arts	293
89	43%	St. Michael's School	202	139	28%	Dover College	294
90	43%	Sidcot School	203	140	28%	Oswestry School	295

# BULLET POINTS

BITE-SIZED DATA TO KEEP YOU IN THE KNOW

## ⊕ APPOINTMENTS

**Maj Gen Richard Cripwell** to be appointed **Head of British Defence Staff United States** in succession to Maj Gen Buster Howes in March 2015.

**Maj Gen Richard Nugee** to be appointed **Military Secretary** in succession to Maj Gen Shaun Burley in March 2015.

**Brig Ian Cave**, currently Director Training (Army), to be appointed **Deputy Chief of Staff Plans Joint Force Command (Naples)** in the rank of major general in succession to Maj Gen Robert Weighill in July 2015.

## ⊕ CAREERS

**Employment portal TipTopJob** has created [www.exmilitaryjob.com](http://www.exmilitaryjob.com) to help former Service personnel find work in the civilian sector. Visit the website for more details.

**Ex-Military Careers** is a free-to-use job board listing more than 10,000 vacancies for ex-Service personnel. For more information visit [www.ex-militarycareers.com](http://www.ex-militarycareers.com)

## ⊕ COMPETITIONS

**Spine line winner:** Malcolm Atkinson-Evans, Buckley Barracks, Chippenham.

**Top Titles:** Adam Blackburn, Shefford, Bedfordshire; Robert Smith, Uckfield, East Sussex; Gordon Crandles, Edinburgh, East Lothian.

**Let's Be Cops DVD:** John Southward, Amble, Northumberland; Capt Christopher Lucas, Rusholme, Manchester; Mr L Matthews, Basildon, Essex; LCpl Steven Wood, Marchwood, Hampshire.

**War in the West:** SSI Christopher Charity, Swindon, Wiltshire; LCpl Ryan Bywater, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire; WO2 Rolf Mason, Shrivenham, Wiltshire; WO2 Dean Crichton, Oman BFPO 767; Mark Sullivan, York, North Yorkshire.

**Christmas competition winners:**

**Snow Nation:** WO2 Gary Smektala, Prestonpans, East Lothian.

**Chilly Powder:** Cpl Barry Maclean RAF, Northallerton, North Yorkshire.

**Newquay Activity Centre:** Victoria Haggerty, Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire.

**Victory Services Club:** Sharon Jackson, Army Reserve Centre, Kempston, Bedfordshire.

**Warren James:** WO1 Craig Geddes, HQ Brunei Garrison, BFPO 11; Capt Simon Hawken, Paderborn, BFPO 22.

**Powermonkey:** Lt Col Jon Duckworth, Chicksands, Bedfordshire; Maj John Nicholl, Castlemartin, Pembrokeshire; WO2 Tobias Woolfit, Shefford, Bedfordshire.

**Heinnie:** LCpl Anthony Wilsher, Didcot, Oxfordshire; WO2 Paul Thornhill, Kinloss, Forres; Cpl Paul Cary, BFPO 801.

**Magnum:** WO2 Stewart Hamilton, BFPO 825; Cpl Neville Robinson, Lichfield, Staffordshire; Capt Joanna Vann, Chicksands, Bedfordshire; Capt Simon Hawken, Paderborn, BFPO 22; WO2 Daniel Mitchell, Army Reserve Centre, Wakefield.

**d3o:** Capt Dale Luttig, London; LCpl Angus Hendry, Strensall, York; Name withheld, Braintree, Essex.

**Snugpak:** SSgt Paul Morey, Paderborn, BFPO 22; Sgt Steven Ware, Gosport, Hampshire.

## ⊕ DIRECTORY

**ABF The Soldiers' Charity:**  
0845 241 4820

**Armed Forces Buddhist Society:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3411; [www.afbs-uk.org](http://www.afbs-uk.org)

**Armed Forces Christian Union:**  
01252 311221; [www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

**Armed Forces Humanist Association:**  
[www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk](http://www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk)

**Armed Forces Muslim Association:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3252; [www.afma.org.uk](http://www.afma.org.uk)

**Army Families Federation:**  
01264 382324; mil 94391 2324; [www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

**Army LGBT Forum:**

[www.armylgbt.org.uk](http://www.armylgbt.org.uk); chair@armylgbt.org.uk

**Army Libraries:** 01252 340094

**Army Ornithological Society:**  
[www.armybirding.org.uk](http://www.armybirding.org.uk)

**Army Welfare Service:**  
01980 615975; [www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support](http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support)

**Big White Wall:**  
[www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

**Blind Veterans UK:**  
(formerly St Dunstan's)  
020 7723 5021; [www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk)

**British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association:**  
020 8590 1124; [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

**Children's Education Advisory Service:**  
01980 618244; [enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk)

**Erskine:**  
0141 814 4569; [www.erskine.org.uk](http://www.erskine.org.uk)

**Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society:**  
01372 841600; [www.combatstress.com](http://www.combatstress.com)

**Family Escort Service:**  
020 7463 9249

**Forcesline:**  
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services \*201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

**Forces Pension Society:**  
020 7820 9988

**Help for Heroes:**  
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459; [www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)

**Heroes Welcome:**  
[www.heroeswelcome.co.uk](http://www.heroeswelcome.co.uk)

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:**  
01722 436575

**Medal Office:**  
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

**Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group):**  
[www.mutualsupport.org.uk](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk)

**National Ex-Services Association:**  
[www.nesa.org.uk](http://www.nesa.org.uk)

**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:**  
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;

[www.ngvfa.org.uk](http://www.ngvfa.org.uk)

**Poppyscotland:**  
0131 557 2782; [www.poppyscotland.org.uk](http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk)

**Regular Forces' Employment Association:**  
0121 236 0058; [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)

**Remount:**  
01451 850 341; [www.remount.net](http://www.remount.net)

**Royal British Legion:**  
0808 802 8080; [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

**Royal British Legion Scotland:**  
0131 550 1583; [www.legionscotland.org.uk](http://www.legionscotland.org.uk)

**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:**  
01622 795900; [www.rbl.co.uk](http://www.rbl.co.uk)

**Scottish Veterans' Residences:**  
0131 556 0091; [www.srvonline.org](http://www.srvonline.org)

**Service Personnel and Veterans Agency:**  
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);  
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

**SSAFA:**  
0845 1300 975; [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

**Stoll (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation):**  
020 7385 2110; [info@stoll.org.uk](mailto:info@stoll.org.uk); [www.stoll.org.uk](http://www.stoll.org.uk)

**The Not Forgotten Association:**  
020 7730 2400; [www.nfassociation.org](http://www.nfassociation.org)

**The Poppy Factory:**  
020 8940 3305; [www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

**The Royal Star & Garter Homes:**  
020 8481 7676; [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)

**The Veterans Charity:**  
01753 653772; [info@veteranscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@veteranscharity.org.uk)

**uk4u Thanks!:**  
01798 812081; [www.uk4u.org](http://www.uk4u.org)

## ⊕ INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at [www.armynet.mod.uk](http://www.armynet.mod.uk)

**ABN 008/15:** Army Conference 2015 key points

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

## INTELLIGENCE CONTINUED

**ABN 007/15:** Army communication activity

**ABN 006/15:** Army Employer Engagement Directive

**ABN 005/15:** Sale of Defence Support Group – update

**ABN 004/15:** Army orienteering in 2015

**ABN 003/15:** Issued hearing protection compliance

**ABN 002/15:** Nano UAS briefing note

**ABN 001/15:** Single living accommodation infrastructure management system

**ABN 179/14:** *Career Management Handbook* part 4

**ABN 178/14:** Chief of the General Staff Christmas message 2014

**ABN 177/14:** Scottish drink drive regulations

**ABN 176/14:** Jewish leadership conference 2015

**ABN 175/14:** Reserves continuous attitude survey 2015

**ABN 174/14:** Launch of training exploitation

**ABN 173/14:** All-arms tactical aide memoire R2 slates

**ABN 172/14:** Game of Truce 2014

**ABN 171/14:** Armed Forces continuous attitude survey 2015

**DIN 2015DIN01-022:** The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK – membership for military personnel

**DIN 2015DIN01-021:** Performance appraisal and development report for all NHS Agenda for Change grades

**DIN 2015DIN01-020:** Performance management and pay reform – civilian dental practitioners

**DIN 2015DIN01-019:** Employment of full-time Reserve service (full commitment) personnel within the Army and other top-level budget holders

**DIN 2015DIN01-018:** Changes to the professional engineering institutions on HRMS

**DIN 2015DIN01-017:** Army officer terms of service – offer to extend intermediate regular commissions and medium commissions

**DIN 2015DIN01-014:** The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club Championships – Wimbledon 2015

**DIN 2015DIN01-013:** Full-time

Reserve service (home commitment) for Army Reserve unit command

**DIN 2015DIN01-011:** Late-entry commissions in the Adjutant General's Corps

**DIN 2015DIN01-010:** JSP 342 *Education of Service Children and Young People* (version 3.0, December 2014)

**DIN 2015DIN01-009:** Late-entry commissions in the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

**DIN 2015DIN01-008:** JSP 770 *Tri-Service Operational and Non-Operational Welfare Policy*

**DIN 2015DIN01-007:** Overseas conversion of civil partnerships to a marriage of a same-sex couple, within the UK Armed Forces

**DIN 2015DIN01-006:** Queen Victoria School admissions process for academic year 2015/16

**DIN 2015DIN01-005:** Tax relief for home-to-duty and business travel

**DIN 2015DIN01-004:** Reserves financial incentives

**DIN 2015DIN01-003:** Notification of changes to Armed Forces pension scheme 2005 and early departure payment (EDP) 2005 legislation including breaks in service, resettlement grants, EDP award reassessment

**DIN 2015DIN01-002:** Policy on the care of Service personnel under the age of 18

**DIN 2015DIN01-001:** Clarification of policy for medical and dental officers applying for the first primary healthcare bonus under Armed Forces pension scheme 2005

**DIN 2014DIN01-231:** SSAFA transitional mentoring scheme

**DIN 2014DIN01-230:** Outside appointments – Reservists

**DIN 2014DIN01-229:** MoD civilian dental practitioners and specialist dental officers pay award 2014

**DIN 2014DIN01-228:** MoD civilian medical practitioners pay award 2014

**DIN 2014DIN01-226:** 2015 pilgrimages by the Armed Forces region of HCPT The Pilgrimage Trust

**DIN 2014DIN01-225:** Data management of Reserve trained strength for professionally qualified officers and soldiers within the Army Medical Services

**DIN 2014DIN01-224:** Service pupil premium details for 2014/15

**DIN 2015DIN04-003:** Amendments to operational medical modules contents (Oct-Dec 2014)

**DIN 2015DIN04-002:** Declaration of obsolescence – PSC 503

**DIN 2015DIN04-001:** Declaration of obsolescence – PSC 506 OS

**DIN 2014DIN04-248:** Trade receipts deliveries, booking-in procedure for the LS Donnington, Bicester and St Athan sites

**DIN 2014DIN04-247:** Declaration of obsolete – Pike

**DIN 2014DIN04-246:** Declaration of obsolete – Announcer

**DIN 2014DIN04-245:** Declaration of obsolete – Cormorant

**DIN 2014DIN04-244:** Amendments to operational medical modules contents (Oct-Dec 14)

**DIN 2014DIN04-243:** Declaration of obsolete – ECM systems Tx1bM and Tx2EY

**DIN 2014DIN04-242:** Amendments to operational medical modules contents – inclusion of B Braun infusomat space volumetric pump and perfusor space TCI syringe pump within medical modules

**DIN 2014DIN04-241:** *Sea Survival Equipment Log*, block amendment 80

**DIN 2014DIN04-240:** The Inventory Management Operating Centre requirements change process and requirements change form

**DIN 2014DIN04-239:** Removal from service of cartridge ignition 0.410 inch

**DIN 2014DIN04-238:** Surface ship configuration reports and index of abstracts issued by Master Record Data Centre (Ships)

**DIN 2014DIN04-237:** Declaration of obsolete – Accent and Accrid systems

**DIN 2014DIN04-236:** Marine fuel supply arrangements for ports in the UK and overseas

**DIN 2014DIN04-235:** Intended out-of-service date – declaration of obsolescence of low value consumable non-powered hand tools and tool sets

**DIN 2015DIN05-002:** Defence airspace and air traffic management – the defence approach to a changing domestic and international regulatory environment

**DIN 2015DIN05-001:** Defence Medical Services senior structure

**DIN 2014DIN05-039:** Relocation of 71 Inspection and Repair Squadron HQ from MoD St Athan to A4 FE, RAF Wittering

**DIN 2014DIN05-038:** The Joint Electronic Warfare Operational

Support Centre and the provision of Electronic Warfare Operational Support to operations

**DIN 2014DIN05-037:** The Dartford-Thurrock river crossing – exemption for MoD vehicles

**DIN 2015DIN06-003:** Release of JSP 317, edition 5, AL 3, *Joint Service Safety Regulations for the Storage and Handling of Fuels and Lubricants*

**DIN 2015DIN06-001:** Reissue of JSP 375 *Management of Health and Safety in Defence* and JSP 418 *Management of Environmental Protection in Defence*

**DIN 2014DIN06-019:** Managing civilian employees' health surveillance/assessment requirements on HRMS

**DIN 2015DIN07-003:** Update – information management courses for September 2014 to July 2015 at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham

**DIN 2015DIN07-002:** Doctrine Note 14/07 – tactical air landing operations

**DIN 2015DIN07-001:** Exercise Westerly Whisk

**DIN 2014DIN07-205:** University Service unit sail training week and regatta

**DIN 2014DIN07-204:** Army survival, evasion, resistance and extraction policy

**DIN 2014DIN07-203:** Regular Army officer language requirements for sub-unit command

**DIN 2014DIN07-201:** Instructor training courses for Fleet outsourced activities project training staff

**DIN 2014DIN07-200:** Defence Centre of Training Support course schedule April 2015 to March 2016

**DIN 2014DIN07-199:** Instructions for the all-arms commando course

**DIN 2014DIN07-198:** Unit welfare personnel training courses 2015

**DIN 2014DIN07-197:** Captains' warfare course

**DIN 2014DIN07-196:** Training by manufacturer or civilian provider – submissions for financial year 2016/17

**DIN 2014DIN07-195:** Joining instructions for personnel attending the Engineering Training School, RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall

**DIN 2014DIN07-194:** Maritime Warfare School – aviation warfare – 2015 course dates

**DIN 2014DIN07-190:** 2014/15 Cyber operational awareness courses

**DIN 2014DIN07-188:** Joint full spectrum targeting training courses

**DIN 2014DIN07-186:** The A4 intermediate management course – general outline and application process

**DIN 2014DIN07-185:** The defence logistics management course – general outline and application process

**DIN 2014DIN07-184:** The engineering and logistics forward commanders pre-employment training course – general outline and application process

**DIN 2014DIN07-183:** Corporate accountancy training scheme recruitment

**DIN 2015DIN08-001:** Insurance arrangements for unit-organised community engagement events, open days and other functions

**DIN 2014DIN09-023:** Changes to the regulations on wearing level four emblems

**DIN 2014DIN09-020:** The Firmin Sword of Peace Awards 2013 – results

**DIN 2014DIN09-019:** The Firmin Sword of Peace Awards 2014

**DIN 2014DIN09-018:** Award of European Security and Defence Policy Service Medal with Eufor RCA clasp

**DIN 2014DIN10-060:** British Army motorsports event – Rickshaw Ramble 2015

**DIB60/14:** The Armed Forces Covenant annual report 2014



## REUNION

**Operating theatre technician reunion, March 6-8, 2015.** All serving or retired Royal Army Medical Corps operating theatre technicians, operating department practitioners and operating department assistants are invited to attend the next event at the North Stafford Hotel, Stoke on Trent. Guests welcome. For further details and booking form contact Ken Hannah at [ottreunited1@gmail.com](mailto:ottreunited1@gmail.com) or visit <http://ottreunited.com>

**Martinique Battery reunion 2015** on April 18, 2015 at the Copthorne Hotel, Merry Hill, Dudley. For details email [k.brooksusher@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:k.brooksusher@hotmail.co.uk)

**The final School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering RFC annual dinner and President's XV** on May 8, 2015 at Arborfield. All serving and former members are invited to attend. Please register your interest by contacting SSgt Kennedy via [mark.kennedy@seae.mod.uk](mailto:mark.kennedy@seae.mod.uk) or

Lesley Lallament on 01189 763663.

**Roebuck Company Royal Rifle Volunteers/3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment Op Telic 6 2005 reunion** on June 13 at F Coy, 7 Rifles, Davies Street, London. For details please contact [mike.scott-hyde@bt.com](mailto:mike.scott-hyde@bt.com)

**Mansergh Troop 75/76 Joint Leaders Regiment Royal Artillery reunion** on September 12-13, 2015. Open to all ex-Mansergh Troop 75/76 and their partners. Exact venue and timings to be confirmed later. To attend please contact Mike Cave on 07516 633675 or email [mikebabes15@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mikebabes15@yahoo.co.uk)

**23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades Association** dinner, combined with the Midlands Region Parachute Regiment Association gala dinner, will take place at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on October 10.

Open to all personnel who have served in an airborne medical unit. For more information contact Roy Hatch on 01926 812363 or email [royhatchbem@fsmail.net](mailto:royhatchbem@fsmail.net)



## SEARCHLINE

**The combined mess for Hohne Station, 1 Medical Regiment and 2 Medical Regiment** is to close in the summer of 2015. Personnel

who have made presentations are asked to reclaim items by contacting WO1 Richard Mason at 2 Medical Regiment, Haig Barracks, BFPO 30 or [2med-rhq-rsm@mod.uk](mailto:2med-rhq-rsm@mod.uk). Items that have not been claimed by March 31 may be sold or auctioned off, with the proceeds supporting ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Andrew Copping is looking for information on **Hubert Harding, Royal Artillery, gunner number 1741365, who served with the 232 Searchlight Regiment between December 1940 and March 1946 near Exeter**. Anyone who can help is asked to contact him on 01252 721025.

**A new glossy guide to The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment** has been produced, covering the formation's heritage and recent operations. To purchase a copy (£6.50 including postage) write to Regimental Headquarters, PWRR, Tower of London, Tower Hill, London, EC3 4AB.

Surrey University student Rose Stratton is looking for **male members of the Armed Forces over the age of 18** to complete a short, anonymous online survey about body image. Anyone who can take part is asked to visit <http://goo.gl/uKqg3I>

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of the British Army football team playing their German counterparts to commemorate the Christmas truce of 1914.

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Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by February 27, 2015.

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

First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results

will be announced in the April issue. Usual rules apply.

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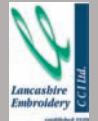
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# REVIEWS



## CHAMPION CHOICES

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[reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

# MOVIES

PICK OF THE MONTH:  
AMERICAN SNIPER

## SINGLE-MINDED SHOOTER

A VIEW OF IRAQ FROM A CRACK SHOT

## Review: Joe Clapson

**N**a movie that is a far cry from *The Hangover* franchise Bradley Cooper puts in a brilliant performance as Chris Kyle – a highly decorated US sniper on a self-appointed mission to rid Iraq of anti-Western terrorists.

Directed by Clint Eastwood, *American Sniper* is based on Kyle's autobiography of the same name and is pretty black and white – Americans good, Iraqis bad – although it does give a realistic look at what the Fallujah front line was like.

The movie doesn't pay a huge amount of attention to the Serviceman's backstory, other than that he was injured in a rodeo accident, so there is no focus on his politics, which allows Eastwood to stick to a clear and simple story of a crack shot taking on evil.

It charts the protagonist's rise from a wannabe Texas cowboy through harsh Navy Seal training to becoming the most deadly rifle ace in America's military history.

In the marksman's boots a bulked-up Cooper shows his acting range, depicting the mood swings of a real-life die-hard individual who struggles to decompress once home from war.

We watch through Kyle's telescopic sight as he takes a view of a bullet-ravaged Iraq and fires on his objectives to notch up 161 confirmed kills, including high-value targets who are hell-bent on murdering his compatriots.

And as he repeatedly returns to the firestorm to fight for America we see his anxiety levels rise on the same upward trajectory as his star status.

For his undoubtedly heroic efforts Kyle gains the moniker of "legend" but his single-minded outlook doesn't make for an easy relationship at home and his embattled wife Taya, played sensitively by Sienna Miller, feels the brunt of it.

Thanks to the chemistry between the on-screen couple the movie shows the toll that military operations can take on troops, even when they are heralded as the best of the best.

Given the complex nature of the conflict, in a heavily built-up area against a hate-filled enemy, the neverending plaudits handed to Kyle by his comrades can be understood and respected.

And although outside commentators have suggested that the sniper was politically motivated to add more numbers to his kill tally, Eastwood pays no attention to that speculation.

Nor does he dwell on the whys and wherefores of the US invasion of Iraq; he is purely concerned with painting a picture of the military action and he does an impressive job.

It is also testament to Cooper's performance that Kyle doesn't stand out as an undisputed hero despite his chest full of medals.

The feature's ending is one of its most powerful aspects with real footage of a funeral procession rolling alongside the credits. These striking images are not to be disregarded as filler – a point missed by the bad-mannered viewers at my screening who were rushing to the car park rather than reflecting on sacrifice.

Award nominations abound for the picture but it also triumphs in highlighting the mental strain of military combat on soldiers and their families.

At a time when post-traumatic stress disorder is a major concern that can only be a good thing. ■

**VERDICT:** The combination of Eastwood and Cooper makes for a compelling modern war film ★★★★★



## FURY out February 23

**DIRECTOR David Ayer** spoke to *Soldier* about his quest for realism during the filming of this Second World War epic. The end result boasts incredible attention to detail as the horrors of combat are played out when a Sherman tank crew goes on a mission behind enemy lines in Nazi Germany. The movie also succeeds in capturing the strong sense of brotherhood that existed between such small units.

**Richard Long, *Soldier***

**VERDICT:** Gripping – expertly captures the realities of war ★★★★★



## WHERE THE DEVIL HIDES out now

THE film opens on the sixth night of the sixth month of 1994 as six different women of the New Bethlehem Community give birth to girls. The religious cult they have been born into prophesised that one of them would be the devil and as they approach their 18th birthdays, killings and suicides begin to mount up. There isn't much in the way of horror but the movie changes pace right at the end so it's worth staying tuned in.

**Phil Tiffany, ex-RAOC/RLC**

**VERDICT:** A really good watch with a few jumpy moments ★★★★★



## WALK AMONG THE TOMBSTONES out now

**LIAM Neeson** stars as Matt Scudder, an ex-New York policeman who now operates as an unlicensed private investigator. Scudder helps a drug trafficker hunt down the men who killed his wife and uncovers a murderous gang of deviants. It's an old-style detective thriller and a welcome break from the usual fast action and gunfights that are now expected in this genre.

**Joe Clapson, *Soldier***

**VERDICT:** A good old-fashioned detective chase with a proper plot ★★★★★



## WHAT WE DID ON OUR HOLIDAY out now

**BILLY Connolly** takes centre-stage as 75-year-old Gordie McLeod. He is visited by his son Doug (**David Tennant**) and his wife Abi (**Rosamund Pike**) – who are going through a secret divorce – and their three kids. With the other self-obsessed son and his manic wife thrown in the film is about dysfunctional family amid a media circus which has hilarious consequences.

**Rodge Tapply, ex-RE**

**VERDICT:** Excellent feel-good film that will have you laughing ★★★★★



## A MOST WANTED MAN out now

THIS has all the makings of a classic spy thriller; **Philip Seymour Hoffman** as the dishevelled head of a Hamburg intelligence unit; a plot that requires no small amount of concentration and some impressive German accents from cast members. But somehow the film manages to be less than the sum of its parts. The suspense builds but it never really gets going and when the end does come you are left thinking "was that it?".

**SSgt Mike Owens, RE**

**VERDICT:** Hoffman stands out but otherwise it's forgettable ★★★★★



## WIN... FURY

DON "Wardaddy" Collier (**Brad Pitt**) commands a Sherman tank and its crew on a deadly mission behind enemy lines. Against a larger, stronger opposition the odds are stacked against him as his men take on the Nazis. *Soldier* has teamed up with Sony Pictures Home Entertainment to offer copies of the DVD to five lucky readers. To be in with a chance of winning tell us the name of Pitt's character in *Fight Club*. Send your answers to the usual postal address or alternatively by email to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

**Closing date: February 27**

# MUSIC

PICK OF THE MONTH:  
ALL OF MY LIFE

## CALLED TO KAJAKI

ASPIRING ARTIST HANDED  
MOVIE MUSICAL HONOUR



## Interview: Richard Long

**W**HILE the cinematic release of *Kajaki* drew critical acclaim for its portrayal of the heroism shown by British soldiers trapped in an Afghan minefield it also formed the big break for aspiring artist Phoebe Katis.

The singer-songwriter was handed the honour of providing the sole musical theme for the film and her song *All of My Life* provided a poignant soundtrack to the closing sequences, when the audience is invited to read about the real personnel based at the Kajaki Dam in 2006.

Involvement in the project proved to be a family affair as Katis' father Paul assumed the roles of producer and director, which made her choice as collaborator almost inevitable.

"He wanted to capture the sentiment and emotion at the end of the film," the up-and-coming star told *Soldier*.

"He had heard the track at various gigs and at home and felt it would work well. He knew about my musical ambitions and I am so honoured that he wanted to use my song on something so special to him and so many other people."

After graduating in music from the University of Leeds last summer Katis landed a job at Pukka Films, the company behind the movie's recent release.

She worked on various post-production tasks – from organising merchandise to arranging the seating plan for the West End premiere – but the chance to showcase a song that was originally penned at the start of her studies was the true highlight.

"When thinking about his project my father asked me to rewrite the lyrics from the perspective of different groups of people all thinking of someone they've lost," she added.

"I think the main reason it resonates with the film is that it allows a certain cathartic release for the audience after the experience they have just sat through.

"It connects them to the men and to the reason the movie was made – as a tribute to our Armed Forces and all of those who have served and continue to serve."

The track has been well received on iTunes and proceeds from its sale are being donated to Help for Heroes, Walking with the Wounded and The Royal British Legion.

Katis said: "I wanted to continue giving to the charities that were supported by the film, so it was an obvious choice to go with those already involved."

"I also sent physical copies of the single to all of the real soldiers' homes and have received wonderful compliments from them and their families."

With the single proving to be a successful venture for the newcomer the stage is now set for a busy year in 2015 and numerous plans are already in the pipeline.

"I have a lot of ambitions including gigging, perhaps a tour, festival appearances and an album," she said.

"I am currently in planning mode with some exciting producers and hopefully I can reveal more very soon."

● *All of My Life* is available now on iTunes

## The Lightning Dream by Fury

ENTIRELY self-funded and produced this work from unsigned Worcester metallers **Fury** shows a band that are already thoroughly in their



stride. A modern take on the classic British heavy metal sound, the songwriting and musicianship are sublime with some killer riffs and indulgent shredding by guitar pair **JJ and Jake Beesley**. Standout tracks are *Out Beyond the Stars* and *Warriors Prayer*, while *Britannia* will move you to the core with its power and poignancy. Buy the album now at [www.furyofficial.bigcartel.com](http://www.furyofficial.bigcartel.com)

**Matt Walpole, ex-PWRR**

**VERDICT:** Absolutely faultless – a must-have album



## American Beauty/American Psycho by Fall Out Boy



JUST when you thought pop-punk outfit **Fall Out Boy** had slipped off the radar they come crashing back into the mainstream with their sixth album *American Beauty/American Psycho*. While single *Centuries* grows increasingly irksome with every listen it should not detract from what is a surprisingly decent offering. *Fourth of July* tackles the adult theme of a broken relationship but there is still plenty of fun to be had on *Novocaine* and *Uma Thurman* – which fuses the *Pulp Fiction* star with *The Munsters* theme tune.

**Richard Long, Soldier**

**VERDICT:** One of the better offerings in the band's back catalogue



## Title by Meghan Trainor



WITH the upbeat *All About That Bass* landing a monster breakthrough hit for aspiring American star **Meghan Trainor** it was safe

to assume it would be more of the same on her follow-up album. So it will be no surprise to hear there are doo-wops aplenty and harmonies galore in the constant flow of head-nodding pop anthems that fill this record. The lyrics offer little in terms of insight or meaning but the tunes are infectious at times and will prove memorable enough for fans of this genre.

**Joe Clapton, Soldier**

**VERDICT:** Sugary and sweet from pop's new pretender



## The Subways by The Subways

ROCK three-piece

**The Subways** are back with a cracking self-titled album full of slick riffs not seen since the early naughties. *I'm in*



*Love and It's Burning in My Soul* is a great example of thumping drums and aggressive guitars that will have you turning the volume up to 11. The band even show their lighter side in the entirely acoustic *Because of You*. *We Get Around* and *Black Letter* are simply outstanding and have hints of **The Ting Tings**, except both are far better than anything they've ever offered.

**LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles**

**VERDICT:** The best thing in British rock music for some time



## By Absence of the Sun by Triggerfinger

SUITED and booted quirky Belgian rockers **Triggerfinger** return with their latest offering *By Absence of the Sun*. The



album opens with *Game*, which starts out sounding like you've just walked into a jam session. But then the main riff kicks in and the slow stomp of the song grinds away as the lead vocals cut over the almost grunge-like backing track. With a sound much like **Led Zeppelin** it will be a definite hit among the rockers out there, piecing a void long missed since the likes of **Slipknot** – which is why they are on the same label.

**Sgt Craig Backhouse, Coldm Gds**

**VERDICT:** A well-crafted rock mosher's noisy paradise



## Uptown Special by Mark Ronson

SUPER-PRODUCER **Mark Ronson** is renowned for calling in an array of A-list collaborators when it comes to recording a new album and that is no different here. Pop superstar **Bruno Mars** leads the charge on the incredibly



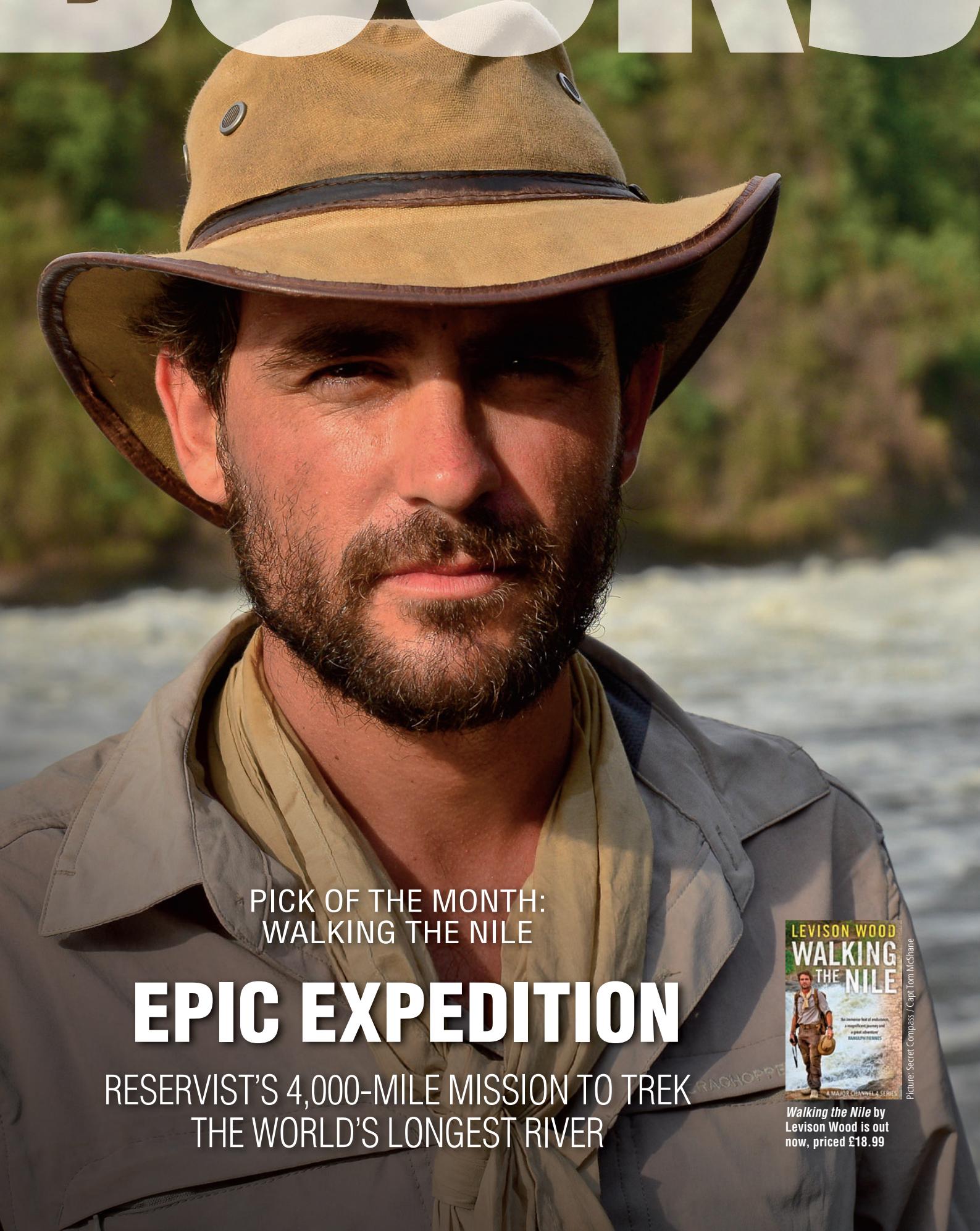
catchy single *Uptown Funk* – the true highlight of this offering – and it appears Ronson has hit the right note once again. Novelist **Michael Chabon** has been given the lyric-writing duties while **Stevie Wonder** lends a hand on *Crack in the Pearl, Pt II*. This is another sure-fire hit.

**Richard Long, Soldier**

**VERDICT:** Ronson and friends are back with a bang



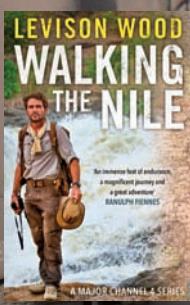
# BOOKS



PICK OF THE MONTH:  
WALKING THE NILE

## EPIC EXPEDITION

RESERVIST'S 4,000-MILE MISSION TO TREK  
THE WORLD'S LONGEST RIVER



Picture: Secret Compass / Capt Tom McShane

*Walking the Nile* by  
Levison Wood is out  
now, priced £18.99

## Interview: Becky Clark

**P**ARATROOPER Capt Levison Wood knows a thing or two about endurance.

Last year the Reservist launched a bid to become the first person to walk the length of the River Nile – some 4,250 miles.

Making his way from its source in Rwanda to its delta in the Mediterranean, the officer battled temperatures of up to 56 degrees Celsius and some of the most hostile terrain on earth.

His new book, *Walking the Nile*, relates the full story of the epic nine-month trek.

And last month a Channel 4 documentary of the same name attracted an average audience of two million – more than US cult series *Homeland*.

“People really seem to have got behind it,” he said, reflecting on the project’s popularity.

“It’s a different angle on the adventure genre; it’s not the Bear Grylls survival-type stuff but more about interaction with people and trying to change perceptions about what Africa is like.”

Recalling the extreme demands of the feat, Capt Wood continued: “Your body adapts to walking but coping with the monotony and the mental strain of getting up every day and doing it all over again was the hardest thing.

“You have to try and keep yourself from going mad by just focusing on the daily routine – the next break, the next water stop.”

The physical dangers were highlighted just weeks into the walk when Matt Power, an American travel writer who was accompanying Capt Wood in Uganda, died of heat stroke despite the team’s best efforts to save him.

Following the tragedy the explorer wrestled with the decision about whether to continue but after speaking to Power’s family he pressed on.

Further perils awaited in war-torn South Sudan, where the 32-year-old’s experiences as a Regular with 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment enabled him to keep a cool head.

“We arrived in Bor on the day when one of the tribal groups decided to storm the UN base and 62 people were killed,” he commented.

“That evening we were stuck in a compound and there was a gun battle in the streets and tracer fire going overhead – it wasn’t dissimilar to what I’d seen in Afghanistan.

“We had to go out to find food and one soldier, who was drunk, ran out and threatened to shoot me but my guide managed to talk him round.

“We thought we might have to swim across the Nile and hide in the bushes until it calmed down and take our chances with the crocodiles.”

Now serving with the Military Stabilisation and Support Group (MSSG), Capt Wood said his new role had also assisted him on his mission.

“A lot of the work we are doing now is Africa-focused,” he explained. “For example, before the exped I went to Burundi to help train its forces.

“Military diplomacy was a useful skill during the walk and vice versa – some of the things I learnt on the trek will be applicable to stuff I do in future with MSSG.”

Commenting on how he hopes his Nile adventure would, above all, reveal a different side of Africa, he added: “There’s a tainted view of places like Sudan but aside from getting shot at, people really looked after us.

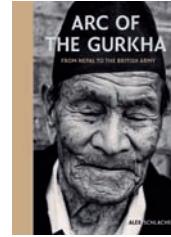
“Every day we would have these amazing encounters with tribesmen or villagers who would come out and offer us tea or food and it’s that humanity that will stay with me most.” ■

## Andy Kay, ex-RS

## Arc of the Gurkha

by Alex Schlacher

COINCIDING with the 200th anniversary of Gurkha service in the British Army, this volume documents the famous Royal Gurkha Rifles. Austrian photographer Alex



Schlacher spent time with the formation in Afghanistan in 2011 and later met with recruits and veterans to gain an insight into their experiences. The book features some very interesting interviews, combined with stunning, intimate portraits and behind-the-scenes photography, making it a great addition to any coffee table.

## Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

**VERDICT:** A well-written book with some striking images



## Buster

by Will Barrow

THE heart-warming true story of a Royal Air Force police search dog and his handler, this book follows the pair from the day they first met, through training and on to operations in Afghanistan. It opens up the private relationship that exists between man and dog and on each page you can feel their love, fear and concern for each other, which makes this a very enjoyable read. The only negative is that the text lacks some detail in places.



## Sofia Byerley, civvy

**VERDICT:** A must-read for dog lovers and would-be handlers



## High Command

by Christopher Elliott

THIS brutally honest appraisal of the UK Forces’ high command by retired general Christopher Elliott takes a fascinating look at the decisions made by Service leaders in recent years. It examines how the MoD works, including the constant battles between the military and the purse holders and argues that bureaucracy has ground down the powers of successive defence chiefs. This book is long overdue and is recommended reading for all those slated to work in Main Building.



## Andy Kay, ex-RS

**VERDICT:** I would give this more than five stars if I could



## Tangier

by Alex Janaway

SET in 1662 as King Charles II’s Army struggles to fortify the new garrison at Tangier, this novel has all the ingredients of a good old-fashioned historical yarn. Hero James Fitzwilliam, swashes and buckles his way around town, fighting enemies within the ranks as well as the tribesmen outside the gates – all while wooing a love interest. Page-turning action and the author’s detailed knowledge about military life in the era bring a little-known campaign to life. I hope a sequel follows soon.



## Becky Clark, Soldier

**VERDICT:** Highly recommended to fans of historical fiction



## Extreme Food

by Bear Grylls

BEAR Grylls is one of my favourite people to watch on TV and I’ve read his previous books. His latest offering about how to survive on what nature can provide has lots of information, good illustrations and is very descriptive. Unfortunately, it’s not the kind of title I really enjoy – it would probably appeal more to keen adventurers. However, it does make you look at food in a different way; it’s only fuel to keep you running and who knows, it could save your life one day.



## Briget Salvage, civvy

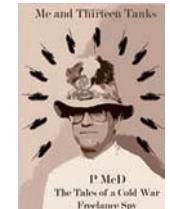
**VERDICT:** A stomach-churning but informative read



## Me and Thirteen Tanks

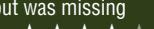
by P McD

DESPITE the subtitle of this memoir promising “tales of a freelance spy” you quickly realise that it isn’t a story of derring-do in Cold War Europe. However, that doesn’t detract from what is a very enjoyable and engrossing account of life as a BFBS DJ. Written in a very straightforward style, it highlights how life can easily be changed by being in the right place at the right time. It also reminds us that nine times out of ten, we – and Tutankhamun – are to blame for our problems. Read the book to find out why.



## Chris Evans, civvy

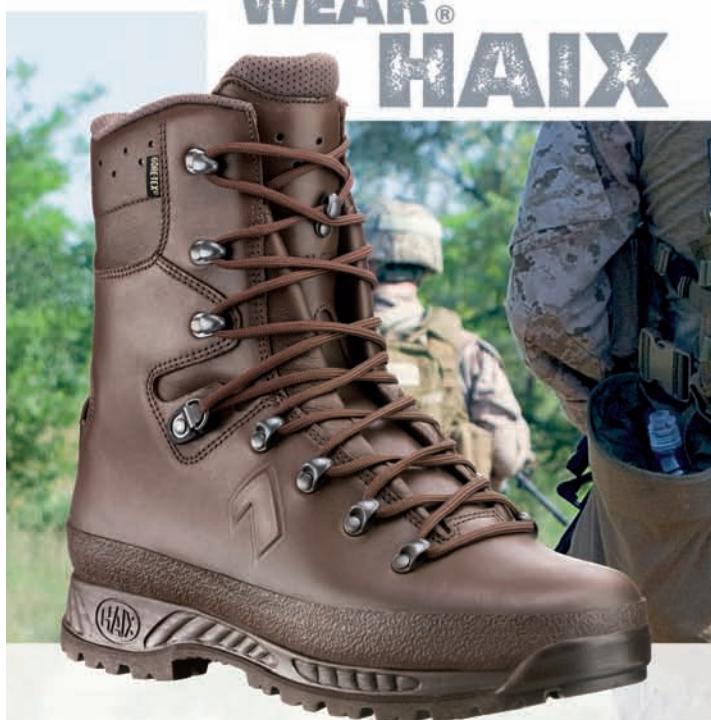
**VERDICT:** A solid four but was missing some pictures





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# SOLDIER SPORT

Sports Editor: Richard Long

Photographers: Graeme Main and Steve Dock

**Fighting fit:** Boxers Spr Luke Brassfield (left) and LCpl Lewis Jones (right, both RE) are hoping to hit the title trail after joining the sport's professional ranks. Read the full story on page 80...





# Wheels in motion

**H**AVING seen their male counterparts make significant strides in recent years the Army's growing legion of female cyclists is looking to follow suit during the 2015 season. A winter camp in Cyprus forged a strong team spirit among the group and with regular training weekends planned throughout the coming months the stage is set for a significant push.

Inter-Services success in 2013 and 2014 laid the foundations for an expansion and with a steady flow of fresh talent joining the fold the future seems bright.

The new-look outfit recently took to the saddle for a two-day track session at the Newport Velodrome and will return to

Cyprus next month for further preparations ahead of the opening round of the women's National Road Race Series.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* during a break in training Maj Vickie Long (AGC (RMP)) said the squad's professional approach will be a huge benefit as the Servicewomen look to make their mark.

"The team has been going for a few years now but we

have not had the backing the guys get," the rider explained.

"In the past we have competed in road races but we were pretty much doing our own thing. But now we have a group of girls who have bonded well and they want to be involved.

"It is all about learning people's strengths. Some are good at time trials, others are sprinters and there are those who are just workhorses.

"We now have to work on the dynamics of the team. This season will prove we can do it, we have a lot of potential and it is not just about the individuals."

Widening the talent pool was the major focus during the close season and the set-up attracted two new novice riders ahead of the first trip to Cyprus.

The duo

will face a stern test in the national series – which welcomes competitors ranging from elite-level athletes to newcomers – but captain SSgt Donna Short (RLC) is unconcerned.

"It tends to be hard for our women as we are racing against top girls all the time and that can be quite daunting if it is your first race," she said.

"However, our main aim is



**“We have a group of girls who have bonded well and want to be involved”**

**Maj Vickie Long (AGC)**



to get more people cycling. The more females we get the better and that will allow us to hold our own in races.

"Anyone can come along and jump on a bike; in two or three years they could be on the Army team.

"A lot of people may think they are not good enough to compete at that level but they have to start somewhere."

Short conceded that challenging in the upper echelons of the sport is an unrealistic target this season but said short-term goals have already been set for the upcoming campaign.

"We are going to choose a regional race series and try to win that; it will probably be based somewhere in the south of England," explained the senior NCO.

"We will also be competing in the women's National Road Race Series.

"We are not going to win against any of the top teams but we want to raise our profile and hopefully attract more sponsors.

"There is a great ethos within the team and we want to share that with as many people as possible." ■



For more details on how to get involved with the women's team email [donna.short392@mod.uk](mailto:donna.short392@mod.uk)

## ARMY'S NEW BREED



» NOVICE riders Pte Charmaine Porter (RLC) and Pte Alex Farquhar (RAVC) will hit the road this season having only joined the ranks late last year.

The duo hail from strong sporting backgrounds and after committing themselves to a new pursuit they are relishing the challenge.

"The Army held a training weekend in Abingdon last November," Farquhar (pictured right) said. "I gave it a try and it went really well.

"I didn't think I would get to the level where I was able to compete but I have done better than expected.

"I now want to get involved as often as I can. We have never had as much momentum as we have now so it should be a good season.

"It all comes down to experience. I

haven't even had a race yet so I just want to go out and give it a go."

Porter's first taste of competitive cycling came at the Army Championships and after finishing in fourth place she was named in the team for the Inter-Services.

"That was a real surprise," the soldier (pictured left) recalled. "I wanted to progress so I bought my own bike and started training.

"This year will be my first proper season and hopefully I can get more experience.

"It is quite difficult to pick up and when I went to the Inter-Services I didn't really know what was going on. I had a quick chat with one of the girls at the start line and that meant I wasn't totally clueless but there is a lot to learn.

"I see myself staying with the team and it is now about setting some long-term goals."



## QUEEN OF THE TRACK

» WHILE road racing remains the key focus for the women's team they will also have a representative on the track in the shape of Capt Sophie Faldo (RY).

The ex-Regular left full-time Service in 2012 to row on the Olympic development programme but after injury ended her hopes in the boat her attention turned to cycling.

Within eight months she had won a gold medal in the masters category at the national track championships and she is striving for further glory in 2015.

"Hopefully I can defend my title and push for a place in the elite competition," she said.

"I'm part of the London Dynamo club and we use the Olympic Velodrome, which is pretty amazing.

"I have only been training with the Army girls for two days but you get a real sense of the team ethic.

"They are working hard on their training and they want to make a name for the Service team. I'm excited to be part of it."

# Punching with the pros

**B**OXING starlet LCpl Lewis Jones (RE) is hoping to create a springboard for success when he steps onto the canvas for a British Masters title fight this month.

The super featherweight will square off against undefeated rival Des Bowater at the home of Walsall Football Club on February 21 and with fellow soldier Spr Luke Brassfield (RE) in action a week later the Army will be dreaming of back-to-back wins for the young contenders.

Jones is challenging for the belt after just six bouts in the professional ranks and he is already targeting further honours as his ring renaissance gathers pace.

The 25-year-old spent two years on the Army boxing team before growing disillusioned with the sport but a chance sparring session with former European champion Rendall Munroe reignited his passion and the soldier is ready to rumble once again.

"I was doing some coaching with 26 Engineer Regiment and we organised a training camp at a pro gym for a change of

scenery," the sapper said.

"Rendall needed some sparring partners as he was training for a title fight. I did two or three days with him and I came away with fire in my belly.

"I didn't want to go back to amateur boxing as I wasn't suited to it but I enjoy the style of the professional game.

"Bowater is local to the Walsall area and has a 6-0 record. He's been up against journeymen and has not had a proper test; he's going to get a shock when he faces me.

"Hopefully this will lead to bigger things. It is a low-end belt but is a step in the right direction. I want to push for an English title and if something like Prizefighter came up I would jump at the opportunity."

Despite turning his back on the amateur sport Jones was quick to praise the Army set-up and the opportunities it offered.

"It is brilliant," he said. "The training and coaching is second to none – you could not ask for anything more. But I needed a break, I was just going through the motions towards the end and I lost heart." ■



“  
He's going  
to get  
a shock  
when he  
faces me  
”

## BOXING CLEVER



» BRASSFIELD takes on undefeated boxer Darren Tetley at the Doncaster Dome on February 28 in only his fourth contest at professional level.

Like Jones, the welterweight prospect enjoyed a spell with the Service squad but after leaving the group to focus on trade courses he is relishing his return to competitive action.

"To be successful you need to spend a lot of time in the gym," the veteran of Op Herrick 13 explained. "You are taking on fully grown men who are trying to earn money."

"I have had to learn a new way to box. I need to be more aggressive and look to get forward."

"I won every round in my first fight and that gave me a lot of confidence. I felt really good going into my second bout but I switched off for a moment and that resulted in a defeat."

While career progression with 51 Para Squadron, 23 Engineer Regiment remains the immediate focus the soldier is hoping to combine work commitments with success in the ring.

"I want to make improvements and get a title shot like Lewis," he added. "The British Masters and Midlands belts are my immediate targets, I need a few more fights first but once I get that experience I will hopefully get my chance."

# Your Battle Station

# FORCES TV

**The only 24-hour TV channel dedicated to Britain's armed forces brings you the latest news about the world of defence.**

Forces TV is broadcast on Sky Channel 264, Virgin 244, Freesat 652 and is also available online at [www.forces.tv](http://www.forces.tv)

SSVC Chief Executive, Nick Pollard, said: "Forces TV is an important addition to our mission of telling the public and the services community what's going on in the forces world, at a crucial time of change and challenge."

Forces TV video journalists report from operations, military exercises and live events to provide news and features from the UK and overseas.

The channel works with charities and organisations that support the serving and veteran communities to cover areas such as welfare and policy changes.

Both Sky and the BBC are supporting Forces TV with content, and programmes from specialist documentary-makers are also on the schedule.



**SKY 264**

**VIRGIN 244**

**FREESAT 652**

**W**HILE London Welsh continue to struggle at the foot of the Aviva Premiership the club's top-flight campaign is proving to be a challenging adventure for Army star LCpl Ricky Reeves (RE).

The front-row forward was one of 25 new players to join the Exiles following their promotion last summer and after enduring a frustrating spell at Wasps he is relishing the opportunity of competing with some of the game's biggest names.

Reeves has been in the thick of the action this season and even though his new side have yet to win a league match he believes it is only a matter of time before that disappointing trend is reversed.

"Results haven't been great and I think that is down to the fact it has taken the guys a little longer to gel," the Serviceman told *SoldierSport* in an exclusive interview at the club's training ground.

"There are a lot of new players but individual errors have been costing us. We have a fantastic team with some great coaches and are not a million miles away.

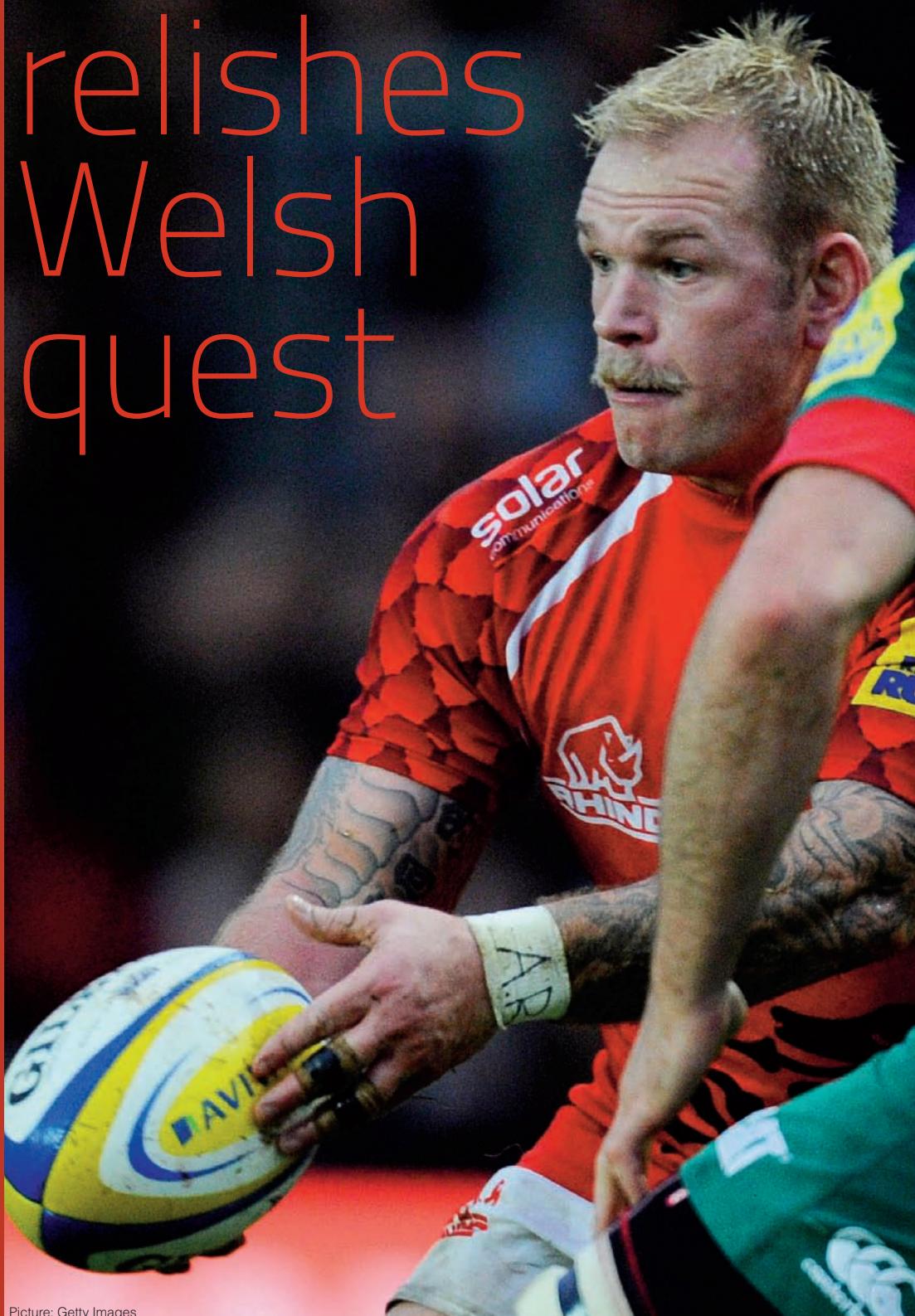
"But as soon as you make a mistake at this level it is punished. We have to cut that out.

"We have attacked well, defended well and have had some great passages of play; we just need to produce that for the full 80 minutes of a game."

The team's collective troubles have failed to detract from Reeves' personal progress and Army coach Capt Andy Sanger (RE) has been a key observer of his development this term.

With another Inter-Services campaign looming and a Defence World Cup to follow the 32-year-old's Premiership experience will be a key asset to the Reds.

# Reeves relishes Welsh quest



Picture: Getty Images



"I feel I have progressed massively," he explained. "I'm now up against the great players I have watched lining up for England on television.

"But it's important I take a step back and tell myself 'they're just human'.

"They are not superheroes but normal, run-of-the-mill people just like me.

"You have to go in to compete and give it everything. Every day is a learning curve.

"I'm in the gym a lot more and can feel myself getting stronger and faster. As a professional you also have more time to work on little aspects of your game.

"There are no outside factors to worry about, your sole focus is rugby and that makes you a better player."

Reeves signed a two-year deal with London Welsh and his immediate aim is to help the club retain its Premiership status.

But he is also firmly committed to the Reds' cause and is plotting a return to life in uniform once his contract expires.

He said: "I'm thinking of going back to my regiment when it's up. I've had four or five years out playing rugby so I want to focus on my Army career.

"I'm part of 33 EOD Regiment so would like to get involved in UK operations as a trained searcher. I want to do my bombs courses and get back to playing regimental and corps rugby.

"London Welsh have been pretty good. I have it written in my contract that I can be released for three Army games so that will cover the Inter-Services matches and the training camp held in the build-up to the competition.

"I speak to Andy Sanger on a regular basis.

"He is happy that I'm getting more game time and

he knows I'm training hard.

"I have massive respect for him and he is one of the best coaches I have ever played for.

"At the end of the day the Army is my first priority. I get some banter from the lads when I join up with the squad but I like it, it is important to be involved.

"The Army-Navy match is an opportunity to get seen by people, it is a great game and a fantastic stage."

Reeves is not the only Service player to be making a name for himself in the Premiership and he was thrilled to see Reds teammate LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) earn his first England cap following some sublime displays for Bath.

"His call-up was fully deserved; he is the best wing in the league," the soldier said.

"He has come up through the Army sevens and then the full 15 and I'm delighted for him.

"We went to The Rec to play Bath and I was giving him some stick on Facebook. He was in the England frame at the time so I didn't want to break him. I hit him but he bounced off me; I got some grief in return for that." ■

**I can feel myself getting stronger and faster**

“

”



#### Front-row fact file

**Position:** Prop  
**Weight:** 18st 8lb  
**Height:** 6ft 1in  
**Previous clubs:**  
 Cambridge, Bedford,  
 Saracens, Wasps  
**Total London Welsh appearances:** 16

# Blazing a trail



Development team launches search for new talent as riders push for seats at the top table

WITH downhill mountain biking among the many boom sports in the Service every effort is being made to capitalise on the pursuit's success to ensure it continues long term.

The Army's senior set-up is starting to make a name for itself in the British Downhill Series and with a rapidly emerging development squad offering a proving ground for emerging talent the future is looking bright.

Competition for places is the driving force behind the two-tiered structure and potential riders for either outfit are fully aware that they must earn their spot.

Preparations for the 2015 campaign are already

well under way and with development team manager Sgt Chris Mount (RE) looking to raise the profile of the group and attract greater numbers race seats will be more coveted than ever.

Mount's men will be competing in the Pearce Cycles Downhill Series and the Forest of Dean Mini Downhill and the NCO is planning for a successful season.

"The development team is all about finding people who are dedicated to the sport and have the skill to ride," he told *SoldierSport* during a break in training at Rogate Downhill.

"They may need a season or two at this level but once they are deemed as being Army standard they can think about stepping up to the main team.



**“**  
**Downhill  
riders are the  
rock stars of  
the mountain  
biking world**  
**”**

Sgt Chris Mount (RE)

"We have got ten guys who race regularly but there are more and more people wanting to get involved. We put events on so they can ride together and stage training sessions to work on jumps and other technical elements."

As well as organising the team Mount is a fierce competitor and has set a number of personal goals for the year ahead.

"I have raced against people from the senior squad in different events and I have beaten a few of them," he explained. "There is a really good team spirit within the group and everyone wants one of those top places."

"My target is to beat the other development riders so I can make the step up next."



season. As manager, I want more people to know what we're about and show them how they can get involved.

"Downhill riders are the rock stars of the mountain biking world. It is an absolute adrenalin rush. It challenges you and pushes the envelope; that is why it appeals."

Newcomer LCpl Jonathan Gray (RE) only joined the fold last year and is aiming to push for a place on the team after some encouraging displays.

And having previously participated on a recreational level he is relishing the environment he now finds himself in.

"I had never really raced before but when I found out about the Army development team I wanted to get involved,"

the sapper explained.

"They are a great bunch of lads. There are no cliques but there is a lot of competitive banter when it comes to the races; that is good though as it makes you go faster."

"I'm hoping to get quicker and quicker and do as many events as possible; the senior squad is my long-term goal."

"It is a brilliant sport. Not everyone is into football or rugby. Downhill has been around for a while and it's only going to get bigger." ■



For more details on how to get involved visit the British Army Downhill Development Team page on Facebook.

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798 likes on the British Army Downhill Development Team Facebook page

## Reserve rider



» RESERVIST Pte Mark Buckingham (RLC) sampled downhill mountain biking on an adventurous training package and immediately fell in love with the sport.

"It makes you feel alive," said the ex-Regular, who served for 22 years in the Royal Artillery. "When you finish a really good run the buzz can last for days."

"This is a brilliant set-up. I'm aiming for some good finishes this season with a few podiums as well. I need to make some technical improvements then I can push for the senior team; that would be a massive achievement."

# MONTH in sport

## February's key fixtures...



**WHAT:** Army Cross Country Championships

**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 4

**WHERE:** Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

**COMMENTS:** More than 500 runners took to the start line for last year's individual and team finals, which proved to be an ideal proving ground for the Service's emerging talent



**WHAT:** Army women v England Under-20s rugby union

**WHEN:** Tuesday, February 17 (1900 kick-off)

**WHERE:** Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot

**COMMENTS:** The Reds are in fine form this season but face a tough test as their Inter-Services preparations continue



**WHAT:** Army v Royal Navy, Under-23 Inter-Services football

**WHEN:** Wednesday, February 18 (1400 kick-off)

**WHERE:** Army Military Stadium, Aldershot

**COMMENTS:** An admin error ended the team's title hopes in 2014 and they will be going all-out to regain their crown

# Horner's high hopes

**H**AVING seen the Reds relinquish their Inter-Services title in 2014 there is one key objective for the new man in charge of the Army rugby league set-up.

Sgt Jack Horner (RLC) already has one eye on the Forces showdown later this year but his immediate focus is the Ladbrokes Challenge Cup and the squad's first-round clash with the Wath Brow Hornets.

The soldiers were in action against the Cumbrian outfit as this issue went to press and the new head coach was bracing himself for a stern test on the pitch.

"They are ranked as the third-best amateur club in the country," Horner told *SoldierSport* on the eve of the fixture.

"From speaking to a few

people up there I've heard we're not held in the greatest esteem. But we have a good group of players and some of those are on semi-professional contracts.

"We have real strength in depth and are confident in our abilities."

A provisional squad of 38 was named for the match and being a former academy coach Horner is fully aware of the talent available.

Up-and-coming stars such as Pte Dan Coombs and LCpl Sam Montague (both RLC) have been added to the mix following the departure of some key individuals and the team has high hopes for a strong cup campaign and the challenges that follow.

"I am chuffed to bits to have this job," Horner said. "It is the pinnacle of coaching

within the Army game.

"My mission statement for this year is to win back the Inter-Services title.

"Last season we had a really close match with the Royal Navy but we let our lead slip when we thought the game was won.

"There will be less pressure on us this time round as we're no longer the defending champions but I want to take that title and retain it in 2016.

"In the Challenge Cup our aim is to progress to the fourth round, which is something the Army has never achieved before.

"We have got faith in ourselves. This squad has been around for a few years now and is not a group of players that has just been thrown together." ■

**"We have real strength in depth and are confident in our abilities"**





Pictures: Sgt Russ Nolan, RLC

# Spartan's success story

A FIELD of almost 500 athletes descended on the slopes of Serre Chevalier in France for Exercise Spartan Hike – the semi-final of the Army Alpine and Nordic Ski Championships.

Varying conditions on the piste failed to dent the competitive edge and 27 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps – spearheaded by Capt Ian Thomas – proved to be the outfit to beat.

The officer tasted individual glory in the Alpine combination and his unit finished first in the super-G and giant slalom.

With numbers proving to be particularly high this year the organisers opened a second hill, which saw victories for 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery in the super-G, 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault) in the slalom and 26 Engineer Regiment in the giant slalom.

Soldiers from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps dominated the men's Nordic events and the unit took team prizes in the biathlon, cross-country and 4x5km cross-country relay.

Gnr Martin Shaw (26 Regt RA) was crowned individual

biathlon champion, while Cpl Benjamin Woolley (17 P&M Regt RLC) took top spot in the cross-country.

In the women's races, 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery celebrated team success in the biathlon and cross-country – with squad member Lt Jennifer Price taking individual gold in both – and they also secured the 4x5km cross-country relay title.

"These units take this competition very seriously," exercise controller Maj Rick Young (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*. "They want to compete and get to the full Army finals.

"Some will go on to race at the Inter-Services so it is a big deal.

"On the whole, the event has gone really well and skiing is no longer an officers' sport.

"It has fantastic appeal for young soldiers. It gets the legs trembling when you head out

of the gate for a particularly icy slalom run.

"We also have the 'phys monsters' who love the Nordic side of things."

The other semi-final – Exercise Pipedown – saw 1 Logistic Support Regiment reign supreme in the slalom and giant slalom with team stalwart SSgt Dougie Macpherson the individual winner in both disciplines.

Servicewomen from 4 Armoured Medical Regiment dominated the ladies biathlon team events – with Cpl Lydia Hilson and Cpl Jo Brownlow proving to be particularly strong – and 1 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers completed a clean-sweep in the men's disciplines.

The Army Championships were being held as this issue went to press. ■



**Skiing has fantastic appeal for young soldiers**

**Maj Rick Young (RAPTC)**

## Piste report

Date: January 11-21, 2015

Competition: Ex Spartan Hike

Venue: Serre Chevalier, France

### Spartan results

#### Slalom

1. 5 Battalion, REME
2. 27 Regiment, RLC
3. 22 Signal Regiment



#### Super-G

1. 27 Regiment, RLC
2. 5 Battalion, REME
3. 9 Regiment, RLC



#### Giant slalom

1. 27 Regiment, RLC
2. 5 Battalion, REME
3. 9 Regiment, RLC

#### Biathlon – men

1. 17 Port and Maritime Regt
2. 16 Regiment, RA
3. 27 Regiment, RLC



#### Biathlon – women

1. 16 Regiment, RA
2. 9 Regiment, RLC
3. 26 Regiment, RA

#### Cross-country – men

1. 17 Port and Maritime Regt
2. 16 Regiment, RA
3. 27 Regiment, RLC



#### Cross-country – women

1. 16 Regiment, RA
2. 9 Regiment, RLC
3. 12 Regiment, RA

## SPORT SHORTS



### Jiu-jitsu joy

FOUR gold medals were captured by the Army's Brazilian jiu-jitsu squad when they took to the mat at the sport's London International Open.

Sgt Graeme Finneran (2 Para) tasted double delight with teammates Sgt Andy Little (4 Regt, AAC) and Sgt Paul Lomas (R Signals) also securing top honours.

Maj Don MacIntyre (Int Corps), the discipline's officer in charge, said: "It was an excellent result and shows we can hold our own at a high-profile civilian level."



### Call to Sandown

SERVICE jockeys will return to Sandown Park on Friday, March 6 for the annual Grand Military Gold Cup meeting.

Two of the card's six races will be dedicated to Service riders, with Maj Alex Michael (KRH) and Gnr Grace Gostelow (RHA, pictured) in contention to represent the Army.

For more information about the event including discounts on admission fees for serving personnel visit [www.sandown.co.uk](http://www.sandown.co.uk)

## Team of the month

### Army Masters Rugby Union Team



THE Army Masters started their competitive campaign in style by demolishing the Prison Service on a windswept night in Aldershot.

A seven-try burst in the challenging wintry conditions steered the Reds to a 44-17 win and with a number of new players catching the eye competition for places in this season's Inter-Services' line-up looks set to be fierce.

Winger SSgt Karl Hinton (4 Med Regt) gave the soldiers the perfect start with a brace in the early exchanges and a superb score from Maj Dave Glendenning (RA, pictured right) secured a slender 18-17 lead at the interval.

But the hosts were a different side after the break and further tries from Capt Sly Sylvester (RAMC), Capt Dave Boocock (RAPTC), Maj

Ollie Ormiston (R Anglian) and WO2 Brad Sutherland (Coldrm Gds) saw them romp to victory.

The match followed a highly competitive trials period before Christmas in which more than 60 players put themselves forward for selection.

A tour of Bermuda – that included fixtures against the Atlanta Renegades and Bermuda Barbarians – forged a strong team spirit within the group and a squad of 26 has now been named for the business end of the season.

"A lot of our guys are sergeants and warrant officers who are approaching the 22-year mark so there is constant change," team director and player Col Simon Orr told *SoldierSport* at full-time.

"We are generating strong competition for places; this is not gin-and-tonic-rugby and we

are trying to play to a professional standard."

As well as chasing success on the pitch head coach WO2 Mark Reed (RE) has been keen to implement an entertaining approach to the game.

"It is one thing to go out and beat our Forces rivals but we get a much better feeling if we do it in style," he explained. ■



**Army Masters** 44  
**Prison Service** 17  
**Tries:** Hinton (2),  
Glendenning, Sylvester,  
Boocock, Ormiston,  
Sutherland.



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# Final word

On the ground in Nepal we asked potential recruits for the Brigade of Gurkhas why they think the British Army is so special...



**John Gurung**

The British Army is one of the oldest militaries in the world and is very technical and renowned for its bravery. The Service is known for having the latest armour, vehicles and advanced fighting equipment and its soldiers have a fine reputation on operations.



**Rupesh Limbu**

As one of the oldest military systems in the world the British Army is still very strong. Even though operations in Afghanistan have been difficult its personnel were successful. I admire the troops that have gone before me and I want to learn how to be a true soldier like them.



**Bishwas Ghale**

Gurkhas have served with the British for many years and I know the Force has been on operations in many regions. Its soldiers have worked in war zones and as peacekeepers and they have done an excellent job – especially in Afghanistan. The aim of every army is to keep people safe and the UK excels in doing that.



**Kiran Rai**

British soldiers are esteemed – they have the best weapons and kit and they are excellent at protecting their own country as well as others. The Army is special because it has earned respect and I look forward to a time when I can go on a mission as a Gurkha.



**David Rai**

The UK is one of the toughest military forces and for a long time it has provided brilliant facilities for Gurkhas to train in. I am very proud that the British Army recruits Nepalese personnel and that my grandfather served with the Force. He told me all about the adventures in a soldier's life.



**Chairan Rajbansi**

The Service's personnel are strong and skilful with good knowledge. Many people in my village have served and every day I used to ask them questions about their jobs. I would like to join the long line of men who have made the Nepalese people proud and it would be a real honour to serve as a soldier. I want to achieve the same things as my ancestors.



**Dilbahadur Gurung**

I think what makes the British Army special compared to others is that it defends not only its own country but those across the world. Recently its troops have been in Afghanistan and the UK is now looking at places like Syria. Its soldiers are the most disciplined and have shown courage in battle and I would like to be part of that.



**Sanjan Khapung**

British troops flourish wherever they are deployed and are part of a great military power. I have learnt from the internet, books and relatives who have served in Afghanistan that soldiering can be fierce and involve tough conditions but they do a good job.

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