

# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



MAY 2020

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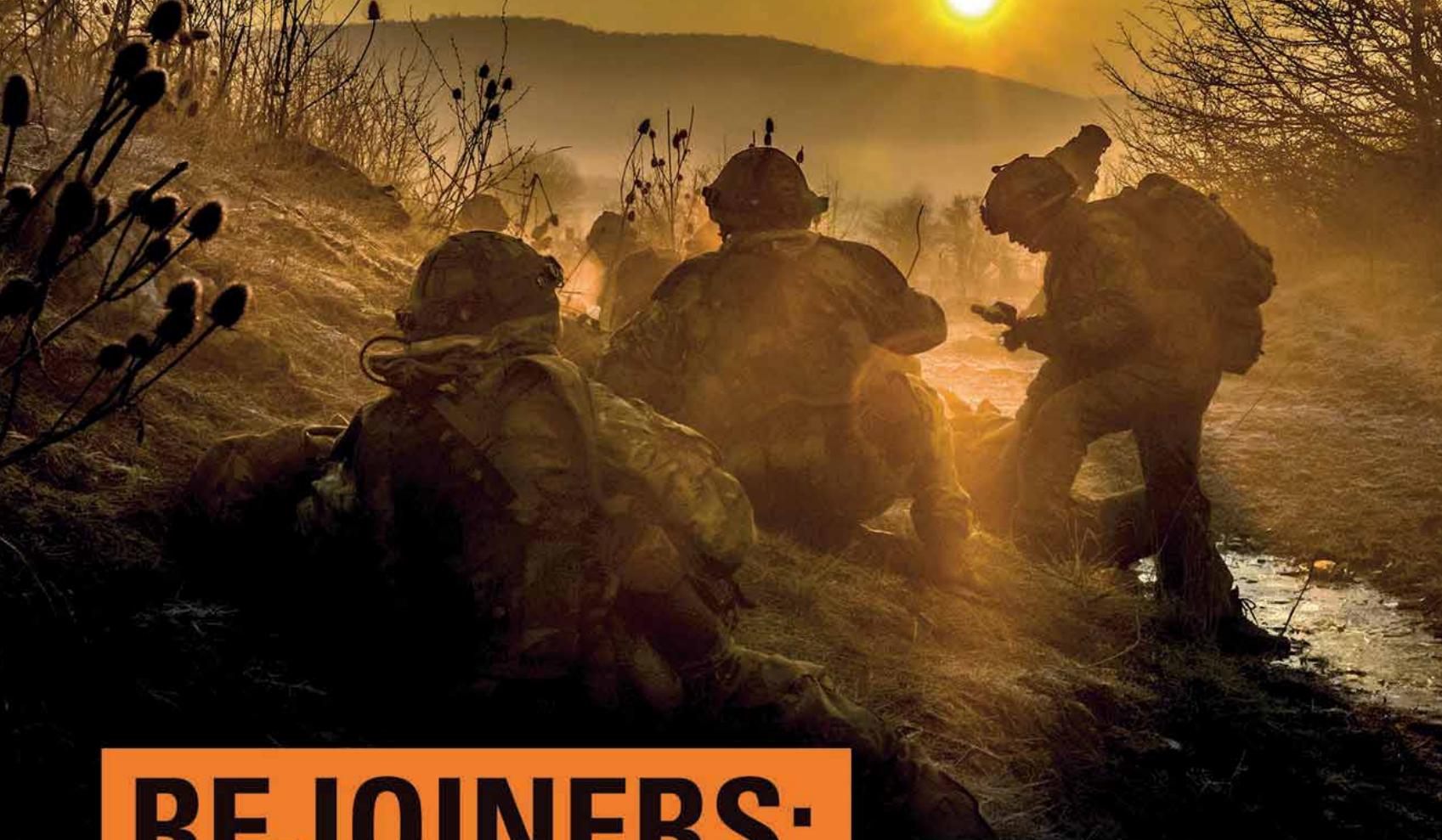
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RESPONSIVE**



**ARMY**  
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Cover picture: By Cpl Cameron Whatmore, RLC, and Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC, with Jenni Finlay, A&E nurse at William Harvey Hospital, Ashford, Kent

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“

Looking back now it's something I'm sure the whole team is incredibly proud to have been a part of

”





## For the greater good



YOU might notice a few changes in this issue – the lack of a big picture spread, for instance, our news pages

dominated by the Army's response to the Covid-19 outbreak, no prize competitions and the Bullet Points pages devoted to the schedule for the resumption of training.

All of these differences are the result of the current state of the nation and are strictly temporary. Normal service will be resumed in the near future.

For now, we are focusing on the demands being placed on the Army in these extraordinary times, and I'd like to thank all the military's photographers, whose sterling efforts to capture such work feature heavily in this issue.

It has been a privilege for us to speak with personnel collaborating with the NHS and other key workers on so many worthwhile projects around the country.

I'd also like to thank **Jenni Finlay**, one of the brilliant nurses at the William Harvey Hospital in Kent, who kindly posed for our front cover. In our book you are all heroes, as is Capt Tom Moore, of course, who embodies the spirit of the many soldiers and civilians working all hours and potentially at risk to themselves for the greater good. We salute you.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

### Where to find *Soldier*

#### ► Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the 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](https://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine) and on Twitter (@soldiermagazine).

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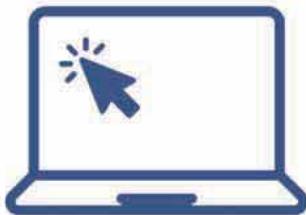
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# The new front line

**A message from Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith**

**S**EVENTY five years ago on Tuesday May 8, 1945 the Prime Minister Winston Churchill was preparing to speak to the nation by radio to announce the defeat of Nazi Germany: Victory in Europe, or VE Day, was to be a public holiday.

Before Churchill made his historic declaration he made enquiries with both the Ministry of Food and Supply and the Metropolitan Police that sufficient stocks of beer were held in the capital to lubricate the impending national celebration.

Unfortunately, no such public celebration will mark this month's 75th anniversary of the liberation of Europe as our country finds itself locked in a struggle with another adversary, this time a virulent, lethal yet invisible respiratory disease, Covid-19.

In marshalling our national resource to defeat this pandemic it has been our health professionals, doctors, nurses and care workers that have been exposed on the front line and the Army has been proud to play its part in supporting an extraordinary and continuing effort to bring the infection under control.

This unprecedented health emergency has also conjured up the language of the war: the NHS on the front line, volunteers "called up" and a community spirit reminiscent of Blitz Britain with Tom Moore, himself of that generation, capturing the public's imagination and generosity with his exceptional fundraising effort, no-nonsense demeanour and humility.

Tom has secured his place in history, not least as the oldest artist to hit

number one in the pop charts, and many congratulations to him as he reaches his 100th birthday.

As he celebrated his centenary, I was delighted that he was able to accept the Honorary Colonelcy of the Army Foundation College, Harrogate. He really has been a national inspiration and will continue to be so.

The crisis has also shown the Army at its best; versatile and inventive, rapidly transitioning to support the NHS with planners, medics, logisticians, communicators, drivers and engineers drawn from across the Service, both Regular and Reserve.

And for the rest, getting used to life in lockdown, it has been a crash course in digital bootcamp, training and education continuing remotely across a variety of digital platforms and headquarters continuing to function but on skeleton-manning.

These have been important lessons and experiences for us as we work out how to operate in a Covid climate. We will have to get used to a regime of constant testing and health monitoring, strict hygiene protocols and social restrictions and it will undoubtedly have a significant influence on how we do much of our business in the future.

But as we approach the 75th anniversary of VE Day, the past calls out to us with optimism. There were dark days then too. Lives lost, expectations transformed, loves separated, genuine sacrifice forced to a greater or lesser extent on our entire society and individual freedom curtailed, then



**“**  
**The crisis has shown the Army at its best**  
**”**

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A taste of the Army's activity across the UK

# NATIONAL SITREP

## 1. LONDON, MANCHESTER, GLASGOW

### PASSING THE TEST

TESTING key workers for Covid-19 has been among the top tasks for British personnel.

Soldiers received training from Boots the chemist to administer checks on NHS staff and other critical employees – enabling them to stay at work if they do not have the disease.

The first teams to complete the package included troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, who were signed off in Wembley.

Meanwhile, representatives from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment assisted at Manchester Airport, while their colleagues from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland deployed at a hub in Glasgow (pictured).

A number of other sites around the UK – including Liverpool, Plymouth and Birmingham – were also set up and staffed by personnel.

Cpl Jamie de Maurier (R Anglian) said: "This may not be normal infantry work but it's a privilege to be able to step forward and help deal with the coronavirus challenge."



## 2. INNSWORTH

### MULTINATIONAL MOVE

TROOPS from Nato allied powers have been among those coming forward to help bolster the UK military's efforts during the national emergency.

French officers from the Armee de Terre are among a contingent from HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps now assisting the Covid Support Force in London. The group, normally based at Innsworth in Gloucestershire, bring a formidable breadth of experience and expertise, including specialist planning skills.

Commander Lt Gen Sir Edward Smyth-Osbourne said: "If you ask a multinational Nato headquarters to do something, it strikes me as obvious that, if at all possible, we deploy on a multinational basis."



## 3. ISLE OF WIGHT

### GRATEFUL TO GUARDS

HARDENED infantry were placed on the front line of the coronavirus battle as they helped to ensure NHS teams at the UK's southern tip were ready for action.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, Scots Guards cleared space for 200 extra beds at St Mary's Hospital on the Isle of Wight – significantly enhancing capacity.

Their work at the Newport facility also included shifting some 200,000 medical records so a storeroom could be transformed to treat patients.

The soldiers, serving with 1 Platoon, Left Flank Company, were assisted by local Reservists during the tasking.

Company commander Maj Will Tulloch said: "We have never been involved in anything on this scale before – the troops have responded very well to what has been a demanding job."



## 6. HILDASAY (235 miles north)

INTELLIGENCE  
FOR THE ATLAS?

“  
The whole team is  
incredibly proud  
”

NCO reflects on Nightingale  
effort, pages 36-43

Brief the team now:



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## 6. HILDASAY EXTREME ISOLATION

FORMER paratrooper Christian Lewis has put his bid to walk the coastline of Britain on hold while he self-isolates on the remote Scottish island of Hildasay

Lewis and his dog, Jet, were on mainland Shetland when lockdown measures were announced, so they took a boat to the usually uninhabited island, where they were allowed to live in a former shepherd's hut with no running water or electricity.

He found time to clean up litter that had washed up along the shore, while keeping his 40,000 Facebook followers up to date with daily posts.

## 4. ABINGDON DISPOSAL DELIVERED

RESOLUTE Army bomb disposal professionals have been continuing to deal with the threat of unexploded ordnance.

Specialists from 621 EOD Squadron, 11 EOD and Search Regiment, RLC were summoned to farmland in Oxfordshire after a device was found close to a Second World War airfield.

Working across two days, they carried out a controlled explosion on the old Royal Air Force munition – which ultimately proved to be a practice bomb.

“We cannot do nothing if unexploded ordnance is found so we remain ready and well prepared to do our day jobs,” said Sgt Paul Coney.



## 1. LONDON 2. INNSWORTH 3. ISLE OF WIGHT 4. ABINGDON 5. FRIMLEY



## 5. FRIMLEY HOSPITAL HELP CONTINUES

THE Army's medical personnel have maintained their support to front-line NHS services.

Nurses, doctors, consultants, allied healthcare assistants and biomedical scientists serving with the Joint Hospital Group (South East) have been working 12-hour shifts at Surrey's Frimley Park Hospital, where the collaborative approach has proved vital in the fight against Covid-19.

“We are operating hand in hand with the NHS,” commanding officer Lt Col Tessa Grieves (QARANC) told *Soldier*.

“The experience we gained during the Ebola outbreak has definitely helped. When we have been away on deployments we have been flooded with patients; it's all about getting used to that high intensity.”



## MEDICS IN RAPID MOVE

■ FAR-FLUNG troops have been squaring up to a new battle on the Falkland Islands.

Reinforcements from 16 Medical Regiment are now in situ at the capital's hospital, where they have been looking after two extra beds at the intensive care unit – upping the number to five.

Capt Marie Llewellyn (QARANC, pictured above) – a veteran of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone – said the group had rapidly deployed.

She added: "It was a hectic few days – I did an NHS shift in hospital and when I finished I had a message saying I was going to the Falklands.

"We brought ventilators, oxygen and medication so we are a self-sufficient addition to the hospital – I'm pleased to be using my skills to help."

Meanwhile, soldiers looking after the islands' air defence – who deployed in December last year – have also been preparing to assist with any Covid-19 related taskings.



## SERVICE TRADES BOLSTER NIGHTINGALE TASKS

■ IT HAS taken an unprecedented effort involving the Army, wider military community and civvy contractors – but it has seen a raft of new hospitals built in just a month.

The first of the NHS Nightingale facilities was constructed at the ExCel conference centre in London's Docklands in nine days (pages 36-43) – followed by five more with military help – in a move health service chiefs said would usually take years.

Harrogate was the latest addition as this issue went to press, joining others in Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, and Manchester.

Between them they can be used to treat more than 8,000 patients if required and are staffed with both combat medical technicians and NHS employees.

A facility north of the border with 1,000 beds – dubbed NHS Louisa Jordan after a First World War Scottish nurse – is also now operational in Glasgow.

# UNITED

by mission to care

ARMY personnel across the country proved their versatility after being trained and readied to support their colleagues in the ambulance service.

As well as providing backing in the south-central region, troops stood up to the plate in East Anglia and embarked on a major effort in Wales.

In Colchester, combat medical technicians and paramedics from 16 Medical Regiment were prepared for work with East of England Ambulance Service staff and their vehicles.

Some 15 personnel completed a training package covering kit familiarisation, advanced life support and dementia care – giving the troops wider clinical experience.

Senior paramedic and Reservist Cpl Aaron Hill (RAMC) – who delivered the course at Merville Barracks – said: "I am confident this cohort will make a real difference when the NHS faces increasing pressure."

Soldiers from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards helped the same service by acting as ambulance drivers to transport critically ill patients between hospitals.

Meanwhile, 60 troops trained to help the Welsh Ambulance Service – learning skills including how to drive the vehicles and assist clinicians.

And a platoon from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh trained on ambulance decontamination tasks during a special package at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon.



# Couple's key response

**A**MARRIED officer couple who volunteered to help the NHS after reading a feature in *Soldier* have helped set up a pioneering partnership with the Ambulance Service.

Majors James (above) and Emma Allen (right) decided to have a break from busy Army lives in their spare time when they both signed up as military co-responders.

The initiative sees Forces personnel assist colleagues in South Central Ambulance Service. All those selected are given medical training and some receive blue light driver instruction.

But the officers' suggestion that the scheme could underpin the Army's assistance to front-line NHS personnel during the Covid-19 emergency has proved a game changer.

"As volunteers we are already integrated within the service and well placed to work with it in the current situation," said Maj Emma Allen, who serves with the Royal Signals.

"We have 80 personnel from all three Armed Forces assisting – 39 from the Army."

While co-responders are normally paired with other volunteers in cars during evening shifts they are now working with clinicians in a full spectrum of roles.

These include taking emergency calls, treating casualties and driving

them to hospital – freeing up NHS staff to help patients who are worst affected by Covid-19.

Meanwhile, six soldiers from 12 Regiment, Royal Artillery, also assigned to the operation, have assisted with tasks such as delivering personal protective kit.

Maj Allen, who is currently designated officer commanding military co-responders, admitted: "It has certainly been a busy time for everyone – the area we cover is huge and stretches all the way from Milton Keynes to the New Forest.

"We have also been helping the London Ambulance Service where needed.

"While it is demanding, we all love what we do and it is great to help.

"There are a range of cap badges involved, from the Intelligence Corps to the Royal Artillery and Adjutant General's Corps."

Although relishing the challenge, Maj Allen admitted she had not seen much of James, a member of the Royal Artillery, during the Covid-19 crisis.

"Setting this up has meant 20-hour days – it has been a long haul," she explained. "He comes home to Tidworth as I leave the house – although we do get to wave as we pass on the A303 each day."



**“Setting this up has meant 20-hour days”**



## Signal of intent

WHEN Sig Bianca Jackson (R Signals) offered her services to her stretched local hospital – The Princess Alexandra in Harlow – she didn't realise that just three days later she'd be in the thick of the action in a specialist Covid-19 unit.

"I didn't think I'd even hear back but in no time at all I was equipped with PPE and helping to keep a ward up and running," she tells *Soldier*.

The Reservist with 68 (Inns of Court and City Yeomanry) Signal Squadron had volunteered to be mobilised, but once her commander found out what she was doing it was agreed she would stay put with the NHS.

Now Sig Jackson is an essential cog in the complex cleaning operation required to keep the treatment area free of the potentially deadly virus.

"I'm doing 60 hours a week," she says. "I'm helping to keep the wards clean, bringing patients' meals in and am assisting with any other requests."

Sig Jackson believes her Army training has been hugely beneficial in such a pressurised environment.

"The way the Service instils resilience in you and the attitude to just crack on with stuff has been massive," she says.

The signaller, who joined 71 Signal Regiment three years ago, admits the experience has also had an unexpected positive. "I was due to start training with EasyJet as cabin crew when the coronavirus epidemic struck, so that was put on hold," she adds.

"However, I used to be a professional carer many years ago and the staff here have said that once this is all over I should apply to the NHS to stay at the hospital permanently."

"I now want to train as a nurse or as ambulance crew – this experience has reignited a spark in me and I really feel this is where I should be."





# CORONAVIRUS

## CGS CONTINUED...

→ as now. But the challenge revealed national characteristics that we are reminded are not merely the stuff of myth.

We are seeing it all again today; there's nothing old-fashioned about stoicism, pragmatism, generosity, decency and humour in adversity. All those same qualities that are the hallmark of the Army that we are proud to serve.

And as the country emerged onto the streets to celebrate victory in May 1945 – in a manner that we cannot today – it was not the end of it all – and people knew it.

There was still a war to be won in the Far East against Imperial Japan and a nation and a continent to rebuild.

Europe was to suffer immediate and violent political and social aftershocks, and plenty could see the Cold War coming. Society had changed irrevocably; unfortunately, expectations and aspirations would never be the same again.

The nation celebrated and then got back to work.

No-one knows how long it will take to conquer Covid-19 finally or what the long-term impacts will be.

But the world and its opportunities, challenges and dangers are still out there, some now more acute and chronic than ever and there will be plenty for us all to do.

So thank you all for your service, loyalty, courage and commitment as you go about your important duty. And good luck to you and your families – we all need some of that!

## PADRES HIT CYBERSPACE

■ COMMITTED Army chaplains have looked at new ways of working during the Covid-19 crisis.

Chaplain General Clinton Langston said padres, like others, were reaching out to their communities with tools such as Skype.

The senior clergyman pointed out that some had also taken to social media – highlighting that Easter messages had been seen by more than 30,000 people.

"There is something for us to take away here on how we might use social media to best support our troops," he added.

Elsewhere, Army padres have been embedded within Standing Joint Command to provide advice on cultural and spiritual issues during the crisis.



“Our troops have kept the vital supply chain moving”

## Lending a protective hand

THE distribution of personal protective equipment has been described by the Chief of the Defence Staff as the "greatest logistics challenge" of his 40-year Army career.

Addressing a Number 10 briefing, Gen Sir Nicholas Carter said the Armed Forces had been ensuring the kit reached front-line professionals.

The ex-Royal Green Jackets officer described the project as immense – stating that in 25 days the NHS had gone from 240 customers to 50,000.

Some 38 extra supply routes per day were required to meet demand – the equivalent of driving three times around the world – plus 260,000 sq ft of warehousing space.

But the ramp-up had proved impressive. Personnel from 101 Logistic Brigade were among those taking the lead in deliveries from the early part of the lockdown – assisting major organisations such as St Thomas' Hospital in London.

Others involved in the protective

gear efforts have included 4th Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, who delivered kit to the police service from a hub in Oxfordshire, while assisting with planning and co-ordination.

Members of 22 Engineer Regiment have used 3D printers to create plastic face visors for front-line health professionals. The work is part of a wider effort that has seen 39,000 of the items produced.

And Reservists from 151 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, worked at the NHS distribution centre in Maidstone, Kent to help distribute vital supplies across the south east.

The unit also put their London facilities to use, with Reserve centres in Southall and Barnet receiving and forwarding kit across the capital.

CO Lt Col Deborah Taylor said: "We all know how important it is that the NHS have the equipment they need to carry on saving lives.

"I am proud our troops have kept the vital supply chain moving".

■ SOLDIERS are being given the critical task of operating a new wave of mobile Covid-19 testing facilities. As this issue went to press it was confirmed troops would run 92 units on the UK mainland. Civvy contractors, meanwhile, would administer four being set up in Northern Ireland.

The move follows a successful pilot that saw Department of Health and Social Care vehicles refitted following



a design by the Royal Engineers. Mobile testing means troops will be able to address hundreds of people each day in the likes of care homes, police stations and prisons in areas of the greatest need, as well as in those that are hard to reach.

Swabs will be carried out on front-line workers and the most vulnerable, with results delivered within 48 hours. The initiative is part of plans for a massive upscaling in coronavirus checks.



# Army cadet achieves PPE target

**Youngster doubles home production of visors to help the nation in time of crisis**

**A** TEENAGER with the Army Cadet Force who hit the headlines after manufacturing homemade visors for health workers has boosted production to meet demand.

Cpl Chris Johnson had been making the headgear with a 3D printer bought with pocket money – but uptake has been so great that he has purchased a second machine to increase output.

With visors rolling off a production line daily, they are rapidly being packed and despatched to NHS workers – including aunt Lt Col Joanne Eccles (above right), a senior Lancashire ACF officer and nurse at the Royal Preston Hospital in her day job.

The cadet, from Warrington, has been widely praised and appeared on television after his work came to light. But the 15-year-old says helping out in the crisis is its own reward.

He told *Soldier*: "My sister also works in the NHS and I had seen reports about people requiring personal protective equipment – I wanted to help out."

"The visors are both simple to put together, as well as being comfortable to wear – they are easily made out of plastic and have a headband attached.

"The real plus is that once they have been sterilised they are ready to use again and again."

"We've been sending them out to organisations including hospitals, as well as district nursing teams, and even a maternity unit in Oxford."

Cpl Johnson, who studies at a specialist technical college and has set his sights on the Army Reserves, said hundreds had been distributed for use by front-line professionals.

The Cheshire ACF cadet continued: "I learned the skills required to make the visors myself and bought the first 3D printer with some money I'd saved up."

"Having the second machine meant we could double output to four visors per hour."

As well as producing the kit, the teenager highlighted that he was now turning his attention to his final few months of education and starting on-the-job training.

Cpl Johnson said: "I've had an interest in science and technology for years – I'd like to go into electrical engineering and get an apprenticeship."

"But I would also like to join the Reserves as a Sapper or maybe with the Royal Signals."

**“**  
We've been sending them to hospitals  
**”**

## HELICOPTERS' KEY ROLES

■ ARMY Air Corps crews with state-of-the-art kit have been playing a key role in a formidable capability focused on carrying out medical evacuations.

Forming the Covid Aviation Task Force, members of Joint Helicopter Command based around the UK have been tasked with bringing seriously ill patients to hospital.

They had carried out five actions as this issue went to press, the MoD confirmed.

Soldiers are operating one Wildcat, flying out of RNAS Yeovilton, covering the south of the UK.

They are working alongside Royal Navy colleagues with Merlin helicopters, while the Royal Air Force have been using Pumas and Chinooks on the taskings.

## VIRTUAL BUGLE CONTEST

■ A VIRTUAL bugle competition saw musicians from The Rifles going head to head during lockdown.

Staged as this edition was going to press, the contest featured categories for Regular soldiers, Reservists, veterans, cadets and even newcomers.

Each cohort was given a specific bugle call to perform, from reveille to the cookhouse call, which is traditionally sounded to summon troops at mealtimes.

Judging the entries was an *X Factor*-style panel of senior Rifles personnel, including Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, and Bugle Major CSjt Simon Topp. The grand final was decided via an online poll. Look out for the results in the next issue.





# CORONAVIRUS



Sara Baade, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation, assesses the impact of Covid-19 ...

## FAMILIES FACE UNIQUE TESTS

**C**OVID-19 has intruded into all our lives and, as always, Army families have had to tackle some additional and unique changes.

The freeze on assignments and unit moves has had a significant impact, not just on soldiers but also their loved ones. Spouses, partners and children who were prepped and ready to move are now refocusing and coming to terms with the fact that they are most likely not moving after all.

And what does that mean in terms of schooling, CEA, jobs and healthcare? Moving is part of Service life, but that doesn't mean curveballs like these are not difficult to adjust to, especially with the wider circumstances at the moment.

Many families currently stationed overseas are facing this situation, as well as coping with additional factors linked to their "host" country. Some have been repatriated, while others have been told to stay put – which creates extra challenges.

Over the past few weeks we have supported Army families from across the UK and overseas to help with any questions and concerns they have had.

We are also working closely with the chain of command to make sure families are getting as much detail as possible. A dedicated Covid-19 section has been added to our website to help with any queries. Please take the time to have a look – and stay safe.

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



“  
What he has  
done is just  
amazing  
”

**T**HE commanding officer of national hero Tom Moore's home unit has described the veteran as an "inspiration to us all" after he raised a staggering £29 million for NHS Charities Together by walking laps of his 25-metre garden.

Former Army captain Moore captured the hearts of the country as he set out to raise a modest £1,000 for the health service by his 100th birthday – but his target rapidly spiralled as news of his quest made worldwide headlines.

The Yorkshire-born veteran, who served in India, Burma and Sumatra, was greeted by a guard of honour from personnel from 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment as he completed the challenge at his Bedfordshire home.

"What Tom has done is just amazing," said CO Lt Col Tom Miller. "He has brought the nation back together during a time of darkness and

## Hero Tom boosts NHS

captured the hearts of Service personnel and civilians alike with such a selfless and humble act."

The 99-year-old gained further notoriety when he and singer Michael Ball topped the charts with their online duet *You'll Never Walk Alone*, a track that features backing vocals from the NHS Voices of Care choir.

And, in light of overwhelming public support, it has since been announced that he will receive a Pride of Britain Award, while the ex-soldier's military career will be charted in the ITV documentary *Capt Tom's War*, which will be broadcast at 2000 on May 8.

Capt Tom also attracted the attention of celebrity artist Charlie Such (pictured left) who created a portrait depicting him as an NHS superhero which he was planning to present at his centenary birthday celebrations as this issue went to press.

## FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

CYCLIST Cpl Ash Brydges (RLC) takes to his bike on May 2 for a 12-hour challenge at Aldershot's St Omer Barracks to raise money for NHS Charities Together. Visit [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ash-brydges](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ash-brydges)

### Getting Physical

ROYAL Army Physical Training Corps soldiers undertook two gruelling feats to boost the NHS in their local areas. Sgt Billy Jervis completed 10,000 press-ups in aid of Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and SSgt Steven Burnell, together with troops from The Royal Lancers, staged a 24-hour watt bike cycle to enable staff at Middlesbrough's James Cook University Hospital to buy protective kit. They raised £2,500 and £7,175 respectively.



### MOUNTAIN MEN

SERVING troops joined in lockdown fundraising efforts by scaling the equivalent height of Mount Everest – 8,848m – at home.

Capt Alex Raymond (Rifles, pictured left above) performed 42,134 reps of a 21cm step in 23 hrs, 57 mins, while SSgt Guy Francis (RE, left below) climbed a fire escape at his camp in Kinloss an incredible 1,455 times.

Money raised:  
**£5,123**  
For: NHS Charities Together



# Ground view

 Contact Gav on Defence Connect

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



**I**T WOULD be an understatement to say that a huge amount has changed since my last column – to the extent that the world is now a different place.

Covid-19 has turned everything on its head and the Army is now on the front line of a war – one as real as in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Yes, it is unconventional, in our own country and against and an invisible enemy. But it is a battle nonetheless and stretching every sinew of the Service.

We have troops supporting NHS colleagues in hospitals and on ambulances. Others are helping test key workers or delivering supplies such as personal protective equipment. We also have people crewing helicopters ready for medevacs, or on the ground keeping them flying.

And last, but by no means least, there are those co-ordinating the whole effort in the Covid Support Force – thank you all for the work you are doing.

Although we have people involved in

high tempo stuff, there are others who are standing by or finding themselves isolated. You are playing your part and I do not take these sacrifices lightly.

I'd like to make two points. Firstly, to our junior NCOs, it is important to reinforce that you win battles.

As leaders, it is your duty to stay in touch with your troops. If they need anything, please use your rank to make life better for them. Even though we may be apart we remain a team and there will be problems if people don't feel part of it.

Secondly, we must throw ourselves into our duty – the chief of the general staff speaks of the "three Rs" in being ready, responsive and resilient.

Soldiers do what others cannot or will not do. At the end of each day we should seriously look ourselves in the eye and ask whether we served to the best of our ability.

When this is over, I want all of us to be able to look back and reflect with pride.

**I want us to look back with pride**

“ ”

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



**Q** What are the upsides and downsides to life in lockdown?

**A** I'm enjoying bike rides with my wife and son, but the logistics of the whole family working at home are tough.



## Business continues

**T**HE Covid-19 situation and protocols around social distancing has seen the Army very capably rise to the challenge of how and where it does business.

My working patterns have changed and I am now at home more than at any time in my military career. I am conducting my usual meetings via conference calls and use the same tech to see units I would normally have visited in person.

We also have fantastic tools such as Defence Connect – sign-up to stay in touch with everything that is happening (page 34).

I welcome people

to challenge, question and advise me – I don't have all the answers. One of the ten diseases of leadership is equating the quality of advice with the rank of the person providing it. We all have a part to play in this team.

It is important to look after your mental, as well as physical, wellbeing and I encourage troops to make the most of welfare contacts.

Elsewhere, Defence Healthcare has rolled out a digital triage service via **econsult.net** (page 16), so you can stay at home and see a doctor online.

Keep yourself well in these tough times.



## RECRUITING REVISED

■ ARMY recruiting is reassuring the public it is still active during the lockdown with revised adverts on TV, radio and social media.

"The numbers of people we are attracting continues to rise but we have changed some wording to emphasise that we are still recruiting in the current climate," said Lt Col Kevin Bingham, from Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command's marketing team. For details on joining up go to <https://apply.army.mod.uk/>



## NEW LEADER TRAINING

■ REVAMPED career courses are due to go online next month.

The Army leadership development programme will replace the old command and leadership management (CLM) parts one to threes.

Lance corporals undertake a ten-day military training package, while corporals and sergeants also attend a seven-day military education course.

The warrant officers' schedule combines both modules, with exact details to be published in the coming months. Until then they will continue with CLM.

Planners say the new scheme represents a more stimulating, demanding test. For full details read **ABN 058/2020**.

## HEALTHCARE ONLINE

■ DEFENCE Primary Healthcare has rolled out a digital triage (eConsult) and remote video consultation (AttendAnywhere) service as part of its response to Covid-19.

Personnel can access advice and book a telephone consultation online but may still be asked to come in for an appointment. It means soldiers can move around the country and be guaranteed care through their own doctor from a smartphone or tablet.

Visit [www.econsult.net](http://www.econsult.net) or search for "eConsult" on Defence Connect.

# Is it time to resume service?

Do you know anyone interested in rejoining the Army? There may never be a better time...

THE Army has a long-standing policy of enabling veterans to rejoin the Service. But it has now developed a fast track scheme to support those who most recently left, helping to provide them with financial and employment stability.

Rejoiner applications are welcome from all former personnel under the age of 57. The Service would seek to make them an offer, but to rejoin in the fast track timelines, they must:

- Have left the Regulars in the last 36 months
- On leaving had a JMES grade of medically

fully deployable or limited deployable

- Wish to return to the same main trade for pay and cap badge
- Had no less than 24 months remaining on a previous engagement or commission

They must also self-declare they have had no significant injury or illness since leaving which could impact their medical grading, or have any unspent convictions. If there are no hitches in the rejoining process, individuals on the fast track scheme can expect to be back in green within a month.

### View from the GROUND



**We asked Maj Rob Sharrock (RE), a member of the personnel policy team at Army Headquarters, about the nuts and bolts of the new scheme...**

#### **Soldier: Is there a financial incentive?**

**RS:** No, but once a candidate has rejoined, they will be eligible for the same pay and allowances as any serving member of the Armed Forces.

#### **Soldier: What are the terms and conditions for the rejoinders?**

**RS:** A fast track rejoinder will typically be offered the same engagement as they were previously on. For example, if they had six years remaining on their versatile engagement (short) when they left the Army, they would be offered the same engagement on their return. In some cases, a cap badge may wish to offer them a longer engagement from the outset. They will not normally be required to commit to any period other than having to provide 12 months' notice. Officers are committed to service for a minimum of three years.

#### **Soldier: Do they rejoin at the same rank they left?**

**RS:** Typically, fast track rejoinders

will return at their previous rank. This will be confirmed by the Army Personnel Centre based on a number of factors, such as skill fade, length of time since leaving and qualifications gained outside the Army. If there isn't space at their previous rank or trade, the cap badge will try and offer them an alternative. If there is no availability in their previous cap badge, a candidate can apply to join a new one. Where possible the Army will try to find a rejoinder suitable re-employment.

#### **Soldier: What training will they require – and will it be the same for everyone or is it trade dependent?**

**RS:** All rejoinders' training is treated on a case-by-case basis, depending on their trade, role and length of time out of the Army. Typically, a fast track rejoinder can return straight to their unit. Those who have spent more time out of the military may have to do some additional training relevant to their role. Any training can be completed once the rejoinder is back in the Service and they will not have to wait for

course availability before they can rejoin.

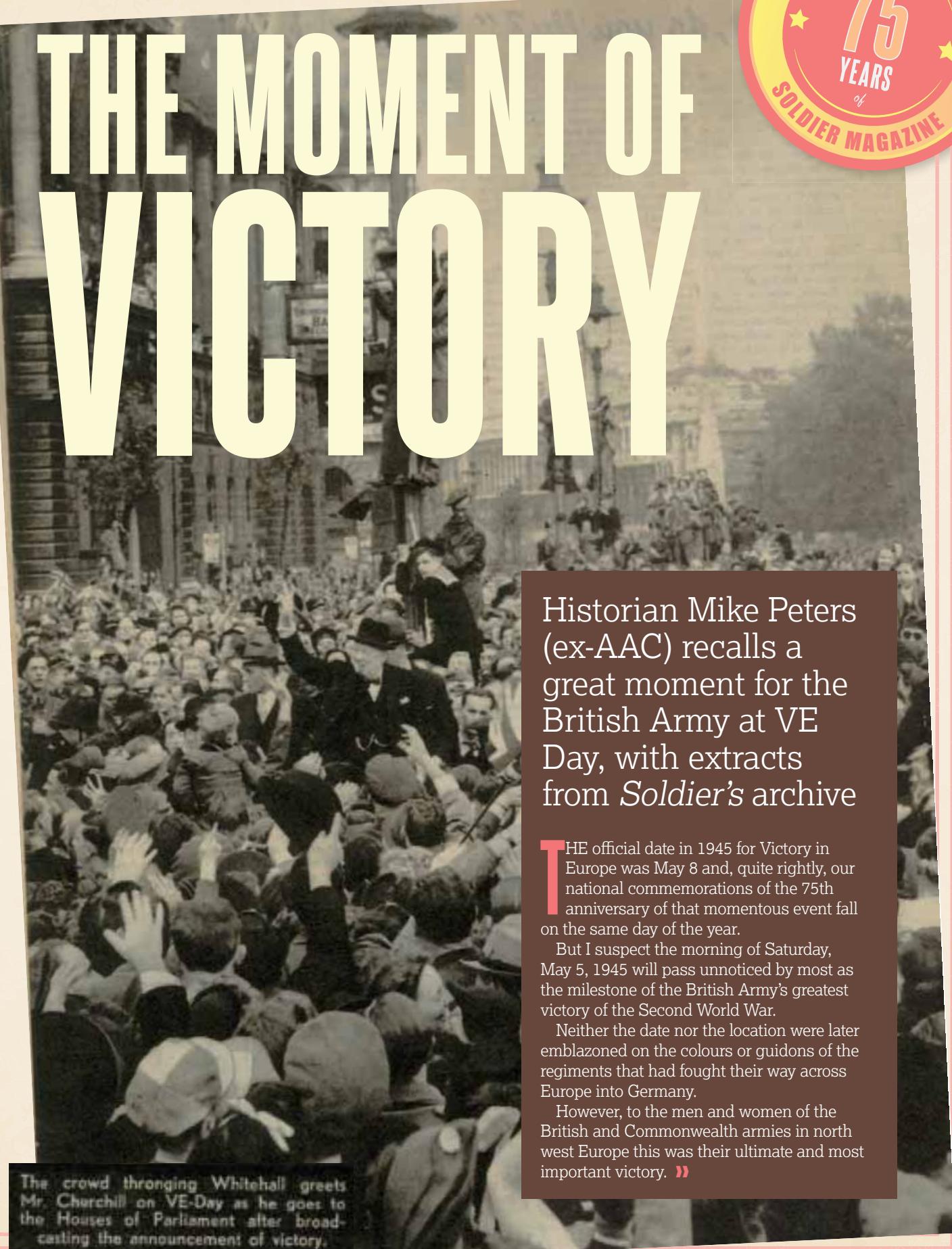
#### **Soldier: What about their Service pension?**

**RS:** Rejoiners will be on Armed Forces Pension Scheme 15. Those already on this scheme can link or add their previous pension benefits, or qualifying service together, provided the gap in service is five years or less. If pension or early departure payment benefits are already under way, and depending on personal circumstances, abatement or recovery rules may apply. It is recommended that rejoinders contact Veterans UK ([dbs-pensionshelp@dbspv.mod.uk](mailto:dbs-pensionshelp@dbspv.mod.uk)) to see how they will be affected.

#### **Soldier: Is there a website or email for those who want to enquire about rejoining?**

**RS:** Yes – go to the Army Rejoiner webpage: <https://apply.army.mod.uk/how-to-join/entryoptions/regular-army-rejoiner> or call the Service's rejoinder team on **0345 600 8080**.

# THE MOMENT OF VICTORY



Historian Mike Peters (ex-AAC) recalls a great moment for the British Army at VE Day, with extracts from *Soldier's* archive

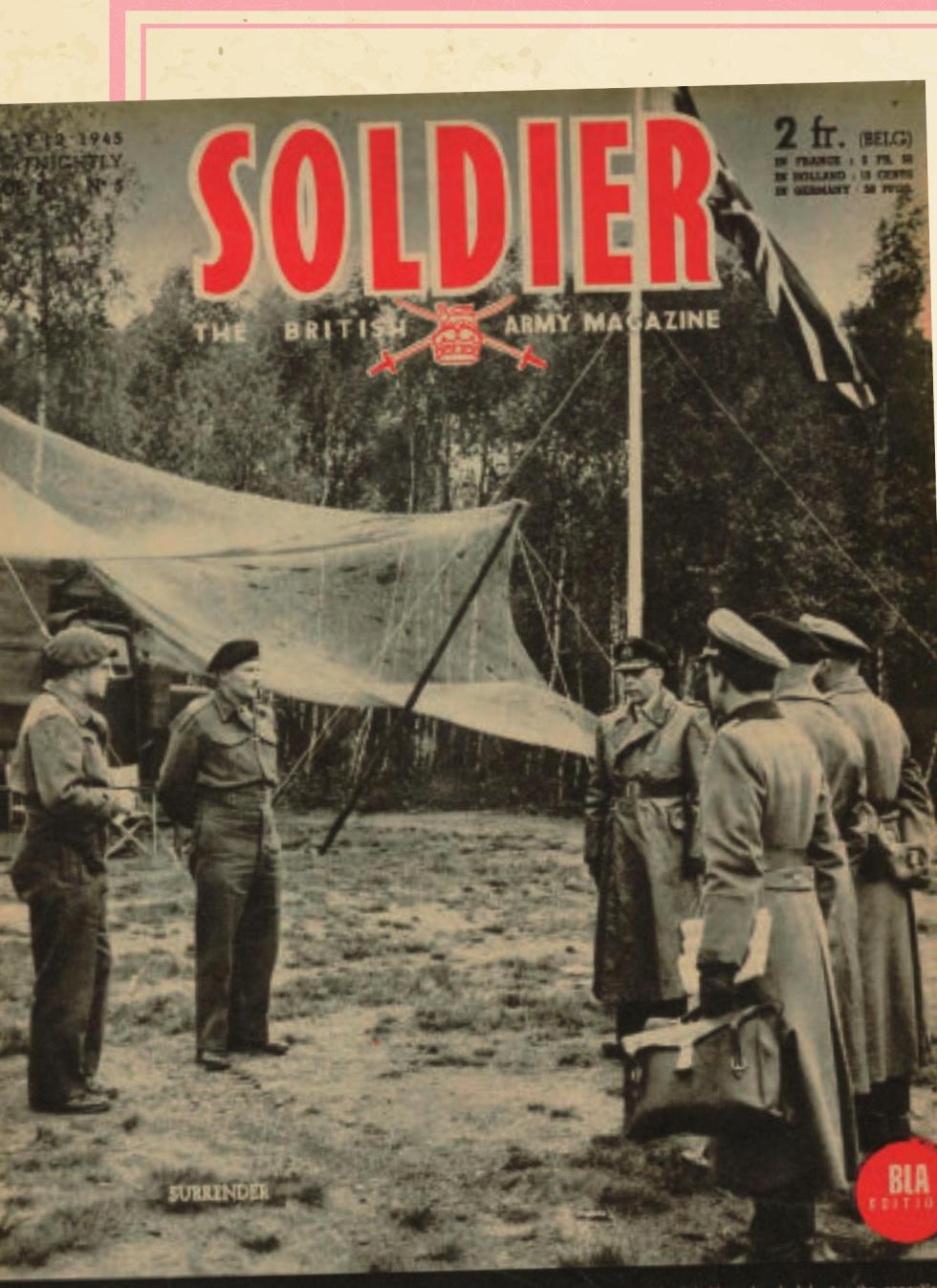
THE official date in 1945 for Victory in Europe was May 8 and, quite rightly, our national commemorations of the 75th anniversary of that momentous event fall on the same day of the year.

But I suspect the morning of Saturday, May 5, 1945 will pass unnoticed by most as the milestone of the British Army's greatest victory of the Second World War.

Neither the date nor the location were later emblazoned on the colours or guidons of the regiments that had fought their way across Europe into Germany.

However, to the men and women of the British and Commonwealth armies in north west Europe this was their ultimate and most important victory. ▶

The crowd thronging Whitehall greets Mr. Churchill on VE-Day as he goes to the Houses of Parliament after broadcasting the announcement of victory.



Soldiers in this theatre of war (as in others) have heard a good deal of late about VE Day — a phrase freely understood to mean that the Hun had "had it" at long last. The public prints have been very full of it all and so have the wireless news broadcasts.

## VE DAY

only — reason for the soldier hereabouts to keep his eye on the ball.

Soldiers in this theatre of war (as in others) have heard a good deal of late about VE Day — a phrase freely understood to mean that the Hun had "had it" at long last.

The public prints have been very full of it all and so have the wireless news broadcasts. Notwithstanding this, men were still fighting and dying and having their limbs torn by enemy gunfire which was as lethal and vicious as ever in the past. This was an excellent — if not the

only — reason for the soldier hereabouts to keep his eye on the ball.

He did, however, on Wednesday, 2 May, permit himself a moment's respite. For on that day he heard that his brothers down south, the Eighth and Fifth Armies under the command of Field-

At 0800 hours on that Saturday morning 75 years ago, the once seemingly invincible German war machine finally collapsed and surrendered to battle-hardened British and Canadian forces, an army whose military prowess remains unrivalled in our military history.

The cover of *Soldier* dated May 12, 1945 (left) captures the all-important moment of German capitulation. The pages recount the fact that it had been a long and costly struggle, reminding readers of just how long the Army had been fighting and the difficulty of the road to victory.

Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, himself a veteran of Dunkirk in 1940, the North Africa campaign in 1942, and Sicily and Italy in 1943, was about to accept the unconditional surrender of all Third Reich forces in Northern Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark (instruments of surrender were being signed between German personnel and the Allies on various fronts).

As the commander of 21st Army Group, he played a pivotal role in the planning of Operation Overlord that landed British, Canadian and US troops in Normandy on D-Day.

Less than a year later, on May 3, 1945, in a nondescript tent on heathland outside the town of Luneburg, Montgomery waited to receive a German military delegation.

The Germans, dressed in peaked caps, medals, overcoats and highly polished leather jack boots, were led by Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg and General Hans Kinzel.

Monty stubbornly remained in his caravan and made them wait.

Finally, after some time, the diminutive figure emerged in his beret and battledress. A British officer observing the meeting commented that Monty treated the high-ranking Germans like a pair of vacuum cleaner salesmen. His demeanour was frosty and abrupt, he began the meeting with a direct question: "What do you want?"

Marshal Alexander, had beaten the opposition into unconditional surrender, and that around one million Germans were once and for all out of the ring. He heard also that Berlin, the accursed city, had fallen to Russian arms.

The soldier cheered — and went about his business.

He has now heard the "Cease Fire" for BLA. A toast, then, for our arms and our cause! We have seen it through.



They had only one realistic answer.

British tanks, aircraft carriers and infantry had reached the shores of the Baltic, captured a host of German towns and cities including the port of Hamburg.

To the south, US Army units were racing through central Germany and Austria. To the east, vengeful Soviet forces had crossed the River Oder and then remorselessly battered their way into the heart of Berlin.

All of the Allies had liberated concentration camps packed full of dead, dying and diseased prisoners. The inhumanity of Hitler's Reich was exposed to all via newsreels, newspapers and letters home from soldiers who had witnessed the horrors of the Nazi regime.

On April 30, 1945, with Russian tanks and infantry closing in on and around his bunker, Adolf Hitler had committed suicide, leaving Germany in complete chaos; surrender was the only course to take.

During the opening stages of his meeting with the German delegates, Monty realised that they were, in fact, hoping to delay the official surrender in north west Europe to allow as many German troops and civilians as possible to evade capture by the advancing Soviets.

This did not play well with the waspish Montgomery. He barked at the stunned Germans, stressing the futility of any negotiation and the desperation of their situation, and stated that the only realistic option open to the »

## AND NOW... THE PEACE

1. On this day of victory in Europe I feel I would like to speak to all who have served and fought with me during the last few years. What I have to say is very simple, and quite short.  
*"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."*
2. I would ask you all to remember those of our comrades who fell in the struggle. They gave their lives that others might have freedom, and no man can do more than that. I believe that He would say to each one of them:  
*"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."*
3. And we who remain have seen the thing through to the end; we all have a feeling of great joy and thankfulness that we have been preserved to see this day.  
*We must remember to give the praise and thankfulness where it is due:*
4. In the early days of this war the British Empire stood alone against the combined might of the axis powers. And during those days we suffered some great disasters; but we stood firm: on the defensive, but striking blows where we could. Later we were joined by Russia and America; and from then onwards the end was in no doubt. Let us never forget what we owe to our Russian and American allies; this great allied team has achieved much in war; may it achieve even more in peace.
5. Without doubt, great problems lie ahead; the world will not recover quickly from the upheaval that has taken place; there is much work for each one of us.  
I would say that we must face up to that work with the same fortitude that we faced up to the worst days of this war. It may be that some difficult times lie ahead for our country, and for each one of us personally. If it happens thus, then our discipline will pull us through; but we must remember that the best discipline implies the subordination of self for the benefit of the community.
6. It has been a privilege and an honour to command this great British Empire team in western Europe. Few commanders can have had such loyal service as you have given me. I thank each one of you from the bottom of my heart.
7. And so let us embark on what lies ahead full of joy and optimism. We have won the German war. Let us now win the peace.
8. Good luck to you all, wherever you may be.

B. L. *Montgomery*

Field-Marshal,  
C.-in-C.,  
21 Army Group.

Germany,  
May, 1945.



forces facing his 21st Army Group was complete and unconditional surrender, there and then.

The two officers were shaken to the core, with Admiral von Friedeburg, the head of the German Navy, now reduced to tears.

After these one-sided talks, the party left Luneburg to consult with the new German government. Montgomery confidently informed Eisenhower that they would sign a surrender document within 24 hours.

What followed was a carefully stage-managed series of events. On the morning of May 5, Monty met the Germans outside the briefing tent with swarms of Royal Air Force fighters roaring overhead and a Union Flag flying over the assembled group to provide an ideal story and photo opportunity for the assembled press pack.

Monty meticulously choreographed the whole process, ordering the Germans into the specially prepared tent and directing which one of them sat where. This was interrupted when one of the officers took out a cigarette, Monty glowered at the offender until it disappeared. His dominance established, he then ordered each representative exactly what to say and do.

Finally, with great ceremony, he put on his tortoise-shelled spectacles and began to read aloud the Instrument of Surrender – the legal document by which the German armed forces capitulated to the Allies.

The subdued Nazis dutifully signed it in full glare of the assembled hordes, followed by Montgomery himself. With the formalities complete, Monty removed his spectacles and announced: "That concludes the surrender".

Outside the tent, British soldiers began to cheer and celebrate. Most were just glad to have reached the end of the war – they had survived. ■

#### Did you know...

Admiral von Friedeburg went on to sign the surrender document that officially ended Nazi Germany and the Second World War in Europe, in Berlin on the night of May 8, 1945. There were representatives from the Allied Expeditionary Force together with the Supreme High Command of the Soviet Red Army, with further French and US personnel present. Both Admiral von Friedeburg and General Kinzel committed suicide on May 23, 1945.



The May 1945 issues of *Soldier* are available to view from links on Defence Connect, the British Army website, Facebook and Twitter.

The front cover for the May 9, 1945 Victory Souvenir issue was illustrated by acclaimed artist Harold Forster, noted for many Second World War posters including the *Keep Mum She's Not so Dumb!* design





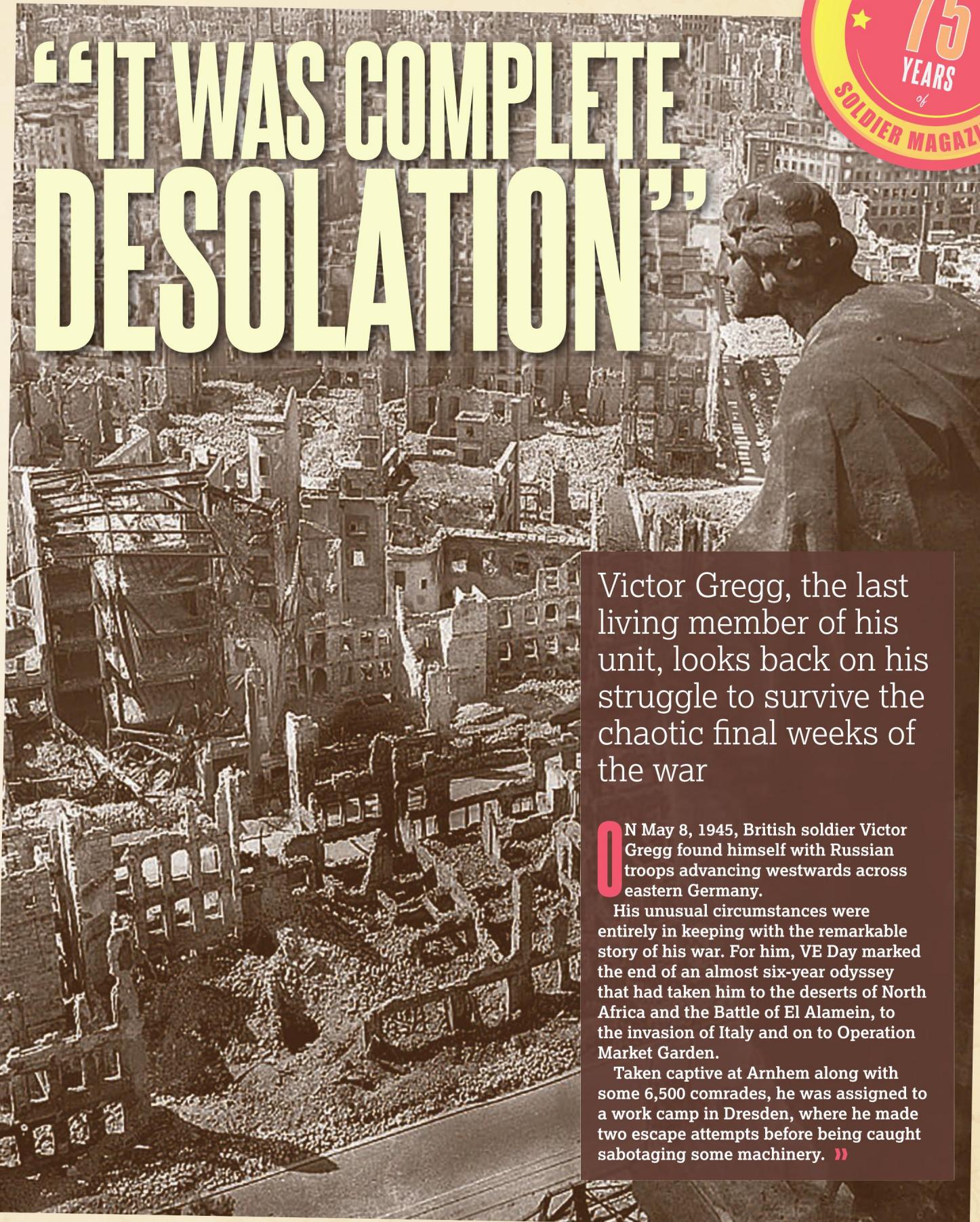
# “IT WAS COMPLETE DESOLATION”

Victor Gregg, the last living member of his unit, looks back on his struggle to survive the chaotic final weeks of the war

**O**N May 8, 1945, British soldier Victor Gregg found himself with Russian troops advancing westwards across eastern Germany.

His unusual circumstances were entirely in keeping with the remarkable story of his war. For him, VE Day marked the end of an almost six-year odyssey that had taken him to the deserts of North Africa and the Battle of El Alamein, to the invasion of Italy and on to Operation Market Garden.

Taken captive at Arnhem along with some 6,500 comrades, he was assigned to a work camp in Dresden, where he made two escape attempts before being caught sabotaging some machinery. »



He and a fellow prisoner were awaiting execution for their crime on February 13, 1945, when fate intervened in the form of the Allied air raid on the city (page 21).

Gregg narrowly escaped the bombs, but what he saw during the hellish inferno that followed would never leave him.

After four days helping recover bodies from the carnage, he realised his death sentence might still be carried out if he stayed, so he headed eastwards towards the oncoming Red Army.

Now aged 100 and talking to *Soldier* from his home in Hampshire, he recalls the weeks leading up to VE Day with great candour and detail.

**“**I staggered out of the charred remains of Dresden on the morning of February 19, 1945. In my search for freedom I struggled eastwards, moving against the human tide of refugees that were heading west, fleeing in terror from the vengeful Russian Army.

I was really hungry. My body ached from a welter of sores that spread across my back and front. Everything urged me to lie down and let fate take its course.

In all of my five years of combat nothing had prepared me for the horror of Dresden. Yes, those years had dehumanised me, no doubt, but Dresden turned me into a psychopath, a man with a twisted mind that was to last the best part of my life, even to this current day.

If anyone wishes to bear witness to women clutching their tiny offspring with their hair and clothes alight as they are swept up into a pillar of smoke and flame, or people stuck in the middle of a road where the tar had melted to form a bubbling liquid, or those who had mistakenly jumped into water tanks and – unable to climb out – finished up being boiled alive – it was all happening on that terrible night. **”**

**Starving and covered in blisters, Gregg took shelter in a cowshed and was pondering his options when he heard machine gun fire and saw Russian troops approaching.**

**“**They came forward, I kept my arms down by my side and offered no form of resistance to their probing for hidden weapons.

The first lot that found me continued their march westwards, but the smaller second wave discovered the burns across my body, laid me on a handcart and whisked me away to the rear. It took them a couple of days to suss out that I was a British soldier – or ‘angliyskiy’.

The mob that I was with saw very little in the way of action. The mere sight of thousands of moving bodies sent the few remaining pockets of German resistance scurrying for cover.

It's best not to dwell on the way in which the Russians behaved when they entered a town or village, but then one has to consider how the Germans had treated the civilians they captured on their bloody way toward Moscow. I don't think the Allies ever fully understood the ferocity of the war in Russia.

I was still being carted around by the unit that had picked me up, mainly because I was able to help keep their American Chevrolet lorries on the move.

They had hundreds of them, but they did have a tendency to be unreliable if left uncovered in damp conditions. I think it was this factor, more than any other, that kept me alive. **”**

**Gregg and his Russian companions were in Leipzig when news of the German surrender filtered through.**

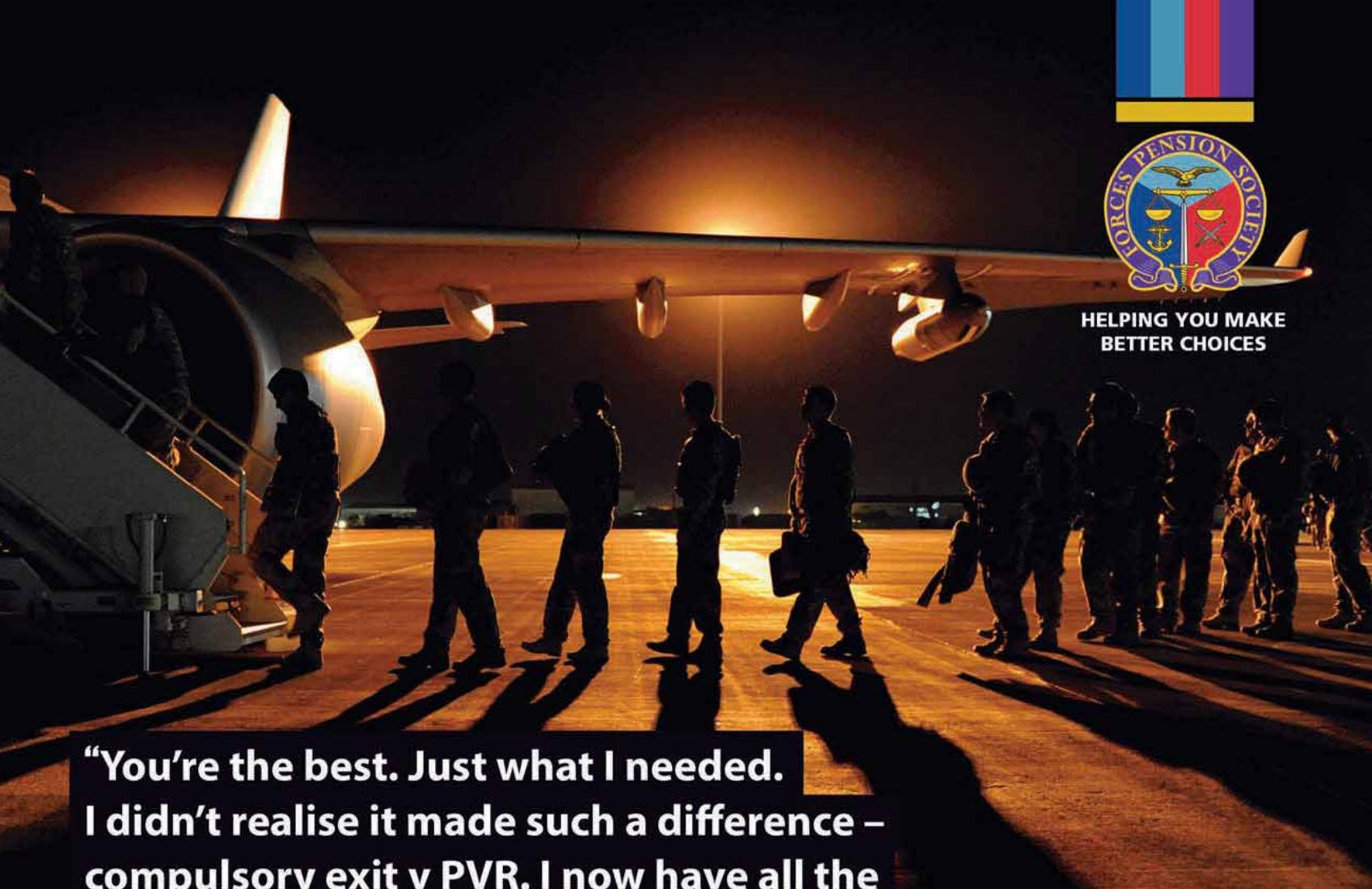
**“**I had gone on a short walkabout in the city that evening and I came in contact with some American PoWs who had this radio that was able to pick up the British World Service. I listened to Churchill's victory speech. It was a one-in-a-million event.

What were my feelings? That's difficult to answer. It didn't happen suddenly. Everyone knew it was coming. **”**





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*FPS Member, Army*

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## IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR PENSION

### Forces Pension Society

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

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

Mentally and physically I was so tired, although thanks to the Russians my sores and scabs had almost completely gone.

I suppose there was a sense of relief, although for anyone in Leipzig that day it was definitely a war zone.

I reconnected with the Russian unit later on in the evening – now that the end was near there was no point in going it alone.

The next day we reached this wide river, where there were some Canadians on the other side. They crossed over to make contact, the Russians stayed put and that's the way it was. The war was over.

Germany looked like a pile of rubbish that had been tipped out of a bin – thousands of people on the move, all desperately trying to get home, wherever in Europe that might be.

By the end of the first week of peace there were these huge feeding centres where civilians were fed and medically attended to.

I've never attempted to describe the scenes, simply because I cannot – the overwhelming sense of loss and futility, people struggling either against the tide or just hanging onto the nearest queue. It was complete desolation in mind and matter. **“**

**After making contact with British forces, Gregg was flown home, though not before being interrogated about his decision to link up with the Russians. He may have finally been back on UK soil, but his experiences haunt him to this day.**

**“** I very seldom spoke about my service history. I think that the reason for this is that people wouldn't believe what I was telling them, and I couldn't bring myself to talk about the events when my very close friends were killed.

Flashbacks occurred in my middle years, when a particular incident might be mentioned.

There were also nightmares, which nearly always took place in a tunnel to which I could see the opening in the distance but could never free myself from.

I would wake my wife up screaming and swearing, covered in sweat and shaking. These traumas happened for more than 40 years, probably at the rate of three or four a month.





Nobody, even the doctors, seemed to have a satisfactory answer. It was assumed that something in the war had tipped me over and that nothing could be done about it. **“**

**Over the years Gregg would return to Germany from time to time, most recently in 2018, for the anniversary of the Dresden raids, accompanied by historian Dan Snow. Despite having published several books about his experiences, he fears younger generations have forgotten the lessons of the past.**

**“** My books are not tales about brave men winning medals and treading the paths of glory. I consider them a message.

We ought to by now, after centuries of pointless bloodletting, have found a method of sitting around a table and solving problems in a sensible manner.

But, in spite of the hours and days spent in pushing this message I am of the opinion that my efforts have come to naught.

I do not believe that lessons have been learnt. Modern history has almost been excluded from today's curriculums, so lack of knowledge of past mistakes allows those errors to be made time and again.

It broke my heart when the British people voted to remove themselves from Europe, after all the sacrifices that were made, to give it all up for what? To go it alone. **”**

**And while the Covid-19 pandemic has made major commemorations to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day impossible, Gregg says he tends to shun large public events anyway.**

**“** I have never been attracted to these large official gatherings. I am 100 per cent against any glorification of war.

Smaller events, where men meet with the intention of honouring their fallen comrades is a different thing.

We gather not to boast or brag – there will be no brass bands. Our campaign and service medals will be polished, and our dress will be neat and tidy.

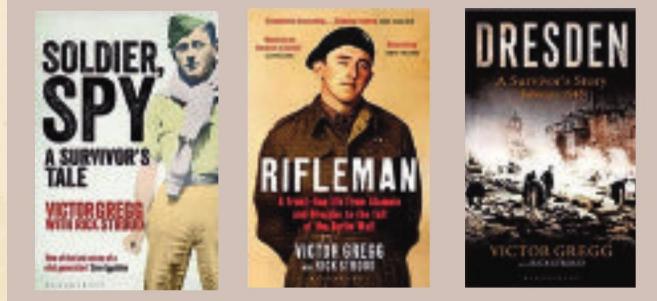
We will have our two minutes of silence and we will remember our comrades who gave their lives so that others may walk free.

I am now the sole survivor of the pre-war Rifle Brigade, and the last man standing of the 10th Parachute Battalion.

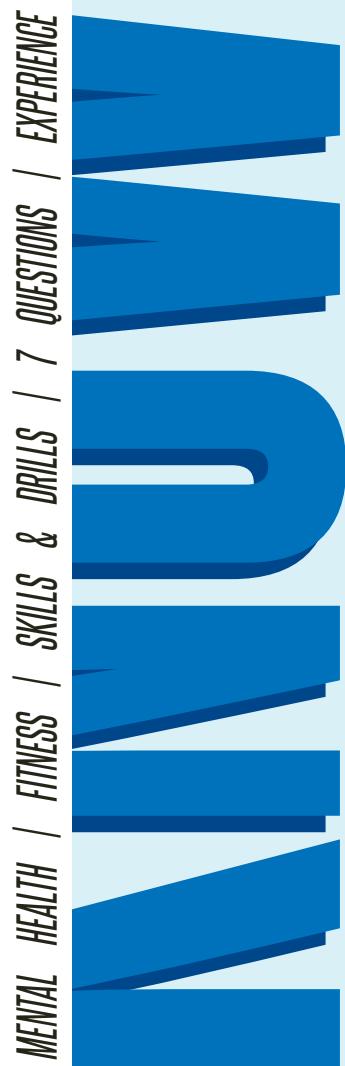
In other words, I can with some justification say that I've seen it all – and it's not a pretty picture. **”**



Victor Gregg has written several autobiographical accounts of his early life, military service and post-war exploits as a spy. Among these are *Dresden*; *Soldier, Spy*; and *Rifleman*, all published by Bloomsbury and available in eBook and paperback.



# WEED TO WING IT



## In Numbers

# 100

percentage increase in registrations on the Big White Wall since the start of the Covid-19 crisis

# 50

size of the service's team, including mental health experts and specially trained moderators

# Home alone

Self-care strategies for social distancing



EVEN after strict lockdown measures to combat the spread of Covid-19 are relaxed, social distancing is likely to continue for some time. *Soldier* asked Dr Tim Rogers, clinical director of online mental health service Big White Wall, about how to cope in this strange new reality...

### Why is isolation so tough?

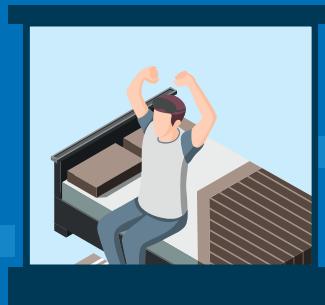
We evolved to depend on social contact – even the most fleeting of interactions is enjoyable for the reward centres in our brains. It's how we connect with each other. At the moment the nation is in a heightened state of anxiety and social distancing means we can't seek out those connections, at least not physically, and that's hard.

### What about for those with existing mental health issues?

There's a huge amount of scientific research about the effects of community on wellbeing. When people with mental health problems perceive they have a low level of social support their symptoms become worse and, conversely, a rich support system has all sorts of positive effects. It has been shown to reduce risky behaviours, such as substance abuse and negative thinking.

### So, what's your advice for mitigating the impact of social distancing?

Big White Wall is a completely anonymous online support service for serving personnel and veterans, as well as their families. Register for free at [bigwhitewall.com](http://bigwhitewall.com)



## Stick to a routine

Having a structure to our days gives us purpose and helps us be productive. It's simple things like getting up at the usual time and getting dressed, not staying in our pyjamas all day. I read an interesting article by a submariner on how they cope being stuck in a submarine for weeks on end and one of the things that he stressed was the importance of their daily routine.

## Prioritise good sleep

The right quality and quantity of sleep is strongly linked to mental health. We sleep best when we get enough natural light during the day and our bedrooms are nice and dark at night. Avoiding technology 90 minutes or so before going to bed and creating a relaxing pre-bedtime routine encourages our body to release sleep-promoting hormones. If you find you can't drop off or you wake up in the night, don't just lie there – go and do something boring and then try again. This teaches our bodies to associate our beds with sleep. Big White Wall has a course and other useful stuff all about how to form good sleep habits.

## Physical distancing doesn't have to mean social distancing

Find other ways to connect with friends and family. We can use technology to create a sense of digital community. Even talking to your neighbours from across the street is a positive step. And I would also say, don't just reach out to those closest to you – try and connect with wider groups you may be a part of. Military personnel can be quite caught up in their own identity and when that is suddenly interrupted it's easy to feel lost. So, look to other, non-military aspects of life, whether it's hobbies, sport or leisure. Try writing a dozen sentences that all begin with: "I am

a..."; only one can end with "soldier". It gives you something else to fall back on and helps us counteract those unhelpful thoughts and feelings.

## Find ways to manage your worry

A little stress is good – it nudges us to plan that supermarket trip or wash our hands. But persistent anxiety is unhelpful and tiring. One of the ways to nip it in the bud is by avoiding watching too much news – limit yourself to ten minutes a day – or spending too much time on social media. People tend to post an edited version of themselves, which is counterproductive because it makes us compare ourselves to them. So, when you post, share support or some of the things that are helping you to cope, rather than just your highlight reel. In other words, make sure you are giving back as well as receiving.

## Don't set yourself unreasonable targets for physical activity

Movement is beneficial for mental health but instead of putting pressure on yourself by aiming for 10,000 steps or 100 push-ups per day, set a learning goal. Use the time to work out what form of exercise you find most enjoyable, how long you need to do it to feel good and how you can fit that into your day.

## Practise how to relax

Mindfulness is a good place to start. Anxiety tends to focus on what might happen in the future – "what if my loved ones catch the coronavirus?" for example. Mindfulness helps to pull us away from those negative thought cycles and into the present moment. Online resources can be useful – for instance you can access courses that help with worry through Big White Wall.

# Maximise YOUR MOBILITY

Got time on your hands during social distancing? Developing your strength and flexibility will take your fitness to the next level, says this ex-paratrooper

AS A former officer commanding of P Company, Sam McGrath knows a thing or two about elite-level performance.

And he says it's not about boasting yourself in the gym or tabbing for miles.

In fact, if you embark on a training plan without first optimising your mobility – as well as your sleep and nutrition – you won't see the results you are after.

"I would liken poor mobility to driving a car with a flat tyre," he explains. "You may get away with it a few times, but eventually you will get caught out.

"Our bodies are complex machines, designed for millions of movement cycles, but just like a flat tyre, every movement done sub-optimally means we

burn through those cycles more quickly.

"And unfortunately, the real symptoms usually appear too late – the first time you are aware of a problem is when something breaks."

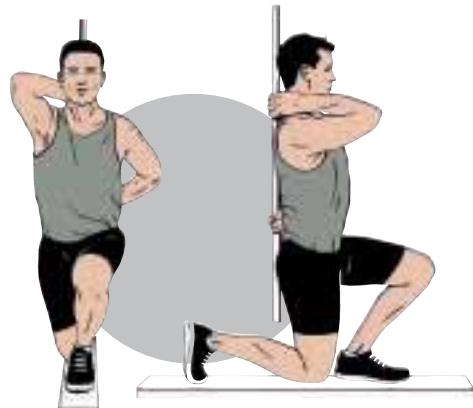
The following assessments, taken from McGrath's new book *Be Para Fit*, are designed to test the two main components of mobility: motor control – your technique when performing an exercise; and range of motion – the freedom of movement available in a joint.

Understanding the level you are at when you start your journey will help you identify the areas you need to target in your training.



## Overhead squat

The goal here is to maintain a straight trunk and arms while sinking your bottom as low as possible, as shown. If you are weak in your core, glutes and quadriceps, you will struggle to dip below 90 degrees and will hinge forward at your hips



## Inline lunge

Again, the aim here is to remain as upright, balanced and as straight as possible. If you find yourself wobbling and leaning forward you need to develop your core strength



## Shoulder mobility

Being able to meet your fingers in the middle means you have good flexibility in your shoulder muscles and aren't too tense in your neck and back. Repeat the test on both sides



Tip – get someone to take photos of you performing each exercise so you get an accurate picture of your position

## Active straight leg raise

The higher you can get your leg while keeping it straight, the better. The tighter your hamstrings, the tougher you will find this move



## Rotary stability

Someone with good core strength should be able to steadily extend opposite arms and legs and bring them to meet in the middle. The next level up is to see if you can maintain your balance while moving your arm and leg on the same side

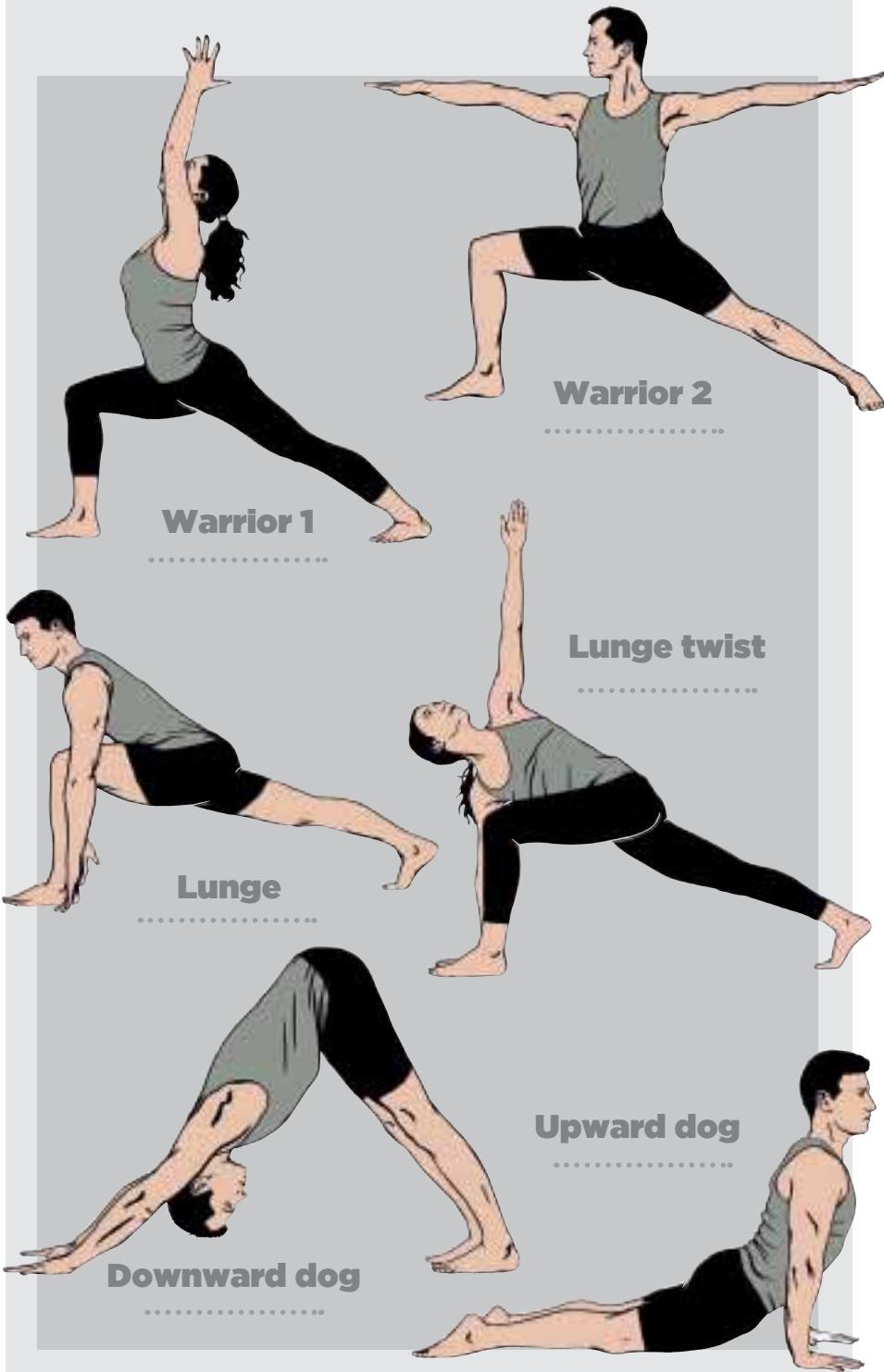


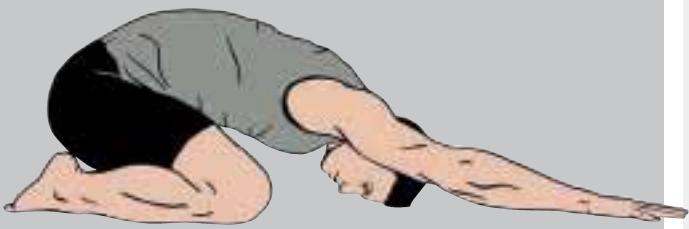
## Trunk stability push-up

If your core is strong you will be able to lift your body as a unit, with no lag in the spine, while keeping torso and legs rigid. Men should position their thumbs in line with their eyebrows if they can (chin for women). If not, men can start off with their thumbs in line with their chin and women with the collarbone, and work up from there

# Room for improvement?

If you've worked your way through the assessments and struggled in some areas, McGrath advocates yoga as a great way of building suppleness. These are his go-to moves...





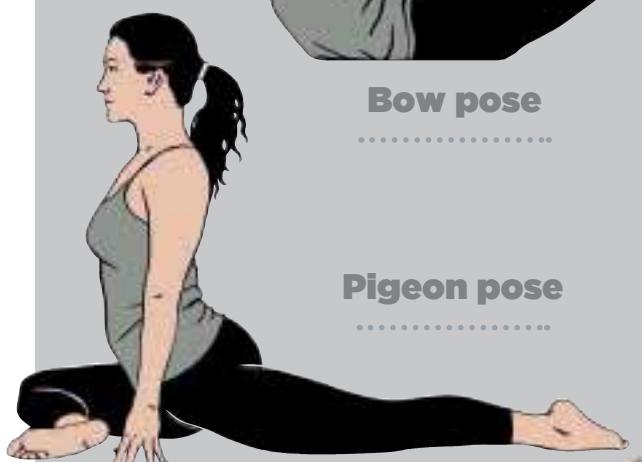
**Child's pose**



**Reclining hero**

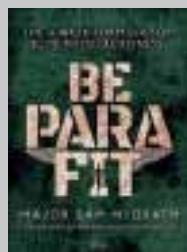


**Bow pose**



**Pigeon pose**

Sam McGrath is a former major in The Parachute Regiment and the author of *Be Para Fit*, a detailed programme for those aiming for elite-level fitness



# Virtual

Why now might be a good time to learn a musical instrument

► WITH social distancing here to stay for the time being, using time productively is key.

Even taking into account work and virtual meetings, a once-a-day fix of outdoor phys and WhatsApp chats with loved ones, there are still hours to occupy.

Taking up a musical instrument – and playing with others – has long been a source of fun and stress relief. But if you have never blown a saxophone, bowed a double bass or tickled the ivories, how do you go about starting?

WO1 Ben Ruffer (Camus) – a multi-instrumentalist and Army bandmaster – says setting up is easier than you think, particularly in the age of internet comms.

Here he offers noteworthy advice to get playing and beat the isolation blues...



# VIRTUOSO

## Choose your weapon wisely

When you come to pick an instrument, think of the sort of music you enjoy as a starting point. If you like jazz, for example, a saxophone could be ideal. If Nat King Cole is your thing, then you could look at piano and guitar is the clear candidate for those who plug into classic AC/DC. But don't be afraid to think about a change if you don't take to the instrument you've chosen. Some people lack the coordination, or physical ability, to play their first choice

## Find decent tuition

In my view, nothing beats face-to-face teaching so my advice would be to seek someone out when the coronavirus restrictions are lifted – you'll locate them on Google. But there are people who can virtually help you online too, as well as lots of tools and lessons on YouTube. A well-known guitar manufacturer is currently offering free trial lessons among the offers out there

## Rehearse intelligently

You won't gain a vast amount from sitting down and playing for hours and hours. Just as Army phys is now about short, sharp bursts the same is true of building muscle memory for music. Quality rather than quantity is best, so leave the instrument on a stand so you can pick it up and put it down whenever you want. But be aware that perfection doesn't come easily – some instruments are difficult to play casually and you won't sound great to start with – so be prepared to work

## Branch out

If you keep rehearsing it is not going to be long before you are able to play with other people – maybe two or three months. There are apps available that will allow you to play together but have a look around for opportunities after the restrictions end. Brass bands, for example, are always looking out for people, or a rock group might be more up your street. Performing together, for me, is the real joy of music

## Don't be deterred

The world of music can seem more complicated by notes put down on paper. Don't be deterred – yes, it's good to learn theory but picking up an instrument first is the most important thing. Study how music is written out alongside your playing, in the same way as you combine your Highway Code with lessons for the driving test



## Profile:

**Name:** WO1 Ben Ruffer

**Years of service:** 17

**Instruments played:** Trumpet, violin

**Career high points:** Performing for royalty and the Pope

**Postings include:** Bandmaster, Household Cavalry Band

**Current role:**  
Warrant Officer,  
Camus  
recruiting



# Ramadan 2020

With the annual fast under way, we asked Sgt Kabir Jasseh (RLC), secretary of the Armed Forces Muslim Association, for the lowdown



## What do you think the biggest myths are around Ramadan?

Many people don't understand that the beginning of Ramadan differs depending on your location and the sighting of the moon. The timings vary too – for example, the days are currently shorter in Africa than in the UK. This makes it confusing for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The other common myth is it's really strict, but it's actually quite flexible. There are exceptions when people don't have to fast, such as when travelling or if they are elderly, sick or pregnant

## So, what exactly are the rules on eating and drinking?

During fasting you are not allowed to consume food or beverages, including water, from dawn until dusk. It is a sign of our submission to God. We use a special calendar to work out the timings of sunrise and sunset each day

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. The exact timing is determined by the new moon and is confirmed by the Islamic council in each country. This year's fast began on April 23 and will end on May 23.

## What do you find the most difficult aspect?

I don't find Ramadan that challenging, once my body has adjusted. The first few days are the hardest. Everyone reacts differently – some people get headaches and so on – but I'm normally okay, although I found it tough when I was in Cyprus one year. It's definitely better in a cold country. Afterwards I feel great – it cleanses your system mentally and physically

## What happens when you are deployed?

Soldiers on exercise or operations can still fast but it depends on the activity. I don't think anyone patrolling in body armour in Afghanistan could do it because they would become dehydrated, but others who are more office-based might be fine. The good thing is that if your wellbeing is likely to be seriously affected you can choose to delay the fast, as long as you make up for the days you have missed by the next Ramadan

## What about PT?

Anyone fasting should not be expected to do phys because they can't drink water and rehydrate. However, I consider it my primary duty to remain fit and well, so I exercise in the evenings. It's a personal choice though. Inform your chain of command if you are doing Ramadan so that they can support you

## How can non-Muslim soldiers assist their fasting comrades?

Commanders receive guidance about it in advance and should therefore be able to support Muslim soldiers to practise their faith and observe the fast. The best thing people can do is just be aware of it and empathise with their colleagues. For example, my team are careful not to eat in front of me and they keep quiet if they see I am praying, which I really appreciate

## How have things changed since you joined the Army?

It has improved every year since I enlisted in 2007. There is much better all-round understanding now and **2020DIN01-34** is also a good tool for educating commanders and peers about Ramadan

# 'The dynamics were unbelievable'

Serving soldier relives role as extra on First World War epic 1917



► HAVING scooped an impressive haul of accolades during awards season, Sam Mendes' blockbuster 1917 is out on digital and home release this month.

Among the hundreds of extras to go over the top during the movie's climactic battle sequence was LBdr Robin Storey (RA).

Last February, on the suggestion of a friend, the 32-year-old Serviceman answered a casting call for young men with moustaches.

A few months later he found himself en route to a secret location on Salisbury Plain to begin filming...

**F**We were taken to the set on buses with blacked-out windows.

When I turned up there were about 2,000 uniforms in a marquee, each with the name of a real soldier who fought in the First World War. Mine was David Stokes, though I don't know who he was.

The costumes were all beautifully made. You had your own dresser to help you put it on properly and then you went to the mudding department to have dirt and chalk applied.

The main scene I was involved in was the sequence towards the end of the film where the lead character, played by George MacKay, is running along the trench, which took five days to shoot.

There were 600 extras involved, which is a lot of people to be moving around at the same time and it was amazing to be a part of.

The dynamics of it were unbelievable – all the way along the trench they had assistants with radios telling everyone when to go. It was a huge area to control.

Because it was meant to look like one continuous piece of footage we had to stop whenever the weather changed, so there was lots of down time, just like there is in the Army.

I've done two tours of Afghanistan and various exercises around the world and there's always a lot of hurry up and wait.

We weren't allowed phones, so some guys started carving out a shrine with little figurines to pass the time before going over the top – a bit like soldiers would have done for real 100 years ago. They kept that in the film.

The special effects looked very realistic too. We watched as these huge explosions came towards us. You could see the smoke, and the stuntmen flying through the air.

Other than the bit I was involved in I hadn't known anything about the plot for the rest of the movie so I was as much in the dark as everyone else.

I went to the cinema to see the film and was able to spot myself because there was one bit where I was carrying a casualty. That was pretty cool.

It was fantastic to see what we had been doing actually on the big screen.

I'd definitely like to do more work as an extra. I was paid around £500 for 1917 but I wasn't fussed about the money – it was more about the experience for me. One of the best things was meeting so many interesting people on set, including lots of veterans and amputees.

It gave me a real insight into what goes into a project of that scale. As a proud British soldier myself I'm so pleased to have been part of such a great film.



GOING  
TO  
GET  
G

Interview: Steve Muncey



The number of British Army users of Defence Connect has grown exponentially in recent weeks. We asked Col Chris MacGregor, Assistant Head of Army Communications, why soldiers and officers alike are turning to this new non-Modnet platform...

#### What is Defence Connect exactly?

It's an application hosted through the Defence Gateway and it provides an online social network for collaboration. It's already proving itself to be a highly effective internal communications channel for the Army and now has more than 100,000 users among Regular soldiers, Reservists and MoD civilian staff.

#### Why should any soldier be on Defence Connect?

It is the one platform we have that allows all Army personnel, from general down to private, to communicate effectively. It's not just about sending stuff out there, it's a place to connect, share ideas and become aware of what's going on. Staff officers in Army Headquarters use it, as do section commanders deployed on ops, defence staff working abroad, liaison officers embedded with a foreign army, and junior ranks with no easy access to Modnet.

#### What about Reservists?

The Reserves were the early adopters, but now Defence Connect is increasingly used by disconnected users

such as soldiers and officers without Modnet access and those working off base. It will become increasingly important as more staff register. Crucially, it is also significantly more secure than external commercial systems and social media.



#### Just how secure is it?

Unlike WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram, we control the servers and we know where they are based. Currently, the Defence Gateway, including Defence Connect, is limited to 'official' and should not be used for sensitive information.



#### What tasks can personnel use it for?

It is hugely flexible and offers everything a good social media platform might, and a lot more besides. That's why major international corporations such as Orange and Lloyds Banking Group use the same software. As well as information, it provides an online space to collaborate on work, create messaging groups, write a blog, ask questions, float ideas for feedback, run surveys etc. It is much more powerful than a simple messaging app.

#### What else can it do?

Currently loads of hard-won knowledge is haemorrhaged as people leave or change jobs. Defence Connect sees us create knowledge together, keep it and share it, so that we can all become better. It sets itself apart from our other platforms as it allows users to develop online networks of people in a way that similar defence systems don't. You can search for people by skills, experience or endorsements and this means you can develop relationships with those you wouldn't or couldn't normally locate or reach. Microsoft Teams, by comparison, is structured

around a project or task and a group of known stakeholders. But Defence Connect differs in this crucial respect and it is one of its stand-out features. There is also the opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns. In addition to unit visits, CGS' briefing team have a presence and will take your questions and issues, either openly or anonymously, and deal with them as if raised in a face-to-face unit visit.

### Why is it important for everyone to have access to this?

In short, it's the future of up-to-the-minute communications, especially for a dispersed work force such as the British Army. In a world where we have to be as agile and flexible as possible, Defence Connect means we can quickly find the information and people we require – and it allows us to do that more efficiently than through Modnet because we can be located on or off base or on the road, be it a Regular, Reservist or MoD civilian.

### What sort of news and information can I receive?

As much information as possible is now being posted on Defence Connect by Army Headquarters, Field Army Headquarters and Home Command, so it's a way for us all to get the truth straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. For example, Defence Connect is currently the best source of MoD and Army information on Covid-19. On Defence Connect you can automatically receive the Covid-19 news feed from the MoD coronavirus page.

Regular and Reserve Army personnel automatically receive the Army News Stream, which contains Service-specific information and direction. To access these news streams is simple, just click on 'News' in the main toolbar, then 'News' under the main header. A drop down menu should then appear with the two news streams.

### Do you need to have a desktop computer to access it?

On the software version the MoD uses, the desktop app (or browser version) is currently better than the mobile app. We have prioritised the development of the latter and we know that it's possible to provide a similar experience for the mobile user as you find in the desktop version. To get the most out of Defence Connect, use a desktop or tablet to access it as this will give you the most functionality. Failing that, use the mobile browser version.

The app will provide you with notifications, which the browser versions don't. If you have access to a smartphone (personal or Modnet), you can also download the Jive Daily Hosted app and sign in using the url **jive.defencegateway.mod.uk**. Note there is a Jive Daily app available on the app stores, but you want the Jive Daily Hosted version.



### How do I get started on Defence Connect?

**1 Find it.** Go to the British Army website and search for Defence Connect: ([www.army.mod.uk/digital-communications/defence-connect-guidance](http://www.army.mod.uk/digital-communications/defence-connect-guidance)).

**2 Register.** Start by watching the series of short videos that guide users through the process of registration. Further down this page you'll also find a detailed video for how to launch an effective community, and a range of success stories on how Defence Connect has benefited users and units, and has been used to access or contribute knowledge through networks or collaborative events.



**3 Get some online training.** Once into Defence Connect, search for 'Defence Connect Help', 'Defence Connect Training', or go to 'Getting Started' and you will find details of the daily online training sessions run by CGS' briefing team. Once you have attended the basic user training package, there is a second level. This will show you the deeper functionality offered, including how to set up and run a group page.

To see the details of this training, search for 'Weekly Defence Connect Training – Page Building'. For those who prefer to work through presentations and videos in their own time, the 'Getting Started' page has a list of videos and presentations for self-teaching.

DEFENCE CONNECT



# STANDING TOGETHER

WO2 Joanne Young (RAMC), of 256 Field Hospital, a member of the planning team for the first Nightingale facility at London's ExCel centre, tells *Soldier* how different Army cap badges worked together to help the NHS and civilian contractors complete a 4,000-bed hospital for Covid-19 patients in under two weeks





**N**ow it's all over, it's amazing to reflect on what was achieved.

When we first visited it, the ExCel building was basically an empty shell. The planning team consisted of four personnel from our unit, Royal Engineers from 66 Works Group's 528 and 516 Specialist Teams, NHS project managers and some civilian contractors.

We all looked at each other and basically said, 'so how can we turn this into a hospital?'.

But just a couple of weeks later we had completed a fully functioning medical facility – along with all the considerable infrastructure that's required to support it – and it's now capable of treating up to 4,000 Covid-19 sufferers. ➔

## **The scale and complexity of the task was hard to comprehend at first and certainly something completely new to me.**

I've been in the Army for 16 years and have always been a medic, moving from role one work, to training and then to role three. I've done four tours of Afghanistan and one in Cyprus as part of the UN's detachment there. I'm used to setting up 48 beds in tents, but the sheer size of the ExCel building is immense. It covers more than 80,000 square metres and is around one kilometre in length. On one day, during the initial planning stages, my smartwatch said I'd walked 25 miles.

The build of any such facility is a huge team effort but that's where the Army can really add value because it's one organisation that has a vast array of skills to offer.

This project started with the Royal Engineers assessing whether the right water and power supplies could be provided, and then we worked out if the appropriate patient flow was feasible. For a site like the ExCel, that's not as straightforward as it might sound.

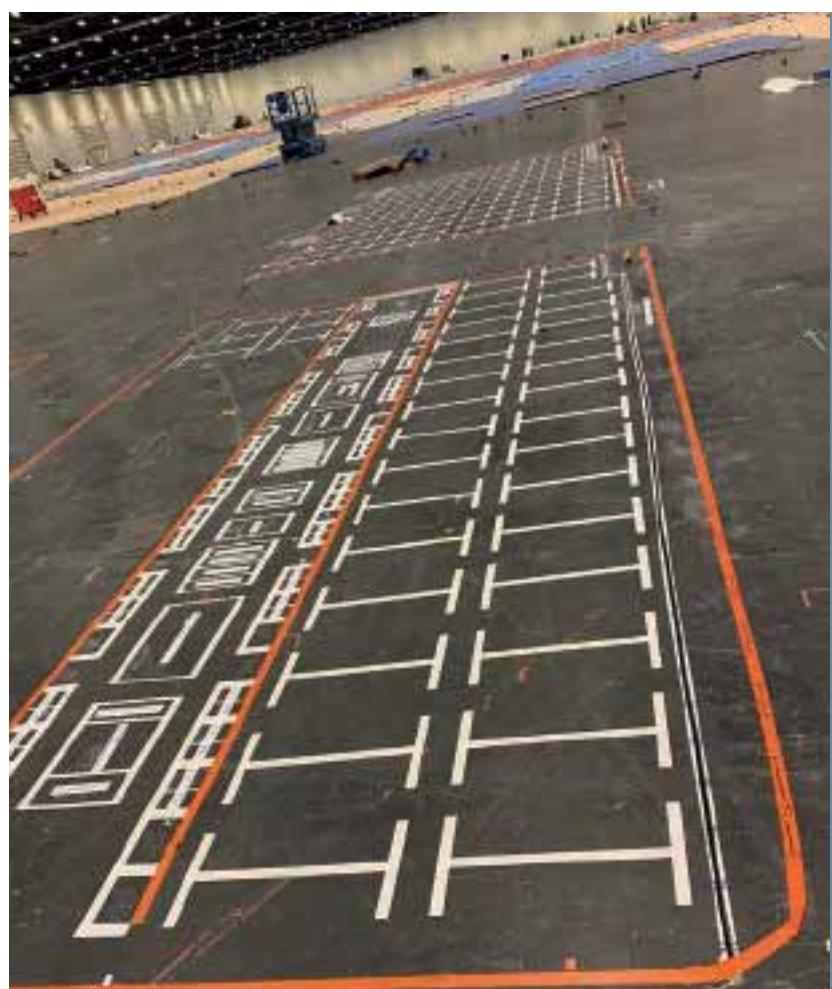
The team had to consider where certain facilities could potentially be located on the inside, then we looked outside; where do the ambulances go and how many could be accommodated at any one time? How do we route them on and off the site efficiently? How do we get all the consumables – the pharmaceuticals and the PPE mainly – in and out? How do the dustbin crews come in and out and how does the food reach the kitchens?

And none of these movements could block the vital flow of ambulances.

This hospital was also a challenge because there were dirty and clean lines to be drawn – zones where you could wear PPE and where you couldn't.

But by the end of the first day, everyone on the planning team agreed that the ExCel was a potential site for the hospital that was required.

Detailed plans were drawn up and, incredibly, they were ratified the very next day by Parliament and the build went live the day after that. The process was unbelievably quick so we all had to hit the ground running.





66

I'm used to setting up  
48 beds in tents, but the  
sheer size of the ExCel  
building is immense

99

## IN NUMBERS:

31

Personnel from 36  
Engineer Regiment  
and The Queen's  
Gurkha Engineers were  
deployed

40

1 Royal Anglian  
troops on general  
duties

FOUR

Miles of copper piping to supply  
oxygen to the bed stations

109

The most soldiers on  
site in any one day



CORONAVIRUS  
SUPPORTING THE NATION



**We collaborated with the NHS very closely and, inevitably, we had to find out how the other organisation worked.**

In the field, the Army is used to keeping to strict time constraints and assumes it will be taking in casualties very shortly. So, we always think about the countdown to that first patient arriving and what we can offer if the build isn't complete in order to keep the battle going.

The NHS team, on the other hand, were more focused on establishing exactly the right environment and conditions for each patient.

We gelled quickly though, and all the Service personnel drew heavily on their experience – my understanding of how to build a hospital and what needs to be done, and in what order, was crucial to me, for instance.

As a regimental quartermaster sergeant I'm also used to thinking about logistics for a field hospital – although not to this scale and for that reason I was extremely glad that two officers from 101 Logistic Brigade – Capt Daniel Toovey and Maj Carl Boyden – were on hand to advise in developing the mammoth logistics chain, because the numbers were mind blowing.

We had to ask ourselves questions like, how do we store, but be able to supply at short notice, thousands of ventilators, and what space does 60 million – yes, 60 million – aprons fill?

We had to consider what items would be needed by each health worker servicing and cleaning each of the 4,000 beds every day.

We also had to calculate how much PPE one nurse could use during a shift? Then multiply that by the number of shifts in a day, the number of nurses working within the ward or facility and then by seven, 14 or 21 days depending on resupply times.

Our Service experience of setting up high turnover facilities meant we were in a good place to process this methodically – we deal with these types of problems when we're on tour, it's what we do.





### **I think the Army's trained ability to plan quickly and efficiently also came to the fore.**

We are taught to assess what's going to be an issue now and whether to leave it, go on to something else and come back to it later, or not. That was a quality I saw in the group of personnel from 84 Medical Supply Squadron, Royal Logistic Corps, for instance (page 43).

They worked at such speed and advised in areas where they have huge expertise. They really turned the logistics side around for the efficient supply of consumable items. They had a pharmacy specialist from the Royal Army Medical Corps attached and were able to put in place processes that a civilian team probably wouldn't have achieved so quickly.

They were able to comprehend what needed to be done and set up all the systems that are in place now in less than a week – it was amazing to witness.

Meanwhile, troops from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment carried out essential duties like transporting heavy equipment around the site and even helped lay the flooring when the civvy contractor fell short of staff.



**The Royal Engineers were just incredible and contributed hugely to the design and build of the complex infrastructure, working closely with NHS management teams and around 3,000 civilian contractors (page 74).**

One of them, Maj Andy Wheeler, from 516 Specialist Team, somehow calculated the exact oxygen flow supply that was required for the ventilators at each bed, and the oxygen storage facility at Nightingale ExCel was custom-built for that specific requirement.

Personnel from 36 Regiment also installed four miles of copper piping to supply that oxygen to the bed stations and many more miles of wiring so that every ward had power for lights and the crucial monitoring and life-saving equipment.

They also installed a water supply system for hand washing – there were no sinks in this huge area. And all of this was completed within two weeks.



66

The Army can really add value because it's one organisation that has a vast array of skills to offer

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**It was a simply staggering team effort all round, a brilliant coming together of different Army skills and cap badges, civilian contractors, volunteers and NHS management.**

When you work in a multi-agency environment, projects often proceed quite slowly but the people on this one worked fast, very hard and with incredible spirit.

If you wanted something done, it seemed to be completed in no time – people just threw everything they had at it and I reckon we all probably averaged 15 hours a day during the project.

When we started there were no other Nightingales under way so we were in the spotlight, the pressure was on, so to speak. But we did it, and looking back now it's something I'm sure the whole team is incredibly proud to have been a part of. I know I am. →





# We've been where you're going

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# Crucial kit

**Cpl Charlotte Crossley (RLC), of 84 Medical Supply Squadron, the only unit of its kind across defence, helped set up the vital logistics system**

A TEAM of 13 of us from the squadron worked at the ExCel for seven days in total.

It was a fascinating and valuable experience because normally a supply chain has already been established but this time nothing was set up, we did it all from scratch.

I worked with a private and a sergeant to set up a pharmacy, while others created a hub for different types of kit such as PPE or ventilator equipment for the medical staff, as well as helping to establish a large warehouse a five-minute drive away.

We had to come up with an efficient system for getting all the drugs and items from the warehouse to the building in an orderly fashion and making them easily locatable. We also had to create an inventory system so it could easily be seen what was in stock and what was not.

It's important to make these systems as clear as they can be - we always work on the basis that a new private soldier should be able to understand it.

As it happens, we handed over to a civilian contractor who had been moved from a building site at Heathrow

and had never handled medical supplies before, so our tactics paid off.

I did a six-month stint in South Sudan last year, which was my first deployment on medical supply, and it prepared me well for this task. We handled all sorts of drugs and dry stores and there's no leeway with these types of goods - they often include controlled and accountable substances so every single procedure has to be done by the book and every item accounted for.

Everything we did was against the clock and I think that's where the Army really shines because we don't have to bring people in from different areas or departments, we are one organisation.

It was fantastic to see all the elements working so well in the end. You didn't just have NHS staff there, you had builders, security staff, even a cookhouse that was open 24 hours a day. There were so many components needed to get that huge hospital up and running, and it feels really satisfying to be able to say I played a small part. ■

# UP CLOSE PERSONABLE

The coronavirus pandemic isn't the first time the military has been called in to help in a crisis, but this one could change its relationship with society, says the National Army Museum's Dr Peter Johnston

**F**ROM engineers and medics pulling together with NHS colleagues to construct hospitals, to loggies distributing vital supplies and myriad other tasks, soldiers have become a familiar sight on UK streets in recent weeks.

Some 20,000 personnel are part of the national effort – the biggest peacetime mobilisation of British Forces in history.

Tracking developments with interest is Dr Peter Johnston, chief curator at the National Army Museum, who believes that these unprecedented events could mark a fundamental shift in the military's relationship with society.

It's a trend he traces back to the London Olympics of 2012, which saw 18,000 Servicemen and women called upon to help make the Games a success. →

“  
It allowed people  
to see soldiers  
up close  
”



"Not only did it make sure the Olympics could happen, it allowed people to see soldiers up close," he explains.

"It humanised them and helped the public understand them better. People were used to seeing troops on the news in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that was very remote.

"However, in 2012 there were guys in uniform at venues, searching bags, cracking jokes, and that showed everyone that soldiers are just like you and me; very much a part of the community."

Operation Pitchpole in 2014 saw the military in action again, sending specialists and manpower to flood-hit southern counties, a task mirrored this winter, when storms Dennis, Ciara and Jorge left large swathes of the country under water.

Elsewhere in the world, Servicemen and women were deployed to combat the spread of Ebola in Sierra Leone and, more recently, help with the hurricane relief effort in the Caribbean.

"If you think about Operations Gritrock and Ruman, in both cases the Army showed it could organise quickly and work alongside civil agencies," adds Dr Johnston.

"That set a precedent for what it is doing now in very serious circumstances on our own front door.

"In a time of crisis, the Army is a force multiplier helping experts on the ground deliver more. I think that's enormously reassuring for some people."

Dr Johnston believes modern generations now take the government's invocation of military aid to the civil authorities (MACA) as a given.



While many draw comfort from the sight of uniformed personnel, the news that troops were being mobilised to fight the pandemic also prompted anxiety in some quarters – a fact not helped by the spread on social media of misleading images implying soldiers would be enforcing the lockdown.

But for Dr Johnston, the wariness among older generations in particular, may also date back to the darker days of Operation Banner, when the sight of military personnel was associated with sectarian violence and bomb threats.

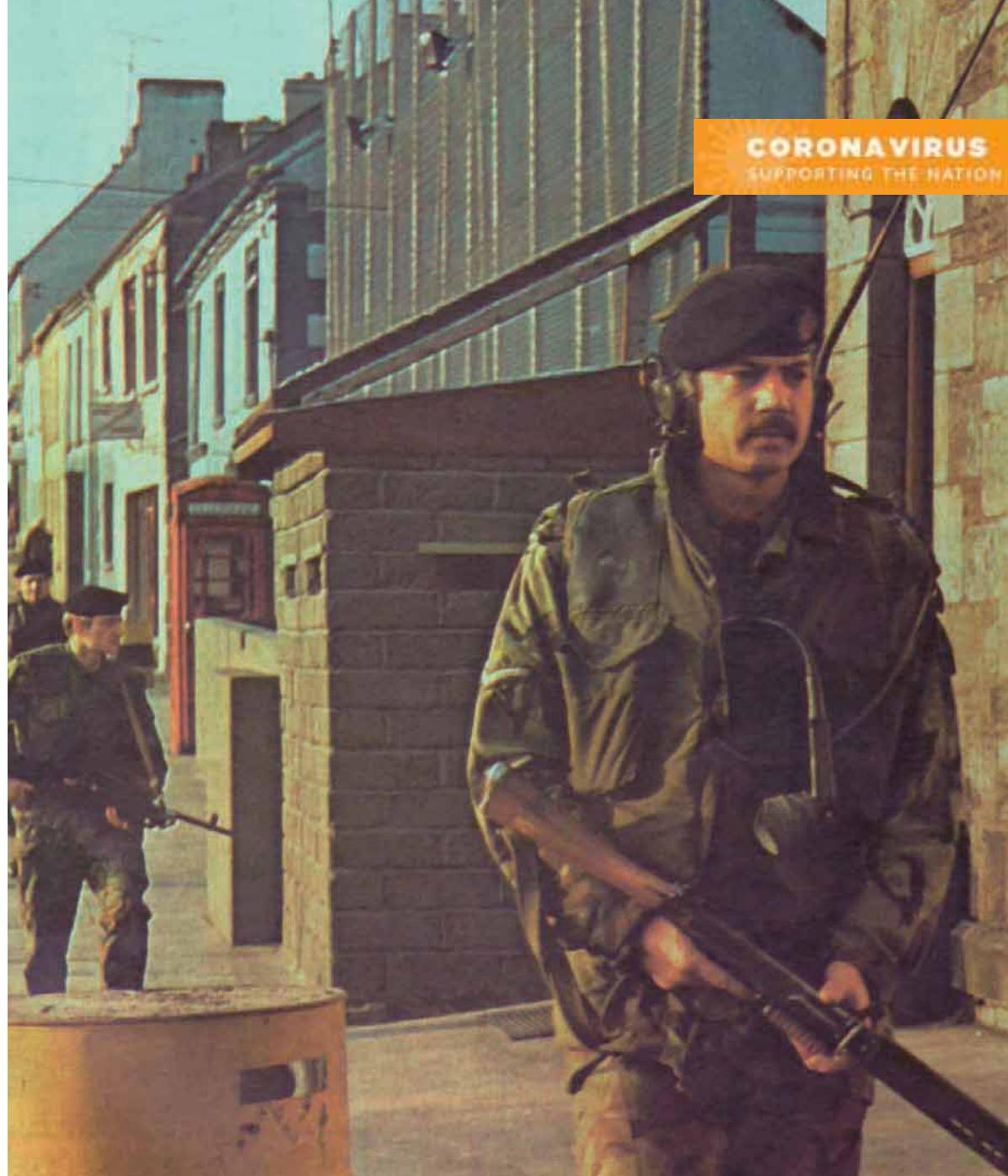
"In Northern Ireland the Army was on our streets in a very different way – it's role there was difficult and seeing soldiers wasn't good news," he says.

"That legacy influenced how the Armed Forces engaged with wider society on the mainland too – there was little contact between the military and the general public and it took a long time after the Good Friday Agreement for that to shift.

"So, you had a generation of people with very little understanding of what the Army did.

"Even now, seeing the Services step in is both reassuring and worrying – it means an escalation in response and that makes people apprehensive, not of the Army itself

“  
In a time  
of crisis,  
the Army  
is a force  
multiplier  
”



necessarily, but of the seriousness of the situation.”

Dr Johnston, who together with his team is spending the lockdown gathering material to tell future visitors to the museum the story of the military’s efforts in the pandemic, believes the increased visibility in recent times, but especially now, will lead to better understanding among civilians of the true nature of the Armed Forces’ role.

“The Army exists to protect the country from threats and this is a substantial threat to the UK, so it’s right that they should be involved,” he concludes.

“It’s also an opportunity for it to demonstrate what it does really well, which is respond, mobilise and deliver effectively.

“But by doing that alongside civil society, it’s showing itself as one of the pillars of our community, rather than this entirely separate organisation, bound up in different myths and legends.

“And I think at the end of this people will have a greater recognition of that.” ➔

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## A chequered past

History shows it wasn't always good news to see troops on home soil...

**U**P UNTIL the latter part of the 20th Century, the sight of soldiers on UK streets was often cause for concern.

In fact, Dr Johnston believes the seeds of society's unease were sown hundreds of years ago, when Oliver Cromwell deployed his New Model Army to enforce his strict brand of Protestantism on the nation.

"Cromwell was a religious fanatic," he explains.

"He used soldiers to close all the pubs and theatres and impose his ideology on the entire country – people didn't enjoy that.

"I think that left a primal legacy of mistrust."

Despite the Restoration ushering in a more liberal era, the Army remained a mechanism for keeping order in the absence of a professional police force.

In the so-called Peterloo Massacre of 1819 and the Bristol riots of 1831, cavalry was sent in to break up crowds, leading to fatalities.

Even during the general strike of 1926, when soldiers stepped in to keep the infrastructure up and running, they drew criticism from workers for crossing the picket lines – a sentiment echoed years later, when personnel provided emergency cover during industrial action by firefighters and dustmen.

But following the Second World War, which naturally saw a greater presence of troops and Home Guard on the streets, conflict between the military and civilian spheres generally began to decrease.

With the deepening Cold War, and conflicts such as Korea and Malaya to focus on, the Army's attention was turned elsewhere.

"In the past the Services were seen as part of the establishment, but what the powerful and elite wanted wasn't what the people wanted," notes Dr Johnston.

"However, from the 1950s on, the Army didn't really have the bandwidth to do much on the home front – there was only so much it could be involved in outside of its core business.

"That, coupled with greater democratisation and the creation of the welfare state, led to a shift in thinking.

"And now, with this very peculiar threat of Covid-19, the Army is very much on the people's side and they are relieved to have them there." ■





## 'Pension may affect traditions'

HERE is a misunderstanding among many of those who joined from 2005 onwards regarding the period required to serve to receive an immediate monthly pension and early departure payment lump sum.

A lot of people I speak to still think 22 years of service is required, but this was a stipulation from the previous 75 scheme.

The 05 version actually allows you to receive a pension after just 18 years of service and the 2015 scheme after 20 years, assuming you are at least 40 years of age.

There is no mention of a 22-year career in either the 05 or 15 schemes, so how will this affect the tradition within a mess for a dine-out after a spell in the Army of this length? Will we eventually start seeing 18- or 20-year dine-outs instead?

— SSgt Robert Lacey, RE

**Col Philip Bassingham-Searle, Assistant Head Army Remuneration Policy, responds:** Dine-outs are a unit and regimental responsibility, so I cannot comment on them, but thank you for the opportunity to clarify pension eligibility.

Currently there are three Armed Forces pension schemes (AFPS) for Regular personnel, and each one has separate rules and eligibility criteria.

The regulations for personnel who have legacy entitlement to AFPS 75 or 05 have not changed.

These individuals moved onto AFPS 15 on April 1, 2015, but retained accrued rights to the previous schemes.

They are now on split pensions and to remain eligible to receive the full benefits of the AFPS 75/15 blend, the qualifying pensionable service is 22 years for other ranks, or 20 years and a minimum age of 40 for officers. For those with an AFPS 05/15 mix it is the same for everybody – you must have served for 20 years and be aged 40.

The pension benefits will remain payable at the time they were expected to be paid in accordance with the existing scheme rules.

Personal circumstances can complicate pension calculations, so you can contact DBS Veterans UK on **0800 085 3600** if you are unsure or need specific advice about your pension scheme.

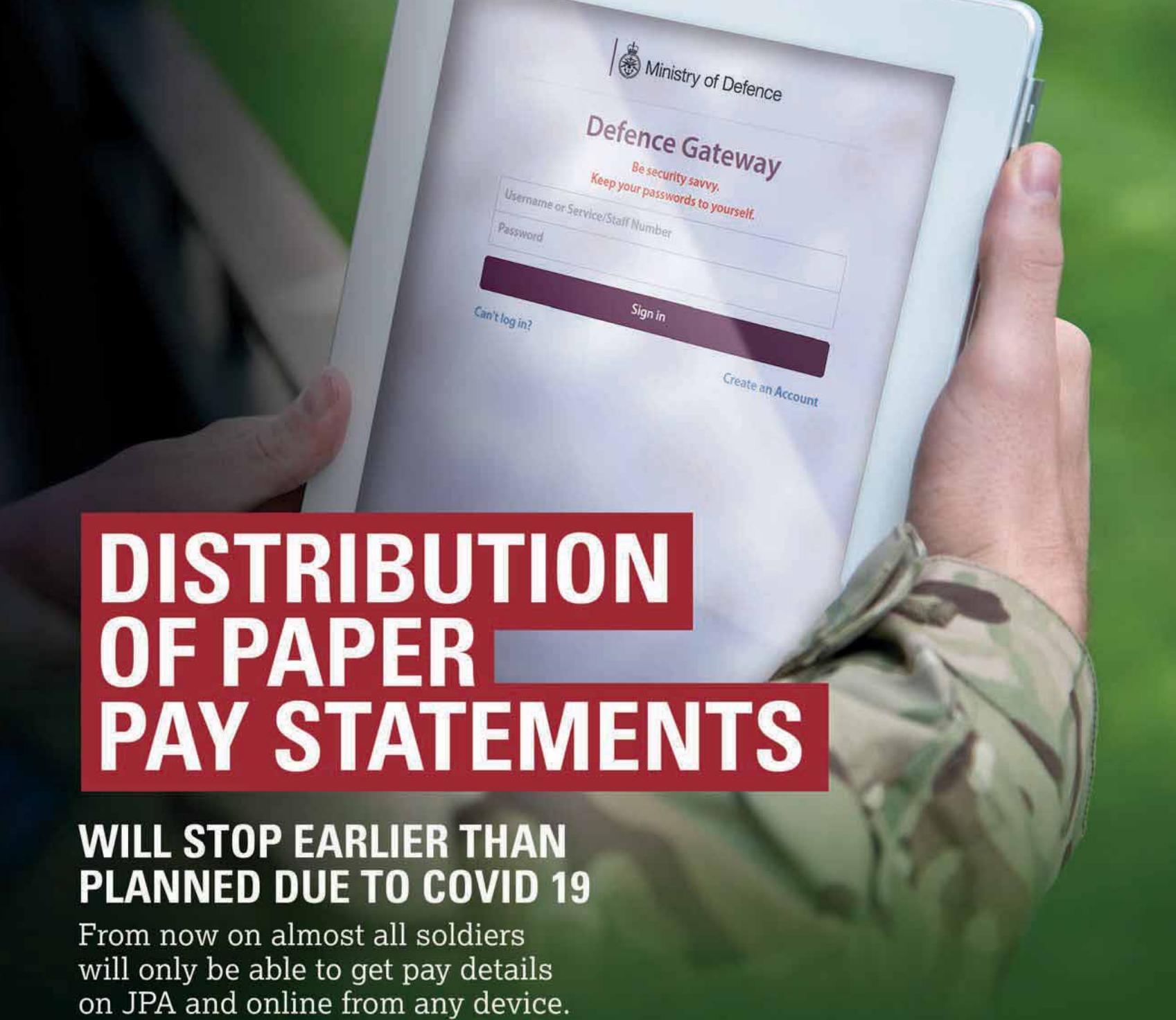
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## HAIR WE GO AGAIN

● HAS there been an update on if, and when, men in the British Army will be allowed to grow their hair long?

I saw a newspaper article claiming generals are looking at potentially relaxing the regulations.

If they are not going to change the rules then why can women and men of some other faiths or religions (through no fault of their own) bend the rules?

– Name and address supplied

**Maj Dom Richards, SO2 Discipline, Discipline and Administrative Law, Army Headquarters, responds:** We continue to regularly review dress regulations but currently have no plans to change these for men's hair.

The direction remains for it to be cut short such that its length does not reach the collar or onto the ears.

As you say, the only exception is on religious grounds, when there is a recognised faith requirement to adhere to traditional practices.

These are all laid down in our regulations and support the chain of command in recognising the diversity of its workforce and allowing individuals to practise all tenets of their faiths.

## ‘THANKS TO YOU ALL’

● I AM an Army wife of 14 years and my daughter was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2013, when she was aged just four.

She is now in remission and has not required chemotherapy treatment for almost four years.

I posted on my local Facebook page asking for donations of presents so that I could take them to children in the hospital in Southampton where my daughter was treated.

I was overwhelmed with generous donations of gifts from complete strangers – fellow Army wives mainly.

More than 20 individuals responded and 14 of them literally came round to my house and dropped off pre-wrapped and labelled presents for me.

All of these ladies were unknown to me and the generosity they showed was amazing.

Thank you all. – **Rebecca Honeysett-Beale**



“  
How  
is this  
relevant?  
”

## Cyprus' unsightly spectacle?

**C**AN someone clarify why the NHS provision for free spectacles for children (up to the limit of the various NHS vouchers which depend on the strength of the prescription) is not mirrored for eligible dependants of personnel serving overseas?

I am currently with British Forces Cyprus (BFC) and have been told that while I can claim the cost of eye tests for my children, I cannot claim back the £39.10 per child which they would have received from the NHS had I been serving in the UK.

I was initially told that “Service persons get local overseas allowance (LOA) and this covers such expenses” which, as anyone who has seen the list of things covered by this knows, is incorrect.

I asked whether I could complete an NHS form HC5 claim for optical charges, which allows the retrospective claim up to the value of the NHS optical voucher, but was told this is not possible as the optician is located outside of the UK.

Finally, I was informed by the Defence Primary Healthcare overseas desk in the Joint Medical Group that dependants “do not pay prescription charges in BFC and if we were in the UK we would be paying £9 per item”.

I am still struggling to understand how this statement is relevant to whether my children are entitled to free glasses in Cyprus, as they would be in the UK.

The general assertion that overseas personnel receive additional allowances, so should just put up and shut up is

deeply disappointing, completely fails to appreciate the underpinning reasons for the overseas offer, and shows a lack of understanding regarding the scope of the different allowances. – Name and address supplied

**Gp Capt Sonia Phythian, Commander Medical Headquarters, British Forces Cyprus, replies:** There is no specific policy, JSP or DIN, regarding providing spectacles for dependants I'm afraid.

**JSP 770** states that defence will strive to offer a service as comparable to the NHS where practicable for Service families serving abroad, but the provision of spectacles in these circumstances does not fall within the Primary Healthcare area in the UK or Defence Primary Healthcare (Overseas).

In respect of LOA, the fact is that it does not fund spectacles or eye tests – but you were informed correctly about NHS form HC5 because our business agreements in this sphere do not cover overseas residents.

The issue of prescription charges paid in the UK is, I agree, irrelevant.

There are examples of overseas bases offering a service in line with the NHS – for example in Nepal and Brunei, which are paid for by the local command.

However, these locations have their own standard operating procedures to cover the administrative process.



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## RMA SANDHURST

**May 17: Regular Commissioning Course.** The Regular Commissioning Course will resume with the start of the new term.

**June 1: Commissioning Course Short.** The course for Reserve and professionally qualified officers will not recommence before the above date.

**September 1: Late Entry Officers Course.** The course is suspended until the above date.

## INITIAL TRAINING GROUP

**May 11: Common Military Syllabus.** Basic training for soldiers is currently suspended. Training will resume on May 11.

**May 25: Common Military Syllabus Reserves.** Basic training for Reserve personnel is currently suspended and will not resume before above date.

**June 1: Sport Coaching and Officials Courses.** All sport courses delivered by the Army School of Physical Training and the Army Sport Control Board are suspended and will not recommence before above date.

## SCHOOL OF INFANTRY

**May 11: Combat Infantry Course.** Basic infantry training is currently suspended with the exception of a pilot being conducted at ITC Catterick to inform the BT restart. Training will resume on above date.

## ARMY PERSONNEL SUPPORT GROUP

**June 1: ALDP Military Education (ME).** This is currently suspended, training will not recommence before above date.

a. **Cpl ALDP ME** is suspended until September 30. An e-Learning course will be available to all Cpl's from **October 1 until October 1, 2021**. This will replace Cpl ALDP ME delivery in an Army Education Centre.

b. **Sgt ALDP & WO CLM Pt 3** are suspended with courses due to recommence not before June 1.

## SCHEDULED RESUMPTION OF TRAINING – As of May 3, 2020

c. Soldiers who will require an extension of ALDP/ CLM deadlines owing to the Covid-19 and/or service on Op Rescript will be eligible to apply for an extension of six months in addition to the existing extension policy.

**June 1: Military Analysis.** All courses are suspended with training not due to recommence before the above date.

a. The requirement to complete two MA modules to filter for promotion to major will be waived with those running to BeL21 (November) required only to have completed one MA module.

**June 1: Junior Officer Leadership Programme 3.** All courses are suspended with training not due to recommence before above date.

a. A waiver will be in place to allow regular officers to attend JOTAC and/or promote to captain without JOLP3. All those receiving a waiver must complete JOLP prior to attendance on JCSC(L).

**Officer Commanding Discipline and Administration.** Remote delivery using the MK platform is currently being explored to best prepare those going into sub-unit command and adjutant appointments. OCDA must be conducted by those going into sub-unit command and some elements are required for adjutant appointments.

**All Arms Adjutant Course.** Is now scoping remote delivery of elements of the course dependant on the duration of social distancing restrictions. Officers must complete outstanding elements of the course at next available opportunity.

**Sub-Unit Commander's Management Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before June 1. Officers must complete the course at the next available opportunity.

## LAND WARFARE CENTRE

**ALDP Military Training (MT).** Courses (including distributed training outside the LWC) will resume at the earliest opportunity, though not before June 1, to maintain the flow of qualified commanders. Any changes to ALDP delivery must be endorsed by the TRA and authorised by LWC as the the Training Delivery Authority (TDA).



## JUNIOR STAFF CENTRE

**June 29: Junior Officer's Tactical Awareness Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

a. Those (Regular and Reserve) due to promote to captain during 2020 will be eligible for promotion without attendance on JOTAC. However, JOTAC **must** be completed prior to filtering for the Bel.

**June 29: Junior Command and Staff Course (Land).** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before June 29.

a. The requirement to have JCSC(L) to filter for promotion to major will be waived for those running to BeL21 (November). Those selected on the BeL without JCSC(L) **must** complete the course prior to confirmation of sub-promotion.



## DEFENCE ACADEMY

**June 1: Battlespace Technology Course.** Will commence on above date initially using e-Learning with the residential phase commencing on July 6.

**Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land).** 16B course is continuing with the course delivered using distance learning. Options for the delivery of ICSC(L) 17, if social distancing guidance is still in place, are being considered and will be promulgated in due course.

**September 30: Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land Reserves).** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

**Advanced Command and Staff Course.** Has continued using distance learning and will conclude in July as originally scheduled. ACSC 24 will commence in September, if social distancing guidance is still in place the course will start using distance learning prior to switching to a residential course when conditions allow.



## GENERAL STAFF CENTRE

**September 8: Commanding Officer Designate Course.** Is

currently suspended and residential training will not recommence before above date. Virtual delivery of key elements of the course is being explored and further details will be promulgated to those booked on the June course. Officers **must** return to complete remaining elements of the course at next available opportunity, additional capacity will be provided on the September and February courses.

**November 19: One Star Commander's Briefing.** Is currently suspended and residential training will not recommence before above date. A virtual briefing day was conducted on April 29, officers **must** complete outstanding elements of the course at the next available opportunity.

**General Staff Induction Course/ Army Generalship Programme.** Will recommence with the next courses on November 2 and January 18, 2021 respectively. Officers **must** complete the course at the next available opportunity.

## ARITC STAFF LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

**May 11: Defence Train the Trainer Phase 1/2.** Courses for both Regulars and Army Reserves are to resume at the earliest opportunity, not before above date, to ensure continuity of qualified trainers to support delivery of basic training and the other training providers to enable the recovery phase and sustainment of inflow to the Army.

**June 1: Army Trainer Mentor.** Courses are to resume at the earliest opportunity, not before above date, to ensure continuity of the development, assurance and mentoring of Army trainers to enable the recovery phase and sustainment of inflow to the Army.

**June 1: Army Instructor Leader.** Courses are to resume at the earliest opportunity, not before above date, to ensure continuity of the development, assurance and mentoring of Army trainers to enable the recovery phase and sustainment of inflow to the Army.

**September 28: Regimental Sergeant Major Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

Continued on page 54

## SCHEDULED RESUMPTION OF TRAINING CONTINUED

## ADVENTUROUS TRAINING GROUP (ARMY)

**June 15: Adventurous Training.** Courses are currently suspended and instructor training will not recommence before above date to provide the capacity and currency to recommence courses not before June 29.

a. The UATO course will be delivered remotely. If an individuals' qualification has expired and there is a requirement for the award, HQ ATG(A) will issue, on application (during Covid-19 to [Gary.Logan303@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Gary.Logan303@mod.gov.uk)), a six-month extension on a case by case basis.

## FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

**Functional Skills support** is being delivered remotely; personnel should contact their local AEC for further information. In the event that Covid-19 significantly impacts on the ability of personnel to meet the FS promotion requirements outlined in ACSO 3225, a policy waiver may be possible to enable individuals to be considered at promotion boards. Where waivers are granted, any soldiers provisionally selected for promotion must attain the relevant qualification prior to substantiating in rank. The requirement to hold the relevant FS qualification prior to attendance on ALDP ME has not changed. This guidance is valid until June 30 and will be reviewed at this point. Waivers to any requirements in FS policy may only be granted by Army HQ Pers Pol, AH L&D (TRA). If granted, Pers Pol will notify the relevant APC desk officer.

## APPRENTICESHIPS

**Apprenticeship delivery** will continue where feasible to do so. Where this is not possible, apprenticeships will be suspended in accordance with Department of Education direction for suspensions of apprenticeships which has been promulgated separately. Where apprenticeships are linked to soldier career progression, individual capbadge waiver policy applies. New enrolments will proceed in line with the restart of ITT and STI.



## DIRECTORY

**ABF The Soldiers' Charity:**  
020 7901 8900;  
[www.soldierscharity.org](http://www.soldierscharity.org)

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

**Armed Forces Christian Union:**  
01793 783123;  
[www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

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

**Armed Services Advice Project:**  
0808 800 1007;  
[www.adviceasap.org.uk](http://www.adviceasap.org.uk)

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

**Army LGBT Forum:**  
[www.armylgbt.org.uk](http://www.armylgbt.org.uk);  
[chair@armylgbt.org.uk](mailto:chair@armylgbt.org.uk)

**Army Libraries:**  
01252 340094

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

**Army Welfare Service:**  
01904 882053;  
[www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support](http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support)

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

**Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:**  
020 8590 1124;  
[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

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

**Care After Combat:**  
[www.careaftercombat.org](http://www.careaftercombat.org)

**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

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

**Combat Stress:**  
24-hour Mental Health Helpline for service personnel and their families  
0800 323 4444;  
[www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

**Defence Humanists:**  
[www.defencehumanists.org.uk](http://www.defencehumanists.org.uk)

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

**Family Escort Service:**  
020 7463 9249

**Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:**  
07713 752901;  
[www.felixfund.org.uk](http://www.felixfund.org.uk)

**Forcesline:**  
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**Forces Pension Society:**  
020 7820 9988

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

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

**HighGround:**  
[www.highground-uk.org.uk](http://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](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk)

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

**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:**  
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;  
[www.ngvfa.org.uk](http://www.ngvfa.org.uk)

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

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

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

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

**Royal British Legion Scotland:**  
0131 550 1583;

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

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

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

**Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:**  
01748 833797;  
[www.spaces.org.uk](http://www.spaces.org.uk)

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

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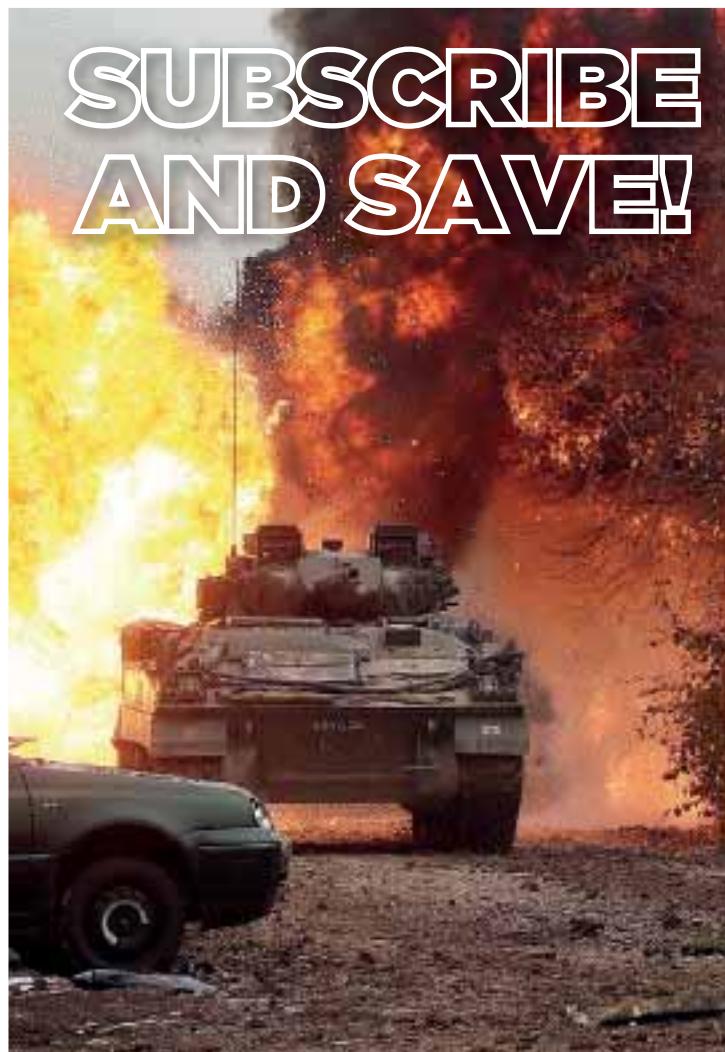
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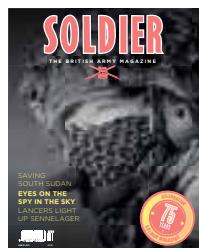
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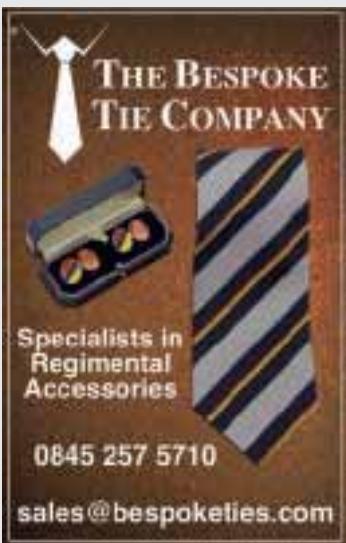
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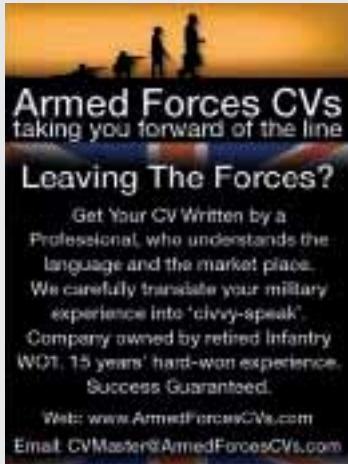


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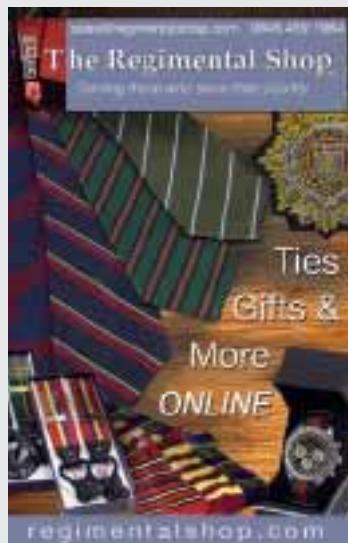


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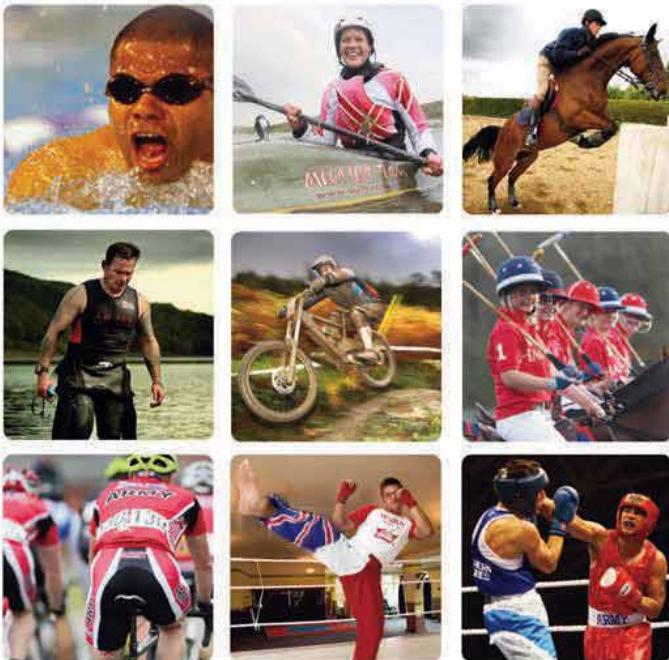
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# REVIEWS

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## MOVIES

### Birds of prey

Female ensemble step up in  
stylish DC outing

GOTHAM City must be a strange place in lockdown – with a populace of hardened organised criminals, supervillains and violent vigilantes working from home or social distancing, the law abiding minority must be quietly celebrating.

The metropolis, by all accounts, has become more dystopian with every celluloid outing. The darkness started in 1989 with *Michael Keaton's Batman* spin and spiralled into a new depression with *Joaquin Phoenix* in *Joker*.

Now the lens turns on some of the minor residents of the city's seedy underbelly in *Birds of Prey and the Fabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn*.

With a storyline that twists and turns as much as its title, this DC





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# MOVIES



• *Birds of Prey* is now available in digital download

## LOCKDOWN VIEWING

**Soldier** reviewers reveal their go-to films for isolation



### A Bridge too Far

Released 1977

WHAT better way to while away the long hours of lockdown than by reacquainting yourself with some of the old classics? *A Bridge too Far* may suffer from the inevitable film industry tampering with historical fact, but it is still one of the best war movies ever made. An all-star cast bring the heroism of the Allied troops to life – from the 101st Airborne paddling across the River Waal under fire, to XXX Corps struggling up a single road and 2 Para's desperate last stand at Arnhem Bridge. And let's not forget General Horrocks' famous speech. While Operation Market Garden was an overall failure, or – to quote the film – only "90 per cent successful", this big budget retelling certainly never fails to raise my spirits.

**WO2 Mike Owens, RE**



outing focuses on the Joker's psychiatrist and ex-girlfriend Quinn, portrayed by the excellent **Margot Robbie**.

Adapting to single life, the doctor finds herself at the mercy of enemies acquired in her spell as the partner of Gotham's craziest citizen. And with the prospect of no longer being zapped by her bad guy boyfriend, they are out for her blood.

But in trying to avoid a kicking, while exacting revenge on her ex by drunkenly driving a truck into his chemical factory, she sets in motion a bizarre series of events that suck her deep into the criminal underworld.

Increasingly out-of-her-depth, Quinn curiously crosses paths with two vigilantes who have scores to settle, plus a washed-up detective and a thieving child who has a stolen diamond belonging to a maniac called the Black Mask.

The result is an unremittingly violent and rapidly paced actioner in which the Joker's former love is relentlessly pursued from pillar to post, and fist fight to gun battle.

And *Birds of Prey* certainly does

not disappoint. A spin-off from DC's 2016 hit *Suicide Squad*, the movie faithfully recreates the graphic novel feel of its roots with some beautifully choreographed fight scenes and fittingly grimy sets.

Strong performances complete the experience with Robbie – who is also one of the producers – solid as the lead, while **Mary Elizabeth Winstead** and **Jurnee Smollett-Bell** respectively excel as vigilantes The Huntress and Black Canary.

**Rosie Perez** brings credibility to washed-up cop Renee Montoya and **Ewan McGregor** – in a far cry from his Obi-Wan days in *Star Wars* – is vile as the Black Mask.

The soundtrack, which features an eclectic mix of songs ranging from retro **James Brown** to rapper **Doja Cat**, also fits in well with the overall atmosphere.

It all adds up to a decent package. While violent and uncomfortable at times, *Birds of Prey* is portrayed in a way that does justice to the genre. In these strange days, a dose of Gotham escapism has never been so appealing.

**REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER**

#### VERDICT:

A graphic novel carried off in celluloid style

★★★★★



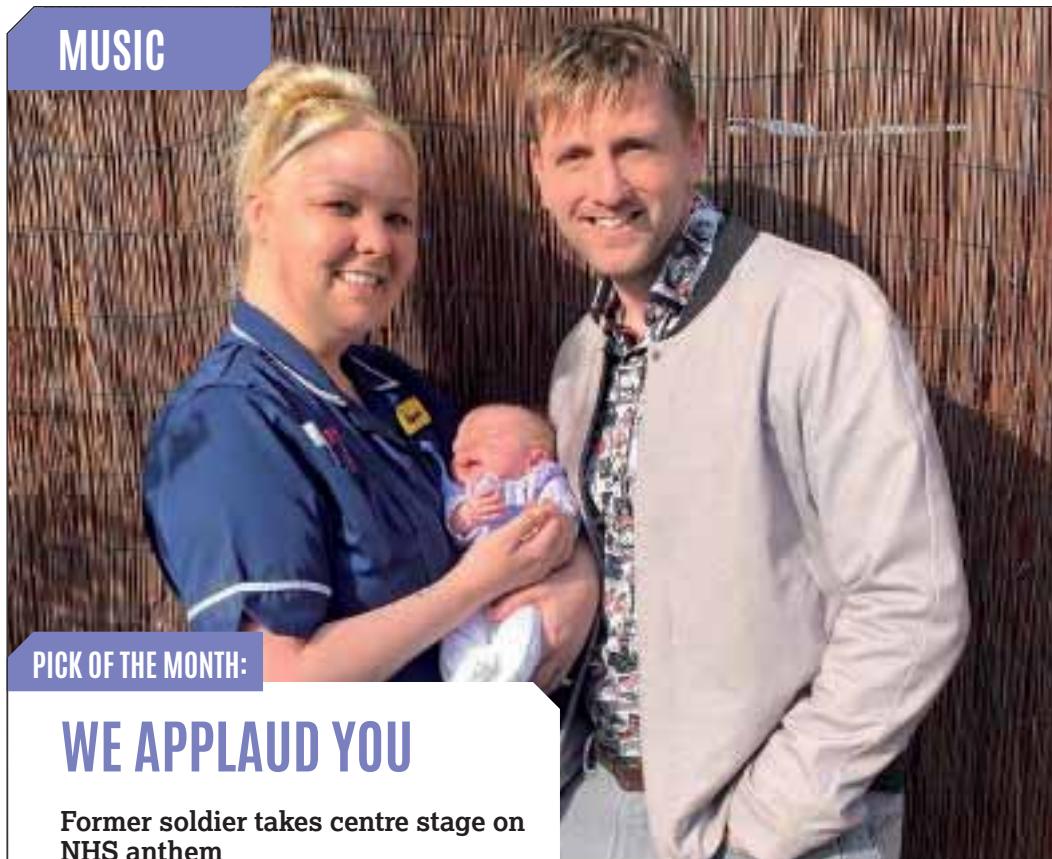
### Ghostbusters

Released 1984

WITH an eagerly awaited sequel to look forward to, this behemoth of an 80s film is the perfect isolation entertainment. When an ancient god is inadvertently summoned to downtown Manhattan to possess **Sigourney Weaver**, who you gonna call? Of course, the Ghostbusters. With a mixture of slapstick comedy, action and award-winning special effects, it truly is one for the whole family to enjoy. **Bill Murray's** sarcastic Venkman will have adults in the room cringing and laughing at the same time, while **Dan Aykroyd's** hapless Stantz will have everyone feeling sorry for him. However, it's the late, great, **Harold Ramis** who truly steals the show as the super brainy and instantly quotable Spengler. Plus, there's even the Stay Puff Marshmallow Man for company.

**Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles**

## MUSIC



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## WE APPLAUD YOU

### Former soldier takes centre stage on NHS anthem

"IT HAS been a whirlwind," singer David Barnes tells *Soldier* as he reflects on the success of charity single *#applaudNHS*.

The ex-soldier, who completed a 22-year Service career and served in the Corps of Army Music, found himself at the forefront of the project when he and fiancee Dawn Ronson were forced into 12 weeks of isolation.

Having returned home from a hospital stay that saw the latter diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease and undergo an emergency C-section at 35 weeks of her pregnancy, they wanted to pay tribute to the medical professionals who worked wonders in what were the most traumatic circumstances.

Music was the obvious avenue to explore and when the coronavirus pandemic worsened the track evolved into an anthem for the NHS staff who now find themselves on the front line in the fight against Covid-19.

"Dawn is a nurse in the NHS and this was the first time she has received care," Barnes says. "She is normally the one giving it."

"We were sat on the sofa and decided to write a song for the NHS. A producer jumped on board, we used songwriters from around the country and it was recorded remotely from each other's houses.

"I had never met some of these people before and we did it all in the space of just eight days."

Having starred in the 2016 series of *The Voice*, Barnes has gone on to forge a post-military career as a professional singer.

His fiancee also served in the Army, initially as a combat medical technician before transferring to Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps – a vocation that has been maintained on civvy street at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Her maternity leave with daughter Shelby means she is unable to support her co-workers in person, but Barnes believes their musical project is the next best thing as all proceeds will go to NHS Charities Together.

"She absolutely wants to be there helping out," he adds. "However, this is another way for her to assist her colleagues."

"It is a chance to say 'thank you'. The day we got home from hospital was when the Covid-19 outbreak really started so we said we should do this for everyone in the NHS."

"And it has gained so much momentum."

Barnes' vocals are supported on the track by internationally acclaimed soprano Christina Johnston (pictured above right) and they have received backing from the likes of Sir Cliff Richard, Suzi Quatro and Kaiser Chiefs' frontman Ricky Wilson.

"I can't believe something that started as a conversation on the sofa has gone so far, so quickly," the 41-year-old concludes.

*#applaudNHS* is now available on all major download platforms. For more details search *@applaudNHS* on social media.

INTERVIEW: RICHARD LONG, SOLDIER



### MUSIC RELEASES



**Earth**  
by Ed O'Brien

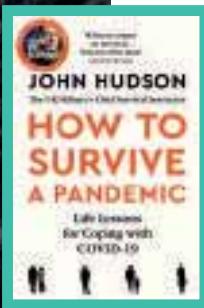
AS a guitarist with musical innovators

Radiohead, Ed O'Brien thought he had found the perfect outlet for his artistic side. As fellow members embarked on solo diversions, he was happy to spend time with his family but after almost three decades of life in a collective he has finally taken centre stage on an individual project of his own. While *Earth* is clearly influenced by his roots in the band there is more than enough originality to make this offering stand proudly on its own. Opener *Shangri-La* boasts the greatest familiarity, a track that builds from a gentle start and progresses to carnival-esque choruses, while the equally impressive *Brasil* flourishes in style from a stripped-back beginning. This approach is a common theme throughout, with the songs given breathing space outside the confines of the traditional three-minute format. The variety and experimentation are pleasing points and O'Brien's vocals hold up strongly against the shifting musical landscape, all of which makes this release a most pleasant surprise.

**Richard Long, Soldier**

# BOOKS

Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

# HOW TO SURVIVE A PANDEMIC

## Life lessons for coping with Covid-19

ON THE surface, the world of military survival may not appear to bear much relevance to life on lockdown in suburbia, but lessons from soldiering could help wider society confront the strange and frightening new reality it finds itself in.

That's according to Flt Lt John Hudson, chief instructor at the Defence SERE Training Organisation at RAF St Mawgan and author of a new e-book – *How to Survive a Pandemic*.

The title draws on the full-time Reservist's 20 years' experience at the centre, where the likes of air crew and elite forces are taught to "survive, evade, resist and extract" should they find themselves stranded behind enemy lines or in an otherwise hostile environment.

And he believes that many of the theories behind such training can be applied to the current situation.

"We use the acronym 'PLAN,'" he says.

"That stands for protection, location, acquisition and navigation.

"Protect yourself from the harsh environment; location – let people know where you are so you can get yourself rescued; acquisition is about what the body needs – so, food and water; and navigation is because you might have to find your way back without a map or compass.

"The book takes that military survival concept, but with Covid-19 as the enemy. It echoes a lot of the official advice from the World Health Organisation and NHS about best practice – reputable sources, rather than the guy on Facebook who reckons if you drink hot water it will kill the virus."

Currently free to download, the title will also form an appendix to the paperback edition of Flt Lt

Hudson's 2019 offering – *How to Survive: Lessons for Everyday Life from the Extreme World* – out later this month.

The 45-year-old began penning the new chapter in March, in the first week of the lockdown, after readers of the previous book asked if he had any pandemic-specific advice. Publishers Pan Macmillan agreed it should be made available free of charge as swiftly as possible.

As well as teaching people how to protect themselves physically from the virus, it reveals how the cornerstone of the military mindset – resilience – can be useful in isolation.

"Forces personnel are au fait with not having everything available to them and having to live in close proximity as part of a small team and get on with each other," Flt Lt Hudson continues.

"Lots of civilians won't have had experience of that principle.

"I've also used examples of people who are really good at working in small groups in confined spaces.

"For example, lighthouse keepers, astronauts in the international space station, as well as an American admiral called James Stockdale, who ejected over Vietnam and was held in the Hanoi Hilton for seven years."

While Flt Lt Hudson acknowledges military types should be familiar with much of the content, he hopes they might find it useful to share with their civilian friends and family who are finding restrictions disconcerting.

Doomsday preppers may find the low-key, measured advice somewhat of a disappointment, but he believes that's exactly the reliable information needed during these anxiety-inducing times.

"There is absolutely no need to go and bury a container full of guns and rice," he laughs.

"The key message is don't be a dick. Don't go out if you don't have to, don't go to unnecessary social gatherings. Follow best practice."

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER

● *How to Survive a Pandemic* is available now as a free download, and as an appendix to *How to Survive*, published in paperback by Pan Macmillan on May 28, priced £9.99

## BOOK RELEASES



### Across the Rhine – January-May 1945

by Simon Forty and Tom Timmermans

THIS is the penultimate title in what has to date been an exceptionally good series of historical guides. The format and narrative are straightforward and easy to grasp. The chapters flow chronologically and in geographic sequence. As with the previous offerings, the standard of maps and photographs is high. This particular book goes a long way toward highlighting a critical phase of the campaign in the west that is often neglected. It is certainly worth adding to your library if you are interested in the last months of the Second World War.

Mike Peters, ex-AAC



### The Strange Year of E.G. Rawlings

by Jane McCulloch

THE titular character in this offering is an ex-war correspondent who has been seriously injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan that also killed his girlfriend and photographer. While writing his memoirs his estranged son and daughter-in-law die in a road accident and he becomes the guardian of a ten-year-old boy. The story is about how he deals with the situations that crop up and the women in his life. This is a well written book and a good read for a quiet Sunday – my only criticism is the ending is a bit abrupt, but I note that it mentions a sequel.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

## ZOMBIE ARMY TRILOGY

### Undead Nazis form haunting foes

► A SHOOTER set in a Second World War plagued by the undead might sound corny – but it has an altogether creepier edge played in the hush of a lockdown night.

Taking place in an alternative world in which Hitler unleashes a legion of ghouls against the Allies, *Zombie Army Trilogy* has all the B-movie clichés.

There is dense fog and ruined towns replete with an enemy which, despite having all appendages blasted off, will happily despatch you with a shovel.

Yet despite a story that is off-the-wall to the point of laughable, the release's arrival on Nintendo Switch is carried off with such style and it really has the ability to make players jump.

Initially designed as a spin-off from its *Sniper Elite* games, developer Rebellion has expanded *Zombie Army* over the years into a series of its own.

While already long established on the likes of PS4 and Xbox One, this is its first outing into handheld territory – and it does not disappoint in the slightest.

"We actually started working with the Nintendo Switch before it was released and have a sound understanding of the console," Arden Aspinall, head of studio and key contributor to *Zombie Army Trilogy*, told *Soldier*.

"There are now six titles we have released especially for it, although the latest game stepped us up to the next level of difficulty – we had a challenge because there are hotspots where a lot is happening on the screen at once."

While its brother sharpshooting series focuses on fine aiming skills and stealth, the new game's undead enemy creates a different dynamic. Whereas Axis troops have a self-preservation instinct that will generally see them run for cover while under fire, Nazi zombies have no such inclination.

Uninhibited by crude nuisances such as death, they attack en masse with a full suite of armaments – from spades to grenades – leaving players with little option but to reach for the fully automatic weapons and blast away until the rounds are eventually exhausted.

With this level of action, Aspinall highlighted that work was needed to ensure the frenzy of the game on full-sized consoles was not compromised.

"We worked right until the end of the project to address some of the issues," he admitted. "The pacing of the title also needed to be right."

Meanwhile, artists were also pressed into action to create the atmospheric sets in which the story



takes place – and the work has clearly paid off.

A far cry from the realistic European and North African realms depicted in *Sniper Elite*, the fictional ruins that are home to the Third Reich ghouls have a haunting quality.

"Although the original idea some years ago was simply to have a spin-off of the original games with zombies, the series very much now has an identity of its own" said Sadie Flayeh, who oversaw the release's publicity.

"It is inspired by 1980s B-movies with the focus on the survival horror genre – that is what we have been striving to create during the development."

*Zombie Army Trilogy* undoubtedly hits the spot

in this respect and the fluid gameplay, along with a tailored Switch experience, makes this an actioner with plenty to offer.

With different characters to take on, each with their own abilities, as well as three chapters, there is a decent level of longevity too. A series of excellent multiplayer options, along with the credible solo campaign, complete the package.

If you pick two titles to go with a new Switch, *Zombie Army Trilogy* and *Sniper Elite III* are good bets to pass the time during the enforced lockdown and beyond. ■

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

#### VERDICT:

A fine handheld outing; corny yet creepy



## GAMES RELEASES

### **Granblue Fantasy: Versus** for PS4



THIS stylised anime fighting game has plenty to offer those who find themselves in lockdown. While the genre is now well trodden fans will still enjoy a great deal here, with a versus mode for tournaments plus a solo arcade setting. Players can also train the title's characters, which are well rendered and highly detailed, so they are ready for action. And there are more available through the downloadable content too.

*Granblue* will fill more than a few hours and comes highly recommended.

**SSgt Rupert Frere, RLC**

### **Panzer Corps 2** for PC



THIS is a turn-based strategy offering set during the Second World War, where you command a wide variety of German units against the Allies in Europe. It may not sound like your typical video game title, but developer Flashback Games have included loads of content. There are a whopping 60 scenarios to face, plus a further ten in the multi-player mode, along with 1,000 unique units – each one painstakingly replicated from the original, real versions. There's a fair amount to get to grips with, but the tutorials go a long way in helping you understand the kit and tactics you'll need, from infantry, to tanks, and aircraft. *Panzer Corps 2* allows you to scratch that strategic itch and it's easy to think of yourself as the next Montgomery, only for the game to throw something new at you and keep you on your toes.

**David McDougall, civvy**



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# SOLDIER SPORT

## PROWLING TIGER »

ARMY forward LBdr Ifereimi Boladau (RA) has been making a name for himself at Leicester Tigers this season. Along with Cpl Lewis Bean (Rifles), he was starring in rugby union's Premiership before the coronavirus saw play halted. Read about their successes on pages 72-73...





# MAINTAINING THE TEMPO

## OLYMPIC HOPEFULS ADAPT THEIR TRAINING REGIMES TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING WHEN SPORT RESUMES

THE decimation of the sporting calendar due to the coronavirus outbreak has forced elite athletes to adopt a creative approach to training as the state-of-the-art facilities that were once the norm are now under lockdown.

For the Army's potential Olympians, the same process applies and while the sporting showpiece has now been pushed back a year their preparations and fine tuning have continued at pace.

Pistol shooter Sgt Sam Gowin (RA, pictured above left) should have been testing his aim at a European qualifying tournament for the Games this month, but is instead sharpening his focus at home in Portsmouth – where a custom-built dry-fire box, designed by teammate Cpl Steven Mitchell (REME), allows him to practise for six hours a day.

"It is a scaled-down version of the target system," the 2018 Commonwealth Games bronze medallist told *SoldierSport*.

"I've got enough space to stand two metres back. Normally, I shoot from 25 but when I look down the sights everything is set to scale.

"I'm also using audio to help me. When I go to a World Cup event there is background noise from range control and other athletes shooting, so I have that playing at the same time.

"It is really beneficial. You can get away with just training against a wall, working on your triggering. But I want to keep this at a level where, when I eventually get back into it, everything feels normal."

Gowin includes strength and conditioning sessions in his daily routine and has also been

working on his reaction times – a key requirement for the rapid-fire discipline – by using various apps, as well as the electronic game, Bop It.

And while some athletes have voiced their frustrations at seeing the Games cycle extended by a further 12 months, the soldier is viewing it as a positive.

"It is a good chance to work on the foundations of shooting," he added. "This is a sport that is all about doing the basics properly and you can practise that just by dry firing.

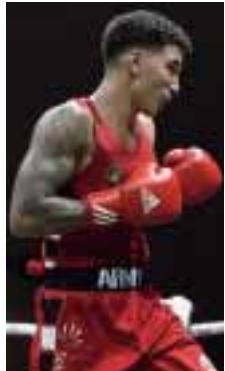
"For rapid-fire, I need to work on my rise, reaction to the green light and getting the gun to the target in the fastest time possible – I'm taking this opportunity to really nail that."

Boxer LCpl John Marvin (PWRR, pictured right and far left) was hoping to secure his Games place at the Olympic world qualifiers in Paris this month, but now finds himself training alone in Aldershot.

The 81kg star was due to compete at the Asia-Oceania qualifying event earlier in the year but missed out after he fractured his hand while in action for the Philippines at the South East Asia Games, meaning the French showdown was a key fixture.

But with the future schedule still up in the air the Serviceman is trying to make the most of his surroundings at St Omer Barracks.

"I can get out for a four- or five-mile run," he explained. "I'm also able to do strength work and explosive training with press-ups, sit-ups, lunges and squats. I have weights in my room, can do some shadow boxing and also work on a cool



**"IT IS A BLOW, BUT WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT"**

down, so it's not too bad.

"The world is in a bad way and health comes first. It is a blow, but we've got to make the most of it and I just see this as an opportunity.

"The Olympics are a dream of mine and if I don't make it at least I'll know I gave it everything I had. I will be fit and prepared for when the green light comes; I consider myself as being on standby and will be ready to go whenever."

Fellow boxer Gnr Tori-Ellis Willetts (RA) was hoping to face the same French test as Marvin after she was omitted from the Team GB squad for March's European qualifying event at the Copper Box Arena, London.

The tournament hosted two days of action before the worsening coronavirus outbreak brought proceedings to a halt. In that time the fighter selected in her place, Charley Davidson, won her opening bout but with a year being a long time in sport, the flyweight is optimistic about her future prospects.

"I'm actually quite glad the Olympics are now taking place in 2021," Willetts said. "It gives me time to get more experience at smaller international tournaments if, and when, we get back up and running.

"I'm hoping they re-select the team for the qualifiers and a lot can happen in 12 months."

In a bid to hit the ground running when boxing resumes Willetts has been following the strict home programme set by her coaches at Team GB.

Her day starts with a run before training continues in an improvised garden gym.

"I have invested in some boxing bags and have reinvented the garden," she →



→ explained. "I've got ropes attached to the tree for skipping and rolling, and I've got a bag hanging from another tree."

"Unfortunately, we can't do any pad work, which is one of my favourite things. But it means I can slow things down on the bag – instead of rushing, I'm able to concentrate on my technique more and go back to basics."

"I like having a routine and structure and because I'm still able to train I can maintain that."

Team GB teammate Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA, pictured above) was even closer to realising her Olympic dream as she was weighed in and ready to fight at the Copper Box Arena when news of the tournament cancellation came through.

"When I first got there, it was announced that the competition would be held behind closed doors," she told *SoldierSport*. "I didn't really care though."

"You could see that, around the world, everything was getting shut down, but I had to stay focused. Initially, I was heartbroken. We had grafted so hard over the past four years and then the opportunity was taken away from us."

"After that it was all about the unknowns. When will the tournament resume? Would it carry on where it had left off? Would the Games even happen?"

Artingstall admitted to taking three or four days off to process things but, like Willetts, is now following a home training programme as she waits for her ring return.

Based at her Team GB accommodation in Sheffield, she has installed a watt bike in her garage, along with boxing bags.

"It is just like being in camp, only we're at home," she added. "The one thing that is missing is the sparring, but there's not much we can do about that."

"I feel good for it and have managed to maintain my fitness. I'm trying to look at the positives."

"It is nice to know the Games are going ahead in 2021, but we still don't know when the qualifiers are."

"I'm training as hard as I can with what I can. But at the same time, I don't want to peak now only to discover the qualifiers will be in December, say."

"It is about maintaining that balance so when I get back in camp, I am ready to go." ■



## SPORT SUSPENDED

ALL representative Service sport has been suspended until June 30 at the earliest.

Maj Gen (retd) Shaun Burley, director of the Army Sport Control Board, said the move had been made in accordance with advice from Army Headquarters, but insisted the organisation will get athletic pursuits "up and running" again when it is safe to do so.

"A lot of our sports are linked to national governing bodies and are following policies from them, as well as government advice," he told *SoldierSport*.

"So, it is a case of waiting to see what we can kick off with, and when. Our message is to stay as fit as you can as we want to get started as soon as possible."

Burley also expressed his regret at seeing premier fixtures such as the Inter-Services Twenty20 cricket at Lord's cancelled and admitted there are now doubts as to whether the annual Army Sports Awards will go ahead.

"To lose that would be tragic," he added. "But our people are soldiers first and they are now focused on their primary role of protecting the nation."



**"IT'S  
LIKE  
BEING IN  
CAMP,  
ONLY  
WE'RE  
AT  
HOME"**





# FRUSTRATION FELT, BUT VIRUS FIGHT COMES FIRST

IT SHOULD have been a historic moment for the Army rugby union women's team, with the players locking horns with their Royal Navy rivals at Twickenham for the first time.

But instead of running out at the iconic stadium on May 2 the soldiers will be reflecting on what might have been after the coronavirus outbreak prompted an inevitable cancellation of the long-awaited fixture.

While the announcement was met with disappointment head coach Maj Gemma Stonebridge-Smith (AGC (ETS)) believes the correct decision was made and has highlighted how the team's focus quickly shifted to more pressing concerns.

"At the end of the day, it is just a game of rugby," she told *SoldierSport*. "A lot of our players have since found themselves on the front line of the Covid-19 requirements.

"We have personnel from the Royal Army Medical Corps, Intelligence Corps and Royal

Logistic Corps who have re-rolled and are now at the front of that fight.

"Others are training at home, keeping on top of their phys and skills. It is frustrating we will not be able to demonstrate where we are as a team, but we are soldiers first."

Having relinquished their grip on the Inter-Services trophy following a loss to the Royal Air Force last season, preparations for this year's showdown had been progressing well.

Stonebridge-Smith (pictured right) had seen developments in the team's style of play, particularly in games against the Exeter Chiefs and Scotland Futures in the build-up, and they were relishing the opportunity to showcase their skills.

"Obviously, the girls were very disappointed when the matches were cancelled," she said. "But it was not just Twickenham. We also wanted the chance to vindicate ourselves after losing to the RAF last season."



**"IT IS  
JUST A  
GAME  
OF  
RUGBY"**

"The biggest frustration from a rugby perspective comes from the fact we have trained really hard this year and were at the place we wanted to be ahead of the Inter-Services.

"In the vast majority of games we have shown how we wanted to play moving forward and I'm sure the RAF were nervous about facing us."

The premature end to proceedings drew the curtain on the coach's second season at the helm and she feels the squad is on target to meet the goals set in her five-year plan.

"We are trying to be more dynamic so we can make the best use of the players we have coming through," Stonebridge-Smith explained.

"This has also been the second season for our A team, and we have seen some real development there as well.

"Fortunately, we are not losing too many players and I believe we are in a really good place moving forward." ■



# BEAN LOOKS TO BUILD ON SUCCESS WITH SAINTS

**S**ECOND row forward Cpl Lewis Bean (Rifles) is hoping for further tests at English rugby union's elite level after an encouraging debut season with Northampton Saints.

The 28-year-old had made 12 appearances in all competitions for the Midlands outfit before the coronavirus outbreak saw the campaign halted in its tracks. He is now working on a home training programme with the hope of returning to action in the not-too-distant future.

Having signed for the club following a successful trial in 2018/19, the Army ace has made rapid strides and was a starter in the Saints' last three Premiership matches – a run that came to an end when the competition was officially suspended on March 16.

The break has allowed the Serviceman to reflect on his progress this year and he told *SoldierSport* about the challenges he has successfully overcome.

"I think I've done alright," he explained. "It has been a big learning curve for me to get to the required level and a lot of credit must go to everyone at the club.

"It has been tough, but at the same time very enjoyable.

"I was playing in the National League and stepped up to the Premiership, so everything had to improve – my skills, fitness, strength, power and speed.

"But one of the biggest things I had to work on was my speed of thought on the pitch as it is such a quick game at this level."

Bean has strictly adhered to his individual strength and conditioning plan and has been a committed participant on the training field, but he believes the efforts made on top of this have really helped his cause.

"It's all about hard work," he added. "After each session you have to do extra, whether that's on the pitch or in the gym.

"I'm totally different now, 100



**"IT IS  
SUCH A  
QUICK  
GAME  
AT THIS  
LEVEL"**

per cent, and I feel as though I can call myself a Premiership player. I've got to maintain that."

While he feels more relaxed now it was a different story when the soldier pulled on a Northampton jersey for his senior team debut earlier in the year.

"It was such a nerve-racking experience," he recalled. "You don't want to make a mistake, if you do the opposition will score.

"So, there's a lot of pressure. Everyone at this level is so good and there is nowhere to hide. But the more you play, the more you get used to it and it eventually becomes the norm.

"I'm now starting to feel comfortable and I want to see how far I can take this opportunity. My aim is to stay at Saints next season and continue to improve."

The unexpected downtime came at the wrong time for Bean and Northampton as a collective, with both the player's and team's

form on an upward curve prior to the hiatus.

"We don't know what is going to happen with the season," Bean said. "We can't train together, so I'm at home working on an individual plan."

"We had a really good start before suffering a blip but were back on track and doing well in Europe, as well as climbing to fourth in the Premiership."

"We're still looking for a good back end to our campaign and as a club we have the mentality to always go for the win."

While the Premiership's future remains unclear there has been no lack of clarity in terms of his Army ambitions, with this year's Inter-Services cancelled.

The decision means Bean will miss out on performing in front of another sell-out Twickenham crowd, as well as denying him the chance to secure some in-house bragging rights.

"We've got AB Sam Matavesi, of the Royal Navy, at Northampton now and we were having a lot of banter about the game," he explained.

"I was looking forward to playing against him.

"The Army team is close knit and the mood is always good, but we're disappointed we can't play together in the Inter-Services."

"We are also frustrated as it is Maj Burnie Burnard's (REME) last season as coach – we wanted to send him off with a win." ■



## BEAN IN NUMBERS

GAMES TO DATE IN THE 2019/20 SEASON

12

MATCHES WITH THE RESERVE TEAM BEFORE PROGRESSING TO THE SENIOR SQUAD

2

POINTS SCORED BY THE SAINTS IN THEIR WIN OVER WORCESTER LAST TIME OUT

16

AFGHAN TOURS COMPLETED EARLIER IN HIS SERVICE CAREER

2

WEIGHT, IN KILOGRAMS, OF THE ARMY FORWARD

125



Picture: Tiger Images

## BOLA TAKES TO TIGERS TEST

**H**AVING signed with Leicester Tigers on loan for the 2019/20 season, LBdr Ifereimi Boladau (RA) has followed in Cpl Lewis Bean's (Rifles) footsteps by starring at Premiership level.

The soldier initially joined as cover for the club's World Cup stars but went on to make 12 appearances for the ten-time champions before the coronavirus lockdown.

"This has been a great opportunity for me to be involved with one of the most successful clubs in the UK," he said.

"I've been so blessed to play as much as I have."

Boladau first tasted professional rugby at Ospreys and later had spells with London Scottish and Rotherham Titans.

He then took a year out to focus on his military career before joining Championship outfit Nottingham and,

subsequently, Leicester on loan, where his skills have continued to develop.

"One of my biggest assets is ball carrying," the 33-year-old added. "And that's one part of what I think I have brought to the club. But, at the same time, I have learned a lot as well."

Boladau's Premiership move continues a proud Army tradition of seeing its players excel in the upper echelons of the game, but such opportunities were far from the Serviceman's mind when he embarked on a military career.

"When I joined the Army I didn't even know there was a rugby team," he explained. "But I managed to get in the squad and was so fortunate to get a contract out of that."

"I couldn't believe it when clubs started approaching me and some of the other boys, and now the women's side are starting to get contracted out as well. It's been great." ■

# Final Word



The Royal Engineer's troop commander's course was invaluable. It helped me to prioritise tasks, allocate manpower and forecast future progress. Last year's Exercise Wessex Storm also taught me how to effectively manage multiple tasks - this command and control experience was very useful at the ExCel.

**Lt Stuart Taylor, QGE**



I've recently completed my electrician class one course, so it was a great opportunity to utilise my new skills and knowledge. I learnt a lot about how to effectively manage your workload in order to complete tasks within a very limited time.

**Spr Subash Thakuri, QGE**



I was able to apply my carpentry skills from training and practising on other tasks, including constructing ranges and field fortifications. Above all, our willingness to help went a long way. Despite the circumstances, it has been a good chance for the military to integrate with civilians and other public services in order to maintain confidence in each other.

**Spr Dean Franke, RE**



As an air conditioning and refrigeration fitter I helped the civilian contractors with pipework and brazing, and fitted the oxygen and medical air pipework and valves to the beds. Great teamwork and communication made the intense two weeks a real learning journey.

**Spr Rohan Rai, QGE**



The management and supervisory skills I learnt on senior NCO courses really helped me. In some ways this has been even more satisfying than my previous experiences on operational tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**SSgt Yakthung Angbuhang, QGE**

## Flying high with THE NIGHTINGALE

We asked members of the military construction force at the Nightingale ExCel hospital how their Army experience helped them through the project

My experience of Op Marmat, providing disaster relief after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, was very useful when installing electrical systems. In addition, my involvement on Exercise Wessex Storm helped me in the management of section members and tasks. I was also able to observe the different leadership styles of civilians, which I think will be beneficial in the future.

**LCpl Nripesh Rai, QGE**



# THANK YOU

to all the military service personnel and healthcare professionals across our nation who are on the frontline working to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

LEVEL  
PEAKS  
ASSOCIATES

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