

# SO SH NAME TO LIE AMONG THE D R



MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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NOVEMBER 2020



6



# 100 years of the Unknown Warrior

# SPINELINE COMPETITION

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Picture: Steve Dolk

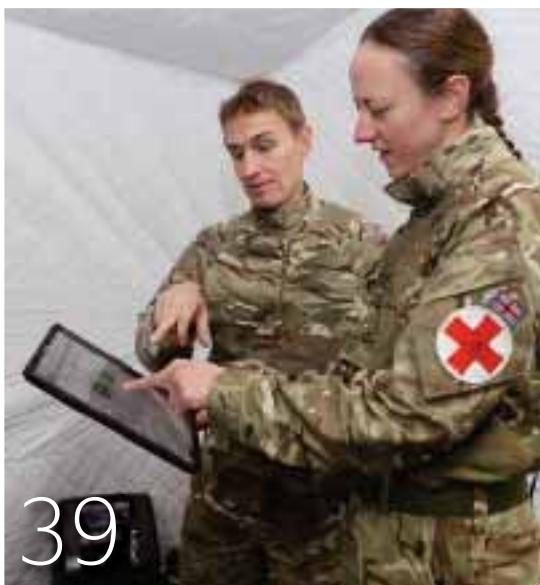


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There were  
so many  
soldiers who  
had no graves  
– 211,648 in  
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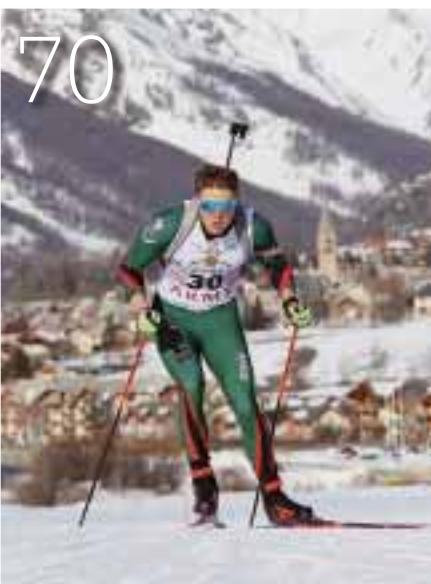
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## Different but the same



THIS will be the strangest remembrance that anyone can recall. Owing to restrictions stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic and in light of the risks posed, the annual Remembrance Sunday march past the Cenotaph will not take place this year. Neither will many large gatherings at war memorials around the country.

A century ago there were no such restrictions – despite the Spanish Flu pandemic ending earlier that year – and an estimated one million people left their homes to pay their respects at the grave of the Unknown Warrior, which had just been established at Westminster Abbey.

Reading over the story of its origins (page 29) brought home to me just how significant this relatively modest memorial was to the nation in 1920.

It also reminded me that while remembrance will seem strange on one level, nothing has really changed.

Despite the divisions in society created by Covid-19, then as now every decent person in the country will want to unite in spirit, if not physically, to remember and honour those who have sacrificed themselves to secure and protect our freedom.

**Steven Muncey** • Managing Editor

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#### ► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

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Picture: Sgt Tom Evans, RLC

## Experiments point to exciting future

### New technologies aimed at securing operational advantage go on trial

**A** SWARM of insect-like drones able to beam information to multiple command points could be prowling future battlefields and identifying potential targets.

Concepts unveiled at the latest Army Warfighting Experiment included a tiny UAV known as the Bug, which is fitted with full high-definition cameras.

The pint-sized assets could be plugged into a suite of Army systems – allowing personnel across an area of operations to see the same detailed picture in real time.

Military robotics boss Lt Col Iain Lamont (RE, pictured right) said introducing artificial intelligence into the mix – with UAVs using their own initiative – could hit adversaries hard.

He told *Soldier*. "These little devices can effectively speak to each other and use artificial intelligence to head off and carry out their own taskings.

"They might be grouped in small teams and would be able to send signals back to commanders on the ground if they spotted potential enemy assets of interest."

Lt Col Lamont was speaking as the warfighting experiment gave soldiers the opportunity to provide feedback to manufacturers on kit prototypes.

Held on Salisbury Plain, the 2020 event was themed around technology that could best team troops with machines, as well as future command and control communications.

Top brass and procurement chiefs were also able to have hands-on time with a raft of gadgets.

There were demonstrations of Android team awareness kit – allowing personnel to check feeds from drones and other assets via a mobile device.

Meanwhile, the suite of unmanned vehicles included the agile AX, which can carry reconnaissance equipment and penetrate into enemy areas.

Lt Col Lamont said these devices offered game-changing possibilities.

He added: "This gives soldiers the ability to see through each other's eyes – at a distance way beyond the range of sights on their rifles.

"This is not a science fiction vision that is going to be ready in another 50 years or so – it is technology that is available to the Army as we speak."

The officer pointed out that strong partnerships with captains of industry were helping the military identify any appropriate equipment early on.

He continued: "This year we have had soldiers from 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade providing feedback on the technologies.

"Getting their views at earlier stages of development means finished products are likely to be more effective if they end up in the hands of troops."

But Lt Col Lamont also warned such advances were challenging warfighting protocols. He concluded: "A 100-tonne armoured vehicle, for example, is going to give off a signature if it is left sitting in one place.

"This kit is going to be vulnerable to some extent – but with the right technologies you will be able to reduce the risk and protect it." ■



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

**SOLDIER** is published by the Ministry of Defence  
and printed by Walstead (Roche) Ltd.  
Print contract managed by CDS.

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# GLOBAL SITREP

## 1. FALKLAND ISLANDS

### APPEAL FOR INFO ON THE 'CLASS OF '82'

THE widow of a Serviceman killed during the Falklands War is stepping up her efforts to create a virtual memorial to every British soldier who fell in time for the 40th anniversary of the conflict.

Jay Morgan Hyrons, who was married to LCpl Gary Bingley (Para), started the *Falklands 35 Blog* in 2017 as a place for all those affected by the events of 1982 to tell their stories.

She is now aiming to add an entry for each of the 258 fatalities by 2022 and is appealing to surviving friends and family members to get in touch.

It was through her decision to set up a Facebook fundraising page during the centenary of the First World War that she came up with the idea for the project.

"We now have more than 20,000 followers and often hear from relatives who have no photos of lost loved ones," she explained.

"That is one of the reasons for trying to capture the Falklands stories, as many of our generation are sadly passing over now. Information is hard to come by, but I hope that this article might encourage families to connect and send material."



To contribute to the blog email [jay@jaymorganhyrons.com](mailto:jay@jaymorganhyrons.com) or visit [falklands35blog.wordpress.com](http://falklands35blog.wordpress.com)

Picture: Paul Haley/Soldier archive

## 2. POLAND

### CABRIT EFFORT LAUDED

TWO members of The Light Dragoons were awarded the coveted Polish Armed Forces Medal at a socially-distanced ceremony at Bemowo Piskie.

Maj Luke Dodington and WO2 James Price are the first British personnel to receive the honour in recognition of their work with the Polish Territorial Defense Forces during a six-month stint on Op Cabrit.

Under their command, Legion Troop – comprising around 150 soldiers from the regiment's C Squadron – introduced leadership skills and helped deliver specialist Javelin and reconnaissance training to the Polish reservists.

Col Paul Clayton, Commander of Operation Cabrit, said: "I saw first-hand how well Legion had integrated into the multinational battlegroup, and am especially proud of the leadership, innovation and commitment demonstrated by Maj Dodington and WO2 Price."



## 1. FALKLAND ISLANDS



## 3. ESTONIA

### RESERVIST'S HIGH PROFILE CALL-UP

A YOUNG British officer found herself in the hot seat of a top-level international defence seminar held in the Estonian capital Tallinn.

Lt Sarah George moderated a section on the contribution of part-time troops at the Baltic Conference on Defence, where delegates included the country's president Kersti Kaljulaid.

Senior defence ministers from across Europe also attended the 90-minute session, most of which was held over the internet because of the Covid situation.

The soldier was put forward for the leading role by colleagues at the Congress of the International Reserve Officers – also being held in Estonia.

The event saw troops from across Nato carry out tabletop exercises, as well as holding a number of diverse seminars and discussions.

Lt George – a Reservist for the past three years – said it had been a privilege to be chosen for her special role.

She added: "I was delighted to get the opportunity, having just completed a Masters in conflict resolution."



## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Biathlon star reflects on fate of winter sports season – page 70

“ We can work together at every level ”

Anglo-French treaty pays off – page 49

### 4. BOSNIA CAVALRY'S MISSION COMPLETE

PERSONNEL from the Household Cavalry Regiment have returned home from their tour of Bosnia, with responsibility now handed to their counterparts in The Royal Lancers.

Supported by troops from 3 Military Intelligence Battalion and 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, the Op Althea deployment saw the soldiers continue the ongoing commitment to maintain a safe and secure environment in the country.

Intelligence officer Sgt Rhys O'Rourke said the standard of soldiering on the tour had been outstanding. He added: "We have

taken young men, who normally drive armoured vehicles back home, and developed their skill set to the point where they are very much in their comfort zone getting answers to the tough questions they pose to some incredibly prominent Bosnian public figures.

"I am very proud of my intelligence operators, and of the HCR personnel that we have been tasked to support."

The troops were presented with their Op Althea medals by Matthew Field, the UK's ambassador to Bosnia, prior to their departure.

Picture: Shutterstock

### 5. OMAN DESERT TREK DELAYED

MILITARY charity Walking With the Wounded has postponed its fundraising expedition to Oman until the new year.

The Grenadier Walk of Oman was due to begin on November 20, with five ex-military personnel and a serving soldier hoping to pull a 100kg cart across the country's punishing desert.

But Covid-19 guidelines have delayed their bid and a new start date of February 18 has now been set. Visit [walkofoman.co.uk](http://walkofoman.co.uk)

## STRENGTH FROM FAILURE

■ THE head of the Army's mental health engagement team has called on the chain of command to better recognise that "vulnerability is not a failure".

Col Tim Boughton said more should be done to tackle the stigma that admitting to difficulties is to show weakness.

Arguing that physical fitness is indivisible from mental fitness, the officer urged commanders to continue to drive the change in culture.

"Authentic leadership acknowledges that failure is progress if you learn from it," he said. "Our darkest moments often lead to periods of greatest strength."

"As a commander you have a legal and moral duty of care for your subordinates. Think from the perspective of a soldier or junior officer – it can be a lonely place and they may rely on you for confidential advice within the regiment."

Describing how he believes organisational change can be achieved, Col Boughton emphasised that leaders at all levels should allow others to make mistakes and improve, be aware of the emotional environment in their unit and establish shared values by encouraging honest conversations on mental health.

He added: "Resilience starts with a choice – to give in or move forward and become stronger. Self awareness gives you the tools to influence your situation and control it."



## Changes to Reserve bonus now in sight

■ ELIGIBILITY for Reservists to claim their training completion bonus has been extended to March 31, 2021.

To receive each of the scheme's two £1,000 payments, new entrants must complete phase one training by this date and phase two training by March 31, 2023.

All other Reserve financial incentives are now closed, including the Reserve commitment bonuses. Existing personnel already on this scheme will continue to be eligible for key milestone payments.

For more information on the changes see **ABN 037/2020**.



## SETTING THE PAGE

■ PERSONNEL from the Pakistan Military Academy high kicked their way to glory in the annual Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Pace Sticking Competition. The visitors retained their best international team title in the Covid-affected event, which proved very different to the norm. The Grenadier Guards also celebrated a successful day as they were crowned best pace sticking team.



# TRACK

## team get to work

A SPECIALIST team of Royal Engineers have taken over the running and reconstruction of a 22-mile railway line near Catterick Garrison in North Yorkshire as part of Exercise Turnout (previewed in the October issue, page 15).

Operating a train service for the first time in some 55 years, the sappers transported more than 800 tonnes of ballast, 650 concrete sleepers and around 1,000 yards of rail along the Wensleydale line before undertaking essential repairs of the network's bridge and track infrastructure.

Led by 507 Specialist Team – part of 170 Engineer Group and the Army's only railway infrastructure formation – a hybrid force of around 80 Regular and Reserve soldiers spent a fortnight working on three main tasks.

These included the re-timbering of a storm-damaged bridge over the River Swale, rebuilding a level crossing and replacing 400 yards of track.

Using engineering trains loaned by Wensleydale Railway and provisions supplied by Network Rail, the refurbishment mission ensures the continuation of the environmentally friendly transportation of military vehicles from Catterick across the networks of the UK and Europe.

"I am delighted that we have created a safer stretch of line, which will allow armoured vehicles to move via the rail network and, as a result of the works, the Wensleydale Railway board are now signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant," said Maj Alex Hamilton (RE).



# Funding boost for Fuchs upgrades

**A**£16 MILLION life extension programme for the Fuchs vehicle has been announced.

Used for chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) surveys, as well as reconnaissance, the armoured six-wheelers will receive updates to their comprehensive sensor suite from Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL).

The company will also make safety modifications and implement a new support contract, to include spares and repairs, maintenance, training and design services to the end of the planned service life.

The work will take place at RBSL's facility in Telford, West Midlands, with the support of the UK supply chain.

■ RESERVISTS from 7th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland conducted urban drills at the Castle Works training area in Dalbeattie. The former munitions factory formed the ideal setting for the soldiers as they enhanced their close-quarter combat capabilities. "It's a key skill," said Maj Andrew Wallace. "If we have well-trained Reservists in such a specialist area we will be in a position to help our Regular counterparts, should they need it."



Picture: Mark Owens

The nine-strong fleet of vehicles complemented by a training simulator – also to be updated and sustained under the contract – ensures the specialist operators from Warminster-based Falcon Squadron, of the Royal Tank Regiment, who were involved in the clean up of Salisbury in 2018, can undergo regular training on site.

Col Tim Chapman, Assistant Head Counter-CBRN at Army Headquarters, said: "The provision of world class area surveillance and reconnaissance capability is a cornerstone of the UK defence's counter-CBRN policy, which seeks to avoid the hazard, protect the force and preserve fighting power in order to maintain operational freedom of action."



**It is a cornerstone of counter-CBRN policy**

## SPINE LINE COMPETITION

LAST month's clues would have been an obvious target for those with an eye in the sky. Hawk, Hornet, Puma and Tarantula are all unmanned aerial systems used by the military. This month, we have teamed up with luxurious leather gift suppliers ASALI ([www.asalidesigns.co.uk](http://www.asalidesigns.co.uk)) to offer you the chance of winning an aviation inspired Chinook weekend bag, cardholder and keyring.

Designed in association with the Royal Air Force Chinook Display Team, the black leather bag is the ultimate in style and sophistication for any aviator on their travels. The keyring and cardholder form the perfect accessories and all items feature a silhouette of the iconic helicopter.

To have a chance of winning simply tell us what links the clues on the spine of this month's magazine. Answers – including daytime phone number – to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by November 30.

## BATTLING BULLYING

■ VOLUNTEERS are being sought to become Army diversity allies.

They are part of the Service's drive to eradicate unacceptable behaviour and ensure that all personnel are free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Their role is to offer support to soldiers through a visible commitment to calling out conduct that falls below the expected standard and to promote inclusion.

To qualify, candidates should attend an awareness day that is open to all ranks and Army civil servants.

It covers what the job entails, resources available, an introduction to the bystander effect and how to challenge inappropriate or unacceptable behaviours.

It also aims to raise understanding of diversity in the Army, why it's important to have visible and active allies, as well as the lived experience of others, including minority groups.

The remaining courses for this year are due to take place on November 12, 17, 26 and 30 and December 3.

For more information on the initiative see [ABN 125/2020](http://ABN 125/2020).



**WIN**

Leather gifts worth £290



## NEW VISION FOR DOGS

■ THE US Army is testing augmented reality goggles for its working dogs.

They will allow the animals to scout ahead of troops for IEDs and other hazards without handlers being required to be in close proximity.

The US Army Research Laboratory (ARL) is currently trialling prototype sets that let the dogs see visual indicators in the goggles, with handlers viewing what the animals look at through a remote video feed.

"The military working dog community is very excited about this technology," said an ARL scientist.



## AWARDS MOVE ONLINE

■ WITH physical attendance not an option due to Covid-19, the Soldiering On Awards reverted to a Facebook Live show to celebrate the achievements of the Armed Forces community.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of the ceremony, which saw 13 winners crowned in a host of categories. Among the recipients were former Royal Tank Regiment officer James Cameron (below), who was handed the Special Recognition Award for his work with Mission Motorsport, while the Army Foundation College, Harrogate claimed the Education, Training and Development Award.

And ex-paratrooper Chris Lewis (above), along with his dog Jet, received the Animal Partnership Award. The duo have spent just over three years walking the UK coastline – raising £160,000 for SSAFA in the process.



Cpl Pardeep Kaur (RLC) passes on her culinary knowledge



Picture: Graeme Main

“  
Personnel  
need to get  
interested  
”

## Chefs serve slice of healthy eating

■ TROOPS have been learning to wield a wok as confidently as they do a Warrior after Headquarters South West organised live cooking classes for those based at the Armoured Trials and Development Unit.

To mark the release of volume two of the *Healthy Soldier Cookbook*, chefs Sgt Mike White, Cpl Pardeep Kaur and Pte Tom Jones (all RLC), from The Royal Welsh at Tidworth, were dispatched to Bovington, where they occupied a kitchen in one of the accommodation blocks for four days.

Soldiers were invited to take part in food hygiene and nutrition lessons and then cook healthy dishes under the chefs' supervision.

Breakfasts, lunches and dinners were prepared using only the kitchen appliances authorised for single living accommodation – kettle, toaster, conventional microwave, low fat electric grill, rice cooker, electric wok, tiered vegetable steamer and blender.

"The whole healthy eating cookbook concept is a fantastic idea, but you can only take a horse to water – troops need to get interested in diet and nutrition," Sgt White told *Soldier*.

"I think Army chefs should actually

go out and do cooking demonstrations like this on a regular basis to spark their interest in healthy eating.

"I'm hoping to organise a garrison event soon where we can show them how to create cracking dishes.

"Credit to HQ South West for organising this – Army chefs want to help spread the word about the importance of healthy food."

He added: "I really believe lots of personnel will use the new book – they are eager to learn and it's great to see."

One of the soldiers attending the sessions, LCpl Chris Corns (Yorks), said that many personnel will need encouragement to get their grills out.

"I've looked through the cookbook and I like the recipes, but I don't know how many of my colleagues will feel the same," he added.

"Quite a few of my mates would like eating these meals but the prep and cooking time is a big factor for soldiers – if they've been out on the range all day they may not feel like putting together a meal in the evening, and that's when they get tempted to just grab a pizza."

### ● Winter warmers – page 20

### Adapting to Covid

■ HAVING seen plans for an overseas training stint in Slovenia shelved due to Covid-19, troops from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh reverted to challenges on home soil for their annual deployment exercise.

The Reservists completed a broad package of marksmanship drills and section-level urban skills at the

Nesscliffe Training Area, before their efforts culminated with an arduous patrol competition in the Clwydian mountain ranges of North Wales.

The unit also ran a series of courses to help troops progress in their careers, with communications and information signals among the many areas covered.

Picture: Sgt Ben Beale, RLC



LEST WE FORGET

LEVEL  
PEAKS



# Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

**T**HERE has been a debate about whether corporals should have their own Army-supported messes for some time – so I'll start with a question.

Do you think we should formally write these facilities into Queen's Regulations? And if we did, how would you want them to look?

The reason for asking this now is because I'm hosting a digital forum to canvas views on November 24. I've already sent out a note to units and you'll need to go through your chain of command for details if you'd like to attend.

Although corporals do have their own messes already, they are not formalised in the same way as those for officers and senior NCOs. This means they can be hit and miss depending on location.

I make no bones that I've always been in favour of going down the regs route. There would be greater parity of standards across the

Army, as well as an established pathway for demanding improvements from contractors if expectations fell short.

While we would not be aiming to replicate the senior NCO and officer set up, this would give junior commanders a space of their own.

It would be somewhere they could meet and talk to others of the same rank and exchange ideas. And they would be able to use it for relaxation too.

I have often spoken about the corporal being one of the key ranks in the Service, but this is not about my view – it is for our young NCOs to decide.

If you can give me a steer on the direction to take, I can help start the ball rolling.

There are spaces for about 300 people on the call – so make sure you register soon. I can then take feedback to our senior command and we can look at how we might move this forward.

I'm happy to use my rank to help you.



“  
It is for our young NCOs to decide  
”

UP CLOSE  
AND  
PERSONAL



**Q** Why do you do so much PT on your travels and does it hurt?  
**A** I want to show phys is important and yes, it does, when you are 41 and most troops are half your age

## Praise for Covid spirit

IT HAS been humbling to see the level of commitment from both instructors and students who have maintained training during the coronavirus pandemic.

I recently visited the section commanders' battle course in Brecon, where there was an opportunity to do some PT with troops and have a brew with staff.

The Covid crisis has made an already demanding programme akin to an operational tour – with infection risks

putting home off limits, soldiers are currently away for months. Conditions in the field are harsh, especially at this time of year.

But it is another example of how personnel are continuing to adapt to the realities of life in this global pandemic. Like many in the NHS, they – and their loved ones – are continuing to make significant sacrifices.

We must – as a Service – remain agile to the changing Covid situation.

## Happy to champion the veterans' cause

■ IT IS a privilege to see so many good causes as Army sergeant major – being a judge on the panel at this year's Soldiering On Awards was a case in point.

The 2020 ceremony was held digitally, and it was emotional to see how people have made a difference in helping our community of ex-soldiers.

Being able to assist these types of events is one of the great perks of this job and I also do a lot of work for ABF The Soldiers' Charity to help our personnel, veterans and their families.

After all, we will all be veterans one day.



## Lancaster landmark on the horizon

**A** JOINT formation of British and French personnel have been standing by for manoeuvres on the tenth anniversary of the landmark agreement that spawned their outfit.

The soldiers from 16 Air Assault Brigade are due to be joined by colleagues from across the Channel on Exercise Wessex Storm this month.

The package will ensure the Airborne Combined Joint Expeditionary Force – the centrepiece of the Lancaster House accords – remains ready for operations.

A company from the French Foreign Legion's 2e Regiment de Parachutistes is poised to join a battlegroup fronted by 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, for the test on Salisbury Plain.

Signed in November 2010 by then UK prime minister David Cameron and French president Nicholas Sarkozy, the deal created the expeditionary force.

The elite endeavour is formed

around the British formation and 11 Brigade Parachutiste in Toulouse.

Troops from both nations normally exercise twice a year under alternate leadership – ensuring they can deliver a potent punch should the need arise.

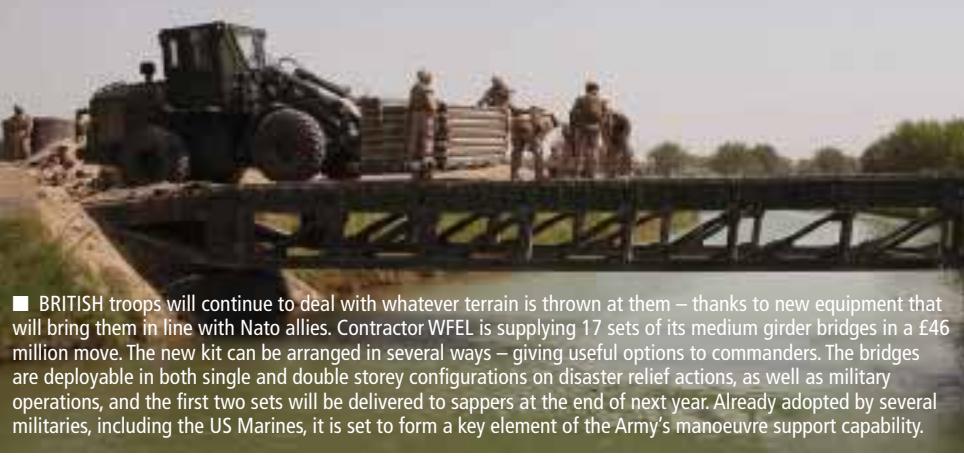
Although the force is the key asset of the partnership, it has also opened up training opportunities for thousands of UK personnel.

Brits have been able to use the Centre d'entraînement aux Actions en Zone Urbaine (Cenzub, pictured) near Paris, offering an array of serials, on a regular basis.

Spread over two square miles, the facility features two replica villages complete with streets, houses and underground areas, plus a live range.

Hundreds of soldiers have also taken advantage of placements in each other's armed forces over the past decade – bringing home valuable experience in the process.

## BOOST FOR BRIDGE BUILDERS



■ BRITISH troops will continue to deal with whatever terrain is thrown at them – thanks to new equipment that will bring them in line with Nato allies. Contractor WFEI is supplying 17 sets of its medium girder bridges in a £46 million move. The new kit can be arranged in several ways – giving useful options to commanders. The bridges are deployable in both single and double storey configurations on disaster relief actions, as well as military operations, and the first two sets will be delivered to sappers at the end of next year. Already adopted by several militaries, including the US Marines, it is set to form a key element of the Army's manoeuvre support capability.

**“**  
We have forged a very good working relationship  
**”**



● Channel hopping – p49-54



## HIGHLANDS HIGHLIGHTS

■ THE mountainous terrain of the Scottish Highlands formed a challenging training environment for Apache crews from 662 Squadron, 3 Regiment, Army Air Corps.

Three helicopters from the Wattisham-based unit headed north for the two-day test, which saw them operating out of Leuchars station and testing their low-level flying skills above the country's famous rural landmarks.



## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

■ TROOPS from 62 Squadron, 6 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps swapped their cargo vehicles for a two-month stint on public duties as they took on the role of the Queen's Guard.

Ceremonial experts from the Scots Guards trained the Thirsk-based personnel in the complex drill manoeuvres and tasks involved in the prestigious job, which saw them guarding the Queen's royal palaces and the Crown Jewels.

They will continue in their new role until mid November.



## Railcard goes live

■ SERVICE leavers are now on track for cash savings when they travel – thanks to a new initiative giving them money off train journeys throughout the UK.

The long-anticipated Veterans' Railcard offers former troops a third off most fares for a special introductory rate of £21.

Companions benefit from the same discount as the holder, while up to four children aged between five and 15 can travel with a hefty 60 per cent saving.

Ex-personnel who have served for a day are eligible for the benefit – available in physical and smartphone forms – which goes live on November 5.

National hero Capt Sir Tom Moore was presented with the very first Veterans' Railcard last month.

Visit [veterans-railcard.co.uk](http://veterans-railcard.co.uk)

“We made a difference in our work”



## Allen's royal response

Picture: Graeme Main

**A**N OFFICER who led a pioneering partnership between Armed Forces personnel and NHS staff at the height of the Covid crisis has received royal recognition.

Maj Emma Allen (R Signals) signed up for the military co-responders scheme – which sees volunteers assist crews from the South Central Ambulance Service in their spare time – having read about it in *Soldier*.

But when the pandemic struck, her suggestion that it could underpin the Army's assistance to health professionals proved a game changer.

And now her work – which saw her assemble and lead a tri-Service team – has been rewarded with an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Maj Allen's entire 80-strong outfit – including husband and Royal Artillery officer James – is additionally recognised with a Commander Standing Joint Command commendation.

“I'm obviously delighted, but

this award is something I had never expected” she said.

“It is the first time our commanding officer has seen me speechless.

“I first saw the *Soldier* feature a couple of years ago – it is amazing how life can change because of something you read while on leave.”

Maj Allen continued: “As much as anything, I am pleased for the team because everyone pulled together.”

In normal circumstances, co-responders give up their spare time to help ambulance crews – and are paired with other volunteers in cars during evening shifts.

But during the Covid crisis the military personnel worked full-time with clinicians in roles such as call handling, treating casualties and driving them to hospital.

They covered an area stretching from the New Forest to Milton Keynes – and assisted the London Ambulance Service when needed. “We made a difference in our work,” she concluded.

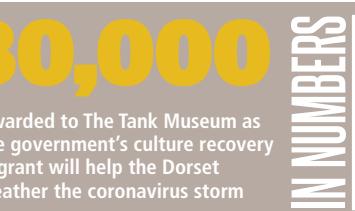
■ SEVERAL troops were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours for work during the Covid crisis.

The Royal Engineers were well represented with Maj Gary Jackson – dubbed the “Nightingale lynchpin” – awarded the MBE for his contribution to the temporary hospitals. His work in London provided the blueprint for nine similar UK builds.

Maj Ben Foster also received the award for his work on the medical facility in Harrogate – as well as developing concept designs for mobile testing units.

And Lt Col Timothy Brent was made an OBE for his contribution in setting up the Nightingale centres while working in Standing Joint Command.

Inspirational soldiers were also a feature, with Capt Steven Henry (RLC) – co-chair of the Army's black, Asian and minority ethnic network – receiving the MBE for his work to promote inclusion.



780,000  
Pounds awarded to The Tank Museum as part of the government's culture recovery fund. The grant will help the Dorset charity weather the coronavirus storm



## CHARITY COINS IT IN

■ MILITARY charity SSAFA has benefitted to the tune of £100,000 from the sale of rare and exclusive coins marking the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Struck by renowned coin specialists Hattons of London, the 22-carat gold collection proved to be a fantastic success with the commemorative items officially selling out.

The company agreed to donate ten per cent of their profits to the charity.

“It's an honour and a pleasure to help a cause close to our heart,” said managing director Simon Mellinger.





Picture: Greene Main

## Runner Davis hits the road in memory of Kitt

After seeing her young family devastated by sudden infant death syndrome, Cpl Hollie Davis (RAMC) is hoping her painstaking fundraising efforts can help save the lives of other children.

The soldier's son, Kitt – whose father LCpl Andrew Lawrence (REME) also serves in the Army, passed away at just 20 weeks old in August, when he became one of around 200 babies to die from the condition each year.

As a way of focusing in the aftermath of the tragedy, the 30-year-old challenged herself to run a 20-kilometre route from her Tidworth home to Kitt's memorial site on ten consecutive days.

Cpl Davis set a fundraising target of £10,000 but her endeavours have generated almost £18,000 – all of which will be donated to bereavement charity The Lullaby Trust, which has supported her throughout.

"Kitt just went to sleep and didn't wake up, it is literally the worst thing you can go through," the combat medic, who is attached to the Royal Tank Regiment, told *Soldier*.

"At the start of this I was thinking 'if

I could just save one life' and my hope is that this money can really help."

Cpl Davis suffered a stress fracture on the fourth day of the charity quest but fought through the pain to complete her bid.

She paid tribute to the support received from within the Army, as well as the local Tidworth community, and said the running helped her through some dark times.

"It gave me something else to focus on, other than fact Kitt had died," she explained. "Exercise is great for mental health and it gave me a purpose for getting out of bed in the morning. I feel a bit lost now it's all over, but it has definitely helped."

"The support I've received from the RTR has been unreal and some of my colleagues from Recce Troop joined me on one of the runs (pictured).

"I was getting messages from people saying they wanted to run with me but, because of Covid-19, we had to turn some away. One morning members of Tidworth Running Club turned up – I had never even met them before. The sense of community spirit was amazing."

**THE LULLABY TRUST** raises awareness of sudden infant death syndrome, provides expert advice on safer sleep for babies and offers emotional support for bereaved families. After completing her challenge, Cpl Davis received an email detailing how the money raised will be spent – a message she described as "really emotional". This is what the donation will fund...

**IN NUMBERS:**

**1,231**

First-time calls to the charity's bereavement support helpline – call 0808 802 6868

**435**  
**24**

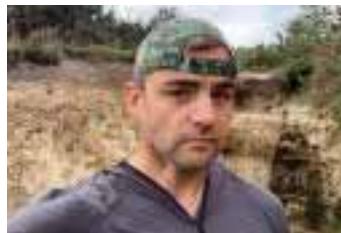
Health professionals will receive safer sleep training packages  
Sleep monitors for bereaved families with other children

“  
It is the worst thing you can go through  
”



Scan to donate on Cpl Davis' fundraising page

## FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



### Grinding it out

VETERAN Carl Shadrake, who served in the Grenadier Guards, pushed himself to the limit by running 100 half-marathons in 100 days. The former soldier, who was severely injured on tours to Afghanistan in 2007 and 2012, took on the challenge as a way of giving back to the charities for the help received. Donate at [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CarlShadrake](https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/CarlShadrake)



### Static success

RESERVISTS from 295 Battery, 106 Regiment, Royal Artillery covered a staggering 3,075 kilometres in just 36 hours as they tested their powers of endurance in a static bike challenge. The event was staged in memory of their forebears from 78th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, who were among the British personnel to endure horrific "death marches" to Sandakan, in northern Borneo, during the Second World War.





## LEGION'S LEARNING TOOLS

■ THE Royal British Legion and the National Literary Trust have created a range of teaching resources designed to help children explore remembrance.

Among the activities are assemblies, book clubs and art and creative writing projects to encourage pupils to draw parallels between past conflicts and modern-day challenges such as Covid-19.

The resources cover key stages one to four and are available to download now at [rbl.org.uk/teachingremembrance](http://rbl.org.uk/teachingremembrance)



Picture: SAC Graham Taylor, RAF

## HUMANIST CEREMONY

■ TELEVISION presenters Dan Snow (above) and Professor Alice Roberts will take part in a secular online remembrance service hosted by the Defence Humanist Network.

The annual ceremony provides a forum for non-religious personnel to commemorate the fallen and the theme of this year's virtual event is diversity.

During the hour-long proceedings, the stories of Bame and LGBT+ troops from past conflicts will be read aloud, from the Crimean War up to Afghanistan.

Snow and Roberts, who are the patron and president respectively of Humanists UK, will also speak on the topics of remembrance and reconciliation.

Maj Neil Weddell (AGC (ETS)), vice chair of the Defence Humanist Network, said the service is not intended as a replacement for religious remembrance, but to offer an alternative to the growing number of personnel who subscribe to secular beliefs.

"Around 52 per cent of the British population identify as non-religious and only one per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds identify as Church of England," he explained.

"If those are the people who are joining the Forces then we need to reflect that diversity and offer them a way to remember that feels authentic to them."

The virtual ceremony is open to everyone and no registration is required. Visit [humanism.org.uk](http://humanism.org.uk) and enter "remembrance" into the search box to obtain details of the event, which takes place at 1100 on Saturday, November 7.

“  
Requests for support have increased  
”



Picture: Graeme Main

## ‘Make every poppy count’

MILITARY charity The Royal British Legion has issued an urgent call for people to get involved in this year's Poppy Appeal, which is under threat due to severe Covid-19 restrictions.

Every year, 40,000 volunteers help the organisation with its remembrance-related campaign, but as many collectors fall into the vulnerable category, it is not safe for them to carry out their usual fundraising activities.

Therefore, the charity is urging members of the public and the Service community in particular to come out in force either by ordering poppies through the post or running 11 kilometres or 20 miles in a virtual poppy run throughout November.

Printable poppies can be downloaded from the RBL's website to be displayed in windows and paper

versions will be available as usual from all major supermarkets.

Collectors will have new ways for people to donate safely, including QR codes and contactless machines.

Simon O'Leary, the former Royal Navy officer in charge of the campaign, emphasised that every poppy counts.

"While Covid creates challenges for the Poppy Appeal, the RBL still has a job to do," he said.

"During the pandemic, we and our partner Armed Forces charities saw requests for critical support increase rapidly due to debt, unemployment, homelessness and isolation – and this is likely to get worse."

Fundraisers are also being urged to "shake the virtual bucket" on social media by contacting family and friends.

● Veterans' views – page 74

## Guidance for marking the occasion in a safe way

- Under local and unit arrangements, individuals are encouraged to attend community remembrance activity in uniform, ensuring adherence to existing Force health protection measures throughout.

- Ceremonies should not involve communal singing.

- Ensure events are short and focused on wreath laying, with a reduced march past or parade and only if social distancing can be maintained.

- Be mindful of local sensitivities.

- Take reasonable steps to minimise wider viewing, encouraging the public to observe existing restrictions, such as the rule of six, when spectating.

- While engaging in an activity in a place of worship or surrounding grounds, all parties should adhere to the social distancing guidelines at all times, even within a group of six.



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**<sup>†</sup>Selected vehicles only. Eligibility criteria applies. See [ford.co.uk/militarysales](http://ford.co.uk/militarysales) for more information.**

Model shown is a Focus ST-3 5-Door 2.3L Ford EcoBoost 280PS with a 6-Speed Manual Petrol transmission with optional Full LED Headlamps. Fuel economy mpg (l/100km): Combined 35.8 (7.9). CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 187g/km.

Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real-life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted, variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load.

# NEED TO KNOW

REGS / CASH / FITNESS  
AND REGS / CASH / FITNESS  
RULES / DRILLS / SKILLS & DRILLS / NUTRITION



# Winter warmers

Chef WO2 Paul Hamblin (RLC) suggests some dishes to light up the long dark evenings

► “COOKING in the block is becoming increasingly popular and knowing how to whip up nutritious, balanced meals is essential for troops required to be physically fit.

The newly published second volume of the *Healthy Soldier Cookbook* includes some brilliant dishes in my opinion.

Here, my team at 26 Engineer Regiment – Cpl Suraj Rai and Cpl Jonathan Cooper (RLC, pictured below) – and I have put forward alternatives inspired by some of its recipes, but using less pricey ingredients and geared towards those lacking experience in the kitchen.

Our other pre-requisite was that the food should be warming and satisfying on those cold winter evenings.

I always encourage soldiers to not be afraid to tweak menus, whether it be to their taste or in order to use some of the leftovers hanging around in their fridge.

It makes cooking even more fun and interesting – and as long as you stick to healthy ingredients and cooking methods you can't go wrong.”



Pictures: Graeme Main



### Braised beef

This is a low-cost and easy-to-cook choice for a satisfying beef dish. The garlic herb crusted rump steak in the cookbook looks and no doubt tastes great, but this meal is cheaper and produces its own thick, luscious gravy – great for winter evenings. It's one of my personal favourites.

#### Serves 1

150g braising steak  
1 onion (diced)  
1 small carrot (diced)  
100g diced swede  
100g diced potatoes  
Gravy mix  
500ml water  
Beef stock cube or stock pot  
Salt and pepper  
2 tbsp oil

**Cost per portion** £2.05

#### Method:

Season the beef with salt and pepper and fry in a pan on both sides until it has started to brown. Remove and then gently fry the vegetables in the same pan for two to three minutes and add the steak back into the pan. Add the water and stock cube or pot, bring to the boil and leave to simmer very gently for at least one hour (for best results simmer for 1hr 45 mins). Add gravy to thicken the sauce if desired.

**Tip** - Always use relatively cheap braising steak for the dish – it tastes great when cooked slowly so there's no need to spend money on expensive cuts of meat.



### Prawn korma and rice

After a hard day on the ranges or in the workshop you may not feel like spending much time prepping the tiger prawns with glass noodles and chilli dressing that features in the cookbook – as delicious as it looks. This is a quick and tasty alternative for those lovers of seafood – and the mild curry heat is always welcome at this time of year.

#### Serves 1

200g tiger prawns  
1 tbsp sunflower oil  
1 medium onion, finely chopped  
1 garlic clove, finely sliced  
3 tbsp korma curry paste  
200ml coconut milk  
2 tbsp double or single cream (for garnish)  
Salt and pepper  
Microwave rice

**Cost per portion** £2.20

#### Method:

Heat the oil in a medium non-stick pan and fry the onion and garlic until the onion becomes golden brown. Add korma paste and coconut milk and bring to the boil. Lower the heat slightly and simmer for five to seven minutes. Using a stick blender, blitz the sauce to a smooth texture, add the prawns and bring to a simmer for three to four minutes until the prawns are completely pink. Microwave the rice per the instructions.

**Tip** - Replace curry paste with korma sauce from a jar if time is an issue. Also, frozen prawns are a suitable alternative to fresh ones.



### Comforting chicken broth

A plainer spin-off from the lemon chilli chicken rice soup in the cookbook, we like this because you can use different cuts of meat and any vegetables you have left over from previous meals. The chopped veggies are very healthy and filling and no real skill is required to cook this dish.

#### Serves 6

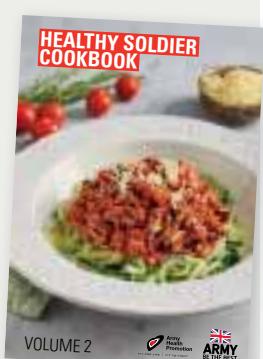
6 chicken thighs  
2 carrots  
1 leek  
1 onion  
1 courgette  
4 spring onions  
950ml water  
2 chicken stock cubes or stock pot  
Oil (drizzle for frying)  
Salt and pepper to taste

**Cost per portion** £0.75

#### Method:

Heat the oil in a pan and add the chicken, fry until golden brown, then add the vegetables. Cook for a further two to three minutes and add the water and stock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 40 minutes. Remove chicken from pot and separate meat from the bone, ensure it is thoroughly cooked and stir the meat back into the pot. Add salt and pepper to taste.

**Tip** - This freezes well so if making for one, pop the rest in the freezer.



# The path to success

Insider tips on how to prepare for your next career course

► **SOLDIER** education was given an overhaul earlier this year – with the Army leadership development programme (ALDP) launched as a replacement for the old command, leadership and management system.

The scheme is split into two modules – military training (MT) and military education (ME) – which personnel will undertake as they move up the ranks.

We spoke to those involved in overseeing and teaching the new syllabus to get their advice on how best to prepare for each course.

## START HERE: Military training

Lance corporals to sergeants must all complete MT. WO2 Andy Pick (RA) of the professional development team at Army HQ breaks down the key skills required.

**Make sure your fitness is up to scratch.** You'll be expected to actively participate in multiple physical tasks like fire and manoeuvre and casevac drills, including from a position of command

**Brush up on basic close combat skills.** An understanding of the fundamentals of troops in contact is useful as assessors will look for a base line of knowledge to build upon

## Hone your navigation skills.

Movement between locations is an important part of the field phase of ALDP testing and you'll have to take your turn leading the way

## Get on top of your admin.

Students are assessed on being able to administer themselves in the field, as well as on dress, equipment and the maintenance of battlefield discipline

## Revise the orders process.

**At the corporals' and sergeants' level, you'll be taught to extract and deliver a full set of orders, so an understanding of the format and detail required under each heading will help.** As with all of these tips, ask advice from your more experienced colleagues or speak to your training wing



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**ME**

## Military education



Congratulations, you've been promoted. Corporals must now complete their five-day online ME course. Sergeants will attend an intense two-week package and these pointers from learning development officer 2Lt Charlotte Bourne (AGC (ETS)) should help you prepare.

3

### Brush up on defence writing.

You'll need to show good written communication skills and will be asked to produce a brief in the proper format, so familiarise yourself with defence writing conventions as set down in JSP 101

2

### Understand the bigger picture.

The course covers international relations and current affairs, so having some knowledge on what the British Army does and where is useful. There are numerous resources on the Army knowledge exchange (AKX) or you could listen to podcasts around these topics

1

**Swat up beforehand.** Make use of the defence learning environment (DLE) site listed in your joining instructions. It hosts optional pre-course reading and helpful guidance. You'll also be required to use the DLE throughout the training so get familiar with it and its content

6 7

**Get ready to be challenged.** Going in prepared and with an open mind will help you make the most of it. It's an opportunity for you to think critically and work collaboratively with your peers from a wide range of different cap badges. Enjoy it!

### Remind yourself of leadership theory.

Assessors will be looking for an understanding of this and how it relates to your role. The Army Leadership Code and Army Leadership Doctrine on the AKX are both really good places to start, as well as the Centre of Army Leadership's page on the DLE

### Practise verbal communication.

Group discussions and being able to communicate effectively are a big part of ME. You will also be required to deliver a presentation to the rest of the course for one of your assessments. If you need to, practise by giving a presentation to friends or family and ask them for constructive feedback

**Revise your IT skills.** You will need to use a laptop frequently during the course. If you're not comfortable with MS Office beforehand you may be able to arrange a short tutorial at your Army Education Centre (AEC) or access a free online session at the following link: [edu.gcfglobal.org/en/subjects/tech](http://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/subjects/tech)

Visit the DLE to access the ALDP Handbook, applications for ME and MT courses and additional resources. If you have any further questions, you can also contact your local AEC for guidance

### Who, what, when, where?

Lance corporals to sergeants undertake the ten-day MT package at training establishments or within their units. Corporals' ME is a five-day online package, while the two-week sergeants' version is delivered at AECs.

**Unlike CLM, the modules can be completed in any order**

The warrant officers' curriculum is under development but will combine elements of both MT and ME into one course

# Scamming the system



Why the Army's top cop wants troops to be on the lookout for workplace fraud

► ACCORDING to the most recent figures, fraud costs the MoD around £60 million per year – and the knock-on effects impact everyone who serves.

By reducing the amount of money available for equipment, infrastructure and training it damages the Service's capability and deprives personnel of valuable resources.

But as Provost Marshal (Army)

Brig Vivienne Buck explains, the consequences of fraud go far beyond the financial.

"It creates an atmosphere of poor discipline and reduced operational effectiveness if it is seen as acceptable to break the rules or undermine established procedures," she says.

"In addition, it can also result in considerable reputational damage if sensitive equipment is lost or sold on.

"If it then falls into the hands of hostile nations or organised crime groups it could even become a security threat or be linked to serious offending and violence."

According to Brig Buck, most fraud is opportunistic in nature and there are a few things defence employees can do to counter it, beginning with being aware of these three most common types...





## 1 Abuse of position

This typically involves false accounting of funds or stores by personnel in positions of responsibility and is sometimes compounded by poor auditing. It can lead to significant financial losses as it is generally committed over a protracted period and often not discovered until the offender hands over the account on re-assignment.

## 2 False representation

This is when individuals claim benefits they are not entitled to – such as continuity of education allowance – or make fraudulent travel, accommodation and subsistence claims. These can often be complex cases involving international travel and significant loss to the public purse.



## 3 Credit card crime

There have been numerous investigations where an offender has used the bank card or online banking account of a fellow soldier to transfer funds or purchase goods. This commonly happens when debit cards or details are shared or left unattended in multi-occupancy accommodation.

## Q&A with Brig Vivienne Buck

● **Can you give any examples of recent cases where Service personnel were caught engaging in fraud?**

"Last year a soldier was sentenced to nine months detention and discharged from the Army after being found guilty at court martial of booking flights worth more than £15,000 for their family and friends. Another was caught making three fraudulent JPA entries for travel and leave – they were reduced in rank and given six months detention. A third was sentenced to three years imprisonment and dismissed after defrauding the Service of more than £400,000 through the unlawful use of an electronic procurement card. The consequences can be severe."

● **What about lower down the scale?**

"Things like making personal calls on MoD mobiles or telephones, using military vehicles for non-official trips or taking consumable items from the stores are all examples of fraud. It may seem harmless, but it all adds up."

● **But isn't it difficult to blow the whistle when the Army is built on allegiance to**

**unit and colleagues?**

"Trust, unity and loyalty underpin the whole ethos of the Service, but fraud has a direct effect on us all, especially in the current fiscal environment where such losses may place vital equipment and training programmes at risk. This is why we have processes that enable individuals to raise concerns anonymously."

● **What should people do if they think someone is committing fraud?**

"Suspicious activity can be reported to the MoD's confidential hotline on 0800 161 3665 or via confidential-hotline@mod.gov.uk. Alternatively you can call the Service police crime line on 0800 085 0658."

● **What if someone has been a victim of fraud themselves?**

"They can contact their local military police station, which means it can be investigated immediately, either by the RMP or the relevant law enforcement organisation. Also, they can use either of the hotlines above – their report will then be referred to the right authority."



# How to haggle



Don't let embarrassment stop you negotiating a good deal

► MANY companies reserve their best offers for new customers, but just a quick phone call to your TV, broadband, insurance and even credit card provider could see you get a great new deal – even if your policy isn't up for renewal.

**Moneysavingexpert.com** has loads of advice on how to get the most bang for your buck and we've selected some of their best tips to help you drive a hard bargain.

There's loads of brilliant offers out there, so ask your provider to match them and if they won't, switch to a company that will.

## TOP TIPS FOR BARTERING

- **Be friendly and polite** – you're asking for a discount so being rude or angry with someone is not going to work. If you don't get what you want, you can always try again with a different operator
- **Don't ever let a policy auto-renew.** If your contract is ending and you're eligible for all those new customer deals you're in total control. Companies will go the extra mile to keep your custom and it saves you the hassle of switching
- **Use any problems you've had with the company as leverage** towards a bill reduction or compensation – for example, problems with billing or poor network or broadband coverage
- **Check what you're paying** for (data, minutes and so on) and if you're not using your full allowance your provider may reduce your tariff cost
- **Speak to the disconnections or customer retentions team**, rather than the normal customer services department – once you tell them you are thinking of leaving you should be put through to those who wield more negotiating power
- **Ask to speak to a manager** if the person you're talking to isn't able to authorise discounts or refunds
- Unless you are happy with the first offer **don't say yes straightaway** as it's likely they have saved some more room to negotiate further
- Just because an offer or deal has finished doesn't always mean you've missed it – **it's always worth checking to see if they can extend it for you**
- **Sometimes you can get add-ons** instead of a cash discount – for example, faster speed or more TV channels



A 2019 poll by **Moneysavingexpert.com**

of some 6,500 respondents found that more than **80 per cent** had had **success haggling** with big-name companies like the AA, Admiral, the RAC and Sky. Others reported to be receptive to bartering included Three, EE, Virgin Media, PlusNet and BT

# Winter is coming

Get geared up for cold-weather riding with cycling guru Sgt Lee Hardy (R Signals)

► "AFTER a long summer of lockdown saw a huge uptake of cycling both indoors and outside, the shorter, chillier days are now upon us.

"Those who are into the sport know the benefits to health and wellbeing that it offers, so don't let the winter months put you off.

"These are my top tips for staying safe and comfortable to make the most of your cycling, whatever the weather."

## Lights

Having quality lights is essential. Technology has come a long way in the last few years, mainly through the introduction of Cree LED versions. On the road they allow drivers to see you and off-road a helmet-mounted beam will enable you to spot obstacles and pick out good lines. Be sure to invest in a decent rear red light as well – and always have it on

## Extremities

There is nothing worse than cold fingers and toes. There are a number of hacks such as lining your shoes with tin foil, but I would recommend getting a set of shoe covers to keep the wind off your feet. For your hands it's important to have a quality set of gloves or cycling mitts. Just be sure that whatever you choose doesn't interfere with you using your gears and brakes

## Head and neck

A large percentage of body heat is lost through your head. Helmets are usually



designed with ventilation in mind, so wearing a skull cap-style hat underneath will help. A snood is handy for covering your face and neck, especially on long descents or in heavy wind and rain

## Layers

Effective layering will help you to modulate your heat. I'd start with a base of merino wool or technical fabric to keep warmth in while wicking sweat. Then you can apply mid-layers, arm and leg warmers and an outer shell as needed – either something wind or waterproof depending on the conditions. It's also vital at this time of year to think about wearing high vis kit

## Mudguards

Okay, this is a contentious issue for me as I hate mudguards on a bike – mainly due to the aesthetics – but they are actually really useful. Not only will they prevent dirt and water from splattering up your back, they will also stop you from getting a face full of spray, which can be

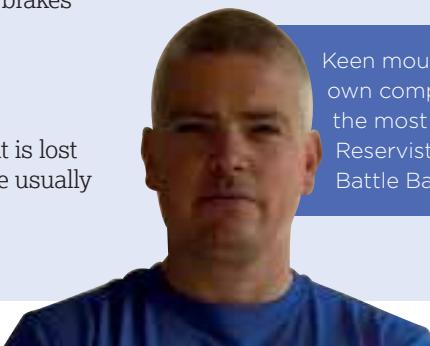
particularly problematic when going down hill. Some clubs also insist that members have them fitted for group rides to stop the person behind being sprayed

## Food and water

Don't forget to stay hydrated and well fuelled to help you maintain performance. We all love a good cafe stop and a large piece of cake but remember this will probably give you a large spike followed by a crash, so remember the principle of eating little and often to keep your energy levels balanced

## Admin

There's a lot to think about when heading out. Make sure you have a route planned and have tools and spares for emergency repairs. I always take an extra energy gel just in case my ride gets extended for some reason. Also, keep your phone, keys and cash in a waterproof bag. I use a small canoe-style pouch, but a zip lock sandwich bag works just as well



Keen mountain biker Sgt Hardy left the Regular Army in 2012 and set up his own company, [thecompletecyclist.com](http://thecompletecyclist.com), with the aim of helping riders get the most out of themselves and their bikes. Now aged 38 and a full-time Reservist, he is the Senior NCO instructor at the Royal British Legion's Battle Back centre in Lilleshall



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# A MAN WITH NO NAME

Serving personnel pay a personal tribute to the Unknown Warrior, 100 years on

**I**N THE autumn chill of November 1920, hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets of London to pay their respects to the Unknown Warrior.

Pulled on a Royal Artillery gun carriage, his casket made its way from Victoria station to Westminster Abbey, with only the sound of horses' hooves and muffled weeping punctuating the sombre silence.

Across the country life came to a standstill in the biggest display of public mourning ever seen. ▶



Pte John William Brown of 4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment was 17 when he died at Contalmaison during a German bombardment of the trenches on July 10, 1916

» The First World War had ended only two years previously and the nation was still traumatised.

Almost one million British and Empire troops had died, many of whom were never identified, but now an anonymous soldier had been returned to home soil to give the bereaved an anchor point for their grief.

Families could take comfort from the fact that maybe, just maybe, it was their loved one whose remains had been chosen.

Among them were the family of John William Brown, a private in the 4th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment who had lied about his age to enlist and was just 17 when he was killed at the Somme in July 1916.

But while his physical remains were lost to French soil, a century later, his memory lives on in the heart of his great nephew, SSgt Martin Williams (pictured left), of the Army Air Corps.

Together with his wife, Bdr Hannah Williams (pictured right) – a Reservist in the Royal Artillery – he is determined to raise awareness of the anniversary, and says that even so many years on, the idea that his long-lost relative could be the Unknown Warrior is reassuring.

“I’m not much of a history buff, but remembrance is really important to me,” he says.

“Hannah did a load of research and took me to the location he was last known at, so he could well be the soldier in Westminster.

“There’s no way of knowing, but



“The mood of the nation was very much of mourning”



it’s nice to think that it might be him.”

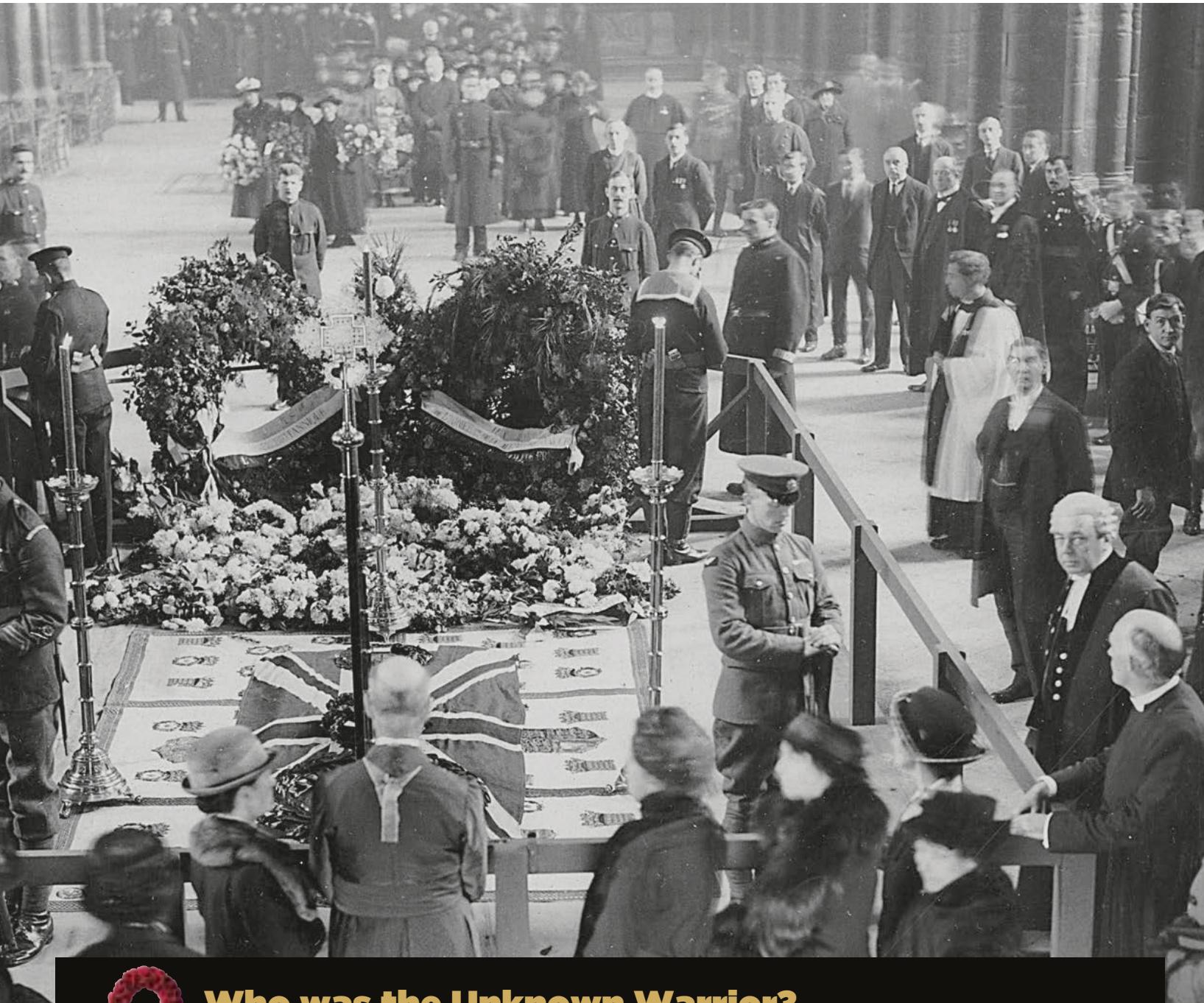
Hannah takes up the story: “John was 16 when he joined up, and he went to Gallipoli and then the Somme.

“He wasn’t in the first wave – he was in reserve. When they realised that the attack had failed the Worcestershires were brought in to hold the line.

“He was then sent to do another job in Contalmaison and that’s where he lost his life.

“There were so many soldiers who had no graves – 211,648 in France alone. That’s an extraordinary number of people whose families didn’t know where they were and couldn’t come and visit.

“The mood of the nation was very much of mourning so to have the grave of the Unknown Warrior, where they could go and believe their son was under that stone, was a really important symbol to help them heal.” »



Picture: © The Dean and Chapter of Westminster



## Who was the Unknown Warrior?

**H**IS story has long been shrouded in mystery, with conflicting accounts adding to the confusion, but the original concept is credited to an Army chaplain – Rev David Railton.

He wrote of seeing a grave marked “an unknown British soldier of the Black Watch” in 1916 and the idea came to him that bringing the remains of one Serviceman back home for a state funeral would help ease the pain of families left behind.

The proposal eventually gained momentum and in November 1920 a group of unidentified bodies – probably four, though this figure is among the disputed details – were selected from different battlefields and brought to a makeshift chapel at St Pol, France.

There, Brig Louis John Wyatt picked one at random and the others were taken away to be reburied at a secret

location, which newly unearthed documents suggest could have been Cagnicourt.

The chosen casket was brought to London and on November 11 it was pulled by six black horses on a Royal Artillery gun carriage from Victoria station to the Cenotaph, where King George V unveiled a permanent stone memorial.

Finally, the coffin was taken to Westminster Abbey accompanied by around 100 women who had lost both their husbands and sons in the war.

It is estimated that one million people came to pay their respects while the body lay in state and the grave remains one of Britain’s most important memorials to this day.

- The mysteries of the Unknown Warrior are detailed in a new exhibition at the National Army Museum. To book your slot to visit *Buried Among Kings* go to [nam.ac.uk](http://nam.ac.uk)



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» Having got together shortly before the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War, the Williamses spent much of the four-year centenary visiting different battlefields on significant dates, beginning with a 0500 pilgrimage to the site of the 1914 Christmas truce near Ploegsteert, in Belgium, and ending at Contalmaison 100 years after the 1918 armistice.

It was soon afterwards that Martin struck upon an idea to retrace the journey taken by the Unknown Warrior's casket from France to Westminster Abbey.

Along with a team of fellow personnel, they were due to complete a stretcher carry along the route this month, raising funds for the Royal British Legion in the process. However, the worsening coronavirus situation has delayed the event until next year.

Despite the setback, the husband and wife duo are determined to mark the anniversary of the Unknown Warrior's internment by ensuring his story isn't forgotten by modern generations.

"I think it's incredibly important," continues Martin.

"Remembrance is the promise from the nation to those who serve that what they do is respected and appreciated.

"Yes, we get paid, but everyone who joins the Armed Forces is



Picture: Steve Dolk

doing it because they are a little bit selfless – even if it's just the smallest part of them.

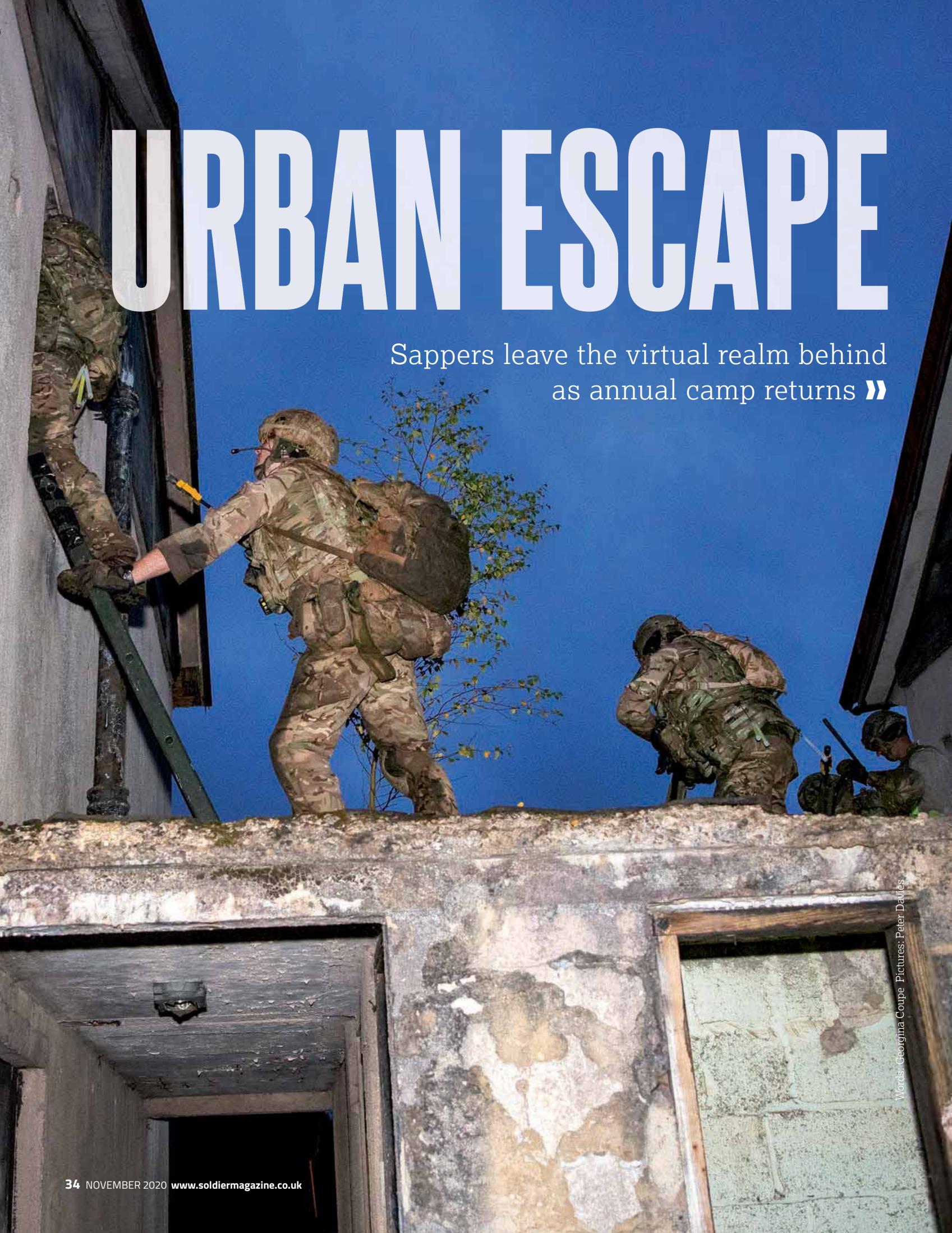
"As soon as it's purely contractual – what's the point? Who wants to risk their life for just a bit of money? No one.

"There really is no amount of money you can pay someone to do what they do for their country.

"I've been to Afghanistan three times and when you're on the front line you don't know what the bigger picture is, you're just there trying to do the very best you can, and that's what all these people were doing – potentially sacrificing their lives to stop the tyranny of the enemy destroying the world as they knew it.

"The fact that we remember them today is a token of respect and shows the country it's still important." ☀

# URBAN ESCAPE



Sappers leave the virtual realm behind  
as annual camp returns »

Words: Georgina Coupe Pictures: Peter Davies

**N**A year unlike any other, 2020 has seen the Army Reserve shift the bulk of its day-to-day business online – but there is no substitute for real-life field exercises.

So, when the soldiers of 299 Parachute Engineer Squadron were offered the opportunity to sharpen their urban fighting skills during the unit's annual training camp, they swiftly cancelled their next Zoom meeting and set their sights on Longmoor.

The high-octane programme saw the Reservists assaulting and defending compounds, gaining entry to buildings with grenades, explosives and simmunition and perfecting the advanced techniques learned in an extensive range package.

Here, they used pistols, rifles and the general-purpose machine gun to gain a greater understanding of fighting in built-up areas (Fibua) and close-quarter battle.

"It's good to be back in training," OC Maj Frank Morrish told *Soldier* during a break in proceedings at Longmoor's urban training complex.

"We've had some exciting ranges and there's been a really good buzz from everyone taking part."

Like many personnel, the sappers – who form the Reserve arm of 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment – swiftly adapted to

life in lockdown and ensured they remained competent by completing compulsory military annual training tests virtually, while drill nights and training weekends took place on platforms such as Zoom and Strava.

The staging of their annual camp signalled a welcome return to action and for many it offered an opportunity to focus on a different way of fighting.

"Fibua lends itself really well to this camp because it's too big a subject to cover properly on a normal training weekend," explained Maj Morrish. "For most soldiers here it's been a steep new learning curve."

"And using simmunition has been a game changer for enhancing the infantry skill set – it adds a sense of realism and makes people think a lot more about what they're doing."

LCpl Matthew Benjamin was among those who relished the urban challenge and said it was completely different to the military drills he had done before.

"It's more systematic and methodical," he explained. "You've got to work without making any noise."

"It's all about good communication and teamwork – you've got to be really slick and everyone must know exactly what's going on, otherwise it can all go wrong." »

“It's about communication and teamwork – you've got to be really slick and everyone must know exactly what's going on”

## Talking training

Royal Engineers reflect on Fibua drills and their Reservist careers

**Name:** LCpl Aaron Gothard, combat engineer in 299 Parachute Engineer Squadron

**Age:** 33

**Length of service:** 7 years

**Civilian job:** Joiner

**He says:** "This is the first time I've done urban training – we normally do field-based exercises. We've been out on lots of night patrols and tasks, as well as working in tunnels, and the weapons training on the GPMG and pistol has been really good as we don't usually use them."

**Military highlights:** "Joining the Reserves was a spur of the moment decision. I wanted a break from my normal nine-to-five job and to do something different.

I went to Cyprus on exercise and did parachuting as adventurous training – the opportunities are endless. You get to travel and see things you would never normally see."



**Name:** LCpl Matthew Benjamin, section 2iC in 101 Engineer Regiment (EOD&S)

**Age:** 40

**Length of service:** 5 years

**Civilian job:** UXO engineer (unexploded ordnance)

**He says:** "Fibua is a different type of military training from what we would normally do, like assaulting a building using the explosive method of entry with grenades and detonated chords."

**Military highlights:** "Last year I deployed on Op Shader 9 as part of a multinational training team teaching Kurdish soldiers search techniques. I also took part in Exercise Nordic Sapper in Sweden, the Army Divisional Ski Championships in France and have received a Chief Royal Engineer commendation."





“It’s about keeping everyone engaged, motivated and fit, and although we were able to continue through the lockdown there’s no substitute for real-life training”

## IN NUMBERS

**9,900**

Live rounds used

**54**

Reservists took part

**48**

Smoke grenades detonated

**20**

Kilogrammes of plastic explosive used

**Name:** Spr Gurpreet Singh Digpal, trainee combat engineer in 299 Parachute Engineer Squadron

**Age:** 28

**Length of service:** 2 years

**Civilian job:** Property manager

**He says:** “I’ve just transferred from The Yorkshire Regiment and this is my first camp with my new unit. I’ve learnt so much here and I’m amazed at how much I’ve improved in such a short space of time – it’s really boosted my confidence. I now know how to stack and breach, use grenades and close in on targets – this is what joining the military is all about.”

**Military highlights:** “I’ve not been in the Army very long, but I’ve taken part in the Nato Exercise Iron Wolf in Lithuania and am about to go on my trainee combat engineer course. Sikhs have a long and proud history of serving in the British military – my father served on two tours of Northern Ireland and I’m looking forward to being part of that tradition.”

» With the government-backed furlough scheme coming to an end and many Reservists returning to their full-time civilian jobs, the decision was made to reduce the annual camp commitment from 16 days to nine, and to invite other engineering units to take part.

"We thought we might struggle to get enough numbers initially as it's a big ask for employers to give people extra time off, but we had a lot more volunteers than expected and actually had to turn people away," Maj Morrish continued.

"Additional Covid-19 restrictions have meant that we have been able to facilitate fewer soldiers in the forward operating base but integrating the training with other units has been really beneficial and is definitely something we'll do more of in the future.

"It means personnel get better training as they are exposed to different elements of the Army."

As training major for the 200-strong unit – which has an

eclectic membership of civilian occupations ranging from nurse to gravedigger and police officer to electrician – Maj Gaz Mutch must ensure the troops can fulfil roles such as combat engineer, plant operator and signaller.

He also has to make sure they are capable of meeting military obligations and forming a high readiness asset when required.

"We always provide the Army with a Reservist capability for anything that happens," he said.

"We have had augmentees deploy on tours of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Cyprus, Kenya, Sudan and more recently on Op Rescript, and I can't think of a single occasion that we haven't been able to provide, when asked.

"It's about keeping everyone engaged, motivated and fit, and although we were able to continue through the lockdown there's no substitute for real-life training where they can integrate and form really strong bonds, like they have here in Longmoor." ■



**Name: Spr Jack Hinton, combat engineer and signaller in 299 Parachute Engineer Squadron**

**Age: 26**

**Length of service: 4 years**

**Civilian job: Manufacturing engineer**

**He says:** "I've never done Fibua before so it's been a really good experience, although it can be quite claustrophobic. I also used simmunition for the first time – it's quite painful and when you hit the enemy you see him flinch, so it adds realism."

**Military highlights:** "I passed P Company last year, and I've also been skiing in Austria and parachuting in Cyprus. The tuition you get from military adventurous training is far superior to any that I've had as a civvy. Being a Reserve has really helped me with job applications and interviews because I've been able to give such strong examples of teamwork and working in stressful situations."



**Name: LCpl David Walsh, combat engineer in 299 Parachute Engineer Squadron**

**Age: 24**

**Length of service:** 6 years

**Civilian job:** In the process of applying for the Fire Service and a Regular Army commission

**He says:** "It was really good to get back to doing military stuff after lockdown. We scaled buildings, set off charges, took part in stretcher runs and a shooting competition. There's a greater emphasis on communication and awareness of your surroundings, and each other, when conducting Fibua training."

**Military highlights:** "I volunteered for P Company and went to Ukraine last year – marching in front of millions of people as part of the independence day parade in Kiev was an amazing experience."



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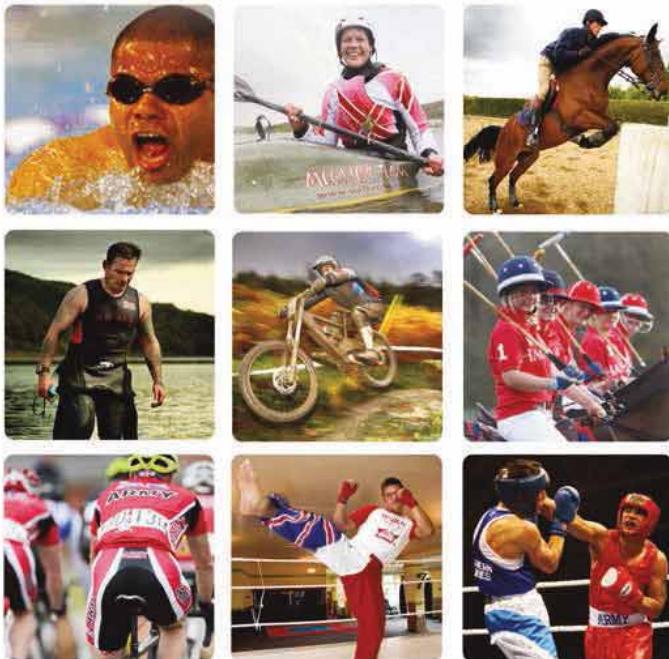


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# SURGICAL STRIKES

New tech is a force multiplier on the medical front line »

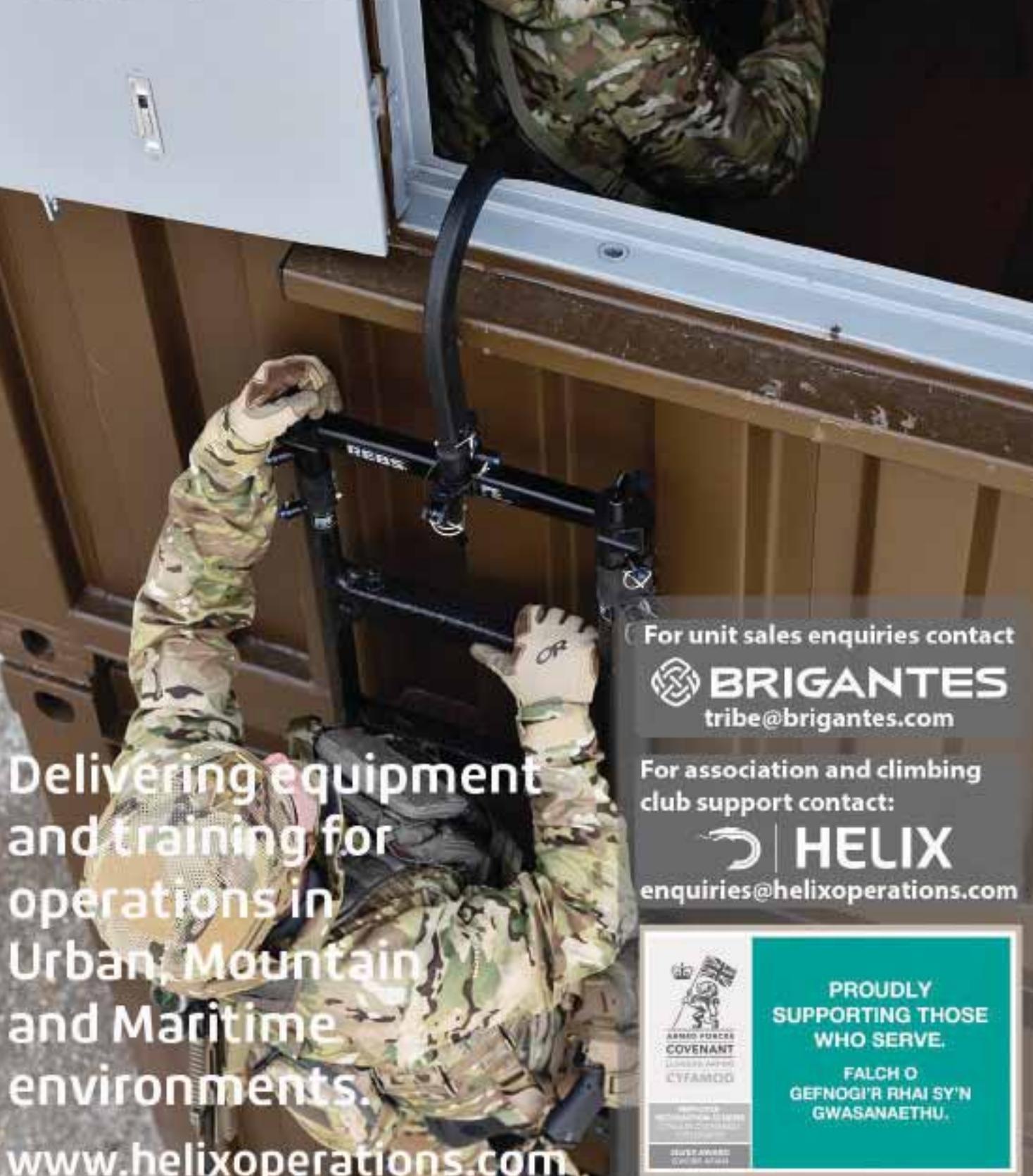


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**I**N THE dim and distant days of 1964, writer Arthur C Clarke made a bold prediction about how advances in communications would shape future medicine.

The author of *2001: A Space Odyssey* asserted that in the coming century surgeons in one country would be operating on patients across the other side of the world.

It was an unprecedented claim made when a house could be bought for £3,500, The Beatles topped the charts, the space race was ramping up and the UK was still three years away from having colour television.

But nearly six decades after Clarke's assessment, Army clinicians are now working to realise his premonition – turning sci-fi into reality and transforming the care of deployed troops.

Project Lara has seen a team of health staff trialling three different technologies, allowing medics to play a full role in operations from way behind the front line.

Augmented reality kit giving doctors the ability to take part in surgical procedures from anywhere on the globe, a secure app to transfer patient data for expert opinion and a system that remotely displays a patient's vital signs, are all showing promise.

Lt Col Oli Bartels (RAMC) – who has been leading the project – said the technologies involved could be game changing, opening up a vast array of clinical expertise.

"In telemedicine terms this means you can go to whichever expert in the world is awake and available to help," the anaesthetist explained.

"These technologies potentially allow us to make this a reality – and open up new opportunities for medical teams to have the best knowledge available."

With the tech currently on the test bed and being probed on operations, *Soldier* was given the heads-up on the equipment turning Clarke's prediction into a reality. »



### Arthur C Clarke: A bold prediction

The futurist and author gave his thoughts on the world – this was his "day after tomorrow" 56 years ago – and he clearly foresaw the approaching communications revolution.

“

“We could be in instant contact with each other...it will be possible for a man to conduct his business from Tahiti or Bali just as well as he could from London.”

“Almost any administrative skill – even any physical skill – could be made independent of distance.”

“I am perfectly serious when I suggest that one day we may have brain surgeons in Edinburgh operating on patients in New Zealand.”

”

### Operation stations

With the medical profession underpinned by a vast range of specialists, taking huge teams covering every discipline away on deployment would be impossible.

But a combination of the latest communications and augmented reality tech means clinicians well behind the front line can now be involved in medical procedures.

Using a suite of technologies known as Proximie, Army teams have been looking at how cameras can potentially be mounted either on – or around – a surgeon to provide a first-person view of the operation they are performing.

Their perspective can be beamed to colleagues with more experience in the procedure being carried out, who can offer their expertise in real time.

Vital info – such as where to look – can even be beamed directly onto the lenses of special glasses worn by the surgeon to give them extra confidence.

Lt Col Bartels – whose 23 years of service include three Op Herrick tours and treating Ebola casualties in Sierra Leone – told *Soldier* the initiative had game-changing potential.

“As you cannot take a specialist in every procedure on an operational tour, this allows more experienced colleagues to assist – wherever they are,” he added.

“We are now into the evaluation phase and are hoping to take it to ops this year – the next phase will see us examining how the glasses could be used.

“The technologies we have – if they are proven – could allow us to use our resources more wisely, enabling more professionals to be involved in a deployment.”

“Faster access to specialist advice for deployed personnel through Pando can hasten medical evacuation for those who need it”





**CV:** Lt Col Oli Bartels  
**Age:** 45  
**Cap badge:** RAMC  
**Current role:** Anaesthetist, Joint Hospital Group North  
**Years of service:** 1996-  
**Operational experience:** Includes Afghanistan, Sierra Leone



**CV:** Lt Col Richard Booker  
**Age:** 41  
**Cap badge:** RAMC  
**Current role:** Senior medical officer, 1 Div  
**Years of service:** 1997-  
**Operational experience:** Includes Afghanistan, Iraq



### Data moves

A specialist comms app to help front-line Army medics stay in touch with top-level support around the world, Pando has also been showing great potential.

The software – which can be downloaded onto mobile devices – was designed by junior doctors in the NHS, where it is now being used by 60,000 staff across 300 hospitals.

But it has more recently impressed military teams with its potential on operations.

The app's industrial-grade security settings mean information – including sensitive patient data – can quickly be transferred between clinicians around the world.

This potentially gives faster access to advice and quicker decision-making.

Lt Col Richard Booker (RAMC) – a GP who has been leading the Pando trial – said the app had proved to be impressive during trials and could prove valuable on ops.

It has been particularly beneficial for the likes of military orthopaedic specialists, who used it to rapidly transfer X-ray pictures to fellow professionals.

“Faster access to specialist advice for deployed personnel through Pando can hasten medical evacuation for those who need it,” he pointed out. “It can also enable others to be treated closer to the point of injury or illness.”

### Staying alive

When Covid-19 sufferers were in ambulances en route to the London Nightingale Hospital, staff responsible for their care were already monitoring their vital signs.

Using a tool remotely plugging them into the Tempus Pro console, which relays information such as patients' heart rates and blood pressures, they could already start determining treatment options.

The so-called “reach back” capability on the kit also allows clinicians to observe the data from several of the machines, on a single screen all at once. Now, its operational potential is being harnessed by Army medical chiefs.

“It is a useful capability because the data can be transmitted in a number of different ways,” pointed out Lt Col Bartels. “A mobile network can be used if there is one available, but we can also make use of satellite links as well.

“We have already shown its potential on operations, using one of the monitors from a Royal Air Force Puma helicopter linked to a hotspot on a phone.

“Adopting this mode means we can be better prepared; again, it allows colleagues, potentially thousands of miles away, to see the screens on ops.” ■



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 **BARCLAYS**

# PUTTING IT *Write*



What lessons would you pass on to yourself if you could step back in time?

**I**T IS one of the most challenging conundrums the modern British Army faces; how does an organisation where rank is fundamental to form and function persuade its soldiers to provide honest and open feedback about their military careers?

One way is to create a platform for personnel to write to themselves, back when they were new recruits.

The individual can reflect on negative and positive experiences and their influence on actions and decisions taken since, aiding professional and personal development and benefiting others by passing on advice and life lessons.

That, at least, is the rationale behind one of the most intriguing internal projects the Army has launched in years.

“Letter to My Former Self” now has its own page on Defence Connect where troops of any rank can submit their innermost thoughts, recollections and advice for consideration by those across the military.

It was created by Capt Renee Raba (AGC (ETS), pictured right), a learning and development officer at 12 Army Education Centre in Larkhill, who first

thought of the idea during the Covid-19 lockdown after seeing a Facebook page popular with personnel that was sharing an article called “The Unpopular Leader”.

The level of likes and comments among junior ranks made the Servicewoman realise that these types of discussions aren’t the preserve of officers.

“If you look at every Centre for Army Leadership event, yes it is open to all but you will not get an ordinary soldier to attend,” Capt Raba told *Soldier*.

“It made me question why that was, and why are we not encouraging our largest body of leadership experience to share their thoughts – why is there that divide where intellectual development is considered an officer’s business, not a soldier’s?

“This platform gives even the most junior personnel the

opportunity to anonymously put their thoughts and opinions on paper and have them viewable to the whole defence community,” she added.

“Hopefully, it will ignite troops’ interest in professional military education and be a stepping stone into further development.”

Capt Raba enlisted the help of colleague Capt Ian Bradshaw (AGC (ETS)) to help bring the concept to life and it also sparked the imagination of the Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gavin Paton, who recently endorsed the project with a special video.

“I wrote a letter to myself and it was a really interesting exercise,” said WO1 Paton. “It made me think long and hard about my career and what I might be able to offer.

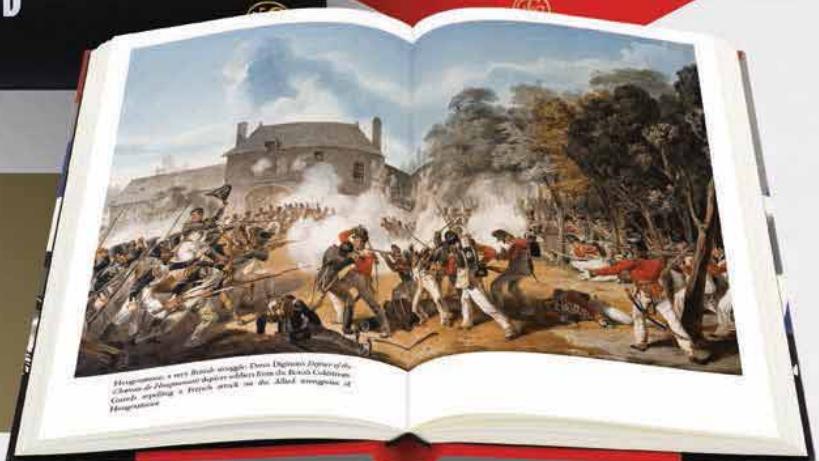
“I challenge soldiers to write one of these and see if they can help the next generation coming through.” ▶



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» Writing standards are not important as Capt Raba and the team will edit them lightly for sense and grammar – and further guidance can be sought on Defence Connect.

The forum is growing in popularity with around 20 letters submitted to date and the number increasing steadily.

“We knew the idea had legs when we asked people we knew to write in and we had four replies in 24 hours,” said Capt Bradshaw, (pictured below).

“There’s lots of evidence out there that shows this type of reflective writing improves performance – a Harvard Business School study found that the hardest leaders to engage with are those who won’t self-reflect.

“And the Australian Army have really bought into this idea and their soldiers get reflective journals and an app so they can record their thoughts at the end of each working day.

“Over time they build up a bank of the lessons learnt and that’s considered a very effective practice for improving leadership skills and personal development.”

Capt Raba and Capt Bradshaw have similar ambitions for their initiative and they hope a large and unique repository of experiences,

advice and insights from troops across the Service will eventually be created to help inexperienced personnel navigate their way through the numerous steps of long and often complex careers. ■



## "I COULD HAVE BEEN A COMPLETE NIGHTMARE"



SSgt Ryan Mullen (REME), from 7 Aviation Close Support Battalion in Wattisham, decided to contribute to the “Letter to My Former Self” project.

Writing this letter made me think about what was done to me, whether it was good or bad and how it could influence someone else on how to think or act in the future.

Sometimes I come across NCOs and ask ‘why did you do that?’ and they reply that that was what was done to them, but you can’t think like that today.

Young soldiers now want to know why they are doing something and how they can do it better. It’s the way it is – mentoring has become so important.

It brought back to me my time as an instructor of new recruits at Pirbright.

I could have been a complete nightmare, shouting in people’s faces all the time, but if I’d done that it’s what they would have expected from the NCOs when they got to their unit.

Their trust in approaching a soldier with that rank would have been broken – and I would have been responsible.

### An extract from Ryan's letter to a young Pte Mullen...

This letter will give you some advice for gaining the skills required to succeed in this diverse organisation that you are now a part of (but knowing you, you’ll probably throw it in the bin and do things the hard way!).

First, **be confident and courteous, but not cocky** in your approach and interaction with your fellow soldiers and superiors. You will have occasions when you want to slap an oxygen thief or open your »

» mouth to question how some NCOs you encounter ever managed to dress themselves, let alone lead soldiers. Stop and think before you do this. That being said, sometimes it will not change what you do but at least you considered your actions first.

This will give you conviction and the rationale for your defence. As you progress through the ranks and gain invaluable experience remember the good and bad – and always strive for the good.

That is how you will want to be remembered. "With great power comes great responsibility," (Spiderman movie).

### Secondly, **learn quickly who you need to keep sweet.**

There are four key personnel in any Army unit:

1 Storeman – you'll never be diffy kit and will get what you want.

2 Chef – you will always be well fed and get seconds.

3 Clothing storeman – he always has the Gucci stuff.

4 The hardest man in the battalion – for a guaranteed quiet life from idiots who think they can fight the world but realistically can't throw a stone, never mind a punch.



Always remember that when you go on operations it is stressful for family too – so please don't let your best mate rock up in full ceremonial dress so your wife can tell him he looks smart. She will only think you are dead and freak out.



Without the support of your family, the work and effort you put in to succeed will double, so don't forget their sacrifice because this will make it easier for you in the long run.

**Never forget where you come from.** As you progress through the ranks remember where you've been. Look after the soldiers you command and let your superiors do the same.

Don't say yes to everything, question it but do it diplomatically – and do that even more as you go up the ranks and gain experience and confidence.

Don't be the guy that brown noses –

Knowing you, you'll probably throw it in the bin and do things the hard way

your superiors might enjoy it but your subordinates will not. Stay strong and confident with the decisions you make and communicate with your soldiers at all levels.

This isn't a democratic organisation but one of values – don't confuse them. There are times for democratic decision-making and times to draw the line and issue orders. Be able to glide between both.

Remember what you do and learn from it as you go. You may strive to be better and think at a young age that the special forces could be for you. That's fine but think basics.

Do them well, remember them as you grow.

Develop and embrace change – if you can't accept it then you will be left behind.

Think before you speak, but when you do, stay strong and have conviction. By the time you get to my stage in life you will realise that it's about the men and women you command and lead, not about the medals and looking ally.

Keep your head down, and move fast. All the best kid.

Ryan

#### **SSgt Ryan Mullen (REME)**

**2003:** Infantryman – 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

**2008:** Served in Afghanistan on Herrick 8

**2014:** Transferred to the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers – served with 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment

**2017:** Army Training Centre Pirbright – phase one platoon sergeant

**2018:** REME Arms School – command leadership management instructor

**2019:** Moved to current unit – 7 Aviation Close Support Battalion

**The future?** I've got a few years left but I don't want to leave. They'll have to kick me out, or kill me!

- Want to get involved? Search for "A Letter to My Former Self" on Defence Connect or email [lettertomyformerself@gmail.com](mailto:lettertomyformerself@gmail.com)

# CHANNEL HOPPING

A decade on from its signing, an Anglo-French treaty has been showing its value in the Covid era





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“It was obvious to me that I should stay and support the effort to combat the virus”



**T**HE prospect of a global pandemic was never on the radar of British and French politicians when they agreed closer military cooperation ten years ago.

Back in 2010, the international focus was still on the high-intensity campaign being waged against the Taliban in Afghanistan, as well as the implications of the emerging Arab Spring uprisings sweeping across the Middle East.

It would have been impossible to predict, as the ink was drying on the Lancaster House agreements, that the two states would one day be allied in a war on their own streets.

But showing trademark adaptability and resilience, soldiers from both countries rose to the challenge of tackling Covid-19, a disease that had already killed tens of thousands across the world and threatened to overwhelm health services.

With the British Army on an operational footing to back civilian colleagues – notably in the NHS – French planners based in the UK under the latest accords also mobilised for Op Rescript. Their invaluable knowledge was used to bolster the command and control effort in the London-based Covid Support Force.

“When the pandemic arrived, it was obvious to me that I should stay and support the effort to combat the virus,” Franck (pictured below) – a major serving in Nato’s Gloucester-based Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps – recalled.

“Although getting used to the British way of working was a challenge, coming straight from a role at the HQ did give me a significant head start.”

Despite the unconventional nature of the foe, Franck also believes the Lancaster House agreements paved the way for a decisive response to the Covid crisis. “We have shown in recent years that we can work together at every level,” he added.

The French and Brits – by all accounts – already had a strong tradition working side-by-side before the two countries decided to press ahead with closer military cooperation.

As well as fighting as allies in the two world wars, a more recent generation of soldiers saw multinational operations in the likes of the Balkans, Mali and Afghanistan.

Politically, both nations had also remained at the forefront of global affairs as permanent members of the UN Security Council. And their governments had consistently shown the political will to use their military when required.

Signed by then British prime minister David Cameron and French president Nicholas Sarkozy, the 2010 accords were based on two treaties – focusing on defence and security, plus nuclear cooperation.

The agreements confirmed the intention to create an Anglo-French expeditionary force ready to deploy on operations at short notice. This became a reality in April 2016 – signed off after the large-scale Exercise Griffin Strike.

The documents also paved the way for troops to embed more widely in each other’s armed forces. Dozens of personnel are now with units from both sides of the Channel.

Although the Covid crisis marked »

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“We have forged a very good working relationship over the years”

» an unprecedented new challenge, the solid foundation of joint working proved invaluable for French soldiers serving in the UK with Nato.

Even those keeping the HQ at Imjin Barracks functioning – and ensuring that core business could still be delivered – stressed that understanding each other's military cultures placed them on a sound footing for dealing with the crisis.

Despite reduced personnel levels and home working, Damien (pictured left) – a French colonel with an armoured background – said joint operating protocols worked soundly.

“I would say the biggest difference we have in terms of business is that British commanders tend to want more detail,” the officer added.

“The French approach is much broader – our leaders set wider objectives and it is up to those more junior in rank to decide how they go about achieving them.”

Damien continued: “In the UK we operate in the British model and its Army structure – we have forged a very good working relationship over the years.

“During the lockdown we were able to continue to work and function effectively.” »





» This sentiment was shared by Franck as he reflected on the London front line – the ability to fit into a UK-led op had been a huge benefit, he added.

“Like lots of organisations, we had to adapt to operating in different ways,” the soldier explained.

“With so many people working remotely it was important that information could be shared quickly and securely with those who were at the sharp end of this battle – such as in hospitals or at the testing sites.”

Fellow major Emmanuel – a planner who was also based in London at the height of the pandemic – was equally convinced that the procedures had paid off.

“I have seen first-hand how the Lancaster House agreements have helped us work together in places such as Mali and Estonia,” the officer emphasised.

“Those experiences have made it much easier in times such as these – we had suddenly found ourselves in the middle of a battle that nobody could have predicted.”

The situation might have been unprecedented, but the experience troops forged in the wake of the Lancaster House accords made a difference in tackling Covid-19.

And with new opportunities for soldiers, plus enhanced capabilities and shared research, there is a strong base on which to build in the years ahead. ■

## At a glance: Lancaster House achievements



### Embedding opportunities in British and French units

Covid Support Force deployment backing civvy authorities

Greater collaboration on kit and equipment

**Combined Joint Expeditionary Force formed, up to 10,000-strong**

**Cooperation on a range of ops, from Afghanistan to Estonia**

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**ESO Education and Training NW** is offering a 15 per cent discount on all courses to Service veterans. The Widnes-based company specialises in training door supervisors, events security staff and security guards. For more information visit [www.esotrainingnw.co.uk](http://www.esotrainingnw.co.uk)

**The Recruit for Spouses coaching programme**, which helps Army partners get back into employment, has received a funding boost to help it reach more husbands and wives. To apply for a six-week course of one-hour sessions contact [coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk](mailto:coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk)

**Army Communications** is recruiting two Reserve SO1s and three SO2s with experience in media, comms, marketing, PR or journalism. The roles encompass exciting opportunities to support or lead projects in campaigns, news, media ops, internal and digital comms. Look out for the job specs on [MS web](http://MS web).

**Forces Families Jobs** is a new platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit [www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk](http://www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk) to see the site, which is free to advertise on for employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.



## SEARCHLINE

**Hugh Corby** is trying to trace the military medals and citations of his late father, **Capt Eric Corby (RA)**, who served as a forward observation officer during the Second World War. Anyone with information is asked to contact him on 07961 606766.

**Jacqui Ritchie, general manager at St John's Wood Care Centre, 48 Boundary Road, London** is trying to find more information about the building's former life as an Army barracks. The centre

celebrates its 20th anniversary this year and is keen to invite veterans to the celebration. Anyone with memories to share should email [stjohnswoodmanager@bondcare.co.uk](mailto:stjohnswoodmanager@bondcare.co.uk)

**Retired Royal Air Force Serviceman Andrew Clark** is a collector of British military tokens used in Iraq and Afghanistan and is seeking examples of pre-2007 issues to boost his collection. If you have any items of interest email [amcpapermoneyman@aol.com](mailto:amcpapermoneyman@aol.com)

**The Air Training Corps, now part of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets**, will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2021. To help mark the occasion, they would like to identify those who were cadets when the formation launched in 1941 and interview them to capture memories of those early days. Email [al.munns@btinternet.com](mailto:al.munns@btinternet.com)

**The Women's Royal Army Corps Association** has launched a campaign to find the oldest British female Second World War veteran. To nominate someone you think may meet the criteria visit [www.wraccassociation.org](http://www.wraccassociation.org) or use #FindOurOATS on social media.

**Anita Louise Watson** is trying to trace her father, **James Watson**, who served as a lance corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers during the 70s. Anyone with information should email [anitawatson164@gmail.com](mailto:anitawatson164@gmail.com)

**The Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society** is looking for newcomers to join the fold. Open to all cap badges of the British Army, it currently has 500 members but is looking to boost numbers. In addition to serving and former soldiers, the society also welcomes cadet force and Nato personnel, as well as MoD civilians. Email [p25@sky.com](mailto:p25@sky.com) for details or visit [www.rsars.org.uk](http://www.rsars.org.uk)



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## ROADSHOWS

**The Forces Pension Society** is staging a number of roadshows at garrison locations throughout the year as well as FAR (financial aspects of resettlement) briefings. See [www.forcespensionsociety.org/news-events/events](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org/news-events/events) for the latest dates and details.

**The Army Engagement Team** roadshows – enquires to [rc-aeg-mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-aeg-mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

# JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU? No. 944

TEN details have been changed in this picture of soldiers from the Pakistan Military Academy Team, high kicking to a halt at the end of their performance in the annual Pace Sticking Competition at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

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Circle all the differences in the left image and send the panel to HOAY 944, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than November 30.

The winners' names will be published in the January issue. All the usual rules apply.



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# REVIEWS

## GAMES

### Fifa 21

**League leader adds fresh polish for the new season**

Available now for all formats

► STADIUMS are empty, fixtures are being held behind closed doors and there is no prospect of normality returning to the beautiful game any time soon.

In the same way as the rest of society, 2020 has seen the football world turned upside down. Competitions have been heavily disrupted or cancelled and the only way to catch a match is via TV cameras at empty venues.

But while the ever-present threat of lockdown and infection control might prevail in the real footie world, console kickabouts are immune to the pandemic.

And this is where the latest instalment of EA Sports' *Fifa* series, put into production before the current crisis, is a virtual breath of fresh air.

Offering an alternative experience in a Covid-free world, this offering still has the welcome roar of crowds resonating through the stands.

*Fifa 2021* also provides the same slick gameplay experience that has evolved in the series for more than a decade with some decent extras to boot.

As always, players can take on everything from one-off exhibition matches to a full campaign. And they're offered an impressive roster of the latest players and kits, as well as a new commentary team to help on-pitch dreams come true.



**P64**  
BOOKS

**P66**  
MUSIC



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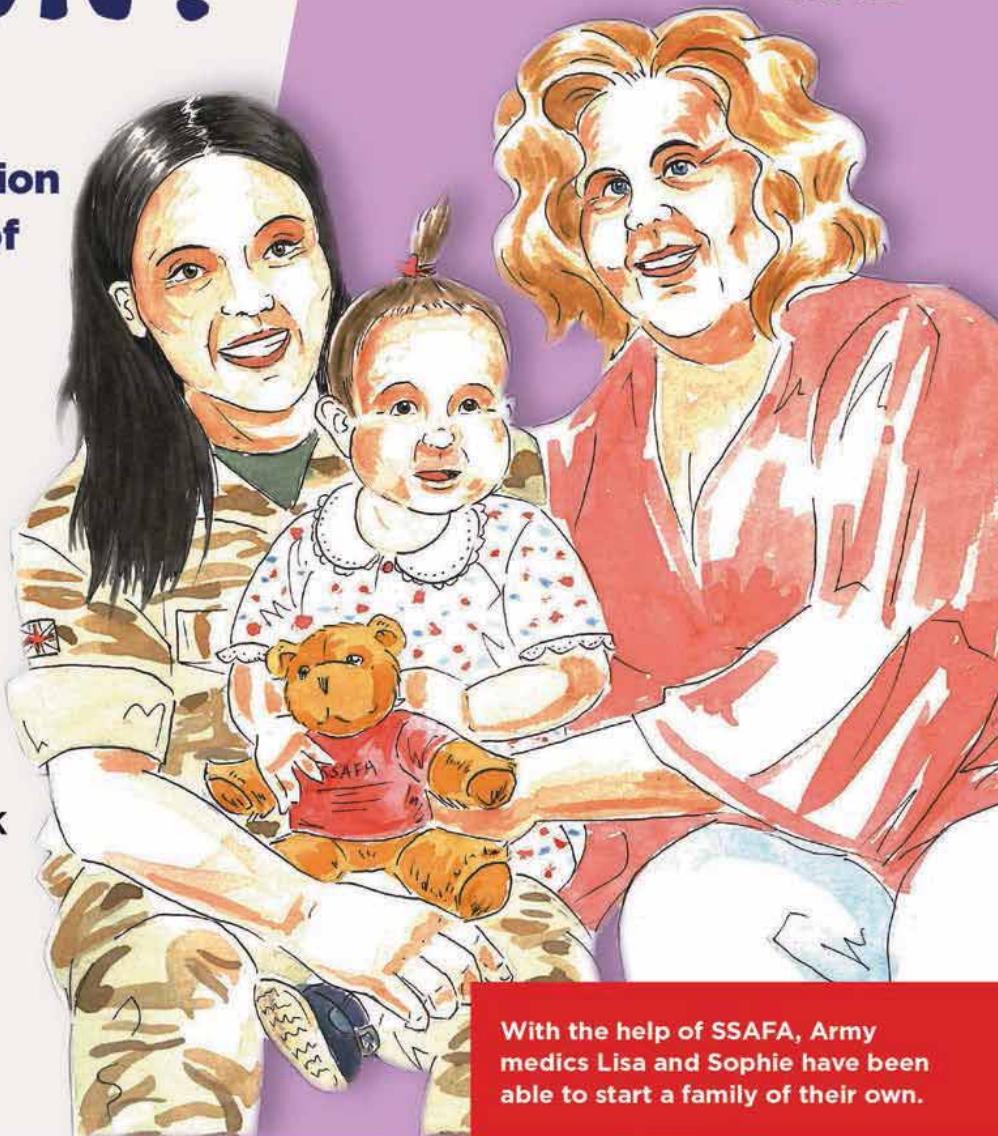
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## GAMES



Enhancements on the field – including the ability to carry out a raft of more refined dribbling and heading moves – are complemented by virtual teammates being more savvy, skilful and tactile in their responses to patterns of play.

In the dugout, an uprated career mode allows would-be player-managers to jump in and out of key matches to bag those all-important late winners, *Roy of the Rovers* style.

The boardroom sees more options on the transfer market and there are still a host of ways to play on your own, online or in co-op modes with mates.

Elsewhere, virtual silverware is up for grabs in an array of competitions – including the UEFA Champions League – while the latest EA Trax jukebox blasts out foot-stomping half-time tunes.

*Fifa 21* is destined to prove popular with die hard football fans – and spouses beware, this will find its way onto the Christmas lists in more than a few Army families.

But despite its assured popularity, there is no escaping the feel of a series at the end of its current lifespan as the next generation of consoles loom larger on the horizon.

With the experience now so polished, there are realistically only a finite number of enhancements available when it comes to completing the game's

annual facelift.

The Switch version is, in particular, considerably stripped back compared to its full-size console and PC counterparts. It principally relies on the new kits and players to hold its appeal, although the gaming experience remains credible.

There are two ways of looking at *Fifa 21* – if you own a previous title in the series and you can live without new kits and players, it might be best to wait for the inevitable sale. The full asking price, upwards of £40, is probably too steep – and this is certainly the case for the Nintendo incarnation.

But if – on the other hand – footie is your passion, you will find the usual class in this offering and a bit more besides.

And with limited night out options looking likely in the UK as this issue hit the presses, troops might be willing to trade a few rounds of drinks for some decent console football action. ■

### VERDICT:

Like top-flight matches – overpriced but polished



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

## GAMES RELEASES

### Her Majesty's Ship For Switch



IT is a frustrating experience when a title fails to hit the mark but there is a decent game fighting to get out – this handheld outing is one such example. Willing soldier gamers will find themselves transferring to the Senior Service for this strategy romp, which pits ambitious captains against their naval rivals, as well as the Queen's enemies. As such, they must make sure their 18th century warship is appropriately armed, crewed and maintained properly. But players will find themselves let down by clunky controls and over-ambitious gameplay. This is an engagement best left to hardened seafarers.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

### MX vs ATV All Out for Switch

WHILE a motorised hack through mud and dust has never been *Soldier*'s favoured pastime, this handheld title clearly shows why the sport has such a fanbase. Already released on full-sized

consoles, *MX vs ATV* makes a credible transition to the Switch with plenty to keep riders of three platforms clinging on for dear life. There are bikes, quads and buggies available for either single or multiplayer mayhem. But while it's good downtime fun, the £30 plus price tag is far too steep and the optional downloadable content adds to the cost.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

### WIN >>

*PlayStation Revolution* on Blu-ray



AS THE original PlayStation marks its 25th anniversary, this polished documentary charts the history of a machine that forever changed the trajectory of popular culture. Drawing on interviews with key personalities, this solid piece of journalism provides a fascinating insight into a phenomenon still weaving its way into the fabric of contemporary life. We have a copy on Blu-ray to give away. To stand a chance of winning, tell us the country in which Sony was first established. Email your answer to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) Closing date November 30. Usual rules apply.

## BOOKS

To find out more about Nims Purja go to [nimsdai.com](http://nimsdai.com) or follow @nimsdai on Twitter and Instagram

Pictures: Nirmal Purja, Gejen Sherpa, Mingma David Sherpa, Project Possible



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## BEYOND POSSIBLE

### Gurkha veteran's ascent to high-altitude glory

► NIRMAL Purja shot to mountaineering stardom last year when, as a relative rookie to the sport, he conquered all 14 of the world's "death zone" peaks in just over six months.

A former soldier in the Queen's Gurkha Engineers and later the elite echelons of the Royal Navy, he carried out his mission – known as Project Possible – with military precision and single-minded determination, smashing the previous record by a staggering seven years.

It was an all or nothing approach that won him legions of fans on social media – not to mention a fair few detractors in parts of the climbing community. But now, a year on, he is setting the record straight in an autobiographical account of his quest to reach new heights.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when *Soldier* caught up with him to discuss the project, he was in the Alps, trying his hand at the high-octane sport of speed flying, or, in his words, "trying not to die every day".

As he proudly explained, it's all part of his ethos of pushing boundaries.

"Everything we do as humans in life seems impossible until it's been done," he said.

"Project Possible was beyond people's imagination. Summiting an 8,000-metre peak is not a joke. Some people climb Everest and it takes them two months.

"Elite mountaineers start as children and probably do 16 or 17 expeditions in their lifetime, only half of which are successful.

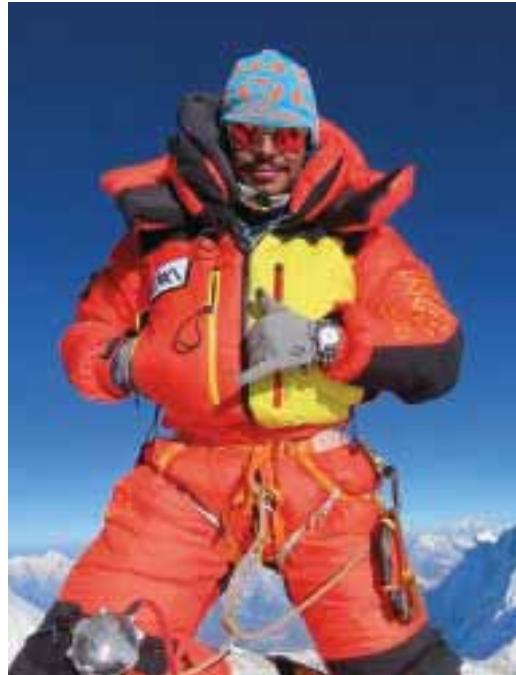
"But I could see there was something there and thought I could do it.

"I also wanted to show everything is achievable if you put your heart and mind to it. I didn't even have one per cent doubt."

It's not hard to imagine how this latecomer, with unshakeable self-belief, backed by generous sponsors and vocal about his exploits would put noses out of joint among established climbers.

However, Purja – who also goes by Nimsdai, or just Nims – is unrepentant.

"If I'd completed the project and no one knew about it, that wouldn't have mattered to me," continues the 37-year-old.





"But I needed the funding, so I had to come out and shout loudly about it."

"My other main message was to lift the name of the Nepalese climbers. They've always been the heroes, but only in the background."

"We've been the underdogs, but I thought it was time to show the world what they can do."

"Doing something just for yourself isn't a big enough motivation."

The book, *Beyond Possible*, charts Purja's upbringing in Nepal and how he passed the gruelling Gurkha selection process and eventually worked his way to the sharp end of operations.

He caught the climbing bug during military expeditions and in 2017 was part of the Gurkha 200 team that summited Everest – after the original bid was hit by the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

Whatever his methods, the magnitude of his achievement is astonishing. In the process of conquering all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks he broke another six records, including the fastest time to scale the top five highest mountains – Everest, Lhotse, Kangchenjunga, Makalu and K2 – a feat he managed in just 70 days.

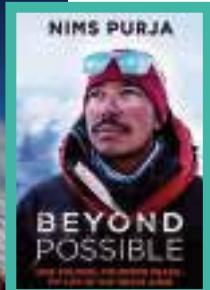
On Annapurna his team also risked their lives to rescue Malaysian doctor Wui Kin Chin, who sadly later died in hospital.

Purja, who cites his own heroes as Muhammad Ali and Usain Bolt, puts his accomplishments down to a combination of biology and good fortune.

"I'm lucky in my physiology," he says. "I am a person who is not only talented in terms of high altitude climbing, backed up by physical fitness and the ability to acclimatise quickly, but I also had my experience of arduous military training and my decision-making skills – it's an amalgamation of all of those things."

"An 8,000-metre peak is my home ground. That's where I come alive. That's where I'm Nimsdai."

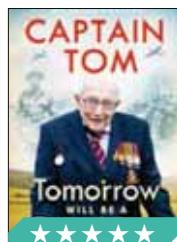
INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



● *Beyond Possible*, by Nims Purja, is published by Hodder & Stoughton on November 12 and priced £20



## BOOK RELEASES



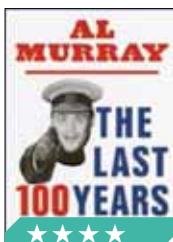
### **Captain Tom** Tomorrow Will Be a Good Day

by Capt Sir Tom Moore

OUR American cousins refer to their Second World War veterans as the Greatest Generation – we

tend to be a little more reserved in our praise for our wartime forebears. This year, one man changed all that and set a great personal example to the nation. Capt Sir Tom Moore has been an inspiration to us all. This book, reflecting on his eventful life, goes some way to explaining where he found his own inner strength. His story, ranging from the Yorkshire Dales to the mountains of Nepal and the war in the Far East, is a genuinely uplifting read that will brighten any day.

**Mike Peters, ex-AAC**

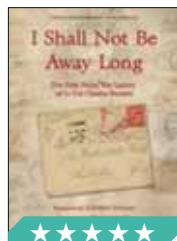


### **AL MURRAY** The Last 100 Years

by Al Murray

WHILST never having followed Al Murray's "Pub Landlord" alter-ego too closely I'm a big fan of his and co-host James Holland's podcast, *We Have Ways of Making You Talk*. In this, his latest book, he applies his irreverent approach to history to the last 100 years. With chapters such as "D-Day: How Hard Can it be?" and "Northern Ireland: They Called it 'The Troubles' – They Weren't Joking", this won't be for everyone, but I found it an entertaining and often hilarious charge through the highs and frequent lows of the last century. Bite-sized history with a few genuine lols thrown in – what's not to like?

**WO2 Mike Owens, RE**

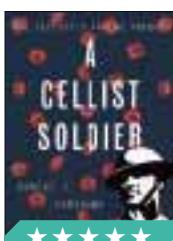


### **I Shall Not Be Away Long**

by Andrew Tatham

THIS is the story of a First World War infantry officer told through letters he sent to his wife. Lt Col Charles Bartlett was in his 30s when fighting started but his age and experience soon saw him promoted to second-in-command of his outfit, 8th Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment. His writings show life in the trenches, often listing colleagues who become casualties. A picture of the formation's officers prior to going to France was the topic of the author's previous book *The Photograph*. This subsequent offering is a strange, one-way conversation but enlightening nonetheless, revealing Bartlett's frailties as a human being, as well as a commander. It will make excellent reading for scholars of the conflict.

**Andy Kay, ex-RS**



### **A CELLIST SOLDIER**

by Robert J Fanshawe

A PREQUEL to the author's superb 2019 offering, *The Cellist's Friend*, this novel examines the events leading up to the execution by firing squad of the narrator's comrade. The injustices, conflicting emotions and authenticity of the dialogue make this a must read. There are some really hard-hitting questions that the characters ask themselves in both of these books, and although they are set in the First World War the story, experiences and feelings described are still as relevant to soldiers today as they were then. I really can't recommend this brilliant title enough.

**Sgt Adam Jackson, Para**

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## MUSIC



You can buy this piece from November 7 at [www.householddivision.org.uk](http://www.householddivision.org.uk)

### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## CENOTAPH REQUIEM

### New recording prompts remembrance reflections

EVERY public event has been cancelled, postponed or altered in light of the continuing Covid-19 crisis – and unfortunately the upcoming remembrance season is no exception.

This month's gathering in London will, by all accounts, be a far more low-key affair than usual – off limits to the public for the first time in its history.

But as difficult as 2020 has been with its array of restrictions and lockdowns it nonetheless remains a landmark year when marking conflict past.

Exactly a century ago, the remains of an unknown warrior were repatriated from the First World War battlefields and interred at Westminster Abbey. Around the same time a new monument in Whitehall, now the focal point for national reflection and wreath laying, was also unveiled.

These two events inspired the recording of the acclaimed *Cenotaph Requiem* – a piece penned by Corps of Army Music stalwart Lt Col Simon Haw and originally performed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great War's end.

But as well as capturing the sense of occasions for this year's two landmark anniversaries, the release of the piece on CD and digital download has a new meaning in the Covid age. It encapsulates the mood of a public now carrying out individual – and deeply personal acts – of remembrance.

"Music is very much a part of who we are, interwoven from the cradle to grave," explained Lt Col Haw, commanding officer of the Household Division Bands.

"It is there from the moment we are born, an integral part of weddings and other events – it helps us to make sense of, as well as celebrate, our lives."

He added: "*Cenotaph Requiem* takes those listening back in time to the First World War and why we fought.

"But it also propels us forward to the era of today, of resolution, and a strong sense of optimism as we move forward."

The new recording – which is performed by the Orchestra of the Household Division with vocal sections provided by the Commonwealth Scholars and Children's Choirs – is a highly polished outing.

The three movements of the piece that *Soldier* sampled – *Kyrie*, *Sanctus* and *Jutland* – certainly strike the right note in capturing the reflective mood.

With unfailingly strong performances in each of these three excerpts, it is impossible not to be moved and they summon some strong emotions on all fronts.

All in all, *Cenotaph Requiem* makes a powerful statement. As well as adding to an evocative Corps of Army Music repertoire, proceeds from the recording are being distributed among military charities to help the wider Service community.

At a time when our good causes need every available penny, adding a very worthy work to your collection of military music is a perfect way to show your support. ■

### VERDICT:

A powerful statement of remembrance and reflection



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

## MUSIC RELEASES



### Zeros

by Declan McKenna

IN an industry awash with "I'm upset about something, so I'll tweet my feelings" musicians, **Declan McKenna** does his best to not set himself apart from the rest. Opener *You Better Believe* is instantly forgettable, but with flickers of early **Queen** psychedelia on *Be An Astronaut* things begin to seem positive. However, the remainder of *Zeros* transforms into a **David Bowie** tribute offering thanks to an array of *Ashes to Ashes* keyboard intros – unfortunately, McKenna lacks the same flair and talent. The one saving grace has to be *Beautiful Faces*, which boasts an opening and chorus that clearly draws inspiration from post-Beatles **Paul McCartney** works. But it is not enough to save the album from what it is; a modern musician making a boring political message with a name check to Quavers crisps along the way. Do me a favour Declan – change the record!

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



### Twice in a Lifetime

by Roachford

**ROACHFORD**, whose most famous song *Cuddly Toy* has been a mainstay of radio airplay for more than three decades now, is back with arguably the best album of his career to date. The 55-year-old is one of the most compelling, and consistent, rock and soul artists the UK has produced and *Twice in a Lifetime* will only serve to enhance such a lofty reputation. It is a record that has clearly been years in the making and is the sound of someone who is at the very top of their game and knows their craft inside out. Produced by Jimmy Hogarth, who has previously worked with the likes of **Paolo Nutini**, **Duffy** and **Amy Winehouse**, it features several members of the latter's band and is an absolute masterpiece from start to finish. This is Roachford at his finest as he pumps out yet more phenomenal music that never gets old.

Rodge Tappy, ex-RE

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# SOLDIER SPORT



## WHEELS IN MOTION »

THE Defence School of Transport formed the ideal venue for the Army Enduro Championships as more than 90 riders took to the saddle for the annual test. Read about the success of the event, as well as the sport's flourishing novice scene, on page 72...

Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC



## SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Outlaw Events



### Matthews marches on

➡ TRIATHLON star Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC) claimed another victory in the Ironman 70.3 ranks as she topped the standings in the Outlaw X event in Nottinghamshire.

The win came on the back of her recent triumph in Estonia, where she secured a place at the Ironman World 70.3 Championships.

Matthews returns to action at the Ironman Portugal race on November 7, when she will be hoping to qualify for the full Ironman World Championships.



### Kentish Cup cancelled

➡ THE UK Armed Forces' footballers will have to wait until 2021 to defend their Kentish Cup crown after this year's tournament was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The competition, which also features the French and Dutch forces, was due to be played in Portsmouth this autumn but the visiting personnel are unable to travel in the current climate.

A strong Army contingent – including Spr Dan Stoneman (RE, pictured) – helped the UK team to a fourth consecutive title in 2019 and they will be hoping for further success when the contest celebrates its centenary year next season.



## REDS SET SIGHTS ON SERVICES CROWN



**"WE  
PULLED  
IT OFF  
TO A  
TEE"**

**T**HE Army's footballers are relishing the opportunity to finish what they started after being given the green light to conclude their Inter-Services campaign.

After defeating the Royal Air Force 1-0 in their opening fixture in March, the men's team were targeting a follow-up victory over the Royal Navy in their bid to retain their Forces title only for the coronavirus lockdown to intervene.

Now, almost eight months later, they will look to complete the task when they finally lock horns with the Senior Service in Aldershot on November 5.

"The aim has always been to complete the Inter-Services," head coach Maj Sean Birchall (RLC) told *SoldierSport*.

"To say it has been a challenge is an understatement but the work the Army FA has done to get this organised has been tremendous."

"We prepared really well for the competition in March and went into the match with the RAF with a game plan that

we pulled off to a tee. When everything suddenly stopped due to Covid it was a kick in the teeth, but we had to deal with it."

The Reds warmed up for the match with a 3-3 draw against Aldershot Under-23s (pictured) last month and, while there were plenty of positives in the performance, Birchall admitted the preparations were not ideal.

"We had four players in isolation and some others, who have returned to civilian football, had picked up injuries," he explained.

"We managed to get a squad of 15 together and it was a really good test – it was a challenge we needed."

"Looking ahead, I now have a full squad available, although that can change. Services football is all about playing to your strengths, and that's what we'll look to do."

The Army women, who lost 1-0 to the RAF in their opening match, face the Navy in Aldershot on November 30. ■



# CUP WIN REWARDS COVID CALLING

**A**STUNNING long-range effort from Pte Owen Karau was the headline act of a commanding 4-0 victory for 7 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps in the Covid-delayed Army FA Cup final.

The forward's sweetly-struck drive sailed over the head of the back-pedalling goalkeeper and into the roof of the net to give the loggies a 3-0 lead in the early exchanges of the second half – a deficit that was to prove unassailable for their rivals from 3 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment.

Skipper LCpl Sean Woolley (pictured) added the finishing touches late on as he raced onto a through ball from Karau and calmly found the bottom corner.

The result means the Rutland-based unit have now lifted the prestigious trophy three times in the past five years.

The champions-elect signalled their intent from the first whistle and when the sappers failed to clear a throw-in on the right, Sgt Mathew Green was on hand to

drill a low shot across goal and into the far corner.

The midfielder turned provider midway through the first half as his free kick was bundled home by Pte Rawlins Ferdinand and with their rivals limited to shots from distance, the outcome was never in doubt.

Karau's moment of magic and Woolley's cool finish capped a triumphant afternoon for the players who, earlier this year, helped form one of the military's biggest mobile testing units during the coronavirus crisis.

"I have to credit the discipline of the boys," manager WO2 Carl Blackburn told *SoldierSport*. "All they wanted to do was play football and they've been so busy with the MTUs – they were doing 12 to 13-hour days for two-and-a-half months.

"The average age of the players is 23 and we've had a tough run in the competition. It is a young squad and as we are only losing one or two for next season there's no reason why we cannot go and win this cup again." ■



## FINALS FLOURISH

WHILE the Army FA Cup final proved to be the centrepiece of football's resumption, a host of other silverware was lifted as the elongated season finally reached its conclusion.

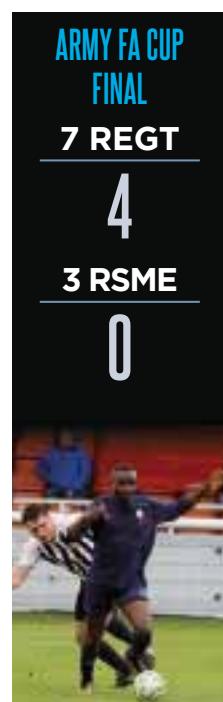
In a repeat of the 2019 final, the Royal Engineers faced off against the Royal Signals in the Woolwich Cup final (pictured) and it was the sappers who gained revenge for their defeat last time out.

After surviving an early onslaught, LCpl Sam Atkinson gave the champions-elect the lead with an overhead effort before Sgt Jay Hubbard converted at the far post to make it 2-0 at the break.

Sgt Kevin Cameron reduced the deficit from the spot but with more goals failing to follow, it was the Engineers who triumphed.

Elsewhere, the Armour Centre claimed a third successive Army Minor Units Cup title as they proved too strong for their rivals from 34 Field Hospital – running out 3-0 winners.

And the Army Medical Services again proved to be the team to beat in the women's game as they retained their Edwards Cup title with a 3-2 victory over the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.





Picture: Marcel Laponder

# WISEMAN BACKS MOVE TO CANCEL WINTER PLANS

**T**EAM GB biathlon ace Cpl Oscar Wiseman (Rifles) says the cancellation of the Army winter sports season is a "massive loss for the military" but insists the right decision has been made given the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

Last month *SoldierSport* reported that a number of proposals on how the various disciplines could proceed had been presented to Army Headquarters. However, given the current and potential future impact of Covid-19, as well as the risk to soldiers, it has since been deemed that all activity should be shelved for 2020/21.

"It is a global pandemic – we cannot really do anything about that," Wiseman, who was hoping to compete in his sixth successive winter campaign at Service level, explains.

"It is a case of better safe than sorry and safety has to be the primary concern.

"Initially, I was quite optimistic about what might happen. If not for full-scale competitions, then at least for small training teams who could operate in a bubble and still take something from the season in terms of getting out on the skis and ranges.

"But when you look at the statistics in terms people dying and falling ill, then it's really not worth it."

The 24-year-old believes biathlon is far more than a sporting escape and has seen the benefits the pursuit offers to personnel in their day jobs.

And while missing out in the coming months is a blow, he is confident the Army's athletes will quickly find form once the activity is safe to resume.

"It has really taken off within the battalions and over the past five years it has become very popular," he adds.

"After the Herrick era people suddenly found themselves with



**"IT'S A  
CASE OF  
BETTER  
SAFE  
THAN  
SORRY"**

more time available and they got into winter sports.

"This discipline is what riflemen, in particular, pride themselves in. It is about covering ground at speed while your heart rate is through the roof, then all of a sudden you have to compose yourself and take aim at a target.

"After a season of biathlon there are soldiers who go straight to promotion cadres and career courses and perform extremely well. Everything we learn on the snow is relevant to military life.

"It is like riding a bike and next season they should be able to carry on where they left off – there is no real skill fade.

"It is a shame that we cannot compete this year but hopefully we can return bigger and better in 2021 with more people and teams involved."

Despite military events being postponed, Wiseman is in the fortunate position of being able to

take to the snow under the Team GB banner having been selected for the squad following some strong showings last season.

He joins fellow soldiers Sgt Amanda Lightfoot (AGC (SPS)), Bdr Vinny Fountain (RA) and LCpl Jordan Foley (RLC) in the national set-up and after completing a training camp in Ruhpolding he will travel to Sweden for his first taste of international competition.

"My initial goal is to simply see how I fare against the Scandinavian countries," the athlete – who was introduced to the sport as a novice through the Army six years ago – explains.

"It is about seeing where I am in comparison to them, particularly on the ranges.

"I've been counting my blessings and every day is a school day.

"I'm skiing against people who have won Olympic medals and I've learnt so much.

"After Christmas I'll be looking at some International Biathlon Union events. Beyond that I want to remain at a standard that allows me to compete against the best, while hopefully qualifying for the World Cup.

"The Olympics would be really tough graft, but nothing is impossible. I've got all the support I need so it's a case of seeing what happens." ■



## WINTER IN NUMBERS

DISCIPLINES  
WITHIN  
THE ARMY  
WINTER  
SPORTS SET-  
UP – ALL OF  
WHICH ARE  
CANCELLED

8

DAYS OF  
INTER-  
SERVICES  
ACTION  
SCHEDULED  
FOR  
FEBRUARY  
THAT HAVE  
ALSO BEEN  
SCRAPPED

7

SOLDIERS  
HOPING TO  
SEE ACTION  
WITH THE  
TEAM GB  
BIATHLON  
SQUAD THIS  
SEASON

4

PLACE  
FINISH FOR  
THE SCOTS  
DG IN LAST  
SEASON'S  
ARMY  
ALPINE  
CHAMPS

3<sup>rd</sup>



Picture: Maj Matt Noone, RTR

## RETURN TO PISTE IS CRUCIAL

ALPINE skier Capt Mike Houstoun (Scots DG) is hoping the Service sport will emerge unscathed from the Covid-19 pandemic after seeing the 2020/21 season scrapped.

The 29-year-old was due to captain his unit team in various competitions this winter and is now pinning his hopes on action at a local level if the relevant authority, and the Scottish weather, allows.

Having missed a previous campaign due to a deployment on Op Tosca he is aware of the negative impact a prolonged absence from the slopes can have but is fully understanding of the unique circumstances surrounding the move.

"That set us back in a significant way," he told *SoldierSport*. "We missed that continuity of training."

"The team we had the season after that was significantly weaker."

"In the build-up to this

decision being made I was visiting different squadrons and when I saw members of the ski team they would ask what was happening.

"We were hopeful, but as soon as cases started to rise again it was obvious it would not go ahead."

On a personal level, the campaign is due to be Houstoun's last as he moves away from the slopes to focus on his career, but he said there is no resentment on his part.

"I got in the Army team last year and competed in the super combined, so I'm not too disheartened," he explained.

"As the Scots DG, we have already put plans in place for some training in Scotland if there's snow and we can get the authority to do so."

"The Army skiing programme is brilliant – it really brings soldiers on. We are just hoping the sport will come out the other side of this and is not lost to Covid-19." ■



Pictures: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC



# BRIGHT FUTURE LOOMING AS NOVICES HIT TOP GEAR

**H**AVING feared the event may not even go-ahead in 2020, organisers of the Army Enduro Championships have been celebrating a job well done as more than 90 soldiers took to the saddle for the sport's annual showdown.

Staged at the Defence School of Transport (DST), the contest saw a familiar face top the individual standings as Cpl Tom Ellwood (RE) was crowned overall champion ahead of fellow elite athlete LCpl Stuart Mack (AGC (RMP)).

But it was the large contingent of novice riders in action that proved particularly pleasing and those charged with developing the discipline believe such healthy numbers point to a positive future.

"They are inspirational," event organiser Maj Sandy Mack (Scots) told *SoldierSport*.

"Enduro is becoming more and more popular on civvy street and

some competitions in the UK are 200 strong.

"The good thing is riders don't have to spend a lot of money on their machines, you can pick up a bike for around £1,500 and come along and enjoy the Army Championships.

"This is all about developing the grass roots level, that is the main thing.

"The big boys look after themselves, but every year we will find one or two who we can feed into the Army team."

With coronavirus restrictions continually changing Mack said there were doubts as to whether the competition would proceed but the emergence of the Leconfield-based DST as a venue – the first time the event had been held there in 20 years – made the process easier.

Once the relevant paperwork was signed off, the officer and his team of volunteers spent a week readying the site for action



**"THERE  
WERE  
SO MANY  
SMILING  
FACES"**

– an effort which he is extremely thankful for.

"Even up until a week before we were not sure what would happen as new announcements regarding coronavirus were coming out," Mack explained.

"When we got the green light, I was surprised as so many other events were on, then off and then ultimately cancelled.

"But because we went up to DST, we had the training area to ourselves and everything was socially distanced – I cannot thank them enough.

"The only real difference to the other sites we use was the fact the loop was just eight miles long – it's normally around 20.

"But as the majority of riders were novices it wasn't really an issue as 20 miles would be too long for them.

"It was a great success, there were so many smiling faces and it was fantastic to have that smell of two-stroke again." ■

## SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Allign Photography

## PREMIER PERFORMERS RAISE THE BAR



**"IT'S  
BEEN A  
GREAT  
START"**

**W**HILE representative rugby union remains suspended at Army level, a number of the Service's female players are tasting competitive action in the Premier 15s.

England's elite competition resumed last month and four members of the Reds' squad took to the pitch in the opening rounds – the highlight of which saw Bdr Beth Dainton (RA, pictured) face teammates Capt Gemma Rowland (RA) and SSgt Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) as Harlequins clashed with rivals Wasps.

A 31-12 victory saw Dainton secure the bragging rights and with Quins also running out 103-0 winners against the DMP Sharks, they have high hopes for the months ahead.

"It's been a great start and the mood in camp is pretty positive," the flanker told *SoldierSport*. "We're definitely going in the right direction."

"In pre-season we were put into training bubbles of six to 12 people, which meant we didn't see half of the squad for a couple of months.

"The training was very hard due to the change in laws. To

minimise the risk of Covid transmissions they've reduced the number of scrums in a game, meaning it is a lot faster and the ball is in play longer.

"We trained at a higher intensity for longer periods to try and replicate game play. Although it was tough it's definitely been worth it."

Dainton has been backed by her unit – 1st Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery – during her return to rugby and managed to stay in peak condition during lockdown after creating a garage gym.

And she believes the number of Service players involved in the Premier 15s – as well as the levels below – will benefit the Army squad when it finally gets the green light to return.

"It definitely raises the standard and allows us to challenge each other on and off the pitch," she added.

"It's disheartening to know that the resumption of Army rugby won't happen any time soon. In the meantime, we need to take ownership of our core skills and fitness so we're in the best position we can be when we eventually come back together again." ■



### Young guns miss out

**■** RUGBY union's Under-23 Inter-Services Championships have been cancelled for the 2020/21 season.

It was hoped the tournament would be played in its traditional pre-Christmas slot but national governing body the Rugby Football Union has since announced that no competitions – with the exception of the Premiership, Championship, Premier and Elite 15s – will be played before January.

The decision also means that all representative rugby in the Army remains suspended, although the Ready for Rugby format has been approved at unit level.



### Willets makes ring return

**■** BOXER Gnr Tori-Ellis Willets (RA) has been named in the first Team GB squad to face competitive action in the ring since lockdown.

The 51kg star was part of a six-strong outfit that was due to fight in the Alexis Vastine Tournament in France as this issue went to press – an event that followed on from an 11-day training camp in Turkey.

"Everything has been put in place to keep our boxers and coaches safe and we're looking forward to having a successful tournament," said performance director Rob McCracken.

# Final Word



For me it will be the veterans who have sadly felt they had no one to turn to and ended their own lives. Nobody should think they have to face their demons alone.

**Mike Kiff, ex-R Signals**



I will lay a wreath at our village war memorial and spend some time remembering the 16 Royal Military Police friends and colleagues who have died as a result of operations since 2000. I'll think of them and their families, the laughs, the pulling together through tough times – they were family.

**Kate Green, ex-AGC (RMP)**

I always think about certain individuals who I had the honour to serve with. Lest we forget that all should be remembered for all they gave. We must also keep in mind that there are many soldiers and veterans silently suffering and fighting hidden battles of their own.

**Nick Bennion, ex-PWRR**



When I go to my local war memorial to pay my respects I'll think about those who've gone before. I have family who fought in both world wars and guys I served with who paid the ultimate sacrifice. I remember them every year, and every day.

**Liam Young, ex-LD**

I'll be at home with a candle this year but that won't stop me remembering the men and women who stepped up to defend our way of life – three of my grandparents served in the military. I'll also think of the men who fell in Musa Qala, Afghanistan, while I was there with the Household Cavalry. They were the best of us.

**Alex Owen, ex-RHG/D**



# For all they gave

We asked six veterans who they will be thinking of during remembrance this year...

I'll hopefully still be able to join my comrades at the war memorial in Doncaster to pay our respects. We wouldn't have the freedoms we enjoy today were it not for the sacrifices made during the two world wars. We owe those people a debt of gratitude for their unique contribution, as well as those who've served and sacrificed since.

**Mark Bennett, ex-RA**



**The work of The Royal British Legion is more vital than ever, with many veterans struggling through new hardships as a result of Covid-19. Every donation makes a difference.**  
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# CHRISTMAS GIFTS ARE HERE

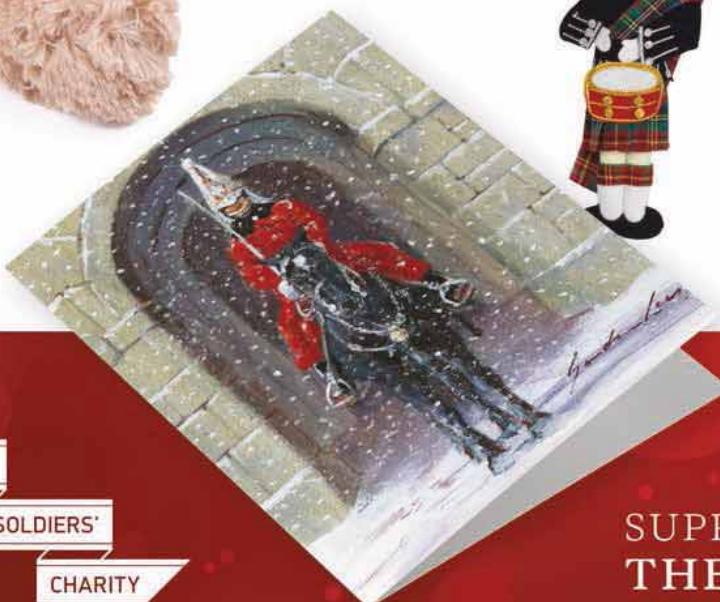


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