

SOLDIER



TOP GEAR

How the world's toughest driving test prepares troops for ops

INSIDE: FORCES FORECASTERS • PAY AS YOU DINE • GOLF

MOUNTAIN MASTERS AIM HIGH

Climbers test their mettle on challenging Alpine courses



MORE THAN A JOB FOR MR MASTIFF

Armoured vehicle expert discusses passion for his profession



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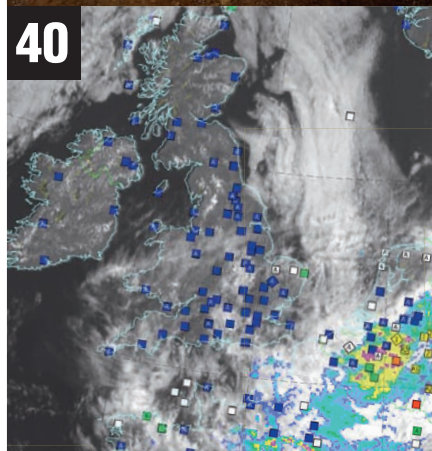
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Cover picture (left): A Jackal 2 vehicle is put through its paces on the specially-built track at the Defence School of Transport in Leconfield

Background image: Wounded troops take to the seas aboard the Fujitsu-sponsored *British Soldier*

Pictures: Graeme Main



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SOLDIER

Est 1945 – incorporating the
Territorial Army Magazine

Parsons House, Ordnance Road,
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU.

All enquiries: Tel 01252 347353
(Ald Mil 94222 2353)

Fax: 01252 347358 (2358)

Email: mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Managing Editor: Andrew Simms

EDITORIAL

Editor:

Stephen Tyler 01252 347356 (2356)
styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor:

Joe Clapson 01252 347154 (2154)
jclapson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Sports Editor:

Richard Long 01252 347362 (2362)
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Editorial Assistant:

Doreen Cadwallader 01252 347360 (2360)
dcadwallader@soldiermagazine.co.uk

DESIGN

Art Editor:

Tudor Morgan 01252 347169 (2169)
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Graphic Designers:

Chris Sell 01252 355080 (8080)
csell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Kath Lee 01252 347361 (2361)
klee@soldiermagazine.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHY

Chief Photographer:

Mike Weston 01252 347357 (2357)
mwatson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographers:

Graeme Main 01252 347357 (2357)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Steve Dock 01252 347357 (2357)
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

ARCHIVE

Archivist/Information Manager:

Ruth Kusonowicz 01252 355056 (8056)
rkusonowicz@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MARKETING and ADVERTISING

Business Manager:

Andy Clarkson 01252 347351 (2351)
aclarkson@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising:

Heather Shekyls 01252 347352 (2352)
hshekyls@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions:

Stephen King 01252 347353 (2353)
sking@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Distribution:

Patricia Lampert 01252 347354 (2354)
plampert@soldiermagazine.co.uk



ARMY



SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by St. Ives Roche Limited. Print
contract managed by CDS.

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily
those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



“Sir... You're not going to believe this!”

● Mettle detectors – Pages 49-51

Author salutes military mindset

DURING the research process for his new book *We Are Soldiers*, writer Danny Danziger came across an aspect of the Army that both surprised and inspired him.

The title, which you can read all about in a future issue, features a series of first-person accounts from personnel explaining their true thoughts and emotions about the realities of serving their country.

When *Soldier* quizzed Danny on whether he was surprised by any of their frank tales, his answer was simple. The only thing that shocked him was the Servicemen and women's passion for their job, even – and, in some cases, especially – when bullets start flying and their lives are in imminent danger.

His observation will strike a chord with anyone privileged enough to work with the Forces. Members of the Services display a dedication to their duty unmatched anywhere else and that is one of the main reasons Britain's military is so highly-regarded around the world.

Not long after speaking to Danny, we were given a first-hand example of his point when *Soldier* met WO2 Darren Hugill during a trip to the Defence School of Transport in Leconfield.

The senior NCO has earned the title “Mr Mastiff” due to his single-minded dedication to introducing and developing the Army's fleet of armoured vehicles based on Force Protection's Cougar and it is easy to see why.

Turn to page 34 to meet the man who spends hour-after-hour dreaming up ways to make the platforms safer, more reliable and more comfortable for deployed troops and designing training programmes to keep their skills and drills up-to-date.

It may appear to be a case of someone simply

doing their job, but the reality is that he goes above and beyond the call of duty because the results of his work can save lives.

The Defence School of Transport is filled with similarly-focused troops whose efforts are keeping an operationally-busy military on the road (Pages 31-33).

Knowing how to handle the multitude of vehicles in service is one thing, but mastering the soldiering skills required on Op Herrick is quite another. Luckily the pre-deployment training package continues to evolve and 16 Air Assault Brigade – the next to deploy – were quick to sing its praises (Pages 26-29).

One thing the Forces can't control is the

weather, but commanders can do a bit better than relying on Michael Fish thanks to the Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre.

The Northwood-based unit provides a raft of climate-related services, some of which are essential in giving troops on

the ground in Helmand province a battle-winning advantage (Pages 40-41).

Their work also extends to those on adventurous training expeditions, such as the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre who welcomed us along to their annual meeting in the Swiss Alps (Pages 49-51) to demonstrate how pitting a soldier's wits against a genuinely-dangerous activity has operational benefits.

Among the other highlights for this month, we check out the latest sporting opportunities on offer for wounded troops, including karting (Page 57), golf (Page 58) and sailing (Page 61).

And as if to prove a point that soldiering really isn't for civvies, you can read all about our calamitous attempt at commanding a Wolfhound in our latest *Media Ops* feature (Pages 37-39). ■



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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture: Cpl Gary Kendall, RLC

United front: The bond of trust between British and Afghan forces will not be broken by insurgents, a senior Afghan commander has promised

Op Herrick partners' bond unbroken

ATTACKS by rogue members of the Afghan National Security Forces will not damage the relationship between the country's military and their British counterparts, according to a senior officer.

Speaking through an interpreter during a visit to the United Kingdom, Afghan National Army 215 Corps Commander Gen Malouk labelled the murder of three Gurkha personnel in July as an isolated occurrence.

He said: "The relationship that we have cannot be damaged by very small things. The incident in July and the one before that were personal things – it is not the Army and everybody was very upset by this.

"These kinds of small things by individual people won't damage the relationship and we will try to build the trust more and more.

"We are working together, shoulder-to-shoulder with each other.

"Always when we go for operations we work together and every day we improve our relationship."

Gen Malouk was in Britain to see first-hand the pre-deployment training undertaken by Servicemen and women ahead of Op Herrick deployments.

The commander said that he hoped the "very effective" missions would help keep casualties to a minimum and pledged to do everything in his power to protect international soldiers.

He said: "I can give this promise to the British Army and to the International Security Assistance Force as well – I will do my best to keep British troops away from danger.

"It is our country and we have to be forward and they can give their support in the back."

He also highlighted the fact that the Afghan National Army had grown from just one battalion, or kandak, in 2002 to 135 now, adding: "As I see it, the Helmand situation is a lot better and improved compared to last year. Next year we hope it will get better [again]."

Gen Malouk's visit included a trip to 16 Air Assault Brigade's mission-specific training and Lt Gen Barney White-Spunner, Commander Field Army, said it was part of a package designed to provide soldiers with a "very full understanding" of Helmand province's cultural background.

And the officer was convinced that the brigade's veterans of former Op Herrick tours would notice the continuous improvement Helmand province's economy and security situation have undergone.

He said: "On the ground there is a sense of things slowly getting better. We know that it's going to take time, we're not going to be through this quickly.

"But they will be able to see solid progress and my advice to them is to continue with that. I wish them every luck for a very successful deployment."

140 THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PATROL BASES AND MILITARY AND POLICE CHECKPOINTS SET UP IN CENTRAL HELMAND PROVINCE TO PROVIDE INCREASED SECURITY FOR RESIDENTS

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NEWS IN BRIEF

AN Army officer studied ways to improve the rehabilitation of severely-injured Service personnel during a trip to the United States.

Capt Henry Nwume (RAMC), who has represented Great Britain in the bobsleigh at the Winter Olympics, made the journey as part of a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship to see how the American military uses sport to aid troops' recovery.

He said: "Spurred on by my own experiences as a doctor during and after a tour of Afghanistan, I travelled to the US to see how the military had joined forces with the Paralympic organisation to aid in the rehab of their injured Servicemen and women.

"Although the rehabilitation system is different from our own in terms of casualty numbers, funding and resources, there are many similarities."

For more information about the fellowship scheme, visit www.wcmt.org.uk

BUDDING young writers from Service families have seen their work published in a new book.

Pupils were asked to write a short story around the theme of "my hero" and the best examples have been included in the *Little Book of Heroes*.

The title, which costs £2.99 with 75p going to Help for Heroes, is available from Morrisons and WH Smith stores nationwide or online at www.littlebookofheroes.co.uk

Millies rallying call from CGS

THE head of the Army has called for the Service community to support a national newspaper's annual Armed Forces awards.

Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir David Richards wants soldiers, their families and civil servants to submit nominations for *The Sun's* Military Awards 2010.

The "Millies", which were dreamt up by the Prince of Wales, are held annually to recognise the work of personnel from all three Services in a range of categories.

Winners receive their awards during a glamorous ceremony held in London and attended by a host of well-known celebrities.

Gen Sir Richards said: "They are a fitting way to bring the dedication, exceptional courage and remarkable achievements of not only the individual Service personnel, but also entire units, to the attention of a wide audience.

"That a great many of those nominated have been previously unsung and unseen makes the awards all the more compelling and inspiring.

"I urge you, whether Regular, Reserve, civil servant or family member, to do the Army proud

by submitting nominations for those you believe warrant special recognition by virtue of their distinguished actions and achievements over the course of the last 12 months."

● Nominations for the Millies can be made by filling in an entry form, which can be found by visiting *The Sun's* dedicated web page at www.thesun.co.uk/millies

Entries must be submitted by Monday, September 13.

MILLIES AWARD CATEGORIES

- 1) Overcoming adversity
- 2) Most outstanding sailor or marine
- 3) Most outstanding soldier
- 4) Most outstanding airman
- 5) Best Reservist
- 6) Support to Armed Forces (civilian)
- 7) Life saver award
- 8) True grit: home
- 9) True grit: overseas
- 10) Best unit

Changes made to 'world class' compensation scheme

PERSONNEL will have longer to make claims for injuries following a review of the military's compensation scheme.

The extended deadline, which gives troops seven instead of five years to initiate a claim, is one of several changes introduced by the MoD last month.

The improvements follow recommendations made by former Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral The Lord Boyce after his review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).

Army spokesman Col Robin Vickers told *Soldier* that he wanted all Servicemen and women to be aware of the scheme and to be confident to use it if necessary.

He said: "There have been a number of criticisms laid at this scheme, most of them due to people's misunderstanding of how it operates.

"Lord Boyce has urged the MoD to improve the way it communicates the scheme to the Services and a lot of work has been undertaken to do just that.

"We are acutely aware that many people did not understand that this offered them the sort of benefits that it did and there was an underlying view that it was unfair and unreasonable.

"We believe that Lord Boyce's extensive changes will put the scheme into a place where soldiers can be confident that they

have something world class that supports them during their service."

Other changes introduced to the scheme last month include a rise in some payments for hearing loss and an increase in the time limit for "late onset" illnesses, such as mental health problems, from one to three years from the date of first seeking medical help.

Further improvements due to be brought into effect from February 2011 included an increase to all lump sums, rises in the Guaranteed Income Payment and a nine-month boost to the time limit in which soldiers can request a decision to be reconsidered.

In addition, personnel who suffer multiple wounds from a single incident will receive compensation for each individual injury.

Col Vickers added that although making changes to the AFCS could be a lengthy process, the MoD was committed to continuing to improve the scheme by

asking members of the Armed Forces for their opinions.

He said: "There is a continuous review process undertaken and the MoD has a mechanism in which changes can be made year-on-year in a considered manner.

"The last review process had interviews with a large cohort of the Services and bereaved families and all of them had the opportunity to express their views. We believe that the fundamental concerns they raised have been addressed."

Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir David Richards added: "I am committed to ensuring that personnel injured as a result of their service are appropriately compensated for [their] injuries."

● For full details about the AFCS changes, log on to www.veterans-uk.info or www.spva.mod.uk or call 0800 169 2277 from the UK or +44 1253 866043 from overseas. Serving soldiers wishing to make a claim should contact their administration office for more information.

570 THE AMOUNT, IN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF POUNDS, OF THE MAXIMUM LUMP SUM PAYMENT OFFERED TO PERSONNEL AS PART OF THE ARMED FORCES COMPENSATION SCHEME



Pictures: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC



Friendly force: A young Sayedebad resident offers a British soldier some bread during Op Tor Shezada

Black Prince a royal success

INTERNATIONAL troops have successfully squeezed insurgents out of a key town in central Helmand province in a well-executed operation.

Afghan National Army soldiers raised their country's flag over Sayedebad following the completion of Op Tor Shezada, or Black Prince, which was led by 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

The mission encountered little resistance as it claimed control of the town, which sits between Nad-e-Ali and Marjah, and pushed enemy fighters further away from central Helmand's main population centres.

Lt Col Frazer Lawrence, commanding officer of 1 Lancs, said: "This is a huge step forward for [the population]. The trick is now to secure the town with our Afghan partners and that will set the conditions for reconstruction and development.

"More importantly, [it will allow] the district governor to get down here, meet his people, confirm their needs and then start to improve their quality of life."

Although held on a smaller scale than previous operations in the region, Op Tor Shezada built on the successes of Op Moshtarak, which removed the Taliban from large areas of Helmand.

The operation began when soldiers

from 1 Lancs' Somme Company launched a night-time move into Sayedebad's outlying villages, uncovering a large stash of deadly bomb-making equipment.

Lt Amy Pennington, of the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Taskforce, said: "There was local intelligence that one of the compounds had been used as an IED factory.

"My team was sent in to search that factory and we actually found component parts of IEDs.

"Once we found those, we removed them and the main charges were demolished by the ammunition technical officer."

British and Afghan troops continued to patrol through the villages in the ensuing days to reassure residents about the operation before embarking on a final move into Sayedebad which was met with little more than harassing fire.

Somme Company extracted from the area just six days after the operation began and Lt Col Lawrence and more than 60 senior figures from the local community held a shura to discuss future progress and security.

Lt Col Lawrence added: "The aim is to improve the school and get it working again, to clean out irrigation ditches and to meet the other needs that the population are bound to have."

OP TOR SHEZADA



Warming up: A British soldier unleashes the power of his light machine gun in the compound clearance training facility at Camp Bastion ahead of Op Tor Shezada



Eagle eyed: A member of 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment's Somme Company keeps a look out from a compound on day one of the operation



Important find: Troops uncovered an improvised explosive device factory and safely destroyed a haul of bomb-making equipment on the mission's second day



Equal partners: Allies from Britain and Afghanistan worked together to patrol the villages surrounding Sayedebad in the fourth and fifth days of the operation



Hearts and minds: Maj Darren Newman (1 Lancs) holds a shura with residents of Sayedebad after Op Tor Shezada reaches its goal without much enemy resistance

Picture: Cpl Gary Kendall, RLC

GOOD DRILLS

ARMY EDUCATION

COLCHESTER Garrison's e-learning facility has won Learndirect's centre of the year award. Praised for providing outstanding customer care and tutor support, the centre provides education to more than 3,000 soldiers, 650 civilians and 1,500 dependants. Spokeswoman Kelly Spencer said: "For us to help the soldiers complete their learning journey makes it all worth it."

TPR JAMES WHARTON

LITTLE more than one year after his appearance on the cover of *Soldier* turned him into an overnight celebrity, Tpr James Wharton, of the Household Cavalry Regiment, has been named one of Britain's most influential gay people. The soldier was ranked 19th in the *Independent on Sunday*'s "Pink List" – ahead of the likes of Labour peer Lord Mandelson and comedian Matt Lucas.



EQUIPMENT FRAUDSTER

A FORMER paratrooper has received a suspended prison sentence after admitting selling military kit on an online auction site. The MoD's anti-theft and fraud campaign, Operation Embroid, caught Allan Peet (46), of Bridgend, South Wales, trading Forces-issue gear including boots, day sacks and hydration systems on eBay. The retired warrant officer pleaded guilty to handling more than £6,500 worth of front-line equipment during a hearing at Cardiff Crown Court, where Judge Rhys Rowlands described his actions as a disgrace.

INSENSITIVE YOBBS

THE girlfriend of a fallen soldier was subjected to a torrent of abuse from a gang of yobbs during a fund-raising trip. Nikki Perry, who was going out with Rfn Craig Johnson before his death during a training exercise in February, was shouted at as she cycled from London to Brighton to raise money for Help for Heroes. The 29-year-old went on to make more than £6,000 for the Forces charity.

BAD DRILLS

Army's annual appraisal

SOLDIERS selected to take part in a major Services survey that helps shape military policies are being urged to make their voices heard.

The 2010 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), which is designed to gauge troops' opinions on their working and living conditions, was sent to ten per cent of the Army late last month.

The results from the questionnaire have a direct impact on issues including pay and housing and the team behind the project want to see an increase on last year's 33 per cent response rate.

Meera Nayyar, the lead psychologist involved in creating the questionnaire, said: "Of all the surveys, the AFCAS is the single most important piece that we have to inform personnel policy."

"It covers the full breadth of terms and conditions of service and has the strongest impact on your day-to-day working lives, including when the Armed Forces Pay Review Body decides levels of pay."

The surveys were sent out on August 30 to a carefully-selected cross-section of the military.

Servicemen and women selected to take part can complete the forms during normal working hours and return them for free using supplied

pre-paid envelopes.

Nayyar added that although the number of people invited to complete the survey is small, a good response rate will provide a clear picture about the views of the Services as a whole.

"The sample is carefully designed to ensure the ten per cent we choose are an accurate representation of the Army," she said.

"We can make confident generalisations about the population based on a sample of only a tiny fraction of the Service."

"It is how individuals are selected to participate that is important, not how many are selected."

"If everyone responds and completes their survey, the data will provide a very accurate representation of the Army."

Topics covered by the AFCAS include views on the length and frequency of deployment; pay and X-Factor amounts; workload; and standards of accommodation.

All responses to the survey will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and no person within a soldier's chain of command will see them.

Data including trade, gender and rank will be included in the final results, but names will not.

For more information about the survey process, contact Nayyar on 01264 388762.

55 THE NUMBER, IN PERCENTAGE, OF RESPONDENTS TO THE 2009 ARMED FORCES CONTINUOUS ATTITUDE SURVEY WHO THOUGHT THAT THEIR OVERALL WORKLOAD WITHIN THE ARMY WAS ABOUT RIGHT

All change in senior rank reshuffle

EXPERIENCED officer Gen Sir Peter Wall will become the new Chief of the General Staff this month.

Gen Wall, who commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1974, takes over as head of the Army from Gen Sir David Richards who will take up the office of Chief of the Defence Staff.

Lt Gen Sir Nick Parker, currently deputy commander of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, will take over Gen Wall's old position as Commander-in-Chief Land Forces.

Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox said: "I am absolutely delighted with both of these appointments. We are very lucky to have men of such high calibre at this time."

Gen Wall has served in Belize, Rhodesia, Germany, Hong Kong, Bosnia and Iraq and is the Chief Royal Engineer.



● Gen Sir Peter Wall



● Lt Gen Sir Nick Parker

He is president of Army Rugby, Association Football, Modern Pentathlon and Sport Parachuting.

Lt Gen Parker, who will be promoted to general, commissioned in 1973 and has served in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan.



Picture: Copyright ODA 2008



London calling: Building work on venues for the 2012 Olympics is progressing on time and on budget

Games adopt Forces focus

THE Minister for Sport and the Olympics has pledged to put Britain's Servicemen and women at the very heart of the 2012 Games.

In an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, former Army officer Hugh Robertson said he wanted the showpiece event in London to give the British public a chance to salute their military.

The MP for Faversham and mid-Kent explained: "I want our Armed Forces to be at the centre of 2012 and play a major part in what's going on."

"I want this to be an occasion where the country can acknowledge their contribution. The exact scope of what they can do is something we are working on at the moment."

Robertson joined the Army in 1985 and admitted that the unrivalled opportunities to play sport and travel the world were high on the list of factors that convinced him to sign up.

He captained the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's cricket team before commissioning into The Life Guards in 1985.

And although deployments to Northern Ireland, the Gulf and Bosnia limited opportunities to further his own sporting ambitions, Robertson said he was not surprised that other soldiers ended up starring for their countries at the Olympics.

"The qualities you learn as a soldier are easily transferable to being an elite athlete," he added. "You must be able to work as a team but focus on your individual

task, have the desire to achieve and a single-minded dedication to what you are doing."

London 2012 could see a number of injured troops competing at the Paralympic Games and Robertson has promised them his full support.

He is planning a visit to Headley Court and has praised the work of the Battle Back set-up which provides sport and adventurous training opportunities to wounded personnel.

He said: "I have long thought that sport could be a really effective tool in helping people injured in Iraq or Afghanistan on the road to recovery."

"I will do all I can to support that and I will see what value I can add to that effort."

With the pressure to match the glamour of the 2008 Beijing Games high, Robertson assured British tax payers that the London Olympics will be much more financially viable.

He added: "The facilities are progressing fantastically well and, to date, the Olympic project is slightly ahead of time and on or near budget."

"Our challenge is to make this a Games that brings together the traditional and modern parts of British life."

The veteran also praised the current generation of Service personnel.

He said: "They are very similar to the troops I served with, but the task they are carrying out in Afghanistan is very different to the one in Northern Ireland, the Gulf and Bosnia."



NEWS IN BRIEF

A STUDY into the effectiveness of the Army's Personnel and Support Command (PSC) will lead to military and civilian post reductions, the Service has warned.

The in-depth look at the PSC, which is responsible for areas including a healthy inflow of recruits and public support, has been introduced to explore potential organisational and financial savings.

Any military staff who have their posts removed will be reassigned to other duties, with civilian staff moving into the redeployment pool.

MORE personnel are in line to receive medals for serving in Iraq and Afghanistan following a change in the eligibility rules.

The Queen has approved a new policy which will see soldiers and civil servants who have accrued 45 days in either theatre receive the respective Operational Service Medal.

Previously troops and civilian staff who did not deploy for a continuous period of 30 days failed to qualify for the awards.

The changes have been backdated to the start of operations in Afghanistan (September 11, 2001) and Iraq (January 20, 2003) and there is no time limit during which the qualification period must be achieved.

Serving personnel who believe they may now be eligible for the medals should apply through their unit administration staff. Veterans and civil servants should contact the MoD Medal Office on 0141 224 3600 or freephone 0800 085 3600.

THE Defence community is being urged to help save money by using military telephone numbers rather than their civilian equivalents.

All personnel should log onto the dDirectory on DII to make sure both their internal and external numbers are listed.

SOLDIERS based in Germany will have to retune their dials after a change in the frequencies used by British Forces Broadcasting Service's radio network.

The new frequencies, which are now live, are 91.3MHz for Rheindahlen; 104.0MHz for Niederkruchten; 92.5MHz for Dulmen; 101.9MHz for Wulfen; 105.1MHz for Rheinberg; and 106.0MHz for Dortmund.

FIFTEEN amputees will put their sub-aqua skills to the test during a week-long diving expedition later this month.

The former Servicemen and women are heading to the Red Sea in Hurghada, Egypt, to take part in the live-aboard Operation Equilibrium project being run by specialist company blue o two.

Organiser John Strutt said: "Scuba diving has a positive effect for the rehabilitation of Armed Forces [personnel] injured during conflicts both past or present."



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Picture: Mike Weston

PRIME Minister David Cameron inspects the latest generation of British Army officers during the Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Mr Cameron was joined at the prestigious facility by dignitaries including the Prime Minister of Bahrain and the King of Swaziland as 220 officer cadets, including 22 from overseas, earned their commissions. The officers will now begin Phase Two training and could be commanding troops on ops in Afghanistan within a year.

4 THE AMOUNT, IN MILLIONS OF POUNDS, THAT FORMER PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR HAS PLEDGED TO THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION TO HELP FUND A NEW REHABILITATION CENTRE. THE MONEY IS FROM AN ADVANCE PAYMENT FOR HIS MEMOIRS.

NEWS IN BRIEF

CHILDREN of Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers who were born outside the UK while their parent was on assignment overseas can apply for registration as British citizens.

A change in law introduced earlier this year meant youngsters born abroad after January 13 could apply for British nationality. The Home Office will now consider the cases of those born before that date up to the age of 18.

Download an application form from www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk or call 0845 010 5200.

MILITARY personnel who die on active service will be exempt from inheritance tax.

The move, which affects soldiers who are killed on operations or other military service the Treasury deems to carry the same risk, also applies to deaths caused by injuries or illnesses suffered in past campaigns, including the Falklands conflict, Korea and the Second World War.

Personnel killed in action in Iraq or Afghanistan qualify for the exemption, but those who died during peacetime activities or on training exercises do not.

THE Army's Non-Regular Permanent Staff scheme which sees ex-Regular and Reservist staff employed on full-time contracts is to end.

The set-up is being replaced by the Full-Time Reserve Service (Home Commitment) system which will offer renewable contracts subject to continuing need and good performance.

The change comes after a review of the current programme.

Museum scheme seeks troops' Afghan accounts

DEPLOYING soldiers are being encouraged to sign up for a groundbreaking project that aims to capture the reality of modern conflict for a major museum.

War Story has been set up with the full backing of the MoD to gather first-hand accounts of troops' experiences in Afghanistan for the Imperial War Museum (IWM).

The tales from theatre, along with physical items such as helmets and boots, will then feature in displays at IWM London and in an anthology due to be published in 2012.

Project manager Louise Skidmore told *Soldier* that *War Story* aimed to overcome the short-term nature of modern communication and provide current and future generations with a better idea of what serving on Op Herrick is really like.

She said: "We have tonnes of stuff from the First and Second World Wars but we realised there was a huge hole in contemporary items.

"Most of the material now is digital and we know that it tends to disappear within a couple of years. Letters aren't just put in an attic like they used to be."

Although museums usually rely on donations decades after conflicts have ended, *War Story* will enlist soldiers to help out while they are on tour.

Anyone signing up to the project can use film, art, photography or the written word to capture their own thoughts and experiences during their deployment.

The material can be logged onto a website or handed over during post-tour workshops, the first of which will involve personnel from 40 Commando who served on Op Herrick 12.

And because the Boeing Defence UK-sponsored scheme is endorsed by the MoD, the department has urged troops to make sure their unique stories are saved for posterity.

Maj Ben Walters (RRF) said: "The MoD fully supports this important and historic project. We are working with the IWM to capture the memories and

experiences of Service personnel from the current conflict in Afghanistan, recreating what our predecessors did in the First World War.

"It will provide an invaluable insight for the general public and will leave a historical record as a legacy for future generations."

Skidmore added: "We don't want to limit it to just digital material – we also want objects. A helmet is just a helmet until you explain the story behind the dents and scrapes on it.

"It's the personal experiences that allow people to relate to what the troops have been through and knowing that a soldier is from your area or was experiencing a particular emotion allows us to identify with them."

For more information, log on to www.iwm.org.uk/warstory or email warstory@iwm.org.uk

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IN MEMORIAM



SPR MARK SMITH (26)
36 ENGINEER REGIMENT,
ROYAL ENGINEERS
KIA JULY 26 – AFGHANISTAN

A ROYAL Engineer who specialised in searching for improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has died in Afghanistan.

Spr Mark Smith, of 36 Engineer Regiment, was conducting a clearance operation with the Counter-IED Task Force when he was killed by a smoke shell that fell short of its target.

The 26-year-old from Kent joined the Army in 2001 and had previously completed tours of Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2007.

Speaking on behalf of Spr Smith's family, a close friend said: "Mark Smith was truly unique. His cheeky grin could light up a room and his zest for life was an inspiration to us all."

Spr Smith joined 36 Engr Regt after qualifying as a combat engineer and

communications and information systems operator. After returning from Op Herrick in 2007, he successfully completed a course to become a searcher with the Royal Engineer Search Team which helps locate IEDs.

Capt Robert Dunford, second-in-command of the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group in theatre, said: "[Spr Smith] was inevitably the first to volunteer for any task and would then never disappoint with both his competence and thoroughness."

Lt Col Simon Hulme, commanding officer of 36 Engr Regt, said: "The phrase 'real character' has been used so often that it has begun to sound banal, yet in the case of Spr Smith it could not have greater resonance."



LSGT DALE MCCALLUM (31)
1ST BATTALION,
SCOTS GUARDS
KIA AUGUST 1 – AFGHANISTAN

SMALL arms fire has claimed the life of a Jamaican-born soldier who had excelled throughout his Army career.

LSgt Dale McCallum, of 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, was taking part in an operation to provide security to residents in Lashkar Gah when he suffered a fatal gunshot wound.

The 31-year-old's family said: "Dale was a wonderful father, brilliant brother and loving son. He was cherished and highly-respected by everyone that knew him."

LSgt McCallum enlisted in the Army in 1998, quickly developing a reputation for being immensely fit, strong and robust.

He deployed to Kosovo in 1999, earned the rank of lance corporal in 2002 and completed a

tour of Iraq in 2003. He was promoted to lance sergeant in 2006 and was due to become a sergeant in October this year.

Lt Col Lincoln Jopp, commanding officer of 1 SG, said: "LSgt McCallum was a wicked man to go drinking with despite the fact he never touched a drop. At work, though, he was quiet. I never once heard him raise his voice or lose his temper. He had control."

Maj Rupert Kitching, officer commanding left flank, 1 SG, said: "Dale was one in a million and his boots will be exceptionally hard to fill. He was a man mountain but with a true heart, caring deeply for his men."

Sgt Tony Gibson recalled: "[His] infectious smile brightened up any situation."



LT JOHN SANDERSON (29)
1ST BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
DIED AUGUST 11 – BIRMINGHAM

AN officer who was utterly committed to Britain's mission in Afghanistan died from injuries suffered in an IED blast.

Lt John Sanderson (29) was wounded in an explosion in the Nahr-e-Saraj district of Helmand province on July 13 and was evacuated to the UK for treatment before losing his fight for life on August 11.

The United States-born member of 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment joined the Army in 2009 and had led his platoon through pre-deployment training in Kenya before leaving for Op Herrick 12.

He had previously left the Royal Marines' officer training course because of a broken ankle.

In a statement, his family said: "John loved

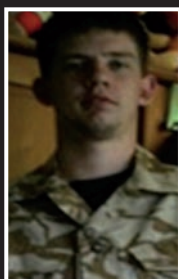
his Army career and was enthusiastically committed to his men and particularly his and their role in Afghanistan."

Lt Col Andy Hadfield, commanding officer of 1 Mercian, described the officer as "big hearted, strong and imaginative".

He added: "He cared deeply for his men; they responded brilliantly to his loyalty."

Maj Rich Grover, officer commanding B (Malta) Company, said: "A truly inspirational leader, his men would follow him anywhere and for anything."

LCpl Richie O'Connell recalled: "He always genuinely took an interest in all of his men, not just their professional lives but their private lives as well."



SPR DARREN FOSTER (20)
21 ENGINEER REGIMENT,
ROYAL ENGINEERS
KIA AUGUST 13 – AFGHANISTAN

A YOUNG soldier who showed a "great deal of promise" died after being shot while manning a sangar in Helmand province.

Spr Darren Foster, originally from Carlisle, suffered a gunshot wound in the incident in Sangin and was flown to Camp Bastion where he died from his injuries.

The 20-year-old had been in the Army since 2008 and had qualified as a combat engineer and military fabricator before joining 21 Engineer Regiment in May this year.

He had been working to upgrade Patrol Base Sangin Fulod into a company-sized location.

Lt Col Bobby Walton-Knight, commanding officer of 21 Engr Regt, said: "He was never one to shy away from work or to leave a task half

done; his section knew it and they loved him for it. His motivation, professionalism and his pride marked him out."

Capt Greg Harris, battlegroup engineer for Combined Forces Sangin, added: "He was hard working and his contribution to the team effort ensured that he was well respected by his fellow engineers."

Recalling Spr Foster as being "wide-eyed and apprehensive" after joining the Army, Spr Mark Kiseljov said his comrade had soon demonstrated his aptitude for military life.

He explained: "He was always ahead of the game and preparing for his next task. This was a sign of his potential and demonstrated his aspirations for a long career."



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IN MEMORIAM



RFN REMAND KULUNG (27)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES
DIED AUGUST 12 – BIRMINGHAM

A "SINCERE and devoted" Gurkha died when a Chinook helicopter collided with the sangar he was manning in Helmand province.

Rfn Remand Kulung, who was attached to 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment with G (Tobruk) Company of 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, was carrying out sentry duty when the accident happened on August 10, causing the sangar to collapse.

He was evacuated to Camp Bastion before being flown on to the United Kingdom where he died two days later.

His wife Sophy said: "He sacrificed his great life while he was doing his duty. His passing has left me the reason to be proud of being the wife of a brave soldier like him."

Lt Col Andy Hadfield, commanding officer of 1 Mercian, remembered Rfn Kulung as a courageous, fit and highly-capable soldier.

He added: "He had a lively nature and lifted the morale of those around him, whether Nepali or British."

Maj Nick Aucott, officer commanding G (Tobruk) Company, said: "Remand had soldiered with us in the difficult conditions of the Upper Gereshk Valley for four months, never uttering a word of complaint, but instead offering advice or a kind word, teasing and joking with his platoon and fighting bravely against a skilful enemy."

"This is how he will be remembered; as a man that simply got on with his job."



SPR ISHWOR GURUNG (21)
69 GURKHA FIELD SQUADRON,
21 ENGINEER REGIMENT
KIA AUGUST 13 – AFGHANISTAN

A PROMISING soldier and keen sportsman died after being shot in a small arms attack in southern Afghanistan.

Spr Ishwor Gurung, of 69 Gurkha Field Squadron, 21 Engineer Regiment, was helping to increase protection at Forward Operating Base Shahzad in south west Helmand province when he was hit.

The 21-year-old passed selection for the Brigade of Gurkhas in 2007 and completed infantry training at Catterick and combat engineer training at Minley before joining 69 Gurkha Fd Sqn, where he specialised as a concreter and bricklayer.

His family said: "He loved the Army and was very proud to be a Gurkha."

Lt Col Bobby Walton-Knight, commanding officer of 21 Engineer Regiment Group, added: "His enthusiasm was infectious. He was modest to a fault, polite and, even when covered in dust and mud, still managed to be immaculately turned out."

Spr Gurung was a talented cross-country runner and boxer and had already been earmarked for promotion.

Capt Yambahadur Pun, The Queen's Gurkha Engineers, said: "He threw himself wholeheartedly into everything he did and his zest for life and enthusiasm was an inspiration to all those around him."

"His passing leaves a void in our lives and we will always have fond memories of him."

Guards keep Helmand highway open



Picture: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC

Making inroads: British troops patrol Route 601

DEDICATED British and Afghan troops have helped boost Helmand's economy by allowing a major access road to stay open.

Soldiers from B Company, 1st Battalion, Scots Guards and The Royal Dragoon Guards have been working alongside Afghan National Security Forces to improve freedom of movement along Route 601 in the centre of the province.

Operating from a base halfway along the highway, the personnel patrol on foot and in Mastiff and Jackal armoured vehicles to ensure there are no blockages and to prevent improvised explosive devices from being placed.

Base commander Capt Neil Gow (1 SG) said the joint patrols helped to reassure the local population about the security situation.

He added: "It also allows us to build up as much information as we can from the ground about what is going on."

"When we first moved here we had a lot of information about where the problems were and where the hot spots were. By going out on the ground, firstly you can see what is going on and

secondly you [get] a chance to see if things are improving."

Route 601 is a Tarmac road that connects Lashkar Gah in Helmand province with Kandahar city to the east.

It serves as an important transport link for International Security Assistance Forces as well as a commercial route for Afghan civilians.

In addition to keeping the highway open, troops have worked alongside villagers living near their patrol base on a host of redevelopment projects.

Tpr Chris Gregory (RDG) said: "We went down to see [them] and said we could offer projects where we pay them to work on their own fields to give them good water supplies so they can grow better crops and basically improve their standard of living."

Capt Gow added that he was already seeing his personnel's work having a positive impact on the population.

He explained: "It has made a big difference – people come up to you and say that since we've been here they've had no drama with the Taliban. Clearly there are a few hot spots, but it has been a warm reception."



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NEWS IN BRIEF

THE Prince of Wales led a service in London to mark the 65th anniversary of Victory in Japan Day.

Prince Charles was joined by hundreds of current and ex-Servicemen and women for the event at the Cenotaph which commemorated the 30,000 British losses suffered in the Far East, 12,500 of them as prisoners of war.

Prime Minister David Cameron said: "We must never forget the sacrifices made and the dedication shown by those who served our country in the Second World War."

TROOPS deploying to theatre are taking advantage of a £186,000 upgrade to passenger facilities at RAF Brize Norton.

Eight new games consoles and 12 computers with free internet access are now on offer at the facility, which handles 15,000 passengers every month.

BRITISH soldiers have taken control of a new battlegroup area of operations.

The troops, from 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, are now in charge of an area between Nad-e-Ali and Babaji district which remains a focus for insurgent activity.

The 2 Lancs contingent are currently serving in Afghanistan as the Theatre Reserve Battalion.

Tragic medic's Service support

A DOCTOR killed in an insurgent attack in Afghanistan was a keen devotee of the British Armed Forces, it has emerged.

In an email forwarded to *Soldier* by Dr Karen Woo's friend Mike King, the medical professional described members of 8 Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps, as "absolutely superb".

Dr Woo had been working with the loggies to deliver vital medicine to three hospitals in Kabul in May, three months before she was among ten people murdered in an ambush in Nuristan.

Her email read: "All I can say is that the lads were absolutely superb on every front, extremely professional and every inch a credit to the Armed Forces."

"I was proud to accompany them as we visited each hospital in turn."

Dr Woo had approached the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul through Mr King to ask for help in getting pharmaceuticals to the Wasir Akbar Khan, Ibne Sina and Indira Gandhi Children's Hospitals.

The request was granted and a team of troops from 8 Regt RLC accompanied her on a recce through the capital before escorting her on the

mission to distribute the drugs.

Mr King said that several of the soldiers Dr Woo worked with even made donations to her cause out of their own pockets.

He added: "Karen was a strong Army supporter and had absolutely no hesitation in working with them to get the job done."

"I feel the same. I'm very proud of the troops and think they are the best thing we have in Afghanistan. They are the best weapons out there even without weapons in their hands because they will do things like helping Karen for no recognition or reward."

Mr King told *Soldier* that he wants Dr Woo's good work to be continued and praised the medical practitioner for giving up a well-paid job in private healthcare to head to Afghanistan.

At the time of her death, Mr King and Dr Woo had been working together to deliver a large quantity of medical supplies for civilian use in Afghanistan.

He explained: "She could have taken the easy life in London but she chose not to and I respect her for that."

"I was concerned for her safety, but if she was ever scared she never showed it or talked about it."



Record-breaking rowers pull in the pounds

TWO Army doctors who became the first people to row continuously and unsupported around Great Britain have raised more than £20,000 for Service charities.

Capt Nick Dennison and Capt Hamish Reid (pictured, both RAMC) took on the 2,100-mile challenge after discussing potential expeditions during their training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

And after setting themselves a target of completing the mission in between 45 and 60 days, the duo were delighted to arrive at the finish line in Lynton, Hampshire, after 50 days at sea, setting a new world record in the process.

The pair's fund-raising haul has been split between Help for Heroes and ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

"It has been great to be back," Capt Dennison told *Soldier*. "We had no idea how long it would take when we set off because it had never been done before."

"We weren't rowing in a straight line and the weather and tides affect your speed, but we thought 60 days was the absolute limit."

Because rowing solo proved more effective than rowing as a pair, the officers operated a two-hours-on, two-hours-off schedule that saw them taking

up the oars for up to 20 hours a day.

Their downtime was spent catching up on sleep, preparing food and drink for the other team member and doing maintenance work on the 24-foot vessel.

Capt Dennison (pictured below left) added: "We tried to use that schedule as much as possible because it meant the boat was always going forward."

"If the boat was going backwards during stronger tides we would put the anchor down and spend more time rowing together."

"The hardest point was the 0200 to 0400 shift when it's just about too late for it to be a late night and too early for an early-morning start so your body is constantly trying to fall asleep on you."

As well as the physical challenge posed by the row, the record-breakers had to contend with constant chores and the isolation of being in a confined space with one other person for such a long period of time.

But despite the potential for argument, Capt Dennison said the pair got

on well and used their military training to keep them on track.

He explained: "I would be lying if I said we didn't disagree, but to finish it we had to work together."

"There were times when we felt tired and hungry but we finished without having any blazing rows."

"From the military point of view I know what it's like to feel uncomfortable for a long period of time."

"Also, military admin skills were important, but we are both determined chaps and there was never a point when I was willing to throw the towel in."

Despite not long being back on dry land, Capt Dennison has already set his sights on embarking on another adventure.

"There are no more record attempts planned yet," he said. "But I am keen to get involved in more expeditions. That being said, I'm not planning to get back in a boat any time soon."

● To donate, visit www.rowforheroes.com



NEWS IN BRIEF

ARMY Physical Training Corps soldiers raised more than £1,000 for charity by completing a four-and-a-half-mile fire engine pull in Germany.

An 18-strong team dragged the 14-tonne machine from Gutersloh train station to their base at the Princess Royal Barracks in a time of 1hr 57min.

The money has been divided between the Gutersloh soup kitchen and the local Haig Primary School.

SOLDIERS will get free tickets to a production labelled by incoming Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Sir David Richards as "crucial".

The Tricycle Theatre has joined forces with Tickets for Troops to offer personnel entry to *The Great Game*, a series of 12 short plays which create an educational drama about the culture and history of Afghanistan.

Since being set up last year, Tickets for Troops has offered Servicemen and women free entry into a host of top sporting, theatrical and musical events.

For more information about the scheme or the offer for *The Great Game*, visit the website at www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk

CADETS are being challenged to raise money for a Service charity by signing up to a new national project.

Members of the North West London Army Cadet Force were the first to join Target125, an initiative which will see funds donated to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help and cadet units.

The appeal coincides with the charity's 125th anniversary and all units taking up the challenge will receive a special pack containing posters, balloons and a fund-raising guide as well as a letter of thanks from a serving member of the Armed Forces.

To take part in the scheme, units should complete the online registration form at www.ssafa125.org.uk



Main picture: Steve Dock; Inset: David Pratt

TRIPLE amputee Cpl Andy Reid gets some last-minute instructions ahead of a fund-raising parachute jump (inset) with The Tigers, the freefall display team of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. Cpl Reid, of 3rd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, was one of 60 people to leap from 13,000 feet during a jump day which made £12,000 for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. Visit www.soldierscharity.org/get-involved/get-active/get-extreme for details of the next event.

Soldier joins flood relief effort

SERVICEMAN LCpl Gary Brown (HCR) sacrificed a week of his summer leave to help the relief effort in Pakistan following last month's floods.

The medic formed part of a 20-man deployment from the Emergency Response Team Search and Rescue charity and delivered humanitarian aid to the country's Sindh province.

LCpl Brown was due back from Pakistan as this issue went to press but he spoke to *Soldier* on the eve of his departure about the challenges he expected to face.

"When you deploy on international operations you are working with NGOs from around the world," he said.

"It is a big learning curve to see how other people deal with medical problems of this type. I think it will

make me improve as a medic and will help me treat people better.

"My Army background will be very useful. I can do admin in the field and the situation in Pakistan can change in a second.

"Having that military discipline will allow me to react faster and hopefully I can do some good."

LCpl Brown has been a volunteer with the charity for two years and his latest deployment saw him working in a small team that was responsible for transporting aid, collecting injured people and providing vital medical care via boat.

He was also part of the relief effort following the Haiti earthquake and offered his assistance in the UK after the heavy snowfalls earlier this year.



Garden's force for good

A SERVICE charity has installed a new outdoor area to help veterans suffering from psychological problems.

The leafy area (pictured left), which has been set up at Combat Stress's Tyrwitt House in Leatherhead, was dreamt up by professional designer Fi Boyle.

Using a gentle and flowing style, every aspect of the garden has only been included after careful consideration as to how it will aid soldiers.

All benches back directly on to walls so that there is no space where an improvised explosive device could be hidden and the installation contains clear lines of sight.

Water features provide areas for contemplation and even the foliage has been specially selected so that there are no reds or oranges on show.

The garden's grass is covered with wire mesh to allow for year-round access for wheelchair users and an oak tree purchased by veterans helped by Combat Stress takes pride of place at the centre of the area.

The garden, which is overlooked by Tyrwitt House's activity centre, was moved to Surrey after originally featuring at the 2010 Royal Horticultural Society Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

● www.combatstress.org.uk

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Fuel Consumption for the all-new Volvo S60 in mpg (l/100 Km): Urban 19.5(14.5) – 40.9(6.9), Extra Urban 38.7(7.3) – 67.3(4.2), Combined 28.5(9.9) – 53.3(5.3), CO2 Emissions 231 – 139 g/km.

NEWS IN BRIEF

AN ARMED Forces charity has been chosen as the first recipient of an international group's quarter-of-a-million pound grant.

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help will receive £250,000 from The Freemasons' Grand Charity, which is designed to benefit communities and encourage grass-roots funding.

SSAFA will use the cash to support veterans throughout its network of almost 100 branches.

Chairman Gen Sir Kevin O'Donoghue said: "We are very grateful to The Freemasons' Grand Charity for this generous grant.

"Recent and current conflicts mean that our services need to be tailored to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of our clients of all ages."

TERRITORIAL Army training provides an £8,000 boost to part-time soldiers' employers, according to new research.

The study by Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SabRE) has revealed that the transferable skills and experience gained by TA troops would cost companies thousands of pounds to buy.

Key competences including team-working and communication were among those developed by personnel during their military training according to the study, which has been endorsed by the Chartered Management Institute.

Lead researcher Jacqui Fairbrass explained: "Training may be undertaken in military uniform, but the skills developed are equally applicable to the office or factory floor."

SabRE has now produced a series of guides to help employers better understand the benefits Reservist soldiers get from their Service training. The 17 leaflets are available to download from www.sabre.mod.uk/guides

A SENIOR NCO enjoyed a taste of the motoring high life after winning the use of a brand-new luxury car over a long weekend.

Sgt Elson James (R Signals) was handed the keys to a Jaguar XF for four days after he was successful in a raffle run by Forces Cars Direct.

He said: "My colleagues were trying to book me as their chauffeur for the weekend so that they could be seen in this quality car.

"I think they were all a little bit envious that I was the one driving it and not them."

SERVICEMEN and women are being offered a four-per-cent discount on any apartment at a new development in Penrith, Cumbria.

Builder Russell Arner Homes' offer is open to all Regular personnel buying a property at Lady Anne Court.

For more information, contact the company on 01539 724282 or phone Kerry on 07917 348015 to arrange a viewing.

Picture: Shane Wilkinson, MoD



Catch of the day: CSgt Vince Bowerman (4 Rifles) takes advantage of the Fishing for Forces scheme

Reel treat for returning troops

SOLDIERS are being given the chance to get hooked on angling thanks to a new charity initiative.

Fishing for Forces has been set up to provide free waterside sessions for personnel who have recently returned from Afghanistan.

The project was dreamt up by Bill Howell and Christopher Robinson after the pair read a letter in *Trout and Salmon* magazine from Lt Will Davis, of The Royal Dragoon Guards, about how the pastime kept him inspired while serving on Op Herrick.

Robinson, whose son is currently deployed in Helmand, said: "I read the letter and wrote to the magazine saying it [would be] fantastic if people in the UK could give members of our Forces some fishing when they got back.

"It's a chance to relax, forget about the stresses and strains of operations and have a quiet day out on the water."

Maj Derek Saunders, who helped coordinate a fishing trip for soldiers from 4 Rifles and 26 Engineer Regiment, described the activity as "the best stress-buster going", adding: "Fishing is a sport that puts the angler in beautiful surroundings in all weathers. That's great for those who have returned from ops."

Fishing for Forces is looking for people to donate equipment or venues.

For more information or to offer your help, contact Howell for kit donations on 02073 852135 or billhowell@lineone.net or Robinson for fisheries and venues on 01488 689701 or fishingforforces@roxtons.com

Win... Exclusive Jelly Belly selection box

THE standard of kit piled into soldiers' Black Bags ahead of operational deployments provided us with the inspiration we needed to come up with last month's spine line competition.

Each of the names featured on the side of our cover – Karrimor SF, Iowa, Meindl, Blackhawk and Gerber – are manufacturers who make some of the £3,000 worth of items in the holdall.

If you missed your chance to enter,

fear not as the cover of this issue has the latest competition adorning its side.

Gourmet jelly bean maker Jelly Belly, www.jellybelly-uk.com, has again supplied a box of its tasty sweet treats for one lucky winner who can tell us the link between the names printed along the spine.

Entries on a postcard to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk to reach us by Thursday, September 30. Usual rules apply.



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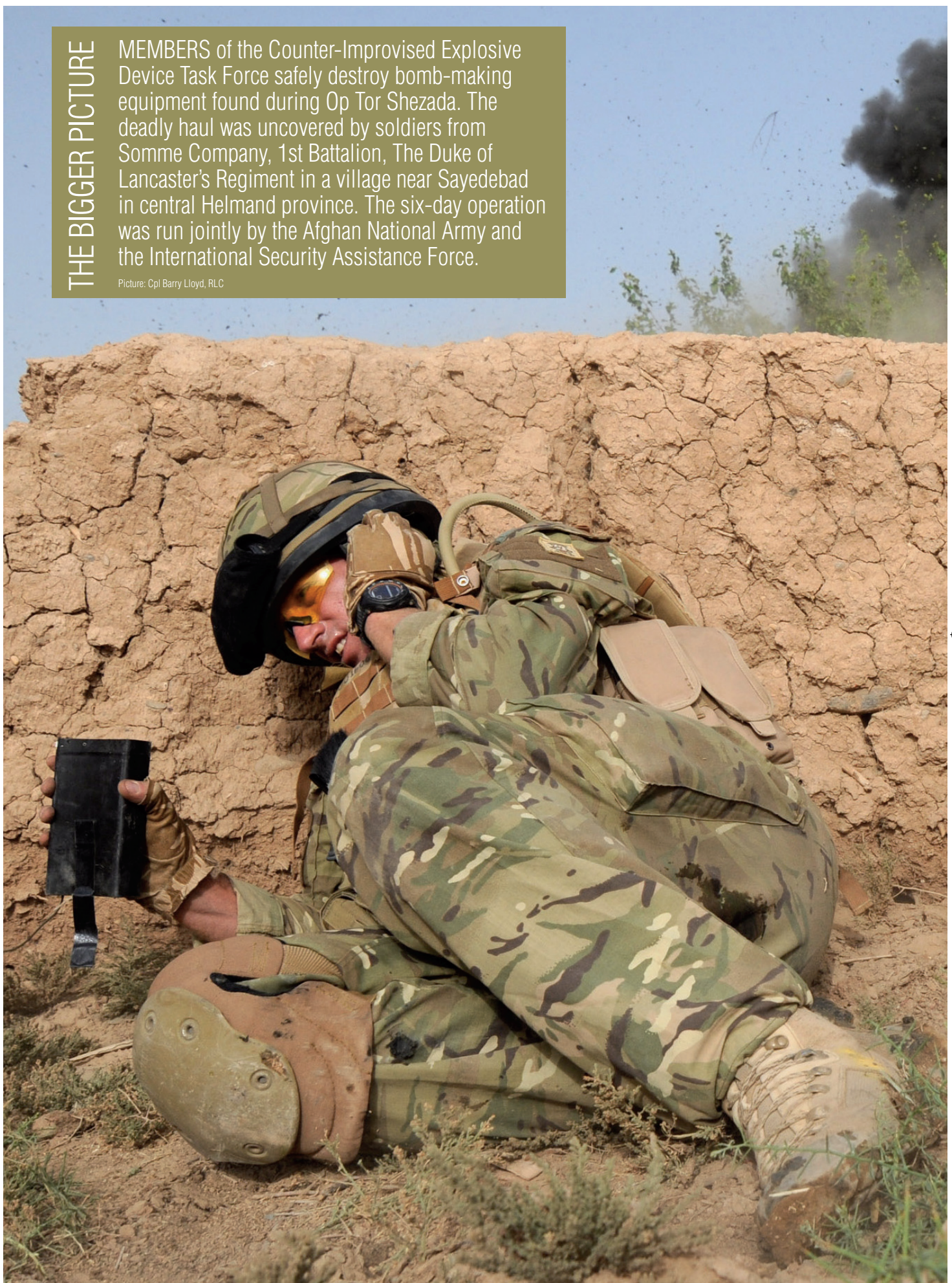
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THE BIGGER PICTURE

MEMBERS of the Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Task Force safely destroy bomb-making equipment found during Op Tor Shezada. The deadly haul was uncovered by soldiers from Somme Company, 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment in a village near Sayedebad in central Helmand province. The six-day operation was run jointly by the Afghan National Army and the International Security Assistance Force.

Picture: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC







ENCORE PERFORMANCE

**AIRBORNE BRIGADE PREPARES TO LIFT
THE CURTAIN ON THEATRE RETURN**





Main picture, Ready for action:
Troops from 1 R Irish board
a Chinook support helicopter
during 16 Air Assault Brigade's
final pre-deployment training
exercise on Salisbury Plain

Picture: Sgt Adrian Harlen, RLC

Below, Fully prepared:
Brig James Chiswell,
commander of 16 Air Assault
Brigade, believes training for
deployments to Afghanistan
is getting "better and better"

Picture: Richard Watts





Report: Richard Long
Main picture: Steve Dock

AS the British Army maintains its commitment to creating stability across Afghanistan, operational commitments for soldiers on the ground come thick and fast.

Personnel from 16 Air Assault Brigade will be the next to deploy to the heart of Helmand province and every effort has been made to ensure one of the UK's prime rapid reaction forces is ready for the challenge ahead.

But heading to the area is far from a trip into the unknown for this brigade as October marks the start of their fourth deployment since 2002.

With such vast experience behind them, these soldiers have a fair idea of what to expect. But nothing has been left to chance with regards to their preparations and training for Operation Herrick 13.

The cycle began with four separate exercises in Kenya and the mission-specific training that followed has had an obvious focus on the

challenge posed by Afghanistan.

Soldiers have been drilled in driving and patrol skills and have engaged in exercises that saw them interacting with Afghan nationals in a similar way to how they will when they deploy.

A strong emphasis has also been placed on learning languages, with 540 troops being taught Pashto and others taking up Dari.

"I would say it is coming together very well," brigade commander Brig James Chiswell told *Soldier* during the final training exercise on Salisbury Plain.

"My sense is that we have a force which is respectful for the challenges that lay ahead, has a professional resolve and, at the end of the training, is feeling confident about what it has to do.

"As we expected, the training gets better and better, the facilities are better and the understanding about how to train is improving."

The brigade returned from Afghanistan in October 2008 and the time between tours has been spent wrapping-up the final details of the previous deployment as well as offering sport, adventurous

training and career courses.

With the operational focus now returning, the brigade commander has clear aims and objectives for the six-month tour.

"Continuity is the key thing," he said. "We are taking on the mantle from 4th Mechanised Brigade and we want to carry on the fantastic progress they are making.

"We are engaged in a contest of wills in terms of the extreme ideology being pushed by the insurgents and the more stable opportunity being pushed by the government of Afghanistan.

"The key battle is in the minds of the people in the middle ground, whichever way they go determines who will prevail.

"Protecting the people is not an end in itself, it is about giving them the confidence to support the Afghan Government."

Brig Chiswell stressed the importance of operating with a collaborative mindset in which troops will work in partnership with the Afghan Police and National Army, provincial reconstruction teams and non-governmental



Mission specific: Soldiers from 2 R Irish disembark from an RAF Merlin helicopter, and far left, members of 16 AA Bde involved in various serials during the formation's pre-deployment training

Pictures: Steve Dock, Sgt Adrian Harlen (RLC) and Cpl Rupert Frere (RLC)

UNITS OF 16 AIR ASSAULT BRIGADE

- > D SON, HCR
- > 7 PARA REGT RHA
- > 21 AIR ASSAULT BTY RA
- > 23 ENGR REGT (AIR ASSAULT), RE
- > 216 (PARA) HQ AND SIG SON, R SIGNALS
- > 5 SCOTS
- > 1 R IRISH
- > 2 PARA
- > 3 PARA
- > PATHFINDER GRP
- > 3 AAC
- > 4 AAC
- > 9 AAC
- > 13 AIR ASSAULT SP REGT, RLC
- > 16 MED REGT
- > 7 (AIR ASSAULT) BN REME
- > 156 PRO COY, RMP



organisations based in the country.

"There is a professional resolve," he said. "The security situation is difficult but we do difficult, that is why we are there."

"There is a healthy respect for the challenges that lay ahead. The guys have got a sense of confidence from the training provided and I think there is an understanding of the importance of this enterprise."

Great care has been taken to ensure that all elements of the brigade receive the relevant training needed and Sgt Mark Blayney (QARANC) told *Soldier* nothing has been ignored ahead of the latest deployment.

"We have gone through every aspect of medical care from advanced trauma to environmental health issues and tropical medicine courses," he explained.

Having completed two previous Herrick tours the NCO is well aware of what to expect and,

although he will be performing a new role this time around, the core aim remains the same.

"It will be a different tour but the fundamental principle is the same – to give the very best medical care to anyone who requires it," he said.

"One of the main motivating factors for any young soldier leaving a forward operating base and going out on the ground is the knowledge that that support is there."

"It is nothing short of an absolute privilege to be a small part of the medical chain. We give 100 per cent to the guys who need it and that can only be a good thing."

Another aspect of training has seen soldiers from Op Herrick 11 briefing colleagues about their experiences and imparting words of wisdom that could ultimately prove vital.

LCpl "Wee G" Parsons (R Signals), part of the counter-IED task force, was on hand to offer expert advice on one of the most important jobs in

Helmand and believes returning personnel play a key role for those about to deploy.

"A lot of the guys are apprehensive ahead of their first tour but everyone wants to go as it is an opportunity to put the training into practice," he said. "Before I deployed it was quite unnerving but a lot of the guys who came back put my mind at ease, like I am doing now. It gave me the confidence to go and do my job in some quite arduous circumstances."

"This is one of the most valuable parts of the training process."

"I am here to pass on my experience of the tour. I am trying to keep them all aware of the latest threats in theatre and give them the heads up of what to expect when they are out there."

As the operational cycle keeps turning, it is clear that troops have never been better prepared for life in Afghanistan.

That certainly applies to the personnel of 16 Air Assault Brigade. They know what to expect and the intensive training they have received means they are ready to meet those challenges head-on. ■

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PASS MASTERS

BUSIER-THAN-EVER DRIVING SCHOOL
HELPS SOLDIERS HIT THE OPEN ROAD



Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

FOR many British teenagers, turning 17 is one of the most eagerly-awaited milestones of their young lives.

Sixteen may mark the beginning of adulthood and reaching 18 brings with it a host of privileges, but it is the year in between that sees young people legally allowed to strap themselves into the driver's seat of a car.

Before hitting the open road, however, would-be motorists have to negotiate the task of actually learning to drive.

For those on civvy street, lessons usually entail a comfortable few months of gear changes, hill starts and emergency stops before they are ready to showcase their talents with an examiner sat beside them.

But for the young men and women of the military, things progress at a much quicker pace. Service drivers master their art at the Defence School of Transport (DST) in Leconfield, near Hull, where many personnel progress from motoring novices to multi-licence-holders in just a few months.

The tempo is rapid, but for DST licence acquisition squadron training manager Gavin Dalton, producing skilled and confident drivers is a necessity for an operationally-busy Armed Forces.

"A lot of kids come here at 17 having never driven before and in three months they have all their licences," the former Royal Air Force officer explained. "Not long after that they could be behind the wheel in Afghanistan."

"It's a bit of a sausage factory when you consider the amount of licences we deliver, but it works really well."

Mr Dalton's description of DST's Driver Training Wing (DTW) – the world's largest driving school and the department responsible for delivering basic lessons and tests – as a "sausage factory" is backed up by the numbers involved.

Using civilian instructors and taking exactly the same tests as those outside the military, DST helps its students qualify for more than 10,000 licences every year.

At any one time, 200 learners can be out and about on the roads around DST's Normandy Barracks in one of the school's 1,300-strong vehicle fleet as they attempt to gain licences for everything from cars to minibuses and lorries.

Those enrolled at the DTW also learn military-specific skills including how to conceal and camouflage their vehicles and even how to drive in a convoy using a network of computers and a piece of software controlled using steering wheels and pedals.

And while successfully passing a driving test spells the end of the learning road for the majority of British drivers, for Servicemen and women it is just the start.

Graduates from the DTW develop an operational focus for their new-found skills at the Advanced Training Wing (ATW), whose job it is to ensure that military drivers are able to safely and effectively steer their vehicles in the unique environments found in an operational theatre.

Expert instructors from all three Services provide tuition on a fleet of operationally-active vehicles ranging from quad bikes and Springer buggies to Mastiff armoured personnel carriers.

Constant developments and refinements in the shape of urgent operational requirements (UORs) mean that the training has to be frequently refreshed, but Vehicle Division training officer Capt Paul Eaton (RLC) said his team was more than up to the task.

"This is an immense job and what we have to do constantly evolves, but we are very proficient at it," he said. "A UOR can come out on the Sunday and we'll be training with it on the Monday – it's very much flash to bang."

"We have more than 40 instructors dealing with that side of life and we also handle the steady state stuff such as advanced driving instruction and driving instructor training."

"The need to improve standards has evolved massively and it is a big challenge. We all work hard but then everyone here knows how important the end result is."

Although the instruction at the ATW contains a mixture of theory and practical sessions, as much as 80 per cent of each course is spent on the road to make the training as hands-on as possible.

And while nothing can replace the experience of

driving in theatre, Leconfield's 800-acre training area is certainly the next best thing.

Purpose-built obstacles, including tight, claustrophobic alleyways, stretches filled with soft sand, rough tracks and water obstacles have been installed to replicate some of the conditions found in southern Afghanistan.

The Herrick flavour also extends to the instructors themselves. Each of the teachers are expert drivers with recent operational experience which is passed directly onto trainees as well as those learning to be instructors themselves.

And far from resting on its laurels, Capt Eaton told *Soldier* that staff from the ATW frequently deploy to theatre to gauge how effective their training is and see how it can be developed.

Taking on potholes, pedestrians and other road users makes learning to drive a tough task for most of society.

Getting behind the wheel of a multi-million pound vehicle knowing that you can add enemy fire, IEDs and an ever-changing landscape to that list is a much more daunting proposition.

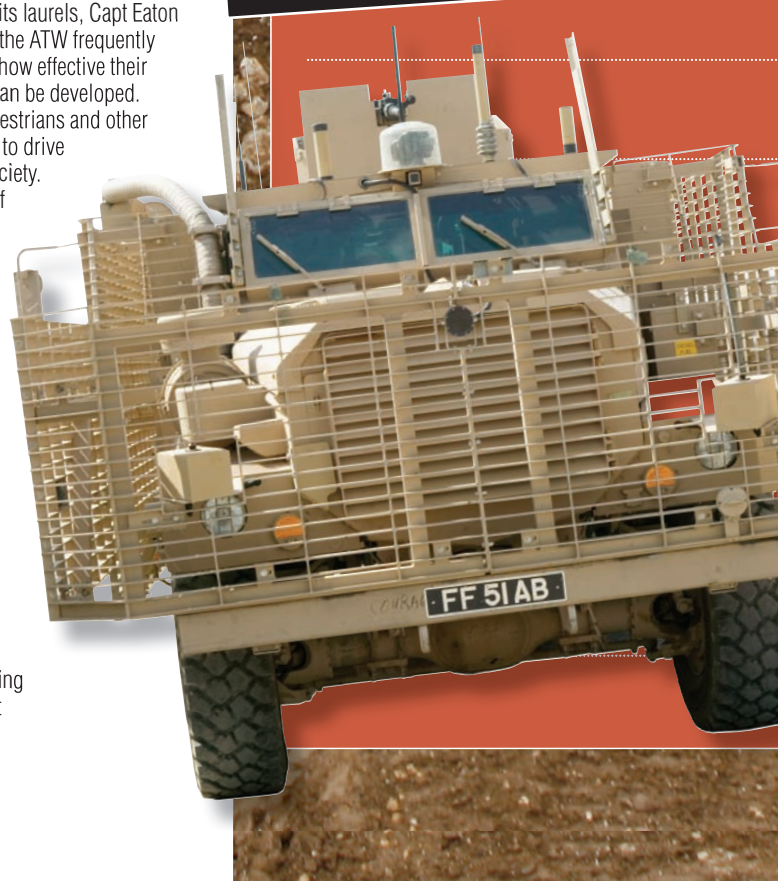
But while the challenge is great, so too is the training provided at the Defence School of Transport.

Whether they are riding a quad bike in a forward operating base or steering a Mastiff through enemy territory, Service drivers head out on operations having passed the world's toughest driving test. ■

'IT'S A BIT OF A SAUSAGE FACTORY WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE AMOUNT OF LICENCES WE DELIVER'

Rough terrain: A purpose-built off-road track containing hills, ditches and flat sections provides operationally-relevant training to drivers of vehicles including the Jackal 2

DST IN NUMBERS





DUTY OF CARE



5.5
MILLION

The number of miles driver training vehicles from DST travel every year

5 5 0 0 0 0 0

16,000

The number of trainees who pass through the school annually



10,000

The number of driving licences granted to successful trainees each year



1,400

The approximate number of staff delivering the training



1,300

The size of DST's training vehicle fleet



50

The amount, in acres, of tree plantations at the school. DST runs an active conservation group



18

The amount, in kilometres, of cross-country training circuits on site



16

The amount, in kilometres, of road training circuits at DST



WITH many of DST's students heading to Leconfield at the start of their Service careers, the school goes to great lengths to ensure they are well looked after.

The Student Focus Team, part of the Driver Training Wing, provides a central point of contact for any personnel with welfare issues.

Capt Mark Jackson (RLC), the man in charge of the three-person team, said the transitional nature of the school makes the organisation vital.

"The students can be here for between 16 and 26 weeks and we want to provide an anchor for them throughout that period," he explained. "We try to lighten the load so that they can get through training as quickly as possible.

"I came from 16 Air Assault Brigade to here and this is busier. It can sometimes just be simple things, but if you deal with them at a low level it stops them progressing into something more serious."

Nepalese soldiers are also taken into account thanks to the school's Gurkha Troop, which teaches 48 students how to drive during four annual courses.



Mastiff man

Bullish senior NCO drives armoured vehicle's evolution

Interview: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

DISCUSS the pros and cons of the British Army's Mastiff armoured patrol vehicle with serving soldiers and you would be hard pushed to find any dissenting voices.

From its unrivalled blast protection to its suite of hi-tech gadgetry, the six-wheel-drive beast's combination of power and precision has made it an operational favourite.

But its popularity with troops is no coincidence. Since the British military first enlisted US firm Force Protection's Cougar and asked NP Aerospace to adapt it, one Serviceman has been at the heart of the mission to make Mastiff a Herrick hero.

WO2 Darren Huggill (The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards), urgent operational requirement warrant officer at the Defence School of Transport's Advanced Training Wing, leads the team responsible for teaching crews how to use the vehicles.

And such is his intimate knowledge of the platform, WO2 Huggill is known throughout the Army – and beyond – as Mr Mastiff.

"It's not a title I've given myself, but I'm very proud of it," he told *Soldier*. "When I was first given the opportunity to work with the US Cougar, I grabbed it by the horns.

"These vehicles won't win the battle, but they will help save a lot of lives. They might not have the firepower of a Warrior or a Challenger 2, but the level of protection they offer is massive.

"There has not been a single fatality in one to enemy action in theatre and that proves the survivability is second-to-none."

WO2 Huggill and his team of nearly 40 senior NCOs bring crews up to standard on the Cougar family, which includes variants such as the Wolfhound and St Bernard, using the very latest feedback from theatre.

The experienced soldier wrote the original teaching programme for the Mastiff and regularly deploys to Op Herrick to refresh his understanding and see if he can make any improvements.

Mr Mastiff's interest does not stop with the training package as his knowledge of the armoured vehicles has helped him to generate a host of money- and potentially life-saving modifications.

From simple additions such as extra stowage spaces and heel plates and foot rests to give drivers a more comfortable ride to a new system to stop expensive external cameras being broken, he has played an integral part in the vehicle's continued evolution.

The result is a platform that WO2 Huggill believes has won Service personnel over after it received some short-lived early scepticism when it first rolled into action.

"When it initially went into theatre, soldiers didn't want to get in it because the feeling was that it was just a truck," he said. "After a couple of months the lads knew they were safe as houses inside and now it's the vehicle of choice.

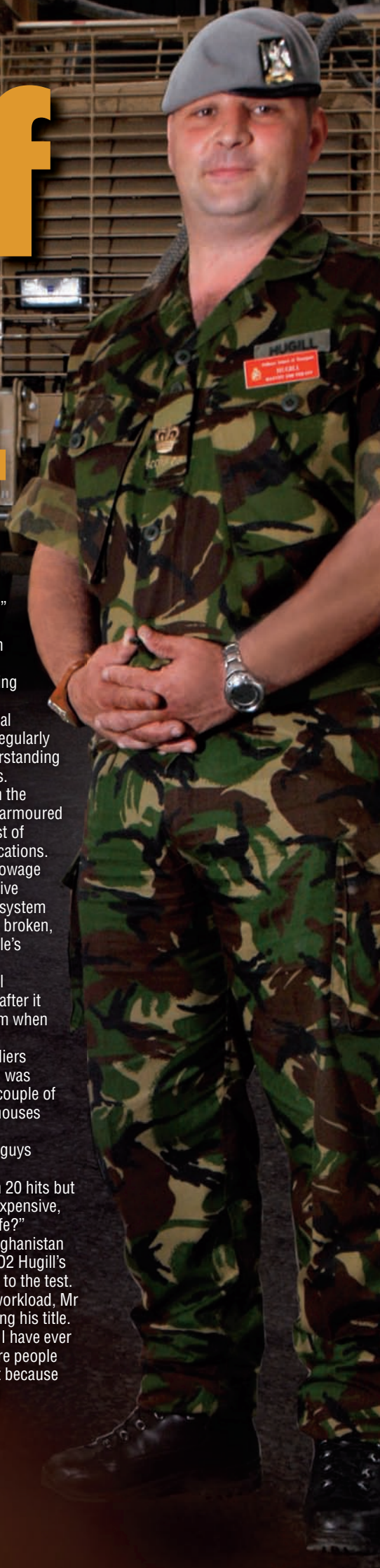
"They can do incredible things and the guys really appreciate that.

"We have seen vehicles that have taken 20 hits but are still going after repairs. Yes they are expensive, but what price do you put on a soldier's life?"

With another fact-finding mission to Afghanistan scheduled as this issue went to press, WO2 Huggill's dedication to the vehicle is constantly put to the test.

But despite the long hours and heavy workload, Mr Mastiff is showing no signs of relinquishing his title.

"I absolutely love my job – it's the best I have ever had in the Army," he concluded. "There are people who don't want me to ever leave this post because there is nothing I don't know about it." ■



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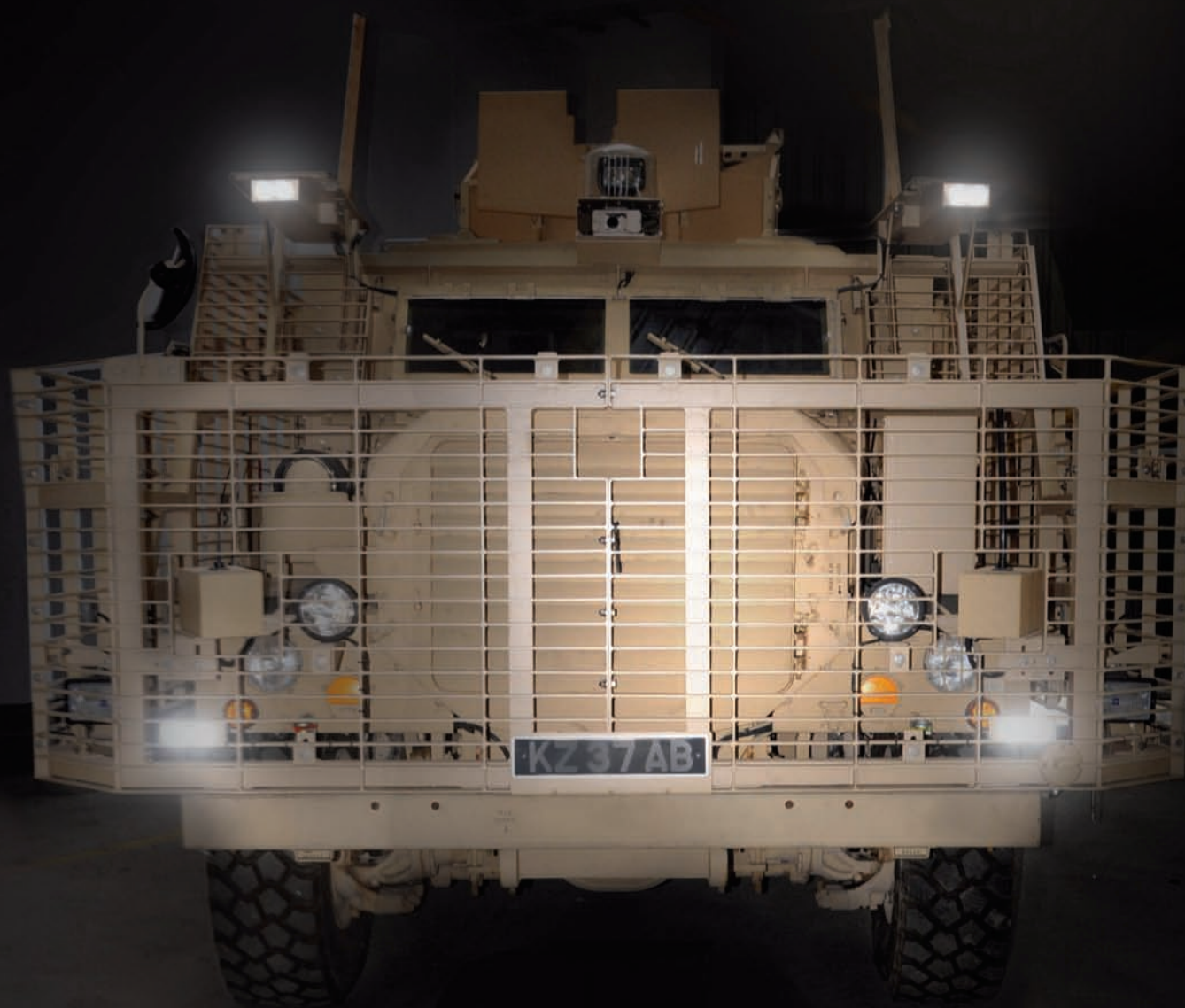
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HOT SEAT

***Soldier* straps itself in to the battle-winning Wolfhound for driving test like no other**

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

ROLLING up to the entrance of an unfeasibly-narrow maze in the wilds of East Yorkshire, the last thing I wanted to hear was that the vehicle I was commanding was worth £1.5 million.

At first, it had all seemed so easy. *Soldier's* challenge was to take charge of a Wolfhound armoured patrol vehicle and guide it safely through a number of obstacles at the Defence School of Transport (DST) in Leconfield.

Sure, it was slightly bigger than my Ford

Focus and, yes, the going was undoubtedly tougher – if not slower – than the M25. But with an experienced driver at the wheel, how difficult could it be to make it through the test unscathed?

"I'm going to drive as if I have no idea what I'm doing or where I'm going," said Sgt Ian Gill (RLC), smashing my bullish confidence in one fell swoop.

Sgt Gill was lying. As one of DST's training team, he knows all there is to know about piloting any of the Cougar family of vehicles and regularly imparts that knowledge to theatre-bound troops.

For me, however, he was happy to forget all he knew.

Sitting in the commander's seat of the Wolfhound, I was given a brief tour of my surroundings. As well as front and side windows, the man in charge of the vehicle has access to a flip-down screen displaying six video feeds from cameras fitted around the outside.

Using a combination of the two, I would have to be aware of the truck's immediate surroundings, know what other vehicles were nearby and keep an eye on upcoming obstacles in order to plan ahead. >>

Sgt Gill then ran through the commands he would expect to receive. As well as telling him when to advance and in which direction, I was told that the magic word to remember was "on".

If I failed to bellow that when the Wolfhound was facing the bearing I wanted it to travel in, Sgt Gill would continue to turn the wheel until I had successfully directed seven-figures-worth of kit into the nearest wall, tree or river.

Happy that I could cope with that, I asked Sgt Gill to move off and sat back in a smug glow as the Wolfhound chugged into life and entered the maze complex constructed out of Hesco Bastion walls.

Noticing an immediate left turn, I gave the "advance left" command, keeping a careful eye out of the side widows and on the camera screen to make sure we did not clip the sides.

It may have been the first test, but I soon discovered why multitasking is such a vital ability for vehicle commanders as my intense study of the camera feed was broken by Sgt Gill bringing the vehicle to a stop and asking me to look out of the windscreen.

It may have had more to do with saving the vehicle from harm rather than protecting my feelings, but I had completely missed the fact that while we were safe from clipping the Hesco wall on the side, we were inches from ploughing into it head-on.

Feeling slightly sheepish, I guided a remarkably patient Sgt Gill through an *Austin Powers*-style 100-point turn before we progressed without much more incident onto the next obstacle.

Travelling over rough terrain, Capt Paul Eaton (RLC) – the DST training officer sat in the back of the Wolfhound alongside *Soldier* photographer and co-commander Graeme Main – began to describe the pressures a real-life commander faces.

As well as directing the vehicle, the soldier would potentially be checking a map, looking at the truck's settings, holding a conversation over the radio and keeping an eye out for enemy fighters or potential IED sites.

All fascinating stuff, but his description was cut short by Sgt Gill again bringing the vehicle to a stop as I had not given him any commands for a good minute or so.

"You'll have a lot of distractions when you're in that seat but you've always got to know where you are and where you're going," Capt Eaton said with a wry smile. That told me.

Already feeling slightly flustered, I ordered Sgt Gill to begin ascending a steep hill. He duly did so, although I again came unstuck halfway up when he asked me what was waiting at the summit. My failure to think more than five metres ahead had again put us into difficulty.

Mr Main heaped further shame on *Soldier's* faltering credibility when Capt Eaton asked him, as my second-in-command, to help. His response over the comms channel of "I need to go to the toilet" was not exactly the inspirational assistance I was looking for.

I clawed back a bit of respect through the final stages of the course, which included a water crossing and another narrow track along which I was convinced a Wolfhound would not be able to pass.

Luckily it did and the senior NCO behind the wheel was gracious enough not to immediately kick me out of his vehicle when we arrived back at base.

Soldier has taken on some tough tasks during this series of features and the challenge of commanding a vehicle through a relatively-safe environment initially seemed a safe bet to boost our pass rate.

The reality, as with so much of the British Army's workload, is massively harder. Telling a driver which way to go is one thing, but doing it in the heat of battle when you are tired, under pressure and in real danger is quite another.

For Sgt Gill, training commanders and drivers how to do such a tough task to the exceptional standards he does is both a professional job and a personal calling as he has two sons who have served in Afghanistan.

The protection provided by the vehicles they travel in is as good as it gets, but true safety can only be provided by crews who know exactly what they are doing.

We may have flunked our task, but the instructors at Leconfield are churning out course after course of drivers and commanders who certainly will not fail theirs. ■

‘You’ll have a lot of distractions when you’re in that seat but you’ve always got to know where you’re going’





FAILED
ARMY 9 SOLDIER 7

WOLFHOUND LET OFF ITS LEASH



Daunting prospect: The sheer size and power of the Wolfhound adds to the challenge of commanding it



Risky business: Crates of ammunition – thankfully not the real thing – were loaded onto the Wolfhound's rear



Candid camera: The video feeds displayed on the Wolfhound's screen allow for much better all-round vision



Soldier's best friend: It may have defeated us, but the Wolfhound has proved a valuable ally in theatre





Report: Stephen Tyler
Main picture: Steve Dock

OF all the adversaries the British military has pitted its wits against over the centuries, one resilient force has remained unconquered.

From being an ally at the Battle of Waterloo to an enemy in the muddy trenches of the First World War, Mother Nature's changeable mood has played a key role in the successes and failures of the Armed Forces.

But while taming the worst of the weather on the battlefield remains firmly in the realms of science fiction, a tri-Service unit is making sure commanders are at least aware of what the climate has in store for them.

Ironically based underground in a bunker at Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood, the Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre (JOMOC) provides information about current and future environmental conditions.

And with operations occupying the thoughts of most of the military, the centre's staff are experiencing an increasing call from the front line for their unique skills.

"Weather can have a massive impact on operations," explained JOMOC air land operations officer Sqn Ldr Ian Matthews (RAF). "Large-scale missions can be delayed or brought forward depending on what the weather window is like and

what impact it will have on things like aviation support. That knowledge gives commanders a big military advantage."

Working in split shifts to provide weather information 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year, JOMOC's staff come from all three Services and include Reservist personnel recruited directly from the Met Office.

The climate experts use a raft of detailed data beamed in from the upper reaches of the atmosphere to gauge everything from incoming fronts to temperatures.

On Op Herrick, the unit's information about night-time illumination, cloud cover and thermal crossover – which affects infrared imaging – is fed directly to commanders ahead of missions.

In-depth analysis of satellite imagery can be used to provide the men and women on the ground with details about safe and unsafe areas, while the Royal Artillery rely on data about wind direction and speed to ensure that the rounds they fire hit their intended targets.

With Afghanistan's vastly-different summer and winter climates posing distinct challenges, JOMOC is also able to predict dust and sandstorms or levels of snow cover.

Land forecaster Sqn Ldr Bruce Sherratt, a professional meteorologist serving with the RAF Reserves, has deployed to theatre for three five-month periods, each time working closely with the International Security Assistance Force's aviation assets.

The officer told *Soldier* that although helicopter and fast jet pilots have always relied on accurate weather information, those in charge of the mission's unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) are

becoming more aware of how the atmosphere affects them.

"Everywhere I have been, meteorology has been one of the biggest factors and I think it should be treated as an intelligence asset," he added.

"When you are planning a battle and have a million things to think about, one person who knows about meteorology can

provide some really important information.

"I think we can add enormously to the mission. Yes, we can tell you about the weather, but our information can also give you an idea about what the enemy might be planning to do and that can be used to your advantage.

"For UAVs, not having cover can put missions in jeopardy because the troops on the ground are operating in a dangerous environment."

WEATHER CAN HAVE A MASSIVE IMPACT ON OPERATIONS

FORCES OF NATURE

WEATHER EXPERTS KEEP SERVICES ONE STEP AHEAD OF MOTHER NATURE

As important as JOMOC's operational abilities are, the centre's reach extends into almost every other area of the Forces.

Units deploying on overseas exercises turn to the meteorological maestros to provide briefings about the climate in their destination country, while troops rehearsing in the UK are able to call on the same level of detail.

Adventurous training and expeditions play a major part in life in the Services and JOMOC has helped trips as varied as attempts to summit Mount Everest and transatlantic rows to pass off smoothly.

With his team's skills able to provide information about conditions from the top of the atmosphere to the bottom of the ocean, officer commanding Lt Cdr Gareth Boon (RN) has urged more Army personnel to make use of the service.

"To anyone planning a major expedition or military training, I would say please contact us," he said.

"Whether it's through a climate brief for an exercise in Kenya or supporting people in the Antarctic by providing regular information about ice floes, we can help."

With personnel on Op Herrick engaged in a tough battle against a devious enemy, any advantage they can gain helps in the ultimate fight to save lives and improve security.

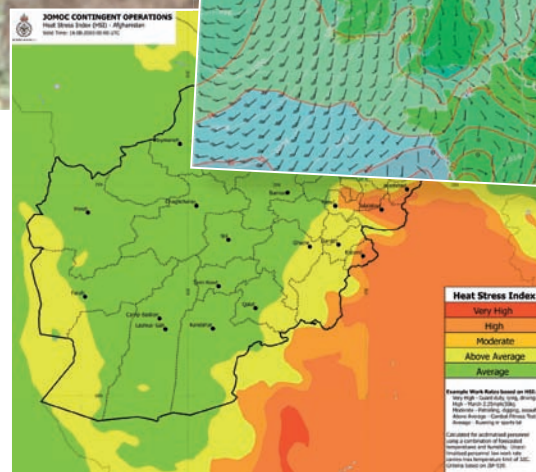
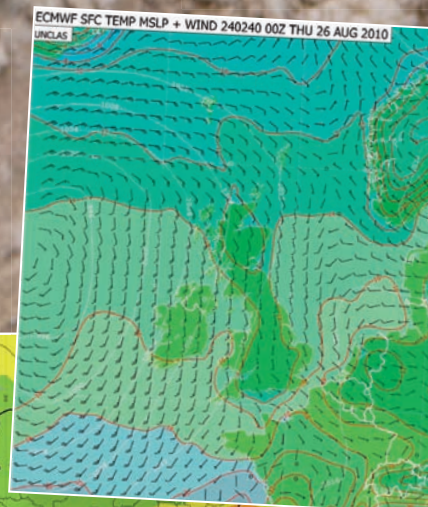
Hi-tech military technology continues to

advance, but the Armed Forces' increasing acquaintance with something that has been present on every battlefield since the beginning of time is proving just as important to present-day success.

"Even though we are moving into the robot age, we are still affected by the physical environment and you can't insulate people from that," concluded Sqd Ldr Matthews.

"It will probably always continue to affect operations and especially so in a climate like Afghanistan's. On some days it can make no difference and no-one is interested, but there are times when everyone wants to know what impact the weather will have and that is what we are here for." ■

● Weather warning order – Page 67



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Loyal BANKS OF SCOTLAND

Veteran's millions safeguard Forces mental health

Interview: Stephen Tyler

WHEN multi-millionaire and former soldier Tony Banks agreed to appear on Channel Four's *Secret Millionaire*, he had no idea that the show would reignite memories of his time spent in combats.

The programme, which plants wealthy benefactors into under-privileged communities to decide if they want to provide the areas with financial boosts, dispatched the Scottish care home boss to Anfield in Liverpool.

There, amid boarded-up houses and burnt-out cars, Banks met an Op Telic veteran who suffered from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and had once tried to kill himself.

Listening to the veteran's harrowing story struck a chord with the ex-member of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. During his time with the elite airborne asset, Banks served in the Falkland Islands conflict and lost 20 comrades from his company, including his best friend.

The Balhousie Care Group owner subsequently gave the young man £30,000 to give to a charity of his choice and he selected Combat Stress. But instead of being a one-off act of benevolence, the donation sparked a much longer-term involvement for Banks.

"I'm the sort of person who doesn't look back and I don't put my military career in the prominence of my life because it's not something that civilians can really understand," he told *Soldier*.

"But taking part in that programme made me think about a number of things from my time in the Army and I wanted to get involved in the charity.

"I was 20 in the Falklands and I was one of the oldest people in my section. You think you are a man, but

you are really just a boy. I thought about the conflicts since then – two in Iraq, the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan – and the deluge of people coming back with mental health problems.

"With a physical injury, it's visible and people can understand it. Mental health issues are not as obvious and often take longer to manifest themselves."

On top of dealing with the pressures of running a growing business, Banks agreed to join the appeal board for Combat Stress's The Enemy Within campaign which aims to raise £30 million to provide help to veterans with mental health problems.

He kick-started the appeal with a personal donation of a six-figure sum and continues to promote the cause, which hopes to provide outreach teams in communities across Britain to complement the charity's three residential homes.

And although the group has been around since the end of the First World War and the era of shell shock, Banks believed it was only relatively recently that people began to take PTSD seriously.

"Previously there was an attitude that you didn't complain and you soldiered on," he explained. "Now we realise that if a guy comes back from war and has problems, it's better to catch them early and help the soldier stay in the Forces.

"Thankfully these days it's more acceptable for somebody to say they have a problem and go and see their medical officer.

"There isn't the stigma attached to it anymore and people are becoming more aware of the benefits of asking for help.

"Soldiers should realise that this is a problem and look out for their mates, notice when they are acting out of character and help them through." ■

COMBAT Stress's ambitious The Enemy Within Appeal was launched by Prince Charles in March to raise £30m to enhance and develop mental health services for veterans.



The charity initiated the campaign following a 66 per cent increase in new referrals since 2005. Combat Stress currently has a caseload of more than 4,400 veterans, more than 82 per cent of who served in the Army.

For more information or to make a donation, visit www.combatstress.org.uk/pages/donate_now.html



Banks, who served from 1979 to 1987 including two years in the Territorial Army with 15 Para, got a first-hand glimpse at the effects of PTSD during a recent return visit to the Falkland Islands and Argentina.

As well as touring sites from the conflict and taking part in a charity trek, he travelled to Buenos Aires to hand back a trumpet confiscated from a former adversary in 1982.

The instrument had been in a military museum in Scotland until the facility closed and had sat in his office for several years since.

He explained: "One day I was wondering what happened to that man, how his life had shaped out. We tracked him down and I flew to Buenos Aires to meet him and give him back his trumpet.

"It turned out that he suffered from post traumatic stress disorder and he was ecstatic to get this trumpet back. He told me that he had not played since arriving home."

His war's been over for decades, but he's still fighting battles today.

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Interview: Richard Long

V IETNAM veteran Karl Marlantes has been making waves in literary circles following the release of his hotly-awaited debut novel *Matterhorn*.

The former US Marine has seen the title hit the *New York Times*' bestseller list and with the book now released in the UK the success looks set to continue.

For Marlantes, the story is very close to his heart. As a young marine he was posted to Vietnam for a 13-month tour that saw him presented with the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism.

While *Matterhorn* is in no way an autobiography, it is heavily influenced by the encounters the author faced while deployed in Asia.

"It is not political," the Yale graduate told *Soldier*. "I wanted to look at what it was like to fight in that war as a young man.

"Most marines were only 19 years old. I was the second oldest in my company at 22. I really wanted to try and show some of the raw human experience.

"The story's central character is a young lieutenant trying to learn compassion in the middle of a war. It is literary fiction and not an autobiography. I have experienced something very similar to what is written, or a friend has told me the story."

Matterhorn revolves around 2nd Lt Waino Mellas, a 19-year-old marine who is just a few days into his tour in the Vietnamese jungle.

He faces disease, starvation, leeches, tigers and an almost invisible enemy as he fights to secure a mile-high fortress, all of which reflects the author's own experiences.

But for Marlantes the rewards have been a long time coming and the book is no overnight success story.

He told *Soldier* how the novel has been more than 30 years in the making as he juggled his burgeoning literary ambitions with raising a family and working full-time as a business consultant.

Marlantes added: "I had 35 years of relatives talking about Karl's book and people asking me 'when is it going to be published?'."

"Now it is in the *New York Times*' bestseller list. I am trying to keep my feet on the ground. I am delighted it is doing so well but I never expected it."

With current operations in Afghanistan constantly in the news the former military man is drawn to comparisons with his own experiences of Service life.

"Once a marine always a marine and wherever they are I always feel as though they are my boys," he said.

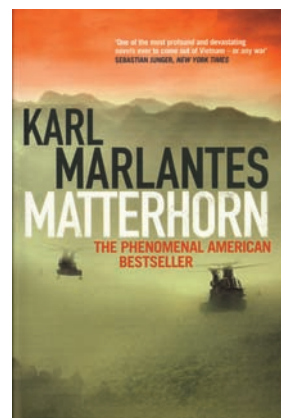
"It is scary how many parallels there are with Vietnam. They face an enemy that can run across borders and disappear and have rules

of engagement that are difficult for a young 19-year-old.

"There is government corruption and the list goes on and on."

However, Afghanistan will not be the inspiration for his next novel.

"You have to write what you know about," he explained. "I have talked to guys who have been but that is as close as you can get." ■



Thirty years in the making:
Ex-marine Karl Marlantes achieves his literary ambitions in *Matterhorn*, which is published in hardback by Corvus

Vietnam revisited

Author reflects on combat experience to pen bestseller

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk SEPTEMBER 2010 45

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Mike Weston

SINCE its inception in 2005, Pay As You Dine (PAYD) has been a subject of fierce debate for soldiers in cookhouses across the Army.

The system was introduced to offer personnel greater choice, but criticism of the quantity and quality of meals has frequently been raised.

Such concerns have often been based on perceptions of the "good old days" when the Daily Food Charge (DFC) offered bigger portions cooked by Army chefs.

But even though the mandatory charge was taken from a soldier's pay packet each month, only 50 to 60 per cent of personnel were eating the meals.

This uptake inevitably prompted calls for change and PAYD was born.

"For many years soldiers perceived that it was not fair to pay for meals they did not take," explained Brig Mark Armstrong, director for infrastructure at HQ Land Forces in Andover.

"PAYD came in to give people the choice of eating in. It is not perfect but I believe it is successful if choice is what we are here to give soldiers.

"If a soldier is telling his chain of command he is still not happy he needs to say how we can do better.

"Everyone talks about the good old days but they do not want it, they have asked for PAYD."

Brig Armstrong conceded that the system is not the finished article and told *Soldier* that every effort is being made to drive standards up to ensure personnel receive the service they demand.

Catering is one of a number of facilities offered through 19 Super Multi Activity

Contracts and a new evaluation scheme, Project Hestia, has been launched to provide detailed feedback before these deals are renewed in 2012.

"We are trying to find out what soldiers want and what would make them say PAYD is a success," Brig Armstrong said.

"Hestia is not about forcing people to eat three meals a day. It is about offering value for money, choice and service.

"We are looking to change opening hours so they are more in line with what the guys want to do.

"If a soldier finishes work at 1700 does he want to eat at 1700? We have noticed that with the current operational tempo soldiers are far more focused.

"They know they have to be in good condition and train hard as their life may depend on it. We are listening to them and we are trying to give them a healthy option."

PAYD offers a core menu that provides 3,300 calories across three meals for £4.13.

Under the DFC a soldier would often enjoy bigger portions as those who were not eating subsidised the meals of those who did.

The local chain of command also has a responsibility to ensure contractors deliver similar standards to the old system.

At the Army Aviation Centre in Middle Wallop, PAYD is part of the daily routine. But soldiers have mixed views of the system and the food it offers.

"I was here for training in 2006 as PAYD first came in and the food now is much better, there is a lot more choice and I'm quite impressed with it," said ATpr Frank Bradshaw (AAC).

"Under the old system, if you were married you were paying for food you would not eat, so PAYD is better than that.

"But some of the lads coming through training now are skint at the end of the month and they do not always think about eating first."

LCpl Nathan Donoghue (AAC) added: "The food can vary quite a bit and some days there is nothing particularly worth eating. I try to eat healthily but it is not always easy.

"I cook for myself back in the block because that way I know what I am getting.

"With the old system you got more choice and bigger portions but you were paying for the whole lot rather than what you ate.

"PAYD has its benefits and you do get different choices, but I prefer the old way."

As a married man, Cpl Barry Ellison (AAC) tends to eat at home, but when away on courses he uses PAYD and he told *Soldier* about the reservations he has.

"The portions in some places are quite small," he said. "When you have a curry you don't want to have to make it up with potatoes and vegetables,

you want a decent portion.

"I was paying something like £1 for a salad. I was told it came with tea or coffee and a dessert, but what happens if you do not want a dessert?"

"They should make one fixed price for what you are getting, say a meal for 60p and a dessert for 50p if you want it. In some cases there is three quarters of the meal you do not want."

While PAYD is far from ideal it is clearly here to stay.

‘Everyone talks about the good old days but they do not want it, they asked for PAYD’

Dinner is served

Pay As You Dine debate returns to the table as the Army continues its pursuit of culinary satisfaction

Trials are now being conducted at Richmondshire Lines in Catterick to offer a more fluid approach to opening times and customer needs and Brig Armstrong is determined to make the system work across the Army.

"PAYD has given soldiers what they wanted – choice," he said. "It is not perfect and we need to package PAYD so it is competitive and attractive.

"But at the end of the day if a soldier wants to fend for himself he is welcome to do so, it is not about forcing people into facilities.

"If they want to take the option we have to ensure the food meets their dietary needs and offers good value for money." ■

Right, Dishing up: The Pay As You Dine core menu offers up three meals a day for £4.13

Below, Tucking in: ATpr Frank Bradshaw (AAC) samples the cuisine on offer at The Village at the Army Aviation Centre, Middle Wallop



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Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

DESPITE undergoing an extensive pre-deployment training package, serving personnel who have not been to theatre will not necessarily know how they will react when faced with a life-or-death situation.

As realistic as preparation has become, it is impossible to perfectly recreate the dangers of the battlefield during an exercise away from Afghanistan.

But for troops engaging in adventurous training (AT) on the creaking glaciers of the Swiss mountains, they are entering an environment where calculated risks are necessary and danger is part of the task.

For the third consecutive year, the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre (JSMTC) took a group of mountaineers of varying abilities to the snow-peaked Alps to teach them new skills and to truly test their mettle.

From a tented base in Saas Grund, 130 personnel from the Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and the University Officer Training Corps fastened their crampons and took up ice axes at the Joint Services Alpine Meet (JSAM).

Expedition leader Lt Col Simon Hall (RM) explained that although a summer stint working on the challenging peaks enables Service personnel to improve their CVs, it also provides them with valuable operational benefits.

"JSAM is really a symposium, a meeting of minds and an opportunity for all three Services to gain qualifications and further experience in an Alpine environment," said Lt Col Hall, who has summited Mount Everest. >>

Mettle detectors

**Soldiers test their bravery
on mountaineering expedition
to the Swiss Alps**



"But the main focus is preparing for operational capability – nobody should be exposed to their first real risk on the battlefield and on this you are achieving things you cannot achieve on an exercise. "Racing up a mountain ridge in bad weather is a real danger which has to be overcome."

Although all members of the trip had experience of mountaineering, some had never set foot on an alpine peak. Others had detailed climbing logbooks and were aiming to qualify as Alpine Mountain Leaders (AMLs) or Alpine Mountain Instructors.

Private soldiers worked alongside brigadiers and lieutenant colonels on the ice, but military rank played no part in the proceedings. With the constant danger of falling into a cavernous crevasse – a potentially-lethal crack in the ice – the most experienced mountaineers were in charge.

Lt Col Charlie Sykes, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, said: "There's only one person in charge up on the mountain and that's the instructor, so rank doesn't get you very far."

Working together on a dry glacier, soldiers, sailors and airmen prepared for the worst-case scenario of rescuing someone who has tumbled into a crevasse. Attached to a rope, personnel took turns to slide into the 15-metre-deep hole.

Up on the earth's surface, other members of the team clamped their ice axes into the snow, created



Cliffhanger: Expert instructors from the Joint Services Mountain Training Centre watch students practicing all-important crevasse rescue drills on a drift glacier 3,200m above the town of Saas Grund in Switzerland



Slippery slopes: Instructors demonstrate climbing techniques during an ascent of the Allalin Horn



a roped bilay using an ice screw and winched their colleague from the forest of stalactites.

Training officer Maj Andy Fowle (APTC) said: "On adventurous training you are taken to a very different environment and required to adapt – just like the British Army, which can be taken just about anywhere.

"Every person practices every skill, there's no sitting at the back of the classroom – everyone goes in the hole and is pulled out."

Operating above the clouds and surrounded by more than 50 snow-capped mountains with summits higher than 4,000 metres, those on JSAM were training in ideal alpine conditions.

Mountaineering may have been the core skill being developed but Lt Col Sykes was quick to emphasise the importance of AT for soldiers.

"On something like this you learn to map-read and navigate to a high level, which is invaluable," he explained.

"You also learn efficiency of kit and you constantly use command techniques."

In order that best

practice is taught to the Servicemen and women, five British mountain guides, three trainee guides and three military mountain guides were drafted in to pass on their expert knowledge.

British mountain guide Peter Rowlands, of the JSMTTC, said: "The amount of courses being delivered at JSAM and the decentralised training it will facilitate is amazing.

"This meeting is on top of the pyramid and the 130 guys that are here will go back and deliver training at their units."

Far from being a lazy fortnight on holiday, those on the expedition were treated to 0400 wake-up calls and were required to rock-climb in the dark and move quickly across

perilous glaciers as they thawed.

But Capt Ross McKenzie (8 Regt RLC) was pleased he made the trip. "JSAM is awesome and is exactly why I joined the Army," he said.

"The AT ethos is about pushing yourself and

dealing with fear, which will obviously transfer very well back to your work – it really is just fantastic to have the opportunity to access the kind of expertise available."

Those who gain the AML qualification are given the green light to take their own groups on AT exercises, introducing scrambling, short-rope, moving on coils and climbing ropes to a new generation of Service personnel.

"If one of the attendees goes back to the UK and trains another person and that person goes on to have a lifetime of enjoyment, then that's superb value for money," said Maj Fowle.

To some, mountaineering might conjure up the image of a solitary, bearded explorer struggling through the cold and suffering from frostbite.

But through the JSMTTC and JSAM, serving military men and women learn to trust teammates, focus on the job at hand and make calculated decisions on how to tackle risks – and have fun.

Each person on the mountain will have faced and dealt with a real fear. Before stepping onto a battlefield that can only be a good thing. ■

‘The AT ethos is about pushing yourself hard and dealing with fear which will obviously transfer back to your work’



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Courtship curtailed by rules

I SEPARATED from my wife in July 2009 but have retained my married quarter as my son is currently in sixth form at a secondary school.

Since the split I have met a lady who lives in Germany and with whom I get on very well. However, I have been told by the estate warden and families officer that I am not allowed to have female visitors at my accommodation as cohabiting is not permitted in the Army.

I understand that rules must be obeyed but surely it's about time this particular regulation was relaxed. I am 46, my son is 18 and my daughter is 21 and both get on well with my new partner, who doesn't want to sleep at my address, just visit me.

As things stand I will need to move into

a civilian flat if my relationship is to move forward. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes:

Your estate warden and families officer, although no doubt well intentioned, are being somewhat over zealous in the application of the rules.

Cohabitation, which is prohibited in Service accommodation, is defined as a situation where the property becomes the home of another person.

There is therefore no reason why your friend should not visit you.

There are restrictions on the length of visits (no more than 28 days in a total of 93), but these do not apply in the circumstances you describe.



Close but no cigar

I DEPLOYED to Camp Buehring, Kuwait on Op Telic 11 as part of a team responsible for acclimatising soldiers on their arrival in country. Can I still claim a Telic award? – **Spr Stonestreet, 32 Engr Regt.**

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, SO1 medal office, replies: Unfortunately, Spr Stonestreet's role placed him outside of the theatre of operations. No doubt there are many others like him.

If he took part in convoys, the instruction from PJHQ was for individuals to maintain a personal record and for units to maintain a register.

Thus, if ever the rules were changed to include aggregate service, there would be a good chance of recognising time spent in Iraq.

There were many who did not serve inside Iraq and Spr Stonestreet looks like one of them.

More colourful courses, please

I AM sure *Soldier* receives a lot of letters about resettlement, but I am trying to decide on a suitable course for myself and can't find anything that appeals.

I am not interested in plumbing, becoming a gas fitter or painting and decorating, but would like to explore what it takes to be a nail technician, fashion designer or even masseur.

Why does it always feel like I am in a man's world? – **LCpl C Kirkland, AGC(SPS).**

Col Hugh Russell, AD Ops DETS(A), responds: Ask in the right place and you will be amazed at the range of opportunities available.

LCpl Kirkland should make an appointment with the Individual Education & Resettlement Officer (IERO) at her local Army Education Centre.

The IERO will be able to advise how to find a civilian training organisation or local college that runs suitable courses



which will enable her to follow her second career choice.

If LCpl Kirkland has served at least six years she is also entitled to register with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), which will assign her a personal consultant for up to two years after she has left the Army.

The CTP are based in nine regional resettlement centres across the UK and Germany and will be able to provide information about all the careers she mentions. The IERO will be able to help her make contact with the CTP.

PS...



"I am fully aware that number 28 is vacant Cpl Harrison, but moving your mother-in-law into it from your own quarter is quite out of the question."

HOW refreshing to hear the lone voice of reason, common sense and compassion from Maj D Walker (Retd), who, if he had been in a position to do so, would have been prepared to make an effort in order to help another person [Miss Joanna Robson, who was critical of the Army for not allowing her and her husband-to-be to move into a married quarter more than two weeks before their wedding date].

The majority of your respondents on the matter should be ashamed of themselves and might do well to remember that two wrongs do not make a right.

How can anyone contest Miss Robson's perfectly reasonable request if the quarter was, as she stated, unoccupied?

How illogical to not, as an exception, allow the quarter to be used. Doing so would have brought more revenue into the coffers than if it had remained empty.

What a shame that our system so typically takes pleasure in disadvantaging others and, rather than adopting a "give and take" attitude to get the best out of people, adopts a "take and take" stance.

If the Army wives who responded think that hardship is the way forward, why not take on some more and forgo a few other pleasures in life – that seems to be your philosophy.

The world would be a much better place if there were more Maj Walkers in it and less of the other respondents.

I suspect that Maj Walker did a great deal for morale and retention while he was serving. Shame on the rest of you. – **Maj G Austin, RAMC, Warminster.**

AT a time when we are all being asked to tighten our belts and to rationalise our spending, shouldn't those in "officer in command" appointments be doing the same?

Rather than hiring cleaners at public expense, have they actually thought about doing a little bit of tidying up themselves? The rest of us, especially those of us who live in our own homes, have to.

Likewise, could they not drive their own cars to work – again like the rest of us – and only use Service transport when on Service business? – **Name and address supplied.**

Dream team counter-attack

CAN I pick a better Army team than the one selected by *Football Punk*, "Starting XI", in June's issue? Well, I'd certainly like to nominate an alternative line-up.

A number of those plumped for by *Punk* – such as Billy Wright, Dave Mackay, Sir Tom Finney, Duncan Edwards and Jim Baxter – would be in most teams, but I was amazed at some of the omissions.

With all due respect to Maik Taylor, between the posts I would go for Gordon Banks (R Signals), England's all-time great goalkeeper and a World Cup winner. Banks played for Chesterfield, Leicester and Stoke, making a total of 510 appearances and was capped 73 times for his country. Having kept goal during England's 1966 victory, Banks also wore the number one shirt during the 1970 World Cup in Mexico.

In the middle, I would drop Gary Holt in favour of Sir Bobby Charlton (ex-Royal Army Service Corps), arguably England's best-ever player.

A European Footballer of the Year, he played a vital role in England's 1966 World Cup victory, played 606 games for Manchester United and scored 199 goals for the Red Devils.

Furthermore, while wearing a United shirt he won the FA Cup, three league championships and the European Cup – scoring a brace in the final against Benfica. Named in the PFA Team of the Century, Charlton played 106 games for England and scored 49 goals.

Speaking of Charltons, Justin Whittle has to go in favour of Bobby's brother. Jack Charlton played 629 games for Leeds United and was a member of England's World Cup-winning team. The National Serviceman was voted Footballer of the Year in 1967, won the league championship in 1969 and went on to manage Middlesbrough, Sheffield Wednesday, Newcastle and the Republic of Ireland, who he took to the World Cup for the first time in 1990.

Up front, Phil Stant is a decent player, but



Football Punk's all-time Army XI... 1. Maik Taylor, 2. Billy Wright, 3. Dave Mackay, 4. Duncan Edwards, 5. Justin Whittle, 6. Gary Holt, 7. Sir Tom Finney, 8. Jim Baxter, 9. Lee Bradbury, 10. Phil Stant, 11. Guy Whittingham

in his place imagine a striker who scored 122 goals in 166 games in the top flight. That was the record of Tommy Taylor, formerly of the Royal Artillery. He scored 26 goals in 44 games for Barnsley before joining Manchester United and his goal to game ratio was even better for England with 16 goals in 19 games. The beautiful game was robbed of Taylor's talents when he was killed in the Munich air crash in 1958.

Welshman John Charles, regarded as one of the world's greatest players during the 1950s, would also feature in my forward line. Nicknamed "the gentle giant", Charles played for Leeds, Juventus (where he scored 95 goals in 155 games) and Roma among others and finished his career having never been booked.

The Welsh international won Serie A

championships in 1958, 1960 and 1961, the Coppa Italia in 1959 and 1960, and was Italian Player of the Year in 1958.

Former physical training instructor Nat Lofthouse, who scored 255 goals in 452 games for Bolton Wanderers and a marvellous 30 goals in 33 matches for England, completes my strike force. – Ray Routledge, SO1 Media and Communications, 4 Div.

Richard Lenton, editor of *Football Punk*, types: Sure, Sir Bobby could play a bit but your team selection fails to take into account the fact that old football was rubbish. My scouts tell me you're a Southampton fan so it's no wonder you don't recognise a winning XI when you see one. Ignore the man, Holty.

I AM writing regarding the Army's use of Body Mass Index (BMI).

Soldiers in my unit were recently tested and a number of personnel scored badly despite flying through their physical assessments.

At the other end of the scale, one individual had a perfect BMI but failed miserably when it came to proving his fitness.

The test is an unfair measure. A rugby player, for example, has a naturally bigger body and will struggle to score highly, while a runner will do so easily. I represent my corps and the Army as a runner and find the test a complete waste of time. – WO1 G P Felton, Gn Sp Tp, Brunei Garrison.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: As an Army-level athlete it is perhaps understandable that you consider the annual Body Composition Measurement a



"He's been in there four hours already – I'm guessing it's BMI testing tomorrow."

waste of your time. However, it has been introduced to identify personnel not so accomplished, whose body weight poses

a serious health risk and may benefit from the advice and support that will follow.

Differing body shapes have been taken into account, which is why the grading is derived from a reliable combination of BMI and waist circumference using standards recommended by the World Health Organisation.

While there will always be exceptions, there is a clear link between those who are extremely overweight and those failing their basic fitness tests. But being within normal weight categories doesn't indicate fitness either, which requires regular exercise.

The assessment, which only takes two minutes, provides an annual reminder of the importance of maintaining a healthy body weight.



FUTURE FORCE

FOUNDATION COLLEGE DEVELOPS GOLDEN GENERATION

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Mike Weston

THINK of 16- and 17-year-olds and you will probably conjure up images of part-time jobs, A-Levels or time spent in front of the television.

But, each year, for 1,350 boys and girls from that age-range the final part of teenage life is spent entering the British Army via Harrogate's Army Foundation College (AFC) and becoming the Service's youngest personnel.

Soldier stood on the parade square as the dedicated group that made up Intake 23 completed their 42 weeks of initial training, passing out in front of a packed crowd of 5,000 loved ones.

Watching the largest military graduation in Europe, Capt Laurence Roche (AGC(ETS)) explained the role of the college and immediately dismissed any suggestion that it is an old-fashioned boot camp institution.

"At Harrogate the students work on personal leadership, teamwork, command tasks and intuitive tests and are taught to think around problems," he explained.

"A lot of people think coming here is about learning to accept orders but it's much more than that – it's about understanding orders, being a leader and learning to realise why we are in places like Afghanistan."

The college was founded in 1998 and the latest crop to graduate from its

military classrooms left with the best educational results to date, boasting record achievement rates at NVQ standard.

"About 20 per cent of each intake arrive without any formal qualifications, but out of those 50 per cent leave with an NVQ at Level 2," said Capt Roche.

"It's all contextual and made relevant which, for some, school is not. Education is just another part of their training, just like doing drills and learning how to handle a rifle."

Recruits that sign up to the Army after their 18th birthday learn the required basic military skills in 18 intense weeks, whereas soldiers under training at the AFC are drilled in the same proficiencies for a whole year. >>

According to the college's commanding officer, Lt Col Steve Ocock, such in-depth tutoring puts his junior soldiers at the top of the class.

"I am passionate about this place because it really makes a difference," he said.

"The most important thing we have on our side here is time and I think people that come through Harrogate have an advantage over those who just have basic training."

"Our graduates should promote quicker and have better retention levels than 18-year-old recruits."

Junior soldiers at the AFC also have the chance to shine in fields outside basic soldiering, with the college offering opportunities to learn languages and musical instruments as well

as producing numerous sports teams to compete across the world.

But despite the wide array of extra-curricular activities on offer, the focus of the main task is not lost on the junior soldiers.

Each member of the current intake was born after the Falkland's conflict and the first Gulf War and was at school during Op Telic, so they made conscious decisions to sign up to a life in the Forces knowing the kinetic climate of current operations.

"We take our moral obligation very seriously and we teach soldiers about the trials that they will face in the future"

Lt Col Ocock said there was no skirting around the issue of Afghanistan and the reality of military service but insisted an Army career offers opportunities other jobs cannot.

"We take our moral obligation very seriously and we teach soldiers about the trials that they will face in the future – there are no illusions about what they have signed up for," he said.

"These 16 and 17-year-olds want to join the Army because it continues to offer the best possible career for a young person in terms of challenge, variety and the ability to be proud."

On August 12, 2010, following a morning of nervous laughter and frantic boot polishing, Intake 23 marched into position to finally finish its training at AFC Harrogate.

With the hairs standing on attention on every member of the packed audience, the gleaming band of the Royal Signals led the graduating recruits into position.

Every colour of the British Army was pristinely represented while The Princess Royal inspected the young men and women before they marched off to begin their careers as private soldiers.

The next time these troops stand shoulder-to-shoulder might be on the battlefield and their next outing on a drill square could be for an Afghanistan homecoming parade.

Whatever step is next for these young Servicemen and women, they take it having made the transition from schoolchildren to physically fit, disciplined and very proud soldiers. ■



TALKING MONEY

Junior Soldier pay after accommodation, food and deductions:

1st six months: £950 per month

2nd six months: £1,050 per month

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

This year's student intake raised £72,000 in one year for ABF The Soldiers' Charity – the largest amount by any single Army unit



CARVING OUT A CAREER



JUNIOR Soldiers (JS) passing through AFC Harrogate are following in the footsteps of highly-decorated alumni including LCoH Chris Finney, recipient of the George Cross, and Cpl Bryan Budd (3 Para), posthumous recipient of the Victoria Cross.

JS Andie Milne is set to graduate from the college in December before joining the RLC and training to become a bomb disposal expert at the Defence Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Munitions and Search School in Kineton.

Describing her decision to switch from a successful academic career to life diffusing explosives, the 17-year-old said: "There was nothing I wanted to do on civvy street and this will be adventurous and something different."

"I did well at school but I didn't want to wait to finish more academic qualifications and go to Sandhurst, I just wanted to get into the Army now."

JS Milne is more than aware of the dangers associated with bomb disposal but is focused on her objectives. "Before joining I was looking for a really technical trade and found that this was the one that used most of my skills, working under the most pressure," she said.

"I knew the risks from day one of stepping in the office and I still really want to do it."

"I just want a successful career and to conquer the problems I am faced with."

Picture: Chris Barker

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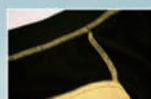
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TICKET TO RIDE

KARTS HELP WOUNDED TROOPS HIT THE TRACK

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

INJURED personnel are being given a ticket to the fast lane by a new karting enterprise aimed at offering adrenalin-fuelled action on the track.

Kart Force will see soldiers racing to the chequered flag with specially-adapted hand controls that allow even triple amputees to compete on a level playing field with their able-bodied colleagues.

The scheme is the brainchild of ex-Serviceman David Player and his business partner Phil Armes, who hope to stage race sessions at tracks across the country.

"We designed these hand controls so we could set up team events for soldiers with different levels of injury," former Royal Engineer Player told *Soldier*.

"We had to come up with a system that can fit into as many karts as possible.

"We are now planning a number of casual tester days and we want guys to come forward and say they are interested.

"For example, if we get ten soldiers in the Kent area showing an interest we can come down and put something on for them.

"This is an opportunity for these guys to try something they probably thought they would never do again, and they are on a totally level playing field.

"They can come and have a look and if they like it they can take it up as a proper sport."

Kart Force has been supported by a £25,000 grant from ABF The Soldiers' Charity, money that has paid for 30 sets of the unique controls to be built.

The system is compatible with all major karts, meaning they can be transported to different centres for race days, where injured personnel can go head-to-head with their able-bodied friends.

Once the initiative is fully up and running, Kart Force hopes to stage regimental events as well as

international challenges involving injured personnel from the UK, USA, Canada, Russia, France and Israel.

They also believe there is scope for an Inter-Services competition.

Player said: "The response so far has been fantastic. We are now encouraging the guys to contact us so we can really start to move things forward."

Soldier attended the launch of Kart Force at the Whilton Mill track in Northamptonshire and spoke to Formula Three ace James Cole after he put the new controls through their paces on the circuit.

"The kart has a very good feel, the throttle is very responsive and the brakes are great as well," he explained.

"It does have a different style to normal karts due to the handle bars. When your mind is used to something [the steering wheel] it takes a while to adjust, but after a few laps on the track it was great.

"I think this is a fantastic idea. As racing drivers we experience these speeds all the time. For injured soldiers to have the same opportunities is brilliant." ■



HOW DOES IT WORK?

- The steering wheel is replaced with a system similar to the handlebars on a motorcycle so the kart can be driven one-handed.
- The throttle cable can be attached to either side of the handlebars, meaning a triple amputee with one arm is able to race.
- A hydraulic braking system can also be switched from left to right, depending on driver specification.
- The Kart Force controls allow injured personnel to race against able-bodied colleagues and amputees could even find themselves at an advantage due to their lower body weight.

To register your interest with Kart Force log on to www.kartforce.org





ON COURSE FOR RECOVERY

Golf provides fairway back to action for injured troops

Report: Joe Clapson

LONG drives, short putts and walks across lush fairways form part of a fresh initiative to springboard injured soldiers back into a competitive environment.

The On Course Foundation is a new organisation with grand plans to use golf to help physically and mentally rehabilitate wounded Servicemen and women at the same time as introducing them to an industry which could be a future workplace.

Soldier joined the founder of the scheme, John Simpson, and its patron Prince Andrew – The Duke of York – at the prestigious Royal Household Golf Course in the grounds of Windsor Castle for the group's official launch.

"I injured my leg as a teenager and golf was the only sport I could play on a level playing field," said Simpson.

"It's been a major part of my life as a player and also in my career as I have worked in the industry managing Nick Faldo, Greg Norman and Bernard Langer."

Simpson set up On Course in July 2009 after being "moved and inspired" by the bravery of troops he met during a visit to Headley Court.

Now he plans to use the foundation to get injured Service personnel playing the game and possibly finding full-time jobs in the sport.

"The objectives of the foundation are to introduce golf to injured current and ex-Servicemen and women and to supply equipment which could be custom made," he explained.

"The other most important side of the foundation is to provide apprenticeships in the golf-related industry."

Funded through specially-created

centres in the UK and America, the scheme will offer golfing programmes, give lessons on all aspects of the game and supply the necessary equipment.

Severely-injured soldiers working with On Course are already reaping the rewards of stepping onto the fairway, with noticeable improvements in their mobility as well as their self-confidence.

Spr Gregg Stevenson (RE) lost his left leg above the knee and had his right leg amputated below the knee after he stepped on an IED in Helmand province in March 2009.

He now walks confidently on prosthetic limbs and is looking to the future with a positive and candid attitude.

"I had no further complications, the legs were lying next to me after the explosion so that's probably why my recovery has been quite speedy," he said.

"With golf there are so many little goals

within the game, from being able to get round 18 holes to shooting a hole in less shots than it took you last time.

"It's given me more confidence and it's a great social game."

Pte Lionel O'Connor (2 R Anglian), who lost his left leg in Iraq in 2006, added: "Out of all the rehab I have had this is the best thing I have done – this is something I can do whenever and wherever I want."

Service personnel who take up the opportunity to work with On Course will also gain access to some of the best and most exclusive golf resorts in the world.

In April this year a British team took on their American Wounded Warriors counterparts in a nine-hole match at the luxurious Marriot Grande Vista in Orlando, Florida.

"If someone had said I would be playing golf in Orlando 13 months after my injury I would've told them they were more injured in their head than I am in my legs," joked Spr Stevenson.

Before watching a few amputee soldiers tee-off in front of the Queen's home, Prince Andrew emphasised his support for Britain's military men and women.

"We have a responsibility to make sure that these young people who have laid their lives on the line should be given an opportunity to continue their lives as best as possible," he explained. "They are important to the country. They are important because of what they have done." ■

'The objective of the foundation is to introduce golf to injured current and ex-Servicemen and women'



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NAUTICAL REHAB

Wounded troops embark on sailing scheme

Interviews: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

A SCHEME that uses sailing as a method of rehabilitation has become an overwhelming inspiration for injured Servicemen and women.

The Toe in the Water (TiTW) initiative was launched in 2008 with the aim of getting wounded personnel to see beyond their injuries by using competitive sailing as an extension to their recovery.

But far from making up the numbers at low-key boating events, the charity throws its members in at the deep end of international races against the sport's best sailors – with outstanding results.

Soldier joined the TiTW crew in their preparation for the world-famous Cowes Week where one of the charity's directors, WO2 Lloyd Hamilton (RE), explained the project's ethos.

"We never carry passengers, there's always something to be achieved and each person is set an individual task and is an integral part of the team," he said. "The shared goal is to win – we want to win every race we enter. It's all about adapting to the challenge, not the challenge adapting to the crew."

The results on the water speak for themselves. Since entering their first regatta in August 2008, the TiTW crews have finished in the top ten in more than half of the races entered. But the physical and mental benefits of competitive sailing on the soldiers, sailors and airmen cannot easily be quantified.

Pte Dean Cauldley (2 Mercian) has a left through-knee amputation and had never been on a boat prior to joining TiTW. He said: "The physiotherapists at Headley Court said the trip was happening and I just thought 'why not?'. I've done

skiing and water-skiing but had never been sailing."

Pte Cauldley was hit by an IED while on foot patrol in Babaji, Helmand, in October 2009 and less than a year later he was steering the Army's A40 racing boat into Gosport Harbour.

"The steering was responsive and quite scary when the wind came in, so I had to be careful," he said. "Balance was an issue, with having one leg, but it was fine and I can't wait to get out on the water again."

A perception of sailing might be one of well-spoken crews sitting back on deckchairs while sipping Pimms, but that is far removed from the TiTW experience.

"They are pushing themselves to the limits of strength and balance and will progress with their rehab without even realising," said Army doctor and TiTW director Maj Tom Wood. "The socialising aspect is just as important. Some guys can be withdrawn and feel isolated but the team spirit on the boat brings a huge difference and at the end of an event they ask to come back."

TiTW adopts a steep learning curve to ensure all personnel are in good shape to challenge professional sailors in prestigious races. From the start of the first training day the three crews sailing on an A40 and two J80s were responding to nautical orders and learning to hoist spinnakers.

Aboard the A40, *British Soldier* – provided to TiTW by the Army Sailing Association and generously sponsored by Fujitsu, was renowned sailor Brian Thompson, who has held 25 sailing records and been involved with TiTW since its first foray onto the ocean.

"On the first day, in terms of sailing it

was a case of zero to hero, with soldiers with no prior experience ending by steering the boat into the harbour," he said. "They carried out lots of complex manoeuvres which many crews would not do with weeks of tuition."

"In the races we go up against boats that have been training for months but our adrenaline gets pumping and our guys learn fast, work as a team and are receptive to new ideas."

Amputee Pte Chris Herbert (4 Yorks) summed up the benefits of the scheme: "I was blown up in a Snatch Land Rover in Iraq in February 2007 and after getting involved with TiTW I'm now a fully qualified yachtmaster and look after *British Soldier*."

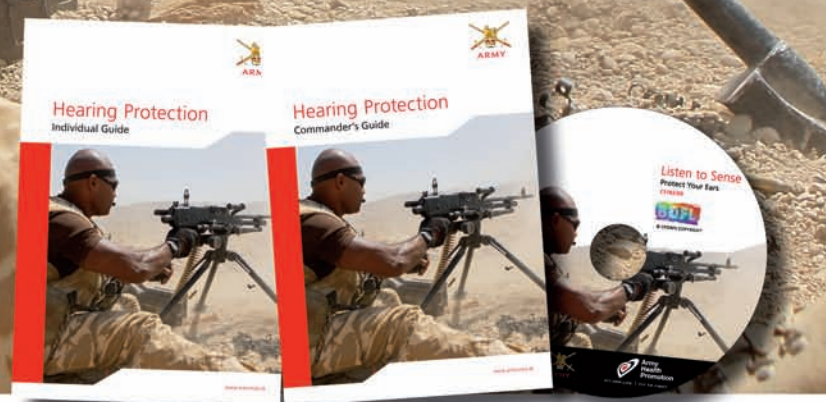
"Toe in The Water saved my life – after the incident I wasn't qualified for anything whereas now I have potential for a very good career. Without this I would be rocking in a chair, but instead I've been made to grow up and push myself."

The TiTW crew excelled during Cowes Week, securing a string of top-five finishes. ■



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TALKBACK

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

Braced for another long wait

IT IS with frustration that I write to you regarding the continued problems faced by Service families in accessing dental treatment and, specifically, orthodontists.

As a family, we have strived to ensure that our children become registered with an NHS dentist on each posting (that itself being no easy task) and on each occasion have been informed that our son requires specialist treatment by an orthodontist.

Having been posted three times in the last four years, this has resulted in starting the process over each time due to never actually being given an initial assessment with an orthodontist. Due to funding restrictions and patient quotas, the latest waiting list projects yet another 12-18 months for an orthodontic assessment, by which time I will have been posted again!

The response from the NHS dental headquarters, each regional Primary Care Trust and relevant dental helplines has been sympathetic but, ultimately, unhelpful.

Having also contacted the Army Families Federation, they too understand the problem and reiterate that central work is ongoing to address this issue but, as yet, no system which takes into account the transient nature of Service life has been agreed.

Meanwhile, my son's dental health continues to deteriorate through the inflexibility of the NHS system and needs of the Army. The situation remains that the need to relocate every two years will mean that my son will never reach the point at which any assessment can be undertaken or any subsequent treatment transferred to my new location.

Furthermore, as a tax payer, being repeatedly told to "go private" does not solve the issue and is not always a viable option. Waiting lists are inevitable and I do not seek special treatment – merely a level playing field with my civilian counterparts where the anomalies of Service life do not impact upon the entitled provision of healthcare for my children.

Must our families continue to be disadvantaged purely because they "follow the flag"? – Name and address supplied.

Lt Col David Willey (RADC), SO1 Oral Health, HQLF Medical Directorate, responds: I have genuine sympathy for this family given three moves in a relatively short period of time.

Seeking private care, while it would undoubtedly enable an orthodontic assessment and start of treatment, is not the answer in itself and there is always a risk that treatment may not be completed before the next move.

Orthodontic waiting lists vary hugely in the UK and there is currently no requirement to provide an assessment within a set time period. The UK has amongst the lowest number of orthodontists per head of population in Europe and provision of orthodontic services is unlikely to increase in the short term.

Progress has been made through the Service Personnel Command Paper and there is now much closer engagement between Regional Forces and local Primary Care Trusts.

However, there may still be individual

families experiencing challenges in accessing NHS dental treatment and specialist orthodontic services for a variety of reasons – in this case frequent moves in a short time have put this family in a particularly difficult position.

The best chance for this family would be to ask their General Dental Practitioner to both telephone and write directly to the local hospital consultant explaining their predicament and requesting that they be given priority on the waiting list that reflects their original referral (although it is not completely clear from the letter whether an orthodontic referral has actually been made yet).

Alternatively, the family is perfectly entitled to make a formal complaint using the NHS complaints system (with assistance from the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service).

If the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved by the NHS or they continue to experience difficulties in accessing orthodontic care, then they should refer the problem to the chain of command for help, as they should not be disadvantaged by the mobile nature of Service life in accessing public services. This principle has been accepted by most Government departments including the Department of Health.

Evidence of significant difficulties should be resolvable by the local Regional Forces formation, in conjunction with the responsible NHS Primary Care Trust or its equivalent in the devolved assemblies.



"Just because your father is an officer and receives more LOA does not mean you can stuff yourselves with endless hot dogs."

HAVING served for many years I have heard most of the arguments for and against Local Overseas Allowance (LOA).

However, if the Army Pay Review Body is looking to scrimp and save, I for one would be happier with a lower rate if it strengthened job security.

Why is it that if, for arguments sake, a "local" loaf of bread costs £3, an officer is given £15 a day to cover this purchase while I [a sergeant] only get £10 and a private soldier receives less still?

Surely if the LOA rate for privates and lance corporals was elevated to that paid to corporals and all ranks above were reduced to the same level, a significant amount of money could be saved. – Name and address supplied.

● WHILE helpless to assist in the business of straightening teeth, *Soldier* would like to try to put a smile on the faces of the aggrieved (above) by gifting the family a free holiday, courtesy of our partners at Pontin's.

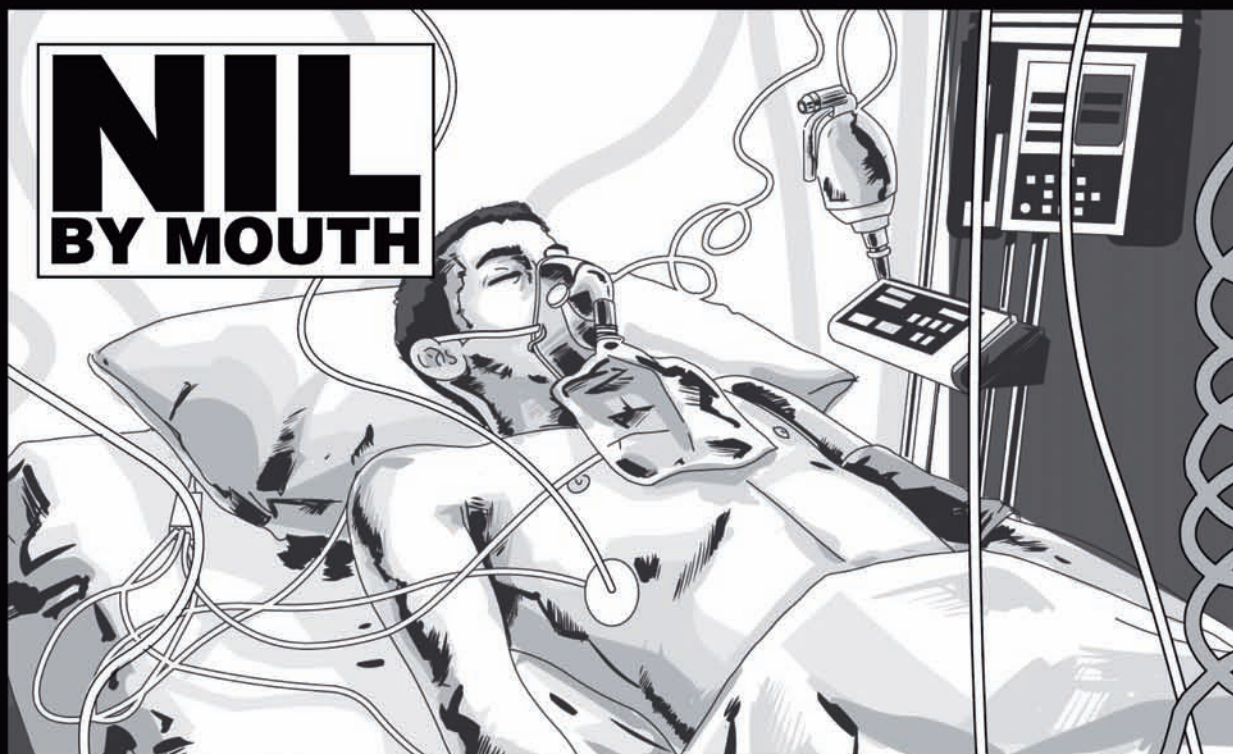
As the subject of this month's prize letter, the son can deliberate his wait for an orthodontist in comfort during a three- or four-night break for four in Pontin's Self-Catering Classic accommodation at a choice of four coastal Holiday Parks: Brean Sands in Somerset; Camber Sands in East Sussex; Prestatyn Sands in North Wales and Southport in the North West.

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Head start for Op Herrick-bound soldiers



AS an Army linguist and cultural advisor currently on my third tour of Afghanistan, I was interested to see the photographs accompanying a feature on troops training at Batus [British Army Training Unit Suffield], "Friendly fire" (July).

The images showed a number of unconvincing Afghan role-players wearing the pakool or pakul hat, as favoured by Tajiks.

The majority of Pashtuns that our soldiers will come across in Helmand will more likely be found wearing a type of turban called the lungee.

It's a small but basic point – these chaps might as well have been wearing bowler hats. – **Capt C Stephen-Martin, Defence Cultural Specialist Unit.**

The editor, doffing his Civil Service-issue bowler, types: The images in question were just a snapshot of those taken by our photographer Steve Dock during Exercise Prairie Thunder.

Both the pakool – modelled right by Cpl Ashley Webster (9/12 L) – and lungee (pictured left) featured during the training serials in Canada.



Forced out of the fight at 55

WHY is it that non-commissioned personnel on Full Time Reserve Service (FTRS) contracts have to retire at 55 while officers are allowed to serve until they are 60?

Equally, why is it that the other ranks are not allowed their FTRS pension before they turn 65 and have to apply for it in writing?

Those lucky enough to remain on contract until they are 60 get their pension the day they retire.

When I approached the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow I was told that I was aware of the terms and conditions when I signed up. Yes, that is true but – and without wishing to offend – so did women who got pregnant during the 70s and 80s and so did individuals who were gay. Both were against military rules at that time but subsequently became permitted on Human Rights grounds. – **WO2 R Hope, 160 (Wales) Brigade.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), and Brig Richard Nugee, DM(A), respond: It is true that Territorial Army Regulations 1978 stipulate that the upper age limit for service on FTRS contracts is the day before an individual's 60th birthday for officers and the day before an individual's 55th birthday for soldiers.

These upper age limits are matters of policy as the Armed Forces are exempt from the application of Employment Equality Regulations on age, which came into effect on October 1, 2006.

However, parity was applied through an amendment to FTRS policy in April 2009 which stipulated that the normal



retirement age for both officers and soldiers is now aligned at age 55.

The relevant Defence Information Notice [2009DIN01-189] also states that in order to meet the Service need these upper age limits may be varied by Directorate of Manning (Army). TA Regulations will be amended in due course to reflect this.

When leaving the Reserve Forces prior to age 60, an individual may be entitled to a preserved pension, which is normally paid from age 65, together with a lump sum (normally tax-free) of three times their annual pension.

There is no qualifying period to be entitled to a preserved pension. However, as pointed out they are not automatically paid and have to be claimed from the Service Pensions and Veterans Agency (SPVA). When the preserved pension becomes payable, it is currently uplifted

by the Retail Prices Index from the date of leaving the Reserve Forces.

If an individual wishes their preserved pension and lump sum to be paid earlier, but not due to ill-health, an application can be made to SPVA.

Doing so is subject to a reduction reflecting the fact that the pension will now be paid over a longer period than would normally be expected. The earliest that it can be paid from is age 55.

PS...

AN issue has come to light in relation to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) and aggregation of prior service.

The SPVA is seeing an increase in the number of soldiers who have left the military with a preserved pension and subsequently rejoined without electing to aggregate their former service with their current service before terminating for a second time. This issue affects those who have served long enough to receive immediate pension benefits had they combined both periods.

SPVA is currently looking at a number of different options to inform individuals of this requirement, including amending AFPS Pension Form 1 to offer the choice of automatic aggregation. Re-employment booklet MMP/116 gives further guidance.

Those wishing to aggregate service should write to SPVA, Pensions Division, Mail Point 480, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX. – **SSgt S Cleary, RCDM.**

PASSPORT AND PERKS, PLEASE



I JOINED the Army as a Foreign and Commonwealth soldier in 2003 and have been stationed in Germany for the last six years.

Now married and serving accompanied, according to policy I am no longer entitled to Domiciled Collective Overseas Leave (DOMCOL) despite, in practical terms, home being the country in which my close family continues to reside.

The alternative to DOMCOL is a farce. A few weeks ago I travelled home with my wife and child and submitted Get You Home (Overseas) (GYH(O)) paperwork on my return.

My unit rejected the claim on the grounds that I have recently taken British citizenship and acquired a British passport. Neither my wife or child hold a British passport or visa and have no family or friends to visit in the UK.

As I now have dual nationality, I believe I should still qualify as a non-British passport holder and in turn be entitled to assisted travel to my country of domicile.

According to Joint Service Publication (JSP) 752, the aim of GYH(O) is to reduce the separation of eligible personnel from close family and friends during overseas assignments. My close family and friends reside in my country of origin, so surely my unit's decision contradicts the core aim of GYH(O). – **A disgruntled soldier.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: You raise issues about two different entitlements available to eligible Service personnel who were either resident outside the United Kingdom or the Irish Republic before

enlistment into the British Army or are holders of non-British passports. The regulations concerning these issues are contained in JSP 760 and 752 respectively.

You are correct in stating that you are no longer eligible for DOMCOL because you are married and serving accompanied with your close family. If your wife and child had chosen to remain in your country of origin then of course you would have retained entitlement to DOMCOL.

With regard to the criteria that should be applied to an individual who holds dual passports and no longer exclusively holds only a Foreign or Commonwealth passport, I must draw your attention to the full aim of GYH(O). JSP 752 states "the aim of GYH(O) is to reduce the separation of eligible personnel from close family, friends and UK lifestyle".

It is the last point that is pertinent. Even when UK-only passport holders have no friends and family to visit in UK they are denied the ability to use GYH(O) to travel to countries where their family members are now resident on the basis that the allowance is designed to return individuals to a UK lifestyle, as well as their close family and friends.

You have taken British citizenship and accepted a UK passport and no doubt enjoy the benefits that this brings. It is therefore only right and proper that this element of allowance policy also be applied to your circumstances.

READING the article on the Army's Personal Combat Equipment Team in *Soldier*, "Tomorrow's world" (June), has prompted me to write.

I've noticed that I'm not the only person to use his rank slide as a pen holder which, while practical, is viewed by some quarters as scruffy and does sometimes lead to lost writing instruments.

Can we please have an easily accessible pen pocket on our jackets? The compartment inside the breast pockets of our current clothing is fiddly to get at (impossible in combat body armour) and can be uncomfortable if there is anything else in the main pocket.

The pen pouches on the sleeves of the pre-Combat Soldier 95 uniforms were ideal, especially the one on the much-loved jungle/tropical shirt.

Another advantage of a better pen pocket is that it will free up my rank slide to act as an ad hoc glasses case. – **Maj Stuart Neilson, SO2 Med Ops & Plans, 306 HSMR.**



"So, let me get this right. We've covered pockets for field dressings; energy sachets; drinks; a radio; torch; mobile phone; GPS; iPod; notepad; small change; first aid kit; DVD wallet... and you're now moaning that you've got nowhere to store your pens?"

PS...

MAY I express my thanks to *Soldier* for printing a tribute to three Royal Marines killed in action in Afghanistan, "Services praised as Marines suffer black month" (July).

As a former member of 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, I worked closely with the Marines on exercise and operations and have some good mates in the "Royals".

While I realise that the *Globe and Laurel* magazine publishes obituaries of marines killed in action, I hope *Soldier* continues to pay tribute to the men of 40 Commando in the event of further deaths.

I doubt I am alone on this, given the way soldiers and marines work together on Operation Herrick – running the same risks and sharing the same dangers. – **Name and address supplied.**



TALKBACK

Baby blues

HAVING returned to work this January after taking six month's maternity leave, I am feeling slightly disgruntled.

I scored well on the regimental corporals' grading board and received an extremely good Service Person's Joint Appraisal Report (SJAR).

However, after submitting the paperwork my boss was told I was not entitled to a full report and that I was subject to a six-month return to work assessment instead.

Nobody within my unit was aware of this procedure and not only did I take up a place on the grading board but this could also impact on next year's report.

I served the six months required in the reporting year to justify a SJAR and have not been given a full explanation as to why it will not be considered.

I work extremely hard even though my fiancé is posted at the opposite end of the country and am consequently a "single" parent to two young children.

An answer to this issue would be appreciated (although an SJAR would be better) as I feel I am being punished for choosing to have a family as well as a career. – Unhappy corporal, R Signals.

Lt Col Anthony Burgin, APC Glasgow, R Signals Wing, responds: This case has been investigated and the extant rules concerning maternity and reporting for personnel have been taken into account, as has the information provided in the letter from the soldier.

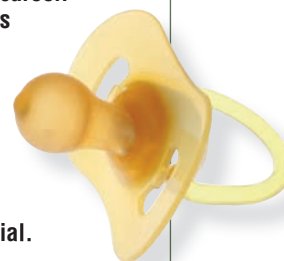
In terms of responding to her particular concerns, under Joint Service Publication 757, Para 2D 11, no report was raised for the period of February 1, 2009 through July 17, 2009 [the date maternity leave began], as this accounted for less than six months.

As her 2008/09 SJAR promotion recommendation is the latest one available, she will still be graded at the forthcoming promotion board in line with the rules; although competition within her trade will be tough with few promotion slots expected.

Only one SJAR for each reporting year can be expected and so there will not be one for 09/10, but there will be subsequent reports bringing her back on the reporting schedule.

If the soldier's performance continues to improve as she states in her letter she will give herself every opportunity for a full and rewarding career.

Her subsequent SJARs will obviously take her to promotion boards should she continue to be recommended and she will compete with her peer group there based on her performance and potential.



One step ahead of Mother Nature: The Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre can forewarn commanders what conditions their exercising troops can expect to encounter Picture: Steve Dock

Weather warning order

READ with interest your review of the Kestrel weather meter, "Uncertain forecast" (June), and noted SSgt Stephen Cooper's comment that while the device gives a snapshot of the conditions at its location, it does not provide a forecast.

The Joint Operational Meteorology and Oceanography Centre (JOMOC) at Northwood exists exactly for this purpose, but although this office provides extensive support to Royal Navy, Royal Marine and Royal Air Force units, it is used very little by the Army.

Currently, our "green" business is limited to aviation, artillery and some overlap between the hydrography work of the Navy and the survey work of the Royal Engineers.

For those *Soldier* readers unfamiliar with the organisation, JOMOC is staffed by Navy warfare officers of the hydrography and meteorology specialisation and UK Met Office personnel – a large number of whom are RAF Mobile Met Unit Reservists with front-line experience.

The office is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and provides environmental information from the top of the atmosphere to the bottom of the seabed in support of land, sea and air operations within the UK and across the globe.

The centre carries a wealth of experience of forecasting for all environments and all climates. Although exploiting

the environment to gain a war-fighting advantage is our chief priority, JOMOC is frequently called upon to support expeditions and adventurous training with high-quality, tailored material.

In recent months the centre has helped assist a pair of Royal Marines sailing through the Northwest Passage, the Navy and RAF yachts taking part in a round-the-world yacht race and a climbing expedition in the Himalayas.

Sadly, we receive very little interest from the wider Army and having recently met members of the ill-fated Army yacht team involved in Exercise Transglobe, I am keen to break this habit.

Even if your unit is about to exercise on Salisbury Plain, there is a good deal of advantage in knowing whether you will face howling gales and torrential rain or clear skies and scorching sunshine.

Specialist information is also available: night illumination levels, surf data, drop zone forecasts and thermal crossover for night vision goggles are all here at the stroke of a key.

The office can be contacted by phone on 01923 958111 (9360 58111) or by DII – FLEET OPS-JOMOC Group (Multiuser).

Alternatively, our global weather website is available via DII at www.jomoc.r.mil.uk or the internet at www.jomoc.net (users will need to call the office to request a username and password). Please do get in touch. – Lt Iain Ritchie (RN), contingent operations forecaster, JOMOC.



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PS...

I HAVE just read the letter regarding the quality of food being served on Op Herrick, "Chefs carved out of operational cookhouses" (June), and am very angry at the writer's comments.

I am one of the ex-Service chefs working in Bastion 2 kitchen and since taking over the facility in November all the feedback I have received has been very positive.

We have had many visitors from other locations compliment us on the standard of food served.

All the chefs based in Bastion 2 are ex-military and we know the standards and service expected by the guys and girls and I feel we do everything possible to provide it.

KBR [the contractor running the facility] has improved the dining area; adding televisions, table cloths, air conditioning and expanding the kitchen.

As Capt Carl Fulford stated in his response to the letter, we hold messing meetings and welcome any feedback – good or bad. We also have an "ex-pat" chef on duty at every meal and if anyone has a complaint they should speak up immediately so that we can try and sort the problem out.

And while I agree with the writer's sentiment that it doesn't make sense to have military chefs and not use them (we have a few coming through our hotplate, working out of role with various units), I know that the Army would prefer to have them in the forward operating and patrol bases.

KBR has taken over some of the other locations to help enable this. – **David Brown** (ex-Sgt ACC/RLC), head chef Bastion 2.



WITH regard to the answer given by Brig Mike Griffiths to a letter suggesting the honours system needs to be reviewed, "Ditch the decoration divide" (July), I have no argument with the operational and gallantry awards as each case is viewed on merit.

However, the half-yearly awards do appear to be weighted in favour of the senior ranks. The Queen's Birthday Honours list included a number of lieutenant colonels awarded the MBE, which I always believed was meant for majors and below. Since doing away with the excellent British Empire Medal [pictured right] it seems that junior ranks are now considered for the same decorations as senior officers and warrant officers. Consequently, very few directors of music and quartermasters are now awarded the MBE despite many of them having served for more than 30 years.

In my own case, I was lucky enough to be the regimental sergeant major of an outstandingly-efficient unit and was awarded the MBE in recognition of every man in the regiment! – **Maj (Retd) Peter Horsfall, Southgate.**



Property pandemonium

DUE to a lack of quarters at Chetwynd Barracks, I was forced to move into Substitute Service Families Accommodation (SSFA) on my arrival at 49 Brigade in June of last year.

In my opinion, the property we were provided with – a small, three-storey, three-bed, new-build town house – was not suitable for a family of five.

Consequently, after a six-month period I applied again for Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and, although put on a waiting list, was informed by Defence Estates (DE) that I would never be considered as a priority as I already had somewhere to live.

I was left with no choice but to purchase my own property. However, that's when the problems started.

Having been informed of a move date of April 16 by my solicitor, I relayed the details to DE and arranged for a march out.

Unfortunately, the legal process took longer than expected and I had to ask HCR [who let properties to the MoD] for an extension to stay in the SSFA for a further 11 days. My appeal was refused.

Faced with being homeless for this period, I requested use of a "spare" SFA and was again told this would not be possible.

I then turned to the welfare department at Chetwynd Barracks and was offered the use of a house for the last seven of the 11 days ahead of my move.

With a week still unaccounted for, I again appealed to HCR for a change in march-out date and was told no and threatened with legal action if I did not vacate the SSFA.

The only solution remaining was to put my furniture into storage and to stay with family 100 miles away – a course of action which meant my eldest two children missed three days of schooling.

Perhaps, in hindsight, I should have given DE and HCR a fictitious date beyond the intended day of completion.

I have served for more than 22 years and have had several SFAs, none of which have caused my family the pain and upset we have recently experienced.

If the deal to buy my new home had fallen through my family and I would have been homeless and been relying on DE to rehouse us very quickly.

I doubt that I am the first person to move out of SSFA to buy their own property and encounter problems. DE needs to look at its policy and procedures to ensure that in such an event no Service families are left homeless. – **Name and address supplied.**

Defence Estates Operations Housing respond: DE is committed to providing personnel and their families with SFA according to their entitlement. The organisation takes its responsibilities very seriously and would never leave entitled families homeless.

Due to the shortage of SFA at Chetwynd, the soldier and his family were housed in SSFA according to entitlement. He was offered a choice of two properties and chose the house he refers to in his letter.

It was the soldier's decision to apply for SFA again and he stated that he would like a D Type property which was above entitlement. He was therefore put on the transfer waiting list. It is correct that the DE priority would be to house personnel who would otherwise be homeless.

It was then the family's choice to pursue the purchase of their own house. And – as with all private sector property transactions – the arrangements can be complex and unforeseen delays can occur.

HCR did try to extend the vacation date on the soldier's SSFA by a week but the landlord had unfortunately already found new tenants for the property.

As SFA was still not available, the Housing Information Centre (HIC) advised HCR that the unit welfare officer could help with temporary accommodation but that the soldier needed to arrange this directly.

In the event of no welfare houses being available, the HIC can arrange for emergency hotel accommodation for Service families. Unfortunately the soldier did not go back to the HIC to advise that there was a problem.

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Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society: 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

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

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);

DEFENCE DIARY

Until January 2011: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

70 SEPTEMBER 2010 www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

Until end of September: Camouflage exhibition. Free for the whole family at Imperial War Museum in Manchester. The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000.

September 18: Scarlet and Gold: A Concert by The Massed Bands of The Household Division, to be held at the Royal Albert Hall starting at 1930. Ticket prices range from £11 to £40 and are available from Royal Albert Hall Box Office by phoning 0207 589 8212, visiting www.royalalberthall.com or by writing to The Royal Albert Hall Box Office, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AP.

September 21: Real spies and real secrets. Keith Jeffery, professor of British history at Queen's University Belfast, will discuss the challenge of writing the first official history of the Secret Intelligence Service. From 1830 at the Churchill War Rooms, London. Telephone 020 7766 0155 or visit cwr.iwm.org.uk

September 23: Florence Nightingale: Influence on Nursing. Speaker Gp Capt W Williams RRC, at the Chelsea College of Art, previously The Royal Army Medical College, London.

September 25: Rhythm Force 2010. Open-air contemporary music festival at Kneller Hall, Twickenham, featuring Status Quo, Hayley Westenra, The Soldiers, plus rock, pop and soul groups from the Corps of Army Music. Tickets costing £20 and £12.50 for concessions can be purchased from www.ticketmaster.co.uk or by calling 0844 847 1742. Further details can be found at www.army.mod.uk/music/concert/default.aspx

October 9 & 10: Malta Military Tattoo. Massed bands, precision marching, formation and gymnastic displays to be held at the Malta Fairs & Conventions Centre in Ta' Qali, Malta. Tickets range from 18-28 Euros and can be purchased online by visiting www.ticketline.com.mt or emailing booking@maltamilitarytattoo.com

November 27 & 28: Birmingham Military Tattoo. Massed bands, displays, field gun competition plus much more to be held at the National Indoor Arena, Birmingham. Tickets £13.50 to £21.50, concessions available. Call the box office on 0844 338 800 or visit www.birminghamtattoo.com

December 4 & 5: The British Military Tournament will be held at London's Earls Court. Presented by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, it will bring together all the best elements of the world-famous Royal Tournament. Tickets cost £29 to £65 from Earls Court on 0870 903 9033 or visit www.britishmilitarytournament.com

SEARCHLINE

David Stewart is trying to trace fellow comrades of his late father, **22722258 Cpl Robert Muirhead Wilson (RAOC)**, from his National Service days. Cpl Muirhead served from October 2, 1952 until October 24, 1954. Contact David at 9/12 Smithfield Street, Edinburgh EH11 2PG or phone 0131 477 6387.

Where are you **Lt Charles Wanter** and **Sgt Brian Marshal (both RASC)**? Dvr Roy Jones is trying to trace former colleagues for a reunion. All personnel left England on the troop ship *Devonshire* on August 15, 1960 with a company of King's Own Royal Border Regiment soldiers

bound for British Cameroon for a ten-month tour. Contact Roy by writing to him at 15 Mount Pleasant, Aldington, Ashford, Kent TN25 7DN.

A university student undertaking historical research for a dissertation is seeking information about **British prisoners of war held in captivity by the Japanese**. She wishes to focus on the rehabilitation in the period immediately after the war by conducting interviews with survivors and/or family members who have any knowledge or experience from this time. Contact Jennifer Taylor by email j_taylor_05@yahoo.co.uk

An ex-Serviceman is running a **Help for Heroes campaign** in his village of Blairgowrie, Perthshire. He is planning to hold an auction of military memorabilia and would be grateful for any donations. If you can help, please forward any items to Mr J Harvey, Wester Parkhead Cottage, Blairgowrie, Perthshire PH10 6LP.

The Trucial Oman Scouts (TOS) were a British-led Arab force that policed the Trucial States between 1951 and 1971 during the formation of the United Arab Emirates. Dr James Olney, of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at Exeter University, is leading a major project to archive documents and memorabilia from the era. Terry Ward, chairman of the TOS All-Ranks Association, is searching for veterans to take part in the study. If you would like to contribute, call Terry on 0634 404528, email tjward@jackanapes.co.uk or write to 44 Weller Avenue, Rochester, Kent ME1 2LG.

REUNIONS

44 Parachute Brigade, Pathfinder Company, SADF: Reunion will be held at the London Club of the Rifles, 52-56 Davies Street, London W1K 5HR on September 16 at 1800. Email Steve Crump at steve@30degreeessouth.co.uk

Royal Regiment of Fusiliers: Beating retreat followed by a dinner dance to be held at the Royal Court Hotel, Keresley, Coventry from 1800 on September 18. Also, an annual service will be held at St Mary's Church, Warwick on September 19, commencing at 1045 and followed by a march past in Market Place, Warwick. Open to past and present fusiliers, wives and partners also welcome to attend. Further details from Maj (Retd) J Turquand, Area HQ, RRF, St John's House, Warwick CV34 4NF, phone 01926 491653 or email rrfhqwarwick@btconnect.com

11 Sphinx Battery Association RA: Reunion to be held in the Queen's Hotel, Newport, South Wales on September 18. Further details from Mag Roberts on 07786 437037 or visit www.11sphinxbtyweb.co.uk

622 Squadron Army Air Corps: A reunion for personnel who served with the squadron while stationed in Munster. Function to be held in London on September 18. Interested personnel should log on to the 662 Sqn page by visiting www.armyaviation.co.uk

Glosters Band and Drums: Reunion at the TA Centre, Eastern Avenue, Gloucester GL4 3BD on October 2. Details from Neil Webb, 1 Oakhurst Close, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 2SS or phone 01452 855236.

Royal Horse Artillery Association: AGM and reunion will take place at the Victory Services Club and St John's Wood Barracks on October 2-3. Attendance is open to past and present members of the RHA unit. Details from R J Whiteway, The Hideaway, 18 Immenstadt Drive, Wellington, Somerset TA21 9TP, phone 01823 665650 or email rhaasn@hotmail.co.uk

Army Command and Staff Course 24 (1990):

20th reunion dinner on October 9 for students at the former Staff College Building, Camberley. Contact Chris Booth on 94641 8627 or 0208 744 8627 or email cos@hq.dcamus.mod.uk

204 (North Irish) Field Hospital's WOs' and Sgts' Mess invites all serving, honorary and past members of the mess to a reunion dinner on October 16 at Hydebank TA Centre. Details from WO1 Dave Cairns on 07775 992635 or email dave.cairns@gmail.com

Alexis Soyer Dinner to be held on October 21 at Worthy Down Officers' Mess. Personnel who have completed the food service/food supply officer courses or are in an FS-supporting role are eligible to attend. If you have not received your invitation, contact Capt M Peters by telephone on 94271 2287/2294 or 01962 887287/887294 by October 1.

129 Battery RA Old Comrades' Association: Reunion for all past and present members and attached personnel of the battery. Venue is the Central Club, Blackpool on October 22-23. For details contact williehenry885@hotmail.com or visit www.129dragonsoca.co.uk

Devon Festival of Remembrance: To be held in The Princess Theatre, Torquay on November 11 at 1900. Further details to follow.

South Notts Hussars: Reunion and Remembrance dinner to take place at the TA centre, Hucknall Lane, Bulwell, Nottingham NG6 8AQ on November 13. Tickets cost £25 each and are available from the secretary at the TA centre.

JACIG: 20th anniversary dinner to be held at RAF Henlow Officer's Mess on November 18. All former JACIG officers and senior NCOs welcome. Full details from Sqn Ldr Ashton on 01462 857489 or email j1j4so2@jacig.raf.mod.uk

COMPETITIONS

Spine Line winner: Jayne Hawkes, Headquarters Hereford Garrison.

Facebook winner: Cpl J Thomas, HQ Defence Dental Services, Aldershot.

Shrink winners: WO1 P Storrs, Shrivenham; M O'Shea, London; N Swales, Richmond; K McMurtrie, 224 MI Section, Edinburgh; Miss M Rickard, Addlestone.

Maximuscle winner: Tpr J Champness, London.

Life During Wartime winners: J Holliday, Bath; M Ward, Coventry; A Neilson, 145(S) Bde, Aldershot; Cpl Bighi, Southwick; S Jackson, 201 Tpt Sqn RLC, Bedford.

Camelbak Chilly Unit winners: SSgt P Taylor, 200 Sig Sqn, BFPO 16; D Elkins, Salisbury.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with a finger buffet. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or e-mail your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending

September: 14, Sunderland; 15, Rotherham; 16, Huddersfield; 28, Leicester; 29, Nottingham; 30, Derby.

October: 19, Walsall; 20, Stoke-on-Trent; 21, Coventry.

NO. 826

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding, RLC

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of a 155mm AS90 self-propelled gun taken during Exercise Flying Rhino. Circle the differences in the upper image and send the panel to **HOAY 826, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by September 30.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the November issue.

July competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Capt D Bellringer**, 21 MI Coy, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. Runners-up **Cpl Bygrave**, 1 R Anglian, Pirbright, Surrey and **SSgt J Malone**, Tayforth UOTC, Dundee, each win a £25 gift voucher.



THE look of joy on the face of International Security Strategy Minister Gerald "Gerry" Howarth as he handled an SA80 at this year's DVD event evaded most of our sharp-tongued satirists last month.

Missing the opportunity to lighten the mood, our cynical captioners instead chose to suggest that all was not well at the show.

Mr Simon Harrison of Wiltshire was among the offenders, suggesting the equally-jovial colonel next to the MP was saying "Sorry Minister, we don't have any ammunition yet – just shout 'bang bang' very loudly and quickly".

Another Mr Harrison, this time from Hampshire, decided that Gerry was in fact taking the opportunity to wheel out one of his favourite impersonations with his suggestion of "The Minister's sudden cry of 'take that you dirty rat' during an impression of a 1930's gangster was an



Picture: Cpl Gary Kendall, RLC

"So you're telling me this little bullet can bag me a stag at 1,000 paces? I'll take 100 to see me through open season!"

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by September 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Hart of Empire* by Saul David.

embarrassing shock to everyone present".

But this month's prime prankster is Wayne Baker from Grantham. The Lincolnshire man's cheerful "This is wicked! Can I take it home to show my mum?" bags him a copy of Robert Kershaw's excellent *Sky Men*.

The Duke of Kent's recent trip to Afghanistan is this month's topic of choice.

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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



'Time to speak up, Service spouses'

SEPTEMBER 29 had better be circled on the calendars of all those Service spouses out there.

The date of this year's Army Families Federation (AFF) International Conference, it is your chance to have your say and influence those whose decisions directly affect your lives and those of your family.

Before becoming a member of the AFF team I lived in Germany for seven years. I remember noticing the posters advertising the annual conference but never considered the event to be particularly relevant to me. As a fairly newly-wed, I had no kids, was in full-time employment and the only operational tour in sight was either Northern Ireland or Bosnia.

Having been to two conferences since, I now know how wrong I was.

Ahead of the big day, AFF staff across the world talk to families about the issues that affect them most and this year we also used an online survey to ensure that we reached as many people as possible.

We're still analysing the results, but one of the highest reported concerns is the impact of operations on relationships. No surprise there, given the current op tempo and the stress associated.

Consequently, this year's keynote speaker, Dr Tony Baker, will be talking about the effect of separation on families and, more importantly, how to cope with it.

I always remember a friend of mine telling me how she associated her father with toys but his homecoming with fear and shouting. He'd go away on ops or exercise for months on end and her mum would use him as a threat... "you

just wait until your father comes home".

As a result, when dad did come home she would be so scared that it took lots of presents on his part to win her round. It took years for them to rebuild their relationship and looking at it from the outside it is amazing that it wasn't beyond repair.

Employment rarely features as part of the AFF quarterly report but for spouses answering our survey it was a priority issue. Not surprising given the difficulty most spouses have in getting a job, never mind maintaining some semblance of a career.

I've waxed lyrical about the abilities of Army spouses in previous columns but moving so often, finding yourself a single parent for long periods of time and with the added pressure of the current economic situation, it's not surprising that employment is high on the hit list.

While the MoD cannot do a great deal to improve the employment prospects of individual spouses, they can bear in mind the difficulties being faced when making policy, posting and strategic decisions.

For example, how many soldiers use their full resettlement entitlement? I would hazard a guess at not many. If their credits could be transferred to their other halves perhaps families would face a more positive future on leaving the Army and it would be a form of payback to spouses for our time served following the flag.

As part of the survey we also asked why people choose to live in Service Families Accommodation (SFA). So many of us bemoan their condition, their location and the magnolia walls, so why do

we continue to live in them?

I dream of the day that we will live permanently in our own home, but moving every two years has meant that so far it has been impractical. We tried it while living in Dorset but I found that I missed the patch life and having people around me who understood what our lifestyle is like.

When hubby got posted and started weekly commuting, that was the last straw. We didn't get married to live apart and have enough enforced separation thanks to his

job, so we sold the house and moved back into SFA.

From our survey it would seem that the majority of you feel the same way that I did.

Three quarters of families living in SFA do so because they do not want a weekly

commute and they choose not to buy in the area that they are posted to because it is not home; they are only there for a relatively short time; and they cannot afford to do so.

When looking at the future of the Defence Estate these are important factors that the MoD must take into account and the AFF will be making the findings of our study available.

Without surveys such as ours, and the conference itself, Service families would be left without a voice.

So, whether you have issues with Army life or you are simply an interested observer, please do make the effort to come along to the Army Families Federation Conference at the Institute of Education, Bedford Square, London, later this month.

● Tickets must be reserved in advance. Visit www.aff.org.uk for more details. ■

'It is your chance to influence those whose decisions affect your lives'





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www.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

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www.forceshomes.co.uk

Finding homes for military personnel. We organise your mortgage, search for your ideal property, manage the complete purchase, arrange the letting if required, and we pay all your professional and legal fees.

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website with news, features and information on all aspects of Army work and life.

www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.armedforces.co.uk

Over 2,000 pages of Defence information, including defence projects and equipment, technology information, military books and defence supplier's details.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

www.stff.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

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www.hmforces.co.uk

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www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.youtube.com/britisharmy

The Army's official video channel with lots of videos ranging from training to equipment.

www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equestrian. Here you will be able to find the information and links you need to keep you up-to-date with what's going on.

www.nfassociation.org

The "Not Forgotten" Association for disabled ex-Service personnel aims to provide entertainment and recreation for war-wounded personnel to alleviate the tedium of their lives and give them something they can look forward to.

www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the Army.

www.facebook.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Facebook fan page

www.twitter.com/britisharmy

The Army's official Twitter channel for the distribution of news and information

www.squaddiewives.co.uk

Squaddie wives, British Army wives and girlfriends site for women only.

www.armycadets.com

We offer fun, exciting and challenging activities on a military theme to 12-18 year olds. Pass on your skills and knowledge to the next generation. Go online to find your nearest detachment and request an information pack.

www.facebook.com/armycadetforce

The Army Cadet Force's official Facebook fan page.

www.honour-our-troops.org.uk

Honour our Troops is a non-profit charity, comprising a dedicated team of volunteers committed to giving knowledge, expertise, time and effort in realising our vision - Staging a National Concert in honour and support of our British Forces.



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MOD LINKS

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

The latest information on match reports, fixtures, ticket and equipment sales, and contact details for all Army Rugby Union teams. See how the most popular and successful sports team in the Army is doing.

www.hive-europe.co.uk

HIVE Information centres for the Tri-service communities.

www.hive.mod.uk

Provision of information to Services communities within UK and overseas

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website, carrying information ranging from corps and regiments, news, features, operations and deployment to kit, welfare and training.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to?

Are you Doing Alright?

www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

HELPING HANDS

www.wrfs.org.uk

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www.tnauk.org.uk

National talking newspapers and magazines. Difficulty reading the printed word? *Soldier* can still be enjoyed in audio format. To receive a free audio sample of *Soldier* contact the National Talking Newspaper Service on 01435 866102 or email info@tnauk.org.uk

www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.oswaldstoll.org.uk

Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation provides appropriate housing with support to vulnerable and disabled ex-service personnel, including those who have been homeless.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families

www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.veterans-uk.info

A wealth of information about pay, pension and support services to both military personnel and the veterans community

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

MUSEUMS

www.remuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.

www.remuseum.org.uk

Royal Engineers Museum, Library & Archive. The explosive history of the Royal Engineers is on display for all the family to enjoy.

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www.bfrs.webs.com

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www.dlp.mod.uk

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Jacqui, (42), 5'7", blonde hair with brown eyes. Works in a bank and enjoys eating out, going to markets, summer fairs, parks and any outside events. Seeking male pen pals, any age group. P034

Gary, (42), genuine single dad ex-TA soldier seeks regular female soldier pen pals between the ages of 30 and 50, non smoker, home or away for correspondence and friendship. All letters will be answered. P035

38-year-old single, 6'0", with long brown hair, hazel eyes and freckles, hardworking, genuine midwife. Enjoys reading, writing, music, travelling to exotic countries, her cats, meeting new people, Muhammad Ali is her ultimate hero, watching snooker, does not mind footie, taking photos and talking nonsense. Happy to write to anyone who chooses to write to her. Please somebody write back to her, any age group. P036

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Picture: Cpl Barry Lloyd, RLC



Hazy days: The critically-acclaimed *When You're Strange* shows the real men behind controversial cult band The Doors

Lid lifted on cult band

Director Tom DeCillo: 'Come with your eyes open and you will see something'

Interview: Joe Clapson

THE Doors' status as a "cult band" is probably unrivalled by any other despite the group going their separate ways in 1973 and their iconic frontman dying aged 27 in 1971.

The fact that the controversial music has lived on with such fervour owes largely to the mystery that surrounds its members and the backdrop to Jim Morrison's lyrics.

But with *When You're Strange*, director Tom DeCillo has – for the first time – put unseen footage and images of Morrison, keyboardist Ray Manzarek, drummer John Densmore and guitarist Robbie Krieger on the big screen.

The format is intentionally basic and blunt – live film rolls of The Doors on and off stage – without any updated interviews with the surviving heroes of the band.

But as the bold American director explained to *Soldier*, that is precisely the point.

"I took a look at all the footage and my concept was to just use it as it was – it's so amazing it speaks for itself," said DeCillo.

"People tend to always make The Doors

something that they're not, in one direction or another. I wanted to take this stuff of legend and bullshit and let them see the real thing."

The film gives an unprecedented view into the people behind the men on stage before and after serving up genre-defining performances to entranced audiences.

The isolation of Jim Morrison driving his car solo in the desert is quite a different prospect to the charismatic singer-cum-poet serenading a crowd of thousands.

"I think the audience will see the band as quite a bit more complex and ultimately more human," added DeCillo.

There will no doubt be comparisons drawn between this film and Oliver Stone's 1991 biopic *The Doors*, but according to DeCillo only his offering tells the true story.

"Oliver Stone made an interesting film, I just don't think it was about The Doors," he said.

The mass appeal of *When You're Strange* was immediately increased when its creators enlisted Hollywood royalty in the form of Johnny Depp to carry out the narration and DeCillo was openly grateful to the A-lister.

"He immediately said yes when he was asked to narrate the film and rather than just read a script

he went off and started sending me stuff line by line, sometimes with five takes for each line," he said. "His input added a definite credibility to it."

Without current "talking heads" interviews with Manzarek, Densmore or Krieger, some fans might argue that an opportunity has been missed, but DeCillo insists viewers will leave enlightened.

"I am proud that I took a risky approach to just use the original footage – I had to just let the film fill in all the information," he explained.

"After viewing it, the band felt I had done them a great honour by just allowing the footage to show them as they actually were."

Despite a large focus on Morrison, the film also pays credit to those who played on in the wake of his out-of-control spiral towards death.

The Doors took their title from the Aldous Huxley line "if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is". DeCillo asks his audience to follow those words to get the most out of his creation.

"I say the same thing, come with your eyes open and you will see something," he said.

"If you are so rigid that you cannot accept new ideas, what's the point?"

● *When You're Strange* is out now on Blu-Ray and DVD. ■

From British gangsters to ferocious fighting in Lebanon, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Down Terrace out now

A GRITTY, urban tale of an "everyday British criminal family" desperately trying to find out who blew the whistle on them. Our lead man has serious anger management issues and his dad is an unlikely drug user and member of a folk band for good measure. He is hard-as-nails and so is his mum. An almost slapstick script is nonchalantly delivered by the dysfunctional family, murderous pregnant women and various amateur hit men. Potentially-irritating first-person camera work instead adds to the realism and plausibility. Trust no-one, watch your back, eat and drink nothing... it's probably going to end badly. Loved it.

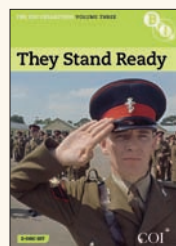
Capt Neil Johnson, AAC



They Stand Ready out now

WHILE I am a keen enthusiast for military history, a series of public service broadcasts from the 40s and 50s was going to be a challenge in one sitting. I needed help. Cue my father Russell as it was clear that these films contained more relevance to him than me. However, watching them together was perhaps the best decision made. It enabled us to share our views and appreciate the production in different ways. These films are glimpses into history and, having been made at the time, offer a fantastic first-hand account of events and concurrent attitudes. If you can get hold of them you should... and invite your dad.

Tpr Alistair Campbell-Grieve, RY



Killing Machine out now

AT first glance, this straight-to-DVD feature feels like it is going to be a cheap, low-budget action film which could be a reminder of a typical 80s shocker, but it actually turns out to be a rather well-thought-out movie with a realistic plot and fast-paced scenes. Written by and starring burly hero **Dolph Lundgren**, the film co-stars **Stefanie von Pfetten**, **Samantha Ferris** and **Bo Svenson** (*Inglourious Basterds*, *Kill Bill*), and is a definite must-see for those with a taste for edgy, independent action movies as well as those who are after an easy-to-follow, entertaining film to watch.

Daniel Crowder, Greater Manchester ACF





Old school: *When You're Strange* director Tom DeCillo shunned new interviews with the surviving members of The Doors in favour of archive footage

Suck out on October 11

A STRUGGLING band find themselves booed off stage and going nowhere until their lead singer is turned into a vampire during a one-night stand. Cue a surge in popularity as the sultry blood-sucker pulls in the crowds. Noticing their new-found fame, her band mates beg to be turned into creatures of the night before realising being undead isn't all it's cracked up to be and trying to find a way back. *Suck* is occasionally funny and features an admittedly-good retro soundtrack, but ultimately not even cameos from rock legends **Alice Cooper** and **Iggy Pop** can save this monstrosity. In short, it sucks.



Stephen Tyler, *Soldier*

Win... Lebanon

TWENTY five years after **Samuel Maoz** killed a man at the start of the Lebanon War he wrote and directed *Lebanon*, a film based on his horrific experiences inside a tank in 1982. His compelling, critically-acclaimed movie is a highly-personal depiction of four boys operating a ferocious killing machine. *Soldier* has teamed up with Metrodome to offer five readers the opportunity to win a copy of the DVD. To have a chance of getting your hands on the disc, tell us the name of the director who wrote *Lebanon*. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: September 30

Win... Modesty Blaise

STRAIGHT from the pages of **Peter O'Donnell's** newspaper comic strip, **Monica Vitti** is *Modesty Blaise* – the world's deadliest female agent. This fast-paced psychedelic adventure from the 1960s is out on DVD for the first time on September 20. With outlandish weapons and ever-changing hair colour, the super spy battles villains the world over. Second Sight are kindly offering five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of the DVD. To enter, tell us who stars as the eponymous hero. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Closing date: September 30



Hot seat: The game responsible for taking up hours of football fans' lives will make its return on PC and Mac before Christmas

Back in the dugout

Armchair bosses set for sterner test as ultra-realistic managerial title returns

Preview: Stephen Tyler

If England's dismal showing at the World Cup taught us one thing, it was that the average British football fan still believes he knows more than the manager.

While Fabio Capello tried – and failed – to cure the Three Lions' anaemic performances in South Africa, armchair fans back home were quick to claim that everything from old-fashioned tactics to irrational team selections were at fault.

But for all the part-time pundits' protestations that their advice would have brought the trophy back to Blighty, we will never be able to put their claims to the test. Unless, that is, we sit them in front of a computer and load up the latest version of the *Football Manager* (FM) series.

The simulation, which puts fans in charge of any of hundreds of clubs from around the world, allows gamers to try out their tactical masterstrokes – all the way up to the grand stage of the World Cup.

Already renowned for its staggering levels of detail, *FM11* ups the ante with a smattering of new features. Contract negotiations with players

now take place in real-time, requiring on-the-fly negotiations to be conducted with agents. The conversational approach also extends to dealings with the board.

A new match preparation mode allows teams to be drilled in specific tactics and the training system has also been overhauled.

On top of the improvements to the game's mechanics, *FM11*'s database is as hefty as ever and weighs in with a colossal 400,000 players and staff.

Sports Interactive studio director Miles Jacobsen told *Soldier*: "We have head scouts in more than 50 countries around the world and there are more than 1,000 scouts who report into them. It's a massive task but one we've built up an amazing team to do over the years."

Anyone who has played *Football Manager* will testify to its addictiveness and the team behind the game are proud that the title can help gamers get through tough times.

"What we're trying to do is create a simulation that acts as an escape for people from their normal lives – whether that be a nurse, teacher, brickie or a soldier – any walk of life and any type of person," added Jacobsen.

"If that's helping them get through difficult

times that is the best compliment that can be given to us and one that means a lot to me."

One of the biggest changes to the games in recent years has been the introduction of a live match engine that allows players to watch their tactics played out on the pitch.

Although still some way off the graphical finesse of *Fifa*, *FM11* has been given an aesthetic overhaul and the matches now take place in improved stadiums featuring better lighting and new player and crowd models.

With serving soldiers among *FM11*'s huge fanbase, Jacobsen wished to pass his wishes on to Britain's Servicemen and women.

"I cannot imagine what any of you are going through with the difficult situations that you face," he said.

"We see a tiny part of what is going on during the conflicts, but Sports Interactive and I do a lot of work with War Child and get regular updates from the ground on what is going on where they work, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Continue to support each other and win over hearts and minds."

● *Football Manager 11* will be released before Christmas. Visit www.footballmanager.com for more information. ■

From war-hungry worms to flamboyant wrestlers, we check out some of gaming's hottest properties...

Worms Reloaded for PC

GAMERS of a certain age will remember the absurdity of the first *Worms* games, but will also recall how fiendishly addictive they were. Taking charge of a squad of murderous worms, players choose an array of weapons, from exploding sheep to banana bombs, and set about destroying an opposing team. This updated version features off- and online multiplayer modes as well as a new single-player game. Destructible landscapes make the gameplay surprisingly tactical at times and new weapons include ferrets (really) and the intriguingly-named Buffalo of Lies. An enjoyably updated blast from the past.



Out now

Smackdown vs Raw 2011 for all formats

THE faux-violence of WWE's wrestling juggernaut returns for its inevitable annual console beat-em-up. Love it or loathe it, the "sports entertainment" company knows how to put on a show and the game features all of the razzmatazz of its real-life counterpart. A massive roster of 70 competitors (condescendingly known as Superstars for the men and Divas for the women) have been lovingly recreated, while the title's story mode has been polished to give owners a greater feeling of being in the WWE world. The usual glut of fight modes add to a strangely-alluring package.



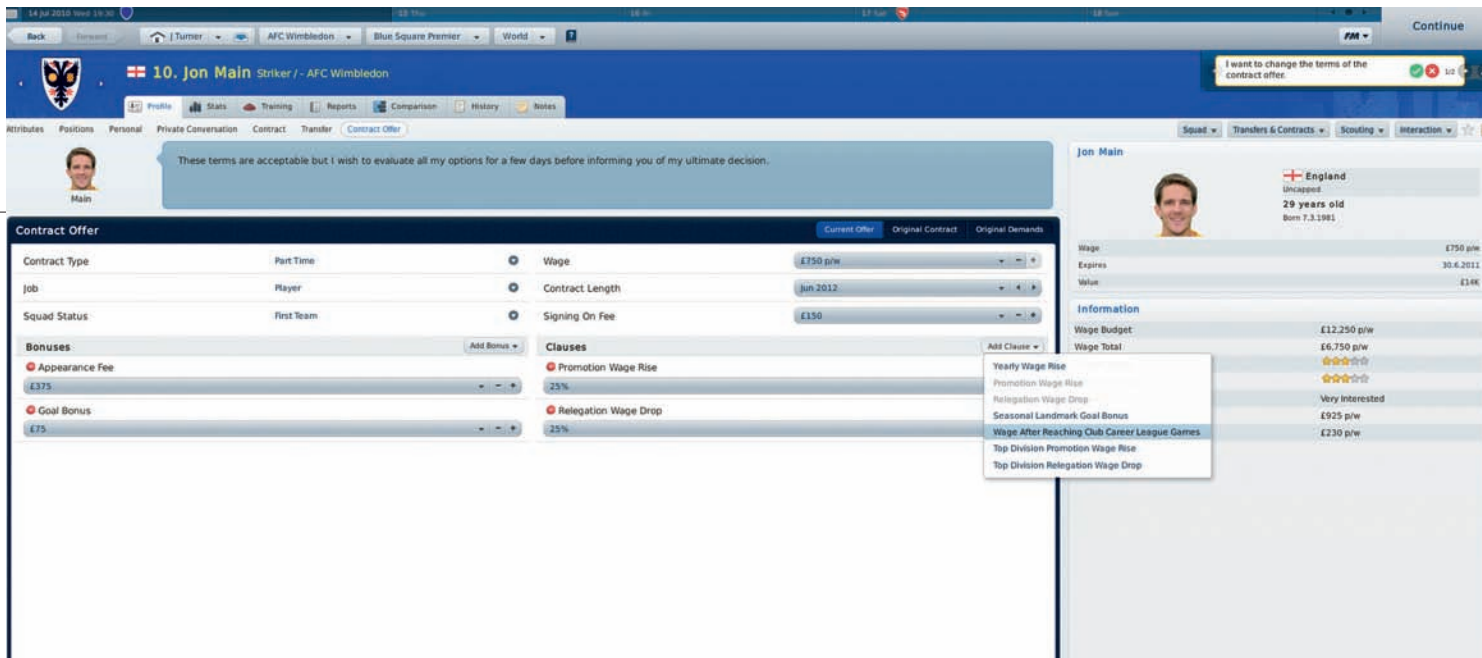
Out later this year

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011 for Xbox 360

AFTER having its mantle as the football gaming purists' title of choice well-and-truly stolen by last year's *Fifa* outing, *Pro Evolution Soccer* has gone on the attack to regain its crown in 2011. The ace up developer Konami's sleeve appears to be increasing realism, chiefly through a new power bar for each player. No longer will gamers be able to press a button and see the ball end up where they want it; now they must choose how long to hold the button for to decide the pace of a pass or shot. Nothing more than the *Fifa* series has been doing for a while, but it could see *Pro Evolution Soccer* mount a top-of-the-table challenge.



Out this autumn



Different ball game: *Football Manager's* new contract system (top) is one of a host of improvements, including updated stadiums, crowds and player models

Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit

THIS all-formats release sees the *Need for Speed* franchise return to its roots. Instead of the tear-around-the-track races found in most driving games, *Hot Pursuit* places gamers in the driving seat of either a police car or a high-performance auto for the ultimate cops-and-robbers chase. The gameplay is fast and frantic and the joy of stopping a racer or escaping the law is immense. Developer Criterion Games has also gone big on the title's online abilities, with a new "Autolog" feature tracking drivers' performances and uploading them to a dedicated social network. Should be a hit.

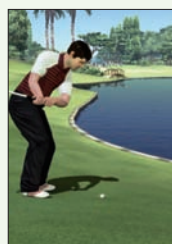
Out in November



John Daly's ProStroke Golf

TIGER Woods' dominance of the golf game leaderboard faces its first threat in a long time courtesy of fellow feline-nicknamed player John "The Lion" Daly. The all-formats release's biggest innovation over it's famous rival is the use of the "ProStroke" system for taking shots. The control scheme gives gamers a first-person view of the ball and club head, in theory making the experience much more realistic. The title will also make use of Playstation Move technology to allow owners to rotate the club in real time and apply precise amounts of power and height to shots over 12 courses.

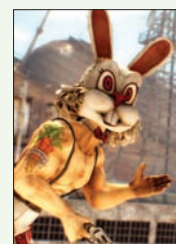
Out in October



Gun Loco for Xbox 360

AS the name suggests, *Gun Loco* promises to be a fast-paced, slightly insane take on the shooter genre. The interesting plot revolves around a group of prisoners left to fight it out on an abandoned planet at the very edge of the solar system. Early images of the title show a highly-stylised game world which takes in a variety of decaying locations and a multitude of climates and developer Square Enix has set out to provide a high-tempo gaming experience to match. Described as a "sprint shooter", the game will not offer much respite as prisoners are chased – or do the chasing – in on- or offline battles.

Out in 2011





Singing sensations: The Soldiers, LCpl Ryan Idzi, SSgt Richie Maddocks and WO2 Gary Chilton, enjoyed tremendous success in 2009

Stars of the show

Service band hoping to shine brightly with follow-up to double platinum debut

Interview: Richard Long

WITH full-time careers in the Army it is hard to imagine how The Soldiers found the hours to plot an assault on the charts.

But the singing Servicemen have done exactly that in the past year, recording one of the biggest-selling albums of 2009 while taking their show on the road with a 16-date national tour.

And now, as the dust settles on the massive success of *Coming Home*, LCpl Ryan Idzi (1 QDG), WO2 Gary Chilton and SSgt Richie Maddocks (both CAMUS) are hoping to build on their new-found fame with the release of their second studio album.

Letters Home will hit stores in late October and two members of the group took time out from the recording studio to tell *Soldier* about what fans can expect.

"They are songs troops would sing to their loved ones. There is a more personal feel this time around," Maddocks explained.

"With the first album we had not been through the recording process before, we didn't really know what went on.

"Now we are better prepared and a lot more relaxed about things."

Chilton added: "We have got a lot of new material. It has not been rushed and we have been able to take more time with the recording."

"The title track, *Letter Home*, is based on a letter from a guardsman.

"It is the last letter he wrote to his mother and wife and we have been given permission to turn it into a song. It is a fantastic track and very moving. It is an absolute privilege for us to sing it."

Other numbers include *I Will Carry You* and *Our Nation's Hero*, songs with obvious connections to the campaign in Afghanistan.

The phenomenal success of their debut has boosted a number of military charities and the band recently handed over a cheque for £271,000, which will be divided between an array of good causes, including ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Such generosity has been at the forefront from the start and, with The Soldiers about to enter the spotlight once again, the sentiment will continue.

Chilton said: "When all this started 16 months ago it was just a pipe dream, we had no idea it was going to escalate and explode like it did."

"When the album went double platinum it exceeded all our expectations. To out-sell artists

like Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston was mind-blowing.

"We had the fourth best-selling album in Britain last year and that is testament to all the guys in Afghanistan at the moment."

"That is what the nation thinks of them."

Maddocks also spoke about the success of the band's national tour and how their shows received tremendous backing from fellow Servicemen and women and their families.

He added: "Every venue was 70 to 80 per cent full and the Royal Albert Hall was packed out. It was really humbling."

"I remember speaking to *Soldier* last year and I said we would just wait and see what happens. Now I'm looking at a double platinum disc on the wall. It is something you dream of."

Chilton has been quick to stress how the fame has not gone to their heads and insisted that their Service careers will remain the top priority.

"We are very fortunate to have such supportive parent units," he explained.

"But with the three of us singing and raising money it is good media coverage for the Army."

"We want the new album to go straight to number one and we will be making sure as many people know about it as possible." ■

From an exhausted equine to plastic pop from a weekend girl group, we check out the latest releases...

Headlines by The Saturdays

THE Saturdays continue their assault on the mainstream pop market with this eight-track stop gap designed to bridge the divide between their top-ten debut *Wordshaker* and their next release planned for autumn 2011. *Missing You* and *Forever is Over* are highly-polished summer anthems which offer easy listening and, at first, this sounds like a pretty decent offering. But the early optimism quickly evaporates and the later tracks disappoint. *Died in Your Eyes* provides the inevitable ballad while *Karma* and *Puppet* are particularly ineffective as they blur almost into one. On the whole this will keep hardened fans happy but newcomers might be better advised to see what next year brings.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



The Place We Ran From by Tired Pony

BORN out of Gary Lightbody of **Snow Patrol**'s doodling on tour, the group **Tired Pony** brings together a plethora of music talent from differing bands and nations, including drummer Peter Buck of **R.E.M.** fame, actress-come-singer Zoëy Deschanel and Tom Smith from **Editors**. *The Place We Ran From* is a heady mix of lots of diverse sounds, from country to intense soulful missives. This truly is an album for all people. The initial single *Dead American Writers*, released last month, gives an insight into how the whole record moves forward – Snow Patrol it certainly isn't. I would definitely recommend you try it, you never know you might just like it. I did.

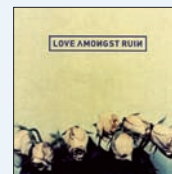
WO2 Mo Morris, RLC



Love Amongst Ruin

IT is a bold step to emerge from the shadows but it is one **Love Amongst Ruin**'s Steve Hewitt relishes. Acclaimed for his stick work with angst rockers **Placebo**, leading from the front has been a new experience. Sensibly he has co-opted the production nous of **Julian Cope** cohort Donald Ross Skinner to assist. *Alone* has a clever tempo, doffing its cap to **New Order** in their prime. *Heaven and Hell* is certainly one of the standout tracks, slowing the pace to an air of atmospheric genius. Generally Hewitt's vocals lack sufficient range and are often distorted. It may take a few plays to convince the floating voter that there is more in the tank for the band to offer.

Steve King, *Soldier*

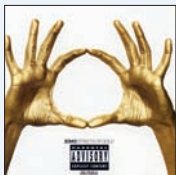




Aiming high: The Soldiers are targeting the top of the UK charts with the release of their second album *Letters Home*, which is available next month

Streets of Gold by 3OH!3

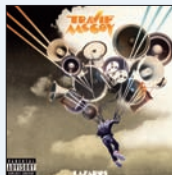
IT is unbelievable to think that this is the third offering from Colorado duo **3OH!3**. Given the fact it is so appalling, one can only assume that the record exec responsible for commissioning this album had never heard their earlier work. If he had he would have surely said 'thanks, but no thanks'. The lyrics are littered with sexual innuendos that lack any degree of subtlety; in fact it is full-on harassment. Rent-a-vocalist **Ke\$ha** appears on the insanely irritable *My First Kiss*, which has littered radio playlists all summer, while **Katy Perry** lends a hand on *Starstruck* and I hope she is ashamed of herself for doing so. This is very much third time unlucky and I only hope there is no fourth album to come.



Stephen Tyler, Soldier

Lazarus by Travie McCoy

AFTER finding fame across the pond with **Gym Class Heroes**, singer **Travie McCoy** has decided to fly solo with the release of *Lazarus*. This is somewhat of a confused debut and after the first three tracks you could be forgiven for thinking you were blending **Gnarls Barkley**, **Linkin Park** and **Jack Johnson**. But when it settles into a hip-hop offering the album works well, with *Akidagain* and *The Manual* particularly impressive. McCoy has called upon a long list of collaborating artists, producers and writers and you can't help but wonder if he would have been better off working as a true solo artist. On the whole this is decent enough and it will be interesting to see how he develops in the future.



Richard Long, Soldier

United Nations of Sound

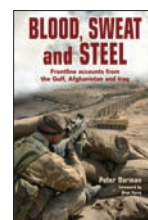
THIS is the self-titled debut from ex-**Verve** frontman Richard Ashcroft's new band **The United Nations Of Sound** and it certainly offers a mixture of different musical styles from start to finish. From **Hendrix** loops to 90s rap ballad-type numbers, the songs are interlaced with a string ensemble and tend to keep to a definite underlying, but noticeable, R&B/hip hop theme throughout. Don't be put off though, there are some very catchy numbers and, once you get past the sometimes bizarre lyrics, this is a very well put together and enjoyable effort. But be warned – if you're expecting a return to the familiar musical style of old-school Verve, you're in for a bit of a shock.



Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

books SOLDIER REVIEW

RECONNOITRING READING FOR THE RANKS reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Allied anthology: *Blood, Sweat and Steel*, published by New Holland and penned by military historian Peter Darman, is out now (£9.99)

Modern memories

Soldiers' stories provide international insight into world's contemporary conflicts

Review: Capt Shaun Fardy AGC

FROM the mundane to the heroic and from the mouths of the willing and the coerced, this anthology of personal accounts of operations in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan attempts to reveal all facets of modern warfare.

The fact that *Blood, Sweat and Steel* is published in support of Help for Heroes is entirely apposite and serves to focus the mind on the stories of front-line service.

Peter Darman uses a simple formula, introducing each section of his book with a brief description of the conflict, both politically and militarily, before providing a sustained salvo of first-hand accounts.

The contributors are of all ranks and responsibilities and range from US National Guardsmen and women and Canadian Civil Police mentors to British Territorial Army corporals and Iraqi Army captains.

The interview excerpts record bravery and boredom with equal honesty and represent a true reflection of operational life which, when combined with the liberal use of military acronyms

and in-jokes, will strike a chord with any who have served. For those who haven't, the title strives to encourage empathy and paints a candid picture of the attitude, worries and observations of the fighting man and woman.

Some of the recollections are well known, such as those of Royal Air Force Tornado pilot Flt Lt John Peters who was abused by his Iraqi captors during the Gulf War, and others are more obscure but no less interesting.

While the book's themes sometimes become muddled, the accounts are balanced and all aspects of warfare – from the kinetic to pastoral – are adequately covered.

What quickly becomes clear as you turn the pages of *Blood, Sweat and Steel* is that it is a book of contrasts. Hi-tech weaponry, instant means of communication and 24-hour media coverage are starkly opposed by the personal hardships endured by many of the contributors.

Some of the living conditions and low-level command decisions recorded are reminiscent of the two World Wars and the author has juxtaposed accounts accordingly to heighten the effect.

With public awareness of conflict being at an all-time high, the book's arrival on the high street is timely, but Darman's offering has some formidable

opponents in the battle to top the best-sellers list.

The length, or more precisely brevity, of the personal recollections used may prove to be the chink in *Blood, Sweat and Steel's* armour.

Up against titles which focus on the in-depth accounts of one soldier or commander, the anthology does tend to leave the reader wanting to know more about the individuals involved.

That said, the real selling point of the book is the down-to-earth-opinions expressed by those featured which reaffirm the long-held truisms relating to Service personnel.

Those in the Forces are stoical, brave, and single-minded, but at the same time funny, sarcastic and realistic. Above all they are human and share the same fears and concerns as those in other walks of life.

The black humour that the Services are renowned for shines through, but so does political awareness, empathy and intelligence – traits that are often overlooked when listing the attributes of our fighting people.

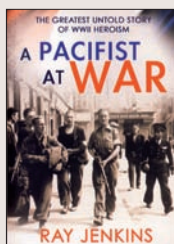
The book has a loose narrative but can be picked up and put down with ease, making for a good personal library addition and a fine source of illustrative quotes and examples of life on the front line. ■

From a reluctant resistance to an onslaught on ordnance, a flick through this month's literary releases...

A Pacifist at War by Ray Jenkins

THE story of Francis Cammaerts is certainly one of deep intrigue and endeavour. The subject – a man responsible for many a French Resistance operation during the Second World War – makes this fascinating book a must for the shelves of any history buff. The author has done well in moulding Cammaerts' memories and musings into an engaging and exciting tale of courage and commitment. However, if you are expecting some kind of *Where Eagles Dare* narrative – straight to explosions and attractive women – you may be disappointed. This book is as much a portrayal of character as it is action.

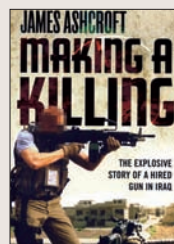
Tpr Alistair Campbell-Grieve, RY



Making a Killing by James Ashcroft

RETIRED "Rupert" James Ashcroft delivers his story of life as a security contractor in the craziness of post-war Iraq with the intensity of an Andy McNab thriller. I even forgave the author for his early display of artistic licence when describing a firefight with insurgents during which he pumped dozens of 7.62mm rounds into one gunman who, after having "bloody great lumps coming off him", still managed to return fire. Regardless of this poetic foray, I found it difficult not to think of Ashcroft's Spartan team as my mates and proceeded to duck and dodge my way to the end of a thoroughly-entertaining book.

Anthony McNally, ex-12 Regt RA



Endless War by Ralph Peters

THIS collection of short and punchy articles focuses on the notion that conflict is the normal human condition with peace representing "time out". Journalist Ralph Peters explores why societies fail and what motivates extremists to fight. He is critical of US wishful-thinking over Iraq as a failure to learn and to have doctrine for the worst cases. Concise, hard-hitting, non-PC and with some excellent one-liners; "These are knife fights to the bone. And we're worried about our table manners". It might not make comfortable reading but Peters outlines what is required of government policy and military activity to win wars conclusively.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE





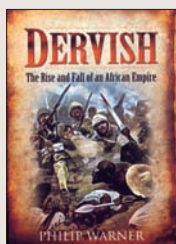
Picture: AP Photo/Brennan Linsley

Multinational memoirs: US Marines, pictured firing at Taliban positions in Nawa, Afghanistan, are among those given a voice in *Blood, Sweat and Steel*

Dervish by Philip Warner

THE 19th century contains few stories more dramatic than that of the Islamic rising led by the Mahdi, "the chosen one", in the deserts of the Sudan, its striking successes including the death of Gen Gordon at Khartoum and its defeat 13 years later by Kitchener and his Anglo-Egyptian army. **Philip Warner's** *Dervish: The Rise and Fall of an African Empire*, republished by Pen & Sword, provides a sound introduction to this remarkable episode in British military history. Parallels with modern resurgent Islam spring to mind, even though the book originally appeared in 1978. A good story well told.

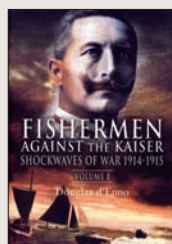
Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian



Fishermen Against the Kaiser by d'Enno

THIS subject is well off the beaten track for the majority of *Soldier* readers but is worthy of investigation. The first in a two-volume set, **Douglas d'Enno** tells the fascinating story of the unsung heroes of the British fishing fleets during The Great War. Under Naval command or operating independently, the fishermen and their boats were employed on dangerous patrols in home waters, the Arctic, the Aegean and the Adriatic. With minimal training the crews operated as an auxiliary navy taking on minesweeping, U-boat patrols, decoy missions and blockade duties.

Maj Mike Peters, AAC



UXB Malta by Sam Hudson

BETWEEN 1940 and 1944 Malta endured 3,000 bombing raids and, as the target of 17,000 tonnes of explosives, became known as "the most bombed place on earth". Roughly 15 per cent of the bombs dropped failed to explode and the people of Malta turned to a Royal Engineers bomb disposal unit for help. **Sue Hudson** has researched her subject in depth and vividly captures the close relationships which developed between the soldiers and the islanders. Her father, Lt G D Carroll, commanded the unit from April 1941 to June 1942. The sappers were still finding and clearing bombs up to 1979 when the British Army left the island.

Lt Col (Retd) Dawson Pratt, R Signals





Tough customer: Ion Mask technology added to the Magnum Spider 8.1 Desert WPI boots protects against all manner of potential risks

Spider packs a bite

New military boots combine power and precision – but carry a venomous price

Review: Stephen Tyler

READERS of last month's magazine will recall our exclusive look inside the Armed Forces' operational Black Bag.

Crammed into its innards were £3,000 worth of the very latest kit and equipment provided to troops ahead of deployments.

And nestled among the multi-terrain pattern combat clothing, head torches and body armour were some of the best boots money can buy.

Crafted by manufacturers including Lowa and Meindl, the Defence Clothing Teams responsible for putting the footwear into the holdall claimed – quite rightly – that the products were so good that soldiers do not need to spend their own money on upgrades.

Their argument certainly stands up to scrutiny as the boots issued to today's Servicemen and women have been procured with Afghanistan in mind and stand up to the varying climates and multitude of ground conditions they are likely to be used in.

But for those outside of the military, getting your hands on a pair of boots matching the

durability of Lowa and Meindl's is a tough – and ultimately very expensive – task.

Leading boot brand Magnum has long been the maker of choice for anyone wanting a hi-tech pair of outdoor strides and the company has just released the Spider 8.1 Desert WPI.

Featuring Ion Mask technology to keep all manner of substances safely outside the boot, these hefty arachnids have been designed with desert and mountain deployments in mind.

As well as being sand- and waterproof, the material also prevents blood-borne pathogens and other nasty surprises from penetrating it.

With such tough terrain likely to pass underfoot, the footwear is fitted with Octopod outsoles which offer a firm amount of grip and durability without feeling like they are weighing you down.

Although we didn't put them through Helmand-like summer temperatures, walking in the Spider 8.1 was comfortable and, perhaps most importantly, cool thanks to vents placed along the outer edges. Rocky conditions posed no dramas to the boot's grip and protection.

A major drawback with some military-style boots can be a less-than-perfect fit that leads to the collar rubbing against the ankles and lower

legs, causing irritation or worse.

With that in mind, we were keen to test Magnum's PR machine's claim that their latest product has been ergonomically designed.

Despite being sceptical souls, we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the company has probably undersold the comfort levels offered by the Spiders.

An innovative cocoon system keeps the laces neat and allows the wearer to adjust the tightness to perfection, while the dimensions of the boot allow for an unobtrusive fit.

Military-specific additions, such as making the footwear safe to use with metal detectors, adds further finesse to a strikingly-bold yet well-crafted newcomer to Magnum's line-up.

But while the Spiders would make an undeniably excellent choice for anyone outside the Services planning on tabbing through desert or tough terrain, their hefty price tag – they are expected to retail at around £130 – makes them an unnecessary purchase for troops.

Also available in a jet black Urban variant, there is a lot to recommend about the latest addition to the military boot showroom. But given the quality already on the feet of soldiers, it is best left for civilians to throw their money at. ■

From ultra-bright torches to life-saving survival kits, we get our hands on the latest outdoors gear...

Lifesystems Intensity 60 Pocket Torch

WITH the end of British summertime approaching, now is a good time to make sure you have a decent torch ready to light up the dark nights of autumn. Lifesystems has stayed one step ahead of the game with its new range of portable lights, including this pocket-sized marvel. Weighing in at just 79 grammes, the Intensity 60 projects an ultra-bright LED beam of 60 lumens from its powerful – and unbreakable – bulb. It's a versatile gadget as well, with users able to switch from spot to flood lighting with a single twist of the body. Powered by inexpensive AA batteries, the torch's makers claim it burns up to four times brighter than standard models.



£16.99 from outdoor stores nationwide

Lifesystems Intensity 500-VF

WHILE the Intensity 60 sits at the "fun" end of the torch market, this behemoth strides in with a very stern look on its face. Kicking out an incredible 500 lumens of brightness from its triple high-power Luxeon Rebel 90 LEDs, this handheld torch is perfect for lighting up large areas. Despite its unrivalled power, the Intensity 500-VF is relatively sleek and certainly looks the part. It weighs in at just over one kilogramme, although its hefty size is understandable considering it packs four alkaline D batteries – providing an impressive 25 hours of power – into its innards. Quite pricey for a torch, but certainly worth the cost for anyone needing top-class portable lighting.



£59.99 from outdoor stores nationwide

Sparkie Fire Starter

DEVELOPED by specialist firm Ultimate Survival Technologies and distributed exclusively in the UK by BCB International, the Sparkie Fire Starter is a powerful source of flames packed into a small case. Weighing less than one ounce and measuring little more than two inches when closed, the Sparkie is designed to be used one handed and is capable of getting a fire going in even the most adverse weather conditions. The updated design incorporates a reconfigured striker tab enclosure and spark bar in a compact set-up. Designed with military use in mind, the lighter comes in orange or sand colours and is perfect for getting high-intensity fires going.



www.bcb.in.com



Bootiful: The impressive array of hi-tech additions to Magnum's Spider 8.1 Desert WPI footwear includes an outsole specially made to cope with deserts

BlastMatch Fire Starter

ANOTHER entry into the fire-starting market from Ultimate Survival Technologies, the BlastMatch was dreamt up with mountain climbers in mind. Its outdoor origins are immediately apparent in the toughened plastic case protecting the spring-loaded flint unit inside. Mountaineers find themselves in some fairly extreme environments and this four-inch gizmo is built to cope with anything Mother Nature can throw at it. Usable with just one hand, the BlastMatch works by generating a stream of super-heated sparks three times as hot as a standard match which are capable of igniting anything from wood to cloth. It is lightweight too at just 2.7 ounces.

www.bcbn.com



Aqua Survival Kit

FOR those who enjoy an outdoors lifestyle, there is no such thing as being too prepared. Whether climbing mountains or tabbing through the wilderness, it pays to take precautions should the worst happen and this deluxe survival kit covers most eventualities. Starting with the BlastMatch fire starter reviewed on this page, the kit also includes Wetfire Tinder cubes which can spark a fire into life even when wet. A SaberCut saw can be used to create shelters and the JetStream whistle and StarFlash signal mirror help attract attention. All of the items are stored in a LokSak bag that has been proven to be completely watertight to a depth of 200 feet.

www.bcbn.com



Aquapac Whanganui

THE Apple iPad may be winning fans around the world – including with instructors from the Royal Artillery who now use it for fire control order training – but the gadget's potential to be damaged is huge. Aside from scratches to the body and screen, one of the biggest threats is posed by water. Enter Aquapac's amusingly-named Whanganui case. Featuring a watertight clip mechanism, this protective sleeve seals out moisture while still allowing full access to the touchscreen and buttons. Perfect for use on the beach, it will also cope with being submerged to a depth of five metres for as long as one hour. The case also comes with an adjustable shoulder strap to further add to its practicality.

£25, www.aquapac.net





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ALSO IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE...



P98 **POLAR RACE**
PARA HEADS TO THE
NORTH POLE



P100 **WINDSURFING**
SERVICES PREPARE
FOR ISLE CHALLENGE



P101 **TRIATHLON**
APTC ATHLETES RACE
THROUGH THE ALPS



P104 **RUGBY UNION**
SEVENS STARS MAKE
SEMI FINALS



Picture: Graeme Main



T20 SCOREBOARD

Inter-Services Twenty20

Lord's Cricket Ground, London

July 27, 2010

ARMY vs RAF

Army 135-6 (Emmanuel 41, Senneck 31no, Dixon 29)

RAF 80 (Hudson 3-19, Dixon 2-4, Booth 2-22)

Army won by 55 runs

RAF vs NAVY

RAF 141-7

Navy 144-9

Navy won by one wicket

ARMY vs NAVY

Army 116 (Emmanuel 31, Hudson 17no, Houghton 16)

Navy 117-6 (Hudson 2-19, Wade 1-12, Senneck 1-16)

Navy won by four wickets



Lack of runs grounds Service stars at Lord's

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Steve Dock

ABELOW-par batting performance from the Army's big hitters shattered hopes of victory in this year's Inter-Services Twenty20 cricket final at Lord's.

After posting a meagre total of 116 all out the impetus was firmly handed to the Royal Navy who, after a flurry of early wickets, recorded a fine win at the world famous venue.

With both teams easily beating the Royal Air Force in the day's earlier matches, the onus was on the Army to post a commanding score and pile pressure on their Senior Service rivals ahead of the run chase.

But opening batsman SSgt Ian Dixon (30 Sig Regt) was dismissed for four and when Sgt Dan Webb (Defence School of Intelligence) – who scored 60 from 40 deliveries in last year's Lord's clash – was run out for just a single, the Army found themselves on the back foot.

LBdr Murray Heyns (RA) and Rfn Michael Lewis (2 Rifles) both departed for six, meaning hopes of a big score were left on the shoulders of Tpr Russell Emmanuel (LD).

The hard-hitting left-hander smashed two booming sixes and three fours before he was caught in the deep off spinner WE (SM) Matthew Thompson (HMS *Raleigh*) for a brisk 31.

Skipper Maj Alex Senneck and Sgt Stu Houghton (both R Signals) tried to repair the damage with some middle-order resilience but the wickets kept tumbling as the Army fell well short of a competitive total.

The Navy made a nervous start in response as pace bowlers Senneck and LCpl David Wade (R Signals) claimed a wicket each from miserly four-over

opening spells.

Capt Steve Booth (RA), who finished with figures of 1-22, and spinner Lt James Hudson (RSA Larkhill), with 2-19, continued to exert pressure and at the end of the 16th over the run chase was stuttering at 74-5.

With time running out, the Navy's middle-order cut loose and Dixon's two-over burst leaked 30 runs as the momentum quickly shifted.

Some big hits from Cpl Alvin Pollard (Cdo Logs RM) left three runs needed from the final over, a target that was easily reached.

After winning the toss and batting first against the RAF, the Army posted 135-6 from their 20 overs.

Emmanuel, in his first season of representative cricket, led the charge thanks to a rapid 41 from 34 deliveries, while Dixon smashed five fours on his way to a knock of 29.

Senneck ensured the innings ended with a flourish courtesy of an unbeaten 31.

The RAF rarely threatened in response and economical bowling from Hudson (3-19), Booth (2-22) and Dixon (2-4) saw them crumble to 80 all out.

Lord's was hosting the Twenty20 competition for the first time having previously staged the Centenary Cup match between the Army and Navy.

However, plans are now in place for the tournament to become a regular fixture on the cricketing calendar.

Speaking afterwards Senneck (pictured left) told *SoldierSport* his side were honoured to have the opportunity of playing at the ground but said results ultimately put a dampener on the day.

He said: "It was disappointing. It was a great event and we had two close matches but we came up short.

"There was great excitement and

"It was a great event and we had two close matches but we came up short"

NEW STAR

OPENER Tpr Russell Emmanuel (LD) has been a huge success in his first year of Army cricket. The left-hander underlined his potential with scores of 41 against the Royal Air Force and 31 against the Royal Navy at Lord's



IN THE WICKETS

AFTER posting 135-6 in a cautious opening innings, the Army bowlers set about making inroads into the RAF batting line-up. The light blues struggled under the pressure of a run chase and crumbled to 80 all out in reply



FINE SUPPORT

ALL-rounder Capt Steve Booth (RA) proved to be a reliable back-up to the Army's opening attack. The officer took two wickets against the RAF and then added a Navy scalp to his haul in a disciplined bowling performance





Howzat?: Sgt Stu Houghton (R Signals) leads the Army appeal in their clash with the RAF at Lord's

a sense of privilege within the camp. The Marylebone Cricket Club gave the event its full support, so to miss out on a victory is a real blow.

"We did not score enough runs against the Navy first up and, as well as we bowled, we just didn't have the score we needed."

Army manager Lt Col Phil King (RLC) echoed Senneck's comments and said the team is now determined to bounce back from the defeat and win in style next year.

"Overall we are very disappointed," he added. "The aim of the season is to win the Inter-Services, which we have failed to do."

"When it came down to it our batting unit did not produce enough runs and

that was a surprise really.

"In the lead-up matches they had been posting some massive totals against much stronger teams.

"But when it came down to the pressure of the Inter-Services competition they did not produce.

"Maybe they need to review the way they play certain types of bowling.

"We are now facing lots of spin. We need to improve and learn how to score off good deliveries.

"However, the standard of bowling and fielding was superb throughout.

"We had no right to, but we took the Navy to within three balls of winning the game." ■

● Army eye winning return – Page 103.

MIXED FORTUNES

INCONSISTENT batting contributed to the Army's downfall at Lord's. After successfully defending 135-6 against the RAF, the Service stars stuttered to a lowly 116 all out in their match with the Navy



WINNING START

THE Army looked set for a day to remember at Lord's after completing a comprehensive victory over the RAF. But the team lost its way in the final and the Navy celebrated a famous win at the home of cricket



Para takes Pole position



Pictures: Rob Holden, John Bamber and Peter Trapp

Heading north: Arctic adventurer Lt James Hooley (2 Para) overcame sub-zero temperatures and 30mph headwinds during his race to the magnetic North Pole

Report: Richard Long

INTREPID explorer Lt James Hooley (2 Para) has conquered the inhospitable Arctic terrain to become the first solo competitor to finish the gruelling 370-mile race to the magnetic North Pole.

The 2010 Polar Challenge saw the officer go head-to-head with eight three-man teams in extreme conditions that included 30mph headwinds and bitter temperatures that plummeted as low as -50 degrees.

His remarkable effort saw him complete the route in 13 days, 5hr and 55min, despite dragging approximately a third more weight than competitors in the rival teams.

As a soloist he had to carry all the kit that would usually be divided between the group.

This included a shotgun, tent, stove, shovel, GPS and satellite phone.

**“FOR THREE DAYS I
SKIED HEAD DOWN IN
HORRIFIC WEATHER”**

– LT JAMES HOOLEY, 2 PARA

“The organisers had warned me not to get too involved in the race because I was the first ever soloist,” a defiant Hooley told *SoldierSport*.

“All they wanted me to do was finish. However, my regimental pride would not accept last place.

“I knew I couldn’t ski faster than a lot of teams due to the extra weight I was dragging so my only option was to ski for longer.”

Hooley set an initial target of skiing for 16 hours and resting for eight hours each day.

But after reaching the first checkpoint his competitive spirit kicked in and he

decided to take full advantage of the near-perfect conditions by increasing his work rate.

“The rules stipulated that you were not allowed any outside assistance so I never knew my position in the race,” Hooley explained.

“I began to increase the length of time I was skiing from 16 hours up to 24 hours without stopping. But despite pushing hard I was still unable to see any teams on the horizon.”

His frustration soon turned to surprise when he came across a shoot-off between one of his rival teams and two polar bears.

One of the beasts got to within five metres of the petrified competitors before they made a narrow escape.

Hooley managed to avoid such terrifying encounters and on his arrival at the second checkpoint he saw two teams preparing to leave.

This equated to a lead of around ten

hours and the solo star was determined to make rapid progress when he returned to the ice.

"I decided that the only way to catch up and get round them was to do two 24-hour days back-to-back, with only eight hours rest in between," he said.

"But when I skied away from the checkpoint I could see the weather was beginning to turn. Within an hour visibility was down to five metres and the wind had picked up to 30mph.

"The wind in the Arctic rarely changes direction and blows from the north to south. Since I was heading north the whole time I had to endure the full force of the Arctic weather head-on.

"In these conditions I couldn't ski longer than 16 hours a day. My focus shifted from travelling as fast as I could to just being able to travel without getting hypothermia or frostbite.

"For three days I skied head down in horrific weather.

"Since I couldn't pick any reference points due to the lack of visibility, I had to rely on the direction of the wind to help me navigate.

"I knew that as long as I kept the wind blowing directly in my face I

was heading north."

In the height of the terrible elements Hooley was skiing at a speed of just 1mph, but when conditions improved he made a 21-hour burst without rest in an attempt to catch the other competitors in the race.

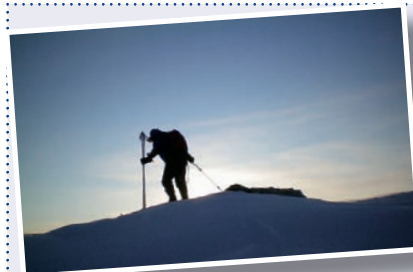
He said: "Out of the eight teams I managed to beat three of them and was only a matter of hours behind the two ahead of me.

"Upon finishing I realised how exhausted I was and how much my body had been hammered by the harsh Arctic weather."

During 13 days of racing Hooley lost a stone-and-a-half in weight, but his determined effort raised more than £26,000 for Help for Heroes and the Afghanistan Trust.

"Taking part in the race was an unbelievable experience and I am extremely fortunate to have sampled the challenges and beauty the

Arctic holds," he added. "While at times it was hard, overall it was an incredibly-enjoyable race." ■



POLAR CHALLENGE

The 350-mile Polar Challenge sees teams racing from Resolute in Canada to the magnetic North Pole.

Competing in teams of two or three, entrants ski across a sea of frozen ice and Arctic tundra.

As well as racing against one another, the groups have to tackle extreme weather conditions that include 30mph headwinds and temperatures of -50 degrees.

Competitors also have to be on their guard against polar bears, the natural inhabitants of the unforgiving North Pole environment.

Hooley became the first solo skier to complete the challenge, finishing fifth in the 2010 race.

Travelling by foot and ski, the officer dragged equipment weighing more than 150lbs along the entire route.

Hooley completed the gruelling Arctic race in a time of 13 days, 5hr and 55min.





On the Wight course

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

STRONG tides and challenging seas await Army windsurfers this month as they take part in an ambitious attempt to circumnavigate the Isle of Wight.

The water sports stars will be joined by colleagues from the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy in the gruelling challenge, which is being staged to raise money for Help for Heroes and the respective Service benevolent funds.

Although the circumference of the island is 58 miles, participants will have to sail on every point of the wind and tackle demanding conditions, meaning the minimum distance will be at least 100 miles.

The Service teams were inspired to take part in the challenge by Rfn Craig Wood (2 Rifles), a keen windsurfer who was injured on operations in Afghanistan and is a triple amputee.

With his recovery now well under way at Headley Court the soldier is hoping to return to the sport in the future. In the meantime he is giving his full backing to the Isle of Wight event.

"I think they will love it, but it all depends on the conditions," Rfn Wood told *SoldierSport*.

"If it is not very windy it will take a lot longer than they have planned, but if the wind is right it will all depend on which rigs they go out on.

"I got a call asking if I wanted to get involved

and I didn't hesitate, I hope to be there on the day giving my help and support if it is needed."

Each Service team will provide windsurfers and safety cover and entrants will be allowed to tackle the course as individual competitors or as part of a relay.

The challenge has been planned around the tides and the first window of opportunity will be between September 13 and 19.

If the windsurfers fail to take to the water a second attempt has been scheduled from October 11 to 17.

Maj Gareth Baker (RE), secretary of Army windsurfing, said: "The course will be between 100 and 120 miles and that could take about ten hours, it is the equivalent of three marathons back to back.

"It is not a race, but with all three Services involved it soon will be.

"We wanted to do something for the military charities. I was on Op Herrick 7 and when we met Craig this became the natural choice.

"We are relying on having the right winds but we also have to ensure we have the right equipment and sea state.

"The circumnavigation has been done before, but this is the first time it has been attempted with this level of ambition."

● The Service teams hope to raise £15,000 and donations can be made online at www.justgiving.com/forceswindsurfingchallenge ■



FORCES WINDSURFING CHALLENGE

EACH Service will provide appropriately-trained sailors, equipment and safety crew for their team.

Competitors can tackle the route as individuals or as part of a relay.

Teams will have GPS so the total number of miles sailed and time taken can be accurately recorded.

The circumference of the Isle of Wight is 58 miles, but challengers will have to sail on every point of the wind and combat strong tides and tough seas.

Conditions mean the minimum distance is estimated at 100 miles, a route that could take up to ten hours to complete.

The Isle of Wight has been circumnavigated by a windsurfer before, but never on this scale.



Pedal power: SSgt Dean Folley (APTC) climbs the French Alps during the Alpe d'Huez's cycle stage

Uphill struggle for triathletes

HEAT, hills and altitude provided a stern test for athletes from the Army Physical Training Corps when they competed in the gruelling Alpe d'Huez Triathlon.

The 12-man team travelled to France as part of the corps' 150th anniversary celebrations and were put through their paces in what is regarded as one of the toughest triathlons in Europe.

With the choice of a short or long course, the PTI soldiers selected the more demanding option, which comprised a 2.2km swim, a 115km cycle and a 22km run.

The ice-cold waters of Lake Verney formed the starting point for the challenge before the athletes started a hill climb among the breathtaking scenery of the Alps.

To finish, the team completed a three-lap run at an altitude of more than 2,000m.

Former Inter-Services duathlon champion WO2 Chris Busby was the first APTC entrant to reach the finish line, clocking an impressive time of 7hr 15min.

"I only returned from Op Herrick in April so my training for this event has been limited to what I could fit in during the last few months," he said.

"The last climb up the Alpe was the hardest part of the race and was made even harder by the fact that 100 kilometres had gone into the legs before it. It literally felt like trying to climb a wall."

While Busby saw his training hampered by operational commitments, colleague WO2 Lisa Dunne had even less time to prepare as she returned from Afghanistan just 17 days before the race started.

"My swim prep was virtually non-existent and the lack of training on a real bike didn't help," she explained. "I came straight from theatre to France to cram in some pre-race training. This was undoubtedly the hardest event of my life so far but the support from the crowds was amazing."

"British spectators were at every bend cheering on the Army, which was very much appreciated."

SPORT SHORTS

MISS England LCpl Katrina Hodge (AGC) and football manager-turned-pundit Graham Taylor will take part in The Royal British Legion's Pedal to Paris this month.

The duo will be among a field of 300 riders for the annual challenge, which is expected to raise £500,000 for the charity.

The ride starts on September 2 and donations can be made online at www.justgiving.com/missengland or www.justgiving.com/grahamtaylor

A DEDICATED team of endurance runners from 156 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps are travelling to Russia to compete in the Moscow Marathon of Peace.

The nine athletes are using the event to continue their fund-raising work for ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the Everton Foundation, a sports initiative in Liverpool.

The group features Regular and Reserve soldiers who hope to raise £10,000 for each of the charities.

To support their marathon attempt on September 12 visit www.justgiving.com/156RunningMoscow

AN introductory course for novice ice hockey players is being held at the John Nike Leisure Centre in Bracknell later this month.

The two-day programme will teach soldiers the essentials of ice skating as well as puck control, positioning and game play.

The course costs £30 and will be held on September 16 and 17. The price includes free entry to a Bracknell Bees game, which will be followed by an after-match discussion with players and officials.

For more information contact WO2 Samuel on 94674 8871 or email 7-REME-132-HQ-SSM@mod.uk

SERVICE fishermen have taken to the riverbank to compete for glory in the 2010 Army Angling Federation inter-corps championships.

After a long day of competition at Portland Water, near Grantham, the REME were crowned champions, with the AGC second and RE third.

LCpl Gaz Evans (AGC) was the individual winner thanks to his impressive 79.27kg haul.

THE Army Football Association will be holding trials for its three representative teams ahead of the 2010/11 season.

Trials for the senior men's squad will be held from September 27 to October 1 and interested players should contact Capt Ritchie Bell on 94777 5743.

The Under-23 side will be holding similar sessions on the same dates and further information is available from Maj Dave Manners on 94222 4048.

Potential players for the women's team can contact Capt Steve Dridge on 94322 5737 for details on their trials, which will be held from September 20 to 24.

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Male	72	70	68	62	55	51
Female	46	41	37	33	31	28

Sit-Ups						
Sex/Age	Under 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54
Male & Female	77	72	71	67	62	61

Run						
Sex/Age	Under 30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54
Male	8:15	8:30	9:00	9:15	9:30	10:00
Female	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:45

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Driving force: Batsman Rfn Michael Lewis (2 Rifles) top-scored with a superb 71 as the Army recorded a five-wicket win over the Royal Navy at Portsmouth

Army eye triumphant return

**Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main**

THE cricket season ended in disappointing style for the Army men's team as they tasted defeat in the Inter-Services 50-over competition.

With rain hampering play at the Royal Navy's ground in Portsmouth, the Reds posted a meagre total of 116 against the Royal Air Force in their opening match.

But the light blues struggled in response and lost eight batsmen in pursuit of their revised Duckworth/Lewis target of 109, before they limped over the line to win by two wickets.

The RAF went on to lift the Inter-Services crown after they defeated the hosts, a result that left their military rivals to battle it out for second place.

Batting first, the Navy posted 200 in their innings as man of the match Spr Jacques Prinsloo (22 Eng Regt)

recorded figures of 4-38 to keep the target within the Army's sights.

Rfn Michael Lewis (2 Rifles) led the response with a fine knock of 71.

The former Zimbabwe under-19 player had willing support from SSgt Ian Dixon (30 Sig Regt), who scored 44 runs to help the Army reach 201-5 and record a five-wicket win.

Although his side lost in the Twenty20 and 50-over Inter-Services competitions, skipper Maj Alex Senneck (R Signals) told *SoldierSport* there were some definite positives to be taken from the campaign.

"The encouraging thing from my point of view is that a number of new players have come through to strengthen the squad," he said.

"That has made all the difference. The new guys will add to the team and

take things on for the next few seasons.

"We have come up short but we will take those Inter-Services titles back next year."

Manager Lt Col Phil King (RLC) also believes there is a bright future for the sport and singled-out opener Tpr Russell Emmanuel (LD) and 2nd Lt Ian Massey (LD) for particular praise.

Both have excelled in their first season of representational cricket for the Army and King said they have a big part to play next season.

He added: "Emmanuel did very well in the Twenty20 at Lord's having come through our development process and Massey is another who has a bright future ahead of him.

"Overall it has been a successful season. We now have some good options and we will turn it around in next year's Inter-Services competitions." ■

'We have come up short but will take those titles back next year'



OPENING UP

SSGT Ian Dixon (30 Sig Regt) smashed 44 runs to help steer the Army to a comfortable victory over the Royal Navy at Portsmouth



SPIN KING

MAN of the match Spr Jacques Prinsloo (22 Eng Regt) was the pick of the Army bowlers, taking 4-38 as the Navy were dismissed for 200



WICKETS TUMBLE

ARMY wicketkeeper Sgt Stu Houghton (R Signals) supported his bowlers with some fine work behind the stumps as the Navy struggled

SPORT SHORTS

ARMY athletes have celebrated double success at the Inter-Services heptathlon and decathlon championships at RAF Cosford.

Sgt Lee Okoroafo (RLC) was in fine form in the ten-event challenge, finishing with 6,003 points to top the individual rankings.

With WO2 Steve Chappell (APTC), Pte Osman Muskwe (3 LSR) and Capt Tom Skinner (11 Sig Regt) claiming third, fourth and fifth places respectively, the Service squad finished with a combined total of 16,810 points.

The Royal Air Force, who only fielded three athletes in the decathlon competition, finished second with a score of 9,387.

In the heptathlon RAF star LCpl Laura McGawn continued her dominant form from the Inter-Services athletics championships to win the individual competition in style.

But the efforts of Pte Natalie Flaherty (RLC), LCpl Naomi Backhouse (21 Sig Regt) and Cpl Gabrielle Rogers (4 Med Regt) were enough to secure an Army win as the Reds amassed 8,752 points, with the RAF on 7,638.

A TEAM of Royal Engineers have set themselves a target of completing ten marathons in five days while carrying 39lb Bergens on their backs.

SSgt Jim Offord (39 Engr Regt) will lead the endurance athletes in the gruelling trek, which is being staged as part of the St Dunstan's Forces Challenge.

"A march of this magnitude has not been attempted by the regiment before and I've picked a strong team with the determination to complete the challenge," the NCO explained.

"We will cover a distance of 266 miles, which means we will complete a marathon every six hours, tabbing at a rate of four-and-a-half to five miles per hour, followed by six hours recovery."

The team will start the route from the St Dunstan's Centre in Sheffield on November 1 and will walk through Nottingham, Loughborough, Nuneaton, Daventry, Milton Keynes and Hemel Hempstead before heading to the charity's headquarters in London.

They will then move on to Crawley ahead of the big finish in Ovingden, near Brighton.

Offord has set himself the challenge of completing a series of treadmill marathons as he trains for the main event.

On September 21 he will attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the fastest 100km on a treadmill carrying 40lb and he has already raised £927 by completing a similar task in a time of 5hr 17min.

The team, armed with 40lb Bergens, will also climb the 560 steps of the Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth on October 14.

To sponsor them visit www.justgiving.co.uk/10squaddies and for more information on the Forces Challenge log on to www.st-dunstons.org.uk



Making a point: Spr Gus Qasevakatini (RE) scored two tries as the Army defeated Kenya at Twickenham

Sevens put to the sword

Picture: Roger Thompson

A REJUVENATED Army squad suffered semi-final heartbreak in the Middlesex Sevens as they crashed to a 29-0 defeat to eventual champions Samurai International.

The Reds enjoyed fine wins over the Gilbert Pups and Kenya in the lead-up to the clash, but when they locked horns with one of the best sides money can buy they ultimately came up short.

Samurai management admitted beforehand that they had selected the cream of the IRB Sevens circuit for the event, an investment that clearly paid off with a 15-12 victory over London Irish in the final.

Twickenham again played host to the traditional curtain-raiser for the new Rugby Union season and the Army started in fine fashion.

Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots), Spr Gus Qasevakatini (RE), LCpl Malaki Magnus (RLC) and LCpl Alosi Yamoyamo (QRL) all touched down in a 19-5 win over a strong and determined Gilbert Pups side.

Kenya, who recently defeated the All Blacks, Fiji and England, were up next and the Africans fielded a strong, lean team that was built for the sevens game.

They showed great ball skills and extreme pace throughout and opened in frenetic style against the Reds.

But a watertight defence, led by skipper LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE), held them at bay and when some hard tackling forced a turnover Prasad ran in for a fine score from the halfway line.

Qasevakatini crossed twice, while Magnus and Pte Apo Satala (1 Scots) also touched down to seal a 28-5 win and set up the Samurai showdown. ■

Strongmen raise the bar

RECORDS tumbled at the Army bench press championships as more than 50 lifters tested their physical strength in a superb day of action at Aldershot.

Standards within the Service sport have risen dramatically in recent years and the latest competition on the musclemen's calendar proved to be no exception.

A series of sensational performances saw eight new Army records set, with Combined Services records shattered in four categories.

The best team award went to 23 Engineer Regiment (Air Assault), which featured the talents of Spr Aaron Mulligan (pictured), with the AGC taking the honours in the corps



championships for the first time.

Representatives from the Metropolitan and UK Police teams were also in action and plans are in place for a return fixture later this year.

The team is now preparing for this month's Inter-Services and potential competitors in the Army power lifting championships, to be held on November 24, are being advised to start training immediately.

The 2011 bench press championships will be held at HQ Land Forces in

Andover on January 19.

For general information on the sport and more details on the above competitions, contact Capt Neil Thomas (AGC) on 94627 2418.

Troops lead Garda of honour

THREE soldiers pushed their sailing skills to the limit when they competed in the Laser SB3 World Championships on Lake Garda.

WO2 Johnny Johnston (Para), SSgt Shane Grimes (RLC) and LCpl Simon Chester (REME) travelled to Italy for the event, which saw 108 boats from 16 nations taking to the water in the prestigious race.

With only a week of training together the Service trio had no great expectations before the action got under way.

They set a simple target of not finishing last and also wanted to beat the second Army entry, which came courtesy of the REME.

The crew experienced mixed fortunes during the week of sailing but still finished 30th in their class.

Johnston said: "Racing is never without its ups and downs.

"Our down was trashing the brand new spinnaker in the first race on the Thursday.

"But we managed to get back to the yacht club, re-rig and make the start line for the second event."

SPORT SHORTS

THE Army will have a strong showing in the Commonwealth Fencing Championships with four competitors travelling to Australia for the tournament later this month.

Capt Naomi Lee (REME) will represent Northern Ireland in the sabre while Capt Jenni Goodman (RADC) has been selected in the Welsh squad and will compete in the epee.

Capt Naveen Rahman (Int Corps) forms part of the Guernsey team and will test her skills in the foil. Col Niall Campbell (late RHF) completes the line-up. He will feature in the epee discipline for the England Veterans.

The competition starts in Melbourne on September 29.

FORMER England boss Brian Ashton was on hand to offer expert advice to the Army's Rugby Union coaches at a two-day training course in Arborfield.

The sessions included tips on offensive and defensive play, scrummaging drills, an overview of analysis techniques and work on set pieces.

TWO former soldiers are planning a 50-mile run through the East Anglian countryside to help raise money for the Bryan Gunn Leukaemia Appeal.

Karl Smith and Carl Murdoch, who both served with 27 Transport Regiment in Aldershot, will start their route at Portman Road, home of Ipswich Town Football Club, before crossing the finish line at Norwich City's Carrow Road stadium.

The challenge takes place on November 21 and donations can be made at www.charitygiving.co.uk/karlsmith350

Long-distance runners up for grabs

LEADING sports manufacturers UK Gear have launched a new ultra-durable running shoe that promises to redefine the athletics market.

The PT-1000 is the first shoe in the world designed to last for 1,000 running miles and features the company's Force Dynamic System technology, which has taken more than eight years to develop with help from the Army Physical Training Corps.



Extensive durability tests have been carried out on the footwear and UK Gear is confident their new product can withstand some of the harshest conditions in the world.

Lt Col Nick Chandler, the APTC's senior master at arms, said: "Our instructors are responsible for the physical development of all our soldiers so they are serious about their fitness and are uncompromising on the standard of equipment they use.

"The PT-1000 was rigorously tested by 40 of our instructors who ran thousands of miles in prototypes. The PT-1000 has earned the right to bear the British Army's famous crossed swords insignia."

SoldierSport has teamed up with UK Gear to offer five readers the chance to win a pair of the training shoes.

To enter, tell us how many APTC instructors were involved in the rigorous testing of the PT-1000.

Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by Thursday, September 30.

The PT-1000 is now available online at www.ukgear.com



final word



We asked personnel at the Joint Services Alpine Meet in the Swiss Alps what benefits taking part in Adventurous Training (AT) can bring

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Capt Alex Kealy (Rifles)

From an Infantry perspective, AT is a release from work at the same time as improving teamwork, putting people in unfamiliar situations and just being good fun. It is difficult trying to fit AT in with operations but finding time is definitely worth it for the lads. Training has been good in terms of leadership, team building and the ability to work under pressure.



Lt Col Charlie Sykes (PWRR)

I think the team building that's done in the extreme conditions of the mountains every day has undoubtedly got much relevance to offer when on operations. Hundreds of new leaders go through adventurous training each year which is excellent, but there's also a lot to be said for the small number of people training for the elite side of AT which is really encouraging.



WO2 Daz Doyle (APTC)

Something like the Joint Services Alpine Meet offers a qualification and a great experience. AT gives soldiers the chance to test and improve themselves in all kinds of environments, which will enhance their military skills. As a joint Service exercise you bring the best of the knowledge and talent together and get to hear stories and views from across the board.



Sgt Rob Brown (APTC)

It is a good opportunity to train students in an Alpine environment which you just cannot get in the UK. It is great value for the experience, training and opportunities when compared to what civilians would have to pay. It's also brilliant to have people from all three Services together outside the formal environment, working with and for each other in difficult situations.



SSgt Matt Fletcher (APTC)

It's a great opportunity to work at a higher level of instructing. In the Alps it is a challenging and rewarding environment – to see someone improve their skills so quickly is rewarding for the student and also for the instructor. The opportunity to put extra-curricular and core skills into practice in such a fantastic environment is great and one to be grasped.



Maj Simon Smith (REME)

I have only got mountain experience in Scotland so this enables me to branch out into Europe and tick the Alps box. It also means I am able to take soldiers out into more challenging environments. Hopefully I will be able to go back to my unit and encourage others to get involved – it's clearly more enjoyable than spending two weeks in the office.



2nd Lt Alex Dow (RE)

This is a very good opportunity for me to refresh techniques I have trained in before and also to get some good days on the glacier with a group doing things you are just not able to do in the UK. To do something similar as a civilian would cost a fortune, probably involve less people and certainly offer fewer opportunities to work in such different locations.



Andy Townsend (JSMTC)

It's a period of concentrated training that will diffuse skills in AT down into the Armed Forces. It is so good to work with different people ranging from experienced alpinists to complete novices on the mountain for the first time. The idea is for the guys training in the Alps to spread their knowledge throughout their units and get more people involved.



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