

SOLDIER

FIT TO FIGHT AT 150

Battle-ready Army Physical Training Corps gets set for milestone birthday

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WAR FILMS
Cinema critic rates
combat classics



ON TRACK FOR OPERATIONAL SUCCESS

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UPGRADED WEAPON ROLLS OUT

Infantry crack shots take delivery of new combat rifle



PAINTER'S PICTURE PERFECT

War artist brings Ops Telic and Herrick to life on canvas



TRANSPORT SCHOOL'S NEW DRIVE

Vehicle training area given ultimate Afghan overhaul



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Cover picture (left): SSgt Stephen Green (APTC) gears up for his corps' 150th birthday Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Iraq-based movie *The Hurt Locker* made the cut in this month's *Ranked* Picture: Empire





Gobi Desert 44 00 N, 105 00 E

14:20 - Audited site
15:00 - Faxed report
15:10 - Received approval from headquarters
17:00 - Sent birthday wishes to dad

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ARMY



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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"Another fine mess you've got us into with your stupid satnav, Harold. God knows
where this is, but it's not Hull... and another thing..." **Shifting sands – Pages 37-40**

Fit for the fight

FOLLOWERS of top-flight football are more than likely familiar with the present-day catch-all excuse for poor performances on the pitch – fatigue.

Any time a player limps off following a sub-standard showing, either they or their manager are quick to point to a congested fixture list as easy justification.

A swift glimpse at the average club's schedule and the lie behind the claim begins to shine through.

Seldom does any team have to play more than three times a week and the rest of these professional athletes' time is spent honing their bodies to cope with the exertion.

Compare the millionaires of the Premier League to the soldiers of the British Army and it is hard not to want to tell them to pull their socks up, stop whinging and play as often as they are told to. Servicemen and women, especially those on operations, do not have the luxury of blaming lapses in concentration on tiredness because any such lapse could have fatal consequences.

Luckily for the personnel patrolling, fighting and remaining mentally agile day in, day out in Afghanistan, there is no need to come up with excuses because their performances rarely dip below exceptional.

That they are able to keep pace with a gruelling schedule while deployed is in part thanks to their personal skills and will power. It also relies heavily on their finely-tuned bodies which are more than a match for the rigours of service.

Soldiers may be naturally fit by definition, but preparing their bodies for going to war is the job of the Army Physical Training Corps' (APTC) instructors (PTIs).

Formed 150 years ago to help raise the standard of fitness throughout the Service (Pages 26-27), the APTC has evolved to ensure the troops fighting every major conflict of the 19th Century and beyond were in prime condition.

And now more than ever, with operational commitments at an unprecedented high, the corps' fitness gurus are an essential part of the British Army's capability.

Gone is the overly-stereotyped image of PTIs as perma-tanned gym obsessives, replaced instead by toned and determined soldiers who are just as well-drilled in front-line roles as they are in leading runs.

SSgt Chris Leare, for example, deployed on Op Herrick late last year expecting to be carrying out a PTI role. That he ended up commanding a Mastiff with the Grenadier Guards Battlegroup may have been a surprise, but it certainly was not a problem as the senior NCO's soldiering skills came straight back to him and he cracked on with the job in hand.

Not forgetting his other job, he also found time to distribute copies of his *Forward Operating Base Fitness Guide* to keep troops ready for action (Page 31).

It all goes to show that the APTC is just as vital to operations as any other part of the Army.

Keeping pace with operations is also high on the agenda for the Defence School of Transport, which has literally moved the earth at its Leconfield base to provide trainee drivers with an Afghan-esque experience (Pages 37-40).

Whether it is fitness, driving or basic soldiering, there is no doubt that the Afghan personnel being trained by British counterparts are clearly learning from the best. ■

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being trained by
British counterparts
are clearly learning
from the best'**

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BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture: Sgt Keith Cotton, RLC

Future proofing: LSgt Matthew Wallis (Coldm Gds) talks to a local child during a patrol in the village of Kopak, near Babaji, in December

CGS: Give Afghan mission time

BRTAIN must maintain its efforts on Op Herrick to ensure its investment of “blood and treasure” does not go to waste, according to the head of the Army.

Speaking on BBC Radio Five Live, Gen Sir David Richards said the recent troop surge into Afghanistan meant that the mission in the country now had sufficient international military support.

But the Chief of the General Staff stressed that the allied community’s efforts would ultimately only be successful if Afghanistan’s own security forces are sufficiently well trained.

“I don’t think there will be a military presence in the shape it is today for more than about three-to-five years, but we’ve got to do this properly,” Gen Richards told presenter Kate Silverton.

“There’d be nothing worse than we hand over to an Afghan army and police that are not yet properly prepared to take over the role.

“But I don’t see why, in the case of Afghanistan where we’ve invested so much blood and treasure already, that we would just get out altogether.”

Comparing the public perception of the war with the middle years of Op Telic, Gen Richards said that an increase in equipment and soldiers on the ground would signify the start of a “more successful” period.

“Two years ago [in Iraq], people thought the country was about to implode. It looked pretty disastrous,” the senior officer explained.

“Today people are cautiously optimistic and I think we’ve just got to

give Afghanistan time now.

“I know people have said we’ve had long enough, but actually we knew the ingredients – we never resourced them and understood the correct formula.

“I’m confident that in the next year, with all the extra resources about to go in, that it will become more successful and we’ll see our way out of it.”

Despite the combat troops in southern Afghanistan gaining the most public recognition, Gen Richards was quick to praise the British Army’s often-unheralded work in providing reconstruction and security for Helmand’s civilian population.

“What’s the most important thing to all of us? It’s actually security,” he said. “It’s the ability to go to work in the morning or to go shopping without risk of being blown up.

“We’re too often associated with killing and blowing others up. Actually what we most like to be associated with is securing other people’s lives. Nothing gives us more satisfaction and when we get the resources right we can do that.”

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THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS NOW OPERATING ACROSS HELMAND PROVINCE. THIRTY NINE OF THE FACILITIES OPENED DURING 2009 AND PUPIL ENROLMENT IS ALSO UP 18 PER CENT

NEWS IN BRIEF

COLCHESTER-based soldier Pte David "Geordie" Balshaw has become Garrison FM's newest recruit.

The 23-year-old, who serves with the Military Transport section of 16 Medical Regiment, is hosting a two-hour show every Monday from 1800.

"This is a great opportunity for me," Pte Balshaw said. "I can't believe I am part of the Army's radio team."

Personnel in Colchester can listen to Pte Balshaw by tuning in to 107FM.

THE National Audit Office has published its annual report into the MoD's major projects for 2008-2009.

The document states there have been encouraging signs of improving cost and time performance in the management of individual projects, highlighting the Lynx Wildcat scheme as a good example.

It also notes that by releasing resources for higher priorities the MoD has been able to commit hundreds of millions of pounds to improving Infantry combat equipment – one of a series of decisions that have led to better support for operations.

ACTRESS Joanna Lumley has launched a campaign in support of veterans of the Second World War who now live in poverty in Nepal.

The Debt of Honour project, set up with the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT), aims to raise £10 million to hand over to 10,000 Gurkha soldiers and their widows.

A spokesman for the GWT said: "These veterans, many war wounded and honoured for their service to this country, are surviving on little more than £30 a month and need our support."

The initiative follows the success of the fight in 2009 to secure the right for Gurkhas to settle in the UK.

For more information and to donate, go to www.debtofhonour.org

A WARRANT officer is hoping to improve the lives of orphans in Sierra Leone by sending items to the country.

WO1 Rob Seabridge raised enough money to ship out everything from bunk beds and desks to toiletries and toys from Merville Barracks in Colchester.

The inspiration to help the orphanage in Freetown came while WO1 Seabridge (RLC) was posted to the African country from 2006 to 2008.

He was moved to help a young child named Sia, the daughter of the late Lt Mbowa of the Sierra Leone Army.

A container packed with the collection, including beds used by UK troops in Iraq, departed for charity International Development Orphanages Vocational Education's (Dove's) Village for Hope for Children late last year.

To donate to Dove go to www.internationaldove.com



Picture: Graeme Main

Aces with spades: Deepcut-based loggies clear the snow from outside Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey

All-weather warriors

MILITARY personnel braved the arctic winter weather to help those affected by the severe snowstorms that swept across Britain in early January.

Heavy snowfall saw 600 vehicles stranded on the A3 in Hampshire and 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery deployed a Land Rover and a four-tonne truck to provide humanitarian aid at the southern end of the blocked road.

A further Land Rover and three four-tonne trucks belonging to 104 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers deployed from their base in Bordon to offer similar assistance at the northern end of the A3 around Petersfield.

Along the way two trucks helped 200 stranded vehicles on the A325 near Bordon by transporting motorists to a rest centre in the town.

More than 30 troops from 47 Regt RA, 104 REME and Aldershot Garrison were called into action to recover snowed-in lorries, coaches and tankers as well as clearing roads of fallen trees and taking beleaguered

drivers to emergency aid centres.

The following day seven Land Rovers from the Royal Military Police based at Longmoor deployed with ten soldiers to help assist more motorists on the A3.

In the north east, soldiers from 146 Field Company, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – part of 15 Brigade – worked with charity Sue Ryder to deliver meals to vulnerable people in south Yorkshire.

Across the Pennines, 42 Brigade handled a request from United Utilities to assist with the movement of chemicals to an isolated treatment plant in Cumbria.

Back in the south, 43 (Wessex) Brigade provided 4x4 vehicles to move staff to and from hospitals in Bath, Cirencester and Blandford while 49 (East) Brigade helped transport non-critical patients and equipment to hospitals in Colchester.

Royal Logistic Corps soldiers based at Deepcut also offered assistance by clearing emergency access routes to allow ambulances to reach Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey.

Guidance for bereaved families

FREE legal advice will be provided to families whose loved ones have died while serving in the Armed Forces.

The initiative, which is part-funded by the MoD, will enable The Royal British Legion (RBL) to offer independent legal expertise to bereaved Service families.

The RBL will be able to give information and guidance, particularly about inquests.

The scheme follows feedback from

a forum set up by the RBL and the War Widows Association of Great Britain which showed that families felt there was an absence of independent legal advice.

RBL Director General Chris Simpkins said: "Our aim is to ensure that bereaved Service families are satisfied that a full and transparent inquest has taken place."

The scheme is due to be rolled out by the summer.

Cool customers

CHILLED-out soldiers embraced the snow that brought the UK to a standstill as they headed out on exercise to make the most of a valuable training opportunity.

Troops from the Army Training Regiment in Bassingbourn were on manoeuvres in Brecon, south Wales, and woodland near Maidstone in Kent (pictured below) where they were able to hone their skills in extreme conditions.

They used a farm as a forward operating base and rehearsed the basics of fire and manoeuvre – all while colleagues in civvy street juddered to a halt.

Maj Mark Goode (REME), officer commanding Rowcroft Company at Bassingbourn, said he was delighted with the performance of his troops in Kent.

The recruits braved temperatures well below freezing as the UK was gripped by the deepest cold snap for more than 30 years.

Maj Goode added: “It looked and felt like Norway out on the exercise area, but this was a good opportunity to get to grips with extreme conditions.

“Not only did the recruits learn battle skills, they also learnt the importance of admin discipline, such as keeping your sleeping bag

dry and the use of ration packs.”

With the British Army operating in extremes of climate in Afghanistan, Maj Goode said that soldiers had to learn to look after themselves and each other early on.

Away from Kent, he explained that recruits on their final training in Brecon had benefited from a modified exercise, which had taken advantage of deep snow and ice.

Maj Goode said that current operations meant soldiers were spending more time in the open.

He added: “On a recent Afghanistan tour, the right flank company of the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards spent 171 of their 190 days living out in the field.

“I was deployed on Op Herrick 7 two years ago and it was extremely cold. You have to realise that good personal admin is your lifeline in those conditions.”



Picture: Graeme Main

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE excellence of the Armed Forces and supporting civilians has been recognised at *The Sun* newspaper's annual Military Awards ceremony.

Princes William and Harry of Wales were joined by military chiefs, senior politicians and celebrities to pay tribute to the Defence stars.

From the Army, Cpl Mark Powis of 1st Battalion, The Rifles was named Most Outstanding Soldier; Cpl Carl Thomas of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles won the Life Saver Award; and Sgt Andrew McNulty of 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment came out on top in the True Grit Overseas category.

The award for Best Unit was picked up by 2 Rifles.

In addition to the main categories a separate award was presented to the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group for its professionalism on operations.

ABINGDON station was rewarded for its forward-thinking approach to keeping traffic accidents down with the presentation of the Defence Annual Road Safety Award.

Chief of Defence Materiel Gen Sir Kevin O'Donoghue presented the accolade for the 2009 competition to personnel from the base during an event at MoD Abbey Wood, near Bristol.

Land Rover, which sponsored the competition, provided ten places for the winners – and runners-up RAF Leeming – to visit its Solihull factory and take part in an offroad driving experience.

30 THE NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL SURVEYS COMPLETED BY THE MILITARY STABILISATION AND SUPPORT TEAM IN BABAJI DISTRICT TOWARDS THE END OF 2009. SIXTY SIX PER CENT OF THE NATIVE FARMERS QUESTIONED BY BRITISH PERSONNEL SAID THAT THEY WERE INTERESTED IN JOINING CO-OPERATIVES TO INCREASE THEIR TRADING POTENTIAL

Nimrod crash inquiry prompts air safety review

FAR-reaching moves to tighten up military aviation safety procedures are taking place following a report into the loss of a Nimrod aircraft in Afghanistan.

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said he would be implementing the majority of the 84 recommendations in a review carried out by barrister Charles Haddon-Cave.

These include the setting up of a new Military Aviation Authority to provide regulation and audit of flying across the three Services. A comprehensive overhaul of airworthiness procedures is also being undertaken.

Mr Haddon-Cave's investigation was launched after Nimrod MR2 XV230 crashed following a mid-air fire in September 2006, killing all 14 Service

personnel on board.

The barrister believed that the incident could have been avoided, citing a “failure to adhere to basic principles” and “an ineffective and wasteful” safety regime as being among the factors that contributed to the devastating crash.

He also blamed a “systematic breach of the Military Covenant” by the MoD and defence contractors BAE Systems and Qinetiq for the failings. But Mr Haddon-Cave did not criticise the Nimrod's current airworthiness.

Speaking after the publication of the report, Mr Ainsworth said his department had spent seven weeks scrutinising the document and he welcomed the recommendations that had been made.

He again apologised for the mistakes that had been made in the lead-up to the incident and said his thoughts were with the loved ones of the personnel killed in the crash.

Mr Ainsworth added: “What we must do now is learn all the lessons from Mr Haddon-Cave's report and take the actions necessary to implement them.

“I share the view that our future management of air safety is of the highest order and I am grateful for the detailed proposals the Nimrod Review has made.

“Mr Haddon-Cave's proposals regarding safety culture have a resonance beyond aviation and we are now looking at their applicability more widely across the MoD.”

GOOD DRILLS

BANGERS FOR BUCKS

ALDERSHOT butcher A Turner and Sons has been cementing its long association with the Army by launching a special range of sausages in aid of Help for Heroes.

The company is donating 5p from every packet sold at Tesco stores in the south of England to the charity, while the supermarket and military food supplier DBC & Purple Foods are handing over 20p per box.

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

SOLDIERS are being offered free entertainment at the Royal Opera House in London in care of the Tickets for Troops initiative.



Hosted by actress Joanna Lumley, the Valentine's Day family event features a host of workshops and performances.

Log on to www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk for further information.

MEDAL MAN

LEICESTERSHIRE man Roger Day appeared in court after being caught wearing 17 military medals he had not earned.

Day (61), of Church Street, Earl Shilton, was captured on video wearing the gongs during an Armistice Day parade in Warwickshire and was reported to police by suspicious organisers.

The fantasist, who admitted making up stories to impress his wife, pleaded guilty at Nuneaton Magistrates' Court to unlawfully using military decorations and was sentenced to 60 hours of community service.

SLOPPY SNOWMEN



SOLDIERS from 16 Air Assault Brigade based in Colchester used last month's weather to put some new maroon-bereted snowmen through their paces.

The shoddily-attired soldiers were stood-to outside Brigade HQ.

BAD DRILLS

Brits eye Bastion move

A HIGH-RANKING officer has revealed that all British troops based at Kandahar in Afghanistan are set to be moved to Camp Bastion within the next two years.

Lt Col Dave Munson told *Soldier* that the future strategy for Operation Herrick was to use Camp Bastion as an efficient rear base.

"The way we manage our logistics won't be split between Kandahar and Bastion – it will all be from Bastion," said the officer responsible for planning for the main base.

"Virtually all of the British Army will be out of Kandahar and they [soldiers] will come to Bastion and be sent to the forward operating bases from there."

The move, scheduled to be completed by June 2011, will be made possible on completion of a new US-built runway which will allow for larger aircraft to fly in and out. Lt Col Munson said: "There are timescales on when the move will be completed but they are very much dependent on when the opportunities present themselves to make a difference."

"The key is the big runway and that

will be up and running by the fourth quarter of 2010."

Since the British Army moved into Bastion in 2006 it has grown from a makeshift camp with a 12-kilometre perimeter to a full-scale garrison with a 28-kilometre perimeter.

After starting life as a barren space in the Helmand desert, the base is now home to 20,000 Service personnel and civilian contractors.

"It's an amazing place if you realise that we have only been here since 2006 – this is a town," said Lt Col Munson.

"We need to be a base that delivers all that we need and we are on schedule to do that."

Lt Col Munson plans for Bastion to be the epicentre of logistics and a place that motivates personnel.

"Bastion serves as a rear base for troops to move forward – we are a force-support hub," he added.

"We are conscious of the conditions that troops going forward have to live with; Bastion is not going to be seen as a luxury rear area – what we want are the right conditions for everybody."

24 THE NUMBER OF HOURS EACH DAY THAT THE VITAL MATERNITY WARD IN GERESHK DISTRICT HOSPITAL IS NOW OPEN TO PROVIDE AN INVALUABLE SERVICE TO EXPECTANT MOTHERS LIVING IN THE REGION

Radio key to family's fortunes

A BRITISH-FUNDED scheme to distribute wind-up radios to the people of Helmand province helped reunite a lost child with his family.

The five-year-old boy was found wandering alone in Musa Qala district centre by an Afghan National Army patrol which then used the Radio in a Box (RIAB) equipment to put out a plea over the airwaves for his relatives to come and collect him.

It did not take long for the child's uncle, a pharmacist working in the nearby bazaar, to come forward and the lost boy was soon reunited with his parents.

Sgt Casper Grainger, a British Army senior NCO serving in southern Afghanistan as part of the team running the radio project, said: "It just goes to show the power the RIAB can have."

"We know it is effective because of the letters we receive – it is not unusual for us to receive up to 150 a week; some of support, some asking

for certain songs to be played and some with specific messages."

RIAB, which is jointly funded by the MoD, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, is administered by the International Security Assistance Force and has been running in Afghanistan for the last four years.

Originally set up to provide Afghan civilians with a different source of news to the Taliban's, RIAB is now used extensively to advise local residents about impending operations, warn children about the dangers of playing with explosives and other munitions and as a community information tool.

Local residents act as the DJs and broadcast a mixture of music, education and comedy programmes to the radio units, which are stored in hardened cases to protect them from the elements.



Wait out: Soldiers take a pause from patrolling during Op Lion's Leap, which took place in Babaji district

Lions on the prowl

SOLDIERS from the Coldstream Guards have penetrated a key insurgent stronghold in Helmand province as part of the ongoing campaign to bring development and reconstruction to the region.

Operation Lion's Leap saw troops from 1 Company, 1st Battalion inserted by Chinook helicopter behind a strategic location in Babaji district so they could engage with local nationals.

The move was made in the western outskirts of the district, an area that was hard won by International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) personnel during last year's Operation Panchai Palang (Panther's Claw).

With patrols in these villages a rarity, the soldiers worked hard to find out what the resident Afghans needed and what issues they had.

"Certainly this area is fairly immature in terms of Helmand for how long Isaf troops have been here," said OC 1 Company, Maj Toby Till.

"One of the most important things was for us to understand the local population and find out who the individual compound owners were."

The troops spent two days on the ground and, despite coming under fire on one occasion, they returned safely to their patrol base.

"The contact was just a shoot and scoot," said LCpl Tom Hutchinson.

"We were defending a roadway

and a guy jumped out from behind a corner and fired a few rounds at us and jumped back in again.

"We got a few rounds down at him but we didn't hit him, we just chased him away basically.

"But we like to think it's not really representative of the people here, he's not really representing what they feel.

"He's just a foreign fighter probably, they're only here in groups of five or ten or so."

The guardsmen also took part in the celebrations for Eid, an important date in the Muslim calendar, and visited homes to distribute gifts to more than 100 families which had a positive effect in terms of the information gathered about the region.

A medic provided treatment for a young girl at an informal village shura and troops spent a night in an abandoned compound that had no electricity or toilet facilities, with cooking restricted to an open fire.

LCpl Hutchinson added: "We did some soft knock operations, basically knocking on a few doors to find out who the people are, what we can do for them and what they need in the way of building or construction.

"We've made a difference, we've reached out to different areas where the people before us could not reach.

"We have influenced this area in a positive way."

NEWS IN BRIEF

BEING crated is never something that is celebrated in the Army – but troops from 2nd Battalion, The Rifles were over the moon when a huge tippie haul came their way.

The soldiers, who recently returned from southern Afghanistan, scooped 3,000 free beers in a competition run by insurance provider Towergate Wilsons.

In the UChoose contest, personnel and their families had to nominate the unit they felt should receive the complimentary drinks – and 2 Rifles came out on top.

MILITARY personnel who are needed to carry out long tours of duty in vital roles have been given a cash boost with the Campaign Continuity Allowance (CCA).

The latest entitlement, created as a result of revisions to the Terms and Conditions of Service in July last year, applies to around 100 posts – and eligible personnel can claim if they complete more than 228 days in the role.

While CCA is almost exclusively reserved for posts in Afghanistan, or those directly supporting the operation, other jobs may be considered.

A BOOK penned by an Army officer is helping to support fathers and their children forced to spend long periods of time apart.

My Daddy's Going Away, written by Maj Chris MacGregor (KRH), is designed for youngsters whose dads are away from home, including those with parents deployed on operations.

The book, which is supported by a website for mothers and fathers to learn more about the separation period, began life as a poem drafted by Maj MacGregor on his way back from deployment on Op Telic 10 in 2007.

"I have two kids myself and it was while I was on the Hercules back from Iraq that I wrote the poem," he told *Soldier*. "If you are in the military then it obviously resonates and it can be used as a resource for soldiers."

My Daddy's Going Away is supporting Combat Stress and the Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health and has a foreword from Prince Charles, who has links with both charities.

For more information or to order, visit www.mydaddysgoingaway.com



100

THE NUMBER IN THOUSANDS OF MOSQUITO NETS THAT HAVE BEEN ORDERED FOR HELMAND AT A COST OF \$600,000. THE VITAL NETS ARE BEING DELIVERED TO THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH WHICH WILL DISTRIBUTE THEM THIS SPRING TO COINCIDE WITH THE PROVINCE'S ANTI-MALARIA CAMPAIGN

Cavorting canine

A GLOBETROTTING dog that has scaled Mount Everest and visited the plains of the Maasai Mara is setting its sights on a cross-ocean challenge in aid of the St Dunstan's charity.

Dunstan the Dog hopes to raise money to enable the group to continue to provide support to visually impaired and blind ex-Servicemen and women.

As part of "Dunstan's Global Tour", Army units are being asked to adopt one of 20 toy Dunstan dogs to accompany them wherever they go and to capture them on camera.

Des Knight, who served with 25 Field Regiment RA in Hong Kong as well as the 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, has already taken up the challenge by taking Dunstan on an awe-inspiring trip.

"My daughter Gemma challenged me to climb Mount Kilimanjaro so, with my wife Ann-Marie, we went to the Maasai Mara with Dunstan the Dog," he said.

"It's a privilege to do our bit to help blind ex-Servicemen and women rediscover their independence after the onset of visual impairment."

Dunstan is also joining forces with a tri-Service team on Exercise Transglobe, a sailing expedition running until July 2010.

Speaking on behalf of Ex Transglobe, SSgt Clive Cooper said: "The Army crew is delighted to adopt a Dunstan and we have named him Oakley in honour of his distinctive shades."

To apply for a dog, go to www.st-dunstans.org.uk/dunstandog or email colin.williams@st-dunstans.org.uk



Herrick kit boost announced

THE MoD has announced plans for a £900 million enhancement package for operations in Afghanistan to ensure troops have the resources they need to achieve success in the country.

With the department facing challenging financial pressures, Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth stated that spending would be reprioritised to balance the books and meet the demands of the campaign in Afghanistan.

The package will be delivered from the core defence budget and will improve troops' safety and operational capability over the next three years.

Included among the enhancements will be 22 new Chinook helicopters to boost the number of airframes in theatre, an additional C-17 aircraft and improvements to the Army's counter-IED capabilities.

Communications will be improved with the provision of more Bowman tactical radios and patrol satellite systems, while increased funding will be made available for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities.

In addition to the MoD package the Treasury will provide £280 million for additional vehicles, weapons, communications and surveillance assets.

This will include a 31 per cent increase in Husky tactical support

vehicles deployed in Afghanistan, a 40 per cent rise in Jackal numbers and more equipment to combat the threat posed by IEDs.

To provide these vital assets, the MoD has had to make difficult decisions regarding areas of defence not directly linked to operations.

An independent review will be launched to examine whether further reductions can be made to the number of civilians working in defence while the number of Service personnel not critical to operations will be cut by 2,500.

This will be achieved by slowing recruitment and preventing extensions to service rather than through redundancies.

Harrier numbers will also be reduced, with the remaining aircraft being moved to RAF Wittering, resulting in the closure of RAF Cottesmore.

The Nimrod MR2 will be taken out of service in March – 12 months earlier than planned – and the introduction of the Nimrod MRA4 will be delayed until 2012.

On announcing the package, Mr Ainsworth said: "These decisions have not been taken lightly but these are tough times for everyone in defence and we must ensure we prioritise spending on operations to achieve success in Afghanistan."

"As we implement the changes we will ensure that safety requirements are maintained and those people affected are supported."

160 THE NUMBER OF PUPILS NOW ENROLLED IN SCHOOL IN GHARTALAY, NEAR MUSA QALEH. TWO SCHOOLS IN NAD E-ALI DISTRICT HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO REOPEN THEIR DOORS

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£7,045	MIKE BUSS Ex-Serviceman Buss smashed the 468-mile record for the furthest distance travelled on a treadmill in 24 hours by covering an astonishing 517 miles	Help for Heroes
2	£5,098	ALPHA TROOP, 256 SIGNAL SQUADRON Soldiers from the strategic communication troop completed a sponsored 24-hour rowathon before marching the length of Hadrian's Wall carrying combat fitness test weight in their bergens	Help for Heroes and Cancer Research
3	£1,719	124 FIELD SQUADRON, ROYAL ENGINEERS Seven super-fit volunteers serving with the Cumbernauld Territorials took on the challenge of the 2009 Glasgow Half Marathon	Scotland's National Centre for Conductive Education



SENIOR members of the Afghan National Police (ANP) got a first-hand glimpse of British pre-deployment training during a visit to England. The four-man delegation, including Helmand provincial chief of police Col Asad Ullah Sherzad, head of administration Col Ayoud, head of counter-terrorism Maj Almas Khan and ANP training officer Lt Ahmad Fared, spent time with the Scots Guards who will be mentoring Afghan police recruits when they deploy to Helmand province this spring. The highlight of the visit was a trip to the mock-Afghan village at Stanford Training Area in Thetford. Speaking after the trip, an enthusiastic Col Sherzad said: "We have finally made it to the UK and in the last two days of our visit I have been interested to see the amount of effort being put into training."

Reporters pay ultimate price

THE risk to journalists covering the fighting in Afghanistan was brought into focus after the deaths of two defence reporters in a fortnight.

Sunday Mirror correspondent Rupert Hamer was killed when the vehicle in which he was travelling was caught in an IED blast in the Nawa area of Helmand on January 9.

His photographer Philip Coburn was seriously injured in the attack, which happened while the pair were embedded with American forces. A US marine also died in the strike and five others were wounded.

The news came after an insurgent bomb claimed the life of reporter Michelle Lang on December 30. The 34-year-old journalist, from the *Calgary Herald*, died alongside four Canadian troops when their vehicle was struck by a device near Kandahar.

Educated at Gresham's School in Norfolk, Mr Hamer began his career at the *Eastern Daily Press*, where he

qualified as a reporter.

The 39-year-old, who was married with three children, went on to study politics at Leeds University before taking up his trade once again on the *Sunday Mirror*.

There he had reported on conflicts including Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paying tribute to Mr Hamer, Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said news of the journalist's death showed the risks faced by media professionals reporting on the front line.

Mr Ainsworth added: "We worked closely with Rupert on a Christmas edition of the *Sunday Mirror*, containing messages for deployed personnel from their loved ones.

"The paper was very well received by troops and its success is testament both to Rupert's hard work and his understanding of Service personnel."

Mr Ainsworth concluded that his "deepest sympathies" were with the families of Mr Hamer and Mr Coburn.

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE Band of the Welsh Guards is planning a series of fund-raising concerts in late April.

Proceeds will be donated to the Welsh Guards Afghanistan Appeal.

The band will be playing at Brangwyn Hall, Swansea (01792 475715) from 1930 on April 23; St David's Cathedral, in St David's, Pembrokeshire (01646 695267) from 1930 on April 24; and St David's Hall, Cardiff (029 2087 844) from 1700 on April 25.

SERVICE personnel are being offered free tickets to The Outdoors Show at the Birmingham NEC.

The annual event, from March 27 to 29, offers a unique experience for anyone with a passion for hiking, mountain biking, walking and climbing.

To get your free tickets email abigail@vosmedia.co.uk

WORK to convert a rundown compound in a village near Musa Qaleh into a community school has been completed.

International Security Assistance Force Military Stabilisation and Support Team staff helped to organise the project in Yatminchay as local workers cleared the area and added doors, windows and gates.

The new school can cater for up to 100 students.

35

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED A SHURA AT THE END OF 2009 TO DISCUSS ROUTE TRIDENT, A MILITARY ROAD BEING BUILT THROUGH THE BABAJI AREA TO LINK LASHKAR GAH WITH GERESHK





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A large advertisement for 'Stereoids' featuring a muscular man in a starting crouch. The word 'Stereoids' is written in a large, white, distressed font in the upper left. Below it, a red 'X' is followed by the text 'don't do it'. At the bottom left is a circular logo for 'ARMED FORCES EMPLOYMENT TESTING' with 'Mandatory Drug Testing' around a globe. To the right of the logo, the text reads: 'Stereoids shrink your prospectsin more ways than one!' followed by 'Always check first with your RMO if you are considering using any performance enhancing substance.' The man in the crouch is wearing a blue singlet and black shoes, looking intensely at the viewer.

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Always check first with your RMO if you are considering using any performance enhancing substance.

IN MEMORIAM



LCPL DAVID KIRKNESS (24)
3RD BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA DEC 15 – AFGHANISTAN

A PAIR of British soldiers sacrificed their own lives in order to prevent two suicide bombers attacking a bustling marketplace.

LCpl David Kirkness and Rfn James Brown, both from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, were killed when the insurgents detonated the devices they were carrying in Sangin, southern Afghanistan.

At the time of the attack the soldiers' reconnaissance platoon was manning a vehicle checkpoint alongside an Afghan National Army section in order to provide reassurance and security to the local community. Two Afghan soldiers also died in the incident.

Lt Col Nick Kitson, CO of 3 Rifles Battlegroup, said that LCpl Kirkness and Rfn Brown had saved hundreds of lives by putting themselves in the line of fire.

"Their sacrifice prevented two suicide bombers from reaching their intended target, the bustling and ever more prosperous Sangin bazaar, packed with local Afghans going about their daily business."

Of LCpl Kirkness, the commanding officer added: "Tragic as his loss is, we take comfort and pride from the fact that he and the soldiers who died with him, both Afghan and British, averted a much larger tragedy."

A joint statement from LCpl Kirkness's parents Christopher and Margaret and his three-year-old daughter Brooke said: "If you knew David, you had to love him – it was impossible not to."

Lt Col Kitson added: "He was a first-class leader, one who put the thoughts and needs of his men first."

Rfn Brown (18), of Orpington, Kent, had been in the Army less than a year before deploying on Op Herrick as a battle casualty replacement one week before he was killed.

Maj James Richardson, OC B Company, 3 Rifles, said: "He was beginning to show all of the hallmarks expected of the thinking rifleman and was testimony to the generation of guys who are willing to take on the challenges that we face out here."

His family added: "James Stephen Brown, a son, brother, uncle, boyfriend and a friend. You were a true hero and will be dearly missed."

"We all love you so much. You died a hero living your dream and you will always be in our thoughts. Your actions will always speak louder than words ever could."

Recce platoon commander CSjt Paul Lucke said that Rfn Brown had made a big impression with his comrades despite only having been with them for one week.

He added: "Importantly he fitted straight in. He found making friends easy and showed enough even from the first patrol that he could deal with the rigours of Afghanistan."

"This was shown with him being appointed as one of our Vallon operators, an incredibly important job after such a short time with the platoon. He definitely had a bright future ahead of him within The Rifles."

"Unfortunately he never will be able to show us his full potential. My thoughts remain with his family. He is truly worthy of the platoon's motto: 'We lead, you follow'."



RFN JAMES BROWN (18)
3RD BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA DEC 15 – AFGHANISTAN



CPL SIMON HORNBY (29)
2ND BATTALION, THE DUKE OF
LANCASTER'S REGIMENT
KIA DEC 19 – AFGHANISTAN

A PASSIONATE soldier who lived for "his wife, the Army and Liverpool FC" died from wounds received in an IED explosion in Afghanistan.

Cpl Simon Hornby, from 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, was killed while on a foot patrol in Nad-e-Ali.

Being the most senior of the non-commissioned officers stationed at Patrol Base Shamal Storrai, he administered the location for his platoon commander as well as commanding his section.

The 29-year-old had deployed on Op Herrick 11 with Arnhem Company, 2 Lancers as part of the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards Battlegroup.

His wife Holly said: "I am devastated by the loss of Simon. He was proud to be a soldier and

died doing the job he loved."

Speaking about the soldier known as "Si", Lt Col Robbie Boyd, CO of 2 Lancers, said: "Cpl Hornby was one of the most courageous men in my battalion. He was a professional and a highly-respected leader."

"Always happy, always chirpy, he lived for his sense of fun, humour and his infectious zest for life; now so sadly taken from him and us."

He added: "As a lance corporal, he was awarded a commendation for services in Iraq for discovering an improvised explosive device and for spoiling an insurgent ambush."

"He will be sadly missed. Our thoughts and prayers lie with his wife. The Lions of England have lost one of their most courageous."



LCPL MICHAEL PRITCHARD (22)
4TH REGIMENT, ROYAL
MILITARY POLICE
KIA DEC 20 – AFGHANISTAN

A MUCH-LOVED military policeman who was working alongside the Infantry was killed as a result of a gunfight in Afghanistan.

The possibility that friendly fire resulted in the death of LCpl Michael Pritchard, of the 4th Regiment, Royal Military Police, during the incident near Sangin is now being investigated.

A spokesman for the MoD explained: "No firm conclusion will be reached until the coroner's inquest."

LCpl Pritchard (22), from Eastbourne, East Sussex, arrived in theatre in October 2009 and was attached to 4th Battalion, The Rifles.

In a joint tribute his family said: "With great sadness we say goodbye to our beloved son, a lover of life who has lived life to the full and

has brought great joy to all those who are lucky enough to know him."

"A light that shines brightly, our precious son, brother, grandson, boyfriend and special friend to all, we are very proud of you in all that you have done and achieved and you will always be in our hearts now and evermore."

Lt Col Debbie Poneskis, LCpl Pritchard's CO, added: "[He] had only been in the Royal Military Police since July 2007 but he very quickly made a huge impact on all of us."

"He was a professional and robust soldier and one who was both physically and morally courageous. He was committed to providing policing advice where it mattered most, alongside his Infantry colleagues on patrol."



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IN MEMORIAM



LCPL CHRISTOPHER RONEY (23)
3RD BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA DEC 21 – AFGHANISTAN

AN utterly professional soldier who "lived for his regiment and his mates" was killed leading his troops from the front, his commanding officer has said.

LCpl Christopher Roney, of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, died during a contact with Taliban fighters in the Sangin area of Helmand province.

And in paying tribute to the 23-year-old father-of-one, his CO Lt Col Nick Kitson said commanders and subordinates alike held the NCO in the highest regard.

Lt Col Kitson added: "Despite having recently stepped onto the first rung of the promotional ladder, his men unstintingly looked up to him. The battalion has lost a brave warrior and a talented prospect for the future.

"His loss is a tragedy – he will be revered

and celebrated by us all. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife Lorna, his son William, family and friends."

Originally from Sunderland, LCpl Roney joined 3 Rifles from the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick in 2006 and completed the Junior NCO Cadre last year.

He deployed to southern Afghanistan in October, where he had been playing a vital role in bringing stability to the Sangin area.

LCpl Roney's subordinates described the young soldier as a "born leader at the top of his game" who had been both a friend to others and a capable commander.

Rfn Thomas Robson said: "His death is a tragedy – we have lost a great soldier and a great friend."



LCPL TOMMY BROWN (21)
THE PARACHUTE REGIMENT
KIA DEC 22 – AFGHANISTAN

THE Parachute Regiment is mourning the loss of a dynamic, optimistic and talented soldier who saw no challenge as too great.

LCpl Tommy Brown was on foot patrol in Sangin, Helmand province, when he died in a suspected IED blast.

He had established himself as a natural leader and relished responsibility. He was enthused by soldiering and proved time and again an ability to inspire those he commanded.

A spokesman for the regiment paid tribute to LCpl Brown by saying: "He gave his life for his

comrades and The Parachute Regiment, both of which meant so much to him.

"His passing is a sad day for us, but every member of the unit is privileged to have known such a likeable, grounded and utterly professional man. We are deeply honoured to have served alongside him.

"Our thoughts and prayers now turn to his family and friends at this difficult time. We hope that in the midst of their profound loss they can draw strength from the fond memories that we all share of this fine man."



Rfn AIDAN HOWELL (19)
3RD BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA DEC 28 – AFGHANISTAN

A PROMISING soldier who demonstrated ability beyond his years was killed in an IED blast in Helmand province.

Rfn Aidan Howell, of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, was on patrol near Forward Operating Base Zeebrugge, situated in the Kajaki area, when the device exploded.

The 19-year-old joined the Army in 2006 and was serving on Op Herrick with C Company fire support group.

"Rfn Howell was already established as a man of promise," said Lt Col Nick Kitson, commanding officer of 3 Rifles Battlegroup.

"His infectious humour and engaging personality had quickly endeared him to his company and platoon.

"Despite being a relatively new arrival to the

battalion he was already operating with the fire support group which demands the experience and ability of our older riflemen. In this he found no difficulty and held his head high, beyond his tender years."

Rfn Howell was an extremely fit and active soldier and was an avid Leeds United supporter, travelling far and wide to cheer on his team whenever he could.

A family statement read: "We cannot begin to express the total and utter devastation we feel at the loss of our beautiful son Aidan.

"He may be recognised as a hero now, but to his family and everyone who was lucky enough to know him, he was always a hero."

Rfn Dean Jackson said: "H" will be sorely missed among all the blokes."



SPR DAVID WATSON (23)
33 ENGINEER REGIMENT (EOD)
KIA DEC 31 – AFGHANISTAN

FRIENDS and colleagues of a "ruthlessly determined" soldier have been reflecting on his many achievements after he was killed in Helmand province.

Spr David Watson, who was serving with 33 Engineer Regiment (EOD), died of his injuries following an explosion close to Patrol Base Blenheim near Sangin on New Year's Eve.

The 23-year-old, who had been on his first tour, was working as an operator in the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Group in the UK Counter-IED Task Force.

Originally from Whickham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Spr Watson joined the Royal Engineers in 2007 and quickly proved to be the consummate soldier's soldier.

He had completed the Airborne Forces' P Company course and All-Arms Commando training and within two years was excelling in his chosen career with the Royal Engineers.

Maj Tim Gould (RLC), officer commanding Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Group, said: "He was the archetypal gentle giant; strong and silent, the big brother you never had – he was the one you wanted by your side no matter what you were doing.

"A man-mountain, Spr Watson was as strong as an ox. To say that it is a tragedy to lose a soldier of his calibre is an understatement."

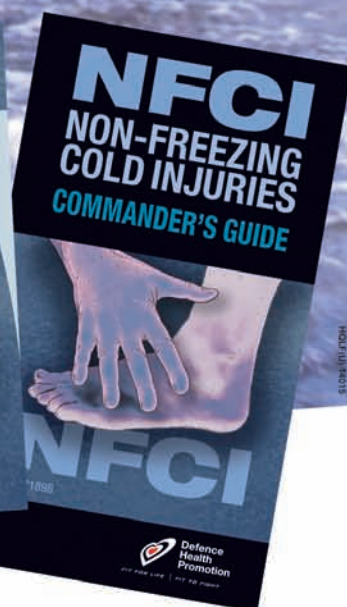
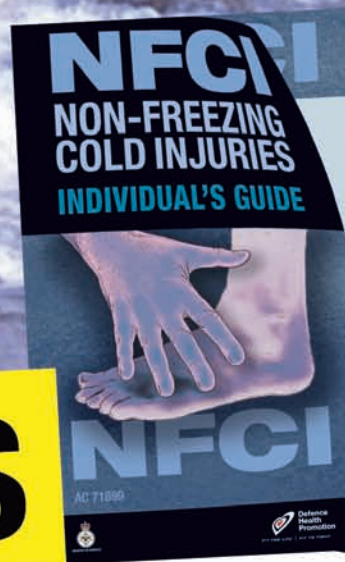
In a statement, Spr Watson's family said: "His achievements show his genuine commitment and determination to serve his country."

REMEMBER

COLD HURTS!



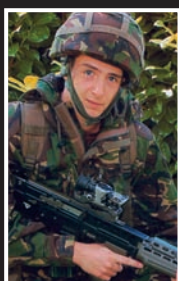
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IN MEMORIAM



PTE ROBERT HAYES (19)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL ANGLIAN REGIMENT
KIA JANUARY 3 – AFGHANISTAN

A YOUNG soldier who made a quick impact on operations was killed while on patrol in a notoriously dangerous part of Afghanistan.

Pte Robert Hayes of 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment died on January 3 when an IED exploded in southern Nad e-Ali.

The 19-year-old had deployed on Op Herrick 11 with C (Essex) Company, attached to the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards Battlegroup, and was serving as a rifleman.

A joint statement from Pte Hayes' family said: "Trying to express the true measure of our sorrow – and our sense of loss – is impossible.

"From childhood, Robbie had one ambition – to be a soldier. He fulfilled his dream last February, passing out from training at Catterick

where he was described as a man of great determination and a credit to his platoon.

"Robbie sincerely believed his fellow 'Vikings' were his 'other' family."

Pte Hayes was a talented boxer who won the welterweight category at his battalion's inter-company championships in 2009.

Lt Col James Woodham, CO of 1 R Anglian, said: "Robert's death leaves a hole in the Vikings' ranks; he will be remembered as a trusted member of the team, a young man whose energy for life was contagious, for his bravery and sense of humour.

"[He] made a real difference in his short time with the battalion – he has been taken from us and we are all the poorer for his passing."



CAPT DANIEL READ (31)
11 EOD REGIMENT, RLC
KIA JANUARY 11 – AFGHANISTAN

A BOMB disposal expert who returned to theatre just two months after being injured in a blast was killed by an IED in Helmand province.

Capt Daniel Read of 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps was supporting Battlegroup North West in the Musa Qaleh area when the device detonated.

The 31-year-old was injured in a bomb blast in October but his determination to get the job done saw him rejoin his colleagues in Afghanistan in December.

Capt Read, a high-threat IED disposal operator, showed boundless enthusiasm towards his work and had dealt with 32 devices during his time in theatre.

"He epitomised the values of selfless

commitment, loyalty and deep-seated courage," explained Lt Col Gareth Bex, commanding officer of the counter-IED task force and 11 EOD Regt, RLC.

"He made the ultimate sacrifice but his actions have saved countless numbers of the lives of both his fellow soldiers and the Afghans whom he fought to protect.

"In ridding Helmand province of the indiscriminate threat of these explosive devices he has served a noble cause and we are inspired by his incredible bravery and personal example.

"I am proud and honoured to have been the commanding officer of a man of Dan's calibre."

Capt Read's wife Lou added: "Dan was so brave, he was my hero and best friend."



CPL LEE BROWNSON (30)
3RD BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA JANUARY 15 – AFGHANISTAN

A FATHER-TO-BE and his "tough as granite" comrade were killed in an IED explosion in southern Afghanistan.

Cpl Lee Brownson and Rfn Luke Farmer, from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, were killed while on patrol in Sangin.

Tributes to Cpl Brownson, section commander with 2 Platoon, A Company, and 19-year-old Rfn Farmer have highlighted the bitter loss felt by their families and regiment.

Of Cpl Brownson, who was due to become a father for the third time, Lt Col Nick Kitson, CO of 3 Rifles Battlegroup, said: "Whether for his beloved wife and daughters at home or for his brothers-in-arms here in Afghanistan, his first priority was to take care of others.

"With spirit and compassion in equally copious measure, he was a beacon of inspiration to us all."

Maj Tim Harris, officer commanding A Company, went on to explain 30-year-old Cpl Brownson's fearless nature.

"He was loved by his men; they all wanted to be just like him, their hero.

"On one occasion, like the all-action hero he was, he was hit by a piece of shrapnel in his shoulder, but refused medical treatment, dealing with it in the morning once the enemy had gone."

Cpl Frankie Mason, section commander with 1 Platoon, A Company, praised Cpl Brownson, who he first met ten years ago.

He added: "I can't even begin to describe the numbness felt due to his loss. He was a man

who was outstanding in everything he set out to do, be it his job or otherwise.

"The part of him I will miss most is his sense of humour, which was always mischievous and among the blokes was infectious."

Talented Rfn Farmer, from Pontefract, West Yorkshire, joined 3 Rifles during their pre-deployment training for Op Herrick 11 and was singled out as an excellent soldier.

Lt Palmer Winstanley, OC 2 Platoon, said: "For such a young man he was mature beyond his years.

"He stepped up to the mark as our lead man, responsible for finding improvised explosive devices with a detector."

Maj Harris added: "[He] was a typical Yorkshireman; tough as granite, quietly self-assured and as brave as ten men.

"Time and again during this tour he found devices which were subsequently made safe, saving countless lives and limbs."

Rfn Farmer's family summed up their emotions with a touching statement.

His father, Mark, said: "I was the proudest dad at his passing out parade. I felt 20 feet tall the day Luke received the award for the fittest soldier within his intake.

"He could have one day gone to the Olympics as a 100-metre sprinter, he was that fast."

Rfn Danny Coop, 2 Platoon, A Company, added: "Rfn Farmer was one of my best mates in the whole world. He always put other people before himself.

"None of us will ever forget him."



RFN LUKE FARMER (19)
3RD BATTALION,
THE RIFLES
KIA JANUARY 15 – AFGHANISTAN

Officer joins Haiti relief effort

ASERVING member of the British Army on secondment to the Canadian military has been deployed to Haiti after a devastating earthquake hit the country.

Maj Stephen Foreman (RLC) was mobilised to the Caribbean island just hours after a tremor measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale struck.

In his role as principal logistics officer for humanitarian operations for the Canadian Joint Headquarters, Maj Foreman was on 12 hours notice to deploy anywhere around the world.

As this issue went to press the officer was on the ground in the capital Port-au-Prince working with the Canadian Disaster Assistance Response Team as part of Operation Hestia to provide aid to the country.

Speaking from Haiti, Maj Foreman told *Soldier* the situation was worse than a war zone.

"I have been to Iraq twice and deployed to Northern Ireland and



Picture: Cpl Johanne Maheu

● Medics from the Canadian Armed Forces provide first aid to victims of Haiti's devastating earthquakes

Sierra Leone, but this is without doubt the most complex and difficult situation I have had to deal with," he said.

"The hospitals are overflowing and there are no mortuary services.

"The amount of aid getting in is improving all the time but there are few

warehouses left to store anything in."

But he explained that the presence of military forces was proving successful, adding: "To date we have already treated around 500 patients."

It is expected that Maj Foreman will be deployed for up to 60 days.



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth, RLC

Public support key says Rammell

THE British public must have a better understanding of the military and how they operate if the UK is to prevail in Afghanistan, Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell has said.

Speaking at the Institute for Public Policy Research in London, the MP admitted his concern that most people in the UK had no direct connection to those in uniform and could not relate to modern operations.

Mr Rammell told the Institute: "We all need to have a better understanding of the Armed Forces and what they are doing because it is on the home front that

Afghanistan will be won or lost. The Taliban and Al Qaeda know this.

"Military operations, and the money to pay for defence, relies on the willingness of the public to support the policies of the government of the day and a preparedness to pay the taxes."

Mr Rammell said it was right that the Government was challenged over its decisions, adding: "No British Government would ever commit military forces to an operation unless it genuinely believed that the national interest depended on it."

NEWS IN BRIEF

SOLDIERS' families will be able to see when their loved ones have landed thanks to a new ArmyNet service.

This month sees the arrival of the Flight Information Data System, which has a real-time information feed from RAF Brize Norton.

The move means dependants will no longer have to call the air station or their rear party to get the relevant info.

THE solution to this month's spine line competition is loosely linked to the magazine's fitness theme.

For your chance to win an exclusive *Soldier* prize, simply tell us what the names on the spine have in common.

Answers to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk to reach us by February 26.

Op Herrick 12 line-up announced

TROOPS serving with 4th Mechanized Brigade will be heading to Helmand province in April for the next Op Herrick tour, the Defence Secretary has confirmed.

In a statement, Bob Ainsworth said the formation would replace 11 Light Brigade and troop numbers would be maintained at 9,500. He also revealed that Headquarters 6 (UK) Division would remain in theatre as HQ Regional Command (South).

The Defence Secretary said 16 Air Assault Brigade – which spearheaded the first Op Herrick mission four years ago – would return to Afghanistan in the autumn.

It is likely that troops from 4 Mech Bde will face a demanding tour over the summer months. But the formation is made up from a host of experienced units including 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment; 1st Battalion, The Mercian

Regiment; 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles; 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland; and 1st Battalion, Scots Guards.

The Royal Dragoon Guards; The Queen's Royal Lancers; 21 Engineer Regiment; 4th Regiment Royal Artillery; and 1 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, are also poised to play key roles during the tour.

As the announcement was made, senior officers confirmed that troops in Helmand would be better equipped to deal with the roadside bomb threat.

A Counter-IED Task Force including enhanced Royal Engineers and Royal Logistic Corps specialists, intelligence experts and military dogs is being created this year.

The move comes after MoD figures revealed that three quarters of all British casualties were as a result of IEDs.



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2 Rifles Win 3,000 beers

The Towergate UChoose Competition has now closed for 2009 - thousands of service personnel and their families registered units for the special prize of winning 3,000 free beers with 2 Rifles emerging as the clear victor.

'The competition was a chance for us to make a small gesture to a military unit. With 2 Rifles so recently returned from operations in Afghanistan it is particularly satisfying to be able to think that, in some small way, we are helping them unwind from the year.'

Rod Breeze, Managing
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THE BIGGER PICTURE

THE horses and soldiers of Kings Troop, Royal Horse Artillery emerge from the smoke of First World War artillery guns at the Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo.

This image, captured by Capt Tom McShane, earned the officer a runners-up prize in the 2009 Army Photographic Competition, which was held at the Imperial War Museum in London last month.

Awards for the best overall photographers as well as the most striking individual images were presented by Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir David Richards.

"Photography plays a key role in explaining the Army to the people of this country," said Gen Richards. "There are some outstanding photographers and photographs here and I am delighted to be able to congratulate those soldiers who have won prizes."

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Corps stability

As the Army Physical Training Corps celebrates its 150th birthday, *Soldier* examines the evolution of the Service's fitness experts...

Background picture,
A bygone age: British
soldiers practice their
bayonet drills during the
First World War under the
watchful eye of an Army
Gymnastic Staff instructor
Picture: APTC Museum

Flying high: A newly-
qualified PTI demonstrates
his athletic prowess at the
Fox Gymnasium, Aldershot
Picture: Steve Dock



POWER TO THE PEOPLE

THE ARMY PHYSICAL TRAINING
CORPS CELEBRATES 150 YEARS
OF PREPARING TROOPS FOR THE
RIGOURS OF SERVICE LIFE

Report: Richard Long

WITH operations in Afghanistan placing ever-increasing demands on soldiers, the need to produce and maintain a fully-fit fighting force has never been more important.

Such crucial work falls within the remit of the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC), whose skilled instructors ensure the highest standards are achieved prior to deployment.

This year the APTC celebrates its 150th anniversary and *Soldier*

visited the corps' home in Aldershot to learn more about its development over the decades and the scientific training methods being used to prepare troops for the tough challenges of the 21st century.

Its birth can be traced to the Crimean War, when poor levels of physical fitness were a common feature among serving personnel.

This prompted the War Office into action and in 1860 Maj Frederick Hammersley and 12 NCOs – who are now affectionately known as the 12 Apostles – were sent to Oxford University for a vigorous training programme before being posted to garrisons across the country, forming the Army Gymnastic Staff.

"There were bad levels of nutrition and fitness and a lot of soldiers were getting injured," explained APTC spokesman Capt Paul Sanderson.

"We needed to sort this out. These guys got together and went to Oxford University where they went through an intensive six-month programme of anatomy and physical training.

"The people who were joining the Army then had poor nutritional and health histories. While they had a hard working life they were not physically robust, a lot of that was down to bad nutrition."

Orders soon followed for gymnasiums to be built at each garrison, which housed its own officer and instructional staff, and by the end of the century the Army Gymnastic Staff were responsible for bayonet fighting skills in addition to physical training, boxing, fencing and gymnastics.

But it was not until 1940 that the APTC adopted its current name.

The outbreak of the Second World War saw a vast expansion of staff to provide purposeful training and to harden troops for the battlefield.

Peacetime saw a gradual reduction in numbers from 3,000 down to 700 and by the 1960s the corps contracted to around 450 officers and senior NCOs, which is its approximate strength today.

While instructors have traditionally ensured soldiers meet exacting fitness standards, their attention is now directed at providing training that specifically meets the challenges of southern Afghanistan.

"We know there has to be aerobic content, they have to be fit to run or walk with heavy weights," Capt Sanderson told *Soldier*.

"But we were getting a lot of injuries to the

lower limbs and lower back. A soldier may have the capacity to run for more than eight miles but he may not have the strength to carry the weight.

"They have to jump over ditches and jump from helicopters so we are looking more at functional strength.

"The work we do now has its base in Olympic powerlifting and we have to get the body moving in the most effective manner.

"We try to encourage perfect form so muscle is strengthened throughout the movement.

"If a soldier is squatting to fire a weapon or jumping across a ditch it impacts on the joints. If they do not have the muscle that is when problems arise."

Science also plays a crucial role in today's training with the APTC keen to gain every possible advantage.

"We are there (southern Afghanistan) for the long term," said Capt Sanderson. "Our most valuable resource is our manpower, if we can make a soldier physically ready he has more chance of coming back alive.

"We look at what

civilians are doing and we look at the Americans and Scandinavians, they both have a great history of research and development.

"We are trying to be science-savvy and we are trying to be more long term in our approach, rather than reactionary."

While future attention will marry with the MoD's drive to support operations in Afghanistan, the corps has a clear focus on this year and is planning a number of events to celebrate its landmark anniversary.

Members will take part in a relay race from Oxford to Aldershot in March to commemorate the effort made by the 12 Apostles and it is hoped members of the public will be able to join runners on the final leg.

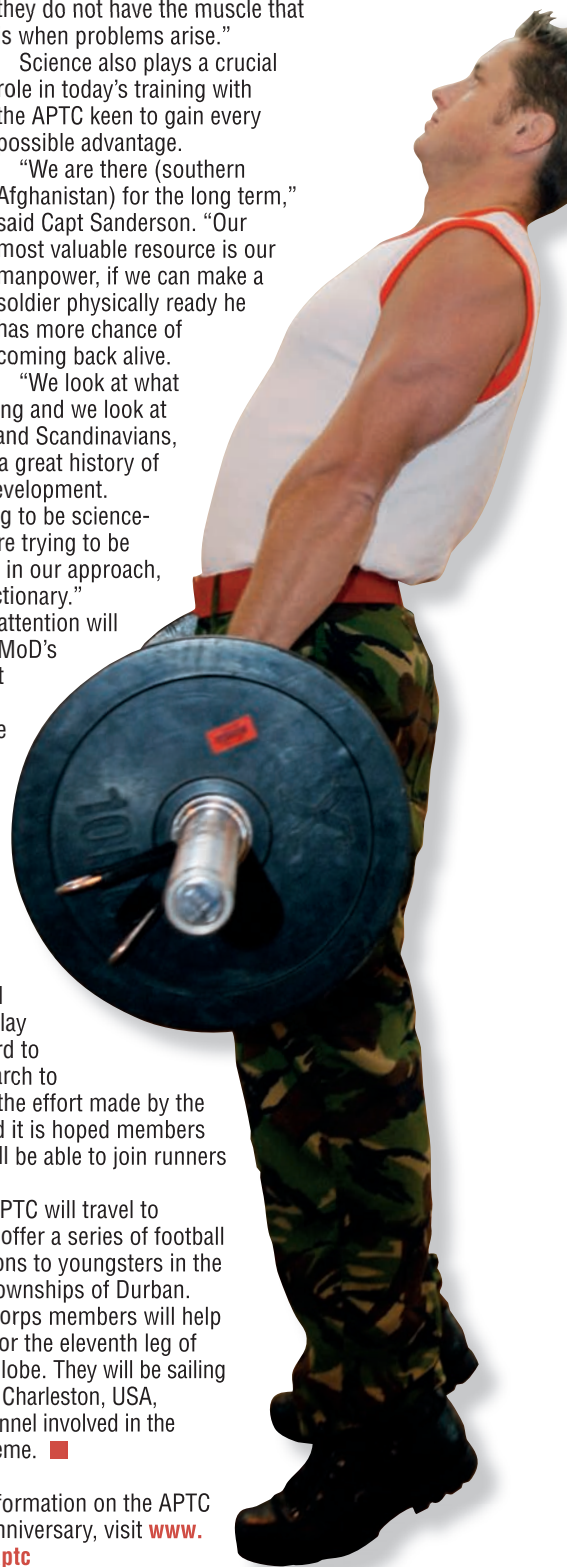
In April the APTC will travel to South Africa to offer a series of football coaching sessions to youngsters in the impoverished townships of Durban.

And in May corps members will help form the crew for the eleventh leg of Exercise Transglobe. They will be sailing from Antigua to Charleston, USA, alongside personnel involved in the Battle Back scheme. ■

● For more information on the APTC and its 150th anniversary, visit www.army.mod.uk/aptc

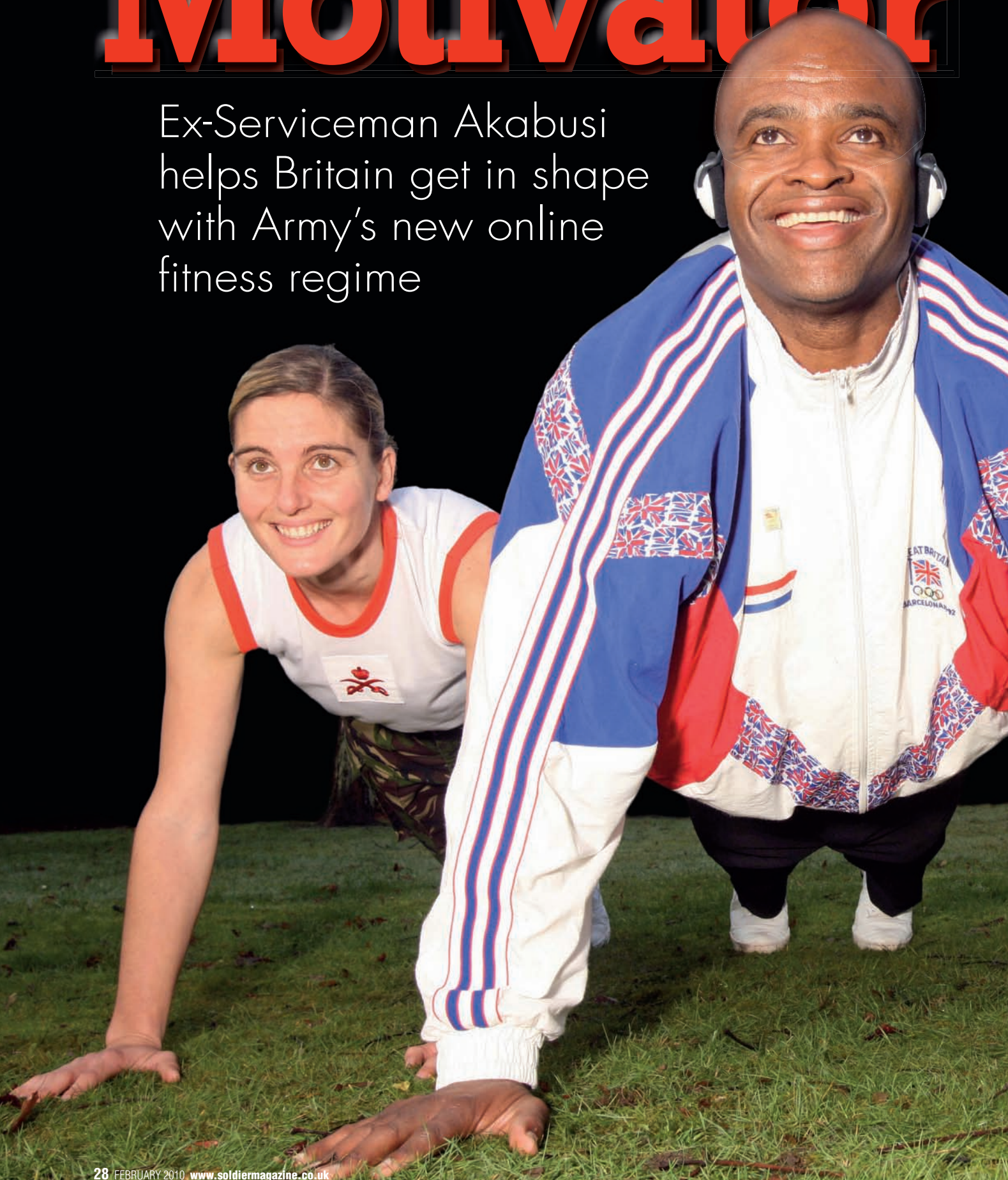
Fit for purpose:
SSgt Stephen Green demonstrates the new Olympic-inspired techniques being used by Army Physical Training Corps instructors to prepare troops for operations

Picture: Graeme Main



Mr Motivator

Ex-Serviceman Akabusi helps Britain get in shape with Army's new online fitness regime



Interview: Richard Long

WHEN it comes to compiling a list of New Year's resolutions it is safe to assume that a quest to get fit and lose weight will figure prominently in most people's thoughts.

But statistics prove that the very best of intentions are hard to keep as 51 per cent of us abandon our new healthy lifestyles by Valentine's Day.

The Army has set its sights on reversing this trend and has launched a new initiative that offers a selection of 40-minute workouts, along with motivational support, for those determined to get in shape.

Army Fit: Personal is being delivered through a series of podcasts and features expert tuition from Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) instructors along with

words of wisdom from Olympic athlete and ex-Serviceman Kriss Akabusi.

“You can do this in your living room using a coffee table or a chair”

“Many people want to start fitness regimes at this time of year but they find it difficult due to the cost, or they don't have the discipline,” the former track star told *Soldier*.

“We hope to provide them with the motivation, insight and framework they need to get themselves to the level where they could take the Army assessment or go on to join a sports club.

“The APTC uses these methods to help to train the Army for combat situations and we know they work. Our young men and women are in great physical condition.

“The Army is in vogue at the moment and people are keen to be associated with that.”

Cost, time and lack of motivation are among the biggest barriers to exercise but the new strategy aims to conquer these hurdles.

Listeners will be provided with guidance from their own “personal Army trainer” for a variety of workouts that have been designed as an alternative to the gym or paid-for fitness programmes.

As well as helping the general public to improve their fitness levels the aide will provide valuable support for

recruits preparing for Army assessments.

“The APTC has a 150-year history of getting people fit for purpose. Whether you are a housewife or a banker the Army can give you a basic level of fitness,” Akabusi said.

“It is low cost, you can do this in your living room using a coffee table or a chair. There are no expensive fees or memberships involved.

“Whether you are a beginner or at an advanced level, there is a programme for you.”

Akabusi is certainly well placed to comment on these tried and trusted fitness methods having served with the Army for 15 years, nine of which were spent in the APTC.

The three-time Olympic medallist has fond memories of his time in the Service and is delighted to be working with the APTC once again.

“Through the Army I discovered my athletic prowess but now, because of the conflict in Afghanistan, it is very difficult to do what I did,” he said.

“I worked from 0700 to 1300 on fitness drills with the battalion and in the afternoon I did my own training.

“I don't think the Army can afford that luxury now, I had a great time and I am very happy to be involved in this project.

“My experience as a soldier is outdated now so we have used two sergeants from the APTC to talk people through the workouts and I help with the motivational side.

“I personally think it is a fantastic way to keep fit.”

For more information about the programme and to download the podcasts visit www.armyfit.mod.uk ■

Gold standard: Olympian Kriss Akabusi is spearheading the Army's new podcast-based fitness training regime for civilians and would-be soldiers

Pictures: Biss Lancaster



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Fighting fit

New book gives troops war zone workouts

Interview: Stephen Tyler

FINDING the equipment – or indeed the time – to do gym work in the far reaches of Helmand province can be a tricky task.

Luxuries such as weights, benches and exercise machines are unsurprisingly not readily available to soldiers living in the Spartan surroundings of some of southern Afghanistan's forward operating bases (FOBs).

Thankfully for deployed personnel, one of the British Army's fitness experts has devised a training book aimed specifically at keeping troops fighting fit even when access to gym gear is at a bare minimum.

SSgt Chris Leare (APTC), who is currently serving on Op Herrick, created the *FOB Fitness Guide* before leaving for theatre where he was initially attached to the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards Battlegroup.

He has since seen it used by scores of troops keen to build on their conditioning and told *Soldier* that he was pleased with the book's appeal to even the most gym-shy Serviceman.

"When I was working at Sandhurst I was asked to do a training programme for injured cadets and it got me thinking that I should do one for the troops in Afghanistan," he explained.

"A lot of the guys at forward operating bases have already set stuff up, but this book is aimed more at the people who want to keep fit but perhaps aren't regular gym users.

"It's a basic guide designed to spark people's imaginations as to what they are able to do with limited equipment."

Rather than relying on purpose-built weights, the *FOB Fitness Guide* is packed with exercises that can be carried out using everyday soldiers' items including rifles, ammo boxes, bergens and jerry cans.

Each of the exercises in the book, which had an initial print run of 200 copies, are complemented by illustrations, how-to guides and safety points to help troops avoid injuring themselves while working out.

And although he has shown his ability to promote and develop fitness is top notch, SSgt Leare has also proved that Army PTIs are more

than capable of day-to-day-soldiering during his Herrick tour.

The senior NCO's Army background lies in the Infantry having enlisted into The Devonshire and Dorset Regiment in 1994 before transferring to the APTC in 2003.

He began his tour of Afghanistan putting his old skills to the test by commanding a Mastiff with the Grenadier Guards Battlegroup and said that his time on the front line demonstrated the versatility of the PT Corps.

"It selects people using a strict process and you get a real mixed bag of cap badges," he continued. "That means that when we come over to an operational theatre we are able to do any job. It shows that the selection process works.

"You can be deployed in a PT role, but we are mainly out here to do operations first. I have been blown up twice in the Mastiff, but the experience of working in an armoured vehicle and going back to my roots has been excellent.

"I originally came out here to serve [as a PTI], but just like anyone else from the PT Corps I'm willing and able to do ops first." ■





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Flexible force

***Soldier* sings the praises of the Army's versatile physical training corps**

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

PHYSICAL training for today's Army extends way beyond the traditional methods of long boot runs or vast hours spent on an obstacle course.

With operational requirements in Afghanistan dictating how muscular strength is as equally important as aerobic prowess it is the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) instructors who have to ensure such exacting needs are met.

SSgt (SSI) Stephen Green is ideally placed to comment on this role having completed a three-year attachment to The Light Dragoons and he believes versatility and an ability to be imaginative are key requirements for any instructor.

"I would try to include a fun element in the operations-based lessons," the 32-year-old told *Soldier*.

"If it becomes regimented to the point where it is always a boot run or obstacle course the soldiers soon lose interest.

"If we were on a run I would tell them to try imagining they were in Afghanistan.

"When they reached the front gate they were out on the ground. By the time we got back I wanted to know how many enemies they had seen.

"They were looking round to check their arcs so when they were out in Afghanistan they did it naturally."

During his time with the Dragoons the NCO was responsible for designing individual training programmes for specific squadrons. "That involved everything from boot runs and Bergen runs to assault courses," he said.

"Initially the main emphasis is getting the regiment to pass one of the two personal fitness tests, depending on the time of year, and the combat fitness test.

"On the back of that is getting them physically fit enough to deploy.

"One squadron was informed two months

prior to deployment that they would not be going in a formation reconnaissance role.

"Instead they were going to be attached to 2 Mercian so we had to alter their training as they would be working from a forward operating base on the ground."

As well as developing individual fitness regimes, SSgt Green was responsible for planning adventurous training and sporting opportunities for soldiers while working closely on a number of community projects.

When the Dragoons deployed to Afghanistan the NCO followed suit, completing his seven-month tour of the country in September 2009.

"I was deployed as a mentor to the Afghan National Army (ANA), to fully prepare soldiers for their role as section leaders," he said.

"The idea was to get individuals to the stage

where they could go back and use their knowledge to help improve those under them and push the ANA forward."

This included teaching Afghan counterparts the value of British military tactics and helping them to develop the weapon skills that are vital for serving soldiers.

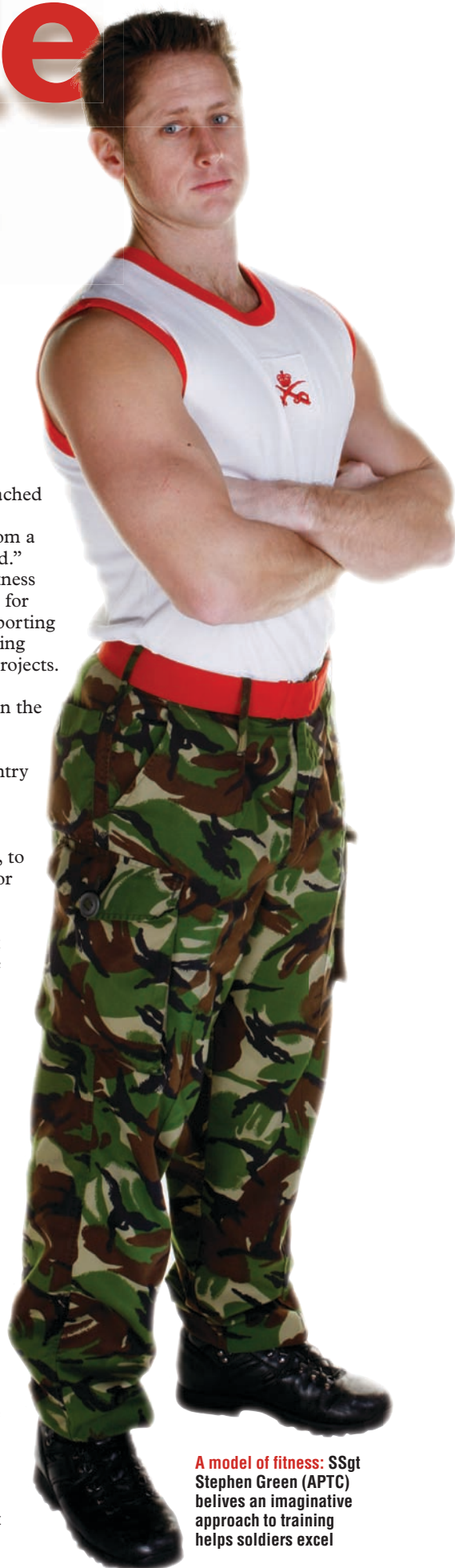
It also featured the traditional fitness programmes with runs and drills held at 0500 to avoid the searing heat.

SSgt Green served with 1st Battalion, The Light Infantry before transferring to the APTC. He now works at the corps' HQ in Aldershot as part of the training development team.

With a vast array of experience behind him, he has a simple message to any soldier considering a career in the APTC.

"There has not been a single day where I have regretted transferring," he said. "Without doubt it is the best job within the Army." ■

“There has not been a single day where I have regretted transferring. Without doubt it is the best job within the Army”



A model of fitness: SSgt Stephen Green (APTC) believes an imaginative approach to training helps soldiers excel

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Sight to behold

Sharpshooter offers perfect vision for Herrick troops

Report: Cliff Caswell

ARM Y crack shots are poised to gain a greater advantage over the Taliban following the introduction of the first new Infantry combat rifle in more than two decades.

Placed in the hands of eagle-eyed soldiers, the L129A1 Sharpshooter will provide improved accuracy at long ranges over its SA80 A2 stablemate and is destined to keep insurgents operating in southern Afghanistan firmly on the back foot.

The semi-automatic, gas-operated weapon, which fires a 7.62mm round, will be handed to the best shots in the Service. More than 400 have been procured in a £1.5 million Urgent Operational Requirement package and will be shipped to theatre later this year.

Made by United States firm Lewis Machine and Tool, the Sharpshooter is 945mm long and weighs in at 5kg. It boasts a 20-round magazine and is fitted with a top rail to which the Army's new suite of

sighting systems can be fitted.

The weapon will join a potent arsenal that is giving soldiers a powerful battlefield capability at all distances. Last year the new combat shotgun was introduced after demand for a firearm for short-range encounters in Helmand's Green Zone, while systems such as the Javelin missile are providing a formidable punch against bunkers and compounds.

Other additions to the armoury in the last few years include an improved sniper rifle and the grenade machine gun, which is now routinely fitted to armoured vehicles such as the Mastiff.

Speaking at the unveiling of the latest rifle Col Peter Warden, a team leader at Defence, Equipment and Support, said the firepower would bring a further dimension to the Army's imposing armoury.

He added: "The Sharpshooter rifle is very

capable and has been bought to fulfil a specific role on the front line of Afghanistan – it will complement the SA80 A2.

"The Sharpshooter's capabilities are also complementary to the current sniper system. Feedback has been very positive and troops are keen to get their hands on it."

Officials at the MoD have confirmed that training on the new firearm has begun and are confident that its introduction will keep the pressure on the enemy.

Quentin Davis, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, said that troops were now "bristling with a variety of

weaponry" with which to hit insurgents.

The minister added: "The Sharpshooter rifle adds to this arsenal and provides our brave Forces with an additional, highly-precise, long-range capability." ■

“The Sharpshooter rifle is very capable and has been bought to fulfil a specific role on the front line of Afghanistan – it will complement the SA80 A2”



Picture: Andrew Linnett

Line of sight: The Sharpshooter – an early prototype of which is shown here – will offer the Army's best shots greater reach and firepower

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Shifting sands

Helmand desert brought to UK for ultimate driver training package



Top dog: Vehicles including the Husky are put through their paces in the increasingly-Afghan-like surroundings of the Defence School of Transport in Leconfield

Picture: Steve Dock

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk FEBRUARY 2010 **37**

Report: Capt Matt Helsby, Rifles
Picture: Andrew Linnett

ONE of the keys to the British Army's success in Afghanistan has been its ability to replicate the realities of Helmand province in its training grounds around the world.

From mock forward operating bases in Kenya to Afghan villages in rural Norfolk, the Service has become a dab hand at making even the most unlikely place bear the sights, sounds and smells of Op Herrick.

The overhaul even extends to perhaps the most difficult aspect of Afghanistan to recreate – the country's terrain.

From undulating sandy hills to the verdant Green Zone and beyond, Helmand has provided a true test to the soldiers responsible for getting vehicles from A to B.

That the troops have met the challenge is in no small part thanks to the constantly-revised training on offer at the Defence School of Transport (DST) at Leconfield.

The 800-acre expanse of land north of Hull has taken on a decidedly Afghan flavour in recent months. Alongside the existing 16km of road circuits and 18km of cross country tracks at the site, new areas have been built to allow the Army's ever-expanding vehicle fleet to sample some of Helmand's testing landscape without leaving Britain.

DST commandant Col Paul Brook explained: "The school has changed fundamentally to respond to the needs of operations, first in Iraq and then southern Afghanistan.

"We've introduced all these new vehicle types and thousands of new course places for people to operate them in."

Among the additions to Leconfield's facilities is an Afghan village complex constructed out of ISO containers. The structures are arranged to form a claustrophobic patchwork of tight alleys and passages, accurately recreating the built-up areas in Helmand's population centres and providing a stern test of concentration for drivers and commanders.

Even the ground beneath the vehicles' tyres has been adapted. Extra sand has been placed over certain sections of the area to replicate the soft desert often experienced in theatre and an undulating wadi network has been installed.

The need for deploying drivers to be able to tackle river crossings has also been addressed with DST now boasting two waterways and a lake.

WO2 Darren "Huggy" Hugill, Mastiff team leader at DST, said: "We've built different types of training areas, some of which are just complete sand, to simulate the driving in the sand tracks of Afghanistan.

"There are also areas which are purely of stone and rocks to simulate the mountain areas that you find in Afghanistan."

If DST's task in making the training area's terrain more like Afghanistan is a tall order, the sheer number and variety of vehicles it has to familiarise drivers with is even taller.

From motorcycles to articulated lorries, the centre's expert tutors are responsible for training all Armed Forces drivers.

Their work has increased in recent times thanks to the Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) process which has required students to master new vehicles,

‘The school has changed fundamentally to respond to the needs of operations, first in Iraq and then Afghanistan’



such as the Mastiff, and to gain the skills required to drive them in all conditions.

But although they are busier than ever before, DST's staff have welcomed the challenge of moving onto an operational footing to meet the demands of providing enough qualified drivers and commanders for deploying brigades.

"The change has been massive," DST Vehicle Division training officer Capt Paul Eaton (RLC) told *Soldier*. "Where steady state was the focus, now everything is UOR."

"Throughput has been quadrupled in the five-year time frame that we've been developing UORs."

The number of drivers needed to be brought up to speed for operations in Afghanistan has inevitably meant that

individual battalions require more of their personnel to train at Leconfield.

Although Col Brook is happy to help develop the Army's vehicular capabilities, he remains acutely aware of the value of soldiers learning with their units.

The officer explained that his staff train instructors from different brigades who are then able to pass on the knowledge to their own personnel.

"It is still good practice for battalions to train their own personnel, but when you have a limited number of vehicles and special training areas for them specifically focused on Afghanistan, bringing everyone together is the way to do it," Col Brook said.

"So currently we are training 4 Brigade's instructors and they are then training 4

Brigade's personnel at DST – it's a good combination of the two."

Ensuring that Service drivers are capable of tackling everything that southern Afghanistan's difficult terrain throws at them is no mean feat, but DST's ability to adapt and refine its facilities and training is helping the Armed Forces to meet the challenge.

Every one of the 5.5 million miles clocked up across the Leconfield training area in any of the 1,300 vehicles in the school's fleet is a distance well travelled to help soldiers on the front line in Afghanistan get from start to finish in relative safety. ■

Perfect preparation: Mastiff and Ridgback drivers under instruction at DST Leconfield's training area prior to deployment to Afghanistan





The art of war

Sketcher captures front-line life during visit to The Rifles in Afghanistan

Interview: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Arabella Dorman

HAUNTING images immortalising the soldiers at war in Afghanistan have been created on canvas by the deft hand of a fearless artist.

Armed with charcoal sticks and sketchbooks, Arabella Dorman joined 2nd Battalion, The Rifles on the highly-kinetic Herrick 10 with the aim of capturing history through her own eyes.

The invitation for the classically-trained portrait artist to take in the sights and sounds of Forward Operating Base Jackson in Sangin came from 2 Rifles' commanding officer Lt Col Rob Thomson after he had seen her previous work.

"I had painted Maj Gen Richard Sheriff, the commander of British troops in Basra, and he invited me to go on Telic 9 in December 2006," explained Arabella.

"While in Iraq I moved widely with The Royal Green Jackets – now 2 Rifles – and then Lt Col

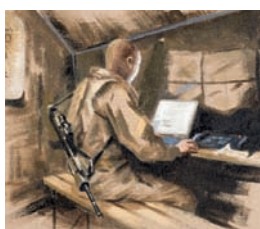
Rob Thomson made it happen for me to go to Afghanistan."

But although front-line warfare was not a new concept for the experienced painter, she said that drawing in such a volatile environment is never plain sailing.

"Out in theatre I work mainly from sketchbooks and photographs as everything happens so quickly – it's not as if you can sit there with your subject for hours," she said.

"I go out with charcoals and other colours then work the sketches into oil paintings on canvas when I get home."

Similar to the way Iraq veterans now in Helmand province have found the Taliban a different type of enemy, Arabella was struck by the "hybrid" nature of the war against the insurgency.



"One of the biggest differences I noticed between Iraq and Afghanistan was that Iraq was a much more conventional fight, where our soldiers were engaging with an enemy," she said.

"What struck me so much in Afghanistan was that they are now having to deal with an unseen, insidious enemy."

The lethal nature of the unseen foe was spelt out in statistics when 19 Light Brigade returned to the UK after its demanding tour last year – soldiers had faced an unprecedented 1,800 IEDs and 70 Servicemen and women were killed.

Arabella spent three weeks with the riflemen at battlegroup headquarters, shadowing their movements and watching them in both the intense moments before crossing the wire and relaxing during their down time.

"In my paintings from Afghanistan I am trying to show the psychological states of mind of the soldiers," she said.

"Intense eyes, tense muscles and a sense of isolation are particular features.



Lasting tribute: Arabella Dorman's stunning paintings – including this one of Iraq – were inspired by drawings taken in Sangin and Basra

"On foot patrol, even with their mates with them, I think the soldiers must feel an element of being on their own. I am trying to focus on the edgy psychological aspect of what's going on."



The bold 34-year-old also explained that the vista of hills and the winding Helmand River provided a surreal setting for such a vicious topic.

"It's crazy that the landscape of Afghanistan is so beautiful," she said.

"You wake up every day to the birdsong at dawn with a sense of calmness, then at about 0800 the gunfire starts.

"I am very interested in the juxtaposition of the beauty of the country and the tragedy and intensity of the fight there."

Before flying out to the desert location of

Sangin, Arabella had worked on numerous commissions for the Army, including paintings of Basra for The Queen's Royal Lancers and of Gen Sir Jack Deverell when he was commander of Allied Forces North Europe.

Speaking about her "sitters" at FOB Jackson Arabella, who enhanced her skills in Florence, Italy, was full of praise.

"At first soldiers ask lots of questions about what my purpose is, but once they see my pictures of them, they are very cooperative," she said.

"The riflemen were a pleasure to draw."

Arabella is currently working from her numerous sketchbooks at her Chelsea studio to create paintings of varying sizes to be exhibited next year alongside her pieces from Iraq.

One set of outlines she plans to turn into a poignant image is from an Afghan shura, attended by members of the insurgency.

"At one particular shura it was known that a handful of Taliban members were in attendance,"

she said.

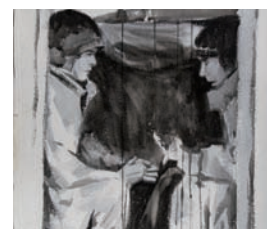
"I just sketched what I saw and I hope to turn that into a major painting."

The aim of the London-based artist is to subjectively illustrate the daily experience of soldiers at war and to portray the surroundings in which they tirelessly live and work.

She said: "Artistically I have always been fascinated by the ability of still images to depict history and I wanted to paint something of contemporary significance.

"I have never been so moved and humbled by something I have witnessed as when I was out with 2 Rifles.

"I have to show what the men and women are doing under incredibly tough circumstances." ■



Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

A FIRING range with bullets being sprayed and grenades thrown might not sound like an ideal environment for an internationally-recognised wildlife area to thrive.

But nestled in a corner of East Anglia in which soldiers are learning the art of destruction, Fingringhoe Ranges has an unlikely double life as a place of nurture.

The lush green area on the Colne Estuary, one of many MoD training facilities provided for the British Army by Defence Training Estates (DTE), a division of Defence Estates, manages to accommodate troops with lethal weapons at the same time as endangered species.

Fingringhoe is well equipped for soldier training with 12 ranges including grenade, demolition, anti-tank and machine gun areas fitted into its 733 hectares.

Outside of the firing points, however, lie wetlands and marshes which are home to a multitude of animals.

Defence Estates spokesman Henry Wilson explained the harmonious relationship.

"Training and conservation both take place without interfering with each other," he said. "Some of the country's most interesting wildlife is found here and it's not affected by people dressed in camouflage or loud bangs."

Troops from 3 and 4 Regiment Army Air Corps were completing an annual partial weapons test during *Soldier's* visit to Fingringhoe and Cpl Daniel Banner (4 AAC) said the effective management of the area makes the site user-friendly. "I'm impressed with it because it's ready to use and there are no problems," he said.

"Some places are affected by vandalism but here it's always in top condition."

To ensure it keeps the correct balance between protecting the flora and fauna and providing a sound training area for troops, DTE works closely with Natural England, the Government's adviser on the environment.

Paul Evans, land manager at the ranges, said: "Every decision we take is informed from a conservation point of view. We strive to maintain and protect that conservation value, but training must come first."

The wildlife at the wind-swept military facility seems to be in exceptionally good hands, with Natural England awarding it Site of Special Scientific Interest status, making it one of Britain's very best wildlife and geographical locations.

Fingringhoe has also been designated as a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation as well as being listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The most recent work at the ranges has been on the 200-year-old seawall that forms its boundary.

Following devastating winds in 2007 engineers informed DTE that unless urgent action was taken to repair damage to the wall, wildlife at Fingringhoe could face the threat of flooding.

In response, DTE drafted in

Landmarc to design and build a 1,000-metre long, six-metre wide berm to allow access for construction workers.

"The idea is to repair the seawall and work from the inside on the road rather than from the water on boats and cranes," said Evans.

The 20-week project of digging up clay to build the berm resulted in a rectangular plot, which when full with water provides a haven for birds and invertebrae and has been named the "New Lagoon".

DTE has also rented out areas of the land to farmers for grazing cattle to act as cost-efficient lawnmowers.

"The idea is to get back to an open marsh and the cattle are on here to keep the young roots coming through without having to spend a fortune," said Wilson.

"The lagoon was designed specifically with conservation in mind. We can raise and lower the water level to suit."

The cows on the grassland and the birds on the New Lagoon are the latest members of a wildlife community that already included migrating and wintering wildfowl and a large oyster population.

But while recognising the facility's conservational value, Fingringhoe commander Maj (Retd) Udai Gurung insists that developing soldiers' skills is his priority.

"Training must come first," he said. "But it's about all of us working together."

The stark contrast between destruction and growth found between the ranges and marshes at Fingringhoe is surprising, but it speaks volumes about the green credentials of the Armed Forces.

Whether it is rebuilding villages in Helmand or protecting wildfowl in East Anglia, the military has a caring side every bit as well-honed as its kinetic might. ■

Green fingered: LCpl Adrian Cobb (3 Regt AAC) uses Fingringhoe Ranges, which are home to a diverse abundance of wildlife

Some of the country's most interesting wildlife is found here and it's not affected by people dressed in camouflage or loud bangs

GREEN ARMY

Weapons and wildlife exist side-by-side on Army's East Anglian range complex

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Report: Cliff Caswell

HAVING led some of the most ferocious combat operations since the Korean War, Lt Col Carew Hatherley is well qualified to cast a critical eye over military procedures throughout the British Army.

After engaging the Taliban in a series of high-intensity actions in southern Afghanistan during a tough tour in 2008, the former commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards is now using his wealth of experience of command in the Army Inspectorate.

And he is delighted to be at the forefront of an organisation set up to be the watchdog that is constantly reviewing the military and encouraging best practice.

"Most of the team here have completed at least one Op Herrick tour, so we are all pretty much up-to-date with what is going on in theatre," Lt Col Hatherley told *Soldier* in an interview at the Inspectorate's base in Upavon, Wiltshire.

"However, all of us are very mindful that what we do is not just about Afghanistan. We can't take our eye off the ball in other areas – we still have troops in places around the world including Cyprus, Sierra Leone and the Falklands."

The Army Inspectorate has a key role to play in making sure the Service is continually striving for improvement and that all the relevant procedures and policies are implemented.

Formed nearly two years ago in the wake of the Blake Report into the deaths of young recruits at the Deepcut base in Surrey, the team has been responsible for ensuring the Army is meeting all obligations to its people.

But following a reorganisation at the top level of command, the 31-strong squad of experienced personnel, which is made up of different cap badges and a handful of civil servants, has

recently undergone a key change. The group now reports directly to the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir David Richards, giving the Army's boss a thorough awareness of all the key issues.

The Inspectorate is made up of four different teams, including the individual training branch, which looks at the work of development establishments, and the pan-Army branch, which has a broad remit to examine specific issues such as the governance of cadets and prisoner of war handling.

The pair are complemented by two other specialist teams tasked with examining policy and managing information.

As Army Inspector, Brig Robert Purdy is responsible for overseeing the entire scrutiny operation. He is delighted with his staff's performance and the positive way they have been received by commanders and soldiers.

The artillery officer, who produces a report for the executive committee of the Army Board each year, stressed that his organisation took a mentoring approach to its work.

"We are all on the same side and our role is to ensure that we look after our people better.

"But I want it to be very clear that we are doing this job on behalf of

‘OUR WORK IS ALL ABOUT HELPING THE MILITARY TO BE BETTER’

the Chief of the General Staff and that he sees our function as very important.

"It might be easy for a critic to say that I am not truly impartial because I am part of the Army – obviously I wear the uniform – but I am independent of the chain of command, and I should, and need to, be prepared to speak up if things are not going well."


Brig Purdy is confident that the Army is firmly on the right path in looking after its staff and experience is vital to achieving this goal. The personnel in the Inspectorate have a huge breadth of knowledge of a variety of arms and trades and have a keen awareness of the importance of the mission to strive for excellence.

For Lt Col Hatherley, who has been heading up the pan-Army team, using skills forged over many years to help keep the military aware of where it is performing well and areas on which it can improve forms an important part of his overall job satisfaction.

"Obviously I miss being in the battalion, but what we are doing here is very satisfying as we're asking probing questions and effectively acting as the Army's conscience," he said. "Our work is all about helping the military to be better."

There is a great enthusiasm to achieve this mission. Having taken on the recommendations of independent reports, Army Inspectorate staff are embracing the spirit of their ethos and are genuinely committed to making a difference.

Their efforts are also clearly having an impact. From identifying areas where improvement is needed to sharing best practice, their work is endorsed by the highest levels of the military. ■



Taking notes: Maj Bob Taylor (APTC), pictured right, of the Inspectorate's pan-Army team gathers evidence for a review of cadet governance – regular scrutiny ensures the troops are always at the forefront of best practice Picture: Graeme Main

Background picture: Inspection teams ensure that the Field Army maintains its peak performance

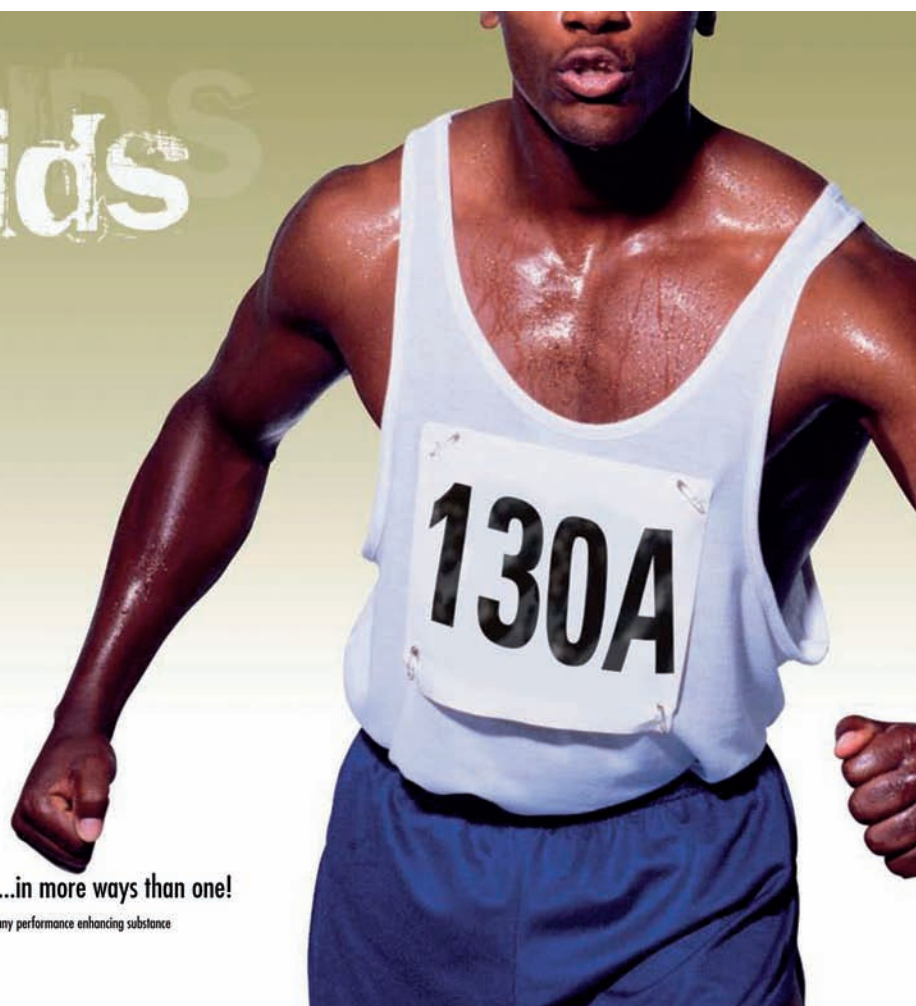
Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere, RLC

A full-page photograph of a soldier in camouflage running towards the right. In the background, a military helicopter is visible, with the letters 'DB' on its side. The scene is set in a grassy field under an overcast sky.

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On the hoof

**SOLDIER TAKES THE REINS AS
COLCHESTER'S ARMY EQUESTRIAN CENTRE
THROWS DOWN THE GAUNTLET**

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

STOOD in the middle of a rain-soaked stable yard dressed in skin-tight jodhpurs while peering up at a giant equine, I was tempted to about-turn and run for safety.

Weeks prior to climbing into a pair of knee-high riding boots I had been happy to accept the challenge set by Colchester Garrison Saddle Club to “just come along and see if you can jump a fence”.

But that was over the phone, without being confronted with Lewis, the 17.1 hands high (hh) competition horse, which had been enlisted as my non-trusting steed for the day.

Cat Lewis, yard manager at the saddle club, showed me around the outstanding facilities at the site and introduced me to the horses.

I thought Carmen the 25-year-old long-haired pony looked perfect for me, but apparently she was more than happy to be left alone in her snow-covered field.

“We’ve got 62 horses here with every standard from Fiesta to Ferrari so we can cater for everyone,” said Cat.

“Lewis is lovely to ride but can be a bit lively and feisty whereas Max is more grumpy and lazy.”

I was informed that ten-year-old Lewis was plan A and 16hh Max was plan B, depending on how much of a disaster zone I was.

“I’m probably erring on the broken Skoda end of things and we don’t want to put Lewis to any bother,” I said.

Considering my experience with horses was limited to losing one in the woods while pony trekking as an eight-year-old, I thought down-in-the-mouth Max was my best bet.

“Let’s get Lewis ready for you and we’ll go from there,” was the upbeat – and unwelcome – response from Cat.

Images of a smirking horse watching my body fly head first into the floor flashed into my mind as we approached the indoor school.

The Saddle Club was based at Colchester Garrison but is now located in Fordham and Cat hopes to increase the number of soldiers taking advantage of the complimentary lessons on offer.

“We want to let people know that the Garrison Saddle Club is here and that on Wednesdays we give free lessons to troops,” she said.

“We’ve got every rank from private to colonel riding here but we want more to come and make horse riding their sport.”

Lessons at the club are given to serving personnel at a discounted rate of £17 per hour, except on “gratis Wednesdays”.

As a warm up Lewis was attached to a “lunge line” held by Cat before being encouraged to trot, then canter, in a circle.

After a few circuits the powerful brown gelding bucked his hind legs in the air, darted towards the wall, then carried on cantering.

In desperate need of some reassurance that this behaviour was the norm I turned to Emma Purmenter, head girl at the stables.

“To be honest, you would be hanging off if he did that with you on him,” said Emma.

Just the inspiration I was looking for.

It was at this point that I remembered how much horses like to crunch on mints and realised what an excellent bartering tool a packet of Polos would have been.

I could have promised Lewis the freshest breath in Essex but I did not have any sweets.

“Rise and trot, rise and trot, keep your hands low and heels down,” were the patient words from Cat as I hopped aboard Lewis.

The calm advice ensured that after a few laps of the pristine paddock I was gaining in confidence and happy to attempt the jump.

I lined my new friend up, kicked him gently and strode towards the fence.

He stopped short of the pole.

Rather unnerved by the blatant refusal to cooperate I kicked on again and approached our horizontal nemesis from the opposite side.

This time Lewis cleared the traffic cone positioned between the fence and the wall, a space I’m sure was narrower than his body.

“What’s going on?” I bleated.

Of course, the horse had sensed that he was in charge and was doing his best to ignore any weak requests I made.

With two failed attempts in the bag I was conscious that time was running out and my legs were beginning to ache.

I made a final request to the hoofed athlete and once more we charged, or trotted, to our destiny.

Finally my mount obliged and gallantly cleared the obstacle before going on to jump it twice more for good measure.

I brought Lewis to a halt and lowered myself to the floor in the knowledge that my legs would be sore the next day.

“He has been unbelievably patient with you,” said Cat.

The excellent staff at the saddle club are keen to teach more Service personnel and their families to ride and it is clear their tuition is top class.

“People think horse riding is elitist or just for officers in the Army but it’s the complete opposite,” said Cat. “Sometimes we have groups of paras down and they love it – especially on the weekend pub rides.”

For more information about Colchester Garrison Saddle Club go to www.colchestergarrisonsaddleclub.co.uk or call 01206 242210. ■



1000 STRAW TALENT



In an attempt to ingratiate myself with the four-legged community, I bribed it with fresh bedding

1030 MODEL BEHAVIOUR



Highly-strung Carmen, the 12 hands high pony, was happy to have her picture taken but would not take passengers

1100 HORSEPLAY



Lewis snorted at my advances as he focused on the job at hand and munched on a supply of fresh carrots

1130 BATTLE ARMOUR



Yard manager Cat Lewis equips me with the necessary hard hat and gives me a few pointers



1135 TALL ORDER



Lewis the 17.1 hands high eventing horse is dragged out of his warm, comfy chair to do some serious work

1300 RINGMASTER



I carefully but firmly encourage Lewis to blow any cobwebs out of his system while warming him up on the "lunge line"

1400 REINED IN

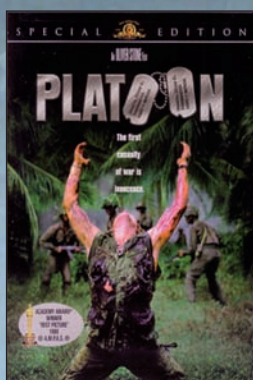


Having become firm friends, wide-eyed Lewis and I relax and have a quick debrief after giving maximum effort over the jump

1600 MINT CONDITION



Lewis gets crunching on some well-deserved equine scoff after being offered a handful of mints prior to *Soldier's* departure



1 Platoon

THE most politically charged and emotionally authentic of Vietnam War movies – which isn't surprising given it's written and directed by a veteran. Oliver Stone volunteered for service in 'Nam and won a Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his courage in combat. But he returned home haunted by the things he had seen and done. Charlie Sheen is his on-screen alter ego, a young recruit torn between the ruthless Sgt Barnes (Tom Berenger) and compassionate Sgt Elias (Willem Dafoe), as he tries to survive the ultimate rumble in the jungle. Though it won four Oscars including Best Picture and Best Director, *Platoon* isn't a romanticised depiction of war – it's a grubby exploration of trying to survive in an unfamiliar country. As Sheen says in voiceover: "I think now, looking back, we did not fight the enemy; we fought ourselves."

2 The Hurt Locker

MOST of the recent glut of movies set in or about the Middle East conflict(s) have been handwringing affairs. In *The Valley Of Elah* was thoughtful but obvious. Robert Redford's *Lions For Lambs* was glib, smug and dumb. Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker* doesn't set out to lecture the audience, but to entertain – albeit in an uncomfortable fashion by placing you alongside a bomb disposal expert (Jeremy Renner) in Baghdad. The story, such as it is, is about whether he will survive his tour, mentally as well as physically. Any political view is implied, not stated, and Bigelow stays with the troops, trying to give a sense of what it's like to serve in such a situation. It's a subtle, honest, gripping, funny, troubling film. Most of us can only imagine the mixture of adrenaline and terror that war brings. This is the closest a movie can get to it.

3 Full Metal Jacket

FEW films are as cruel and compelling as Stanley Kubrick's ninth feature. After the supernatural shocks of *The Shining*, the notoriously demanding director shifted to real-life horror with the story of the training and deployment of war reporter Joker (Matthew Modine) – a bloke who scrawls "Born to kill" on his helmet, yet also wears a peace symbol badge. The first half of the film follows Joker as he and his fellow recruits are verbally abused by Drill Sergeant Hartman (played by former US marine R Lee Ermey, who employs the most imaginative swearing ever heard on film). Then, with their humanity beaten out of them, they head to Vietnam to put their preparation into bloody practice. Co-written by reporter Michael Herr, *Full Metal Jacket* is a merciless depiction of what happens if you try to turn men into killing machines.

6 Lawrence Of Arabia

DAVID Lean's follow-up to *Kwai* won him another Best Director Oscar, while the finished film would become the favourite of Steven Spielberg. The British master of the epic first considered Marlon Brando, then Albert Finney, to play TE Lawrence, but ended up with Peter O'Toole – who is quite brilliant, both tender and tough as the enigmatic leader of men. Lawrence is a complex, confusing man, who never quite emerges from the shadow of his own legend – which is just as it should be. This is a film happy to allow for uncertainty, just as it's a movie whose powerful images linger longer than the story (ostensibly about Lawrence's attempts to unite Arab tribes against the Turks in the First World War). The shot of Omar Sharif emerging from the desert's heat-haze is one of the greatest in cinema. Watch it on the biggest screen you can.

7 The Big Red One

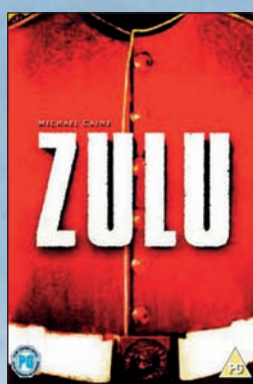
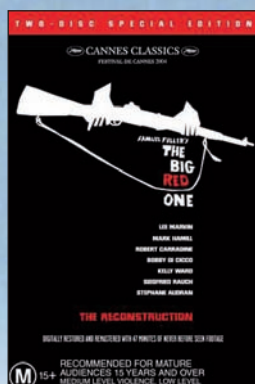
THIS is the movie *Saving Private Ryan* wants to be when it grows up. The opening of Spielberg's Second World War flick, as Tom Hanks and co land on Omaha beach, is arguably the most convincing, gripping combat sequence ever filmed. But it's all a bit dull after that. Not so with *The Big Red One*, which may not share *Ryan*'s shaky-cam immediacy, but feels more grounded in the grime and grit of war. Writer/director Samuel Fuller called on his own experiences as a grunt, as did star Lee Marvin, playing a sergeant shepherding his platoon through the Allied invasion of first Africa, then Europe. Surreal, emotional and yet sometimes funny, its attitude is summed up by the marketing tagline: "The real glory of war is surviving." Look out for Mark "Luke Skywalker" Hamill as a wide-eyed recruit witnessing war's horrors first-hand.

8 Attack!

LEE Marvin draws on his own real-life experiences once again, lending a toughness and brutal pragmatism to the role of a lieutenant colonel who leaves troops under the command of an idiot captain (Eddie Albert) because he wants to curry political favour. He's a bastard and no mistake, but somehow understandable, where Albert comes off as a petty dictator – weak and despicable. Jack Palance – who is probably best known as the villainous gunfighter in *Shane* – plays a lieutenant who has to save his men from bureaucracy and cowardice. Released in 1956, the film is shockingly frank in its depiction of officer-class incompetence, prefiguring the cynicism of the Vietnam War era. You've probably seen director Robert Aldrich's most famous war movie *The Dirty Dozen*, but this is his World War masterpiece.

RANKED

GREATEST EVER WAR MOVIES



4 Bridge On The River Kwai

THE Prisoner of War movie is virtually a genre in and of itself, but while much of this near-three hour epic takes place inside a detention camp, its scope is much wider, taking in the military mindset, honour and when bravery turns to insanity. Alec Guinness is superb as the starchy British colonel who first resists doing any work for the Japanese, then sees building the titular bridge as a way to keep his imprisoned men motivated. William Holden – who delivered a similarly smart performance in *Stalag 17* – is an American soldier who escapes the camp but is sent back to blow up the colonel's handiwork. Their contrasting behaviour is set against a sweltering, majestic but oppressive jungle backdrop, with Sri Lanka doubling for Burma. A film about the power of pride and discipline – and its danger.

9 Zulu

MICHAEL Caine is the iconic cockney of the 20th century, but the actor made his starring debut playing a toff, with co-star Stanley Baker the more modest everyman thrust into command in this based-on-fact epic. Baker's Lieutenant Chard simply came to the mission station of Rourke's Drift "to build a bridge", but ends up fighting off more than 4,000 Zulus with only a hundred men. Eleven Victoria Crosses were awarded after the battle – the most to a single regiment in a single action – and the film somehow manages to be both heroically rousing and yet clear-eyed about the costs of conflict. Baker and Caine are both brilliant, but it's the scale of the scraps that most impresses – and the mounting sense of dread within the camp. Along with *Gunga Din*, perhaps the best film about the military exploits of the British Empire at its peak.

5 Three Kings

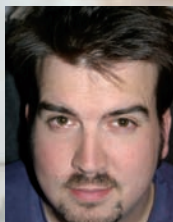
COMEDY meets conscience in the second American movie set in Operation Desert Storm. While the first, *Courage Under Fire*, was straight-faced, here writer/director David O Russell takes a tone more in keeping with the hijinks of *Kelly's Heroes*. With hostilities officially over, three grunts discover a map that shows the way to stolen Kuwaiti gold. Soon Capt Archie Gates (George Clooney) is leading them illicitly across country, hoping for a personal pay day. Violent absurdity abounds but this isn't a picture that preaches about the perils of war. Instead, it gradually reveals an emotional core.

10 Apocalypse Now

ORIGINAL leading man Harvey Keitel had a lucky escape when director Francis Ford Coppola fired him early-on in the production of his demented Vietnam War odyssey. Replacement Martin Sheen suffered such stress during the shoot he had a heart attack – but recovered and completed his role. A troubled movie, it drove its director near to bankruptcy and insanity and he made some daft comments about it, the dumbest being: "This isn't a film about Vietnam. This film is Vietnam!" Still, *Apocalypse Now* is something to behold, from the mumbling genius of Marlon Brando's reclusive colonel to the gung ho excess of Robert Duvall's surfing soldier. Coppola, who had already made *The Godfather I* and *II* and *The Conversation* in the 1970s, left a part of himself in the jungle. Nothing he has done since can rival it in ambition or achievement.

AUTHOR

NEV Pierce is Editor-At-Large for *Empire*, the world's biggest movie magazine. No one is quite sure what his title means, but it largely involves visiting film sets and interviewing actors and filmmakers. He has chatted to everyone from Keira Knightley to Jack Nicholson and also contributes articles to *Esquire* and reviews movies on BBC Radio Two. His favourite film is *Fight Club*, when it's not *It's A Wonderful Life*. www.empireonline.com



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TALKBACK

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PS . . .

AS a civilian clerk I was relieved to read the article about the new camouflage clothing and for the clarification that the two designs it will be replacing were deliberate.

I had always hoped that was the case, but had my suspicions that the desert version was simply the traditional green kit washed in the wrong soap powder. – Robert Steel, LF-E2 Pers Ops & Plans HQLF.

I REFER to the response given to the recent letter about soldiers' hairstyles, "Cut us some slack" (December).

Although I always had short hair while serving, and still do, I appreciate this look is not everyone's cup of tea.

I felt the reply given by Brig Mike Griffiths was rather terse. The writer appeared to be complaining about the shortness of hair and

scalp-like cuts in particular.

The answer given does not mention that "the hair should be kept neat and tidy", but instead endorses the view of the company sergeant major in

question that hair should be "ultra-short". This was never a requirement during my days in uniform and I'll bet it still isn't. Does this mean that the brigadier is an advocate of "the scalp" haircut? Young soldiers like to at least have a chance with the girls when out-and-about, which, let's face it, isn't very often these days.

Incidentally, from my own experience it was officers who were the worst offenders when it came to hair length. We should cut the lads a little slack when they are back in the UK. – Victor Hunt, veteran.



Picture: MoD/Crown Copyright

Pattern pending: As reported last month, the British Army is set to switch its camouflage clothing to a multi-terrain pattern that is effective in all environments. The new design (above centre) – which was developed in America – will replace the traditional green clothing (left) and desert gear (right).

Dress debate wearing thin

WELL done on the excellent article in January's *Soldier* on the Army's new camouflage clothing [which is scheduled to be issued to deploying personnel from March].

While a new design of DPM [Disruptive Pattern Material] is long overdue, I can only imagine the reaction of some regimental sergeant majors to the picture which accompanied the story. Seeing three soldiers wearing uniform not tucked into their trousers will have had them and officers everywhere shaking their heads, outraged at the sight of these "scruffy" individuals.

Personally, it was good to see the kit being worn as it was designed to be. I am

currently deployed on Op Herrick 11 and in some locations here in theatre there are dress policies where shirts have to be worn tucked in.

Can we concentrate on winning the war first and worry about the way we look once that is done? It seems that the only audience who are concerned with soldiers' appearance are those people sat behind desks with shirts tucked into their trousers.

I don't believe for one minute that the public sit at home reading newspapers or watching television thinking "our boys are doing us proud, but I wish they could decide is it sleeves up or down?". – Name and address supplied.

IN his reply to a letter from a soldier bemoaning the requirement for "ultra-short hair" (Talkback, December), Brig Mike Griffiths was quite right to highlight that company sergeant majors are there to enforce discipline and ensure that haircuts reflect regulations, and that one aspect of leadership is setting an example for your subordinates to follow.

However, it should be noted that regulations do not state that individuals are to have their heads shaved, merely that hair length is to be above the collar and ears and neat and tidy.

The "frustrated" soldier made a valid point that needlessly shaved heads can give the wrong impression to the public

and police that Service personnel are uneducated, bad mannered and a likely source of trouble. Just consider the impression some members of the British National Party create on television with their shaved heads and bomber jackets. Perception is everything.

If shaved heads are a must for professional soldiers, why don't officers lead by example and trim their own locks accordingly?

The regulations are applicable to all, so it's surely shaved heads all round or everyone should be allowed to grow their hair to the same length set by those bastions of high standards, the Guards' officers. – Name and address supplied.



"I don't like it... put your bearskin back on."



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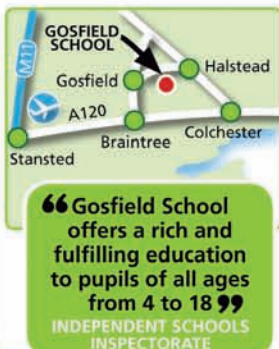
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'What's the state of play with ballistic plates?'

I AM currently attached to 11 Light Brigade on Operation Herrick 11. Living and working from one of the patrol bases, I appreciate the time it takes to move equipment to locations in Afghanistan.

However, having been issued in theatre with the new Osprey Assault body armour, it was disappointing to discover that the kit had arrived with only medium-size Mark 7 helmets and minus the system's much-reported lightweight plates.

A defence clothing instruction accompanying the armour explained that we were to remove the protective cover from our existing front and rear ceramic plates and insert those into the Osprey Assault vest.

This advice horrified those of us who have previously been deployed on Op Telic as we remember being routinely told that this protective cover was a vital part of the ballistic plate.

This concern was underlined by the bold red writing at the bottom of the instruction which read: "Under no circumstances should the plate be worn in the standard Osprey system without the protective cover being fitted."

Is there an explanation for this conflicting advice or has there been a major fault in the procurement and supply system? – **Name and address supplied.**

Maj (Retd) Allan Law, SO2 Mat Sp, responds: Approximately 5,000 sets of



In theatres now: The new Osprey Assault body armour, pictured on show at last year's Defence Vehicle Dynamics show, has all the stopping power of the current Osprey but is closer fitting, less bulky and easier to move in Picture: Steve Dock

Osprey Assault body armour and Mark 7 helmets were task issued direct to theatre in September 2009.

The stocks are theatre-controlled and allocated in accordance with theatre

priorities. An additional supply, to meet theatre requirements, will be made early this year.

The original intention was to issue the new equipment with Osprey Assault ballistic plates.

When rolled out the new plates will provide identical ballistic protection to Osprey plates but, at the time of writing, they are still under development.

The use of Osprey plates, without the rubber bump cover, in Osprey Assault armour provides the same ballistic protection. The cover was only used to prevent wear and tear to the edges of the plates when worn with Osprey as the plate is mounted outside the vest and can be damaged when adopting the prone position.

The bump cover can still be used but creates extra bulk. The protective cover also prevented the plates from moving inside the pocket.

In Osprey Assault vests the plates are mounted in internal pockets which are lined with a "touch and close" material designed to prevent movement and damage. Therefore, the plates do not need the bump protection when worn in the Osprey Assault system.

The guidance in the instruction leaflet and the fielding plan is correct; nonetheless, all plates should be handled with care and any damage reported by the user asap.

PS...

HAVING re-enlisted in the Grenadier Guards after being in civvy street for six years, I recently returned to reading *Soldier*.

Some of the *Talkback* letters over the past few months regarding the award of the Golden Jubilee Medal have really struck a chord with me.



I was serving around the time the decoration was introduced, but did not receive it due to the qualifying criteria [five years' service in either the Regular or Territorial Army].

How can it be fair to gift Princes William and Harry with the medal and yet overlook those Service personnel

who were actually in uniform at the time of the

Queen's Golden Jubilee?

Either the gifted medals should be withdrawn or the eligibility criteria should be extended to include all those who were serving in 2002. As things stand I feel cheated. – **Name and address supplied.**

'We warrant more respect'

I FEEL the need to add my two-penn'orth to the letter from WO2 J Moreman (*Talkback*, December) regarding the warrant issued to warrant officers across the Services.

I too have negative feelings about the standard of this document. It really is poor when the warrant states "signed by my own hand", yet is clearly a facsimile of the signature of the Secretary of State for Defence.

The lack of a wax seal is understandable as I'm sure it would only be damaged in transit, but surely an embossed seal would not break the MoD's bank.

Furthermore, the delay in issuing the warrant can sometimes add to the disappointment. I was promoted to WO2 in May 2008 but did not receive the signed warrant until June 2009.

Each year the Army promotes approximately 850 personnel to the rank of warrant officer. Given that it has taken approximately 420 days for my warrant to be signed, is producing two warrants a day really too much to ask?

Give the warrant officer community



"Hell's teeth Susan... I've still not received mine, but here's an advert in the newspaper stating 'quickie warrants, signed and sealed on receipt of payment, 24-hour service'."

some credit and please don't use cost as an excuse.

As we serve more time, we see more and more traditions being watered down. Please don't let this be one of them! – **WO2 (QMSI) J M Blower, 106 (WR) Fd Sqn, Sheffield.**

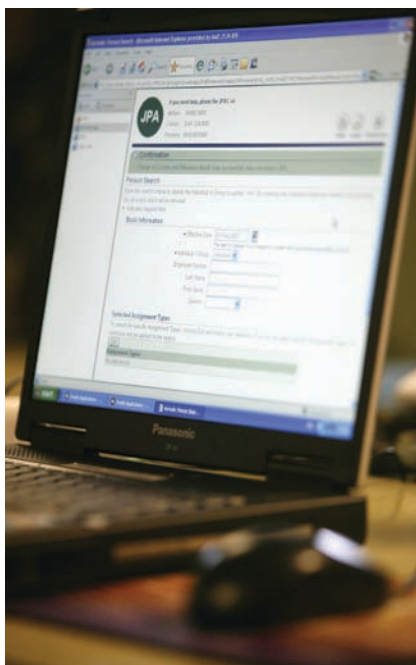
JPA: Juvenile Proposal Adjutant

READ with dismay the note from “a frustrated adjutant” in January’s *Talkback* which suggested that, following last summer’s claims scandal, MPs should be made to submit expenses through the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system.

In the letter the author refers to the input of “an incompetent clerk” along with the idiosyncrasies of JPA and its inherent non-availability being enough to put MPs off even contemplating submitting a claim.

I hope the inference of incompetence was not addressed to the many AGC(SPS) clerks within units who, more often than not, and with little or no training themselves, do their utmost to assist personnel with JPA-related problems.

The frustration the correspondent experiences with JPA must be small in comparison to that which we as human resources staff experience when things go wrong. If the criticism was aimed at the AGC then I would like to put on record that I have served with a number of “incompetent adjutants” who have been the cause of these problems. – **WO2 (SQMS) Vickers, RAWO, 204 Hospital.**



MP-proof?: The British Army's self-service Joint Personnel Administration system Picture: Steve Dock

PS...

I INVITE the “frustrated adjutant” (*Talkback*, January) to make contact with me and discuss any issues he/she has with JPA, bearing in mind the comprehensive Business Process Guides and many other e-learning packages on the system. Yes, JPA can be slow and it takes time to resolve issues but it is a dramatic improvement on Unicom. And in response to the “incompetent clerk” comment, the adage “a bad workman always blames his tools” comes to mind.

If the adjutant in question is reading this I would ask that they do not generalise in the future. My Combat Human Resource Specialists (the term clerk disappeared over a year ago) give 100 per cent all of the time, always pushing and maintaining the “right first time” approach. – **Capt C L Hughes, a frustrated detachment commander, 3 RHA.**

PERHAPS the “frustrated adjutant” wouldn’t find JPA so “user-unfriendly” if he/she actually took time to learn how to use it. If a private soldier can do so, why can’t a commissioned captain? One final point, the adjutant should be aware that we are Combat HR Specialists and not clerks. – **Name and address supplied.**

PS...



“Splendid initiative Harrison, but a job best left to the likes of Royal Mail I feel.”

I AM responding to the letter from a member of the Territorial Army who suggested that the MoD should use Regular soldiers as couriers in a bid to cut costs (*Talkback*, December).

If Mr Emery thinks for one minute that the Regular Army has the time on its hands to act as the MoD’s postal service, he is clearly living in dreamland. Does he really believe that those soldiers not deployed on ops are just sitting around doing nothing?

As for the “savings” of such a move, he’s obviously not considered the running costs of vehicles or the price of fuel. Soldiers may be paid “24 hours a day” but that doesn’t make them exempt from the rules mandating driving hours. – **Name and address supplied.**

Rueing covert cost of relocation

I HAVE recently been promoted to sergeant and been posted from Paderborn to my new unit in Hameln.

The change in jobs meant a seven-week tour of Afghanistan, before which I was given relocation leave. On my return from operations I discovered that I had not been paid any Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) for the period of my leave. On querying this I was told that personnel on relocation leave are not entitled to the allowance. Is this right?

As I was posted between two German units and my two children were in school at the time, I remained in Germany for the duration of the leave. – **Sgt D Simpson, 23 Amph Sqn, BFPO 31.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Thank you for highlighting the current anomaly whereby individuals posted

within an LOA theatre lose their entitlement to the allowance during any period of relocation leave. This is also true of any Service person that arrives in an LOA theatre and takes relocation leave in country in order to sort out their personal administration before starting work.

Joint Service Publication 752 states that “LOA is not payable during periods of leave taken overseas either before the commencement of the overseas assignment or after its completion”.

This is currently interpreted to mean that it cannot be paid during periods of relocation leave and JPA [Joint Personnel Administration] has been programmed accordingly. My team is currently working with the allowances staff in the other two Services and with the MoD with a view to removing this anomaly. Your case will be used as evidence during this work.

I AM serving in Germany but have recently bought a property in the UK which, although presently empty, is liable for Council Tax.

While in Germany I am having to pay Contribution in lieu of Council Tax (CLOCT) for my quarter, so I was disappointed when my local authority told me that I did not qualify for a discount on the grounds that I do not live in England, Scotland or Wales. CLOCT is the same in Germany as it is elsewhere, so why am I not entitled to a discount on my Council Tax?

– **CSgt Towe, BFPO 23.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: Current legislation requires that all

personnel who own or rent a private property in England, Scotland or Wales remain liable to pay Council Tax to their local authority while absent from that property, as this normally remains their sole or main residence.

Council Tax discounts and exemptions are a matter for local authorities rather than the MoD.

If you disagree with their decision you have a right of appeal. Pages 22 and 23 of *Council Tax: A Guide to Your Bill* (www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/ctax/ctaxbillguide.pdf) explains this process.

'Left-hander was right about Army's rifle'

READ with interest the letter "Left-field rifle request" in January's *Talkback* and felt compelled to point out the real issue with having a weapon which you can only fire right-handed, regardless of Army Personal Weapon Test results or the fact that the cocking handle of the SA80 knocks your teeth out if you do attempt to fire left-handed.

Having spent almost 38 years in uniform, I still fail to understand why the Army – which was operating in a largely "urban warfare situation" in Northern Ireland at the time – bought a weapon which forces the user to put his complete body in view of any potential sniper to fire around the left-hand corner of a building.

When I was in Londonderry in 1975 and Belfast in 1977 all soldiers and their weapons (Self Loading Rifle) were capable of firing both left- and right-handed without offering the local hoods a full frontal target.

The procurement process of the SA80 was clearly flawed because the British Army later encountered left-hand corners on buildings in Iraq, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Kosovo and, oddly enough, Afghanistan.

Now if I was a betting man, I would wager there is an extremely high likelihood of there also being left-hand corners on the buildings of the next country we go to war in.

So, "suits", when you get round to replacing the SA80 with the next generation weapon, make sure it is fit for purpose.



Cornering problems?: The British Army's SA80 A2, pictured above with improved stock and hand grip (which also contains a drop out bipod), and featuring the advanced optical gunsight Picture: Steve Dock

In the meantime, I would suggest to Maj Jim Mowie [COS Equipment Directorate HQLF, who responded to the original letter] that he reconsider his statement "further

investigation and investment into a left-handed weapon is therefore not considered to be needed". – **Lt Col R Jones, SO1 WDP & FBL (Plans), HQ London District.**

PS...

AS a member of the Reserve Forces who has recently been promoted to sergeant, please could you explain why I am not eligible for the SNCO mess dress uniform provision. – **Sgt J Connolly, 4 Para.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: The grant can only be paid to Regular personnel who are promoted on or after April 1, 2009 to either acting or substantive rank. The grant is not payable to members of the Reserve Forces. Regular personnel were given priority because of the greater frequency with which they are likely to attend functions in mess dress. Indeed, Queen's Regulations have now been amended so that those who receive the grant will be required to wear mess dress when appropriate.

Those that are not eligible remain entitled to attend mess functions in issued uniform. Regrettably at the time the allowance was introduced it was not possible to find sufficient monies to enable it to be extended beyond Regular personnel and, given the economic climate, it is unlikely that funding will be found to extend this allowance in the near future.



IS it possible to apply for a British passport while serving in the Army as a Gurkha soldier? I understand that this is not the case if serving with a Gurkha regiment, but what if I was to transfer to a British corps or regiment? – **Pte S Gurung.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: You are correct that you cannot apply for British citizenship or a British passport while serving in the Brigade of Gurkhas. If you transfer to the wider Army you will be eligible to apply so long as you meet all the Home Office criteria.

'Why do new mums miss out?'

MY father died while I was on maternity leave from MDHU [Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit] Frimley Park Hospital and, living in a quarter at Deepcut, I had to complete a 660-mile round trip to attend the funeral in Carlisle.

I have subsequently been told that I cannot claim compassionate travel as a consequence of being on maternity leave. Had I been working I would have been reimbursed for the journey. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: Your absence on maternity leave should not have made any difference to your entitlements, and I am sorry that this has happened to you at such a distressing time. The leave regulations in Joint

Service Publication 760 (para 20.015) are clear that during maternity leave you are entitled to the benefit of your normal terms and conditions of service.

However, the authority for compassionate leave travel at public expense within the UK rests with your CO, but he/she can only grant it in very serious circumstances and when there is a genuine need for travel at public rather than personal expense.

So, while it appears to me that although your unit gave you the wrong reason (being on maternity leave) for refusing to pay for your travel expenses, they were correct in doing so because compassionate leave travel in the UK is normally carried out at the individual's own expense.

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PS...

IN Brig Mike Griffiths's reply to my letter, "No valid reason for Balkans veto", and that of a soldier serving in Lashkar Gah, "Campaign confusion" (December), he stated that medal policy is decided at the very highest level within the MoD.

No doubt this is the case, but there is one higher authority – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

Should the Queen not have the final say on matters such as extending the eligibility criteria for the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal [right] to include time served in Bosnia; whether or not UK personnel should be issued with a National Defence Medal, or whether eligible veterans should be allowed to officially wear the Pingat Jasa Malaysia? I am not asking for a referendum on these medal legacy issues, but it would be nice to know whether Her Majesty was actually consulted on these matters and furnished with the full facts.

Finally, the brigadier quite rightly suggests that we should all look forward [to ensure repeat service in Afghanistan is suitably recognised]. However, avoiding future anomalies and unfair medal policies should not be used as an excuse to forget the past. —
A former Regular soldier.



"Cool badge Harry... but it says veteran, not vegetarian. Back to Specsavers for you."

I AM writing in response to the letter in December's issue of *Soldier* regarding Veteran's Badges being sold on market stalls.

The badge is issued by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency in recognition of a person's service in the Armed Forces and has been extremely well received with more than 700,000 issued to date.

As the badge is gifted to the individual, it then becomes their property. Regrettably, this means that a small number of recipients choose to sell their badges, in the same way that some veterans sell their medals. While we would never condone this action, there is no practical or legal way of preventing it. However, we do log the details of all genuine recipients so that multiple badge requests cannot be made. — Clare Ellis, Editor *Veterans World*, SPVA.



Royal reward: Soldiers from 4th Battalion, The Rifles were presented with their Op Herrick medals by The Duchess of Cornwall at a ceremony in Bulford late last year. Serving as part of the Election Support Force, the riflemen endured a successful but gruelling five-month tour in southern Afghanistan. Three soldiers from the battalion were killed in action. Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer, RLC

Medal motion seconded

THE response given by Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer to the letter appealing for a second award for troops in Afghanistan, "Herrick heroes deserve double acclaim" (January), was accurate only in so far as it was confined to Malaya.

An example of two medals being awarded for the same campaign relates to the Brunei Revolt at the end of 1962.

The General Service Medal (for members of the Army and Royal Air Force) and the Naval General Service Medal (for Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel) were awarded with a Brunei clasp for the Revolt from December 8 to December 23, 1962.

Thereafter, the campaign service medal was awarded to all three Services and, to reflect the development of the

conflict, a Borneo clasp was attached.

Those involved in the initial thrust who stayed in theatre beyond Christmas 1962 received two medals for the same active service, as did those who returned for subsequent tours.

When the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM) was instituted I doubt that it was envisaged just what the Armed Forces would face in the future.

Given the exceptionally difficult circumstances encountered in Afghanistan, and Iraq previously, it might be appropriate to review the eligibility criteria for the ACSM.

Alternatively, an emblem – reflecting repeat six-month tours – could be issued to adorn both the ribbon and medal of the Operational Service Medal. — Wg Cdr Colin Cummings, Yelvertoft, Northants.

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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



Final journey: Residents of Wootton Bassett near RAF Lyneham turn out to pay their last respects to Tpr James Munday of the Household Cavalry Regiment following his death in southern Afghanistan – Julie McCarthy believes the realities of Army life mean making a will is hugely important Picture: Graeme Main

‘When there is a will Forces families have peace of mind’

WHILE recently watching television with my husband I suddenly felt compelled to ask him about his funeral arrangements. Did he want to be buried or cremated? And were there any hymns that he particularly wanted?

It was a scene in the detective series *Wallander* that prompted this discussion rather than any worry about his dying any time soon. Regardless of the catalyst it got me thinking about wills – he and I have talked in the past about this subject, agreeing that we should have one, but neither of us had done anything about it.

A straw poll of my friends showed that I was not alone in this. Although soldiers who had recently been away on operations had a will, commonly the standard MoD form, several spouses did not. So why do so many not bother?

There are many reasons. Some will argue that the whole subject of death is too morbid, others that they are too young. And then there are those who say the process takes up too much time or they’re worried about the sky-high costs associated with seeing a solicitor.

Yet none of these reasons hold water. There is nothing wrong with being

prepared for the inevitable, it’s a reasonably straightforward process and doesn’t have to be expensive. And if you are old enough to fight for your country, go out for a drink, get married and have kids, then you are surely old enough to make a will.

The burning reason for anyone to put pen to paper – apart from giving your family peace of mind – is that if you don’t and something happens to you, your property is strictly dealt with according to the letter of the law and that can cause huge distress and anxiety at a difficult time.

According to intestacy rules, your spouse gets the first £125,000 of your estate if you are married but the rest is then divided up between your other half and your children. If you don’t have kids, the threshold rises to £200,000 and the remainder would be shared between your spouse, parents or siblings. Your wife or husband will only automatically inherit everything if you do not have any other living blood relatives.

If you are in a long-term relationship but not married then a will really is essential. In the eyes of intestacy law, long-term partners

do not inherit anything. The estate is carved up firstly between any children, then parents, siblings or other living relatives and, in the worst case scenario, it is given to the Crown. The expense of writing a will is nothing when compared to the cost of having to mount a legal challenge.

If you write a will you can decide who the beneficiaries will be. You can also make fundamental decisions such as appointing a guardian to look after your children if the other parent is no longer alive as well as specifying your own funeral arrangements.

Once you’ve written one you should review it regularly, particularly if your circumstances change and you get married, have children or get divorced.

Having a will is important to everyone, but it’s doubly important given the lifestyle that we all lead in the Services. Soldiers owe it to their families, whether they are married or not, to take action on this front. Nobody likes the thought of our families having to deal with this sort of situation, so do the right thing and add making a will to your list of objectives for 2010. ■

‘Having a will is important to everyone – do the right thing’

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NO. 819

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

WIN £100



TEN details have been changed on this picture of troops from 1st Battalion, Irish Guards at the Guards' Chapel, London. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the panel to **HOAY 819, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by February 26.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the April issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

December competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **WO1 G D Poulter**, JFCBS, BFPO 28. Runners-up **Mrs M B Miller**, HIVE, DCAE Cosford and **Pte K K Li**, MPGS, RAF Halton, Aylesbury, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: brake cable; screw head; square plate; serial number plate on chassis; round hole on housing; handle on cable assembly; black rectangle; white square on roof assembly; axle strut; hole in roof assembly.



THERE'S nothing quite like an exercise in the most brass monkey of winter conditions to bring out the British Army's unique sense of humour.

Whether it's in the driving wind and horizontal snows of Brecon or the pelting rain of Salisbury Plain, you can be assured that troops will pull off a prank that will make most civvies shiver with cold at the mere thought.

Take this trio on a camouflage demo at ATR Bassingbourn (below right). The man in the middle had already spent a night on a freezing exercise area before he stripped down to his skids in the name of training.

Our caption writers, however, found plenty of alternative explanations for our NCO's bizarre appearance, including a witty "after Pay as You Dine, Uniform as You Go soon exposed those soldiers unable to budget" from Mr P Clarke of Wokingham.

But the winner this month was a worthy



A breakdown in communication at Whitehall had led to the procurement of the wrong Husky vehicle

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by February 26. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Operation Banner*, an account of the British Army in Northern Ireland from 1969-2007 by Nick van der Bijl

offering from Mrs Jane Clarke of Taunton. She felt the picture related to the launch of a new Army calendar that was destined to fail miserably. Her outstanding caption reads: "Sorry, but the Women's Institute does it far better". She wins a copy of the acclaimed novel *Silken Dalliance* by John Ogden.



Picture: Cpl Steve Ward, RLC

Picture: Mike Weston

BULLETIN BOARD

DEFENCE DIRECTORY

Armed Forces Christian Union: 01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gt.net.gov.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 charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

Until further notice: War Boy, The Michael Foreman Exhibition. Exploring the World Wars and the civilian connection with the British Army. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk

February 12: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops, kitchens and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

February 12: Friends of Millbank Annual General Meeting. Chelsea College of Art, previously The Royal Army Medical College, London SW1P 4JU.

June 12: Trooping the Colour. Queen's Birthday Parade. Horseguards, London.

June 16, 23 & 30: Royal Military School of Music Concerts in the Park. Three or more bands at every concert. Bring your own blankets, chairs, picnics and wine. Refreshments available on site. Gates open at 1800, concert starts at 1950. Adult tickets £10, concessions (under 16s, OAPs, students, MoD 90 Holders and TW2 residents) £8. Season, group and family tickets available. Payment in advance by credit or debit card or on the gate. Cheques payable to the Accounting Officer MoD, Concert Secretary, Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, Twickenham, Middlesex. Tel: 0208 744 8633.

July 7, 14, 21 & 28: Royal Military School of Music Concerts in the Park. Details as above.

SEARCHLINE

Brig (Retd) Brian McMahon is looking for **Capt Brian O'Higgins, RMO of 6 Light Field Regiment** which was part of 28 Commonwealth Brigade based in Terendak Garrison, Malaysia in 1968-69. Brig McMahon was the RMO of 1st Bn Royal NZ Infantry Regiment. Had further contact in Duisburg, Germany in 1972, when Capt Higgins was RMO of a Transport Regiment. Contact Brig McMahon by email btcmcmahon@xtra.co.nz

Forces Reunited, a TV show to be presented by Fiona Phillips showcasing the dedication of those who served and are still serving in the British Armed Forces, is looking to speak to current or former Servicemen and women and their friends and family. The theme of the series is reunions, so producers are looking to speak to people who haven't seen old friends for a number of years and are looking to get in contact with them again. If you would like more information on the series or would like to take part, contact Alice Brooksmith by email at alice.brooksmith@leopardfilms.com

Notification of Closure. The Duke of Connaught Military Hospital Unit, formerly the Military Wing Musgrave Park Hospital, will close early this year. It is intended that the closure will be marked by a suitable event. If you served in either the DCU or Mil Wing MPH, or were an operational casualty treated in either and would wish to attend this event, then please send your details, including full address and connection to the DCU/Mil Wing MPH to: W02 (RQMS) P Sharkey, DCU Mil Hosp Unit, BFPO 801 or email DCU-RQMS@mod.uk

Cornelia Bertsch is looking for **Lynne Shepherdson**, who joined the British Army in 1980 and started her Service career as an Army chef. If anybody remembers her or knows her current whereabouts, please contact Cornelia by email cornelia.bertsch@web.de

Ian Clark is seeking **James (Jim) Deville (2nd Lt RASC)** who was his best man at his wedding in Colchester on August 22, 1959. Mr Deville and Mr Clark were carrying out their National Service

(1958-1960). The pair were commissioned on August 15, 1959 at HQ Buller Barracks RASC, Aldershot. Contact Mr Clark by phone 01782 680472 or email ianclark@talktalk.net

Fred Carslake (Ex A/R LCpl and Cpl RE) is writing a book about intake 57A (1957) at the Army Apprentice College, Harrogate. One hundred and sixty people were on the original nominal roll, but only 107 passed out in December 1959. Eighty one of the recruits have been tracked down and Fred would like any information about the intake to help find the missing 26, who would have gone into careers with the Royal Engineers or Royal Signals. Contact Fred by email at fred.carslake@sky.com

Helge Kristensen, of the **Danish Association of ex Army Men's Club** founded by Danes who enrolled in the British Army in 1945, is looking for new members. Danish citizens were permitted to join the Army allowing the British government to continue with demobilisation, while keeping up military strengths in the Middle East. The organisation is 65 years old and should there be any members now residing in the UK the group would be interested to hear from you. Contact Helge Kristensen, Skaerling Hedevej 114, DK-8250 Egaa, Denmark or email congo.kris@gmail.com

Mike O'Brien is searching for ex Royal Engineers who served with him at Hameln (11 Engineer Brigade) during the 1960s, especially **Bob Cummings, Dave Trotter and Ken Pope (ex ACC)**. Contact Mike by phone on 0151 474 4759 or at 12 Cowdron Road, South Liverpool L21 7GB.

Maria and Barry Codd have lost touch with **SSgt Gordon Anderson RMP** and his family. They were serving together in Hohne in 2003 and Osnabruck in 2004-2006. SSgt Anderson was posted to Aldershot in Spring 2007 for resettlement. Gordon please get in contact or if anyone knows of his whereabouts please contact Barry Codd by email barrycodd@yahoo.co.uk or W01 Codd, 47 RA Workshop, Thorney Island, Emsworth, PO10 8DH.

REUNIONS

RAMC Reunited: Reunion for former RAMC members (National Service, Regular, TA or widow(er)). You and a partner are invited to attend on February 12-14, at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Mick McCran, 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ enclosing a C5 SAE or email michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

Old Tonbridgian Forces Association. Tonbridge School invites all OT (current or former members of Armed Forces & Services, including the TA) to join OTFA. Membership is free. The Tonbridge celebration of Cadet 150 will be held on March 10. All OTFAS members are welcome. For further details email OTFA@tonbridge-school.org

723 (CS) King's Squadron RM: 1959-60, 50-year reunion on March 19, 2010 at Portsmouth. Details from Taff Prichard on 02920 790322.

Royal Anglian (Grimsby Poachers). Reunion at Beachcomber Holiday Camp, Cleethorpes, NE Lincs on March 27. Contact Denis Watson on 01472 508514, 07597 394511 or email denis.watson@ntlworld.com or Frank Rimmer on 01472 238259, 07879 625338 or email frank.rimmer@ntlworld.com

Glosters. WOs' and Sgts' reunion April 3, at 1 Rifles, Beechley Camp, Chepstow. Details from Capt Godden by email timmy.godden@virgin.net

410 Independent Plant Troop RE: Second reunion to be held during April 2010 in Blackpool. For further details, contact Mick (Scouse) Ramsay on 0151 648 2896 or email mick@rommel.plus.com

Veterans in Prison Association: National conference "Dealing with the Demons" will be held on April 16, at the London Voluntary Resource Centre, 356 Holloway Road, London N7 6PA. Contact Mark Leech, Events21 Ltd, 175 Hill Lane, Manchester M9 6RL or email mark.leech@events21.com

76th Artillery Clerks: Reunion and dinner April 23-25 at Larkhill. Full details from secretary Capt Ian Constantine, 19 Regiment RA, Bhurtore Barracks, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7AS, telephone 01980 656550 or send an email to ian.constantine758@mod.uk

Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland. First reunion to take place in May. Seeking missing dog handlers who worked with **Wagtails, Groundhogs and Snappers.** Contact Robert Shevill, 99 Carnarc Crescent, Inverness IV3 8SJ or email pressliaison@armydogunit-ni.co.uk

747 Squadron (1960) RM: 6th reunion and 50th anniversary of joining the Royal Marines takes place at Exmouth and Lympstone, Devon on July 9 and 10. Further details from Harry Briggs by email hbriggs747_rm@hotmail.com

Q/HQ (Sanna's Post) Bty, 5th Regiment RA: Reunion on March 20 at Marne Barracks, Catterick. Past and present members and their families are invited. Please let us know your contact details for future events. Contact Maj Youlten by email qsannaspostbty@hotmail.co.uk or phone 01748 875698.

COMPETITIONS

Spine Lines winner: J Kellner, Maidstone.

Skype equipment winners: Julie Jessiup, Catterick Garrison; J Best, Aldershot; Sharon Clarkson, Harwich; M Woods, Frimley; J Walker, BFPO 14; Lisa Yates, RMAS, Camberley; Capt Whitewick, 4 LSR RLC; I Cruttenden, Arborfield; P Duggen, HQ SEME, Chatham; K McMurtrie, 224 MI Section, Edinburgh.

Love The Beast winners: Angela Neilson, 145 Bde; WO2 McLorie, London District; Pam Griffith, Failsworth, Manchester; D Myatt, DE, Sutton Coldfield; J Rutland, Grotton, Oldham.

Mario and Sonic video game winners: G Crandles, Edinburgh; Sgt Bennett, 40 Regiment RA; J Milne, Deepcut; M Evans, Brampton; J Mill, Dundee.

DJ Hero video game winner: Gillian Thompson, Springhead, Oldham.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and question-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

February: 2, Gloucester; 3, Truro; 16, Leeds; 17, Sheffield; 25, Bath. **March:** 1, Lincoln; 2, Norwich; 3, Peterborough.

GOGGLE BOXES

Prize for sore eyes

WHEN it comes to operations in Afghanistan today's soldiers are reliant upon protection from the ever-present insurgent threat as well as the extreme weather.

To help achieve this goal military kit specialist *Revision Eyewear* has produced an array of goggles and ballistic glasses aimed at keeping injuries to a minimum.

The company is committed to delivering the very best in eye protection and uses the latest designs and developments in all its products.

A leading light in the range are the Hellfly ballistic sunglasses.

Offering 100 per cent UV protection, they boast 2mm thick lenses made of high-impact, optical-grade polycarbonate to ensure visual clarity.

The wrap-around design features a wide field-of-view and protects from light, wind and unexpected fragments.

Ballistic protection is also a key feature of the Desert Locust.

Again offering a wide field-of-view, the goggles provide an optimal facial and helmet fit and come complete with interchangeable lenses for various light conditions.

The low profile design ensures compatibility with helmets, weapon sights, binoculars and night-vision systems and its high performance OcuMax coating provides superior protection against fogging and scratching.

The ballistic range continues with the Sawfly Military Eyewear System glasses.

Function and comfort are key components of the glasses, which come complete with a selection of lenses for use in varying light conditions.

UV protection is guaranteed and the adjustable arms ensure an almost perfect fit.

Soldier has teamed up with *Revision Eyewear* to offer three lucky readers the chance to win a pair of Hellfly sunglasses, complete with t-shirt; a set of Desert Locust goggles; or a pair of Sawfly ballistic spectacles.

To stand a chance of winning answer this question:

What high-performance anti-fogging coating is included on the Desert Locust goggle?

Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by February 26.

● For more details on the *Revision Eyewear* range visit www.revisioneyewear.com ■



Picture: Steve Dock

***Soldier's* army of worldwide readers can catch up with their award-winning magazine online by visiting the free-to-view digital edition via our homepage at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk**



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SERVICES

www.armylibraries.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

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.sftf.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.

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.hmforces.co.uk

New unofficial online HQ for the British Army. Free - featuring active forums, benefit updates, military news and videos. Plus civilian jobs by Monster.co.uk

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 & 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.bitecard.co.uk

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www.servicescotswoldcentre.mod.uk
Services Cotswold Centre gives information about the temporary accommodation facility near Corsham for service families.

OPPORTUNITIES AND BUSINESS

www.forcesreunited.org.uk

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MOD LINKS

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.hive-bfg.co.uk

HIVE Information centres for the Tri-service communities.

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.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Support available to Army personnel and their families is given through the Army Welfare Service (AWS).

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.wrvs.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.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.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.starandgarter

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service Community since 1916.

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.

MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.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.



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www.armynet.mod.uk

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P005

Hayley-Joanne, (24), 5'4", blonde, slim and a happy person. Enjoys music, films, the cinema, concerts, letter writing and generally having fun. Friendly, chatty and likes socialising, seeking pen pals, 18-35.

P006

Karen, (37), 5'7", with dark red bobbed hair and curvy build. Works in advertising, divorced, no children. Enjoys socialising, the Internet, friends and family. Seeking pen pals, any age group.

P007

Mair, 39 year old single mum of two, works for the prison/noms service. Would love to chat and write to one of the guys in the thick of it, just to cheer them up and for them to keep her sane. Has daughters 12 and 13 so her house is in chaos. Enjoys dancing, rom coms, eating out, air hockey and driving games. An honest person looking for friendship or something more, seeking pen pals, any age group.

P008

Pen Pal replies

To reply to a pen pal, write a letter and send it to: **Soldier Magazine, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU**

* The box number must be clearly written in the top left corner of all your replies.

* Replies should consist only of letter and photograph if requested.

* Replies received more than three months after the cover date, large, heavy or poorly addressed envelopes will not be forwarded.

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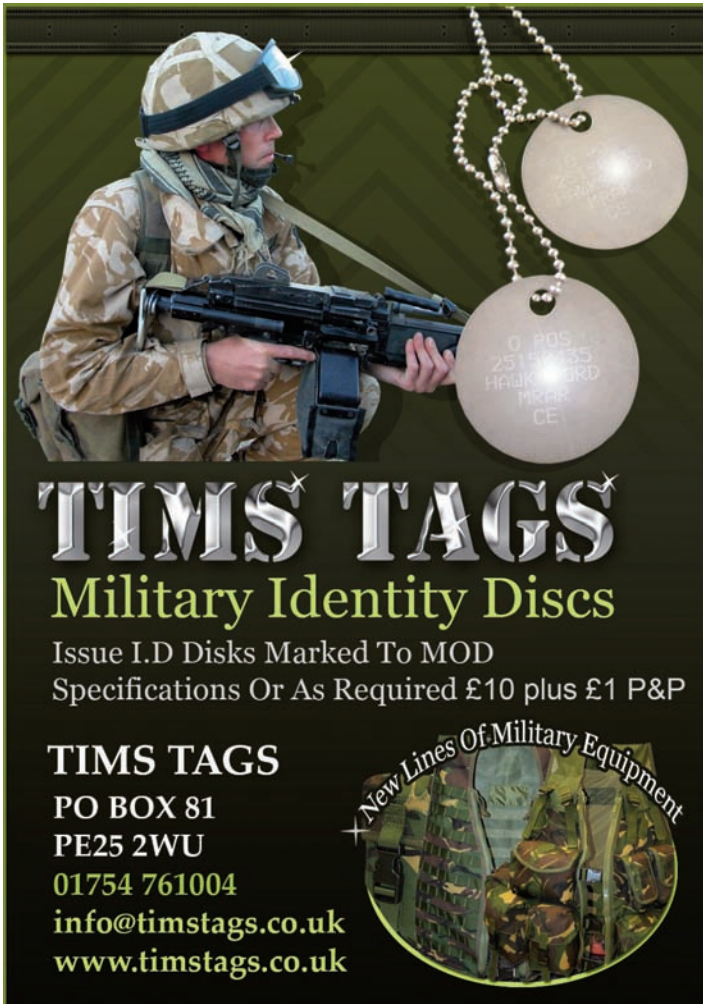
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Music maestros: *Afghan Star* follows the fortunes of the finalists in Afghanistan's biggest-ever televised talent show, held in 2008

The real X Factor

Inspirational pop idols risk everything to chase recording dream in *Afghan Star*

Interview: Stephen Tyler

VIEWERS of television juggernaut *The X Factor* will be all-too-familiar with the talent show's love of a hard-luck story.

A close-up of a doe-eyed teenager and a softly-spoken voiceover from Dermot O'Leary is usually all that is needed to warn viewers of an impending tale of personal tragedy.

But no matter how much the entrants claim to have overcome massive odds to earn the right to squeal their way through a Westlife track in front of Simon Cowell and co, none of them can hold a candle to the contestants of *Afghan Star*.

Afghanistan's own version of the entertainment goliath, *Afghan Star* saw a dozen of the country's youth risking relationships and even their lives in order to secure a recording contract.

And while the contest was played out in the war-ravaged country, viewers in Britain are now able to follow the finalists' awe-inspiring journey courtesy of documentary maker Havana Marking.

Invited to Kabul by a friend, Marking set out to create a film that portrayed the lives of Afghanistan's young people and knew the talent

show would give her an unrivalled opportunity.

"I was a fan of *Pop Idol* when it started and I knew that it was a really good way of getting into people's houses and to find out about their hopes and dreams," she told *Soldier*.

"This show galvanised an entire population and the campaign made me hopeful because I realised that the majority of the population don't want the Taliban – all they want is food on the table and an education for their children."

Afghan Star makes for such an interesting proposition largely because of the insight it gives into the lives of ordinary civilians, whether they are finalists in the show and their friends or members of the public.

For the contestants, taking part in the series was a double-edged sword. On one hand they stood to win a record deal, but on the other their lives were at risk from Taliban sympathisers who disagreed with everything from them performing on stage to their clothing and even their gender.

The stakes were particularly high for Herat resident Setara Hussainzanda, one of two female finalists, who performed a provocative – although not by most standards – dance on live television.

The powerful moment led to Setara receiving death threats and she was forced into hiding for

her own safety. Likewise, fellow female Lima Sahar feared for her life as she only learned to sing during secret lessons at her Kandahar home.

But despite the hardships they are forced to endure, each of the performers' love of singing propels them to carry on and Marking believes culture may hold the key to Afghanistan's future.

"I think music does have the potential to heal," she said. "It's a country in trauma and every person you speak to has had some awful experience, but music has a role to play in healing and making people proud and giving them hope."

Ever since filming the documentary in 2008, Marking admits she has "got the bug" to return to Afghanistan for a second time.

And although she was not exposed to Helmand's front lines, Marking said that her dealings with Afghan nationals led her to believe that Britain's presence was well-appreciated.

"What was amazing was how people had real respect for the British," she said. "While most of them don't want foreign forces in their country, the vast majority recognise and are thankful that there are troops who are trying to keep the peace."

● *Afghan Star* is out to own on DVD now, courtesy of Dogwoof. ■

From gangsters to an Antarctic adventure that left its reviewer cold, we check out the latest releases...

Win: Mesrine Parts One and Two

ACADEMY Award nominee **Gerard Depardieu** (*The Man in the Iron Mask*) and **Vincent Cassel** (*Ocean's Thirteen*) star in the lavish gangster biopic *Mesrine: Killer Instinct* and *Mesrine: Public Enemy No. 1*, out now on DVD. This two-part account charts the rise and fall of the ruthless Jacques Mesrine, who was responsible for a series of hold-ups, prison breaks and kidnappings. *Soldier* has five copies of the film on DVD to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer this question: Which merciless gangster is portrayed in the film? Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date February 26



Ocean Waves out on DVD now

THIS is a Japanese animated feature which, almost uniquely for the genre, doesn't feature exploding tentacles or people with drills instead of hands. It is in fact a rather slight coming-of-age story about how your attitudes change as you mature into an adult. Set in the unsophisticated region of Kochi, it tells the story of a small group of friends who are preparing to take their university entrance exams. It all plays out like a more chaste and cerebral episode of *Hollyoaks* and that is a big clue as to the film's appeal. It's sweet but insubstantial stuff – unless you're a lovesick teenager.

Daniel King, MoD



The World Ten Times Over out now

A STYLISH black and white film that was extremely controversial when originally released in 1963 due to its subject matter and on-screen nudity. It stems around Billa and Ginnie, two nightclub hostesses who find refuge from their public lives in the London flat they share. You won't be familiar with this film as it was last shown on TV in the UK in 1974. Overall the cinematography is excellent and the cast strong, but the story is too slow and depressing to work. Nevertheless, it presents an interesting peek back in time to a point when nudity and sexual talk were really pushing the boundaries of decency.

W02 Ritchie Downing, 3 AAC





Reality bites: *Afghan Star* contestants share the stage during the remarkable televised talent show which gripped the nation when it was held in 2008

Whiteout out on DVD now

TO say that this film is a pointless – and plotless – disappointment would be an understatement of epic proportions. Opening with a Russian transport plane hosting a bewildering gun battle between the crew at 10,000 feet in 1957, the story soon jumps into the present as U.S. Marshal Carrie Stetko (**Kate Beckinsale**) tries to unravel the mystery while being chased by an ice pick-wielding killer. Not unlike the Antarctic location the film is shot in, it soon becomes a frozen, dark, desolate affair. The terrible dialogue and dodgy accents complement the lack of warmth or chemistry between the characters. A chilly offering.

W02 Ritchie Downing, 3 AAC



Win: Ong Bak: The Beginning on DVD

FOLLOWING on from the ground-breaking *Ong Bak*, martial arts superstar **Tony Jaa** brings his sensational skills to the screen in the action-packed prequel *Ong Bak: The Beginning*. Set against the backdrop of feudal Thailand 600 years ago, the film follows Tien (Jaa) as he attempts to avenge the slaughter of his family and features some jaw-dropping fight scenes. *Soldier* has teamed up with Sony Pictures to offer five lucky readers the chance to win a copy of the film on DVD. To stand a chance of winning, tell us which country the film is set in. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 26



Win: Go Fast on DVD

THRILL-seekers will be sent on a pulse-quickenning ride into the violent and dangerous world of undercover narcotics cops in *Go Fast*, a film from the team behind the *Transporter* series. Following a gang of drug traffickers who use prestige cars to move their product across Europe at death-defying speeds, this is an action-packed adventure not to be missed. Thanks to the kind people at Momentum Pictures, we have five copies of the film to give away on DVD. To enter, tell us what age rating *Go Fast* received. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 26





Shooting gallery: *Army of Two: The 40th Day* is an improvement on its predecessor, offering a mix of action and tactics

Paired up for trouble

Mercs forced to fight for survival in latest instalment of EA's team-based shooter

Review: Cliff Caswell

THE world of future military operations is going to become an increasingly dark, murky and corrupt place if the current crop of video games is anything to go by.

Already we've had first-person shooter *Haze*, where soldiers from an all-powerful, state-endorsed mercenary outfit use narcotics to enhance their performance plus *Hawx*, a flight sim in which a private fast jet squadron takes cash for missions. And now EA has launched *Army of Two: The 40th Day*, in which you are again thrust into the front line as a hired gun. Only this time you have become the target and you are faced with shooting your way through an entire legion of hostile combatants while simultaneously trying to escape a fast-crumbling city.

Despite the plethora of games of a similar theme currently on the market, this squad-based tactical shooter is a highly-credible offering that demands plenty of strategic thinking and agile reflexes to stay alive and kicking.

The 40th Day is also a huge improvement on the original *Army of Two* title, with an easier-to-

use control interface that makes the action much slicker than before. The result is an outstanding, action-packed game.

The storyline of the latest episode again focuses on veteran private military contractors Salem and Rios, who are out on a fairly run-of-the-mill job in Shanghai when all hell breaks loose and the city comes under attack.

It soon becomes apparent that the enigmatic Jonah – the brains behind the so-called 40th Day initiative – has assembled a vast opposing force of terrorists to reduce the metropolis to dust leaving you with a fight against the odds.

"Many games have destructive environments, but destruction is pretty much a theme in *The 40th Day*," said Sarah Stewart, who produced the title at EA's Montreal studios. "The whole place is under attack and the chaos is all around you."

"Everywhere there are civilians trying to get out of the city and you are placed under serious pressure. The two members of your team have to work together and look after each other if you are going to survive."

The boffins at Montreal have certainly invested a huge amount of time and effort to step the gaming experience up a notch in *The 40th Day*. As well as using advisers from real-life private

military companies, they took the time to get hands-on experience with the game's weapons.

"EA sent a bunch of sound specialists to California for three days, where they recorded the sounds of the guns," added Stewart. "Their efforts ensured that we had a really high-quality audio experience throughout the game."

"The team were also on the range and made sure we knew what it felt like to fire assault rifles, machine guns and pistols."

Soldier was given access to a multiplayer demo of *The 40th Day* ahead of its release in mid-January and found that EA's efforts with the title have not been in vain.

You must co-operate smoothly with your partner if you are to win the battle. In environments that are often claustrophobic, this involves using cover to your best advantage to drive the enemy back. A player who is incapacitated will find themselves overwhelmed if their buddy fails to reach them in time.

Some outstanding graphics and an atmospheric soundtrack are the icing on the cake of *The 40th Day*. The future might seem dark and moody for mercenaries working for private military companies, but the video game world has never been so much fun. ■

From mythical creatures to space-based carnage, we round up the latest releases...

Dante's Inferno for Xbox 360 & PS3

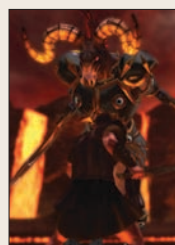
BASED on Dante's medieval poem of the same name, this is essentially a fighting game – and an extremely slick one at that. Players take on the role of a knight who finds himself mortally wounded during the Crusades and facing a showdown with Death himself. If you manage to give the Reaper a kicking in the first instance without him claiming your soul, you'll steal his scythe as your weapon and find yourself descending into the terrifyingly surreal world of hell as described by Dante. Fighting games don't come much better than this – judging by the preview we saw it could even rival *Bayonetta*.



Out this month

Clash of the Titans for Xbox 360 & PS3

INSPIRED by the forthcoming movie featuring **Ralph Fiennes** and **Liam Neeson**, *Clash of the Titans* gives players the opportunity to take the lead in a Greek drama and fight some of the most dangerous beasts from the mists of mythology. Opponents promised in this fighting extravaganza, which is released in March, include the infamous snake-haired Medusa and the Kraken sea monster. You can equip yourself with 80 weapons to do the business and there are numerous attacks available. Film tie-ins can have a nasty tendency to be turkeys, but the screen shots from this look promising. Watch this space.



Out next month

Napoleon Total War for PC

UK-based developer Creative Assembly has already forged a notable track record with the *Total War* series of games and this latest offering looks equally impressive. Having studied the great age of 18th Century exploration and conquest in *Empire*, the gruesome clashes that took place with France and its European neighbours are now the focus with this new war game adventure. You can fight as the legendary French general or his adversaries in campaigns including the 1812 struggle for Moscow and the Battle of Waterloo of 1815. Published by Sega, *Napoleon* is set to be a hit for real-time strategy fans.



Out this month

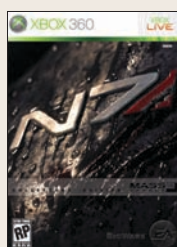


Shanghai noon: The *Army of Two* have to fight like bulls in a china shop if they are to stand any chance against the oriental onslaught

Mass Effect 2 for Xbox 360 & PC

A SPACE odyssey of considerable depth, *Mass Effect 2* looked to be an impressive game on all fronts when *Soldier* sampled a late-build demo in December. Best described as a blend of adventure, strategy and combat, players assume the role of an astronaut who is rebuilt following a near-death experience only to be charged with leading a team on a suicide mission against a marauding alien menace. We sat down to have a go on the PC version of the title, which features some fantastic graphics, sound and an engrossing storyline of cinematic proportions. Highly recommended.

Out now



Aliens Vs Predator for Xbox 360 & PS3

TWO of science fiction's most notorious nasties square up to each other in this latest first-person shooter from Sega. In what promises to be an explosive intergalactic encounter, you have the opportunity to play the shadowy predator hunter, the parasitic aliens or the human colonial marines. Each of the species has strengths and weaknesses to play to or exploit, giving plenty of variety. The original *Aliens Vs Predator* game was one of the few outstanding titles on the failed Atari Jaguar console in the 1990s and it will be interesting to see if the latest incarnation lives up to its predecessor's pedigree.

Out this month



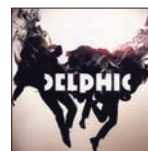
Assassin's Creed Bloodlines for PSP

HAVING set the new *Assassin's Creed* game in Renaissance Italy, French publisher Ubisoft has returned to the original Middle East campaign for the game's first outing on the PSP.

Bloodlines reunites players with the ruthless Altair in his continuing vendetta against the crusading Knights Templar. This is a sound offering with a fresh environment in the shape of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus and new missions to complete. The only gripes are the control system, which is somewhat difficult to master, and the sword combat that is slower than we would have liked.

Out now





Mad for it: Delphic hope to breathe new life into Manchester's famous music scene with the release of dance-inspired *Acolyte*

Blurred boundaries

Indie upstarts Delphic create a rich fusion of musical genres for their debut album

Review: Richard Long

BEING heralded as the next big thing in the Manchester music scene puts a certain amount of pressure on a band.

With the likes of Joy Division, New Order, the Stone Roses and Oasis blazing the trail for the iconic city, Delphic certainly have some tough acts to follow.

But instead of freezing like a rabbit in the headlights the trio are making a determined bid to emerge from such a rich heritage and move forward with their own style and sound.

"Even though it has had a cosmetic facelift, there's a certain vibe to Manchester which is as relevant now as it was when Joy Division appeared," band member Rick Boardman said.

"If there's such a thing as a new Manchester, hopefully we can be its band in the same way that Joy Division were for the old Manchester."

Guitarist Matt Cocksedge added: "There's a challenge set down by previous acts from Manchester and we want to look at how that applies to us and where to take that legacy."

The Delphic sound is hard to pigeonhole and

their debut album *Acolyte* flits between indie, dance and trance, often on the same track.

The band are committed to producing music with new ideas and, after acknowledging the guitar-driven anthems of stalwarts such as Oasis have become somewhat predictable, they have found a new way to push the boundaries.

"The guitar is dead, long live the guitar," Boardman explained. "You can use it more like a synthesiser and get so much more out of it.

"There may be references to 90s' dance music but we also love Bjork, Radiohead, Kraftwerk and, at the other end of the spectrum, Xenomania."

While their music has been produced in an attempt to break from the norm they have also been keen to avoid the tabloid glare.

"We're naturally retiring people," Boardman said. "We prefer to make films or sit at our computers doing music, that's what we get a buzz off and we're much less bothered about being known as rock stars than we are about being known as artists and musicians.

"We want to be in a band, we don't want to go out and die of Jack Daniels poisoning."

The time spent sitting at computers "doing music" has certainly paid off as Delphic are being hotly-tipped to collect a healthy haul of industry

awards as 2010 progresses.

The trio of Boardman, Cocksedge and James Cook create their music on laptops in their Manchester flat but when they take it on stage it transforms into something much bigger.

"People take what they want from the gigs," singer Cook said.

"If you're standing down the front then maybe it's more of a rave but if you're at the back then you can chin-stroke to your heart's content."

Acolyte starts in fine style with the electro-charged *Clarion Call* before moving on to the single *Doubt*, which carries a hint of Klaxons, and the anthemic *This Momentary*.

Tinges of both Joy Division and New Order are prevalent throughout and Bloc Party fans will detect elements of *So Here We Are* in the guitar riffs of *Counterpoint*.

The title-track *Acolyte* is the undoubted highlight, starting in a dark and moody manner before progressing to a dance crescendo very much akin to The Chemical Brothers.

With such lofty praise already bestowed on Delphic only time will tell if they will reach the status of their Manchester luminaries, but with the release of *Acolyte* they are definitely taking a step in the right direction. ■

From a re-released slice of thrash metal to the latest pop princess, we check out February's releases...

MTV Unplugged by All Time Low

POP punksters **All Time Low** head into the intimate *Unplugged* arena for a stripped-down run-through of some of their more popular songs. The transition is comfortable enough but does not offer any real fireworks and you cannot help but feel a sense of sameness as the tracks progress. With just six songs included on this album fans may feel a little short-changed, but the pack includes a DVD recording of the show to numb the pain. While this should be acknowledged as a commendable effort by a band that has a bigger following across the pond than it does in the UK, it certainly fails to reach the heady heights set by **Nirvana** in the *Unplugged* series.

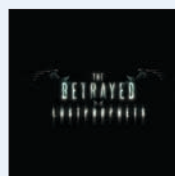
Richard Long, *Soldier*



The Betrayed by Lostprophets

LOSTPROPHETS end their four-year hiatus from recording and fans of the band's early sound will be pleasantly surprised with the fruit of their labour. Although 2006's *Liberation Transmission* saw massive commercial success and a sold-out arena tour, it sounded like a watered-down version of Lostprophets' previous efforts and left fans feeling like something was missing. *The Betrayed* is, for the most part, a showcase of the Welsh six-piece's strengths – angry guitars, heavy drums and sing – or indeed shout – along choruses. The music is raw and far less accessible than the radio-friendly tracks of *Liberation Transmission*, but that is definitely no bad thing. Highly recommended.

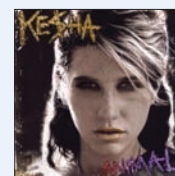
Stephen Tyler, *Soldier*



Animal by Ke\$ha

IF 2009 was the year of **Lady GaGa** then expect exotically-titled singer **Ke\$ha** to follow suit in 2010. The pop temptress is already making waves in the charts in the United States and music fans in Britain can now look forward to an assault on the UK market courtesy of the inevitable string of releases from her album *Animal*. Hit single *Tik Tok* has paved the way for the artist's future fame and, with sass-fuelled anthems such as *Your Love is My Drug* and *Kiss N Tell* waiting in the wings, it's going to be a long 12 months if you're not a fan of her work. While this electro-pop offering is far from my sound of choice it is inoffensive enough, given the clear market it is aimed at.

Richard Long, *Soldier*





Wall of sound: Mancunian three-piece Delphic are being tipped for musical greatness in 2010 thanks to their melting pot approach to record making

Among the Living by Anthrax

THIS re-issue of a late 1980s' **Anthrax** album provides a snapshot of the mainstream American thrash metal scene at the time but little else to the casual listener. The set of nine original tracks features some dubious lyrics coupled with the trademark over-produced wall of distorted guitar, drums and wailing vocals. Die-hard fans of the genre will no doubt love this well-packaged offering, which includes a healthy haul of bonus material plus a DVD of the band performing live in London while Margaret Thatcher was still Prime Minister and the first Gulf War was years away. If you like your vintage metal, this is probably for you – otherwise it is best left buried.

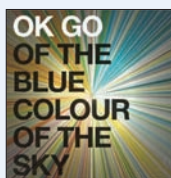
Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Of The Blue Colour of The Sky by OK Go

IN A career spanning nearly eight years **OK Go** have been largely recognisable for their innovative videos rather than the music they make as a band. The skilfully-choreographed treadmill routine on *Here It Goes Again* was an internet phenomenon and could easily be considered as the group's defining moment. But *Of The Blue Colour of The Sky* gives us something else to admire and covers diverse genres including funk, synth-pop and rock. *WTF?* is a throwback to **Prince** in his pomp and the **Weezer**-esque *This Too Shall Pass* is among the many stand out offerings. At last OK Go have delivered an album that could prove as admirable as their work in front of the camera.

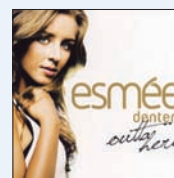
Richard Long, *Soldier*



Outta Here by Esmee Denters

SULTRY Dutch singer **Esmee Denters** shot to fame after **Justin Timberlake** saw her singing cover versions of pop songs – including one of his hits – on YouTube and offered her a recording contract. The cynic in me was convinced that the resulting debut album would be a sickly sweet pop-by-the-numbers offering, but there is actually a hidden depth to many of the tracks that makes it more than bearable. Denters co-wrote everything on the album, which benefits from the production skills of Timberlake and **Timbaland**. A nice change of pace for the pop genre and, with the likes of *Outta Here*, an album that is likely to propel Denters onto many radio playlists.

Stephen Tyler, *Soldier*





Out now: *Glider Pilots At Arnhem* (Pen & Sword) by Maj Mike Peters (AAC) and Luuk Buist is available online and in shops for £20

Army all-rounders

Salute to the 'total soldiers' who flew wooden gliders on a one-way trip to Arnhem

By Maj Mike Peters AAC

WITH the distinction of being one of the shortest-lived and smallest formations ever to feature in the British Army's order of battle, The Glider Pilot Regiment (GPR) has always fascinated the military historian in me.

And, as a battlefield guide, I have come to know the territory these airmen fought over and am privileged to count many of the unit's surviving veterans as friends.

Over the years they have told me about their exploits in North Africa, Sicily, Normandy and the crossing of the Rhine and, amazed by their stories, I promised to one day write a book in their honour. Three years ago I found myself cornered by a group of glider pilots who, mindful of their advancing years, reminded me of my pledge with the warning "we are all in the dropping zone now".

So it was with those words ringing in my ears that I began writing *Glider Pilots at Arnhem*.

The book tells the story of a remarkable regiment that in September 1944 produced the 1,334 pilots who manned the 667 British gliders that flew into Arnhem and Nijmegen, with its

opening chapters detailing the birth of a new breed of flying soldier in 1942.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the idea of assault gliders flown by soldiers was opposed by many in the Royal Air Force, with ACM Sir Arthur Harris a prominent dissenting voice. Thankfully his view was not shared by Winston Churchill and the GPR quickly grew from a fledgling capability into a two-battalion asset.

The pilots themselves were all volunteers who were desperate to fly and escape the mundane routine of home defence duties. Their CO, Lt Col George Chatterton, based the GPR training syllabus on the concept of the "total soldier". Every pilot, who on award of their wings was promoted to sergeant or staff sergeant, was expected to be an excellent infantry soldier – at home on the drill square or in a trench as they were in the cockpit.

It was during my research into the Battle of Arnhem, where the pilots played a role in every facet of the action, that I first realised the true extent of the regiment's diversity.

Having piloted the wooden assault gliders which delivered the fighting men of 1 Airlanding Brigade and Divisional troops to Arnhem, the airborne soldiers remained on the battlefield. Unlike the Normandy landings, when the GPR

was quickly withdrawn, they appeared all over Arnhem, guarding prisoners of war, acting as reinforcements, defending the gun line and carrying out anti-sniper patrols. As the casualties mounted, glider pilots were used to lead composite units holding the hard-pressed perimeter.

Later in the battle their SNCO status and map-reading skills made them obvious candidates to act as markers during the withdrawal on the last night of the battle. They stood patiently in the darkness and pouring rain as the survivors of 1st British Airborne Division filed past them to the waiting storm boats of the Royal Engineers.

For the GPR, Operation Market Garden proved a tragic battle. The regiment flew into Arnhem at the peak of its strength. Following nine days of intensive fighting it emerged shattered with 90 per cent of its members listed as casualties.

Brig Shan Hackett, who commanded 4th Parachute Brigade during the battle, said of the GPR: "Our glider pilots were not only very high grade airmen – I believe that The Glider Pilot Regiment was the finest body of soldiers that the British Army produced in World War Two."

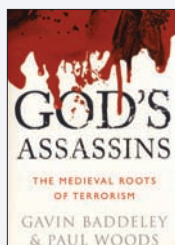
I hope that *Glider Pilots At Arnhem* is a befitting tribute to those "total" soldiers and helps to preserve for posterity their unique story. ■

From assassins to the art of arming the artillery in Afghanistan, a flick through this month's literary releases...

God's Assassins by G Baddeley & P Woods

CENTRED on the stories of the Nizari sect, supposedly the original assassin's creed, and their leader Hasan Sabbah, this is a fascinating account of terrorism through the ages delivered through an easy-flowing narrative that proves difficult to put down. Cleverly-written short stories embellish the main text with colourful insights into the Nizari sect's cunning negotiations and devilish assassinations. Enthusiastically explored and thought-provoking, this historical reinterpretation tackles everything from the Crusades and Irish Republican terrorism to the Central Intelligence Agency and entertains throughout.

Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



Decoding the New Taliban by A Giustozzi

THIS contemporary volume – edited by Antonio Giustozzi and contributed to by a number of respected authors – presents a picture of Afghanistan as complex as its tribal mapping. The only simple deduction is that the Taliban is a vehicle for a multitude of historical, tribal, geographic, criminal, financial, personal, political and religious grievances. Some contributions are involved academic analyses of issues which are valuable but not easy to digest. Pieces by Thomas Coghlan and David Kilcullen focus on Helmand province and would make worthwhile pre-deployment reading. Definitely worth getting hold of a copy.

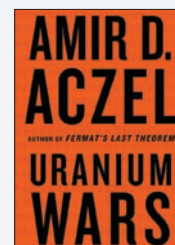
Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Uranium Wars by Amir D Aczel

THE author cleverly unravels the story behind all things nuclear through the key personalities at each stage of its development, from the discovery of radioactivity through to the use of nuclear power and weaponry. Aczel does a good job of making the concepts of quantum mechanics accessible to the lay person, although this is a demanding read and I was thankful there were no end-of-chapter exams. The discovery of nuclear power and how it can be harnessed has defined our modern age and is likely to continue to do so. My advice? Read this book quickly, before it becomes even more complicated.

Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC (ETS)



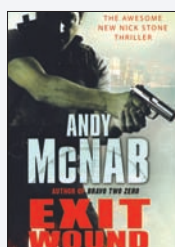


Double agents: The men of The Glider Pilot Regiment, pictured with their wooden aircraft at a landing zone, served both on and above the battlefield

Exit Wound by Andy McNab

IN his latest thriller **McNab** takes our hero, Nick Stone, to Dubai in search of lost gold. The mission inevitably goes to pot when Stone and his Special Forces comrades-turned-robbers are double crossed by their man on the inside. All of McNab's trademarks are here: military jargon, squaddie humour and a good dose of "sticking it to the man". But there's more than just action; references to global politics and ops in Afghanistan place this story in the present and make it hard to put down. Grab yourself a brew, settle into your basher, tell your opos you're on radio silence and lay up until Stone has saved the day.

Capt Dan Knowles, 35 Engineer Regiment



Mons, Anzac and Kut by Lt Col A Herbert

A FASCINATING war diary written by MP **Lt Col Aubrey Herbert** and first published in 1919, which has been revitalised by the author's great-grandson, Lt Col Edward Mellotte. Herbert joined the Irish Guards in 1914, took part in the retreat from Mons and was wounded, captured by the Germans and then released by the French. Attached to the New Zealand Division in 1915 as an interpreter and intelligence officer, he experienced the disastrous Dardanelles expedition. Then, in Mesopotamia, he arrived just in time to join Lawrence of Arabia in his failed attempt to relieve the siege of Kut. A unique story – well worth the read.

Col Patrick Crowley, PWRR



What the Thunder Said by Lt Col Conrad

THOSE in Britain may forget the role of other armies in Afghanistan. This book, subtitled *Reflections of a Canadian Officer in Kandahar*, provides a first-rate corrective. The friction of war, constant awareness of death, thoughts of absent loved ones and questions on the purpose of the mission are all present in **Lt Col John Conrad's** interesting narrative. A logistics officer, the author's pride in his men and his army is rooted in historical knowledge, especially of the Canadian Corps' splendid role in the victories of 1918, with *What the Thunder Said* referring to the success of supplying the guns on the Western Front.

Dr Rodney Atwood





Picture perfect:
Panasonic's nifty BL-C111
retails at £149. For more
information, log on to
www.panasonic.co.uk

All-seeing sentinel

Internet-enabled wonder camera takes home security technology to another level

Review: Stephen Tyler

THERE can be few people who are not familiar with the feeling of dread associated with being away from home and convinced that something is wrong.

Whether you are spending all day wondering if you unplugged the iron or let the cat out or have wider concern about whether your property is safe from burglars, it is a problem only fixed when you are physically able to return and check things out for yourself.

The issue is amplified for soldiers who have their own houses but are often unable to check up on them for months at a time due to deployments on exercises or operations.

But now an electronics giant is claiming to have come up with a hi-tech solution that does not cost the earth.

Panasonic has harnessed the power of the internet to release the snappily-titled BL-C111 home network camera.

The gadget, which comes in both wired and wireless models, allows owners to view real-time images of whatever the lens is pointing at using a

computer or mobile phone.

Comprising of little more than a palm-sized unit and associated power cables, Panasonic argues that its latest invention takes a chunk of stress out of being away from home.

And in the name of science, I decided to put its claims to the test by setting it up to monitor my living room while I was away for a weekend.

As a veteran of numerous failed IT installations, I was slightly dubious of the camera's quick setup guide which stated the system could be assembled and operational within minutes.

I need not have feared as getting the camera up and running is exceptionally easy thanks to the clear instructions and an automated CD that runs through the required steps.

With the unit installed and pointing out across the living room, I headed out armed with my laptop so I could keep an eye on things during my two days away.

Logging in to the camera is every bit as easy as setting it up. Panasonic gives users the option to view images over their network or to register a personalised web address that they can then visit whenever they want.

And it is once you begin to view the output that you appreciate what a useful piece of kit this is.

It all depends on your connection speed – not a problem for the vast majority in the days of broadband – but the remote images are amazingly clear on a computer screen.

The camera's functions include a microphone to pick up any sounds and a motion detector that can be set up to take a picture (which is then stored in the device or sent to an email address) when a certain threshold is cleared.

Perhaps the greatest innovation is the ability for users to pan, tilt and zoom the camera's angle remotely using controls on the computer software.

Although nothing untoward happened during *Soldier's* trial, it was easy to appreciate the value of being able to take a closer look at different parts of a room at the touch of a button.

There were even a number of additional functions – including the ability to view images from up to 16 cameras at once – that I did not have a chance to try out.

Add in the possibility of logging into the camera on a mobile phone and it is safe to say that this is well worth the asking price.

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From mini marvels to HD beasts, *Soldier* takes a closer look at some of the hottest camcorders around...

Kodak Zi8 Pocket

FULL HD is the buzzword surrounding modern video cameras and Kodak's pocket-sized Zi8 is



joining the party with 1080p capture. As well as looking pretty cool, the camera will do its best to make its owner seem like a competent film-maker by firing up its built-in image stabiliser. The Kodak's box of tricks even extend to the post-recording period as a flip-out arm containing a USB connector means that videos can be transferred to a computer or viewed on an HDTV in a matter of seconds. An expandable memory card slot means that the recording time can be boosted up to an impressive ten hours.

£149.99, <http://shop.kodak.co.uk>

Kodak PLAYSPORT

SOLDIERS perhaps more than anyone appreciate the value of rugged gear and Kodak's



miniature camera is aimed specifically at people who want to test their equipment to the limit in all conditions. The PLAYSPORT has all the technological wizardry you would expect – full HD 1080p recording, image stabilisation and a full-colour LCD screen – but it is the hard-as-nails outer casing that really stands out. As well as being sturdy enough to survive the occasional bump while out and about, Kodak's slinky model is also waterproof and can be used as easily underwater as it can above it.

£129, <http://shop.kodak.co.uk>

Sony bloggie

IF Facebook was 2009's big craze, video blogging is the medium boffins are predicting to be hot stuff



this year. Uploading clips to personal websites or YouTube can be a technological tangle of memory cards and wires, but Sony's dainty bloggier claims to have found a simpler way of allowing people to share high-quality shots with the rest of the world. Shooting video in either super smooth 1280x720/60p or full HD 1920x1080/30p, the camera comes with software to allow users to upload their masterpieces to a selection of websites at the touch of a button. Face recognition software is an added bonus.

£209, www.sony.co.uk



Silver surfer: Panasonic's network security camera allows owners to keep an eye on their homes in close detail wherever in the world they are posted

Sony HDR-AX2000E

LOOKING every bit like something you might have found on the set of *Star Wars*, this professional-style Handycam packs a punch far greater than almost anything else on the consumer market. Laden with sensors, an image processor and a premium quality G Lens with a powerful 20x optical zoom, the HDR-AX2000E captures lush, cinematic HD images without trouble. For those who really know their stuff – and if you are considering buying this that is a given – the camera contains a host of manual functions to create the perfect image. Likely to be pricey, but definitely one for enthusiasts.



On sale later this month

Sony Handycam CX350V

SONY unveiled its 2010 range of Handycams last month and the supermodel-esque line-up has had film fans drooling ever since. Pick of the bunch for home users is the HDR-CX350V which can swallow up to 13 hours of video in full HD thanks to its copious 32GB internal memory card. The wide angle G Lens with 12x optical zoom is perfect for capturing group shots, while anyone using this while out and about will appreciate the optical Steadyshot technology that cancels out camera shake. An interesting feature of the Handycam is the ability to capture a still photo of a smiling face during video recording.



On sale later this month

Panasonic HDC-SD10

EVEN the strongest of Service personnel would admit that holding a camcorder at shooting level for an extended period of time can be a test of muscle power, so Panasonic's light camcorder is a welcome addition to the fold. Weighing in at just 227g, the HDC-SD10 fits in the palm of the hand and can be easily stored in a bag or even a pocket. The small size hides a powerful set of features including full HD recording and advanced optical image stabilisation which detects and corrects hand-shake about 4,000 times every second. A touchscreen LCD rounds off the package.



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SOLDIERSPORT

GENERATION GAME

Union's old guard
welcome new blood
for 2010 campaign

A photograph of three male rugby players from the Army Rugby Union. They are wearing red tracksuits with white accents. The player on the left is Pte Apo Satala, the middle player is LCpl Matt Dwyer, and the player on the right is Cfn Matt Bowman. They are all looking towards the camera with serious expressions. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Age no concern: Army
Rugby Union stars Pte
Apo Satala (1 Scots), LCpl
Matt Dwyer (WG) and Cfn
Matt Bowman (REME) line
up for the new season

Picture: Steve Dock



Picture: Graeme Main

Mainstays: Established stars from last year's all-conquering Reds' side will be joined by a youthful class of 2010 in their pursuit of Inter-Services success

Rookies join Reds' glory trail

Report: Richard Long

COACH WO2 Andy Price (WG) has assembled one of his most exciting-ever squads as he continues his pursuit of Army glory on the rugby field.

The proud Welshman has named ten uncapped players in his 30-man selection for the new Rugby Union season as the Reds look to extend their unbeaten run from the 2009 campaign.

More than 75 players were in contention for places this year and the coaching team had to make a series of difficult decisions before announcing their final list.

The squad boasts a healthy mix of emerging talent and established stars and Price believes his new-look group is well equipped for the season, which culminates in the Twickenham clash with the Royal Navy on May 1.

"The fixture list last year was quite ambitious in the fact that we were playing Premiership A teams and were competing against fully-professional players," Price told *SoldierSport*.

"That is the standard we aspire to. This year we are taking on the Worcester, Saracens and Northampton A teams.

"Again we have been ambitious by challenging three Premiership sides and we have also gone for two difficult games in South Africa.

"The Navy tends to play fixtures at the lower level to gain a modicum of success. We are not content to do that, we follow the Army adage 'train hard, fight easy'.

"The standard we play at all year is definitely higher than the Inter-Services.

The others play lower level games so by the time they face us we are the highest-standard opposition they have faced."

Capt Mark Lee (AGC) will again lead the side while seasoned campaigners LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh), Pte

Apo Satala (1 Scots) and LCpl Melvyn Lewis (WG) are among the many familiar names returning for 2010.

But the Reds will have to cope with the loss of fullback WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC), who retired after last year's

Twickenham match, while a number of other players will be missing due to operational commitments, the most notable of which is fly half Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots).

Prop Gnr Ken Dowding (7 Para RHA), a professional with Birmingham

'We have ten uncapped players in a squad of 30 and I think that is really exciting'



Solihull, and wing Pte Charl Cootzer (AGC) will be hoping to win their first Army caps after both were included in the Combined Services squad for last year's Remembrance Day fixture with the Barbarians.

Spr Taniela Basoko (RE) and Sevens specialist Tpr Semesa Rokodugni (Scots DG) are expected to challenge for the wing slots and Price has high hopes for back row forward Cfn Matt Bowman (REME), pictured right.

"We have ten uncapped players in a squad of 30 and I think that is really exciting," the coach said.

"Matt Bowman is one to keep an eye on, he is only 19 and was player of the season for the under-23s.

"He joins four internationals in the back row but he will push them hard for a place.

"Having so many uncapped players is not a concern for me as we have lots of experience around them.

"Cpl Ben Hughes (RE) could reach 30 caps this season and having players like him in the squad really helps the younger guys."

Bowman said he was proud to be called up alongside big names such as Satala and Lee.

"It is daunting but I want to pressurise them for a place in the team, I can only learn from the experience," the exciting prospect added.

"Last year I had a really good time with the under-23s but I am ready to make the step up to the seniors. It is important we have the young guys coming through to challenge.

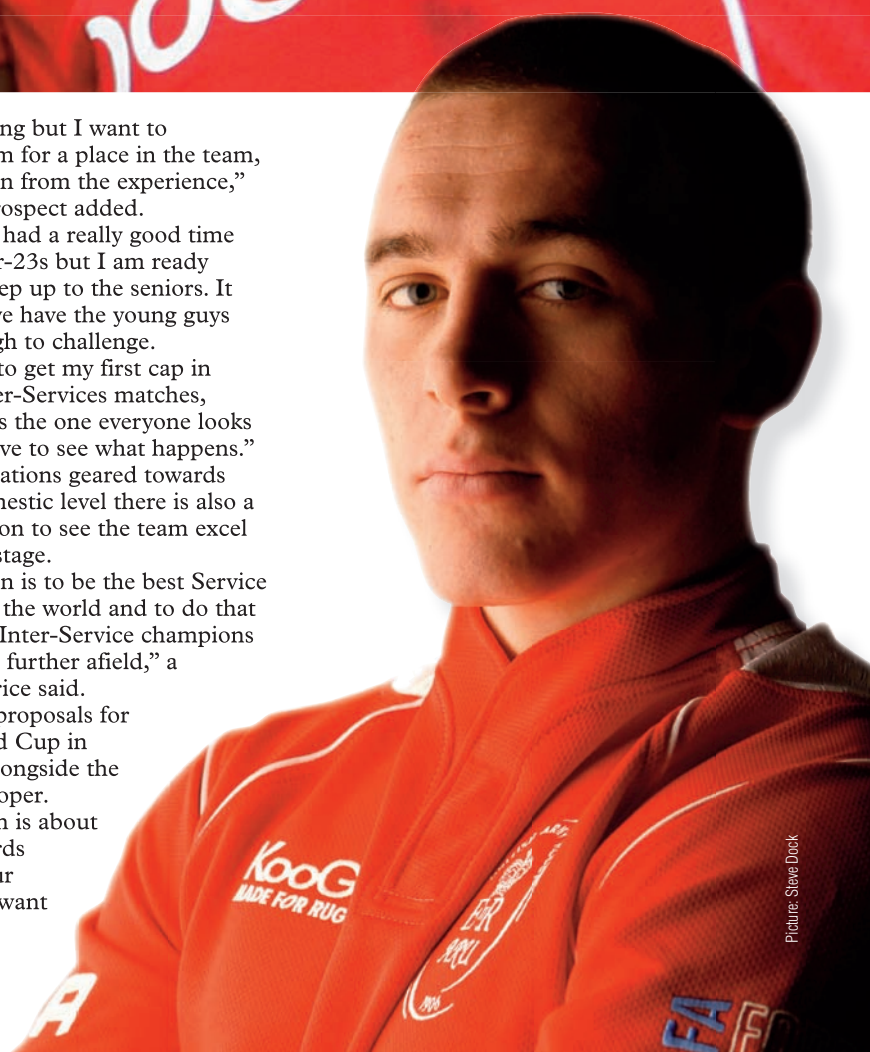
"My aim is to get my first cap in one of the Inter-Services matches, Twickenham is the one everyone looks to but we'll have to see what happens."

With preparations geared towards success at domestic level there is also a driving ambition to see the team excel on the global stage.

"Our mission is to be the best Service rugby team in the world and to do that we have to be Inter-Service champions before looking further afield," a determined Price said.

"There are proposals for an Army World Cup in 2011 to run alongside the World Cup proper.

"This season is about building towards that. It is in our sights and we want to win it." ■







No early bath for Barnes

Interview: Richard Long

PREMIERSHIP powerhouse David Barnes is a man on a mission in what promises to be a hectic testimonial year.

The Bath ace is using the landmark celebration to raise vital funds for Help for Heroes and while his attentions could easily be distracted by such a worthy cause he remains equally committed to matters on the pitch.

Veteran Barnes looked certain to win an England cap in last year's autumn internationals but a training ground injury cruelly robbed him of his dream.

The 33-year-old is now firmly on the comeback trail and with testimonial plans in full swing he is determined to excel on the pitch as well as off it.

"I am very lucky to have enjoyed a long career in professional rugby," the front-row forward told *SoldierSport* in an exclusive interview.

"The testimonial has given me the chance to organise a number of events and I want Help for Heroes to benefit.

"We all appreciate the work the soldiers are doing in Afghanistan, Iraq and around the world. It is something people want to acknowledge."

The testimonial events include a number of golf days as well as black-tie dinners in London and Bath, with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Welsh offering an Army experience at Tidworth as one of the auction prizes.

Barnes also hopes to climb Mount Kilimanjaro in 2011, with proceeds again going to Help for Heroes.

"We cannot be there on the front line but we want to give as much support as we can," he added.

"We play a game that is all about team building and camaraderie. Soldiers do the same but in a different environment and we can learn a lot in terms of how they work and operate. We have a reasonable amount in common."

Barnes intends to build on the similarities professional players share with soldiers through a new coaching partnership between Bath and the

Infantry rugby team.

Star players from the Premiership side will be working with the Service squad to offer expert advice aimed at improving performances on the pitch.

"At Bath we are lucky to have the time available and we like to get out and help other clubs," the long-serving prop explained.

"We want to build a relationship and give something back.

"Infantry rugby has suffered with guys going away on operations. I think the help will be appreciated and hopefully they will enjoy it.

"Players such as Danny Grewcock, Lee Mears and myself want to be part of this. We have a lot of respect for the Army so it was not hard for us to get the guys involved."

With Barnes building a busy schedule away from the game one could assume his playing career could be on the wane, but that is far from the truth.

Now fully recovered from injury he is hoping to force his way back into the Bath side before challenging for international honours.

"With the amount of injuries in rugby there is always the possibility of a call-up," he said. "I am ambitious and I want to keep playing.

"The World Cup in 2011 is my goal and it is something I will be working very hard for."

Barnes has been in and around the England Saxons squad throughout his career but his injury, and subsequent lack of game time, meant he missed out on the clash with Ireland A on his home ground at the end of January.

But his first concern is helping Bath improve on their lowly league position.

"We had a great couple of years with third-place finishes and this season we expected to kick on," he explained.

"But we lost five guys due to drug-related issues and we have had injuries to key players such as Butch James.

"As a squad we felt we were strong enough to compete. It is something we are very disappointed with. Bath is a big club and it is important we get back to where we should be." ■

'We cannot be there on the front line but we want to give as much support as we can'

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Picture: Maj John Carey-Hughes, RDG

Champion's run: WO2 Phil Maddox (APTC) triumphed in a close field at the Army Telemark Ski Association Championships, which were held in Austria

Heroes of telemark

Interview: Richard Long

ARMY racers tackled the challenging Austrian slopes in an adrenalin-fuelled fortnight of telemark action.

Around 70 competitors travelled to Rauris for the 2010 Army Telemark Ski Association (ATSA) Championships, with races held for both experts and novices.

The two-week event started with a succession of training runs, during which the ATSA had the prestigious honour of hosting the opening leg of the 2010 World Cup Telemark Series.

This was the first time Britain had staged a World Cup ski event and 12 countries were represented, with 19 female and 49 male racers taking part.

With the standard of racing extremely high the British team, which featured a

number of Service personnel, gave an encouraging performance to improve on 2009's results.

The Army event, which doubles as the Royal Navy and British National Telemark Championships, followed immediately after and WO2 Phil Maddox (APTC) triumphed in a particularly tight field.

"The races offered a variety of challenges including gates, a jump, a 360-degree banked turn and a skating section," ATSA committee member Lt

Col Iain Saker (QDG) told *SoldierSport*.

"With much of the course in sight from the finish area, spectators could watch racers through the mid-section, before lining up for the jump.

"It takes skill and courage to gain sufficient air to clear the distance line and successfully negotiate the next gate.

"There were some exits among the Army competitors at this stage, although none perhaps quite so spectacular as the Slovenian World Cup racer who wrapped up all the safety netting, laughing as he did so."

29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery were team winners and Tpr Ben Holmes (LD) was best novice.

"The development races presented the same challenges, but in a less demanding format and the determination to do well was clear for all to see, particularly over the jump," Saker added.

Holmes was awarded the Tom Sawyer prize, which was presented by Katy Sawyer in memory of her late husband, a captain in the Royal Artillery, who took part in the championships in 2008 and was killed in Afghanistan last year.

● For full results and more information on the ATSA visit www.telemark.army.mod.uk ■

‘The determination to do well was clear for all to see, particularly over the jump’

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Making waves: WO2 Martin Smith (AAC) won the longboard class at the Army Surfing Championships

Total wipeout

ARMY surfers suffered a comprehensive defeat in their pursuit of Inter-Services glory off the Newquay coastline.

With clean, head-high surf welcoming competitors to a wintry Tolcarne Beach it was the Royal Air Force who made the early running with a series of strong showings in both the short and longboard competitions.

For shortboarders in particular the event became more challenging as the tide dropped and surfers had to be very selective with their choice of waves. The bodyboarders, however, excelled in the varying conditions.

The RAF took full advantage of its early form to complete a comfortable win finishing on 29 points, with the Royal Navy second on 20 points and the Army third with 15 points.

"I would love to produce excuses like we were down surfers due to operational commitments or because WO2 Dave Cox (APTC) was out of the competition due to an injured ankle," Army surfer WO2 Martin Smith (AAC) told *SoldierSport*.

"We could also draw attention to the fact that both other Services are based at the coast, but unfortunately on the day we were clearly out-surfed."

The Inter-Services competition

was the culmination of a busy week as Newquay also hosted the Army Individual Surf Championships.

More than 30 competitors took to the water for the event, which started with the longboard competition.

With a solid onshore overhead swell hitting the bay surfers had to enter and exit the water on the rocks behind the breaking waves.

Smith mastered the difficult conditions to take the title with Lt Joe Vernon (RE) second and Maj Andy Clee (RE) third.

LBdr Moggy Mogridge (RA) triumphed in the shortboard as Vernon matched his effort in the longboard to finish second while Sgt Dave Holden (APTC), treasurer of the Army Surf Riders' Union (ASRU), was third.

The bodyboarders were then given the chance to shine in the high swell and LCpl Steve Nicholson (RE) was crowned champion ahead of Lt Kevin Pottage (MPGS) and Sgt Nathan Culpitt (RLC).

Anyone interested in joining the ASRU – from novice to advanced surfers – should contact secretary Sgt Tim Gort (RE) on 07968 148261 or visit www.armynet.mod.uk and click on the Surf Riders Union link in the clubs and associations section. ■

SPORT SHORTS

THE Territorial Army individual and inter-unit half marathon championships will be held in Hampshire on March 21.

Entry to the event, which is being held in conjunction with the Fleet Half Marathon, is open to all TA and NRPS Servicemen and women.

Entry forms and administration instructions are available via email from castle@armymail.mod.uk

ARMY windsurfers will host the Forces Open Wave Sailing Championships from March 22 to 26.

The event in Rhosneigr, on the Isle of Anglesey, will accommodate both novice and open fleets, with advance coaching clinics also available.

For more information call Jon Metcalfe on 07768 988258 or email asawsm@btconnect.com

A NEW road race event has been launched to raise money for Service charity Help for Heroes.

The Surrey Spitfire 20-mile challenge will start and finish at Dunsfold Aerodrome, home of the BBC show *Top Gear*, on March 14.

Runners will compete in a fast, flat two-lap race on roads surrounding the aerodrome and the village of Dunsfold. There will also be a ten-mile race for less-experienced athletes.

The closing date for entries is March 7. Visit www.sportsystems.co.uk/ss/dunsfold/index.htm

RUGBY fashion brand *Front Up* is offering *SoldierSport* readers a ten per cent discount on its ever-expanding range of leisurewear.

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WOUNDED personnel at Headley Court had a special visit from some of boxing's biggest names as part of the ongoing Legends and Heroes project.

American heavyweight champions Leon Spinks and Tim Witherspoon joined British greats including Lloyd Honeyghan and Richie Woodhall.

The legendary guests spoke to soldiers about their careers in the ring and were keen to learn more about the work being done at the centre.

"I'm proud to have served in the US Marine Corps and I'm proud to spend time with these young men who have given so much in the service of their country," Spinks said.

The evening was the latest event to be organised by Legends and Heroes, a collaboration between sporting heavyweights and Service personnel to raise money for Help for Heroes.



Land Down Under: The Army's Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race crew enjoy some sightseeing in the iconic city ahead of the sixth leg of Exercise Transglobe

Race hopes gone with the wind

Report: Richard Long

VARYING weather conditions dashed Army hopes of victory over their Service rivals in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

The sixth leg of Exercise Transglobe saw the Royal Air Force cruise to victory in the 630-nautical mile challenge, with the Royal Navy second and the Army trailing at the rear.

With conflicting weather reports reaching crews, the soldiers were left with a make-or-break decision over which course to take and their selection tipped the balance firmly in their opponents' favour.

"We decided to stay close in and follow the tide lines while the others pushed further out," Capt Ed Lilleyman (RAMC) told *SoldierSport*.

"Unfortunately that was one of our mistakes. They [the RAF and Navy] went out and caught the weather system and we were left with 60 miles to make up while floundering with no wind.

"The first and second days were very frustrating. We would get a schedule every 12 hours reporting where the other boats were and every time the Navy and RAF were further ahead."

Lilleyman said the result was more luck than judgement but was thrilled to

be part of a determined Army crew.

"It was disappointing not to beat them but it would have been worse if we had made the same decisions and they beat us on skill," the crewman added.

"We made a different choice early on and it could quite easily have gone the other way, it is very tactical.

"It was just an unbelievable experience. There were points where we were drifting along with no wind. As soon as it picked up we built some great momentum and it was simply glorious."

Watch leader SSgt Jason West (RE) echoed his colleague's sentiments and added that he was honoured to have had the opportunity to compete in the prestigious event.

"We may have come third but to complete the Sydney to Hobart race is an achievement in itself," the Royal Engineer Yacht Club member said.

"Although we did not win we came away as a very strong team.

"Towards the last day we nearly caught the RAF and Navy and they were almost in the doldrums that we were in such a strong position. It was absolutely exhilarating.

"The trip made all those miserable days training on the Solent worthwhile."

Capt Murray Smith (RE), who completed the Perth to Sydney leg before joining the race crew, also felt the sense of occasion.

"If you combine the Silverstone Grand Prix, the Grand National and FA Cup Final, that is how popular the Sydney to Hobart race is in Australia,"

he explained. "It was an amazing experience.

"The boats for Transglobe are not right for this event. It is like entering a Land Rover in a Grand Prix, you are not going to win but it is a lot of fun."

As well as competing with their Service rivals, the Army was part of a

very strong sailing field and was placed 79th out of the 95 finishers.

Transglobe is a year-long, round-the-world adventurous training exercise that has been divided into 13 legs.

As this issue went to press the soldiers were embarking on the Auckland to Montevideo stage which covers a distance of 6,300 nautical miles.

● Visit www.exercisetransglobe.com to follow the Army's progress. ■

'We made a different choice early on and it could quite easily have gone the other way'

Oz gold rush for Army vets

THE World Masters Games proved to be a happy hunting ground for the Army with both swimming and Rugby Union stars celebrating a magnificent medal haul.

Sydney's Olympic Park provided the backdrop for the event, which welcomed competitors from 98 countries in a field of 28 different sports, and the world-class facilities were inspirational for the swimmers.

After a week of acclimatisation the 13-strong team made a dream start, with Maj Sian Edwards (RADC) taking silver in the women's 800m freestyle.

Further success followed in the week-long meet with LCpl Luisa Gavazzi (RE); Cpl Collette Fear (Int Corps); Maj Katie Hislop (RE); Capt Amy Cruickshank (REME) and Cpl Ric Emerton (REME) among the individual medal winners.

The team finished with two gold, seven silver and eight bronze medals with a further four medals stemming from the relay races.

On the rugby field there was a similar tale of success.

The Army 35's side romped to victory in all three of their group matches to comfortably progress to the quarter-final stage.

Tries from Cpl Foxy Cokanasiga (RLC) and skipper WO2 Kev Davies (RE) helped to secure a hard-fought 15-10 victory over the Melbourne Moorabbin Rams, a result that was followed by a narrow 12-3 semi-final win over the Sydney Goats.

The tournament decider saw the Reds matched with hot favourites the White Hart Marauders, a semi-professional side featuring former Premiership and international players.

With defensive play dominating the clash the score was locked at 0-0 as the game entered the final five minutes.

The Marauders then broke through to score an unconverted try in the corner, leaving the Army on the verge of a heartbreaking defeat.

But with just 30 seconds remaining LCpl Tomasi Turagabeci ghosted home before WO1 Marc Wilding (REME) secured a famous win with the last kick of the match.



Picture: Cpl Rupert Frier, RLC

Big hitter: Pte Dean Rees (3 Para) throws a punch during his middleweight bout against Carl Walton

Paras give students masterclass

REIGNING Army boxing champions 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment continued their impressive form in the ring with a comprehensive victory over Oxford University.

The soldiers clashed with some of the country's best students in the nine-bout contest at London's Wellington Barracks to raise money for Airborne Forces Charities.

For most of the 3 Para team the contest was their first time fighting for the battalion and despite their inexperience they stormed to an 8-1 win.

Speaking after the victory team coach Cpl Paul Preece said: "I thought Oxford boxed really well; they matched us. Some of their boxers were better, it was just our lads pulled through with fitness and determination."

Boxers from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers also tested their ring skills against the Royal Engineers at the Bankhouse Hotel in Worcester.

Inspired performances from Cfn John Woodman, Cfn Si Biggs, Cfn John Davies, Cfn Dave Ogdenbe and Cfn Daniel Leggett helped the REME to a 5-2 win on a night which raised more than £9,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund and Help for Heroes.

SPORT SHORTS

ENDURANCE ace Capt Chris Howard (AGC (ETS)) raised more than £1,000 for Help for Heroes by completing the Winchester Body Armour Marathon.

The officer completed the gruelling challenge in a time of 4hr 17min despite "hitting the wall" at the 15-mile mark and running the last four-and-a-half miles "on empty".

Howard ran the race while wearing Osprey body armour.

GUSTING crosswinds tested the skills of the Army canopy piloting team at the World Cup in South Africa.

With a series of horrific injuries hitting the event the Service stars escaped unscathed following their appearances in the Great Britain squad.

Cpl Alan Westley (AAC) finished fourth in the third speed round, Cpl Deane Smith (RE) won the third zone accuracy round and Maj Alastair Macartney (RLC) finished 11th in the speed round and 16th overall.

"Canopy piloting requires consistency on each round, which was extremely difficult here," Macartney said.

"While the results weren't exactly what we were after we should be content with a strong overall performance."

COALITION forces marked the New Year with a charity football match against the Afghan National Army.

The clash saw British troops line-up alongside players from the Dutch, American and French military to raise just under \$500 for Help for Heroes.

Goals from RSM Carl Gardner (Lancs), LCpl Michael Williams (RDG), Maj Gary Bird (RM), Sgt Gall (Scots) and LCpl Sheldon St Clair (RLC) helped secure a 5-2 win in the match, which was played at Camp Dubbs FOB, on the southern edge of Kabul.

"At the end of the game we did a crossbar challenge with the Afghans, which had some funny results," Gardner told *SoldierSport*.

"The match was a great success, raising just under \$500 as well as building some good bridges with our Afghan counterparts."

A JOINT Army and Royal Navy team tasted success in the Inter-Services field gun competition thanks to a record-breaking run in Birmingham.

The mixed Service team from MoD Abbey Wood defeated a Royal Air Force Cosford squad in the contest, which ran over two nights in front of sell-out crowds at the National Indoor Arena.

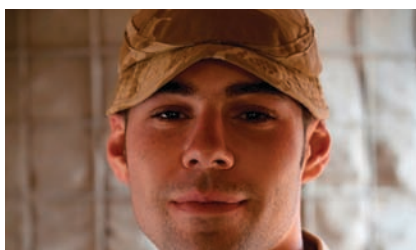
With Cosford taking the spoils on the opening night the Army members – many of who were running for the last time – inspired a stunning comeback and the team set a new National Indoor Arena record of 1min 22.2sec to secure the trophy.

final word



We asked British and Australian troops at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Armadillo for their thoughts on Op Herrick 11 so far

INTERVIEWS: LT SARA LUCE, RA
PICTURES: SGT ROB KNIGHT, RLC



LBdr Jamie Greenham (RA)

As a guided multiple launch rocket system operator I input the grids and data so we can fire missions. I've previously served on Op Telic 11 and it is very different here. The equipment has improved, however we don't have as many facilities as we had in Iraq. We are lucky here as we get on very well with the other units especially the gun line and the Danes.



Gnr Charlotte Dunn (RA)

I'm enjoying things so far. I was on Telic 12. The FOB is a lot better than I thought it would be. I was expecting solar showers and rations but we had toilets and a cookhouse installed as we arrived. Welfare facilities are good as we have both phone and internet access. The highlight so far has been firing the first mission as it was a real target and not just training as in the UK.



Gnr Connor Hall (RHA)

This is my first tour and so far it has been much better than I expected it to be. I work on a gun detachment and it was fantastic to fire for the first time and to be able to put all our training into practice. When we're not firing there are plenty of jobs and maintenance to be done. We do get some down time and a chance to catch up with others in the FOB which is good fun.



Sgt Mathew Miller (RAA)

Having previously served in East Timor I'm finding it a lot more kinetic here. Things have changed even since we arrived thanks to new facilities such as the cookhouse and toilets. We haven't fired as much as I thought we would but that's understandable. The highlight has been patrolling with the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team call signs and getting to see a bit of the place.



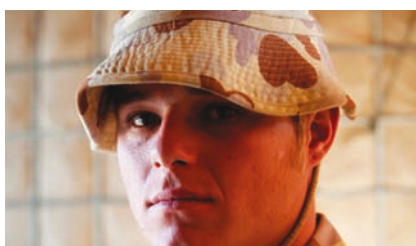
Gnr Adam Jackson (RHA)

This is my first tour and after all the training it's been good to finally get into it. We're very lucky here as compared to some patrol bases we are quite comfortable. There is no set pattern – we have periods when it is fairly quiet then suddenly we get a mission and it's very busy. My detachment is mixed Australian and British which has worked out very well.



Gnr Dave Mann (RHA)

I am a TA soldier and this is my first operational tour. I came out with an artillery regiment and work in the command post. The job can be pretty intense at times but we had plenty of training before deploying which has definitely prepared us well. The tour has given me a great insight into the Army and I am considering doing it full time when I return to the UK.



Gnr Mathew Farrell (RAA)

My previous tour was peacekeeping so this is quite different. I enjoy the fire missions when we get them but there is plenty to do when we are not firing. The highlight of the tour has been working with the Afghan National Army. They are a good bunch and try really hard despite the language and cultural differences. Integration with the British has been great and we all work together as a team.



Gnr Leigh-Anthony Greatorex (RHA)

I work on a light gun and it's been great so far. When a mission comes in it's all hands to the pump to get the gun to fire in the quickest time possible. The camaraderie is what gets you through. It's been a great learning experience for me as there are Australians on my gun and they have shown us their way of doing things as well. I'm enjoying broadening my horizons.



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