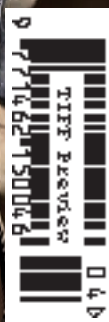


SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

APRIL 2019



FACE OF THE FEARLESS

MASON, MAY, NICHOLLS, WOOD



**Wessex
Storm**
puts Gunners
to test

Is a **Nato**
posting
for you?

Gurkhas show American
troops what they're about

If you opt for flexible service, you'll want to know how that could affect your pension.



IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND
YOUR PENSION



Discovering your pension options

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it up.


ARMY
BE THE BEST

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“
I decided
to make
the most
of every
opportunity
”

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Nato calling



SEVENTY years ago this month, a document was signed that would shape overseas missions for

generations of British troops.

With that in mind, and given the continuing threats faced by the alliance today, *Soldier* decided to delve into the mysterious world of Nato postings to discover a bit more about what exactly they offer.

From some juicy assignments on the continent (page 34), to the grit of Exercise Rattlesnake which put Gurkhas to the test in Louisiana last month (page 38), there seem to be more opportunities to develop at the hands of this organisation than meets the eye.

Today's personnel don't need educating about the value of sharing skills with other nations – in 2019 there's hardly an operation or exercise in town without a foreign contingent.

But the powerful memories of Kosovo veterans on page 44 remind us how lives are also saved from such powerful ties.

So begins the next chapter...

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

> Printed copies

THESE are distributed to every Army site at the start of each month.

> 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 and on Twitter (@soldiermagazine).

> Online

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

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IF you're not in the Army you can buy *Soldier* from your high street magazine retailer or directly from us at subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk (£23 for 12 issues in the UK).



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A 'unique and memorable' mission

Nato deployment is pushing personnel to new highs...

BRITISH soldiers are returning from the Nato mission in Estonia with sharper-than-ever infantry skills, a commanding officer has told *Soldier*.

Lt Col Tom Miller arrived back on home soil last month with the battlegroup of 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment.

He said the latest stint of Operation Cabrit – where 1,000 UK troops worked with allies to prevent Russian aggression – saw junior commanders rise to the task “superbly”.

“After eight months in challenging conditions, the battalion returned in high spirits,” he said.

“The mission and climate tested soldiers as they operated in the dense forests of Estonia, in several feet of snow and in temperatures as low as -23 degrees Celsius.

“I’ve been delighted with how they have performed.”

The Baltic backdrop is a new experience for many who deploy there from the UK.

“The environment put great emphasis on our low-level soldiering skills,” the officer continued.

“Held at high readiness – and working with Estonian, Danish and Belgian soldiers – gave us a good

opportunity to learn.

“The deployment also gave troops a chance to see this wonderful country and interact with the Estonian people, who have been amazing partners.”

During the mission two battlegroup-level exercises tested everything from low-level infantry tactics to communications and planning.

Lt Joe Tankard (Yorks), who helped set up a range package for Exercise Furious Axe in Latvia (pictured below), said the experience had been “unique”.

“There were long nights digging target pits in freezing conditions with litres of black coffee,” he explained. “But it was a chance for the battlegroup to really push itself.”

The mission has now been handed over to The King’s Royal Hussars.



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GLOBAL SITREP

1. CHILE

CRATER CHALLENGE

ARMY spouses showed top-notch resilience when they summited the world's tallest volcano.

The partners of Parachute Regiment personnel reached the peak of Orjos del Salado – nearly 7,000 metres up – braving extreme cold to raise cash for The Royal British Legion.

Their success also marked the beginning of the new Forces Wives Challenge – a movement helping to unite loved ones of serving troops through challenge and adventure.

Initiative founder Heather Sharp said the ascent had been hard but the ladies had reached the top in time to celebrate International Women's Day in style.

"We've proved that with determination and dedication you can achieve anything," she added.



2. BELIZE

REPAIRING CROCKED CAMP

AROUND 100 troops from 9 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers have been helping make the Belize training estate capable of accommodating large battlegroup exercises.

At St Augustine Camp personnel reconstructed a single storey building that will be used to coordinate jungle warfare training and upgraded tracks to increase accessibility.

The task site was austere, with squad room headquarters and other support an arduous four-

hour road move away.

The airborne sappers also conducted their own jungle warfare package, enjoyed some adventurous training and competed in the Chiquibul Challenge – an annual marathon that raises funds for wildlife conservation projects.

The troops used their spare time to help the community in other ways too, carrying out repairs at Dorothy Menzies Orphanage and Belize Zoo (pictured below).

LCpl Josh Cunningham (RE) said: "It was a real privilege to be able to do something for the local people."



“
It's a dream
to be in the
United States
”

Gurkhas relish Ex
Rattlesnake – page 38

3. EGYPT

HISTORY REVISITED

ARMY air defence professionals learnt some lessons from the past after heading to the Middle East for a battlefield study focused on the Yom Kippur War.

Troops from 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery toured the sites of the 1973 conflict in which the country battled Israel to regain territory lost during previous fighting.

The Egyptian soldiers used technology of the era to ward off attacks by a powerful

opposing air force.

Hosted by the North African country's military, the outing was also an opportunity to visit a number of cultural sites as well as the British embassy.

Maj Rob Deane, commanding 32 (Minden) Battery, said the trip had been a huge success. He added: "It was a great experience for everyone involved – we were looked after well."

"With our new Sky Sabre weapon – which is replacing Rapier – entering service within the next year, this was also an opportunity to inform future doctrine."



IN NUMBERS 13

British troops from the Arcc in Gloucestershire skied 120 kilometres to retrace the route of the Heroes of Telemark, the soldiers who sabotaged the Nazis' Vermork heavy water plant being used to develop an atomic bomb.

5. ROMANIA



4. AFGHANISTAN



3. EGYPT

6. AUSTRALIA



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Picture: Steve Dock

6. AUSTRALIA WALKABOUT WARRIORS

SOLDIERS from The Royal Gurkha Rifles will test a range of skills and drills in the dense Queensland bush later this month.

Exercise Pacific Kukri will see the members of 2nd Battalion conduct blank- and live-firing packages – as well as urban fighting drills – on the Shoalwater Bay Training Area. The Brunei-based personnel will then get the chance to challenge themselves with some adventurous training, with 40 soldiers being treated to a dive off the Great Barrier Reef.

4. AFGHANISTAN

JOINING UP ONCE MORE

RIFLEMEN and rangers have deployed together for the first time since the Second World War.

Troops from the 1st Battalions of The Rifles and The Royal Irish Regiment have arrived in Kabul to provide armoured force protection to Nato advisers.

Reservists from the two units are also boosting the mission – making the total British headcount 800 on Operation Toral 8.



5. ROMANIA

MEDICS ON THE MOVE

AIRBORNE troops have been testing their ability to integrate into the largest medical exercise ever staged by Nato.

Soldiers from 23 Medical Squadron, 16 Medical Regiment joined 2,500 personnel from Nato partners, allies and civilian healthcare agencies.

The Colchester-based troops took their air-portable Role 2 medical treatment facility, which offers damage control surgery, to plug into the multinational set-up.

The system is being assessed for its ability to move individuals through treatment provided by different nations' medics, from care at the point of wounding all the way to evacuation by air or sea to Role 4 military hospitals.



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ssafa.org.uk/forcesline





The robots are coming...

Picture: Hannah Simms

A host of kit: Soldiers tested many gadgets as part of last year's Autonomous Warrior exercise



Mini-drones and other new tech to hit ops within 18 months

GAME-CHANGING mini-drones and remote-controlled robots are set to hit Army operations by the end of the year, it has been announced.

In a video message to troops, Director Capability Maj Gen Chris Tickell said he was "determined" the technology would fall into the hands of personnel within the next 18 months.

"This will be challenging but given its ability to improve the effectiveness and safety of our soldiers, we must succeed," he added.

"We will need autonomous machines to make us more effective and more lethal."

Estonia, Afghanistan and Iraq are likely to be among the first missions to receive the new kit.

The Service will work closely with international partners to deliver it – particularly the US, Denmark, France and Germany.

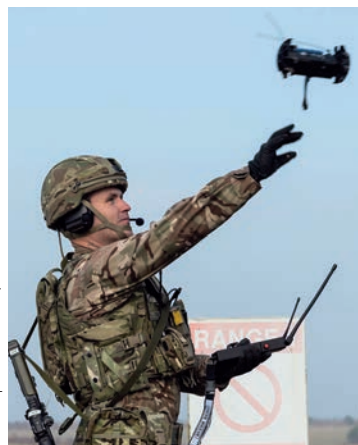
The MoD said that £66 million is being poured into the effort, with the funds focused on mini-drones, remote controlled fighting vehicles and autonomous logistics platforms that will help to keep troops away from

dangerous resupply tasks.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson commented: "This investment will ensure the UK stays at the forefront of global military capabilities and ahead of our adversaries."

Last year the biggest military robot exercise in British history – Exercise Autonomous Warrior – tested around 70 of these potential systems on Salisbury plain.

Picture: Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC



“We must succeed”



A PRECIOUS PASTIME

■ A SENIOR NCO has struck gold when it comes to relieving Service stress.

Sgt James Linett (AAC, shown above) has taken up panning for the precious metal in UK and European rivers. And he has successfully sifted some chunky nuggets on his travels.

The Serviceman even had two wedding rings crafted from the spoils for his recent marriage to Royal Navy petty officer partner Charlotte.

"It made our ceremony all the more special," he told *Soldier*.

"We had the gold put into a smelting pot and the bands were made by an old-time craftsman. It is great because they are completely unique."

Sgt Linett, an instructor at the Defence Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract Training Organisation in Cornwall, said his hobby was a way of switching off.

"I've been interested in the yellow stuff since I was a kid," he said. "But it was on an Army Air Corps training course in North Wales that I went out panning for the first time."

The Serviceman has seen his skills win him top prizes in gold-panning contests around Europe.

"I've been addicted ever since I found my first nugget," he said. "I always come back happier from my time away."

TOP TITLES FOR TROOPS

■ THE Army Library and Information Service's fiction collection has been given a boost to mark World Book Night later this month (April 23).

Around 80 copies of *Juliet Naked* by Nick Hornby were donated by the Reading Agency in a bid to encourage more troops to read fiction in their spare time.

Find out how to borrow from the library's collection for free by visiting its page on the Defence Gateway, and turn to page 30 for some reading tips.

IN NUMBERS

100

Years since the first ever scheduled mail delivery to British troops serving overseas. The trip, from Folkestone to Cologne, marked the start of a century of progress in postal provision to the Armed Forces, which the British Forces Post Office – or BFPO – continues to this day.





GOALKEEPER GUARD

■ PERSONNEL from 16 Signal Regiment formed a guard of honour at the funeral of legendary England goalie Gordon Banks.

The family of the 1966 World Cup winner, who died at the age of 81 after battling kidney cancer, asked for a military presence on the day given his close links with the Army.

Banks served in the Royal Signals as part of his national service at the start of his football career.

Ten soldiers from the Stafford-based unit joined six players from the corps' football team at the funeral in Stoke Minster.

COMMONWEALTH EVENT

■ WREATHS were laid at the Commonwealth Memorial Gates in London as the country paid tribute to those who volunteered to fight for Great Britain in the two world wars.

More than five million people from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean served alongside UK personnel in the conflicts and their sacrifices were honoured as dignitaries from across the Commonwealth joined senior military officials.



REDCAPS RALLY

■ TROOPS from 4th Regiment, Royal Military Police honed their skills for airborne operations on a windswept Stanford Training Area.

Exercise Redcap Pegasus saw the personnel of 156 Provost Company, who provide military policing support to 16 Air Assault Brigade, take on an infantry masterclass courtesy of their colleagues in 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment before focusing on core policing skills.



Paratroopers get FIRED UP

AIRBORNE personnel faced a stern test of their skills when they trained alongside their Jordanian allies.

Exercise Olive Grove saw members of B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment spend four weeks in the Middle Eastern country's desert.

The serial also saw the soldiers – part of 16 Air Assault Brigade – strengthen their ties with colleagues from the Mohammed bin Zayed Quick Reaction Force.

They were put through a fire and manoeuvre package and practised assault ops from Blackhawk helicopters before taking on a simulated insurgent group.

Maj Robin Rowell, officer commanding B Company, said he had been pleased with the troops' performance, adding that both the Brits and Jordanians had improved their capabilities.

"We've understood more about the kit and tactics we each use and learnt from one another," he added.

"The desert is very austere and the terrain has tested our paratroopers.

"Exercise Olive Grove is all about partnership; we're both high readiness units and could be called into action quickly, which creates a real bond."

Taking on the players...

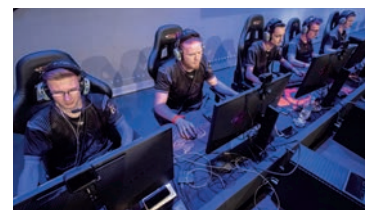
BRITISH troops are preparing to take up arms against hardened video gamers.

Thirty soldiers will represent the Service at the 2019 Insomnia Gaming Festival at Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre this month.

Drawn from the Infantry, Cavalry and Royal Engineers, the outfits will clash with their civvy opposition in a team-based first-person shooter, likely to be Electronic Arts' *Apex Legends*.

Maj Tim Elliott (Scots), one of the officers promoting science, technology, engineering and maths in Regional Command, said the event would be a key opportunity to meet the public.

He added: "The idea is to get the troops demonstrating some basic tactics in the game, such as fire and manoeuvre and



making use of cover.

"I think we might be okay against some of the more casual opposition, although I think we'll probably be annihilated if we come up against proven gamers."

But Maj Elliott said the opportunity would be invaluable.

He added: "We hope we can educate visitors about the Army – and learn from them too.

"Being involved with this has been a real eye-opener for me; so many people including soldiers are now playing video games."



Urban escape artists

New course will equip soldiers with vital survival skills

PERSONNEL are being ruthlessly hunted down in towns and cities in a new training package.

The survive, evade, resist, extract (Sere) course has been tailored to urban settings – where troops must use the environment to avoid capture.

All the while a professional enemy force is after them and looking to exploit any mistakes.

It complements existing Sere courses run in a range of extreme climates, including the Arctic, desert and jungle.

The new addition has been tailored to potential conflict areas and is open to all three Services.

"The urban environment could feature in future battles and this type of setting is challenging," said Wg Cdr Andrew Malbon (RAF), commanding officer of the Defence Sere Training Organisation in Cornwall.

"For example, things don't happen as fast in a city and searchers will work in a slow, methodical process to find someone.

"Avoiding them is challenging but it can be done.



Picture: Graeme Main

"We worked with US allies in developing this – they have significant urban experience."

Evasion and extraction courses are a core part of the syllabus for soldiers in roles where survival disciplines might be needed – such as Army Air Corps pilots and crews.

They spend a week learning skills including self-defence and finding shelter before being challenged in the field for several days with little kit.

CSgt Wilbo Williams (Para), who helps oversee the instructor team, said: "I went through the course myself last November, it's very good.

"Those taking part will be tested on the streets."



Picture: Graeme Main

SPECIAL ARRIVAL

■ THE MoD has confirmed that a third battalion in The Royal Gurkha Rifles is to be created.

It will be a specialised infantry battalion and recruiting will begin later this year.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said: "The Gurkhas have built an outstanding reputation for their skill and bravery as soldiers through centuries of service and sacrifice.

"They bring unique expertise and perspective to the UK and British Army, which makes them an ideal choice to form a third battalion."

He also announced more financial support for around 22,000 Gurkha veterans and their families.

Those who joined the Army before 2007 will benefit from a boost to their pension, with some veterans in line for an extra 34 per cent backdated to January 1, 2016.

Another £25 million is also being invested in medical support for veterans in Nepal.

It will be delivered over the next ten years in partnership with the Gurkha Welfare Trust and administered via regional healthcare facilities.



UNDERGROUND INVASION

■ GOOGLE proved to be a valuable resource for Number 2 Company, Irish Guards as they sought an underground environment in which to conduct urban war-fighting drills. After searching for locations that could challenge troops in a restrictive and claustrophobic setting, Liverpool's Williamson Tunnels came back as the number one hit for Company Commander Maj Ben Irwin-Clark. Troops used the tourist attraction to test a host of skills, including casualty evacuations up ladders and using night vision devices, and became the first Army unit to exercise at the site since the 1960s.



Picture: PA

MAIN MAN HONOURED

■ **SOLDIER** photographer Graeme Main was awarded the MBE by the Queen during a ceremony at Windsor Castle.

The honour recognises his outstanding career with a camera, in which he has documented military life for more than a quarter of a century.



REHAB CENTRE NEARS

■ THE new Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall is almost complete.

A host of building work has ended and wounded personnel are already benefitting from state-of-the-art care at the Loughborough-based facility.

Accommodation blocks, gymnasiums and treatment rooms are among the elements to be signed off already.

The centre will replace Headley Court in treating patients with complex trauma and neurological injuries.



Picture: Phil Greig/Stoke City FC

FOOTBALL FOCUS

■ THE Mercian Regiment has taken a novel approach to recruitment by sponsoring a Championship match.

The game between Stoke City and Nottingham Forest was seen as a good chance to interact with fans who may be considering a career in the Army.

"We have to think outside the box," said Capt Matt Styles, of the formation's 4th Battalion.

Troops showcased the latest military kit and answered questions about life in uniform.



Picture: Steve Dock

DRIVEN TO JOBS

■ A CHARITY has been set up to help ex-soldiers find jobs in the motor industry.

Mission Automotive will work with the MoD's Career Transition Partnership. Its founding members include Jaguar Land Rover, the Westway Nissan car dealership, DHL, Alcon and Bicester Motion – a new driving-oriented theme park.

Visit www.missionautomotive.org for more.

LANCE-JACK LESSON

Troops show they are worthy of promotion



Picture: Cpl Jamie Hart, RLC

■ GUNNERS keen to take their first steps on the Army's promotion ladder proved their worth on a demanding leadership course. Members of 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery were given leadership lessons at Merville Barracks in Colchester before putting them into action on Stanford Training Area in Norfolk (pictured). The troops hope to gain the rank of lance bombardier.

London lifesaver hailed

A N NCO has been recognised for saving the life of a civilian contractor who suffered a cardiac arrest on the inner square of London's Wellington Barracks.

Sgt Melissa Weeks (AGC (MPGS)) received a Home Command commendation after she performed CPR along with MoD civil servant William Denton last June.

Paramedic Mark Faulkner told an award ceremony the duo

had delivered "the most effective resuscitation I have ever seen".

Fewer than ten per cent of victims survive when their heart stops, even with intervention.

The 45-year-old, who was a first responder with the South West Ambulance Service before joining the British Army, said: "I have had to deal with this dozens of times, but when you're working without backup, oxygen and a team supporting you, the pressure is really on."



96 in 96



FOOTBALL fanatic Sgt Chris Nicholson (REME, pictured) is preparing to lead a six-man team on an epic Easter quest to visit all 92 league grounds – plus four extra venues – in the space of just 96 hours.

The Reservist, who enjoyed a 15-year career in the Regulars before redundancy in 2012, is battling bowel and liver cancer and devised the challenge as a way of raising money to help other sufferers.

Fellow soldier Sgt Neil Wold (REME) and three ex-Servicemen will join Sgt Nicholson for the challenge, which gets under way at Sheffield United's Bramall Lane stadium on April 18.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," Nicholson told *Soldier*. "A lot of people have done the 92 league clubs but we decided to push it further."

For more information visit www.96in96.co.uk



Ground view

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

LIFE has got busier since my last column – I'm spending lots of time on social media chatting about all kinds of concerns as well as getting out and talking to as many people as possible.

Thanks for all of your comments so far and please make sure you stay in touch.

A number of issues have come up – and one of the big ones has been the long-running debate over getting the corporals' mess put into Queen's Regulations.

It seems to be something that pretty much everyone wants.

But I'll cut to the chase: it's not something we're going to be able to achieve any time soon.

As you probably know, the warrant officers' and sergeants' mess is supported by Queen's Regulations and has a funding stream attached.

I would love this to be the case for our junior commanders too, but there simply

isn't the infrastructure across the British Army.

To include the corporals' mess we would need to have the same accommodation, bars, buildings and supporting contracts in every camp.

This is currently not achievable. Not never, but not yet.

You are probably aware that I am a great supporter of the Army's junior NCOs.

They are where the rubber meets the road, and the first layer of leadership in any unit.

My time as a junior NCO was fantastic; it was where I really learnt my trade as well as developing physically, mentally and militarily.

And the mess played a big part in my leadership; I loved it.

So my message here is clear – please understand what the mess can do for you and your people.

When used correctly, it is a place for troops to relax, develop and have fun.

It has worked for many years without being in Queen's Regulations, so please continue to support it.



Making us fitter to fight...

THIS magazine dedicated several pages to the new soldier conditioning review (SCR) in March – a series of six exercises that help you to assess your fitness.

I've given them all a go now – in the same way as I tried out the annual physical employment standards last year – and I'm impressed by the regime.

You will be getting to know the SCR better because it replaces the personal fitness assessment for everyone

this month.

But don't worry about the SCR and PES – they're about training in a different way and keeping you fit for role.

The new system is all backed up by the latest science, too.

We've stopped guessing what PT is right for our soldiers – so it's an opportunity, not a threat.

Remember too that this is not about what you can do now, it's what we can train you to do in six months' time.

They are not harder but different.

“
The mess is a place to relax and develop
”



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What are your **BEST** and **WORST** reads?

A I like stuff by James Patterson. I really dislike anything with JSP on the cover

BUGGED BY THE BUTTIES?

■ I'M WELL aware the patchy quality of food in our Army continues to be a concern. Everything from poorly cooked chicken through to empty sandwiches in packed lunches. Please help me to help you. There are two types of people – whingers and complainers. Simply put, whingers don't help and complainers do. So if you are not happy with food, complain. All I ask is that you are polite and accurate with your comments. There will be an official system to follow so see your RSM if you need help with it. It's critical we make our feelings known so improvements can be made. Failing to complain is failing our people.

ANNUAL TESTS MOVE WITH THE TIMES

■ **MILITARY** annual training tests (Matts) have been overhauled to make them more user-friendly and easy to complete online.

It follows a review of the ten core Service disciplines, which include personal weapon handling and battlefield casualty drills.

From this month personnel can complete several of the theory-based tests – navigation, operational ethics, law/behaviour and the survive, evade, resist and extract training – on their smartphone via the Defence Learning Environment portal.

Other modules have revision materials on the site.

Practical elements can also now be signed off on exercise rather than at a one-off, bespoke event.

Maj Liam Wilson (RRF), who helped draw up the changes, said the Field Army wanted to ensure the tests remained fit for purpose.

He told *Soldier*: “We have done a deep dive to ensure the Matts programme is fully up-to-date, easier to administrate and a more stimulating experience for those taking part.

“It’s fair to say the way we run the tests has not kept pace with busy military life.”

To find out more about the changes visit the Electronic Battlebox on the Army Knowledge Exchange.



ARES MAKES ITS DEBUT

■ **THE** first two Ares vehicles – the armoured personnel carrier version of Ajax – have been delivered to the Army.

Designed to move cavalry soldiers around for dismounted tasks, these particular models are heading for the Defence School of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering in Lyneham and the Armour Centre in Bovington.

The Household Cavalry Regiment will begin its conversion to the highly agile fighting vehicle in the autumn.

Its capabilities include acoustic detectors, a laser warning system, local situational awareness equipment and electronic countermeasures.

It will play an important role in the forthcoming strike brigades, along with the Boxer eight-wheeled, all-terrain, mechanised infantry vehicle.

Egyptian ex breaks new ground

“They reached an impressive standard”

B RITISH soldiers have exercised with an Egyptian infantry battlegroup for the first time.

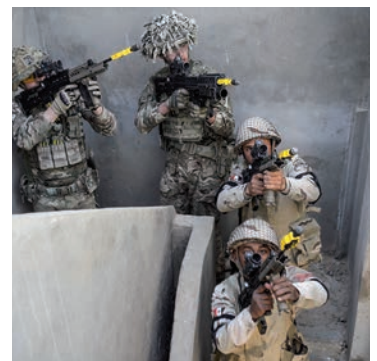
Around 150 troops – mainly from Cyprus-based 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment – flew into Egypt on C-130, C-17 and Voyager aircraft and set up a forward operating base in the desert near Alexandria.

Over four weeks they were put through several scenarios – including urban operations, close-quarter combat and a live-fire attack supported by mortars, machine guns and snipers.

“Our objectives were to conduct joint training with the Egyptians, strengthen our defence relationship and confirm and demonstrate our readiness as the lead company group of the regional standby battalion,” said Maj Jim Phipps (R Anglian).

The formation also included a specialised infantry team from 4th Battalion, The Rifles, who worked alongside an Egyptian partner unit, and reinforcements from The Royal Gibraltar Regiment and 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. Also in support were personnel, including linguists, from the Coldstream Guards, Welsh Guards and 14 Signal Regiment.

“The guys have got a lot out of this,”



said Sgt Paul Laird (R Anglian).

“We’ve been teaching the Egyptians our drills, from the basics up – the concept of a gun line and how it can be integrated into a platoon or company attack. They’d never used this before.”

FAMILY APPEAL



■ **ARMY** partners selected to take part in the annual families continuous attitude survey are being urged to complete their responses by April 29.

The findings will be used to develop and improve welfare support and policies, and will be published in a report in July.

To see if your other half was selected for this year’s survey visit www.tools.mod.uk/survey-checker.html and enter your service number.

Pictures: SAC Phil Dye, RAF

A chemical comeback

ARMYP sappers are taking over responsibility for counter-chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) operations.

After its disbandment five years ago, 28 Engineer Regiment has been reformed to take the role from 20 Wing, RAF Regiment.

Once at full strength in around two years, it will have more than 400 troops.

CO Lt Col Dave Robbins said the change was "really exciting" for the corps.

"It's a new capability for us, and for the Army, which is interesting," he added.

Troops from 77 Armoured Engineer Squadron are among those to change roles and travel back to the UK from Germany.

"Learning to use new kit has been fun and challenging," explained LCpl Andrew Lopez, one of the first to switch.

Spr Molly Toombs added: "The training's been second-to-none."

The Defence CBRN

Centre is also being brought under Army responsibility and will now be run by the Royal School of Military Engineering.

Meanwhile, the MoD revealed an £11 million boost to the UK's chemical counter-measures, including improved kit at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down.

The Royal Tank Regiment's Falcon Squadron – an armoured reconnaissance unit that uses Fuchs vehicles to root out toxic hazards – will continue its work as usual but under 28 Engineer Regiment.



Picture: Graeme Main

Making WAVES

STAFF at British Army Training Support Unit Belize have completed a gruelling four-day, 175-mile paddle.

The La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge is one of the world's toughest endurance boating events, attracting competitors from across the globe.

This year five boats were manned by British personnel along with five locally employed civilians from the training establishment.



"Each day brought new challenges," said crew member Cpl Aaron Mates (R Signals).

"Rapids caused teams to capsize and a hidden rock damaged a boat so badly it had to withdraw for repairs."

All the Army teams completed the event, which started at San Ignacio and finished in Belize City.

"Locals lined the route in their thousands, which really made us push on," added Cpl Mates.

“Are these really the soldiers the Army wants?”

Recruitment rage

TALKBACK
PAGE 51

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



BRITISH troops, led by Capt Stu Gilbert (RRF), organised the third Samia Yusuf Omar Memorial Run in Mogadishu, Somalia. Held in honour of the late Olympic athlete who drowned trying to reach Europe in a migrant boat in 2012, the event attracted 465 entrants. There was a notable win for Capt Nikki Reid (RA) in the women's half-marathon.

Money raised:
£2,533
For: Aamin Ambulance in Mogadishu

ROBBIE'S RALLY



SIX officer cadets will run a 52-mile ultra marathon from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to Southampton. OCdt Harry Keville, whose brother Robbie died from a brain tumour in 2016, was leading the group in action as this issue went to press. Visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/exercisecharitablecadet

Fundraising target:
£6,000
For: Robbie's Rally

Gav's good deed

ARMY Sergeant Major WO1 Gav Paton will compete in the London Marathon this month. Visit www.virginmoneygiving.com and search Gav Paton to sponsor him.

Fundraising target:
£4,000
For: ABF The Soldiers' Charity



Queen Ethelburga's

"To be the best that I can with the gifts that I have"

Queen Ethelburga's has a long-standing relationship with the British Forces, welcoming students from military families for over 100 years. We currently have over 300 such students living as part of the QE family.

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New mascot makes a splash



Nato chiefs defend controversial decision

Picture: Shutterstock

A MASCOT has been created by Nato to coincide with the alliance's 70-year anniversary this month.

Following weeks of top-level discussions, it has been decided that the humpback whale best represents the values and standards of the organisation while encapsulating its north Atlantic whereabouts.

British Army regiments have frequently had goats, dogs and other animals as mascots – but recruiting a seaborne beast is believed to be a first for any military organisation.

Nato spokesman Anders Fin Sassenborg told reporters at a press conference in Brussels: "Choosing an animal to represent all our member states is an important milestone in our history.

"This largest of mammals, which

roams the oceans, encapsulates the spirit of freedom for which we stand while its long lifespan displays our intent to continue.

"We vigorously defend the time and money invested in this project – the whale will be a uniting force, featuring on all of our stationery and in our branding as we go forward."

He was speaking after a barrage of criticism from ex-soldiers, who

claim the choice of animal could fuel accusations of the alliance being over-heavy and cumbersome.

"At a time when Nato has many

new challenges to face, including the enhanced forward presence in Eastern Europe, worrying about whales is not what we need," commented Tarquin Baleine, a former major with the Royal Green Jackets.

A Kremlin spokesman declined to comment.



“
It will be a
uniting force
”



■ **TESCO** is the most popular destination for Army leavers, figures show.

A new study suggests the supermarket is attracting around one in 100 outgoing troops – with Asda and Sainsbury's also appearing in the top ten companies that former personnel are most likely to join.

But the survey suggests that continuing a career in defence, security and public service remain popular options, with BAE Systems, Serco, the NHS and MoD featuring in the line-up.

The research – which was carried out by job website Indeed – followed thousands of veterans as part of a wider investigation into what happens when jobseekers transfer their skills to new areas.

The most popular roles for soldiers included driving and labouring, which researchers put down to them having to take entry-level posts in civvy street.

SPINE LINE COMPETITION



THE clues on the spine of last month's magazine would have been familiar to the better travelled among our readers.

Cape Dyer, Kivito, Pangnirtung and Qikiqtarjuaq are all the names of places on Baffin Island – the location of an Army expedition that will see troops venture deep into the Arctic wilderness.

This month we have teamed up with Rift (www.riftrefunds.co.uk) to offer two lucky readers a Fitbit Charge 3 worth £130.

With a lighter design and larger display than previous versions, this health and fitness tracker is a fantastic piece of kit for anyone keen to improve their performance at the gym or in the field.

To be in with a chance of winning one tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers – including a daytime telephone number – to the usual postal address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 30.

RIFT
Tax refunds made easy

THE APPRENTICES

■ **SOLDIERS** were commended for their achievements at the 2019 Army Apprenticeship Awards.

Spr Luke Hudson (RE), Pte Rebecca Gould (RAMC) and Sgt Katie Stock (RA) were respectively named intermediate, advanced and apprentice champion of the year.

They collected their prizes at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.



RIFT

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claim again.***

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March 2019

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Yearly MOD Tax Refunds

RIFT Answers Your Questions

With the tax year ticking over in April, it's time to get your annual refund claims in order. RIFT's Head of the MOD Specialist Team, Ryan Carman is here to answer some common questions about claiming again:

I claimed last year, can I claim again?

Absolutely! You can claim a tax refund annually – and you definitely should. If you've claimed with RIFT before, your next refund will be even easier because we already have all your personal details.

How much tax can I claim back?

Last year, the average MOD tax refund came to £795. RIFT put £6.5 million back into MOD personnel's pockets in 2017/18. This is your money we're talking about. There's just no good reason to leave it in HMRC's hands.

Why should I claim again with RIFT?

97% of RIFT's customers say the simplicity of working with us is a big reason they keep coming back. 89% report that they get a bigger refund when they claim through RIFT, while 94% say our expertise gives them real peace of mind.

If you need another reason, how about our exclusive MOD discount for returning customers? We're dropping our fee to 25% for MOD personnel returning to RIFT.

So far, 80% of our Armed Forces customers have told us they'll be claiming again this year. Over 1,000 have already started updating the information in their MyRIFT accounts, staking out their place in the 2018/19 refund queue.

How do I claim again?

Since we've already got your personal information, all we need now are details on:

- ✓ **Your work travel and expenses since your last claim.**
- ✓ **Whether your employment status has changed.**
- ✓ **Any additional income you've started or stopped receiving.**

You can update everything directly to your MyRIFT account. If you'd rather chat with our friendly specialist teams, just call on 01233 628648. We'll be posting claim packs to all customers, so if you'd prefer a hard copy simply fill that out and send it back in the Freepost envelope provided.

Our MOD teams are experts at protecting you and your money. When you're tackling the taxman, you're better off with RIFT.

Get Started Now

Claiming with RIFT means:

- ✓ **No charge to find out what you're owed.**
- ✓ **No up-front charges.**
- ✓ **No refund, no fee.**



RIFTrefunds.co.uk/soldier

Call us on **01233 653004**





THE BIG PICTURE

Tame Ranges, Sweden

Mercury falling

THE latest addition to the Army's armoured vehicle line-up has smashed its extreme cold weather trials. The reconnaissance version of Ajax demonstrated huge potential when it was put through its paces in Scandinavia's plunging temperatures. Defence contractor General Dynamics UK Land Systems conducted the outings. The asset is designed with next generation electronic architecture in mind – it features robust crew protection and is formidably armed with a turret-mounted 40mm cannon.

Picture: Jack Eckersley, MoD

NEED TO

KNOW

EXPERIENCE | CASH | HEALTH | FITNESS | SKILLS & DRILLS | 7 QUESTIONS



“*Confidence* doesn't come from attaining *the perfect body*, it comes from embracing the one you've got”

A life-shattering injury taught one soldier some valuable lessons about appearances...

► DAN Richards (ex-RHA) was set to train as a farrier in The King's Troop when he lost his right arm and shoulder in a devastating motorcycle crash.

Ten years on he works as a model, campaigns for body positivity and is a finalist in the inspiration category of the Soldiering On awards this month.

But the 33-year-old had to reach rock bottom first...

“

I remember waking up in hospital and the doctors telling me they hadn't been able to save my arm.

I looked over and where my shoulder should have been was just a pillow. It was a massive shock – I was 23 years old.

I had been rehearsing for Trooping the Colour and the next day I came off my motorbike and hit the central reservation at high speed.

I don't have any memory of that. I was flown to hospital and the next thing I knew it was four days later.

My first goal was to win my independence back. I didn't want anyone doing anything for me.

I decided to adapt myself.

After rehab I went back to my regiment. My main focus was to get my fitness back up – I wanted to earn my place.

My chain of command were brilliant and I learnt to ride again. But three years later, in March 2012, I was medically discharged.

I did a resettlement course and then moved home to Somerset.

That was the worst year of my life. I wrote 327 job applications and not one of them led to an opportunity.

By August I was at breaking point.

My savings were gone, I was depressed and reclusive.

I was 27 but living with my parents like a

teenager. I felt I had nothing to look forward to and tried to hang myself with a dressing gown belt. What stopped me was the thought of my mum finding me.

I realised I needed help.

What I really wanted was to move back to London. So through Help for Heroes I was offered a job as a chauffeur, driving celebrities and wealthy people around and by watching them I started to draw on their attributes.

I decided to make the most of every opportunity so I did a scuba diving course, learnt how to fly a plane, went skiing, trained to row the Atlantic – and then I got into cycling.

That became my thing and I set myself the goal of competing at the 2018 Invictus Games in Sydney. Around the same time I was offered a contract with a talent agency that represents people with disabilities.

My first job was a mental health awareness campaign with Lloyds Bank.

For the first time since leaving the Army I knew what I wanted to do.

Losing my arm was probably the best thing that's ever happened to me – it's opened a lot of doors.

It's also given me a platform to talk about body confidence, across both genders.

Women bear the brunt of the criticism but men get it too and are perhaps more reluctant to talk about it.

► EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

► EXPERIENCE

I've dealt with it myself – I used to compare myself religiously to men on TV or social media and worry that I didn't have abs or a big enough chest.

It's a very sheltered and ignorant way of looking at yourself. Confidence doesn't come from attaining the perfect body, it comes from embracing the one you've got and realising you're beautiful in your own right.

The voice in your head saying you can't do something is a liar.

My biggest hurdle was taking my t-shirt off at the beach or the swimming pool, so one day I just did it.

It took me a good five minutes to calm

down, I was anxious as hell.

But then I realised these people weren't bothered – and anyway I can't control their opinions.

If I can help even one person to address their own demons by speaking out that's enough.

I don't think of myself as inspirational at all. But the fact that an organisation has taken a look at what I do now and recognised me for that is so humbling.

As clichéd as it sounds, I just enjoy every day.

I genuinely can't remember the person I was before the accident. I feel as normal as anyone else. ■

”

Follow Dan on Instagram:
@theonearmedwonder



Save at the shops

The biggest
and best
discounts
for Service
personnel

► IF you haven't got a card like this rattling around your wallet, you are probably missing out on getting cash off everything from high street shopping to meals out. The Defence Discount Service – which is endorsed by the MoD – has been running for more than six years and gives soldiers, and veterans, some impressive reductions.

Here is a flavour of the savings to be had...

HOLIDAY HIGH



The card bags users great holiday savings. From camping parks and hotels to airlines and insurance, there are discounts to be had on most elements of your trip. Rail company **LNER** offers 34 per cent off advance tickets and **National Express** offers 60 per cent off coach tickets for soldiers. Many hotels also offer 10 to 30 per cent off, including **Hilton**, **Travelodge**, **Marriott** and **InterContinental** (owners of **Holiday Inn**). Search the app to browse the full list. **Merlin** - which owns many UK theme parks and attractions - also offers up to 50 per cent off. And if camping is your bag, don't forget the outdoor stores.

IN
NUMBERS

74,000

Army personnel have signed up to the discount service to date

HIGH STREET IN-STORE DISCOUNTS



(Eat & Drink Co, Costa, Burger King, Upper Crust)

20%



CREW CLOTHING COMPANY

20%



10%



(Starbucks, Starbucks Drive Thru, Pizza Express, Tossed, Subway, KFC, Harry Ramsden, Chopstix, Burger King)

10%



maternity | baby and child | nursery and toys

10%



15%



10%



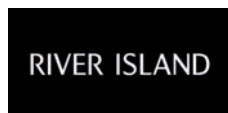
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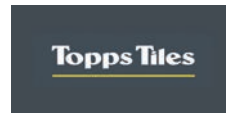
15%



10%



10%



10%



25%

ONLINE DISCOUNTS



10%



10%



15-50%



10%



20%



20%



10%



10%

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The Defence Discount Service has two parts:

- + a free web service with access to online discounts using voucher codes
- + a high street discount card, which costs £4.99 for five years



Testing times

How early action helped an officer battle cancer

When did you realise that something was wrong?

As you get a little older you're more aware of any lumps and bumps on your body. I found a lump and it just didn't feel right. You are not necessarily feeling for something on the surface of the testicle, it is more like a hard stone in the middle.

What happened next?

I was referred to a hospital in Salisbury. The NHS gets a bad rap at times but I had two appointments with a consultant, a blood test, an ultrasound

▶ WITH testicular being the most common type of cancer in young men it makes sense for soldiers to have a feel regularly.

This message will be emphasised throughout April – which doubles as testicular cancer awareness month – and Maj Fraser Dowling (AGC (ETS)) is urging other Servicemen to beware after his diagnosis last year.

His key message? Act early if something doesn't seem right...



In numbers

2,200

men diagnosed with testicular cancer in the UK each year

98

percentage of sufferers who survive for five years or more after diagnosis

15-49

the age range commonly affected

and an MRI scan all within four hours. That was on the Wednesday and the testicle was removed on the Monday.

So, was that the end of it?

The testicle was found to be cancerous. But from the tests they could confirm that it hadn't moved through my body, which was obviously good news. I then had a high dose blast of chemotherapy to kill anything microscopic. The side effects lasted longer than I expected. At first it was fatigue and sickness and it took me around six months to get over them. But if you don't catch the cancer early there isn't always such a positive outcome so if I can raise some awareness that's great. This is my advice:

1 If you find something and are unsure what it is get it checked out. It might be a bit embarrassing but if you prolong things you'll have far more medical professionals examining you

2 It's not just the testicles; doctors encourage anyone who is young and healthy with something they are not comfortable with to come and see them. It is not a wasted trip – you know your body

3 Don't use the excuse of being busy in your job to avoid booking an appointment. Make it a priority – you won't be able to do anything at work if you don't get problems sorted

4 In terms of stigma, there's nothing to worry about. I think society has moved past that now. My colleagues make jokes about the fact I only have one testicle and I'm fine with that. It brings people out of the woodwork and gets them talking about cancer – which is a good thing

● Anyone with concerns should contact their GP immediately. Further information can be found at www.nhs.uk/conditions/testicular-cancer

Swimming

Show these Servicewomen a pool over a gym, any day

rules

ACCORDING to a recent survey by sports store Decathlon, swimming is the most popular form of exercise for British women – overtaking the gym, which is still preferred by men. *Soldier* asked four Army swimmers why water workouts do it for them...

I love how you feel like a family at swimming competitions, with everybody pushing each other on. I get up at 0400 each day to train, and feel so good after a tough session. It helps in the job too, with things like timekeeping, commitment and teamwork. I do strength work in the gym but am definitely more of a water baby.

LCpl Kath Baker, RAMC



Being in the Army, where running is pushed as the go-to fitness discipline, it's nice to have a different challenge. You get in the pool with good runners and often they can't do it. I love lifting weights at the gym, but with swimming it's a head-to-toe workout without having to try.

Capt Jess Martin, REME

I began swimming in childhood and it came quite naturally so I started getting competitive. It's completely different to land fitness; it works everything at the same time and gets your cardio up too.

Cpl Chanaleigh Hughes, AGC (RMP)



It's the variation I like, such as the different strokes. I also enjoy the confidence swimming brings. If you don't have a big six-pack you don't always feel you belong in the gym.

Pte Georgina Ladley, RLC



FANCY GETTING INVOLVED?

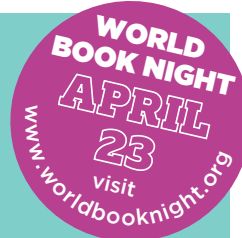
Contact your corps team OR the Army Swimming Union on military 94222 7089

Pictures: Peter Davies and Freepik

The fight to read and write

Is it holding you back?

► WITH the literacy skills of nearly half of new soldiers falling below GCSE level, you're not alone if the answer to that question is yes. But the good news is that most troops turn this around within two years of joining, thanks to the support of Army education centres. Read on for some tips on improving your own – or a colleague's – skills...



'I didn't realise how much support is there'

Cpl Anthony Lee (RLC) got sick of asking for help from colleagues half his age...

School was pretty much non-existent for me. I didn't have a nice childhood and got into trouble with the police.

After 16 years as a bricklayer I'd become bored and wanted to learn another trade, so I joined the Army.

I didn't realise there was so much reading involved.

When I got promoted a couple of years ago I needed to get my English and maths qualifications.

Problems started with orders like 'send an

email' but I had to be shown how; it was embarrassing.

So I went to the education centre and told them I was struggling. I spoke to someone there and she was brilliant. We had a cup of tea, and I explained what I wanted.

She started one-to-one courses and together we cracked it.

After all those years as a bricklayer I could have built an entire housing estate but I just couldn't work out this other stuff. It put me at the bottom of the pile.

I'm still working with the centre now and have even toyed with the idea of getting a degree.

I didn't realise how much support is there. I've turned things around, and that's such a buzz.



Lee's lessons

Advice for soldiers struggling to read and write

Try a QUICK READ

Many titles from bestselling authors including **James Patterson** and **Andy McNab** have been shrunk into easy-to-read versions that can be bought in bookshops or borrowed from the Army Library and Information Service. Visit their page on the Defence Gateway for details.



Reading – it's a great way to improve your English while unplugging from smartphones and other devices. **Maira Addison** – basic skills development manager at 10 Army Education Centre in Tidworth – has the following tips for anyone interested in picking up a book...

- ✚ Choose something that interests you, fiction or non-fiction. Maybe it's linked to a hobby or a person, film or video game
- ✚ Use a bookmark to follow the lines as you read. This can help if your eyes get tired
- ✚ Always have a book to hand so you can read at lunchtime, in a waiting room or on exercise when there is time
- ✚ Set a regular slot to read in – make it a habit

Get help early on

"It will affect you at some point, and I wish I'd done it a year after I had been in."

Remember you can't be good at everything

"Let people know about your other strengths."

Be patient

"Even recently I got up and walked out in frustration. But it does come together eventually. And it gets easier."

God Squad

We quiz the Army's senior padre about life at the top of military ministry



FACT FILE: CLINTON LANGSTON

Age: 56

Years of service:
1994-present

Operational experience:
Includes Iraq, Northern
Ireland, Bosnia

Last job: Deputy
chaplain general

► **HAVING** started out in the Church of England as a parish priest, Clinton Langston joined the Army as a padre after four years. Now chaplain general, we asked him about his plans as the most senior clergyman in the Service – a century after the Army Chaplaincy Department received its Royal prefix.

1. Is chaplaincy still relevant to troops?

Absolutely. To use a sporting analogy, we can offer a set of golf clubs to help with different situations. If somebody is bunkered in a tough place we can provide the sand iron needed to get them out. Chaplains are also good for unit cohesion and providing moral direction.

2. What do you talk to soldiers about?

You can guarantee that if you go into a room with soldiers we will speak about really important things, including life and death, as well as anything else that may interest them. Even if you have never met them before, you can learn so much about their lives in the space of an hour or so.

3. Are soldiers different to how they were at the start of your ministry?

No – they have different haircuts and talk about a new generation of football players. Other than that they have been pretty much the same over the years.

4. Why did the Army appeal to you?

I had always played a lot of sport – notably football and rugby – and enjoyed talking to blokes in places such as working men's clubs in my early ministry. I felt the military was the path for me so with a young family I moved to Germany for my first posting at the age of 31.

5. What are your aims in this new role?

To enable people to have the "life in fullness" that is described in the Gospel of John – they should not hold back in all they want to do.

6. Are you looking forward to it?

Yes – although being at this level is a cultural change from a padre. There you tend to be focused on a unit. At the next level you have a wider remit overseeing your colleagues. Now I'm at two-star level, sitting in Army Headquarters and seeing the broader picture.

7. How have you been preparing?

Obviously prayer is important. But I have also been growing my skills and been on the three-week generalship course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst alongside eight major generals from different branches of the Service. It has been a great opportunity for learning and discussion – having a padre there also brought a different perspective.

'YOU'RE ALWAYS BETTER OFF DOING THINGS WITH PARTNERS'

As Nato turns 70, Brits are joining their allies more than ever to square up to a raft of threats



WHEN the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) was formed at the end of the 1940s, military chiefs could never have foreseen the challenges it would face as tumultuous events reshaped the world.

Having long outlived the Warsaw Pact – its Soviet-led equivalent – the alliance has embraced peacekeeping duties, faced down international terrorism, protected civilians and battled to prevent the spread of extremism.

Next year it will welcome its 30th member into the fold, Macedonia – an eastwards expansion that has drawn criticism from Moscow.

Seven decades on from its conception, the organisation faces a similar political story – a resurgent Russia with other potential nation state aggressors also a concern. But while the territory may seem familiar on the surface, life has moved on significantly and the battlefield is a very different place.

Although the core military threat is in Europe, disinformation and cyber attacks are a wider concern while terrorist groups continue to strike across the globe.

In this environment, British troops are increasingly likely to see multinational deployments. A generation of versatile, tech savvy soldiers who are able to work seamlessly with their allies will be vital in this world of diverse challenges.

“If you look at Nato’s history you find significant events at 12-year intervals,” said Maj Gen Maurizio Boni, deputy commander at the alliance’s UK-based HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (pictured).

“This was the timeframe from the end of the Cold War to the September 11 attacks in the USA – there was also 12 years between those atrocities and the Russian invasion of the Crimea.

“Collective defence might be our core business but we have to respond to a 360-degree spectrum of threats – fortunately, we have a global reach and many partners.”

Nato certainly has accrued a wealth of experience across a breadth of theatres over the years.



FACT FILE: NATO



Formed: April 4, 1949



Main HQ: Brussels, Belgium

Current membership: 29



Operational theatres have included: Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya

The focus of the last two decades has largely been on peacekeeping and counter-insurgency, but in light of the potential threat posed by well-equipped nation states commanders have recently moved to tighten up the core business of conducting peer-on-peer war fighting.

This has been a key priority for members of the British delegation based at Nato Headquarters in Brussels, including the UK’s deputy military representative Air Cdre Mark Sexton.

“Efforts are coming to fruition in terms of enhancing the readiness of the alliance,” he told *Soldier*.

“This means getting all the forces that

the members provide on paper, which is a phenomenal basket of capabilities, and ensuring they can deliver those when and where they are needed so that we can operate effectively in the face of Russian aggression.”

But the days of massed armies eyeing each other warily across the Iron Curtain ended with the Cold War; these days the onus is on doing more with less.

“It isn’t just to do with people, it’s about exploiting new technology and making the most of the kit you’ve got,” continued Air Cdre Sexton.

“The UK has always been good at focusing on technology and looking at the future. Look at cyber – Britain has been a leader in that and has brought the alliance together in terms of thinking about how we use it.

“And now it’s turning its mind to other forms of disruptive technology such as automation – driverless cars and so on – and the impact of artificial intelligence on military intelligence.”

The world may have changed since the North Atlantic Treaty brought 12 countries together on April 4, 1949 in the post-Second World War environment. But Nato continues to endure and has consistently adapted itself to new threats.

“More and more, Nato is at the heart of UK defence,” added Air Cdre Sexton.

“We have 29 nations – soon to be 30 – that are unified and you’re always better off doing things with partners.

“That’s where the authority comes from – because everything is done by consensus, everyone knows this powerful political alliance has spoken, and will act, as one.” ■

NATO SPECIAL...

» Nato postings open up (page 34)

» Troops hit the US for Exercise Rattlesnake (page 38)

» Kosovo 20 years on (page 44)



NATO's reconfiguration to meet modern-day threats head-on will see its ranks boosted by around 10 per cent.

For the UK, that means its military contingent will increase by roughly 100 extra posts to a total of around 650 positions throughout the alliance's entire command structure.

With the Army set to be allocated 50 of these, there will be some pretty exciting foreign postings coming up in the near future for soldiers with the travel bug – Norfolk anyone? (Virginia, that is).

Air Cdre Anthony Beasant, UK national military representative at Mons-based Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe – otherwise known as Shape – was keen to get the message out about what a stint abroad could offer troops.

"There are some really good jobs, of real influence, dispersed across all disciplines and ranks," he explained.

"From intelligence, to logistics, communications, planning, even cyber – if you're someone who's interested in your tradecraft Nato offers you the chance to step up a level.

"In the UK you might get up to brigade or division but here you're suddenly at multi-corps level so there are some wonderful opportunities to test yourself in a very challenging environment."

As well as being professionally rewarding, with 29 different nations and cultures to do business with, it stands to reason that a posting to Nato will also develop soft skills such as tact and diplomacy.

But Air Cdre Beasant said working for the alliance has not always been viewed as a career booster.

It is a myth he is keen to counter.

"There's a perception that Nato jobs can be detrimental to your career because a few years ago your annual report wasn't written by a British officer, but we've changed that so everyone now has at least one British person in their reporting chain.

"And we're now starting to see a change in culture, with promotion boards recognising the challenging nature of the job."

The new posts will be introduced over the next two or three years across Nato's vast global footprint.

So if you're mulling over your next move and think a job with the alliance could be on the cards, these personnel serving in Belgium and the Netherlands have some advice...



WO2 Jason Hanlon, RLC

Location: Mons, Belgium.

What do you do?

I'm in charge of the base supply department at Shape. The job is similar to being a regimental quartermaster.

How have your family found this posting?

It's been a very positive tour for me and my wife and kids. They're all happy and enjoying school – their education has improved a lot more here than in the UK. It's also ideal for travel if you want to get out and about.

What about allowances?

In terms of financial benefits I'm probably around £1,300 better off a month when you take into account local overseas allowance, rent being cheaper and our gas and electric being subsidised. I don't really see any negatives. I'd like to stay with Nato now rather than go back to a regiment.



Lt Col Elton Davis, QG Signals

Location: Nato HQ, Brussels.

What's your role?

I'm the staff officer in charge of information, communications

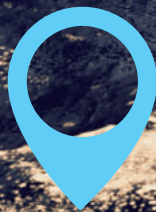
and cyber for the UK military delegation.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

One of the kicks I get out of it is representing my nation. Sitting in the committees behind a little plaque that says 'UK' on it you suddenly realise you're not there on behalf of your unit or formation – you're there for your country. That's fun, challenging and scary at times – but it's made a lot easier by the fact that Britain has such a good standing within Nato.

ALL ABROAD

Nato is growing, and with it the chances for British soldiers to shine on the international stage



Shape,
Mons



Nato HQ,
Brussels

ALL ABROAD CONTINUED →



WO2 Waylon Jang, AGC (SPS)

Location: Joint Forces Command Brunssum, Netherlands.

What goes on here?

JFC Brunssum oversees the Nato mission in Afghanistan and the enhanced forward presence battlegroups in the Baltic, as well as providing assurance and deterrence for Northern Europe.

How do you think a Nato job will affect your promotion prospects?

Depending on what stage of your career you're at you have to consider your options. I was advised before coming here to think carefully because in the UK I would be in a regimental admin office managing 20 people. Here I'm not doing that but I'm adding more thought and analysis to my role. My take-away from that is there is a benefit to working here even if it's not perceived in the wider Army.

What about the social side?

I'm here with my husband. He's joined local groups - the lunch and cooking clubs - and really enjoys it. The community and social element are both great.



**JFC,
Brunssum**



Lt Col Christian Fortey, RE

Location: Joint Forces Command Brunssum, Netherlands.

What's your job title and what do you enjoy most about it?

I'm the coordination officer for the Joint Engineering Division. The decisions you make here mean something - it's not just for exercise. It has some tangible output. Our peers grew up in the Cold War and they saw life before the wall came down, and they expect you to have that understanding and be part of that team because to them it's real.

Do you spend a lot of time behind a desk?

No. I've felt trapped at my desk since I was a captain but here there is much more freedom. Going on exercise in Britain means being on Salisbury Plain or wherever but out here I've been to places like Hungary, Estonia, Norway, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

What about housing?

There's no DIO housing stock out here - it's all rented from local landlords and that can be quite difficult. Without plenty of notice they might not be able to accommodate you straight away.

Should people worry if they don't speak the language?

Absolutely not. It's embarrassing how good the Dutch are at English. You can go out and about with your family without having to worry about making yourselves understood.

Globe trotting:

A Nato posting could take you to places like Naples, Milan, Istanbul, Izmir, Valencia, Ramstein and Lille

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Left to right: Brenda Hale, John Tyson, Mark Smith



“
BEING IN
THE FIELD
AGAIN IS
FANTASTIC
”



POISED TO STRIKE

Exercise Rattlesnake offers stern test for Nato's support troops

ESTONIA, Afghanistan and Iraq may be the places that British personnel immediately associate with Nato operations, but there are opportunities to serve alongside our allies closer to home too.

The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps' (Arrc) Support Battalion is a lesser-known but vital cog in the alliance, specifically geared up to enable its multinational parent unit to deploy on operations worldwide.

And with a stint as Nato's lead war-fighting headquarters looming (page 43), members of the Gloucester-based outfit are making sure that their skills are on point.

Their latest tasking saw them head stateside to take part in Exercise Rattlesnake, a large-scale package staged at Louisiana's Joint Readiness Training Centre, Fort Polk.

A mix of Nepalese and British personnel – predominantly logisticians, sappers and infantry – the 100-strong group was split into three and embedded within the mobility, engineer and recce elements of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division.

For some of the Gurkhas allocated to the reconnaissance platoon, the visit was a chance to put trade skills on hold and get back to the business of soldiering.

Among them, and heading up the team, was SSgt Tilak Pun (QGE), who landed the role after a previous posting to Catterick's Infantry Training Centre.

"Coming from a corps unit and leading the platoon like this is a dream come true for me and being out in the field again is fantastic – I'm loving it," he said.

"I've got members of the Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment and the Queen's Gurkha Engineers, as well as the Royal Gurkha Rifles," he explained.

"We all do nine months training as riflemen before we pick up our trade streams, so the boys have the basic knowledge but when they go to their units they might get rusty.

"The RGR guys are more experienced in terms of infantry exercises as it's their main job. They have the muscle memory and can guide the others if needed.





➔ The team's assignment came with the high-profile job of hunting down the opposition.

Having cut their teeth in the jungles of Brunei, the Nepalese troops may have felt at home in the swampy Louisiana woodland, but outsmarting the foe at Fort Polk takes some doing.

The resident opfor is the Geronimo battalion – or G-men – whose sole purpose is to make life difficult for the 30,000 or so troops that train at the facility every year.

Coupled with a distinct home advantage, they are heavily armed with assets including tanks, aviation, anti-aircraft weapons and drones.

"They are a near-peer enemy which means they have similar kit to us," explained LCpl Julian Rice (RE) during a security serial.

"Starting in pairs they'll do a little recce to check the skills of the soldiers they're testing, and if they feel like they have the edge they will call in reinforcements to attack a position.

"They've been hitting us hard, especially at night, and then disappearing within minutes.

"They know a lot of hidden tracks and pathways that we haven't found yet so we have to make sure we do proper patrols to try and catch them."

To prepare its personnel for the challenge, commanders at the Support Battalion instigated a series of testing packages as soon as they had confirmation in the autumn that Rattlesnake was on the cards.

However, even without the latest mission, troops are used to a fast-paced working environment.



Exercise Arcade Fusion, the Nato headquarters' yearly showpiece, is the largest training serial of its kind in the UK and sees the troops setting up a mobile command post from which some 1,000 multinational personnel plan a simulated operation.

Meanwhile, elements of the battalion also deploy regularly alongside its higher formation, 1 Signal Brigade.

Spr Matthew Makinson (RE), whose role in Power Troop is to set up and

maintain generator facilities, said those posted to the unit can expect to be on the move roughly every six weeks.

"There's always something new and challenging," he commented.

"You see a lot of the wider world with people going to places like Latvia, Estonia and Germany, and loads of adventurous training.

"It's so busy that you don't really get into the battle rhythm of a normal unit."

But Spr Makinson, who celebrated

IN NUMBERS

1,300



vehicles involved in the package



troops who took part in training at Fort Polk over the last 12 months



30,173



his 26th birthday in the field, thinks opportunities afforded by the Support Battalion are not widely understood by Service personnel.

"No one really knows much about it, or specifically what Power Troop does," he continued.

"We are quite small so you have to know your trade and stand on your own two feet.

"When you're posted in the unit it's a quick change to learn how all the cogs fit together.

"It's amazing when we do Arrcade Fusion to see how big the organisation is and learning how to support that huge machine is a challenging experience."

And as Nato adapts to future threats, and the Arrc's readiness cycle ramps up, Spr Makinson was sure Exercise Rattlesnake would stand him and his colleagues in good stead.

"This is testing the skills of all the blokes – new and old," he concluded.

"It's back to Cold War basics, living in a forward location in the forest, under a poncho with all your kit and no supply.

"It's really exciting." ■



helicopters on Exercise Rattlesnake, including Apaches, Chinooks, Hueys and Pave Hawks



COMING TO AMERICA

Gurkha troops bring it on bilateral training mission

THANKS to Anglo-American efforts to step up military cooperation, joint manoeuvres have become almost bread and butter for both sides. But it is still rare for Nepalese soldiers to train on US soil.

Here's what they made of the opportunity to fly the flag for their country...



"It's like a dream to be in the United States – I'm very happy to be here."

Rfn James Gurung, RGR



"We want to leave our mark. All the boys are hyped up and are looking forward to showing US allies what we can do. There's definitely an element of pride."

Cpl Rakesh Gurung, QOGLR

"Everyone wants to talk to us and ask about our kukris and our selection process. We made them a curry and they loved it. We didn't put too many chillies in – it was quite simple. Our typical messing always helps build friendships and team cohesion."

LCpl Jagadish Gurung, QGE



→ CONVOY DRILLS

British and US troops team up to keep the show on the road

A huge logistical effort underpinned Exercise Rattlesnake, with members of the Arrc Support Battalion's mobility troop helping keep some 3,000 personnel supplied with food, water and ammunition on a daily basis.

For drivers that meant getting behind the wheel of unfamiliar vehicles like the Humvee and the catchily-titled heavy expanded mobility tactical truck load handling system – or LHS for short.

Though not vastly different from their British Army equivalents, personnel had to learn the ropes before taking to the road.

"The LHS is similar to our drops vehicle," explained Pte Max Tripe (RLC). "It's basically a trailer with a hook on the back. The turning circle is a bit harder and we had to learn their hand signals and road signs, as well as practising driving with night-vision goggles after dark.

"You have to be careful not to go off-track because the ground is quite soft and it's easy to get stuck."

Given the boggy terrain, vehicle recovery was one of the more common real-life tasks facing mechanics alongside the fictional serials.

Working with the American maintenance team, Cfn Will Healey (REME, pictured right) had to get up to speed with the different platforms, including the Stryker armoured fighting vehicle.

"I've never worked on them before but all engines function more or less the same, even if things are in a different place," he said.

"We diagnose faults together and then replace or repair components to get the vehicles back into play.

"It's good for my trade skills to adapt to stuff I don't normally use."



Aid post partners: LCpl Kayla Charles (RAMC) treats a casualty alongside her American counterpart in the US-led Role 2 medical facility





“IT’S GOOD FOR MY TRADE SKILLS”



Taking command

Meanwhile back home, troops are ramping up to lead the alliance into battle

WHILE the Support Battalion honed its skills in Louisiana, the Arrc itself is going through a change programme ahead of its turn as lead war-fighting headquarters for Nato at the end of the year.

In a rapidly evolving environment, Maj Gen Jez Bennett, the formation’s chief of staff, said personnel would not only need to focus on core combat skills, but remain ready to meet a range of other threats.

The senior officer also stressed that working more intricately with a large number of partners – as Arrc staff do on a daily basis – is the new normal.

Explaining how the different capabilities brought by each nation would pay dividends, he said: “We now have a network of familiar and lesser-known allies that give Nato both an extended reach and a quality it simply didn’t have when it was created.

“Already there are British deployments to the continent as part of the enhanced forward presence and I think there will be more of this kind of work in future.”

Maj Gen Bennett also predicted that non-conventional threats – such

as fake news and other information warfare – would evolve and need tackling in the future.

“We’re going to see things continue to change,” he added.

“Cyber and space environments create different dimensions so we obviously need to modernise.”

This is a view shared by the HQ’s commander, Lt Gen Tim Radford.

Having joined the Army in the Cold War and led a brigade on the Nato mission in Afghanistan, he has a keen awareness of the alliance’s past – as well as the emerging operational environment.

“The challenges we face are multiple – there is a new state-on-state threat and a grey zone of hybrid warfare, where misinformation is spread, as well as terrorism,” he said. “But the alliance is cohesive now and we need to make sure it continues to be strong – this means having the right posture and the ability to deploy quickly.”

With a proven reputation in both Kosovo and Afghanistan in its recent history, and personnel up and down the chain of command working hard to meet modern threats head-on, the Arrc will take up position at Nato’s spear with confidence.

Picture: SSgt Brandon Pomrenke, US Army



THE aftermath of the violence that defined Kosovo is etched on Nathan Webber's memory.

Wading through a shallow river while deployed as part of a huge Nato peacekeeping action 20 years ago, the young Royal Artillery officer battled to keep his footing as his boots slid over the rocks beneath the water. But then the awful reality dawned as he looked down.

"I was actually walking over human bones," he recalled. "It was a horrible reminder of what had happened – there had been such a terrible level of violence in this place."

Although major operations in the Balkans are now gone, the events of 1999 still resonate today. Peacekeepers remain on the ground and Nato troops – including the Brits – are on standby to reinforce the ranks in the region if trouble flares once more.

The lessons learnt – particularly from working in a multinational environment – also remain relevant now with major operations alongside other nations again on the minds of military chiefs.

While Kosovo is today an independent country, in 1999 it was a province of Serbia torn apart by civil war. The parent state's security forces were battling an uprising by Albanians – making up most of the population – as well as conducting a murderous campaign against civilians.

With wars in nearby Bosnia and Croatia that followed the splintering of the former Yugoslavia still fresh in the memory, as well as the ominous phrase "ethnic cleansing" back in the public lexicon, the international community was demanding action to halt another humanitarian catastrophe.

After the collapse of diplomacy and an ever-increasing spiral of violence, Nato launched an air campaign against Serb targets in the March of 1999 in a move to halt the crisis.



FIGHTING FOR PEACE

Two decades on from the harrowing Balkans peacekeeping campaign, the lessons learnt remain relevant today

A peacekeeping mission backed by the international community followed in June after the country's government relented, halting the aggression.

Webber (pictured left) – who is now a lieutenant colonel and serving with the same HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps that initially commanded the alliance-

led Kosovo Force – said troops had been stunned at the brutality.

"I was a battery reconnaissance officer for 4 Regiment and there was one occasion early on when we came across a village that had been ethnically cleansed – civilians murdered," he said.

"Nato had been through 40 years of a Cold War period in which nothing much had happened operationally – but Kosovo was very real and sights such as this



were sobering.”

In the wake of the violence and chaos, however, Webber pointed out that Nato personnel had learnt valuable lessons for the various campaigns that would follow in the coming years.

Media handling skills – with online coverage emerging – were refreshed while managing a long logistic chain in a multinational environment had steadily been perfected. New kit such as the Phoenix drone improved the intelligence picture.

The officer also highlighted that the dawning internet age had seen the concept of a “strategic corporal” emerge. With the flow of information increasingly rapid, there was the possibility for a junior commander’s actions on the ground altering the top-level picture of a major operation.

Para Steven Hawkins (pictured above)



was at the forefront of the action – the 22-year-old had already been on tour closer to home in Northern Ireland when the new crisis erupted.

A relatively new soldier, he said the euphoria of civilians at the troops’ arrival was his standout memory.

“We’d flown into the capital Pristina on Chinooks and everyone from kids to the elderly were on the streets chanting ‘Nato’ – over and over,” he added. “They were so happy to see us.

“For me, the other real difference with this operation was that it was my first time overseas.

“I was in a new environment and working alongside troops from other countries – seeing different military vehicles when we were patrolling made me realise we were not alone.”

Now a WO2, Hawkins is convinced Kosovo helped troops develop professionally, and particularly with rapid deployment. “It was a very different experience to Northern Ireland,” he reflected.

“When it all started we flew out to Macedonia, where we were in very confined, hot and uncomfortable conditions – we waited, and when the call finally came for us to move we didn’t have much of an idea of what the situation would be when we actually arrived.”

Nick Thomas (pictured right) – who was a troop commander with the 1st Queen’s Dragoon Guards

when he was called to Kosovo – believes he also learnt a great deal during his early deployment.

“The striking thing for me was boarding an aircraft at RAF Brize Norton and being in a warzone within three hours,” he added. “You could see the level of destruction as you flew into Pristina, the bridges that had been destroyed and the wreckage of vehicles.

“I was working in an armoured squadron back then, based out of a town called Podujevo – it was an opportunity for me to see what other countries could bring to an operation and how you could mix the capabilities they had for a number of different roles.”

Thomas – who is currently a lieutenant colonel – highlighted that the discipline of working closely with the local population also delivered results in Kosovo. These skills would prove to be critical in the theatres to come in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A generation has passed since the events of Kosovo heralded the start of an intense period for the British Army. But the operation remains an important milestone in terms of the experience it ultimately fostered.

During a live operation, troops were able to work alongside Nato colleagues with the latest kit and perfecting the skills needed for working in a dangerous and complex environment.

Their contribution also saved countless lives and helped to restore peace in an embattled region. ■



EYE OF THE



STORM

Exercise shakes down the fire and manoeuvre skills critical for modern battle space

THE sleep-deprived gunners are weary in the final phase of what is proving a long battle.

Concealed beneath camouflage netting in a wood somewhere on Salisbury Plain they are playing a critical waiting game. If discovered, their L118 light gun would be a prize scalp for the enemy. The grinding fatigue adds to the risk of opposition troops sneaking into attack positions.

A brief interlude of spring-like weather during the previous week has long dissipated. Gale force winds now tear through this tiny, tented hamlet – yanking the tree branches from all directions. Beyond, the rain-hammered Wiltshire countryside stretches to a horizon drained of colour, uninviting and morale-sapping.

The combination of physical demands and unforgiving conditions has made the two weeks of Exercise Wessex Storm – a shakedown of core war-fighting skills against a well-equipped enemy – a particularly tough experience for the personnel of Newcastle-based 3rd Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery.

They are part of a battlegroup led by 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment for the manoeuvres. And this final phase of the three-week package – which makes use of tactical engagement simulation (Tes) equipment – tests troops' ability to pack up camp within minutes after each fire mission. They must be ready to move out immediately.

"My understanding is that a gun battery has never done this final element of Wessex Storm – a tactical engagement with a live enemy," says Lt Max Pulger-Frame as he shelters under the canvas of the command point. "I think all gunners should go through this."

"In reality the four 105mm weapons we have on the exercise would be a high value target for enemy artillery, so making sure we can change position is important – but getting about is physically demanding."

"Salisbury Plain has proved to be particularly boggy in places and towing equipment with our Pinzgauer vehicles has been a test as we've moved around this terrain."

The recce officer is speaking as troops from C Battery make their gun ready for the next mission.

After a brief respite, the downpour has begun again as the crews go to work.

Elsewhere around the temporary camp, personnel are prepared for bread-and-butter soldiering skills should they find their position under attack from infantry or vehicles.

They have already been assaulted by enemy armour simulated by British kit, with Gnr Ryan Carter (pictured left) repelling the attack using the next generation light anti-tank weapon (NLAW).

"Everyone here has done well with keeping their basic skills sharp," remarks gun position officer Lt Sophie Nicholls. "We have a lot of new people and this has been their first exercise."

"It has definitely been a demanding physical experience for everyone involved – the weather has been very challenging and the past 12 hours have seen constant wind and rain."

While troops who have readied their gun admit they are tired, they are in sound shape for a final attack that will erupt in the evening. They are satisfied they can continue to outperform their opponents in the remaining hours.

"The physical demands have been pretty serious but the training has been good," points out Gnr Beth Wood. "It was interesting for me to put infantry skills into action."

"In terms of the downsides, the weather has been bad. But you have to just deal with it."



Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Peter Davies

URBAN SHADOWLANDS

A FEW kilometres away from the gun position – at the Copehill Down urban fighting facility – there is a growing sense of anticipation at the evening to come.

Here the core of a battlegroup made up of more than 600 soldiers – with personnel from outfits including the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as well as medics and military dogs – is at work.

Earlier, the infantrymen behind the coils of razor wire and sandbags protecting the buildings were forced into a battle in the shadows, clearing room-by-room as they took the objective.

And somewhere in the countryside an opposing force of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and the Household Cavalry Regiment, are ready to fight.

“We’ve pretty much the whole battalion out here for the exercise,” explains Pte George Mason (Yorks), who will be among those fighting to hold the position before the battlegroup launches a counter-attack.

“It’s been good although this phase where we are preparing for the final assault has been quieter; there have, however, been a couple of disturbances from the simulated civilian population.

“We’ve rehearsed our room clearance drills – we’re getting very good at them,” he adds.

Colleague Pte Craig May believes the exercise has presented worthwhile challenges.

“At the moment we’re preparing to defend the village from the forthcoming enemy attack,” he says.

“In rehearsing for war fighting we’ve been doing the range of activities, including the skills required for the urban setting as well as preparing for non-conventional attacks.”

This incarnation of Wessex Storm has certainly been of huge value. Operating in an environment with a full range of assets, soldiers are honing the skills needed for conventional operations.

Conducting successful combat in a complex, multi-threat battle space will be critical to success in future actions – but troops are proving highly capable as they adapt to the challenge. ■





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Recruiting ‘out of step’ with need?

THE Army’s latest recruitment campaign seeking “snowflakes” is problematic for a number of reasons.

Wikipedia defines that word as “a derogatory slang term for a person, implying that they have an inflated sense of uniqueness, an unwarranted sense of entitlement, or are over-emotional, easily offended, and unable to deal with opposing opinions”.

Are these really the sort of soldiers the Army wants? And if so, it’s not a good idea to insult your target audience.

Also, I suspect these individuals don’t represent the most fertile recruiting ground and our scarce resources would be better directed elsewhere. And I wonder how many good people are being put off by association with this label.

All recruiting activity acts as PR, and this campaign sends a negative message to those serving and the wider defence community, as well as potential employers of retired personnel.

No doubt, an expert will tell us the messaging is ironic, not for us, and we should judge by results.

But with undermanning still plaguing us maybe it’s time to return to more traditional and positive messages because in every generation there are those who seek adventure, have a sense of service and, dare I say it, wish to be the best. They are the people we should be trying to attract. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Ben Wilde, Assistant Director of Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command, responds:

With significant changes in the aspirations and motivations of young people, traditional messaging no longer delivers the numbers we need.

Over the last three years we have addressed shortfalls by tailoring our advertising to appeal to today’s youth in all parts of society.

This has succeeded, with applications rising steadily and now at a five-year high.

This year’s Your Army campaign is designed to show how the Service sees beyond unfair stereotypes to identify a person’s potential.

Far from insulting those we are looking to attract, it points out that where others see weaknesses the Army sees strength and offers a chance to belong to a team doing work that really matters.

The posters, one of which included the snowflake headline, were live for two weeks at the beginning of the campaign and designed, partly, to attract attention and trigger debate.

So far, this approach has been hugely effective.

It is still early days, but far from being counterproductive interest has surged.

In January alone, there were 10,120 eligible Regular soldier applications – up 57 per cent compared with January 2018.

The important thing now is to ensure that these applicants have the opportunity to progress smoothly through the recruiting pipeline and into basic training.

“How many good people are being put off?”

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

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Vehicle fee is a wrong turn

I HAVE been informed that we are going to be charged a non-refundable annual £100 fee to keep caravans, motor homes and equestrian vehicles on site at our barracks.

We will need to produce evidence of third-party insurance, road tax and MOT or statutory off-road notification if they are motorised.

I'm not happy the fee will be going to a welfare fund that does not benefit members of our formation because we are a resident minor unit here.

Also, I'm not sure why this charge is even being introduced – I have been here for a number of years and parking has never been an issue.

Presumably, it is aimed at those people who don't use the vehicles in question every day.

Also, when we pay this fee, are we entering into a contract with the MoD and if so, can we claim the tax back on it?

– Name and address supplied

Sheila Symes, Financial Governance and Compliance Department, Army Headquarters, replies: MoD policy states that the storage of documents, equipment, vehicles and caravans and any revenue generated from this should be conducted in accordance with the Treasury's managing public money policy. Costs arising from approved

private and non-entitled use of publicly-funded MoD facilities must be charged for and recovered with no subsidy.

Additionally, the department must also be fully indemnified by the user against any potential claims from third parties or losses and damage to property arising from these vehicles through suitable insurance cover to the minimum the department requires.

Charging fees for the storage of caravans, campervans, equestrian vehicles, trailers or towed equipment such as boats, when privately owned and belonging to Service personnel on MoD sites, is not a new initiative.

The head of establishment can put in place local arrangements for charging for and managing the risks that could potentially arise.

On your final point, I would advise you to make your own tax enquires with respect to this matter.

The parking and storage of private vehicles at an employer's facility could be classed as a benefit-in-kind that is taxable unless a charge is being paid.

For more information please refer to 2017DIN08-008, chapter 20 of JSP 462, chapter 14 of JSP 362 and JSP 850, part one.

We will need to produce evidence

Reserve mess

● AFTER being passed from pillar to post, receiving different answers and trying to contact the two email addresses in the Reserve Forces regulations, neither of which work, you are my last attempt at getting definitive guidance on a particular problem I have.

I am a senior NCO on a full-time Reserve service (FTRS) contract with Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) and have been told I must belong to the warrant officers' and sergeants' mess even though I don't want to join it.

I have received a backdated bill, taken from my JPA records, of more than £200 for the garrison mess at my current location, a DE&S outstation.

I approached my chain of command and they told me I only needed to join if I wanted to.

As you're probably aware I'm not entitled to accommodation, medical or dental services and if I eat at the mess I pay non-entitled rates.

If I'd been posted to Abbey Wood this wouldn't be an issue as there are no mess facilities, but because I'm at this outstation I'm at a huge disadvantage.

– Name and address supplied



Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head, Personal Services, replies: I am sorry to say you have been given incorrect information from your chain of command on mess membership rules. We have contacted the support unit to ensure that Army officers and senior NCOs are correctly advised on this requirement.

It is mandated in chapter five of Queen's Regulations that you should belong to a mess at all times and as a senior NCO it is your responsibility to comply and to pay your various mess bills accordingly.

You are correct that according to your terms and conditions as an FTRS senior NCO you are not entitled to medical or dental provision or Service accommodation, but if you eat in the mess you should only be charged entitled rates.

Read JSP 456, part two, volume two, chapter five, paragraph 0508.

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Army sergeant major says...



WO1 Gav Paton has been chatting about flexible service

@ArmySgtMajor

Flexible service opened to the Army on Feb 1, 2019. Great to hear that a number of soldiers across cap badges are showing interest. FS won't be for everyone, but if you're interested then speak to your CofC about AGAI 44, and check out <https://flexibleservice.mod.gov.uk> #soldiersfirst

@MinionStaff

I'm sure there are staff jobs for officers where this could be great – if said officer doesn't like his career much. Could you give any examples for soldier jobs where this might work?

@TheMaverickSgt

I've managed two soldiers who needed flex. It literally stopped them from being forced to NTT. It works.

@Dacopsey1

Good news – what roles were they out of curiosity?

@TheMaverickSgt

Trg Wg and MT. I see the policy as a modern solution to modern problems in a modern army, and am glad to have it as a tool to keep our people engaged.

@DavidCrosbie13

@ArmySgtMajor is bang on. FS won't be for everyone (other flexible working policies may better suit), but it could be the thing that keeps that good soldier from signing off. That's got to be a useful tool for every individual/commander.



Picture: Mike Weston

Seeking answer to Irish question

I WAS considering Northern Ireland for my next posting but the administration office cannot confirm what I would be entitled to other than the 12 flights per year everyone stationed there receives.

Could you provide some clarity on this to help me decide what I should do?

– Name and address supplied

Col Phil Bassingham-Searle, Army Pay Colonel, responds: Soldiers posted to Northern Ireland benefit from several bespoke allowances.

If you serve as voluntarily unaccompanied you are entitled to 12 return flights every year, including the cost of travel between the airport and your home, which will enable you to get back to your family on a monthly basis.

This is to provide respite from the additional pressures and restrictions placed on Regular soldiers serving there and to reduce separation from

their loved ones.

You would also be entitled to eight days' additional leave in the form of four long weekends, as well as the Northern Ireland resident's supplement, a taxable daily payment of £7.88 that compensates for the constraints that come with serving in this location.

Longer separation allowance can also be claimed as you will be voluntarily unaccompanied in a different location from your family home – this is only applicable at level one and, unfortunately, will not count towards the accumulation of separated service.

Additionally, if you experience increased motor insurance premiums because of your permanent assignment and residency, you will be entitled to a refund for the amount that exceeds the comparable central London rate.

“Could you provide some clarity?”

IN PRAISE OF THE ARMY LIBRARY INFO SERVICE

● I JUST wanted to highlight the benefits provided by the brilliant Army Library Information Service (ALIS).

I am currently studying a distance learning MA in military history and have found the facility to be first rate.

It has saved me countless trips to station libraries as well as several hundreds of pounds in purchases.

The system, accessed through the Defence Gateway, can only be described as faultless; the staff are extremely helpful and the service they provide superb. I would hazard a guess that this is an untapped resource!

If you need a book or reference material for a battlefield study, whether for personal or professional enjoyment, use ALIS. It has it all. – WO2 Mike Owens, RE



Your WelComE account card...

A **WelComE account card** is assigned to you for your entire military career and can be used to access **telephone** and **Internet** services whilst deployed.

You should receive it after basic training. If you haven't been given it, speak to your admin officer. For more information visit: **www.mywelcome.co.uk**

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APPOINTMENTS

Maj Gen Christopher Tickell, currently Director Capability, to become lieutenant general and **Deputy Chief of the General Staff** from August 2019.

Maj Gen Thomas Copinger-Symes, currently Commander Force Troops Command, to be **Director Capability** from August 2019.

Brig Stephen McMahon, currently Head International Policy and Security (Indo-Asia Pacific) to become major general and **Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Defence Engagement)**.

Brig Andrew Roe, currently Head Senior Faculty and Assistant Commandant (Land), Joint Services Command and Staff College, Defence Academy to become major general and **Chief Executive Defence Academy** and **Commandant Joint Services Command and Staff College** from next month.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: John Middleton, Worthy Down; Winchester, Wendy Sparrow, Marlborough Lines, Andover.

Book *Bulletproof Bodies*: Gordan Crandles, Edinburgh; Jason Kingsford, Bulford, Wiltshire.



DIARY

April 4: The 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Turn to page 33 for more on the Army's role in the alliance.

April 4: The Tank Museum in Bovington is launching Long After the Battle – a new exhibition running for 18 months to mark the 80th anniversary of the Royal Armoured Corps. A vehicle display will see historic tanks from the organisation's collection rolled out in the Kuwait Arena followed by some more modern equipment. Further details at www.tankmuseum.org

April 6: Exhibition of Second World War posters by graphic artist Abram Games begins at the National Army Museum. The Art of Persuasion features 100 examples of his work dating from his time working in government from 1941-45. The showcase is accompanied by other one-off activities. For more information visit www.nam.ac.uk

April 6-11: Make Your Own Cap Badge – a free drop-in event for families at the National Army Museum, London. Sessions run from 1100-1300 and 1400-1600. Visit www.nam.ac.uk

April 20: Talk on Imphal and Kohima 1944 by Tim Bean, senior lecturer on war studies at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, to mark the 75th anniversary of the battle. Event from 1430 at the National Army Museum; booking recommended. Visit www.nam.ac.uk

May 11: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo in support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, at The King's Hall, Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent.

May 22: British Army Leadership 2019. Director Leadership Maj Gen Paul Nanson gives his annual address at 1030 in the Churchill Hall, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. For tickets and details visit www.sandhursttrust.org

June 5: Portsmouth will host the national **75th anniversary commemoration of the Normandy landings**. Flypasts and a military parade will mark the occasion with Forces bands providing the musical accompaniment. The event kicks off five days of activities in the city. See www.thedaystory.com for more.

July 27: The North East Military Ball from 1845 at The Hilton, Bottle Bank, Gateshead. An evening of glamour, live entertainment and food in aid of The Royal British Legion, Veterans in Crisis and Grace House NE. Open to all tri-Service personnel, veterans, families and supporters. For more details visit www.nemb.co.uk



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
www.soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
www.afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
www.afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
www.adviceasap.org.uk

Army Families Federation:

01264 382324; mil 94391 2324;
www.aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:
www.armylgbt.org.uk;
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124;
www.blesma.org

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

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
01372 841600;
www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
www.erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901;
www.felixfund.org.uk

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

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:

www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association:
www.nesa.org.uk

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

Poppyscotland:
0131 557 2782;
www.poppyscotland.org.uk

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

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
0131 550 1583;
www.legionscotland.org.uk

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

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
0131 556 0091;
www.svonline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:
01748 833797;
www.spaces.org.uk

SSAFA:
0845 1300 975;
www.ssafa.org.uk

Stoll:
020 7385 2110;
info@stoll.org.uk;
www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400;
www.nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676;
www.starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

Continued on page 58

Directory continued

Troop Aid:

0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260

uk4u Thanks!:

01798 812081;

www.uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:

0808 1914 218 (from the UK);

0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);

www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service



NOTICES

The second issue of the Army's *In Front* newsletter is now available to read on Defence Connect or the Army Knowledge Exchange.



REUNIONS

13 (Martinique) Battery reunion

on April 13 at the Copthorne Hotel, The Waterfront, Brierly Hill, Dudley, DY5 1UR. For more details contact Kevin Brooks-Usher on 07834 287426.

Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland (RAVC) Association AGM and

reunion, Holiday Inn Express, Burton-on-Trent at 1500 on May 4 then afterwards at the RBL Alrewas annual memorial service the next day, with all to meet at the Millennium Shelter at the Ulster Grove NMA from 1000. Contact John Tucker on 07734 113077 for details.

85th Artillery Clerks' Association

reunion and dinner in the Royal Artillery sergeants' mess, Larkhill on June 7-9. Open to all members with strong attendance expected. For details visit www.artyclerkassn.org

Royal Pioneer Corps Association

reunion, June 14-16 at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Norman Brown on 07868 757642, or email royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades

Association remembrance and reunion dinner on June 21-23 at the National Memorial Arboretum and Bosworth Hall, Market Bosworth. All ranks past and present welcome. For further details contact Roy Hatch on 01926 812363.

8 Regiment, RASC/RCT/RLC 18th anniversary reunion weekend,

October 18-19. A pre-reunion event

will be held on Friday evening at a venue TBC with the main event at The Village on the Green Club, Aspull, Wigan. All past members, irrespective of cap badge, are invited along with a partner or guest. The cost is £30 per head or £10 for the pre-reunion event. For more information contact jimmyasp@hotmail.com



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Group

welcomes members of the public to its roadshows. For more info call 01276 412880 or visit www.army.mod.uk/engagement

April: 2, Mole Valley; 30, Dundee.

May: 1, Glasgow; 2, Ayr; 14, Leicester; 15, Nottingham; 22, Chichester.



SEARCHLINE

An aspiring Scotland-based musical combo is appealing for donations to buy kit. **The Paisley Comrades Pipes and Drums**, which is starting from scratch, is hoping to deliver top-notch performances at ceremonial occasions. Contact Ronald Scobie at

flightless.scotsman@hotmail.com

Frank Tilburn Hodson (ex-REME) is looking for information on craftsmen Pete Boots and Jim Gascoigne, who served with him in Hong Kong from 1959-61. Contact carolmorgan2412@icloud.com

Author Mike Donovan wants to hear from anyone who served alongside former footballer

Alan Gilzean during his national service in Aldershot/Farnborough around 1959. He is writing an official biography of the ex-Scotland, Dundee and Tottenham Hotspur player, who died in July 2018. Email mikedonovan333@gmail.com

4 Regiment, Royal Military

Police will disband on November 1, 2019. If you have donated or gifted any property please contact SSgt Gary McCallum (AGC (RMP)) via gary.mccallum324@mod.gov.uk to arrange its return. Anything unclaimed will be donated to the RMP Museum.

Lawrence Lustig is seeking details on a **Military Medal won by his late grandfather Joseph Bloom** in the First World War. Anyone with details is asked to contact lawrence@iblmedia.co.uk

NO. 929

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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WIN

TEN details have been changed in this picture of Adm Sunil Lanba, the chief of the Indian naval staff, during a visit to the Ministry of Defence in London last month.

Circle all the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 929, Soldier**, Ordnance

Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, no later than April 30.

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

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date wins a Jetboil MicroMo Stove for outdoor cooking. The winner's name will be published in the June issue. All the usual rules apply.

February's winner: Nicola Skelding, Chatham, Kent.



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Spotlight on...

Whinny Hill Urban Training Area



This facility sits within the Catterick Training Area, the principal and only OBUA training area in the North East. Recently upgraded, the facility offers an impressive and realistic urban sprawl complex. The area offers many challenging opportunities for urban war-fighting and nearby self-contained accommodation with hot and cold running water.

Location	Size	Bed spaces
North Yorkshire	9 hectares	82

Training facilities

Petrol bomb range
Mechanised assault area
Platoon defensive position
Patrol base
39 fighting houses
Section level Low Level Urban Skills Trainer
200m of purpose built sub terrain tunnels
5 storey block with abseiling capability



UNIQUE TRAINING FEATURES

Urban sprawl:

A mini complex of urban training buildings representing the cluttered and complicated urban environments found in many areas around the world.

Consists of 13 single and double story buildings with a variety of access point options including forced entry. Facades add realism and the internal room layout enables a variety of configurations. Includes a multi storey building (Air Delivery Platform) enabling helicopter and rope access training.

The buildings offer a realistic urban environment with street lighting, colour closed circuit TV coverage throughout and a Battle Simulation Audio System.



“The facility at Whinny Hill offers a challenging, enjoyable and safe urban training environment. It provides everything that's needed to produce inventive scenarios.”
OC 4 Inf Bde CTT

For more information see JSP 907 or call 94731 2504 / 01748 872504
To book use BAMS <https://bamsonline.landmarc.r.mil.uk>

THE ARMY SPORTS LOTTERY IS CELEBRATING ITS SILVER ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR

To mark our 25th year on 1 April 2018 we increased the weekly prize money from **£25,000** to **£30,000**. Every week members will have the opportunity to win the following prizes:

1st Prize	£10,000
2nd Prize	£5000
3rd Prize	£4000
4th Prize	£3000
5th Prize	£2000
6th Prize	£1000

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15 x	£200
10 x	£100



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Since its creation in 1993 the **Army Sports Lottery** has:

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- Given **£20 million** in cash prizes
- Awarded over **£23 million** in grants to Army personnel

In addition the time between visiting Zone 4/5 countries has been reduced so you can now go once every 2 years

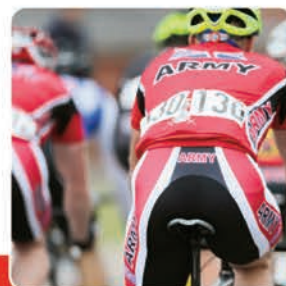
The Army Sports Lottery is a non-profit making organisation that exists to support sport in the Army

For further details visit our web at:

www.armysportslottery.com



ARMY



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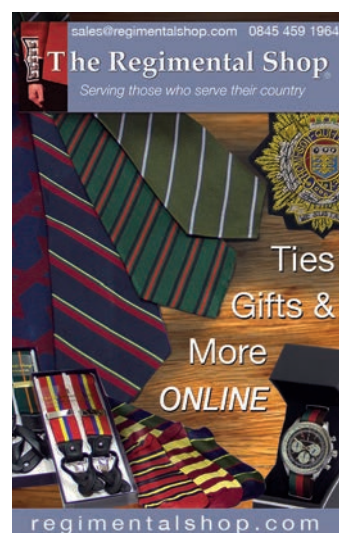
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REVIEWS

MOVIES

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY

Queen biopic isn't perfect but don't let that put you off

AFTER claiming four Oscars at this year's Academy Awards, the biopic charting Freddie Mercury's rise to fame with Queen really should be a shoo-in for a five-star rating. But its flaws – some minor, others less so – are hard to overlook.

The niggles start with **Rami Malek** (*Papillon*, *The Pacific*), who deservedly won an Oscar for his performance as the strutting, charismatic frontman of the band. >>

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MOVIES



The dental prosthetics he was given to recreate Mercury's famous overbite are simply too pronounced, almost cartoon-like, and catch the eye annoyingly frequently, leaving a small blot on an otherwise magical recreation.

Then there's **Mike Myers** who is unconvincing as cynical EMI record executive Ray Foster, sporting a British accent that's not quite on the money and make-up and wig that look like they were applied by a five-year-old.

Thankfully, he isn't in the film for long but in his one and only scene he references *Wayne's World* by claiming *Bohemian Rhapsody* would "never have kids headbanging in the back of cars".

There's a time and a place for that type of gag and this film isn't it. The script editor should be ashamed.

The plot also twists history to contrive a more fitting finale. It's widely accepted that Mercury wasn't diagnosed with HIV until 1987 but in this instance it occurs before the band's triumphant appearance at the legendary Live Aid concert in 1985, creating a fake climax to proceedings, with Mercury performing against the odds, in ill health and facing up to his impending death.

This contrivance certainly adds poignancy to some of the lyrics from songs such as *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Hammer to Fall*, which contain references to death and its inevitability.

However, in real life that memorable appearance at Wembley came at the end of a string of successes for Mercury and the band. He was fit and well, his solo album had sold respectably, and Queen's latest collection of tracks, *The Works*, was riding high in the charts around the world.

Does a biopic of this nature have a duty to be more faithful to the real timeline?

Personally, I think it does. It certainly spoils the film a little for me.

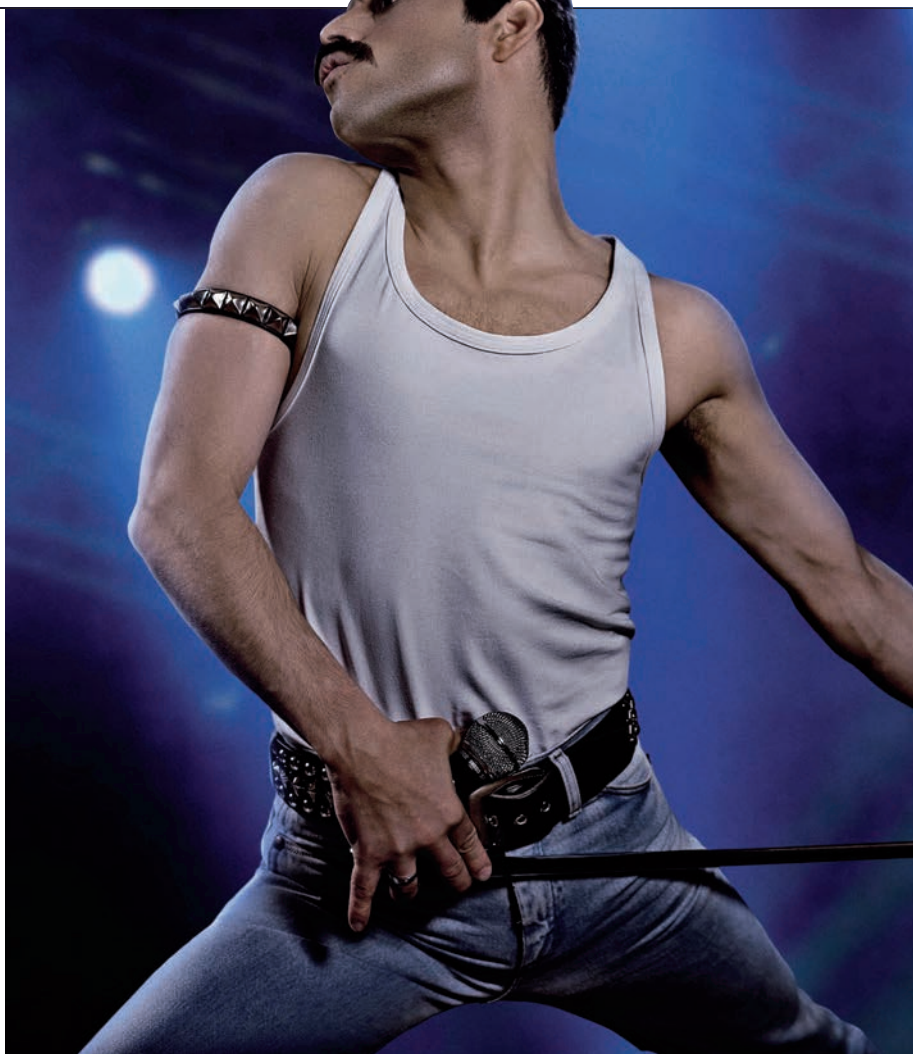
However, the recreation of that magical 21 minutes 34 years ago is superb and totally faithful to the actual performance, even down to the positioning of the soft drink cups on the piano (check it out on YouTube).

Malek and the highly impressive **Gwilym Lee** (Brian May), **Joseph Mazzello** (John Deacon) and **Ben Hardy** (Roger Taylor) produce an uncanny facsimile of the band's performance, and their acting throughout the movie is just some of the many positives that manage, overall, to outweigh the negatives.

Malek is magnificent in capturing Mercury's energy and charisma, both on and off stage, while Lee gives a particularly convincing turn as May, the nerdy astrophysicist-turned-genius rock guitarist.

The film was produced by May and Taylor and it unashamedly provides their perspective of the dynamics and tensions in the band and how Mercury's flourishing homosexuality affected his relationships with them, industry colleagues and his family.

One strong thread throughout the whole film is the importance of the lead singer's attachment to long-term friend Mary Austin, played by **Lucy Boynton** (*Murder on the Orient Express*, *Sing Street*).



They met when he was just 24, a year before Queen was formed, and she remained a part of Mercury's inner circle until he died from an Aids-related illness in 1991 aged 45.

At one point early in their relationship he asked her to marry him and after passing away he left Austin a large chunk of his reported £60 million estate – including his 28-room London mansion where she still lives to this day.

That's documented fact.

How well you can ignore the bits of fiction, the clumsy make-up and Mike

Myers is probably the key to enjoying this film – for diehard fans of the band, anyway. But it's well worth a watch, especially for Malek's captivating performance.

He manages to embody the spirit of Mercury despite not looking particularly like him, and in that respect his portrayal is right up there with **Gary Oldman's** Winston Churchill in *Darkest Hour*.

No wonder they both were awarded the ultimate actor's accolade for their roles. ■

REVIEW: STEVE MUNCEY, *SOLDIER*



● *Bohemian Rhapsody* is out now on DVD

VERDICT:

Malek's performance compensates for irritating flaws

★★★★★

DIGITAL/DVD RELEASES



Lost in London Out now

STREAMING a whole movie, live, in a single take to hundreds of cinemas across

America is no mean feat. But that is what **Woody Harrelson** did with this title. It follows the Hollywood star through an evening that goes from bad to worse as he tries to reunite with his family. Throughout, cast members reference his back catalogue and you would think this would lead to a barrel of laughs. But this is not the case. Even cameos from funny man **Owen Wilson** and music legend **Willie Nelson** cannot save this film from dullness. Although you have to admire the concept and execution, the overall product is disappointing.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



PICK OF THE MONTH:

EVERYTHING NOT SAVED WILL BE LOST

Foals chart a path through uncertain times on comeback offering

► "THEY'RE two halves of the same locket," explains **Foals** frontman **Yannis Philippakis** as he discusses the band's return with an ambitious dual album project.

Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost features 20 tracks split over two releases and with the first instalment already drawing favourable reviews, 2019 promises to form a new peak for a group that have proved their worth as major festival headliners.

The material explores some of the worrying themes found in contemporary society – from climate change to political uncertainty – and this approach is sure to resonate with a wide audience as we attempt to navigate such troubled times.

"There's a definite idea about the world being no longer habitable in the way that it was," Philippakis, who also assumed production duties on the album, continues.

"A kind of perilousness lack of predictability and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problems we face.

"Lyrically, there are resonances with what's going on at a global level at the moment. I just feel like, what's the utility of being a musician these days if you can't engage with at least some of this stuff?

VERDICT:

Back with a bang

★★★★★

"These songs are white flags, or they're SOSs, or they're cries for help – each in a different way."

Such themes may prompt fears of a depressing, heavy-going listen but that is anything but the case.

While lead single *Exits* ponders how "the weather is against us" and that "there's no birds left to fly" it is lifted by a stadium-esque chorus and an almost groovy pop vibe.

The superb *White Onions* and *On The Luna* are more guitar-driven rock affairs – with the former hinting at the sound delivered on the band's debut offering.

And the variety continues on *In Degrees*, where elements of techno and dance come to the fore.

Proceedings draw to a close on the sweeping *Sunday*, before *I'm Done With the World (& It's Done With Me)* delivers a final reflection on the panic around us with the lyric "all I wanna do is get up and leave".

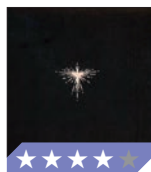
This excellent record also represents a change in direction for the Oxford natives, who saw founding bassist **Walter Gervers** depart in 2017.

His absence saw Philippakis and keyboard player **Edwin Congreave** covering his role during the recording process and the new dynamic will be tested once more when the album's second chapter is delivered some time in the autumn.

A host of tour dates will be ticked off in the meantime and, with a stunning array of new tunes to incorporate in their live shows, **Foals** will undoubtedly become festival favourites once more.

We eagerly await news of their next release date. ■

MUSIC RELEASES CONTINUED



Lux Prima by Karen O and Danger Mouse

AS front-woman of the
Yeah Yeah Yeahs,

Karen O proved to be a formidable presence on the noughties indie-rock scene. The singer's unique vocal style, coupled with her energy-charged stage persona, helped make the band one of the most innovative acts of the period, which makes this sweeping and cinematic collaboration with producer **Danger Mouse** a surprising diversion. But the formula works. Her trademark shrieks and screams have been replaced by soft vocals, and whispers on occasions, and the songs have more than enough breathing room for her counterpart's instrumental diversions – none more so than on the nine-minute long title track. *Woman* is the closest we get to O's recognisable sound but the remainder of the album gives way to futuristic production that delivers on so many levels.

Richard Long, Soldier



The Modern Age by Sleeper

THEY were never
at the forefront of

Britpop but **Sleeper** more than held their own in a congested era, releasing three top-five albums and touring with the likes of **Blur**. But as the scene faded so did the band and they eventually split in 1998. Now, more than 20 years later, they have returned with a new album that follows hot on the heels of a successful comeback tour. Those yearning for some nostalgia will find great familiarity on the likes of *Paradise Waiting* and *Blue Like You*, which recreate the 90s guitar-pop sound, but singer **Louise Wener** reflects the here and now by referencing the joys of motherhood and pitfalls of social media elsewhere. While true variety may be lacking, there is just enough of the old magic present to make this worth a listen.

Richard Long, Soldier



BOOKS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

THE PRICE OF PARADISE

Journalist examines the bloody history of the suicide bomb

➤ FROM concert-goers in Manchester and Paris to pedestrians on the streets of Kabul, more people have been killed or injured by suicide bombers than any other explosive weapon.

Some quarter of a million have been maimed since such devices were first used in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 – more than the number who died in the atomic bomb strikes on Japan.

But recent decades have seen a rapid upswing in attacks, and where Europeans were once spared the regular bloodbaths endured in Middle Eastern countries, no large city is now immune from the threat.

The evolution of these "weapons of mass destruction" is the topic of a compelling new book by investigative journalist and human rights campaigner **Iain Overton** (pictured below).

The Price of Paradise examines their origins in pre-revolutionary Russia, through to the Kamikazes of the Second World War, and up to the present day via Palestine and 9/11.

"We've seen dozens of countries impacted in the last 20 years that had never witnessed suicide strikes prior to that," Overton told *Soldier*.

"What I try and chart in the book is how this weapon became so widespread and I also unpick the thorny issue of whether this is an instrument of Islamic terror."

The author delves into the ideology of martyrdom as a means of achieving utopia, which gained traction in the Iran-Iraq War before leeching across borders and Islamic denominations to inspire a new generation of al-Qaeda and Isis fighters.

Along the way the target became no longer just the state, but civilians and fellow Muslims.

Overton was embedded alongside personnel from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in Basra in 2004 when he witnessed the nature of the battlespace change suddenly.

"In a couple of weeks we saw dozens of attacks, and this was unprecedented," he said.

"Iraq erupted – it went from being an intervention to an occupation and suicide bombings began to proliferate.

"You saw this conflagration and that really has infected everything ever since.

"You could almost plot on the map – as I do in the book – leaping

from country to country in the Middle East, and North Africa and from there to Europe."

In his quest for greater understanding he physically retraced the path of violence, speaking to failed bombers, victims and imprisoned terrorists of all creeds.

But he goes further than to simply join the dots of history. The 45-year-old believes the international community needs to radically question its response to attacks.

"I've charted over time that the reaction by states to the suicide bomb threat usually kills more civilians than the bombers themselves kill," he continued.

"So my argument is that what the suicide bomber does is so terrible and so antithetical to our notion of fairness that governments almost lose their heads a bit.

"But if there's a path to a suicide bombing there can be a path away.

"And that doesn't always necessitate hard violence but a more considered, nuanced approach – restricting access to explosive materials, challenging the justification of attacks on civilians and limiting the outreach of jihadist theology."

Having considered a career in the Army – his father is an ex-Royal Signals officer and his brother is a serving brigadier – Overton instead accepted a job with the BBC after graduating from Cambridge University.

These days, in addition to media work, he runs the charity Action on Armed Violence, which lobbies to protect civilians caught up in conflict.

In 2015, during an address to UN officials, he spoke of the inevitability of a major suicide attack on European soil – less than a week later 130 people were killed in a series of coordinated strikes in Paris.

Born out of that twist of fate, *The Price of Paradise* is Overton's search for answers in dark times. Anyone trying to make sense of the suicide bomber threat, especially those who may face it while deployed on operations, should add it to their reading list. ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



VERDICT:

A hugely informative attempt to understand the incomprehensible

★★★★★

THE PRICE OF PARADISE



How the Suicide Bomber
Shaped the Modern Age

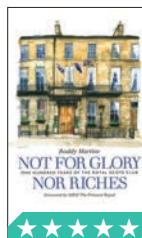
IAIN OVERTON

● *The Price of Paradise*,
by Iain Overton, is
published by Quercus
on April 4 and priced £25

BOOKS

Picture: Shutterstock

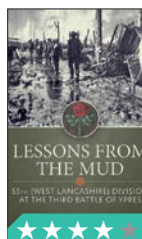
BOOK RELEASES



Not for Glory Nor Riches by Roddy Martine

IN 1919 an all-ranks club was opened in Edinburgh as a memorial to the 11,162 officers and men of The Royal Scots who were killed in the First World War. This informative book details the history of the organisation, its highs and lows and the changes it has seen over the century. It covers some well-known characters and is well laid out, with excellent illustrations to bring the story to life. Even though The Royal Scots are now remembered as part of The Royal Regiment of Scotland, the club remains a pillar of support. This volume is a fitting tribute to its origins and ongoing work.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



Lessons from the Mud edited by Paul Knight

THIS history of the 55th (West Lancashire) Division at the Third Battle of Ypres is unusual in its origin and format. Originally compiled by the General Officer Commanding, Gen Hugh Jeudwine, in the immediate aftermath of two attacks by his own formation, it drew on an extensive combination of official reports, war diaries, maps and – most importantly – a broad spectrum of first hand accounts. The latter give a real insight into the reality of the Western Front and robustly challenge the outdated myth of the “chateau general”. Carefully edited and well presented, this is a useful addition to any Great War collection.


Mike Peters, ex-AAC



Operation Kinetic by Sean M Maloney

WHILE this account of the Kosovo intervention is primarily focused on Canadian contributions to the campaign, it provides an excellent overview of the entire Nato effort. I recommend it to anyone who is unversed in the complexities surrounding the alliance's role in the Balkans. Of particular interest to British readers will be the strands dealing with the need to project a credible conventional force – even during humanitarian or peace support operations – to deter interference from regional adversaries, as well as the Canadians' efforts to understand the human terrain. Also relevant are the difficulties of deploying at reach, at relatively short notice, especially when readiness is already spent elsewhere.

Capt Matt Ixer, R Welsh



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SOLDIER SPORT



GOING FOR GOLD »»

FORMER soldier Jody Sole jumps clear on Le Reve ahead of a gallop for victory in this year's Grand Military Gold Cup at Sandown Park. Read more about his third win in the prestigious Forces race on page 75...





A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

WOUNDED PERSONNEL AIM FOR THE TOP AFTER RUGBY BOOSTS REHABILITATION PROCESS

DUBBED as murderball, wheelchair rugby has become famed for its high-impact collisions and fluid, fast-moving action.

Boasting elements of handball and basketball, it is played with a volleyball and features rules that have significant differences when compared to the sport's able-bodied variant.

By comparison, wheelchair rugby league is in its infancy but has a much more familiar feel for those taking to the court for the first time.

As in the traditional game, each team retains possession for six tackles, the ball can only be passed backwards and the offside rule stands.

But tackles are made by removing a tag from the shoulder of an opponent and matches are staged on a five-a-side basis, with two able-bodied players allowed on each team.

The inclusive nature offers obvious appeal and the Army has capitalised on the growing momentum by forming its own team from personnel based at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall.

The brainchild of former Service player SSgt Steven Sampher (LD), the squad took on Hull in their first match last month and they have big plans for the future.

"The Rugby League World Cup is coming to the UK in 2021 and the wheelchair game will be a huge part of that," the senior NCO told *SoldierSport*.

"A lot of Army lads are already at a good standard even though they have not been playing for long.

"We want them to find local

clubs, make their way into teams and possibly get scouted for the England set-up.

"We are also looking to create an Inter-Services tournament.

"We are still in our infancy but the determination to push this forward is definitely there."

Sampher (pictured right) was injured on Op Herrick 16 in 2012 when the vehicle he was travelling in struck an IED.

After landing in a crater the soldier was targeted in a secondary attack that saw him shot in the helmet.

His road to recovery has been far from plain sailing and he eventually had his leg amputated in October 2017. This led to further complications as he then had to battle blood clots on his heart and lungs.

"As I was going through my rehabilitation I really struggled with my mental health and PTSD," Sampher explained.

"I had played rugby league from a young age. I competed at Army and corps level and not having that really broke me.

"But getting in a wheelchair and being competitive again was an amazing feeling; it is such a buzz.

"It was easy to pick up and it has been a massive help. Doing this and being part of an Army team has given me a focus.

"I was pushing everyone away, including my family, but rugby league has given me something to look forward to and aim for."

Sampher's efforts in creating an Army squad have been backed by the charity Soldiers League, an organisation that supports wounded Service personnel during the rehabilitation process.



**"BEING
PART OF
AN ARMY
TEAM
HAS
GIVEN
ME A
FOCUS"**

It started as a recreational activity at Stanford Hall but, with interest rapidly rising, attention soon switched to forming a military team.

A convert from rugby union, LCpl Louis Farrell (REME) was among the first to sign up.

The aircraft engineer underwent 12 surgeries before his right leg was amputated following a non-combat injury. He said the set-up had given him an opportunity to extend a sporting career that he feared was over.

"Having this injury left me unable to walk, let alone play sport," he explained.

"Losing rugby was a huge part of the mental side to my injury. I was playing once a week, training regularly and going away on tour – it was a massive setback.

"So being involved in this has been brilliant. As long as you know a bit about rugby league it is easy to get into."

Sampher also recruited close friend Tim Nicolini, who served in The Light Dragoons.

The former lance corporal was evacuated from Afghanistan with severe PTSD and is now waiting for knee and shoulder replacement operations.

"I had no idea what the sport was," the veteran, who represented the Army in the full code, explained.

"But when you play you realise it is as close to the real game as you can get.

"I take a high dose of anti-psychotic drugs, which has led to weight gain, but since getting involved the kilos have dropped.

"It is amazing. My first target is the Inter-Services but after that I want to aim for the England squad." ■

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ARMY

CYCLING



SOLE SHINES AT SANDOWN TO SEAL HAT-TRICK RUN

JOCKEY Jody Sole has set his sights on making history in the Grand Military Gold Cup after claiming his third victory in the prestigious race.

The ex-lance bombardier, who served in The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, surged clear of the field on 7/2 shot Le Reve to seal a commanding win in front of an enthusiastic crowd at Sandown Park.

He looked set to battle 2018 champion Lt Billy Aprahamian (IG) for the top honours but when his rival's horse – the favourite Carlos Du Fruitier – pulled up he was able to gallop clear on the home straight.

"As we came round to the railway fences for the final time I looked across to Billy and said 'come on, let's take this home'," he told *SoldierSport*.

"We were two from home and I saw a loose horse, so I assumed he had fallen. I raced clear and the rest is history."

The loose horse was in fact Pete the Feat as Aprahamian's challenge had already ended, but Sole ignored the distraction to

finish well clear of the field.

The Sussex-based star was indebted to trainer Lucy Wadham for offering him what proved to be a winning ride – a mount he met for the first time on the day of the race.

"As a jockey you regularly get horses you have never sat on before and you have to trust that the trainer is teaching them in the right way," he explained.

"My job is to get to the fence and the horse's job is to jump it. Fortunately, my experience carried me through."

And with another success to his name he is now looking to surpass the recent record of four victories achieved by Jamie Snowden, a former captain in the King's Royal Hussars.

"That is the aim moving forward," Sole added. "But we are all friends and it doesn't really matter who wins."

"While I'm no longer in the Army it is great that I can still support it."

The meeting also included the Queen Mother Memorial Hurdle – which was won by retired



**"I RACED
CLEAR
AND THE
REST IS
HISTORY"**

captain Guy Disney, of The Light Dragoons – and the two military races featured 14 Forces jockeys, seven of which are still serving.

While the day proved successful Sole believes greater support is needed if the future of the event is to be safeguarded.

"It would be great if we could keep these races alive," he said. "We want to get more people involved from across the regiments and encourage extra footfall through the gate."

"It is a great day out and a fantastic spectacle."

"We also need more military jockeys and personnel should be aware that they can do these things through the Army."

"The top trainers will be happy to back us if our jockeys are given the time to ride and they put the effort in."

"Support is given to sports such as football, rugby and skiing; this race has been running for 156 years so let's keep it going."

"A lot of people will say horse racing is elitist and for officers but that is not the case." ■



ADVANTAGE ARMY AS DECIDER LOOMS

H EAD coach Capt Sean Birchnall (RLC) has insisted that complacency will not be an issue ahead of the Army's Inter-Services decider with the Royal Navy.

The Reds recorded an emphatic 3-0 win over the Royal Air Force in their opening match and they can seal the title with a repeat performance in Yeovil on April 3.

Hopes of victory will be high as the soldiers triumphed 7-3 in last season's clash but Birchnall will not be taking anything for granted ahead of kick-off.

"The Navy will be a different proposition from last year," he told *SoldierSport*. "We've seen their under-23 side and they have a couple of Royal Marines who have done very well.

"But there is nothing to be overawed by and if we plan and prepare in the same way as we did for the RAF we will be fine.

"A few years ago the team beat the air force in their opening

game and only needed a draw with the Navy to win the title. However, they conceded in the last minute and lost.

"We still have a few players who were part of that squad and their experience will hold us in good stead."

A brace from Cpl Adam Wakely (Rifles, pictured above), plus a further effort from strike partner Sgt Matt Glass (RAPTC), ensured the Army started the 2019 campaign in style and Birchnall was pleased to see their hard work in training pay dividends.

"The RAF set up quite defensively but we scored two early goals to break their shape," he explained.

"They had a couple of chances and goalkeeper LCpl Luke Cairney (RE) made two exceptional saves, but after that we were never under threat.

"We spent a lot of time working on our shape in the build-up and the boys did really well." ■

INTER-SERVICES
FOOTBALL

ARMY

3

RAF

0



ALL TO PLAY FOR

THE Army women have work to do if they are to retain their Inter-Services title.

Despite dominating possession and having the better of the chances the Reds endured a frustrating afternoon in Aldershot as they could only draw 1-1 with the Royal Air Force in their opening fixture.

Star striker Cpl Libby Dixon (AGC (SPS), pictured above) gave the defending champions the perfect start as she converted in the ninth minute but they were dealt a blow on the stroke of half-time as midfielder Rachel Griffiths scored from a free kick.

Unfortunately, further goals failed to follow in the second period, meaning the teams had to settle for a share of the spoils.

The RAF were due to face the Royal Navy as this issue went to press and the soldiers were eagerly awaiting news of the outcome in order to plan ahead for their final match.

They take on the Senior Service at HMS *Temeraire* in Portsmouth on April 2.



LIFE IN THE BIG LEAGUE

AFTER signing with Hull FC as an unknown quantity, Pte Ratu Naulago (Yorks) has made a blistering start to life in the Super League by scoring four tries in as many matches.

The flying winger was picked up by the Humberside outfit on the back of his fine form in the Premiership Sevens last year, when he helped Saracens lift the trophy for the first time since 2010.

With a host of scouts watching on from the stands the soldier was looking to impress in front of some rugby union's biggest names but it was the sport's northern-based code that eventually offered him a route into the professional game.

Naulago was invited to a trial at Hull FC and, after showing significant improvements in his brief time as a rugby league player, he was offered a one-year contract.

"It was quite a surprise but I'm happy to get the opportunity," he told *SoldierSport*.

"After the Premiership Sevens I was hoping one of the top rugby union teams would call and I had no idea that Super League clubs were there as well.

"I've played a bit of league back at my unit but that's it. I'm learning every day, I want to express my talent and experience what it feels like at this level."

After signing his deal Naulago made his debut two days later against Wigan Warriors and scored two tries as his new team ran out 23-22 winners.

"I didn't think I would be picked as we were up against last year's champions," the Serviceman added.

"But it was chance for me to show what I can do. I just focused on the match and treated it like any other game.

"I think the coach was shocked that I scored two tries but that win was down to the hard work of the boys."

Naulago has since scored in victories over Huddersfield and Leeds but is keeping his feet firmly on the ground when it comes to future team selections.

"I'm here to learn and if I get the call I will go out and do my best," he explained.

"We want to be in the top four at the end of the season and everyone is happy with our results so far.

"I'm really grateful for the support I've received from The Yorkshire Regiment – without them I would not be able to have this opportunity in the Super League." ■



Picture: Ash Allen/SWPix.com



Picture: International Paralympic Committee

● **SKIER** Maj Jen Kehoe (RE, pictured left) received further recognition for her stunning achievements on the slopes when she was named UK Armed Forces sportswoman of the year.

The award comes after the officer acted as the guide to Menna Fitzpatrick in the visually-impaired skiing at the 2018 Paralympics, when the duo won four medals.

Basketball referee WO2 Ian Lester (RAPTC) was crowned sports official of the year.



● **DISTANCE** runner Cpl Dani Hodgkinson (QARANC) has seen her fine form in 2019 rewarded with a call-up to the England squad for the Parelloop 10-kilometre race in Holland.

The athlete won the Army Cross Country Championships earlier this season and was also part of the Reds' team that claimed the Inter-Services title at RAF Halton.

Parelloop is seen as the ideal event for those who are looking to gain road running experience at international level or are preparing for major competitions in the future.

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Alligin Photography



Punishment for the police

TWO victories in the space of three weeks saw the Army men's rugby union team maintain their 100 per cent record in 2019.

A 28-12 win over the British Police was followed by a 31-19 triumph against Chinnor RFC as the Reds continued their preparations for this season's Inter-Services.

A sterner test will follow this month as the soldiers face Bedford Blues in the annual Mobbs Memorial Match on April 10 before they travel to Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium to take on the Royal Air Force.

Tickets for the match on April 27 are available at www.gloucesterterugby.co.uk



Black's brace inspires win

A DOUBLE strike from SSgt Paul Black (RLC) helped the Army masters to a 3-1 win over the Welsh national veterans football team.

The match was played at Cardiff City House of Sport and saw the Reds hit top form ahead of this season's Inter-Services campaign.

Black opened the scoring with a bullet header in the 35th minute and then added to his tally shortly after the break, when he chipped the opposition goalkeeper from 20 yards.

The hosts then reduced the arrears but WO2 Paul Douglass (RLC) sealed the result from the penalty spot.



NEW-LOOK REDS ADD TO TITLE HAUL



"THIS WAS A SUPERB RESULT"

THERE was a familiar feel to this season's Inter-Services Hockey Championships as the Army women sealed yet another title.

The defending champions started their campaign in style as they dispatched the Royal Navy 5-1 and with the Royal Air Force downing the same opposition it was winner-takes-all when the two sides met on the tournament's final day.

With a number of top players missing through the injury the Reds fell behind before a quick equaliser drew them level.

The RAF then suffered another setback as Army goalkeeper Capt Caitlin Lower (RA) produced a stunning save from a penalty.

And they were punished

moments later as veteran Lt Col Paula Nicholas (AGC (SPS)) sparked a counter-attack that saw Maj Lucy Valentine (RLC) fire into an unguarded net to seal a slender win.

"It was a much tougher game than usual," said skipper LCpl Heidi Devey (R Signals).

"We're about half and half from the squad we had last year.

"There's a lot of fresh talent coming through so this was a superb result for us."

Elsewhere, the RAF proved the team to beat in the men's competition as they retained their title from last season.

The Army began the tournament with a 2-2 draw with the Navy before slipping to a 3-0 defeat against the champions. ■

● AN exciting new format has been announced for the eighth annual Army Cycling Road Race Series, which gets under way this month.

The competition will see 12 races split between northern and southern leagues, with the riders coming together to contest the overall titles at the end of the season.

Open to athletes of all experience levels, there will be prizes for the top individuals, major/minor units and the champion corps outfit.

The northern series begins at The Brownlee Centre in Leeds on April 17, with its southern leg starting on May 8 at Odd Down Cycle Circuit in Bath. For more information and to get involved email ian.tosh450@mod.gov.uk



MONTH IN SPORT

April's key fixtures...



WHAT: Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Series
WHEN: April 3
WHERE: Erlestoke
NEED TO KNOW: The first

of six rounds, this competition is aimed at growing the sport at all levels – from novices upwards. Prizes will be handed to the best individuals and unit teams



WHAT: Inter-Services Table Tennis
WHEN: April 17 to 18
WHERE: Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre
NEED TO KNOW: Army champion Pte Bibek Kakri (RLC, pictured) will lead the charge as the Reds lock horns with the military's top players. The Royal Air Force dominated last season but the Reds will be looking for victory on home turf



WHAT: UKAF v Cambridge Uni
WHEN: April 29
WHERE: Fenners, Cambridge
NEED TO KNOW: The new cricket season gets under way as the Forces' finest players take on the

students. The Army contingent will be looking to hit top form ahead of a busy summer that includes the annual Inter-Services Twenty20 at Lord's

NETBALL IN NUMBERS

SERVICES
TITLES WON
BY THE
REDS IN THE
PAST NINE
SEASONS

8

POINTS
SCORED BY
THE SOLDIERS
IN TWO
GAMES

111

ARMY
PLAYERS
SELECTED
FOR THE
UKAF SQUAD

6

DAYS OF
ACTION
FACING THE
FORCES
OUTFIT AT
THE NETBALL
EUROPE OPEN
CHALLENGE
IN MAY

4

TEAMS
COMPETING
IN THAT
CONTEST -
INCLUDING
GIBRALTAR
AND ISRAEL

7



Picture: Cpl Robert Weideman, RLC

POINTS PILE UP IN COSFORD

THE Army's netballers laid painful memories of Inter-Services defeat at RAF Cosford to rest with a resounding victory at the same venue in the 2019 showpiece.

Three years ago the station played host to a shock 32-23 defeat to the Royal Navy as the heavily fancied Reds relinquished their grip on a trophy they had won for the past five seasons.

However, there was to be no repeat performance on their return visit as the soldiers recorded a 50-21 win over the Senior Service before downing the Royal Air Force 61-16.

Sgt Ellie Naweale (AGC (SPS)) and LCpl Dee Bolakoro (RE), part of Netball Superleague outfit Celtic Dragons, bolstered the ranks and despite only having nine players in the squad they proved too strong for their rivals.

Success in Shropshire means the Army have now triumphed in three successive tournaments but captain Sgt Nordia Masters (AGC

(SPS)) stressed there was no complacency ahead of the opening match.

"You cannot go into the competition thinking it will be an easy win," she told *SoldierSport*. "This was our first time back at Cosford and we still have bad memories of that defeat to the Navy.

"We are proud of what we have achieved and we were confident, but not cocky. We wanted to show that we are good netballers.

"The squad trained hard beforehand. We had long, tough sessions and worked on our match play when tired, which really helped.

"These matches are always high tempo at the start and we only began to pull away from the Navy in the third quarter.

"The RAF also started strongly but we had the experience and depth of players to get the result."

The Reds completed a clean sweep of titles as the masters and development squads also won their competitions. ■



Pictures: Lawrence Lustig

DEBUT DELIGHT SPARKS TALK OF TITLE CHALLENGE

CRUISERWEIGHT star LCpl Chez Nihell (RLC) has told *SoldierSport* he plans to challenge for regional and national titles after making a winning start to his career as a professional boxer.

The reigning Army Sportsman of the Year secured a 39-37 points decision over Kent Kauppinen at London's O2 Arena, where he fought on the undercard of the world title clash between James DeGale and Chris Eubank Jr.

He is aiming for at least four more bouts in 2019 in a bid to strengthen his quest for honours and believes the experience gained from such a high-profile debut will hold him in good stead for the tests to come.

"It was a great fight against a tough opponent," Nihell explained. "He was dangerous and has knocked out two lads on their debuts in the past.

"We knew he could bang so it was a case of fighting sensibly

and not doing anything silly. He came out swinging at the end, and was relentless up until the final bell, but I was confident of winning after my performance in the opening rounds.

"He was not the best boxer but he was fit and strong.

"In many ways it was similar to the way I fought as an amateur, I wanted to pop and move and not take any unnecessary risks.

"It was a four-round fight and moving forward I want to push for six and eight rounds as that is where you gain the experience.

"It is about getting the rounds under my belt. I'm looking for five bouts this year and at the end of that I want to challenge for the southern area title."

Nihell's debut brought added pressures away from the ring, with the fighter facing a public weigh-in, a press conference and a raft of media interviews during the build-up.

Interest in the contest was



**"THESE
ARE THE
SHOWS
I WANT
TO BOX
ON"**

heightened by the fact the Serviceman's wife, fellow boxer and Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Cpl Alanna Nihell (RLC), was part of his corner team.

"I think I did 20 interviews, including with the BBC and Talksport," the athlete said. "It was a high-profile bill which brought extra pressure, but that is part of the game now.

"It was something I knew I had to do but I remained cool, calm and collected.

"I was over the moon to be part of it and these are the shows I want to box on.

"It was brilliant to have Alanna involved and I wanted her to come on this journey with me.

"It attracted a lot of attention in the press but that was never our intention.

"The calls she was making were the same as the other guys in the corner, so she was on it. It was a great night." ■

SPORT SHORTS



Up for the Lawson Cup

EIGHT corps sides will take to the pitch later this month in the opening round of rugby league's Lawson Cup.

Four matches will be played at Dale Barracks in Chester on April 24, with defending champions the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in action against the Infantry.

Two further rounds will be staged over the summer before the competition progresses to its play-offs, semi-finals and finals in July. For more news follow [@ArmyRugbyLeague](#) on Twitter.



Picture: Alligin Photography

Reds rout touring Swedes

THE Army women claimed an impressive victory over the Swedish national team as preparations for this season's Inter-Services campaign gathered pace.

Centre Cpl Lou Dodd (QARANC, pictured) crossed for two tries as the Reds recorded a 40-3 win on home turf following February's loss to England Under-20s.

Sgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)), Capt Gemma Rowland, Bdr Beth Dainton (both RA) and LCpl Ellie Gattlin (Int Corps) were also on target as the soldiers triumphed in style.

Picture: Alligin Photography



PANTHERS POUNCE IN FINAL THRILLER

PREMIERSHIP FINAL

9 REGT, RLC

16

ROYAL WELSH

15



A MAN-of-the-match display from Cpl Connor Hull guided 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps to a dramatic win over The Royal Welsh in the Army Premiership final.

The fullback (pictured above) scored all 16 points in a memorable personal display as the Panthers overturned an 8-0 deficit at the interval to triumph 16-15 and lift the trophy for the first time.

With the wind at their backs the Welsh Warriors bossed proceedings in the first half and their dominance was rewarded in the 24th minute as Fus Corey McIntyre surged to the line after the forwards flexed their muscles up front.

Further points followed on the half-hour mark as Cfn Jamie Laing drilled a penalty between the posts but their lead could have been greater had he found his range with two earlier attempts.

The champions-elect opened their account early in the second half as Hull converted a simple penalty after their

rivals collected the first of three yellow cards.

A second misdemeanour in the 69th minute saw Hull successfully kick for goal to reduce the arrears to 8-6 and he fired his side in front within seconds of the restart.

Army player Pte Frank Boginisoko punched a hole in the Welsh defence as he gathered from the kick-off and a swift passing move saw Hull sprint clear to score.

He then added the extras before slotting a third penalty of the afternoon to move his side 16-8 ahead.

Veteran forward LCpl Chris Budgen barged over for a consolation score at the death but it was too little too late, meaning the Panthers could celebrate a famous win.

"The weather played a big part in the first half but we knew our fitness would come to the fore after the break," Hull told *SoldierSport*.

"This competition is more than 100 years old and it is a great feeling to bring the trophy home." ■



Working with different nationalities is enjoyable. Although it presents challenges you can have great fun overcoming them. You don't tend to get that type of experience in the British Army.

Maj James Wells, RA



I am a clerk in the financial branch of HQ Arrc – I've another three years to go so I'm hoping to be speaking English without an accent by the end of the posting.

Cpl Maria Cristina Rossetto, Italian army



I'm an artillery officer and working with four other Spaniards in the UK. The hospitality shown by our hosts has been great. The whole experience is very exciting – we consider ourselves to be part of a close team.

Maj Juan Ariza, Spanish army



The British are great – they are helpful and our families get all the support they need.

Capt Ayberk Gunes, Turkish army



Before I came here I worked at the main logistic HQ in Poland, which was a very different environment. Nato can be a test – not least because of the language barrier – but we all do our best to mitigate the challenges and everybody is really friendly.

Maj Tomasz Dering, Polish army

Being here is more enjoyable than it is challenging. Our families are with us, there's a good culture at work and you gain a new professional perspective. Our British hosts are very polite.

Capt Lutz Hackstein, German army



Nations united

We asked Nato soldiers based in the UK what it's like to serve in a multinational workplace

With so many nations here you learn a lot from each other. The language barrier can be an issue – I'm from Hull and people struggle to understand me! It's a bit different being a junior rank here too – the nature of the HQ means there are more seniors around.

LCpl Emily Stone, AGC (SPS)



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