

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

RETURN OF THE KING

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exclusive interview

How the TA
sees itself

Inside the
Colchester
glasshouse



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Secret's out of

Commando gunners spring to the defence of MoD's cold-weather kit

Report: Andy Simms
Pictures: Graeme Main

REPORTS in the national press blaming military-issue sleeping bags for frostbite injuries sustained by soldiers conducting Mountain and Cold Weather Warfare (MCWW) training in northern Norway have been branded as "nonsense" by the commanding officer of the Army's lone commando regiment.

Lt Col Simon Wolsey stressed that none of the 12 cold weather injuries suffered by members of 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery, during a regimental exercise within the Arctic circle, where temperatures frequently dropped below minus 25C, could be attributed to the Army's long-serving sleeping bag or the kit issued to his green berets on arrival in Scandinavia.

"When using an Army sleeping bag in extreme conditions you might get a chill that wakes you up periodically in the night, but it cer-

tainly doesn't lead to any kind of cold weather injury," he explained. "The kit used by our soldiers is actually very good and most of them will tell you that they are in fact at their warmest when they're in their sleeping bags."

According to Lt Col Wolsey a degree of skills fade, an unwanted by-product of recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, which contributed to a prolonged absence from Norway, and more stringent health and safety regulations due to litigation issues, were far more plausible culprits for the larger-than-usual sick list.

"There has been no one cause for the injuries, none of which are serious, but the most common cases have been as a result of touching cold metal and refuelling stoves," he said. "An element of inexperience and bravado has played a factor with a lot of novices failing to take responsibility for themselves and address

frost nip injuries at an early stage. "Another factor is that the medical components are far, far more wary when it comes to cold weather injuries than they used to be. In years gone by troops would have been warmed back up and told to soldier on, but now they are declared injured and sent home.

"However, it is important to remember that Norway represents a harsh environment, which is the reason we train here, and it is inevitable that there will be the odd casualty. If conditions weren't harsh we wouldn't be getting the most out of our training."

Despite believing that British forces should explore the possibility of investing in a specialist sleeping bag specifically



Thermal U

Arctic socks - Lo
inner and outer.

Tent boots - A thermal over boot
used to keep feet warm inside
tent or sleeping bag

the bag

for use in cold weather environments, WO2 Sid Siddalls, one of 29 Commando Regiment's cold-weather warfare instructors, also sprang to the defence of the Army's beleaguered doss-bag.

"The arctic issue kit given to troops on exercise is getting better all the time and has come along way in the 20 years since I first visited Norway as a soldier," he said.

"We are constantly being asked to trial new equipment and clothing, which suggests that the British Army is not resting on its laurels. On the novice ski and survival courses we

run at the start of the training programme in Norway every-

one has to use Army kit so that they know that what they are issued with is adequate and how to use it correctly.

"The sleeping bags aren't the best, but they do the job. They are only designed for use in temperatures down to around minus 15C, but with the various different layers of clothing given to soldiers can be used in much colder conditions.

"I have heard no gripes from people in this regiment - guys have been cold in their bags but no one has gone down with cold weather injuries or suffered unduly while in them. The

main reason people do tend to steer away from the Army bag is not because it is not warm enough, but because that they want something smaller and more compact."

■ See Vox Pop on Page 86; and 29 Commando on exercise in Norway, Pages 27, 28 and 29.



Eat your greens



Lovely leeks: Aldershot-based soldiers of the **1st Battalion, The Royal Welch Fusiliers** celebrated St David's Day with their traditional leek-eating ceremony at a drumhead parade on the drill square of Mons Barracks.

The Welsh delicacy was served in style by Cpl Tony Evans, main picture. Immediately afterwards the battalion began 15 days of intensive training to prepare for a six-month tour to Iraq as part of 1st Mechanized Brigade. The first units were due to deploy early this month. Pictures: Mike Weston

● The **1st Battalion, Welsh Guards** celebrated St David's Day at their RAF St Athan barracks with a leek ceremony and parade attended by Regimental Colonel the Prince of Wales.

● In Basra, the **1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales** marked the day with leeks, a special lunch, and a battalion sports day.

Over to you . . .



Changing of the guard: **Maj Ralph Arundell**, left, 2ic of the 2nd Battalion, The Light Infantry, and **Lt Col Jorge Mendonça**, CO 1st Battalion, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment, lower and raise their respective flags as the LI makes way for the QLR from Catterick as resident infantry battalion of the Eastern Sovereign Base Area at Alexander Barracks in Dhekelia.

Picture: Cpl Will Craig

Kit shortages in Iraq 'worrying'

MPs call for more junior ranks to be heard

MEMBERS of Parliament who examined lessons learned during Op Telic have praised the work of the Armed Forces in Iraq but made a number of criticisms about the way the MoD equipped and protected troops.

The Commons Select Committee on Defence congratulates troops on their conduct, performance and commitment and describes the capture of Basra as a "significant military achievement."

But its report identifies serious shortcomings in the supply and distribution of critical items such as ammunition, body armour and NBC kit.

The MPs state: "We are pleased to note that, following its initial rejection of the concerns about personal equipment and protection, the MoD now acknowledges that there was a problem which had a detrimental impact on Service personnel."

The report recommends that "robust arrangements should be introduced to gauge the views of more junior ranks and specialists whose widespread concerns do not seem to be properly understood, reflected and acted upon by

more senior commanders and officials."

Describing the issue and availability of desert clothing and boots during Telic as a "confusing and worrying story", the MPs conclude that the MoD "clearly underestimated" the impact on morale of failing to provide the kit personnel required and expected, and that it was "unacceptable" that two weeks after the start of combat 60 per cent of the additional clothing requirement ordered was not available in theatre.

They found required levels of detection and protection were not available to everyone and that the lack of armoured vehicle filters was a matter of the "utmost seriousness".

The demands Op Telic placed on UK forces in the context of other operational requirements were "very close to the maximum they could sustain" and the committee urged the Government to recognise that the "forces are simply not large enough to sustain the pattern of operational deployment . . . without serious risk of damage to their widely admired professional standards".

● www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cm/dfence.htm

Cannabis alert

Reclassified drug still illegal, warn Army testers

OF the 92,000 soldiers compulsorily drug tested last year, nearly 500 showed positive. More than half those caught had smoked cannabis.

Despite the drug being reclassified in January, the Army will not tolerate its use. "It is still illegal under civil law and soldiers who test positive for cannabis or any other controlled drug will face administrative discharge," said Col Peter Davies, late LI, Colonel Personal

Services 2 (Army) at Upavon. The MoD's policy remains that drug misuse is unacceptable in the Armed Forces.

Cannabis was reclassified from class B (amphetamines and barbiturates) to class C (where it joins tranquillisers and anabolic steroids), but the use of it, possession and trafficking remains illegal. Prison terms of up to two years for possession and five for trafficking can be imposed for trading in it.

IN BRIEF

● As part of its support of humanitarian missions in former war zones, the MoD has given 12 armoured trucks to the HALO Trust for mine-clearance operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan. The DAF-45s, which are surplus to Army requirements, bring to more than 100 the number of ex-military vehicles gifted to the charity in the past four years.

● Five veterans, all in their eighties, flew to Burma last month to mark their involvement 60 years ago with Orde Wingate's Operation Thursday Chindit raid behind Japanese lines. The 15-day pilgrimage was organised by the Royal British Legion's travel service, Remembrance Travel, with funding from the Heroes Return scheme.

Picture: Sgt Brian Gamble



Armed for action: Troops from Tidworth-based 1st Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery have spent two months preparing for their deployment to Iraq with 1st Mechanized Brigade this month.

That training for the 700 gunners included an intensive week at Copehill Down village on Salisbury Plain learning

how to deal with civil disturbances. The gunners were joined by members of A Company, 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment in clearing streets of "rioters" provided by 1 Mech Bde and Arabic teachers from the School of Babylon.

The regiment will leave its AS90 guns in the UK while it takes part in Op Telic 4.

Jury service on cards for troops

SOLDIERS could find they have a new duty to perform when changes to the law come into force this month.

From April 5, Servicemen and women will no longer be excused jury service. Under the Criminal Justice Act 2003, they may be summoned for jury duty in England and Wales. The change will not apply to anyone with an electoral roll address in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

"It is critical that soldiers inform their commanding officer when summoned," says the Directorate of Personal Services (Army) at Upavon.

In common with civilians, Service personnel may apply to defer duty or be excused completely. Individuals must

satisfy the authority that there is good reason – such as medical or family commitments – to defer or be excused.

Commanding officers also have the opportunity to intervene if they consider the soldier's jury service would harm operational effectiveness.

Drumming up support

NEXT month's *Soldier* will have details of how units can enter for the Army Benevolent Fund's new silver Carrington Drum Award. Sponsored by Carrington & Co, who make regimental silver for the military, it will be presented to the unit that raises the most for the Army's national charity or produces the most innovative fundraising idea.

Win family tickets for Music on Fire!

WE have a set of family tickets, worth £60, for the spectacular Army Benevolent Fund 60th anniversary *Music on Fire!* event at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst on July 9 and 10.

To put yourself in with a chance of winning them, answer the question below and send it on a postcard or small sealed envelope, marked "ABF 60", to reach us by April 28. The first correct answer selected at random will win the tickets.

And if you don't win, you can still be a part of the anticipated 13,000 picnicking audience on each of the two evenings by calling the box office and credit card hotline on 020 8675 3582 or logging on to www.musiconfire.com

The question you need to answer is:

When was the ABF founded?

a) 1943 b) 1944 c) 1945

QDG chefs on run

Twenty to go: Sgt Paul Carpenter reaches the halfway point of a marathon in the Aldershot Garrison area. He and colleague Cpl Chris Penk, both chefs attached to 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards at Osnabrück, Germany, are planning to run 24 full 26.4-mile marathons this year – at the rate of two a month – to raise money for the Army Benevolent Fund and the BBC Children in Need Appeal. They hope to make £10,000 and donations can be sent to QDG, 12 Event, c/o RAO, Imphal Barracks, BFPO 36. Cheques should be payable to "QDG Central Bank".

Paul also ran the Aldershot marathon in memory of his father-in-law, who died that week.

Picture: Mike Weston



Normandy veterans' accommodation offer

FRENCH villagers have offered their homes to D-Day veterans who can't find hotel beds for the 60th anniversary events in June.

The official Normandie Memoire website has published details on how veterans wishing to stay with a family between June 3 and 8 may register for accommodation. The offer is available only to veterans who took part in the landings and Battle of Normandy. They should choose the town nearest to the ceremonies they wish to attend. Ring 0033 231 069504 or go to normandiememoire.com



● Mrs Friedl London, left, widow of the late Brig Don London, first president of the Army Benevolent Fund in Cyprus, presents a cheque for £15,000 to Brig David Shaw, the charity's regional finances and fundraising director. The island's small band of ABF supporters work hard to swell the coffers of the Army's national charity.

More cash for war memorial repairs

EXTRA funding for the preservation of free-standing war memorials in England is available from the Wolfson Foundation. Under the Grants for War Memorials scheme, administered by English Heritage, £60,000 will be available each

year to help communities repair and conserve memorials. Application packs, available from Friends of War Memorials on 0207 2590403, are assessed every six months and the closing dates are April 30 and October 31 each year.



On me 'ead!

Football crazy: Soldiers from 2 RGR, the Rifle Volunteers and 1 GS Regt RLC in Kabul lost 1-3 to the Afghan Under-21 side in a match at the International Security Force Headquarters. Before the kick-off, RLC soldiers held a coaching session for 60 children who were given medals and certificates by Col Mike Griffiths, Commander British Forces Afghanistan, and the head of the Afghan Football Association.

Training the trainers for Afghan army – Page 21

Presenting the Army at a venue near you

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. Shows start at 1830 and end with a buffet and a chance to talk to the military hosts. Call 01276 417000 or e-mail your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

Apr – 1, Luton; 6, Peterborough. **May** – 10, Catterick; 11, Pontefract; 12, Harrogate; 13, Rotherham; 24, Aberdeen; 25, Edinburgh; 26, Kelso; 27, Dumfries. **June** – 14, Barry; 15, Brecon; 16, Merthyr Tydfil; 17, Rhyl; 28, Banbury; 29, Henley-on-Thames; 30, Slough.

Special needs help is there – but you've got to ask first

SOLDIERS in Germany and other foreign posts who have dependants with special needs or disabilities are being urged to ensure the chain of command is aware of what support they need.

Unlike the UK, where local authorities are responsible for support, troops based abroad have to rely on the Army to provide what it can.

Army General Administrative Instruction No 108, held in unit admin offices, details how cases should be brought to the notice of the chain of command. This will not affect a soldier's career – the Army is obliged to minimise the disadvantages of personnel with special needs dependants, but can only do so when the requirement is known.

To report for duty at an overseas command and then reveal that a dependant has special needs could result in the family being sent back to the UK if support can't be found locally while the soldier has to continue with the posting.

Contacts: Welfare or admin offices; Army Welfare Service (UK and British Forces Germany); Personnel Welfare Service (in Cyprus and Northern Ireland); Service Children's Education (UK); or SSAFA Forces Help at 19 Queen Elizabeth Street, London SE12LP, tel 0207 0463 9234.

Switch it off

... and save Army a fortune for front-line kit

ARMY chiefs are bracing themselves for a 52 per cent rise in utility bills, currently running at £100 million a year, by 2010.

So serious is the potential drain on resources that energy-saving measures are to be discussed at a conference this month.

If soldiers and civilians took the simple precaution of turning off lights and taps, up to £3 million a year could be lopped off the utilities bill, enough to pay for a large chunk of front-line equipment.

The £100m bill covers Army facilities in the UK, Germany, Northern Ireland and Canada.

Among options being looked at is the potential for micro-turbines. Army Estates Organisation utilities manager David Gray said a rooftop turbine costing £750 could run the lights in his own office block at Erskine Lodge, Wilton.

"Intelligent" lighting sensitive to move-

ment which powers off if there is no one in the room could also be an option. He estimates that renewable energy across the Army estate could reduce power taken from the grid by as much as 20 per cent.

Most soldiers in single-living accommodation have a TV, computer, games console and other gadgets. If they turned off lights and other equipment when they were not needed, there would be more money for things that could have a direct impact on soldiers – such as front-line equipment.

It is estimated the Army could save a third of the power it is using by making its buildings energy-efficient. That is the cost of one new Apache helicopter every year.

"For every £1 we spend on a utility bill, it is £1 less being spent on something else," said Mr Gray. "In 2009-10 we are going to have a £62-million hole in our budget, and that will have to come from somewhere."

Oz officers' jungle gathering

TWENTY-four UK **exchange officers** and warrant officers in Australia gathered at Kokoda Barracks, Canungra on Queensland's Gold Coast. The annual conference is the only opportunity for personnel on two- and three-year tours in a wide range of Australian Defence Force posts to meet and share experiences. The barracks is the former home of the Australian Jungle Training Centre.

Ghana trains peacekeepers

THREE Army officers from the British Military Advisory Team in Ghana have been seconded to the **Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre** in the country. The UK, along with African and other nations, is helping Ghana to develop the regional centre of excellence, where peacekeeping skills and expertise in conflict prevention and resolution can be developed.

US infantry museum's MC

A REPLICA gallantry medal, combat uniform and personal items belonging to **Lt (now Capt) Charles Campbell MC, RRF**, have been presented to the US National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning in Georgia. They will be displayed in the museum's Operation Iraqi Freedom exhibition honouring coalition forces who supported the American-led mission.



Under Big Ben

A digest of what's being said on
Army matters in Parliament

Staff work flat-out on Suez medal

SOME idea of the work involved in processing applications for Suez Canal Zone 1951-54 campaign medals came to light through a series of written answers to questions from Aldershot MP Gerald Howarth.

Veterans' minister Ivor Caplin said on March 8 that more than 34,000 claims had been received, the majority by the Army Medal Office (AMO), which had had to spend more time than usual acknowledging the huge number of letters.

This had delayed the assessing of individual claims, though the backlog of letters had been cleared. The AMO, with 12 staff working full-time, was aiming to process between 250 and 300 cases a week, though no completion date could be predicted.

RMP deaths: A board of inquiry was convened on March 15 to examine the circumstances in which the six Royal Military Policemen died at Al Majarr Al Kabir, Iraq, on June 24 last year. The

board was addressing a wide-ranging series of questions including the issue of equipment to the men before their departure for Al Majarr Al Kabir.

Kenya exercise: Training at Archer's Post, Kenya, will be conducted by 1st Battalion, Irish Guards on Exercise Grand Prix this autumn.

Overseas service: Among 36,000 regular service personnel serving overseas on March 10, 2004, about 1,200 were members of the Territorial Army.

And I quote . . .

6 If a regime such as Saddam's... is responsible for the murder of hundreds and thousands of people over the years, why should we in the House of Commons oppose such military action to end such tyranny?

— **David Winnick** MP for Walsall North during the debate on Iraq (Attorney-General's advice).

ArmyNET is new one-stop info shop

ARMYNET – a restricted access website designed exclusively for soldiers and their families – has been launched on the internet.

The new service is a dramatic step forward for the Army.

Accessible worldwide from any internet-connected PC, ArmyNET will allow soldiers to use the latest in internet security technology to conduct routine business online.

Regular, Territorial Army and Reserve soldiers register by simply logging on to **www.armynet.mod.uk** and they can choose to sponsor a spouse, partner or other dependant.

Each registered user is given an ID and password. Once inside the website, they can access unclassified but sensitive information based on their user profile – from their latest Army pay statement, operational welfare instructions, and downloadable Army forms, to the latest media and soap action.

Every user is allocated a unique **armymail.mod.uk** e-mail account for the duration of their Army career, enabling real-time two-way communication across the Army at all levels.

Mail can be auto-forwarded to the user's usual e-mail account – such as Hotmail – ensuring important information reaches registered users even when they are on leave or away from their duty station.

Every Armymail account is safeguarded from viruses, allowing com-



puters available in operational areas under the operational welfare package to be used safely – even if commercial e-mail services are removed.

Launched by the Directorate Command and Battlespace Management (Army), ArmyNET is the product of an 18-month pilot project and already has 16,000 registered users. It is capable of catering for up to 140,000.

Corps and regiments are being encouraged to create and update their own online noticeboards and general information web pages by making use of ArmyNET's Content Management System (CMS).

To activate existing or construct new pages, units should contact the DCBM (A) Web Exploitation team to arrange training on the CMS, which normally takes two hours to complete.

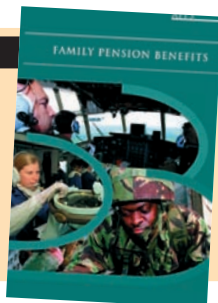
You can contact the team by e-mail to **admin@armymail.mod.uk** or tel (mil) (9) 4371 2548/2562 or (civ) 01258 482548/482562.

How to access ArmyNET and register

- Type in **www.armynet.mod.uk**
- You may receive a "Security Alert" message if your browser does not recognise the MoD Security Certificate – click YES to proceed.
- Apply for an ArmyNET account – follow the instructions for "sign-up".
- Provide the information requested (which will include your National Insurance number).
- If the database does not contain your details, contact your RAO to confirm that your details are correct and correspond to the Army Pay Database. Otherwise contact **admin@armymail.mod.uk**.
- Once registered, use the log-in screen to access ArmyNET.

IN BRIEF

● Two easy-to-read and helpful booklets in the Armed Forces Pension Scheme series, *Family Pension Benefits*, right, and *Invaliding* are available on MoD websites, both intranet and internet. They include sources of help, advice and support.



● Fourteen Service climbers, including five from the Army, are attempting to climb the world's fifth highest mountain, the south east ridge of Makalu in the Himalaya. The team, which left for the region last month, hopes to make its summit bid in May.

● Men of the 1st Battalion, The Green Howards will relieve the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles in Afghanistan later this month. Most of the battalion will be in Kabul with the International Security Assistance Force to help the Afghan Transitional Authority maintain security in the capital and surrounding areas while a small team will join the



Experience: Cpl Andy Bishop, above, completed four operations in the Balkans. The tour shields, dating back to Grapple I, will be displayed in the Royal Engineers Museum

Last out

Sapper presence in Balkans ends

THE last Royal Engineer squadron to serve in the Balkans has cleared out its Bosnian base and returned to Germany.

Sappers of 31 Armoured Engineer Squadron, part of 32 Engineer Regiment, have just finished a six-month tour.

As well as construction, combat engineer and snow-and-ice clearance tasks, the squadron co-ordinated the Multi-National Brigade North-West's helicopter-borne incident response team.

Royal Engineers have been in the Balkans since Op Grapple I in 1992 and provided support to Ifor, Kfor and Sfor over the next 12 years.

Maj Tom Scott, officer commanding the 100-strong unit, which is part of 7th Armoured Brigade, said: "During Op Telic we were one of the first units into Basra in support of the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards and are now the last engineer unit to leave the Balkans.

Cpl Andy Bishop, with four Balkan tours behind him, from Vitez in 1992 to Op Oculus in 2003, said: "I remember dri-



Key moment: SSgt (SQMS) Shane Crowhurst, who was responsible for clearing the base, locks up Sipovo Lower Camp

ving through Mostar in 1992 and hardly seeing anyone on the streets – now there are DIY stores and people everywhere.

People always welcomed us with open arms but they are not looking forward to us leaving.

"It was quite harrowing the first time I was posted here – no phones and tents in the middle of winter. Now the system is probably better than the single guys get back in Germany. There are six TV channels, R&R and adventure training, and the gym facilities are fantastic."

● As this issue went to press, the 1st Battalion, The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, under Lt Col Nick Welch, supported by Queen's Company, Grenadier Guards as well as Royal Artillery, RLC and AGC personnel, deployed to Kosovo to reinforce Kfor peacekeeping units under pressure as violence flared across the region between ethnic Albanians and Serbs.

Wessex gathering



VIP visit: The Earl of Wessex meets members of The Royal Wessex Yeomanry at Bovington Camp and Lulworth gunnery ranges.

Picture: Cpl Rob Knight, RLC

Recruitment drive for birders

THE Army Ornithological Society (AOS) needs recruits to help with overseas and UK-wide bird expeditions and surveys.

As the Army's main focal point for ornithological issues, members are involved in conservation work, bird counts and other MOD and civilian schemes through field trips, overseas expeditions and scientific studies.

Future planned expeditions will visit Ascension Island, Holland, Texas, the West Coast of Canada and Diego Garcia. Past expeditions have included Nepal, Belize, Bulgaria, Poland and The Gambia.

Membership of AOS is open to serving and ex-Army personnel, other Services and their families, MOD employed civil servants and members of Commonwealth forces.

Although a good knowledge of birds is always welcome, the Society makes a point of developing initial interest in the field through practical activities. It is particularly keen to recruit more serving soldiers and officers of the Regular Army.

Membership enquiries should be passed to either Maj Andrew Bray RLC on Mil 9352 31501 or WO2 Richard Seargent on Colchester 9465 13208.

US-led Afghan National Army Training Team. The remainder of the battalion, based further north in Mazar-e-Sharif, will form part of the United Kingdom Provincial Reconstruction Team.

● The town's biggest military parade in generations will mark the 150th anniversary of the

British Army arriving in Aldershot. More than 1,000 soldiers, serving and retired, will march through the town on April 30.

● Soldiers from 2 R Irish moved 50 tonnes of wood after cutting down trees threatening St Saviours Church in the twin villages of Kells and Connor in Co Antrim. The Colours of 1/9 Ulster

Defence Regiment are laid up in the church.

● Action-packed days out at the Imperial War Museum in spring and summer include D-Day duck tours, Easter Egg hunts and interactive children's workshops. For further information on all events log on to www.iwm.org.uk or phone 0207 416 539.



Home team: WO2 Roger Williams, right, from the Army Careers and Information Office in Sheffield, presents a new strip to Ahmed Mohamoud and Amin Kassim of local football club Surud United under a sponsorship deal he helped organise. Surud United FC plays in the

Sheffield and District DB Sports Under-18 League across South Yorkshire. WO2 Williams said the sponsorship gave the recruiting office an opportunity to build a relationship with Sheffield's Somali community and to inform youngsters of career prospects in the military.

Join Stephen at his big birthday party

THREE years after the terrorist bomb blast which robbed him of his sight, his left hand and part of his hearing, Army cadet Stephen Menary is planning an 18th birthday to remember.

He is turning his party into a high-profile charity auction which he hopes will raise £20,000 for good causes.

Money collected will be given to four organisations which helped him and his family in the aftermath of the blast: St Dunstan's for blind ex-Service personnel, SSAFA Forces Help, Children in Crisis, and Lindon Lodge – a school for pupils with visual impairment.

Stephen was 14 when a bomb disguised as a torch exploded in his hand at the White City Territorial Army centre, which he attended every week.

"My family and I have had tremendous support from lots of different people and



Charity 18th party: Stephen Menary

organisations since the accident so we started up the Cadet Stephen Menary Jump 4 Charity Appeal because we really wanted to be able to give something back," said Stephen.

"I've been collecting items for some time and wanted to come up with a great event to auction them at. This is the perfect opportunity."

The Victory Services Club in London will host Stephen's birthday fund-raiser on June 3. He hopes the guest list will include sporting, TV and media personalities as well as military and charity representatives and medical staff involved in his treatment.

● If you want tickets to the party, to donate money or contribute auction items, e-mail Stephen at j4c@cadetmenary.com or post them care of the Army Cadet Force Association, Holderness House, 51-61 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4DW.

Abseilers wanted for tower descent

WANTED: Intrepid soldiers to take part in fund-raising activities.

Parity for Disabled, an Aldershot-based charity, is organising a sponsored abseil down the outside of the 150ft tower block at St Omer Barracks on May 15.

Col Paul Budd, Commandant of the RLC Training Centre, said it would be an experience to remember. Ring 01252 375581 to take part.

Meanwhile, the Laura Crane Trust, a charity which funds research into cancers affecting the 13-15 age group, is looking for people to trek the Ghunsa and Thubten Chulung Gumpa route in the Everest region of the Himalayas.

Details of the expedition, from March 4 to 13 next year, and a free trek brochure, can be obtained from the trust on 01484 510013 or helen@lauracranetrust.org

Paper talk

What the Press has been saying

● The Army has nearly 200 more senior officers, including up to triple the number of generals, than the official requirement, according to figures obtained by Liberal Democrat defence spokesman Paul Keetch. – *Guardian*

● Army drivers in Iraq saw red after their commanding officer banned them from wearing sunglasses. They were ordered to ditch their Ray-Bans and other designer frames while off-duty in their Basra camp. The 120 drivers from 60 Squadron, 4 Composite Logistic Support Regiment can still wear shades in their trucks and Land Rovers. – *Sun*

● British troops can expect to be in Iraq for at least two more years, the UK's senior envoy in Baghdad warned. Sir Jeremy Greenstock said that, as in the Balkans, forces would have to be deployed for "longer than planned". – *Daily Mail*

● Senior military officers are to be prevented from regular contact with journalists under a plan approved by Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary. – *Guardian*

● US Army chiefs want to equip their paratroopers with the wings a stuntman used to glide across the English Channel. They reckon the hi-tech carbon fibre fins which Austrian Felix Baumgartner strapped to his back could enable troops to sneak behind enemy lines. – *Sun*

● If this Government wishes to commit itself to further wars of choice it needs to learn three fundamental lessons pretty quickly. First, plan and supply the Army for the worst case – the wars you start are seldom the ones you end up with. Secondly, soldiers are not fools and their loyalty is not unlimited; don't ever take it for granted again. Thirdly, always listen to the advice of your senior commanders – they are the ones who have to fight their way out of whatever jam you land them in. – Brig (Retd) Tom Foulkes, in a letter to *The Times*.

● As a British soldier serving in Iraq, I say to my fellow countrymen who may be despondent about life in Britain: just be thankful for everything you have and realise how fortunate we are in the West. – Letter from J Powlers, of Colchester, in *Daily Express*

● The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has been given a four-year contract to maintain the graves in South Africa of the 25,200 soldiers who died fighting for Britain in the Boer War. – *Daily Telegraph*

Paras in Baghdad

Battalion learns new skills to guard British Embassy in tense city

Report: Jonathan Turner
Picture: Cpl Gary Wort RAF

SOLDIERS from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have deployed to the Iraqi capital of Baghdad to help protect British VIPs.

They are due to spend several weeks in the city, which has been hit by a series of terrorist attacks, to watch over staff at the British Baghdad Support Unit.

Their duties include guarding the British Embassy and escorting VIPs through the city, and to and from Baghdad International Airport.

Lt Jim Farndon, platoon commander of 11 Platoon, D Company, said the soldiers were enjoying the chance to do something in

‘The biggest challenge we face is the higher threat level here 9

Iraq which most other British troops would not get the chance to do.

“The biggest challenge we face is the higher threat level here compared with Basra,” he said. “There is a greater danger from improvised

explosive devices, suicide bombers and so on.

“The guys have to be wary and watch each other’s backs as well as the people they are protecting. But, as ever, they are dealing with the challenges very professionally and are coping very well.”

The soldiers have been given additional training in escort driving to teach them how to escape from ambushes and avoid bomb attacks. In Baghdad, they use civilian vehicles to help them blend in with ordinary traffic.

“Being in Baghdad is not something most British troops are getting to do,” Lt Farndon said. “We count ourselves lucky that we have the chance to get this kind of operational experience.”

Sgt Charlie Carver, who oversaw the driving training, said it was the first time his soldiers had done this kind of job.

“This is very valuable for my guys, because it is the first time they have had this kind of training. It represents a step-up in their soldiering skills.

“It certainly is a lot busier up here, and there is a lot more going on. In our eyes, it is a bit like the early days in Northern Ireland.”



Defensive driving: Pte Andrew Pownall practises escort skills in Baghdad

Milestone as Iraqi takes over

BRIG Dhia Kadom Jawad Al-Kadony has taken command of 5,000 Iraqi troops trained by the British Army and other coalition forces in Basra.

His appointment as the new commander of the Iraqi Civil Defence Corps' 70th Brigade is a milestone in the development of the corps.

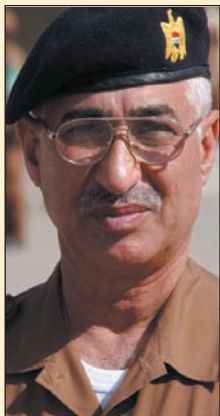
Brig Dhia was formerly a brigadier in the Marine Infantry. His brigade will assist with security operations, primarily in rural areas, in the Al Basra, Maysan, Dhi Qar and Al Muthanna provinces. It will support Iraqi police with vehicle check-points and patrolling.

He inspected a pass-out parade of officers in Basra and said he was looking forward to watching the ICDC grow as more soldiers were trained and equipped.

Also present were Brig Nick Carter, commander of 20th Armoured Brigade, and Lt Col Jonny Gray, CO

of the 1st Battalion, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, which is responsible for training the ICDC in southern Iraq.

Coalition forces are continuing to work alongside the ICDC and other Iraqi security forces in joint operations and training programmes.



Appointed: Brig Dhia

Free parcel service to end after Easter

THE free postal packet service to Iraq, which allowed relatives and friends of Service personnel to send packets weighing up to 2kg free or at no charge, ends on April 8. This will allow Easter gifts to be posted before the free service ceases.

After April 8, which marks the changeover between 20th Armoured Brigade and 1 Mechanized Brigade, a package up to 2kg will be able to go at the concessionary rate of £7.23, equivalent to the UK inland first class postage rate.

The MoD says it would be unfair to personnel deployed in other theatres to allow the Iraq concession to continue.

Sappers restore normal service

SAPPERS of 35 Engineer Regiment have been helping Iraqis to get vital utilities working efficiently since they deployed at the end of last year to support 20th Armoured Brigade.

A complete change from the Paderborn-based unit's usual concentration on close support in war operations and peacetime engineering, the switch to utility support was achieved despite a steep learning curve.

Several different teams have focused on fuel, liquid petroleum gas, power generation, distribution and transmission, pipeline repair and sewage and solid waste.

By offering technical, managerial and programme advice, the engineers have enabled the Iraqis to identify and solve problems for themselves, so taking ownership of their own essential utilities.

For example, a team under 2nd Lt Nick Spratley liaised with Basra authorities to keep sewage ditches and culverts open and to reconnect sewers.



We'll fix it: A section of 35 Engr Regt sappers work with a Chinook to replace damaged power lines in the desert

Airborne pylons pace of repair in

VITAL repairs to electricity lines in southern Iraq are set to accelerate after coalition forces perfected a new method of replacing damaged pylons, **writes Jonathan Turner.**

British Army engineers and a crew from the Royal Air Force used a Chinook helicopter to lower a repaired pylon back into place outside Az Zubayr.

The new technique means pylons can also be replaced in the southern marshes, where the ground is too boggy for conventional cranes.

The Chinook, from 1310 Flight, based at Basra airport, took 30 minutes to lift the 4.5-tonne pylon and lower it into place. On the ground soldiers from 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron and Iraqi

engineers from the Ministry of Electricity pinned the pylon into place. The job took close coordination between the helicopter and the ground, especially as winds were gusting to 30 knots.

Sqn Ldr Simon Paterson, the pilot, said it required a lot of concentration to get the pylon in place. "We literally had to move it inch by inch to get there," he said. "It was about as difficult as I thought it would be. We're very pleased we managed to get it where it had to go."

Maj Alex Hilton, of 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron, said that by using the helicopter, pylons could be replaced in locations which were otherwise totally inaccessible.

"This method is a lot faster than trying



Pictures: Cpl Jimmy Millin RLC

Quick change: A replacement pylon is dropped into place by a Chinook helicopter

Chilled-out ammo will save millions



Picture: Cpl Gary Wort RAF

Heading for a cold climate: LCpl Alex Bowers, serving with 6 Supply Regiment RLC, loads the first set of ammunition boxes into the large climate-controlled storage unit at Shaibah

A NEW £1 million project to protect British ammunition from the searing heat in Iraq has been officially opened at Shaibah, **writes Jonathan Turner.**

Six climate-controlled stores have been constructed, which will save an estimated £10 million a year by increasing the shelf life of ammunition. The site will be run by Ammo Troop, 4 Composite Logistic Support Regiment RLC.

Col Steve Smith, commander of the National Support Element (NSE), said without refrigerated stores ammunition would become unusable in under a year.

"The new shelters maintain a steady

Shelf-life extended

temperature of 20C, which means the ammunition will remain effective for many years," he said. "This allows us to return it safely to the UK if we no longer need it here. Without such a store, we would have to destroy it as soon as it went past its shelf life."

quicken n desert

to rebuild a pylon and re-erect it by hand," he said. "Many of the pylons also have to go into the marshes, and this will make it a lot easier to do that."

"There are 30 pylons to erect between here and Al Faw. The quicker we can get the pylons up the quicker we can get lines up and get electricity to people."

The Iraqi Ministry of Electricity is also working hard to repair the damaged power-lines, which were demolished by looters stealing copper cables.

"The new cables will be aluminium, not copper, so hopefully they will not be a target for looters," Maj Hilton said.

The lines will also be guarded by the military and security forces from the Ministry of Electricity.

REME move on loggie base

A COMPANY of Tidworth-based soldiers swapped pine trees for palm trees.

The 120 troops from 6th Battalion REME have supported 20th Armoured Brigade in the south-east of the country, helping to keep it on the road by maintaining vehicles and keeping vital equipment working in the harsh environment.

Most of the soldiers are located at the Shaibah Logistic Base but elements are

spread as far north as Al Amarah and Al Zubayr Port and Kuwait in the south.

They are supported by 14 members of the Territorial Army's 101st and 102nd REME battalions.

At the end of its tour the company will be replaced by a second batch of troops from 6 Bn REME, who will work with 1 Mechanized Brigade, which deployed at the end of last month.

Force for future



United front: Afghan National Army, currently 9,500-strong, intends to become a national force of 70,000

New Afghan army moulded by British training techniques

Report and pictures: UK ANATT

RAISING an army from scratch in Afghanistan is a daunting task but one that the Kabul-based Afghan National Army Training Team (ANATT) has got firmly on track.

The UK element of the US-led training team – which includes 22 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles – has played a pivotal role.

Using widely-respected British Army techniques, the Gurkhas have already instructed 1,000 Afghan NCOs and are putting the final touches to a training regime that will allow the Afghans to tutor themselves to coalition standards from the end of May onwards.

“A strong national army under a democratically elected government is the key to future peace in Afghanistan,” said Maj Frazer Lawrence, 2 RGR, who leads the UK unit.

Training takes place at the Kabul Military Training Centre, where 2,500 troops pass through training at any one time. The UK team can process up to 400 NCOs.

Recruits aged 18 upward are drafted in from all parts of Afghanistan. Some of the older soldiers come with previous military experience gained through many



Capt (QGO) Shivakumar Limbu, 2 RGR with new arrivals for the JNCO course

years of fighting the Taliban and the Russians.

Soldiers receive \$70 per month during training and if successful will progress to a wage of just over \$100.

When trained, many deploy on operations against the Taliban. Later in the year, they will play a key part in providing security for the democratic elections.

While US troops run basic training, the UK team co-ordinates all NCO courses and French forces run the officer programme.

Basic training lasts ten weeks, with students showing potential elevated to a junior NCO course after four weeks. The UK team runs three courses – six weeks for JNCOs, five weeks for combat leaders and three weeks for senior sergeants.

“Junior NCO training is based on our section commanders’ battle course, tailored to the needs of the Afghans,” said Maj Lawrence. “We’ve included an internal security package, lectures on human rights, the battle for hearts and minds and a series of practical lessons on vehicle anti-ambush drills and mine awareness training.”



Sgt Kajiman Limbu, 2 RGR, supervises Afghan soldiers during machine-gun training

“The transformation as they pass through the six-week course is dramatic and nearly all become capable section commanders. We teach controlled, accurate and well thought-out assaults. No more firing from the hip on automatic while charging at the enemy from the front.”

The combat leaders’ course – the Afghan equivalent of the British Army’s platoon sergeants’ battle course – is particularly demanding as most of it is spent on the training area and it culminates in a tough 48-hour exercise. The end product is impressive.

Senior sergeants are taught the roles of company and *kandak* (battalion) sergeant majors. Mentally challenging, their course concentrates on discipline, administration, bearing, dress and drill, and their responsibilities in all phases of war.

“We are now on track to hand over all of our courses to the ANA,” said Maj Lawrence. “We have trained an Afghan instructor cadre of officers and senior NCOs and most have already begun teaching, under 2 RGR supervision, on the junior course.”

My
Army

KING ABDULLAH II OF JORDAN



Return of the King

Former Hussars troop commander reveals why he has re-modelled his Forces on the British regimental system

Interview: Chris Horrocks
Pictures: Steve Dock

HIS Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, Monarch of The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and 43rd generation direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, has a way of putting people at their ease.

In the tastefully understated lounge of his suite at one of London's grandest hotels, at the end of a hectic few days in England, he looked relaxed in a blazer, slacks and open-necked shirt as he rose, smiling, to shake hands.

The dialogue was originally to have been conducted by e-mail. But the King, who two days earlier had visited his old regiment The Light Dragoons for the first time since being appointed its Colonel-in-Chief last year, dispensed with such for-

malty and decided he wanted *Soldier* to interview him in person.

Educated in England and the United States as well as his own country, Prince Abdullah was commissioned in 1981 from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst into the 13th/18th Royal Hussars (QMO), where he spent about a year and commanded a troop of 17 soldiers and six Fox armoured cars.

The regiment amalgamated with the 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars in 1992 to form The Light Dragoons, where he is remembered as a popular and highly competent officer, with great charm and a keen sense of humour – qualities he had needed in abundance at Sandhurst.

"The shock of the first five weeks at Sandhurst remains in the memory of anyone who's been there," recalled the 42-year-old King. "It was very tough and

challenging but I think everybody looks back with tremendous fondness at that period of time. And it was a time, again when you look back, that really developed an individual's character. I've seen my brothers and sisters and some other members of my family go through it – it made a tremendous, positive difference."

The King was candid about what he liked least about that time.

"I think the worst thing, for many people from my part of the world, was the cold. I came down with trench foot on one exercise. There was snow on Salisbury Plain and in Senybridge."

"On the positive side, I was very fortunate as an officer to have very good colour sergeants at Sandhurst and with the 13th/18th. I think it really makes – moulds – an officer right at the

beginning in the proper way. Looking back, it was because of those two people that my military career was – I hope – successful, because of the basic training I received."

King Abdullah described how his links with the British Army had influenced the shape of his own Armed Forces.

"One thing that Sandhurst taught you was tradition," the King said. "When I returned home we had sort of 'Americanised' the Jordanian Armed Forces. We had gone from the regimental system to the brigade and divisional system and we



Pleased to meet you: King Abdullah of Jordan meets families and other guests after inspecting soldiers of The Light Dragoons and taking the first salute as Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment. He had been greeted on his arrival at Robertson barracks, Swanton Morley by the CO, Lt Col David Amos, and the Colonel of the Regiment, Lt Gen Sir Roderick Cordy-Simpson.

During the parade the King presented soldiers of C Squadron with Nato medals for peacekeeping service in Bosnia and the day ended with an armoured battle display.

"It was a wonderful day," the King later told *Soldier*. "I think when I arrived I was a bit nervous and so was the regiment, but as the day went on I saw most of the squadrons and spent a lot of time in the Sergeants' Mess and Corporals' Mess. By the end of the day I felt I was back where I was 20 years ago."



Relaxing in the JNCOs' refurbished mess . . .

had all gone to standard black berets like the Americans and Canadians.

"In the past five years, since His Late Majesty King Hussein passed away, I have reintroduced the regimental system and skill-at-arms berets and given regiments their own characteristics to make them different from one another."

"The powerfulness of the regimental system – the family atmosphere – is what makes the British Army different from any other army in the world. That is the single most important change I have made."

The King spoke of his family's long

ng



... meeting fellow officers ...



... listening to more young soldiers ...



... and presenting C Squadron with Bosnia medals

association with the British Army and his pride, as a foreign monarch, at being granted the special honour of being invited by the Queen to become Colonel-in-Chief of the Light Dragoons in succession to the late Princess Margaret.

"That is not a simple matter," he said. "The last time this happened I think was to the Czar of Russia or Kaiser Wilhelm. To have the honour, for a foreign dignitary, to be Colonel-in-Chief of a British regiment is a tremendous undertaking and one that I don't take lightly.

"It is not just about being Colonel-in-Chief but about the relationship that is

shared between our Armed Forces. Indeed the relationship between our two nations has historically always been a very strong one. Obviously it is strong between the two royal families and has been through several generations. Politically, we have a very strong relationship with the British Government.

"And there is a long historical friendship with the Armed Forces, which of course will be of particular interest to *Soldier Magazine*.

"As we continue to see things getting worse in the Middle East – and things unfortunately will get worse before they

get better – more and more cooperation between the Jordanian Armed Forces and the British military will happen naturally as we are side-by-side in a very troubled area. As you provide forces to the Middle East and further afield you will have seen in the past six or seven years with UN, Nato and other coalition initiatives, Jordanian soldiers standing side-by-side with British soldiers.

"Politically in the past two years, with Tony Blair's government, we have been very close on issues in the Middle East. So the future can only see that relationship getting stronger."

Seriously tough

New plant in pipeline for Royal Engineers

SAPPERS will begin to get their hands on some seriously rugged new vehicles and machinery next year under a 15-year Private Finance Initiative worth more than £500 million, **writes John Elliott.**

The contract, for what will be known as C Vehicles, covers a range of heavy plant equipment and logistical support and construction machines. They will start to come into service next year, with full service provision by April 2006.

Examples are tracked bulldozers, dump trucks, excavators, wheeled tractors, container handlers, cranes and forklifts.

The project also covers specialist equipment for airfield damage repair, explosive ordnance disposal, amphibious operations and bespoke handling of combat supplies.

According to *Preview*, the journal of the Defence Procurement Agency, Amey Lex Consortium has been chosen as the MoD's preferred bidder.

C Vehicles, in tandem with a variety of widely-used commercial logistic vehicles specifically modified for military use, will form part of the support vehicle fleet available to the Royal Engineers.



Tough guys: Two examples of the equipment planned under the C Vehicles contract. They are a medium-wheeled excavator Caterpillar M318, inset, and an airport dozer Caterpillar 30 30

Mamba is ready to strike

FOUR complete Mobile Artillery Monitoring Battlefield Radar (Mamba) systems have been delivered to Catterick-based 5th Regiment RA six months ahead of schedule and ready to deploy anywhere in the world.

The state-of-the-art battlefield radar, designed to pinpoint the positions of enemy artillery, has been built by Ericsson under a contract worth £30 million.

Earlier versions of the system, leased from the company, were praised by UK troops in Afghanistan and Iraq after proving highly effective in combat.

Mamba is mounted on tracked BV-206 vehicles. Two can fit in a C-130 and it can also be carried underslung by a Chinook helicopter.

It takes just minutes to deploy with a crew of five but can be operated by a single soldier. Mamba has a range of 20km and can be networked with others to cover 100 times that area.

SPECIALIST electronic warfare troops, including 14 Signal Regiment, have taken delivery of Scarus, the next generation of lightweight equipment designed to intercept enemy communications and pinpoint their locations.

Battle-proven during the war in Iraq, the system was produced by Falcon Ltd of Tewkesbury. It is more sensitive, more capable and easier to use than existing EW equipment and, critically, light enough to be man-portable.

Land Command and the manufacturers pulled out all the stops to make Scarus available to troops in Iraq. It was reported to have performed faultlessly during Op Telic and was used on many occasions to gather vital intelligence in combat situations.

Twelve complete systems have been delivered under the £2.5 million contract to EW units, including 14 Sig Regt and the Royal Marines.

A CIVILIAN company has been signed up by Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood to provide logistical support for military operations and exercises.

Kellogg Brown & Root could be responsible for the provision of services ranging from tented accommodation, food and medicine to airport facilities, vehicle maintenance and interpreters.

The contract has a core value of £12 million although demands by PJHQ to supply quick-reaction forces could add up to £50 million a year to its value. KBR personnel, who delivered temporary deployable accommodation (TDA) at short notice to troops in Iraq, will be attached to planning staff at Northwood.

RANGES at Aberporth and Llanbedr in Wales are to play a part in the development of unmanned aerial vehicles for the UK and Europe. It will be the only specialist UAV environment outside the USA.



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FOOfighter

29 Commando Regiment hones skills learned in Iraq

Pictures: Graeme Main

BY swapping the heat of battle in the Gulf for the chill air of the northern extremities of Norway, 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery's deployments have become as diverse as the firepower assets available to their Forward Observation Officers (FOOs) on operations.

An integral component in the high-tech surveillance matrix used to such devastating effect in degrading enemy positions in both the mountains of Afghanistan and the deserts of Iraq, the role of the Plymouth-based regiment's FOOs and their Fire Support Teams (FSTs) has evolved dramatically over the past three years.

Previously responsible for providing offensive support for 3 Commando Brigade by coordinating fire from the regiment's own

105mm light guns, the eyes and ears of the commando gunners are now also adept at working alongside multi-national forces and their assets.

While in Norway the FOOs honed skills learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, where they worked closely with the United States Marine Corps, American

Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Companies – the US Army's indirect fire specialists – and British close air support, by conducting a joint exercise with the Norwegian Air Force.

“The regiment is keen to build on our experiences of operating alongside the Americans and develop the concept of

Eyes and ears on the enemy: After an 18km ski into position, Capt Allister Sheffield, above left, and Bdr David Heath (both 79 Bty) man a forward observation post high above 29 Commando Regiment's gun-lines



Gun runner: One of the regiment's 105mm light guns being towed into position by an articulated BV206



having multi-national Fire Support Teams," explained 29 Commando's 2ic Maj Hugh Baker. "The idea being that in times of conflict there can be a complete integration of joint effects, inclusive of all indirect and direct-fire support weapons."

During the live-firing stage of the exercise the FSTs deployed on a mountainside high above the regiment's gun-lines and, equipped with Man-portable Surveillance and Target Acquisition Radar (MSTAR), a thermal imager, laser range-finder and binoculars, executed joint artillery and Norwegian F16 fire missions.

Capt Allister Sheffield, a FOO with 79 Kirkee Bty, told *Soldier*: "We can now find ourselves in charge of the management and deconfliction of a huge array of quite potentially devastating equipment, instead of just purely artillery."

"When you are working with aircraft and mortars there is a lot more to our job than purely the technical side of gunnery. There is a lot of number-crunching involved in coordinating the various assets to ensure that missions are completed safely and that they produce the desired strike effect on the ground."



Guns at the ready: Above, 8 Battery 105mm light gun crew LBdr Gav Groves, Gnr Lee Slater and Bdr Nathan Morrin spring into action

Number-crunching: Using information provided by their FSTs, 79 Battery's Fire Planning Cell (FPC) issue fire missions to the multi-national force's offensive assets. Left to right, signaller Gnr Pete Hammill, FPC commander Capt Tom Vincent and battery commander Maj James Learmont





How it was: A harness helps a soldier become acclimatised to real heights

Not-so-high jinx: Soldiers carry out "confidence-building" exercises on the new-style trapezium, main picture

High-level deceit

P Company training, assault courses will change in light of Euro-edict on swings

Report: John Elliott
Picture: Graeme Main

EUROPEAN health and safety regulations designed to standardise equipment in children's playgrounds may affect radically the Army's robust parachute training methods, it has emerged.

From April 1, kiddies' swings will have to be hung no more than 53cm above a soft, rubberised matting surface. But the legislation, drawn up to cut the rising number of playground accidents across Europe, is not age-sensitive. An oversight by the drafters means that as the law stands, it applies to high-level confidence-building equipment currently employed by the military for training and selection purposes.

So-called "trapeziums" and other assault-course items, used extensively to prepare would-be para-

troopers attempting to pass the Army's gruelling P Company selection regime, will have to be lowered to near ground level to conform with the edict from Brussels. As the MoD sought no exemption, there appears to be now no way to avoid the new legislation.

Instead of daring to climb to the height of a two-storey building before stepping out on to a flimsy rope walkway, soldiers will carry out the nerve-testing manoeuvres on equipment slung at little more than knee height.

Instructors have expressed concern that individuals who show no fear on the low-level equipment will "freeze" when ordered to do the same thing for real 30 or 40 times further from the ground.

Under current guidelines, potential airborne recruits who hesitate at tree-top altitude are accompanied on the trapezi-

um by experienced staff who "talk" them through their anxieties. Robust encouragement has helped many who would otherwise not have passed the initial selection tests to overcome their acrophobia and to go on to establish successful careers as soldiers in the Airborne Forces.

While MoD lawyers examine the small print of the EU directive, motivational consultants are being commissioned "just in case" to devise imaginative ways to create "depth" under apparatus barely three steps off the ground.

Recruits could be deceived by a combination of pseudo-height disguise techniques into believing they are operating far above the ground. Special effects could further build an impression of greater spatial dimension than is actually the case.

"This is a joke," ex-WO1 (RSM) Josh "Highball" Higham, who until his retirement several years ago, was chief instructor at P Company's former training base in Aldershot, told *Soldier*. "They are going to make the training so meaningless that anyone will be able to join the paras. Those Brussels pen-pushers should be told to take a running jump, ideally from a great height."

THE GUILTY DIRECTIVE

The EU directive on safety standards for swings and above-ground playground equipment marketed in EU countries after January 1, 1990 refers to technical regulations stipulated in the European Standard EN71, compiled by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), and in the European Standard EN 50088 for swings and roundabouts drawn up by the European Committee for Playground Standards (CENEPLAY).



"As a government, we believe in the preservation of ancient military traditions . . . which is why we propose to resurrect the practice of COs paying to equip their own regiments!"

Chuckle with Chip



"Off to negotiate the defence budget I see!"

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"So the Army Board said, if the WI can make loadsamoney doing it . . . so can we!"

Belle of Basra's model behaviour: Nell McAndrew pictured during her Combined Services Entertainment-arranged visit to post-conflict Iraq last May

Picture: CSE



Desert brat? ... not on your Nelly

Forces' sweetheart Nell McAndrew stands by her men (in uniform)

DESPITE being branded a "desert brat" by some of the tabloid press, Nell McAndrew has vowed to continue visiting British troops on operations across the globe, **writes Andy Simms.**

The top model and television presenter became the first British entertainer to travel to post-conflict Iraq last May, but her return journey to the Gulf in December was overshadowed by reports of diva-style demands and claims that she cut short her tour of the region.

"Things were simply blown out of proportion by the media and unfortunately that is just part and parcel of being in the public eye," explained the former *I'm A Celebrity* ... *Get Me Out of Here* star. "The funniest quote I read was that I – being a major in the British Army and all – had demanded to be driven somewhere by my military escorts. What complete rubbish. Soldiers might take orders from their officers, but they're hardly going to take any notice of me."

"The truth of the matter is that there was a mix-up in the arrangements – that's all. I

met more than 3,000 people and I certainly didn't come home early. In fact I stayed a day longer than originally planned.

"I also stayed in the same hotel as I did when I went to the Gulf last May," she said. "Nobody said anything about it then, so I'm not sure why it became such an issue the second time round."

The Yorkshire-born pin-up, who now lives in London with her boyfriend Paul Hardcastle, said: "Regardless of what the papers said at the time, I know that I visited a lot of soldiers and shook hands, chatted and showed interest in and support for all of them."

"That's what it should all be about and why I was there."

The 30-year-old had planned to make her third visit to Basra next month, but has postponed her trip so that

she can be at the hospital bedside of her father, who was diagnosed with lymphatic cancer in September.

Nell, who is a member of Team SSAFA, a new fitness group set up to raise funds for SSAFA Forces Help, said: "There is no way that the bad press was going to discourage me from doing more visits or working with the forces."

"I have had a personal invite from the British Embassy in Iraq to go back. They knew that what was written about me was ludicrous and wanted to show that they supported me."

"I also had quite a few letters from soldiers and members of the public saying that what they had read didn't ring true. It's great to know that the people who really matter are still behind me."

◆ For more information on SSAFA Forces Help and Team SSAFA, who plan to conduct a 15-day trek through Nepal's Himalayas in February 2005, visit www.ssafa.org.uk

'Soldiers might take orders from their officers, but they're hardly going to take any notice of me'



Inside story

Colchester's Military Corrective Training Centre is less daunting than the legend

Report: Andrea Frazer
Pictures: Graeme Main

STEP up to the entrance gates to the infamous glasshouse – the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester – and your imagination is inclined to run wild.

Scenes from *Prisoner Cell Block H* spring to mind, along with expectations of perimeters crowned in razor wire and punctuated by searchlights scanning for the next breakout.

Myths emanating from the UK's only remaining military corrective centre have seeped though the Service community for decades, although in reality the place is much less daunting than its reputation.

Gone are the wartime Nissen huts and the brutal regime associated with the feared military prison of National Service years. In their place is a custom-built complex of buildings and a firm-but-fair approach by the staff.

MCTC Colchester focuses its efforts on re-training soldiers and preparing them for a continued military career or integration into civvy street. Staff and detainees are quick to point out, however, that this is no "walk in the park". It's certainly not an easy option.

"The MCTC is exactly what it says on the tin," said Lt Col Matthew van Grutten QDG, commandant of the

MCTC and commanding officer of the Military Provost Staff Branch. "This is a 21st century establishment," he said.

"It's not a prison and inmates are referred to as soldiers under sentence [abbreviated to SuS], not prisoners. Unlike a civilian prison, we are all on the same side, we're all in the Services.

"Detainees are well treated and generally don't try to escape. Their punishment is being here. We don't punish them while they are here. There is no stigma attached to being sent to Colchester. It's seen as a glitch in a military career, not the end of it."



Same side: Lt Col van Grutten

Soldiers leave Colchester better for the experience and many go on to pass NCO cadres.

The MCTC covers cases ranging from misdemeanours and AWOL offences to rape, murder, indecency and paedophilia.

Detention periods can be anything from one month to two years. Although the average age of detainees is 19, inmates can range in rank from private to colonel. All lose their rank on arrival but keep their cap badge.

"The bulk of offenders are rule-breakers, not law-breakers," said Capt Neil Wilson, AGC (MPS). "They're not out-and-out criminals, they just got caught doing something wrong."

"When a soldier comes through our gates we draw a red line under his or her conviction and start from scratch to rehabilitate that individual and build them back up again."

A soldier under sentence arrives at the MCTC guardroom with two escorts. The reception process can take three days and includes administration, medical and welfare interviews and checks for potential vulnerabilities such as self-harming and suicidal tendencies.

Through the keyhole: C Block cells, above, are used for MCTC's most serious offenders



Bed blocks: Inspections are a part of the routine

Inside the wire, the MCTC has a familiar feel about it. There is a guardroom and reception area, an HQ, regimental square, QM stores, military training wing, gym, church and education wing.

Detainees fall into four categories: A Company is for those who will return to their unit, D for those being dismissed the Service, and C for personnel under investigation or awaiting trial on serious charges. The fourth category covers those sentenced to serve terms in a civil prison or young offenders' institution and who are being temporarily detained at MCTC.

Capt Wilson said: "Our system is based on trust and as a result we have very few problems."

Soldiers under sentence progress on merit from maximum security (stage one) to reduced security (two), minimum security (three) and an open-door policy





“Their punishment is being here. We don’t punish them while they are here. There is no stigma attached to being sent to Colchester. It’s seen as a glitch in a military career, not the end of it”



First stop: The guardroom

and day-release for long-term detainees who reach stages four and five.

New arrivals enter at stage one and are locked in their rooms at night, escorted at all times, allowed one phone call a week and given a radio which is removed if their behaviour is unacceptable. They are reported on daily and, if they reach a satisfactory level after six weeks, progress to the next stage.

A programme of military training prepares A Coy detainees for the return to their units. Strict regulations and rigorous room and kit inspections instil discipline, while instruction in military skills such as drill, physical training, first aid, NBC and skill-at-arms takes up a large chunk of



Shaping up: Fitness is key

their day. If the length of detention allows, they go on to more advanced training: live-firing, night shoots and basic literacy and numeracy if needed.

D Coy training – for those who will be discharged – is based on national vocational qualifications such as brick-laying, painting, decorating, fork-lift driving, plumbing, mechanics, literacy and numeracy. Resettlement programmes also improve job chances.

C Coy cell block, reserved for serious offenders, is often referred to as the prison within a prison. Capt Wilson said: “As cells go, it’s the Hilton Hotel, but it would still drive you crazy. When that heavy door is closed behind you in the evening and you are left alone with your thoughts, it’s not a pleasant place.”



Brick work: A soldier from D Company improves his job prospects on one of the vocational courses on offer

What soldiers under sentence (SuS) think of life inside the MCTC

SuS Sean Fitzgerald, 1 WFR

Getting used to being locked up for the first night was a bit rough. This place brings you back to being a soldier and it’s done me the world of good.

The best bits are the discipline, learning to do the job you’re meant to do and getting educated and trained up again. The training is brilliant... you learn stuff you didn’t take in before and you don’t get beasted and treated like you’re nothing.

When I get out I want to go back to my regiment and go on an NCO cadre. Thanks to this place, I know I can pass.



SuS Sean Thomson, 1 Kings

I’ve gained a lot of knowledge and become more keen and enthusiastic. It’s more like an intense training package to get you back into the swing of things. It’s been good for me. The instructors are quality.

SuS Nathan Day, 2 RGJ

The training team here is good and the staff prepare you for when you go back to your regiment. They brush up skills to a high standard.



SuS Kevin Winter, 2 PWRR

It’s like going back to infantry training, revising the skills and drills you learned when you first joined.

SuS Christopher Cochrane Hale, 1 D and D

You’ve just got to crack on and make the best of it and keep your nose clean.



And the view of a member of staff

Capt Neil Wilson, AGC(MPS)

The screaming skull approach doesn’t work. Our focus is on a positive and progressive training regime, developing military skills in the normal military training command style. We’re here to guide and support soldiers under sentence and put them back on the straight and narrow.



TA What you think of it

First TA survey for six years finds morale is high and most joined up for the challenge

Report: John Elliott

TWO-thirds of Territorial Army officers and soldiers believe the TA is integrating better with Regular Army units, according to research carried out last summer.

A TA continuous attitude survey found that more than 70 per cent of officers and nearly 60 per cent of soldiers regarded themselves as equal in status to Regular counterparts in the same rank.

Although most said that Regular Army colleagues dealt with them in a fair and friendly manner, nearly 60 per cent of TA officers and 70 per cent of soldiers said the Regular Army did not treat them equally compared with Regular personnel of the same rank.

A very large proportion of the TA said their expectations of challenge and adventure had been met and individual morale was high, as was satisfaction with TA life in general.

The three biggest factors for joining were, in order of importance, the challenge, the adventure and being part of the British Army. Factors most likely to influence them to leave were the demands of their civilian jobs, family responsibilities and the impact of TA service on their personal and domestic lives.

A different set of factors emerged when personnel were asked about what influenced their intentions to remain in the TA. For officers, the amount of responsibility they were given, job satisfaction and personal development opportunities were important.

For soldiers, the critical factors were, in order, the bounty, satisfaction with their TA job and opportunities for personal development. Sport and adventurous training were in fourth place, while pay was only the fifth most important factor in soldiers' decisions to stay on.

Just 39 per cent of those surveyed – 1,177 – completed the questionnaire sent out in June and July 2003. The low response, by 305 officers and 872 sol-



Afghanistan mission: Territorial Army soldier Fus Clive Davis RWR on patrol with the Kabul Protection Force

Picture: Graeme Main

diers, was thought to reflect operational commitments at the time and the accuracy of addresses held for personnel who were sent the forms.

It was the first survey done with the TA for six years.

Most of those who responded were in full-time jobs while most of the officers were in traditional professional occupations. Many of the soldiers were in technical, craft or skilled jobs such as mechanics, plumbing or electrician fields.

The majority worked for companies employing 50 or more people and most said their bosses knew about their TA roles. About half thought their employers' attitude towards their military service was supportive and helpful.

The most frequently given reason for not attending training days or annual camps was work commitments, a reply which, the surveyors conclude, suggests officers and soldiers have to work hard to get a proper balance between their TA careers and their civilian occupations.

In future, TA continuous attitude surveys are to be issued every 12 months to a random sample of all ranks. But the researchers say the results are most accurate when large numbers respond.

The message from them is: "These surveys are one of the ways in which you can influence policy and personnel decisions, so please take the time to respond to a Territorial Army survey if you receive one in the future."

For more information on the TA, visit www.ta.mod.uk

Survey at a glance

Are bosses supportive of TA service?
About half of those surveyed said yes.

Why did you join the TA?
1, For the challenge; 2, For adventure; 3, To be part of the British Army.

Does the TA meet your expectations of challenge and adventure?
Most who replied thought it did.

Are you satisfied with TA life in general?
Yes – 81 per cent of officers agreed.
Yes – 76 per cent of soldiers agreed.

Is TA integration with the Regular Army getting better?
Yes – 70 per cent of all ranks agreed.

Does Regular Army treat you equally compared with same rank Regulars?
No – 60 per cent of officers.
No – 70 per cent of soldiers.

Do Regulars treat you fairly and in a friendly manner?
Yes, said a majority of all ranks.

What might make you want to quit?
Job demands, family responsibilities and impact of TA on private life.

What factors make you want to stay?
Officers – Responsibility, job satisfaction and personal development.

Soldiers – The bounty, job satisfaction and personal development, sport and adventurous training, and pay.

No more Mr Ni

Finishing second not an option when junior captains go to war

**Report: Ray Routledge
Pictures: Steve Dock**

A DYNAMIC new course to prepare officers to be junior captains has been hailed a success by its students.

From October the Junior Officers' Tactical Awareness Course (Jotac) at the Land Warfare School at Warminster will be mandatory for all officers for promotion to captain.

Born out of the Review of Officer Career Courses (Rocc), the new regime replaces the old Junior Staff College course with a hands-on, practical three weeks of training.

One of its underlying themes is winning. Course director Lt Col Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, RTR, said the message to officers at the start of the course was: "Forget about the flowery doctrine. The only thing that is important is winning. It may be very un-British, but in our business coming second is not an option."

The third intake is due this month. As well as being mandatory for all Regular officers on promotion to captain in the autumn, Jotac will become compulsory for all Territorial Army officers from January. Plans for Late Entry officers to complete the course are being reviewed.

The integrated course also involves Royal Marines and a few Royal Air Force officers.

"It is for anyone who works in the land battle space," said Lt Col de Bretton-Gordon. "It will cater for about 1,000 officers a year, with about 50 from the RAF. With the Junior Staff College course having finished, we are catching up, so some of the participants have already reached the rank of captain.

"I have put new methods and new technology into Jotac to make it fun. It is high-



Winner: Course director Lt Col Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, RTR



Taking charge: Captain Simon Hill, RDG commands a Challenger tank simulator

tempo and very busy. The feedback we are getting is that the students have learned a lot and enjoyed themselves."

Four captains and four majors provide the instruction at Warminster, although the element of Jotac using the nearby Combined Arms Tactical Trainer (CATT) is taught by civilian contractors.

"Some people may say why does an officer in the Adjutant General's Corps need to sit in a tank? My view is that it is part of that officer's education. One day that person might be at the MoD and in a role where such experience is necessary."

While the course centres on the practical rather than lectures, students have to study introductory tutorials to bring them up to speed before attending Jotac.

"The energy students put into winning battle simulations is extraordinary. It is practical, hands-on stuff. You learn much more by doing it.

"They cover a number of elements at different levels, including company, squadron, battle-group, regimental and division formations. Training equips the officers for roles such as planning liaison officer, watchkeeping, logistics and communications.

"Typically, we undertake an exercise for running a battle. The students do a plan, undertake a tactical exercise without troops (TEWT), and a virtual TEWT."

The virtual exercise makes use of the CATT's 3-D database, where elements have been recorded on to a DVD that can in turn be played on a PC.

This enables students to look at the ground they are about to fight on in a virtual world before going out on it in reality.

"That adds value to their planning" said Lt Col de Bretton-Gordon. We then fight the interactive battle – winner takes all. That is followed by an after-action

ice Guy



Driving seat: Lt Charlie Peters takes the controls of a Warrior AFV simulator

review." All that happens in less than a day. Another element of Jotac is combat service support. "Young officers should know that what enables them to fight at the sharp end is related to what goes on behind. If they understand that, they will be more capable. We spend a lot of time teaching them the systems.

"Using new software being produced by Land we can prepare a virtual battle-group to deploy on operations and can show the students what they get right and wrong.

"For example, they might pack their ISO containers with all the kit they want, load their vehicles on a ship and their soldiers on a flight. Their soldiers' movements have to marry up with the ship and the ISO. One squadron on this course left three ISO containers in Warminster during a simulation, so when they got to theatre they couldn't fight. We



Brand new: Jotac HQ



Class act: One of the new classroom facilities at Jotac HQ

are trying to improve the capability." He said he was happy with the progress since the first students passed through before Christmas.

"The building is perfect, the course is just about right and the students are positive. But we have to look forward.

"There is a Jotac website on the intranet and we hope to have one on the internet where people can work before coming so they are better prepared.

"Jotac brings the Services together, leading to a greater understanding. The air-land integration we've had has been really effective and we now understand how air works. Blue-on-blue should become less likely to happen.

"We have a really good product here. There is also the potential to generate income by inviting soldiers from other armies to come along, but that is one for the future."



What you thought

Lt Dave Tortoiseshell, QLR

I've done the old junior officers' training course, but this has a lot more realism. It has plugged gaps from the old course such as watchkeeping and liaison officer duties. Now we have some idea what we are supposed to do in these fairly critical areas.



Having so many cap badges here puts the whole thing in a bigger context. I now have a greater understanding about combined arms operations and a better perspective of what is going on around the battlefield.

I will leave here with more confidence and more knowledge.

Capt John Alecock, RMP, serving at HQ SIB (UK) Bulford

This fills the gap between what combat service support arms do and what the battle-groups are doing at the sharp end.

RMP officers have got a lot out of it by putting everything into context and other cap badges learn about what we do as well.



Capt Gayle Nugent, RMP, serving with 33 Section SIB, Catterick

I knew a little about the cavalry and infantry but not a lot. This gives a massive insight. All our syndicates are mixed cap badges so when we are in lessons, we share experiences and learn what they do day-to-day.

Normally I would be in a Land Rover. Here I have been in a Warrior simulator. Now I have more understanding of what those guys do. Since part of my job in the field is route allocation I now have more knowledge of how quickly they can do things and what they can't do.



Capt Ross Atherton, Staffords

The course has been a positive experience. Force projection and recovery exercises have improved my awareness. Media training has come to the fore and we cover that here. It shows us how to project ourselves positively.

I think the earlier an officer completes the course, the more they will benefit from it.



Change of pace: Two Black Watch soldiers find time for a game of chess during a pause in operations on March 2. They are resting in the shade of their Warrior at Az Zubayr



WO2 Penfound



SSgt Andrew



Cpl Jarvis



Cpl Liddle

Images of war

Army photographers produced unique record of Iraq conflict

Report: John Elliott

A PICTORIAL tribute to the Servicemen and women who took part in Operation Telic has been created from the work of five Army photographers who covered the build-up, combat phase and immediate aftermath of the liberation of Iraq a year ago.

The Fight For Iraq, compiled and edited by Maj Angus Beaton RLC (V), one of two reservists among the five, is dedicated to the Servicemen who gave their lives during the operation.

A casual remark that the superb images taken by Army photographers deserved to be published turned into a labour of love for freelance photographer Maj Beaton, who, with no previous publishing experience, selected the pictures, cajoled linking text from a variety of sources, sought help from designers and proof-readers, and negotiated a contract with the printers.

He drew on his own work and that of fellow RLC members WO2 Giles Pen-

found, SSgt Chris Andrew, Cpl Paul Jarvis and Cpl Dave Liddle to create a heavily-illustrated 160-page book which will be given to every unit that took part in Op Telic. Copies are also available for purchase from the Army's national charity, the Army Benevolent Fund (see below for details of how to obtain one).

"Digital cameras gave the Army's professional photographers the opportunity to compete with the world's press," said Maj Beaton. "The images were all taken by members of the 41-strong photographic trade group of the Royal Logistic Corps."

"Our pictures sat on editors' desks alongside the best from the international media. With the satellite technology we



Maj Beaton

Photo: Tom Stoddart

had in Iraq and Kuwait, we were able to transmit our images back to the UK, often within minutes of taking them. They were distributed to press agencies all over the world by the picture desk at HQ Land Command at Wilton, near Salisbury." Chris Andrew had left the Army three years

before the war. He was mobilised for service in the Gulf and attached to the 7th Armoured Brigade alongside Maj Beaton, who is an officer in the Territorial Army's Media Operations Group (Volunteers).

The text was contributed by Maj Peter Caddick-Adams, also MOG (V), and Government information officer Graham Thomas, with a foreword by the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mike Jackson.

Win a copy of *The Fight For Iraq*

A HARDBACK coffee-table version of *The Fight For Iraq* is available from the Army Benevolent Fund at a cost of £14.99 plus £3.45 p&p. Post and packing will be waived for Military personnel.

To order yours, call the ABF hotline on 01869 325829 or look for the links on the website at www.armybenfund.org

In association with the Army's national charity, we have a hardback copy of *The Fight For Iraq* to give away. Just send your name and contact details on a postcard or small sealed envelope, to reach us by April 28. Mark your entry "Iraq book comp". The first name drawn at random will receive the prize. Multiple entries will be disqualified.

Brave hearts

Outstanding courage and service by military and civilian personnel during the Iraq conflict was recognised at an historic investiture at Buckingham Palace. Family and friends of Service personnel, visibly bursting with pride and emotion, eagerly awaited a

glimpse of their own war heroes being decorated by the Monarch in the Palace ballroom.

The line-up of heroes was led by 19-year-old Tpr

Christopher Finney, of The Blues and Royals, the youngest-ever military recipient of the George

Cross, who was decorated for saving the life of

a comrade while under attack by an American aircraft



Historic moment: The Queen presents Tpr Christopher Finney with the George Cross for risking his life to save a comrade. Tpr Finney, 19, is the youngest Serviceman to receive the medal, which is the highest award for acts of conspicuous gallantry when not in the face of the enemy
Picture: BCA Films

**Words: Andrea Frazer
Pictures: Steve Dock**

TPR Christopher Finney looked calm and collected as a detailed description of the incident for which he received the prestigious George Cross was read out before the Queen to a hushed audience in Buckingham Palace's grand ballroom.

It concluded: "Acting with complete disregard for his own safety even when wounded – his bravery was of the highest order throughout."

A Scimitar driver with less than a year's service, Tpr Finney never imagined that the actions he took on March 28 last year, when two of his troop's vehicles came under fire from US aircraft, would lead to a medal for gallantry.

"I expected a pat on the back when I got back, a 'well done, mate, here's a pint', but I never imagined anything like this. I'm extremely proud, but the medal is not just an award for me, it's one for all the lads. It's devastating to have lost three men from our unit.

"All the lads did a superb job, especially in that incident. It wasn't just me there, there were four or five others."

Tpr Finney, who admitted to nerves during the ceremony, said: "I think it helped that there were quite a few of us there. I was glad I was the first one up. I got it all out of



Grateful: LCpl Alan Tudbull, right, watched as Tpr Finney, who saved his life in Iraq, received his George Cross from the Queen

the way and could sit and watch everyone else. The Queen asked how I felt about it all and said she was proud to be presenting a George Cross because she hasn't given one out in so long. It's a tremendous feeling, it still hasn't hit me now.

"It's been a couple of months since I was first told about it. I've just been presented with it and I still don't feel like I've got it."



OP TELIC AWARDS



Four's company: Irish Guardsmen Maj Peter MacMullen MBE, Lt Daniel O'Connell MC, Lt Thomas Orde-Powlett MC and Gdsm Anton Branchflower MC with their medals. Maj MacMullen said: "It was a spectacular day. Every person we met, from the policeman on the front gate right through to talking to the Queen, was very positive, very happy and congratulated us. "Lt Orde-Powlett received his award for an attack he conducted on the night of March 22-23 to the north of Basra. Lt O'Connell, Gdsm Branchflower and I received ours for the Scots Dragoon Guards' battle-group attack on the centre of Basra on April 6 during which two Irish guardsmen from No 1 Company were sadly killed."



Distinguished Service Order: Maj Richard Taylor, D Sqn, The Blues and Royals, Household Cavalry Regt with his wife Andrea after the ceremony



Proud moment: Tpr Christopher Finney with his parents, Sharon and Jeff



OBE: Lt Col Matt Limb, 165 Port Regiment RLC. "It was a mixture of feeling absolutely terrified and being very proud. It's a very rewarding recognition for what the regiment has done."



MC: SSgt Mark Heley RE. "It wasn't as nerve-racking as I thought but my heart was racing as I walked up to the Queen."

Picture: BCA Films

My nightmare fa

Robert Taylor, 38, left the Army three years ago. He has a family . . . and a mountain of debt. This is his story

ROBERT Taylor was a lance corporal serving with an armoured regiment when this photograph was taken at Kiseljak in Bosnia in 1995. His unit was on standby to relieve Sarajevo.

"I enjoyed that tour," he recalls. "I didn't miss home and family [he had been in the Army nine years and married for three], I just got on with the job and enjoyed laughs with my mates.

"I was one of the lucky ones who spent that Christmas at home in Germany with my wife and stepson. We had a good time because I had just sold my six-month-old £13,000 tax-free jeep via an agent, albeit at a huge loss. I only got £9,700 for it."

Although he didn't know it, the combination of events that followed were to plunge Robert into a spiral of debt from which he has never recovered. It cost him his career, his self-respect and his health. And it almost cost him his much-loved family.

He bought the jeep out of a £19,900 loan, making monthly repayments of £324. At the time the vehicle was sold he'd repaid just £1,900.

"The jeep was a big mistake," he acknowledges. "Not because I couldn't



Robert Taylor, left, pictured while serving with the RAC at Kiseljak in Bosnia in 1995. At the time the photograph was taken his unit was standing by to relieve Sarajevo, a task ultimately given to the French Foreign Legion

Robert, right, as he is today, pictured at home in the north-east with some of the memorabilia he collected during his military service

afford it at the time, but due to other reasons not all entirely my fault. It was the start of my debt. It crept up on us so slowly."

All seemed well for several months after his return from Bosnia, but when Local Overseas Allowance was reassessed downwards in Germany his income dipped by £100 and he had to make the £324 repayments from his wages.

With the £9,700 from the jeep sale, he paid off a previous bank loan and bought furniture and a second-hand car. The rest was frittered away.

The car broke down while Robert was on a course in the UK and cost £160 to recover. Robert bodged the repairs

himself and part-exchanged the vehicle for a sporty second-hand model on HP. In the summer of 1997 he was promoted corporal. "I was over the moon and took on my role with vigour. It was also wel-

come financially, as we were struggling. I was out of the water now, on a life raft instead of drowning slowly."

He sold the car, paid off the HP and bought a mountain bike. Then the cheque for the car bounced . . .

Despite its previous assurances that the cheque had cleared, his bank told him he owed £4,400, with interest mounting. Robert's paymaster went to see the manager and reported back: "They've closed ranks, mate. They are denying it."

His wife, by now increasingly worried by their financial situation, got a job but, out of the blue, fell pregnant. The couple began to use their Naafi card to buy food.

Robert's behaviour changed. One day, instead of rushing home from work to give his wife a cuddle and to tell her how much he loved her, he knocked off early, bought a six-pack of lager, went to a park and sat drinking for the next three hours.

Back in the UK on a course, Robert arranged a £4,000 loan to buy another second-hand car. The loan also paid the

'Although he didn't know it, the combination of events that followed were to plunge Robert into a spiral of debt from which he has never recovered'

Robert's advice to soldiers of all ranks

THINK: If you buy a new car, pay for it over the least time possible.

THINK: Prepare for resettlement. Look at what the job market offers and what you can realistically do (also look at the wages). Build a portfolio of civvy-recognised qualifications.

THINK: Save for a decent holiday.

THINK: If you have no children and your wife's not working, help her to get training. If you can cope between you, do it even with kids.

THINK: If your spouse is stuck at home with children, make sure you get them out for some quality time together. One of you is

stressed with work at camp, the other stressed with kids at home.

THINK: Before you buy a home think about a council house if there's a danger you might lose your job. Once you are on your feet in civvy street you can look into buying.

THINK: Cut up store cards. If you are buying food on them, see a welfare officer and get it sorted.

THINK: If more than a quarter of your take-home pay is being used to pay back debt, don't let it get any higher. If you think that is going to happen, see a welfare officer.

THINK: If you are already in debt, go to a

welfare officer and get it sorted. Now.

THINK: Watch out for IVAs (individual voluntary arrangements). If you can't keep up the payments, all you pay out for up to three years is simply an additional loan. You will still owe the creditors the full amount. If you can manage the payments, you'll be clear after five years.

Remember that if you owe money you are throwing away more than just your wages. But you are not the only one, and if you can walk into that office and tell someone with your head held high, you'll save yourself more than just pride.

all into debt hell



road tax, insurance, fuel back to Germany and the residue of an outstanding loan.

Things looked up when he was given a gleaming confidential report and his wife gave birth to a boy. But there were clouds on the horizon. "Although I was doing my best at work, it wasn't good enough for one or two people with whom I was having a few personality clashes.

"Under pressure I made a really stupid mistake during an inspection and decided I wanted out of the Army or a transfer to

another squadron. I reluctantly agreed to a two-year posting in the UK."

Robert had to take out a consolidation loan, partly so the family could leave Germany with their debts settled. They defaulted on the first of the loan repayments.

"I was so desperate I was making roll-up ciggies from teabags," he recalls, "and we were using our store card nearly every week." A welfare officer told him not to worry because he was dealing with high-

ranking officers who were also in debt.

Through a civilian debt management company he arranged to make monthly repayments of £460 over five years.

"I started having some pretty nasty mood swings at home, which frightened my family. I'd also signed off from the Army. I knew I couldn't stay in for another seven years to complete my 22."

He and his wife felt they had a strong marriage and decided she should move to a council house near her family in the north so their stepson could settle into school. A week after they had departed Robert began an affair.

He was so messed up he couldn't focus on his resettlement courses, so hitched a lift to visit his family and was offered a joint by the driver. When he returned to the squadron for his last two weeks in the Army he faced a compulsory drugs test.

He left without doing his resettlement course and still doesn't know if the drugs test was positive.

Although Robert had ended the affair he now had the Child Support Agency to deal with and creditors were ganging up. Despite a year of £460-a-month payments, all the money had gone to the debt company. That's how it works for three years before the creditors get a look in.

He moved to a flat near his family and began drinking heavily and smoking joints. His wife asked for half his lump sum from the Army and he wasted the other half.

"I got back with my wife four months after leaving the Army but became violent and started smashing up the house. By the time the police came I'd quietened down and was sitting, rocking with my head between my arms."

"That was two and a half years ago and I still have ups and downs."

ROBERT'S story clearly shows just how easy it is to get into debt when circumstances conspire against you.


You can be coasting along thinking life is a doddle, but by overstretching himself and not working out a simple budget, Robert made his first big mistake.

Cars, especially when bought on finance, can be very expensive and depreciate in value sharply.

Promotion usually leads to a rise in income but somehow this – and more – is spent attempting to keep up with what we perceive to be our new standard of living. Sometimes we end up worse off than before.

Robert made the classic mistake of thinking that when money was tight all he needed was another loan. A consolidated loan in par-

Manage your money



Credit Action Director Keith Tondeur comments on Robert's case. Credit Action is a charity which provides free advice to those with money difficulties

ticular sounds sensible but usually ends up as just another debt.

The ongoing stress can lead to rational people doing daft things. While it might have

been a good short-term idea for his family to move north, the distance apart and the strain caused Robert to seek comfort elsewhere.

With his wife's loyal support he is pulling through, though he still faces considerable problems. The advice he gives is sound, although I would add the following:

1. Draw up a budget with your partner
2. Try to save a little every month.
3. Use the Army guides to help you make your money go further.
4. At the first sign of trouble seek free and confidential debt advice from the Credit Action/CCCS helpline on 0800 1381111.

The next time you are thinking of taking on significant borrowing, Robert's story, told with bravery and honesty, might help you avoid years of pain.

RESULTS SERVICE... RESULTS SERVICE...

ATHLETICS: Inter-Services cross-country championships, junior men – 1, Army; 2, Royal Navy; 3, Royal Air Force. **Senior men** – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Veteran men** – 1, RAF; 2, RN; 3, Army. **Women** – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Individual championships, senior race** – Sig Haggie Chepkwony (21 Signal Regt). **Women's race** – Lt Jo Kelsey (ATR Pirbright). **Junior race** – Sig Stewart Laycock (21 Signal Regt).

Cleveland Army Cadet Force cross-country championships, senior boys – 1, Andrew Wilson (Bydales School GH); 2, David Gillgallon (Norton RE); 3, James Jepson (Thornaby GH). **Senior girls** – 1, Ashleigh Readman (Thornaby GH); 2, Zoe Featherstone (Thornaby GH); 3, Terri Gallagher (Hartlepool RE). **Junior boys** – 1, Paul Wright-King (Coulby Newham GH); 2, Khyle Short (Prissick Base RLC); 3, Karl Starsmore (Prissick Base RLC). **Junior girls** – 1, Rachael Binghma (Loftus GH); 2, Michaela Court (Lawrence Jackson School GH); 3, Stephanie Kerr (Billingham LI).

BOBSLEIGH: Army championships, women's – 1, LCpl Carice Allen and Pte Jane Kosla (Int Corps) 1.56:71; 2, Capt Anna Poole and Cpl Jolene Goodridge (7 Para) RHA 1.56:89. **Men's** – 1, Cpl Neil Scarisbrick (1 RTR) and Sgt Dean Ward (2 Para) 1.48:94; 2, LCpl Dave Rayson (KORBR) and Sgt Mark Leitch (MCTC) 1.50:05; 3, Sgt Rob Hinton (16 CS Med Regt) and Sgt Ian Barnett (7 Sig Regt) 1.50:27.

Inter-Services championships, women's – 1, Army – Cpl Jackie Davies (R Signals) and LCpl Carice Allen (Int Corps) 3.45:01; 2, RAF – Michelle Coy and Cheryl Done 3.45:97; 3, RN – Chatfield and Gray 3.49:75. **Men's** – 1, RN – Lee Johnston and Johnston 3.37:35; 2, Army – Cpl Scarisbrick and Sgt Ward 3.37:61; 3, RAF – Graham Richardson and Humphries 3.37:79.

FOOTBALL: Massey Trophy – APTC 2 (Sgt Wallbrook, Sgt Lear) AGC 1 (Pte Thomas); RLC 3 (Sgt Hope (2), Pte Douglas) RE 1 (LCpl McCormick); APTC 0 REME 3 (Cfn Hill, Cfn Finnegan, LCpl Combelack); Infantry 6 (Pte Brown (3), Pte Piercy (2), LCpl Bartlett) AAC 0; CA Mus 1 (Cpl Holt) Int Corps 2 (Cpl Kemp, LCpl Broadhurst); AAC 3 (LCpl Smith (2), LCpl Robinson) RE 5 (Spr Lawson (3), Spr Cotton, LCpl McCormick); RAC 0 REME 5 (Sgt Smith, Cfn Thorne (2), Cpl Lynch (2)); CA Mus 0 AGC 7 (Cpl Curtiss (2), Pte Thomas (2), WO2 Kincaid, Sgt Wilson, Cpl Moore); APTC 9 (Miles (3), Morten (2), Collins, Pulham, Fernandez) CA Mus 0; AMS 1 (Cochrane) REME 6 (Cfn Thorne (3), Cpl Ashurst, Cpl Lynch, Cfn Mavin); CA Mus 0 Infantry 5 (Pte Piercy (2), LCpl Jones, Pte Wallace, LCpl Powell); Int Corps 0 APTC 1 (WO2 Spafford); AGC 4 (WO2 Kincaid, Cpl Power, Pte Thomas, LCpl Minett) AAC 1 (SSgt Smith); RAC 7 (LCpl Cox (3), Tpr Buchan, LCpl Jones, Tpr Henderson, Cpl Nelson) CA Mus 2.

LUGE: Army championships, men's – 1, Lt Andy Croucher (REME); 2, Pte Matt Duncan (2 LI); 3, Capt Steve Reynolds (16

Air Defence Regiment RA). **Women's** – 1, Capt Helen Carter (29 Regt RLC).

British championships (Army sliders) – 3, Lt Croucher; 5, Pte Duncan; 7, 2nd Lt Tom Cowie (REME); 8, Capt Reynolds; 9, Maj Adam Johnstone (HQ DEME). **British novice championships (Army sliders)** – 2, 2nd Lt Cowie.

Inter-Services championships, team winners – Army. Individual standings – 1, Lt Croucher; 2, Pte Duncan; 3, 2nd Lt Cowie.

SKELETON: Inter-Services championships, team standings – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Individual standings (after four runs)** – 1, LCpl Stuart Hayden (17 Port and Maritime) 3.44:42; 2, Sgt Jack Baldwin (REME attached to 39 Regt RA) 3.51:68; 3, Nigel Millar (RAF) 3.51:93.

SQUASH: Army championships, men's open – 1, Capt Gary Clarke (AGC); 2, LCpl Mick Grehan (RLC). **Women's open** – 1, Capt Emma Hanson (RLC); 2, Lt P Pam Butifant (AGC). **Novice open** – 1, Sgt James (REME); 2, Pte Mutyasira (RLC). **First round plate** – 1, WO1 Carey (APTC); 2, Capt Morris (RA). **Novice open plate** – 1, Sig Brent (R Signals); 2, Capt Gallagher (SASC). **Second round plate** – 1, LCpl Alex Smith (Infantry); 2, Capt Alex Laing (Infantry). **Women's plate** – Capt Fox (RA); 2, LCpl Thornley (RLC). **Men's over 45** – 1, Maj Chris Wilson (retired); 2, Capt Clark Adam (retired). **Men's over 40** – 1, SSgt Burke (RA); 2, Lt Col Robinson (RLC). **Men's over 35** – 1, Maj Wilson (AAC); 2, WO1 Smith (RE). **Men's U25** – 1, Cpl Alex Smith (Infantry); 2, Spr Nathan Ttophi (RE).

Inter-Services championships, men's U25s – 1, RAF; 2, RN; 3, Army. **Senior men's** – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Women's** – 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN. **Veteran's** – 1, 1, Army; 2, RAF; 3, RN.

PRICEWATERHOUSE COOPER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
R Signals	3	3	0	0	17	9
RA	4	3	0	1	13	9
AGC	4	3	0	1	11	9
Int Corps	4	2	0	2	-5	6
RLC	4	2	0	2	-1	6
AMS	3	0	0	3	-8	0

MASSEY TROPHY

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
Infantry	10	10	0	0	52	30
RLC	10	7	0	3	9	21
REME	7	6	0	1	17	18
R Signals	6	5	0	1	21	15
RE	7	5	0	2	12	15
RA	7	5	0	2	12	15
APTC	10	5	0	5	-6	15
Int Corps	9	4	0	5	-12	12
AGC	8	3	1	4	6	10
AMS	8	1	1	6	-18	4
AAC	8	1	0	7	-16	3
RAC	9	1	0	8	-25	3
CA Mus	11	1	0	10	-50	3

Army's

Audley Harrison treats troops to world title fight

Interview: Andy Simms

BRITISH troops enjoyed a ringside-view of the right upper-cut that knocked out previously undefeated heavyweight Richel Hersisia at Wembley Arena last month, thanks to the man who landed the blow – new WBF champion Audley Harrison.

The Sydney Olympic gold medallist donated the rights to his world title fight against Hersisia, billed as a Dutch Sonny Liston, to the British Forces Broadcasting Services (BFBS), who beamed the bout to more than 75,000 Servicemen overseas.

"Giving the fight to BFBS was a small gesture that I could make to our Armed Forces to let them know that I am proud of them," explained Harrison, who visited members of the Army boxing team at Aldershot's Maida Gym prior to his showdown with the Dutchman. "Regardless of people's opinions on the war in Iraq, those lads and lasses out there are representing us and they deserve our support. They are a big part of our society and they do a great job of protecting us."

"It would mean a lot to me to have the support of the British Army because I am behind them every step of the way."

A former England teammate of Army coach Sgt Chris Bessey, Harrison added: "I met a few soldiers during my days as an amateur boxer and found that I shared the same sort of spirit and mentality as them."

"The mental fortitude, courage and determination it takes to be part of the best army in the world is similar to the characteristics you need to be able to compete in the boxing ring. That is why I have so much respect for them."

Harrison certainly put on a good show for his military audience in the Middle East, extending his professional record to 15 straight victories, 11 by virtue of knock out.

From the opening bell Harrison began picking off the reigning champion, who entered the ring with an unblemished record of his own, 21 wins, 16 by knock out, with his southpaw jab.

Sporting a cut above his left eye, a legacy of two hard lefts from Harrison in the third, Hersisia had no answer to the barrage of blows he sustained in the fourth.

's prizefight



Picture: Graeme Main

Winning smile: Olympic medallist and new WBF heavyweight champion, Audley Harrison

When it finally came, Harrison's finish was of the highest order, a body shot and stinging upper-cut dropping the much-fancied Hersisia to the canvas.

The win, which secured Harrison's first professional title, represents a significant stepping stone towards succeeding Lennox Lewis as the recognised world champion.

"I definitely believe that I am the real deal," the 33-year-old told *Soldier*. "They don't give Olympic gold medals away in sweet shops. I know that I have still got a lot to prove, but I am ready, willing and able for the challenge. I believe that I bring a lot of different things to the ring for a big guy. I'm quick, a good technical fighter and a quick thinker.

"There are no other heavyweights in Britain that have the chance to represent this country on the world stage and I definitely think that I have the credentials.

"I'm not ready yet to fill the void left by Lennox and I don't claim to be, but in the next 12- to 18-months you'll be able to put me in with the best fighters in the world and I won't embarrass myself.

"People always talk about my age being against me, but age is nothing but a number. Heavyweights tend to mature post 30, and if you look at the current rankings all of the top ten are over 30.

"I'm coming into my prime and over the next two years you're going to see me capitalise on it."

SHORTS

King of the court

WINNING the men's open title for the tenth time in eleven years, Capt Gary Clarke (AGC) continued his reign of dominance at the Army squash championships in Aldershot by beating fellow finalist LCpl Mick Grehan (RLC) 9-2, 9-1, 9-4.

Swords at the ready

THE 2004 Army fencing championships will be held at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot from April 27-30.

A fencing performance course will precede the competition on April 25-26. Those wishing to take part should contact Capt Stu Brown on mil 94663 3344.

Skiing by the book

FORMER international ski orienteerer SSgt Keith Jenns (APTC) has produced a nordic ski manual featuring useful tips and techniques for skiers of all standards.

To order a copy of *Nordic Skiing*, priced at £11.95 (including p&p), call 01562 741986 or send a cheque made payable to K Jenns to JSMTIC Indefatigable, Llanfair, Anglesey, North Wales LL61 6NT.

Tri-ing times at Tidworth

THIS year's REME triathlon will take place at Tidworth Leisure Centre and the Bulford area on May 19. Anyone wishing to enter should contact WO1 Ron Condie on mil 94391 3799 or WO1 Shaun Benfield on 94391 2056.

Army win Boat Race

MORE than 3,000 spectators watched the Army boat crew beat their Royal Navy counterparts by four-and-a-half lengths over a 1.5-mile course on the Great Ouse at Ely, Cambridgeshire.

The rivals' encounter helped to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1944 Boat Race, which was moved to Ely as the Allies readied themselves for the D-Day landings and London was under attack from German bombs. It remains the only occasion on which the historic race has not been run on the Thames.

In the main race, Cambridge University gained revenge over Oxford University for their historic Second World War defeat.

Rugby rudiments

THE Army Rugby League is running a series of development and coaching courses over the coming months. Course dates include: **Development camp** - April 19-24. **Club coach** - October 6-8. **Senior coach** - October 25-28. For more information contact Sgt Swindale on mil 94284 8846.



Like

Player profile: Mick Kearns

CAPPED 18 times for the Republic of Ireland, Mick Kearns spent the first four seasons of his 13-year professional playing career between the sticks at Oxford United.

After season-long spells at both Plymouth Argyle and Charlton Athletic, he signed for Walsall during the summer of 1973 and went on to make 249 appearances for the Saddlers, before seeing out his career with Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Now the Community Liaison Officer at the Bescott Stadium, home of first division Walsall, Mick made his international debut at the age of 20, coming on as a substitute during Ireland's 2-1 defeat to Poland at Lansdowne Road.

Big gloves to fill: Mick Kearns senior, pictured above playing for the Republic of Ireland, spent six seasons as Walsall FC's first choice goalkeeper

Picture: www.sporting-heroes.net

International record: Rep Ireland

Career record: P18, W6, D6, L6

Clean sheets: 6

06/05/70 Friendly v Poland (H) L 2-1
21/10/73 Friendly v Poland (H) W 1-0
08/05/74 Friendly v Uruguay (A) L 2-0
12/05/74 Friendly v Chile (A) W 2-1
24/03/76 Friendly v Norway (H) W 3-0
26/05/76 Friendly v Poland (A) W 2-0
08/09/76 Friendly v England (A) D 1-1
13/10/76 Friendly v Turkey (A) D 3-3
17/11/76 WCQ v France (A) L 2-0

09/02/77 Friendly v Spain (H) L 1-0
30/03/77 WCQ v France (H) W 1-0
01/06/77 WCQ v Bulgaria (A) L 2-1
21/05/78 Friendly v Norway (A) D 0-0
24/05/78 ECQ v Denmark (A) D 3-3
20/09/78 ECQ v N Ireland (H) D 0-0
25/10/78 - ECQ v England (H) D 1-1
29/10/79 - Friendly v USA (H) W 3-2
21/11/79 - ECQ v N Ireland (A) L 1-0

WCQ - World Cup Qualifier
ECQ - European Qualifier

father, like son

British Army's number one boasts international pedigree

JUST like Manchester City's teenage shot-stopper Kasper Schmeichel, Lt Michael Kearns (1 Staffs) has big gloves to fill, writes **Andy Simms**.

Embroided in a three-way battle for the Army's number one shirt with Cpl Jim Paniers (9 Para Sqn RE) and Pte Terry Burton (27 Regt RLC), the 6ft 3in platoon commander is the son of former Republic of Ireland, Oxford, Walsall and Wolverhampton Wanderers goalkeeper Mick Kearns.

"You often find that sons follow in their father's footsteps, so I guess that I was always destined to play in goal," mused Kearns, who is currently sidelined with a knee injury. "I never remember making a conscious decision to take up goalkeeping, but I was given my first pair of goalie gloves when I was five years old and have played between the sticks ever since."

Having inherited his father's safe hands, Kearns was signed by his hometown club, Walsall, at the age of 16 and spent two seasons playing for the Saddlers' youth side, where he kept goal against some of the Premiership's top strikers.

"As clichéd as it may sound, signing for Walsall really was a dream come true for me," he said. "Not because it was my hometown club, but because it meant I was on the road to becoming a professional footballer."

"During my time there I played with some very good players, including Michael Ricketts who is now at Middlesbrough, but more importantly, as far as my own personal development was concerned, I was lucky enough to face some excellent centre forwards."

"Robbie Keane (then Wolves) and Darius Vassell (Aston Villa) were in the same age group as me and both played for Midlands-based teams, so our paths crossed a lot."

"I still keep in touch with Robbie and it came as no surprise to me that the three of them have gone on to become well-known professionals. They stood out from the rest of us back then and we all knew that they would make it in the game as top pros."

Now 24, Kearns left the Bescott Stadium for then Conference side Hednesford Town in 1996 and helped guide the non-leaguers to the fourth round of the FA



On the treatment table: Lt Michael Kearns (1 Staffs) is currently sidelined with a knee injury

Cup, before switching to Dr Martens' Premier club Weston Super Mare.

"I played for Weston while I was at Bristol University," he said. "While most of my friends were supplementing their student loans by stacking shelves in supermarkets, I was getting paid for doing something that I would have gladly done for free."

"However, even though I was playing at a reasonable level, it was during my spell there that it dawned on me that I wasn't going to be able to make a living out of just football, so I decided to go to Sandhurst."

Commissioned in 2002, Kearns' footballing pedigree did not go unnoticed by Army coach Capt Alan Higgins (7 Sig

Regt) and quickly earned him a call-up to the representative squad.

"As a platoon commander it can be difficult to get away from work, but I am very lucky that I have the full support of both my OC and CO," he said. "My main aim at the moment is to cement my place in the squad and play for the Army as regularly as possible, which won't be easy with two other very good keepers in the frame."

"I'd be lying if I said that I didn't miss playing club football. Every Saturday at three o'clock I still feel a pang and wish that I was on a pitch playing, but I guess that is only natural after spending nearly 12 years in the game."

"Although I've not enjoyed the same success on the pitch as my dad, I've no regrets about my career and believe I could still play at senior non-league level."

‘As clichéd as it may sound, signing for Walsall really was a dream come true’

Picture: Steve Dock

SHORTS

Rider clears final hurdle

ONE of the Army's best known jockeys, Lt Col Oliver Ellwood (LD), has announced his retirement from racing at the age of 47.

During a 17-year career in the saddle, Ellwood rode more than 25 winners in point-to-point and hunter chaser races, and won the Grand Military Cup at Sandown Park on two occasions, with Country Member in 1995 and riding the late Queen Mother's horse Norman Conqueror in 1996.

"I won't be slinging myself over any more fences at 30 miles an hour from now on," explained Ellwood, who has broken a total of 32 bones in falls. "I'll miss racing terribly. I am still fit and healthy, but there comes a time to draw stumps."

German heavyweights

THE 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers secured the bragging rights to having the best Army boxing team in Germany by winning the BA(G) boxing championships at Trenchard Barracks, Celle. Victories for Sgt Steve Berridge, Lt Shamus Kelly and Fusiliers Mossy Mosettig, Lee Andrews, Spencer Clift and Lee Wines guided 1 RRF to a 6-3 win over fellow finalists 28 Engineer Regiment.

Marathon task

A TEAM of 12 soldiers from 9 Para Squadron RE plan to run this year's London Marathon wearing military boots and carrying 30lb bergens in a bid to raise £15,000 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

Adventurers wanted

ABERLOUR Child Care Trust is looking for volunteers to take part in an 11-day challenge in Kinabalu Park, Borneo's World Heritage site, next April.

The expedition will include a nine-hour trek up Mount Kinabalu, a 135km mountain cycle to Tambunan and Tenom, a whitewater raft ride through the spectacular Padas Gorge and scuba dive off the coral island of Mamutik.

To find out more or request a brochure call the events hotline on 0845 3002210 or register online at www.aberlour.org.uk

Fight festival

THE Combat Sports Show, which covers all fighting disciplines from the cultural and classical arts through to Olympic sports and Ultimate Fighting, will be held at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham from April 24-25.

Tickets are priced at £6 for adults and £3 for children, and can be ordered in advance from the NEC box office on 0870 7300063.

Champions

Para gunners reclaim Challenge Cup silverware

**7 Para RHA 36
RGBW 7**

Thames Water Army Challenge Cup

THREE old-fashioned tries by 7 Para RHA winger Gnr Martin Lacey ensured that there was a change in ownership of the Thames Water-sponsored Army Challenge Cup at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium, **writes Roger Thompson.**

Until Lacey completed his personal hat-trick in the second half, the cup holders, RGBW, had been very much in contention. Their free-flowing style continually threatened the gunners' line and only a well organized and brave defence kept the infantrymen at bay.

Watched by more than 1,000 spectators, it was predictable that this would be a highly-charged encounter. Having lifted the cup in 2002, 7 Para RHA were denied the chance to defend their title last year when they answered the call-to-duty and deployed to Iraq prior to the tournament's semi-final stage.

In their absence their crown was liber-

ated by the RGBW, albeit in tremendous style, but clearly with two unbeaten champions waiting in the changing rooms, there remained much unfinished business.

In the first few minutes both sets of forwards and the occasional back, who shouldn't even have been in the same county, squared up. Only sympathetic refereeing by Welshman Flt Sgt Richie Rees prevented unnecessary exuberance and a few very early baths.

LBdr Lee Soper and skipper Sgt Ben Butler, a changed player from the "pull-through" of a lad that a few seasons ago roamed in the shadow of some of the Army greats, were in soaring form and the gunners secured the line-outs with feet to spare.

They scrummaged well enough to hide their technical inexperience although, on the afternoon, no one would suggest that Messrs Brammer, Tink and Zeitsman, all former Army boxers, were on anything but the front foot.

England Sevens and Army flanker Bdr Andy Dawling was also on top of his game, dominating the wide spaces and recycling the ball for scrum half Jezz Walters to set the backs in motion.

Outside, attacking in the centre channel Army players Gnr Rory Greenslade-Jones and Capt Dave Blackburn represented the main targets for the RGBW defence. Both were in boisterous mood moving abrasively into contact but, having committed the defence, both unselfishly shipped the ball to Lacey.

For the RGBW, Army Sevens cap Pte Toobs Koroinaulivou's late try highlighted what might have been possible had his pack been able to win a greater share of the ball and a bit of space.

In attack the Fijian back row pairing of Ptes Naulogo and Ronny Leqaiwai combined powerfully with scrum half Pte Ian Hoytt to dent the gunner's close defence. When allowed to reach open territory their movement and handling was mesmeric and only a match-saving tackle after a 50 metre covering sprint by Lacey allowed the gunners space to breathe.

Unfortunately for RGBW such occasions were at best sporadic and the likes of Army winger and potential match winner Pte Tangoe Tuivonovono weren't even on half-rations.

Boasting seven Army players among their ranks, it was the gunners organi-



Towering influence: Sgt Ben Butler (7 Para RHA)

return fire



Pictures: Roger Thompson

Hat-trick hero: Man-of-the-match Gnr Martin Lacey (7 Para RHA) evades a last-ditch tackle

zation and experience that ultimately overcame the raw flair of the Slashers and guided them to their eleventh cup victory in the past 15 years. However, a couple of knife-edge moments meant the final could have gone either way and both sides would have made worthy winners.

Knowing they had weaknesses at the start of the year, 7 RHA's "freshers" contacted Hadleigh Samurai the civilian club of Army-sponsor and England A team manager Terry Sands. With Terry's help

they got a grip of their shortcomings and charted their own destiny.

Lacey was rightly named man-of-the match, but make no mistake it was Butler and the gunner pack that devised and executed the victory fire-plan.

◆ **Results: Major units shield final** – 2 Signal Regiment beat 39 Regt RA beat 51-22. **Minor units cup final** – 42 Engr Regt beat 16 CS Med Regt 57-0. **Shield final** – AFC Harrogate beat BFPO Agencies 56-3.

Four-midable form

CROSS-COUNTRY runner WO1 Dave Rollins (RLC) marked his return to full fitness by winning a hat-trick of Army competitions and taking first place at the British individual night orienteering championships.

Rollins, who was blighted by a series of knee injuries last season, began his haul of victories at the Army cross-country championships in Deepcut where he helped guide HQ 145 (HC) Brigade to the minor units' crown.

Alongside RLC teammates Lt Col Brant and WO1 George Cummings he then won the

Army team night orienteering championships in Bordon.

Win number three came at the Army individual short-cross championships, where Rollins retained the title for a second successive year by finishing ahead of Cpl Paul Couldridge (3 RSME) and Capt Richard Barret (HQ 160 (Wales) Bde), who finished in second and third respectively.

The Army treble winner capped his prosperous start to 2004 by winning the national night orienteering title.

SHORTS

TA hotshots

OUTSCORING a field of 38 international teams, the TA combat shooting team lifted the Lexington Green Trophy at the Armed Forces Skill-at-Arms Meeting (AFSAM) in Little Rock, Arkansas, for the third time in four years.

Led by Capt Peter Cottrell (3 PWRR), the team emerged as clear winners of the competition, which is widely regarded as one of the most prestigious combat marksmanship events in the world, finishing ahead of the US National Guard and US Army Reserve, who finished in second and third respectively.

FIXTURES

Your sporting guide to April . . .

ATHLETICS: 18 – Inter-Services marathon championships (London); 28 – Army novice triathlon (Bovington).

BASKETBALL: 18 – Founders Cup quarter-final (TBC).

BOXING: 2 – ABA (England) senior finals (TBC); 20-22 – Army individual novice championships (Aldershot).

CANOEING: 9-12 – Marathon championships (Devizes).

FENCING: 10-11 – Winton Cup (TBC); 25-25 – Performance course (Aldershot); 27-30 – Army championships (Aldershot).

FOOTBALL: 2 – Minor unit cup final (Aldershot), RE v Int Corps (TBC), REME v AAC (TBC), APTC v RA (TBC) AGC v Infantry (TBC) RAC v AMS (TBC); 7 – RLC women v REME women (Deepcut), R Signals women v RA women (Blandford); 8-11 – Army Crusaders Easter tour (Liverpool); 9-17 – TA tour of Germany; 17 – SWCC final (Aldershot); 19-28 – Army women's tour (Verona, Italy); 23 – Int Corps women v AMS women (Chicksands), R Signals v AMS (TBC), Int Corps v AGC (TBC); 25 – TA Cup final (TBC); 28 – RLC women v REME women (Deepcut), AGC women v R Signals women (Worthy Down).

HOCKEY: 20-21 – Inter-unit cup (Aldershot); 27-29 – Inter-corps tournament (Aldershot).

REAL TENNIS: 4 – Hatfield v Army (Hatfield).

RUGBY LEAGUE: 24 – Army U23s v Parachute Regiment (Aldershot); 28 – Scottish Courage Cup: Army v GB Police (Gosport).

RUGBY UNION: 3-4 – TA inter-division championships (TBC); 5 – Northampton v Army (Northampton); 21 – Army v RAF (Newbury), Army women v RAF (Newbury); 30 – Army women v RN (Aldershot).

SHOOTING: 1 – Inter-Services clay target match (TBC); 7 – Army target pistol championships (Bisley); 17-18 – Inter-Services short-range small bore championships (Bisley).

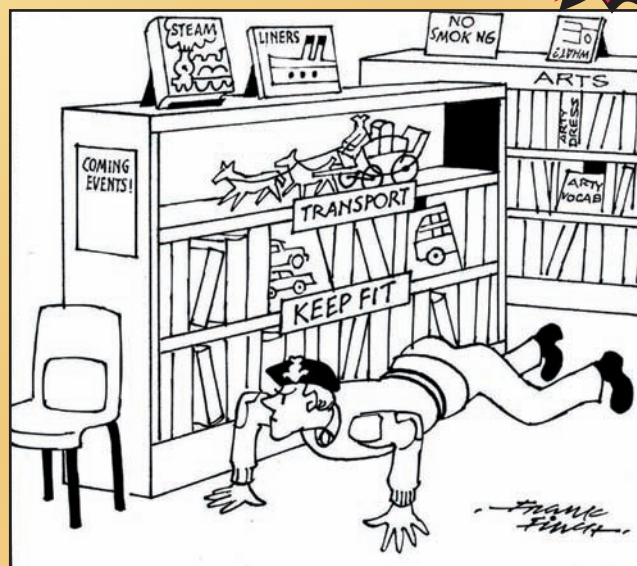
SURFING: 4 – Spring meet (TBC).

TENNIS: 17 – Army veterans v 45 Club (Aldershot).

No 749

How observant are you?

**WIN
£100!**



TEN details have been changed in one of our archive drawings by Frank Finch.

Circle the differences in the right-hand image, cut out the whole panel, add your name and address and send it to HOAY 749, *Soldier*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot,

GU11 2DU by April 30, 2004.

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

Do not include anything else in your envelope.

First correct entry drawn after the

closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £10 gift vouchers. No correspondence of any kind can be entered into.

The names of the winner and runners-up will be announced in the June issue.

Name : (Give initials and rank or title)

Address :

February 2004 competition: First correct entry drawn at random was from LCpl J A Doherty, The Queen's Royal Hussars, Athlone Barracks, BFPO 16, who wins £100. Runners-up Sig N Hewitt, of Bicester, Oxon, and SSgt Russell Heynes, of Burgess Hill, W Sussex, each win a £10 gift voucher. The ten differences were: pace stick; left-hand tree; civilian's tie and jacket; soldier's gun, sleeve and jersey; driver's face; grass round tree-trunk; grass below soldier's boot.



Freeze frame

"CO's compliments . . . but he'd rather not have this GM Brussels sprout"

Write a caption for the photograph, right, published in *Soldier* in December 1950. The best, in the Editor's opinion, will win a prize from our silver logo collection. Usual rules apply, entries to reach us by April 30.



WINNER of the February competition, left, is **WO1 John Mill** of DII(A) Unicom, Worthy Down, with "Sgt Green's world record attempt at getting the most chips for a single potato had begun".

We also liked "The DIY circumcision was not a favourite demonstration" from David Deenan, ACIO Strand, and, on a similar theme, "The new Army surgeons were not impressed by their first lesson on brain surgery in the field"

from Gareth Hardwick, ex-RE, of Putney. Worth a mention were "The officers' annual pigeon shoot went down well with the chefs" from LCpl B Sheriff, RTMC, Chilwell, Notts; "Right lads, this nice lean beef is for us . . . and that tough joint is



for the troops" from A Fradley of Newcastle, Staffs; and "Slice . . . two, three, back . . . two, three" from Cpl Baker, RSDG LAD REME, Fallingbommel.



Reunion and searchline notices also appear on our website. See

REUNIONS

The Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry: Reunion on Apr 3 from 1930 at the TA Centre, Wigan. All past DLOY and present D (DLOY) Sqn welcome. Write to D (DLOY) Sqn RMLY, Canal Street, Wigan WN6 7NQ; tel 01942 248882; or John Cavanagh, tel 01942 246411; or e-mail john@cavanaghj.freemove.co.uk

6 Artillery Support Squadron RCT: Reunion Apr 17 from noon at 158 Transport Regiment, TA Centre, London Road, Peterborough. For further details contact Skin Askham on tel 07976282438 or prassart@aol.com

A Coy, 1st Battalion, The Wessex Regiment: Reunion for all ex-A Coy, AT/KS, Recce, Ass Pnrs on Apr 24 at Gloucester TA Centre. Write to Bob Kulzaj, A Coy, RGBW, Rifle Volunteers, Eastern Avenue, Glos GL4 3BD or tel 01452 523132.

404 Troop, 24 Sqn Movements RCT, Belize: Second reunion at Lichfield, Apr 24. Details <http://groups.msn.com/404trooprct> or from Pete (Goose) Gosnell on 07946 252212.

Italy Star Association 1943-45: Events to be held on May 6 to mark 61st anniversary of the Allies' return to Europe and mainland Italy. Chichester Cathedral service in presence of Fd Marshal Lord Inge (all to be seated by 1320); followed by parade led by band of 1 RGR. All welcome. Details from Graham Swain on 01425 614884.

201 RCZ Wksp (V): 33rd joint mess reunion for former officers, SNCOs and families to be held on May 14-15. Details from R F Smith, 6 St John's Place, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 5NP.

Glosters, R Berks, Wilts, DERR, RGBW Regt Assn: Reunion to be held May 22-23 at Devizes. Phone 01722 414536 for details.

Queen's Lancashire Regiment Association: Loyals' weekend dinner-dance (tickets £16), Jun 5, and Loyal Regiment (N Lancs) memorial service at Preston Parish Church, Jun 6, at 1100. Service followed by lunch at Sgts' Mess, Fulwood Barracks. Bookings and tickets from RHQ on 01772 260362.

Royal British Legion D-Day anniversary parade, Jun 6, at Southwark Cathedral, 1500.

Malta 2005

A major reunion for Malta veterans is planned for the George Cross island in September 2005. All who served there during the Second World War will be welcome. The reunion will coincide with the Malta International Air Show 2005, and VIP seating will be provided for the visiting veterans.

Former members of the RAF, FAA and RAAA units are invited to take part in a programme of commemorative and social events.

Much of the cost is expected to be met by the Veterans' Agency Heroes Return lottery grant. Further details are available from Sdn Ldr Colin Pomeroy RAF (Retd) on 01305 848895 or cpomeroy@aol.com ● www.battleformalta.freemove.co.uk

Form up at Harper Road, off Borough High Street, at 1400. Standard bearers welcome, also RAF Association, RNA etc. Enquiries, with sae, to Ceremonial Officer, Metropolitan and Overseas Region, Stan Heath, 15 Ashgrove Road, Ashford, Middx TW15 1NS.

721 Car Company RASC to Rhine Area Wksp RE ME: 50th anniversary celebrations on Jun 19, open day, evening function for all past and present serving and civilian members. Details from WO2 (SQMS) G B Calland, Rhine Area Wksp RE ME, Javelin Barracks, BFPO 35 or tel 0049 (0) 2163 972271/972329.

144 Para Med Sqn (V)/144 Fd Amb: Past and present reunion dinner at Squadron HQ, TAC London on Jul 3. Enquiries to Capt Roy Hatch on 01926 812363 or 07730 977989.

Queen's Lancashire Regiment: Somme Service and reunion for all members of the regimental family past and present, to be held in Blackburn Cathedral Jul 4. Lunch at Somme Barracks, Blackburn after the service is by ticket only. Details and tickets available from RHQ on 01772 260362.

RBL Military Gala Night, Kempton Park Racecourse, July 14, in aid of the Poppy Appeal. Parade of standards, Guards Band,

RHA and musical ride, 1700-2200. Details from RBL on 08457 725 725.

British Korean Veterans' Association: Armistice commemoration on Jul 27 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffs. Service 1000-1630. Free non-alcoholic refreshments. Details from Bob Edwardson on 01527 833505.

RAOC/RLC Commandos: Reunion to be held Jul 30 to Aug 1. Details from WO1 (SSM) Geoff Murray on 01271 857103.

King's School CCF Chester: Reunion dinner at the school on Sep 4. All past and present invited and partners welcome. Ring 2nd Lt Diane Joseph for details on 01244 689508 or diane.joseph@chester.ac.uk

RLC Band and Corps of Drums 1993 to present day: Reunion to be held Sep 11 at Deepcut. Enquiries to the Band Office on 01252 833494 or e-mail office@rlcband.co.uk

Gordon Platoon RAOC Apprentices College Sept 1970 intake: Reunion at Ironbridge, Telford, Sept 15. For further information, e-mail graham.harvey53@ntlworld.com

Grenadier Guards drummers: Reunion for past and present members of the regiment to be held at Windsor, Sept 25. For details call Peter Taylor on 01189 793372.

Infantry Boys/Junior Leaders: Tenth annual reunion for those who served at Tuxford, Harrogate, Oswestry, Plymouth and Shorncliffe during 1950s-70s. To be held on Oct 9 at the Royal Rifle Volunteers Training Centre, Milton Keynes. Further details from Hon Sec Charlie McGrogan, 15 Lambie Street, Whitburn, West Lothian EH47 0HH, tel 01501 741215; or Howard Johnson on 02920 891274.

Royal Artillery band musicians: Reunion for past and present members and wives of all RA bands. Further information from Bandmaster on 0208 7813219 or at info@raband.co.uk

Cambrai Band (Royal Tank Regiment): Reunion weekend at Ipswich from Oct 22-24. More information from Simon Burns on 01473 255353 or e-mail burnies@ntlworld.com

UNIT DISPOSALS

● The **Army Technical College**, formerly the Princess Marina College and the Army Apprentice College/School, in Arborfield is to close in August. Anyone who has made a presentation to the WO's and Sgts' Mess is invited to reclaim it. Any not reclaimed by July 15 will be relocated to ATFC sites.

Write to WO1 (RSM) Osborne PWRR, Army Technical Foundation College, Rowcroft Barracks, Arborfield, Reading RG2 9NL or call Pipe Major Duthie on 01189 763581.

● In August the **Army Technical Foundation College** will cease Phase 1 Training for apprentice tradesmen. Although Hazebrourk Officers' Mess will continue to serve Arborfield Garrison, presentations made to the college in the past may be reclaimed. Those

wishing to do so are asked to apply by July 15. Write to 2nd Lt Wade Hankins, Military Studies Department, ATFC, Rowcroft Barracks, Arborfield, Reading, RG2 9NU; tel 0118 9763473 or dehankins1@tiscali.co.uk

● **Emblem Station** has a large amount of presentations made to messes and units in the past. Due to drawdown and passage of time, many of these pieces are probably not fully appreciated as their provenance is unknown. Former Emblem personnel who would like to reclaim items or have them redistributed (perhaps to their regimental museum or HQ) are asked to apply with a full description of items. Write to WO1 (SSM) R J Wong RLC MCWO, UK Movements and Liaison Staff (Low Countries), BFPO 21.

COMPETITIONS

From the February issue:

National Army Museum Book of Wellington's Armies. Winners: Capt W Smithson, Sunderland; D Dunipace, Old Woking. Answer: Rolica.

Tears of the Sun DVD. Winners: R McLaughlan, Paisley; P Smith, York; Sgt A Edwards, Cardiff; W Vercera, Chatham; P Stanley, Exeter. Answer: *Die Hard*.

SWAT: Gobar Strike Team. Winners: Spr S Duncan, BFPO 36; E Gell, Salisbury; Sgt N Campbell, BFPO 38; I Jackson, Lowestoft; S Cassells, BFPO 803. Answer: Colin Farrell.

Rainbow Six 3. Winners: G Exley, Billericay; C Taylor, Taunton; K May, Cardiff. Answer: *The Hunt For Red October*.



Tribute to an extraordinary chaplain

THE death 75 years ago of the Rev Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy MC – better known to generations of soldiers as Woodbine Willie – was marked last month by the presentation of a silver statuette, pictured left, to the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at Ampthorp House near Andover in Hampshire.

It was commissioned by the Chaplain General, the Ven John Blackburn, from artist Ben Twiston Davies.

Few Army chaplains have fired the imagination quite as much as the legendary First World War padre. That he is remembered today is testimony to his extraordinary ability to make God a reality to ordinary soldiers. A skilled orator, he could make people laugh or reduce them to tears.

Just 5ft 6in tall, with large ears and

a radiant smile, he had a wicked sense of humour and an acute awareness of social injustice.

In December 1915 Studdert Kennedy was appointed Temporary Chaplain to the Forces and arrived on Christmas Day in a French village where he found 400 troops waiting for a service. He was soon on his way to the Rive Gauche railway siding at Rouen, from where he ministered to troops on their way to the front, boosting morale and writing letters home for them. He would pass down the train corridors to hand out Bibles and cigarettes. A chain smoker, he was very proud of his nickname.

In 1917 he won the Military Cross during the attack on the Messines Ridge. A dressing station had run short of morphia and he volunteered

to fetch more under heavy enemy fire. Then he volunteered to evacuate three wounded men.

He came to hate the war but always returned to the front as he felt he could be of most use where he was closest to death.

After the war Studdert Kennedy became a missionary for the Industrial Christian Fellowship, travelling all over Britain, preaching to thousands and holding audiences spellbound. He threw his energies into a crusade to alleviate the suffering of poverty, industrial unrest and unemployment.

Weakened by asthma and the effects of gas poisoning, he fell ill while preaching in Liverpool and died of influenza at the age of 46.

Former Servicemen threw packs of Woodbines into his open grave.

SEARCHLINE

Jim Liddell, now aged late 50s, served with **Warwickshire Regiment** at Basingbourn Barracks, nr Royston, in the **mid-1970s**. His uncle George in New Zealand would appreciate any news via g.liddell@paradise.net.nz

6965 Duncan Samuel, ex-249 Squadron, R Signals 1990s, or anyone who knows of him, is asked to contact relatives Gwynne and Heather Samuel at kr1sten668@aol.com

John Meehan AAC, Gutersloh 1994-2000, is sought by old friend Graham (Cockaz) Clarke, who left the Army in 2001. Contact him via chunkybuttgraham@aol.com

The Commando Veterans' Association is for former and serving commandos from 1940 to today. Current membership includes Second World War veterans and serving commandos with an interest in the historical lineage of today's units. The CVA will have a

stand at the Aldershot Show on Jul 3-4. Information and membership details available from secretary Alan Frasca, CVA, PO Box 45760, London, SW16 5WE, tel 0208 6690471 or by e-mail to thecommandos@tiscali.co.uk

Newly-formed **Royal Military Police Malaya Veterans' Club** is planning a reunion. Contact is Tony Bowdler, 50 Oak Avenue, Droitwich, WR9 7BT, tel 01905 775174 or e-mail tonyb@elaineb.freesevice.co.uk

Princess Marina College, Arborfield intake 95a members are sought by old REME friend via claire_robertson@yahoo.com

Ex-L Nery Battery 1969-73, and other **2 Fd Regt RA** members sought by Phil Randall. Tel 01257 231417 or e-mail rrandall83@aol.com

Any ex-RAVC Malaya 1955-59 personnel from WDTW FTC, Johor Bahru, Malaya

sought. Particularly R Parks, P Shephard, J E Hughes and P Double. Please contact Pete Dawe on 01684 566972.

William Renshaw and Kev Watts, ex-E Bty, 1 RHA 1970s, who served with Steven Ward, are asked to contact his daughter for a 50th birthday surprise celebration in July. Call 0115 9165344, e-mail claireward11@hotmail.com

Robert Goodwin, formerly of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglians (served in Aden and Germany in 1960s) is asked to please contact R Scott in Leicester on 07799211238.

Hardley School at Holbury, Southampton seeks ex-pupil **David Gough**, known to have married a German national about ten years ago, for school's 30th anniversary celebrations on June 19. If you know his whereabouts contact Alison Henderson (née Glanville) via hendo@badger-towers.fsnet.co.uk

Useful numbers

Army Benevolent Fund 020 7591 2000; www.armybenfund.org

Army Families Advice Bureau 01722 436569

Army Welfare Service 01722 433456

Army Families Federation 01980 615525; www.aff.org.uk

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association 020 8590 1124; www.blesma.org.uk

Career Transition Partnership 0207 766 8020 www.ctp.org.uk

Confidential support lines:

UK 0800 731 4880

Germany 0800 1827 395

Cyprus 080 91065

Bosnia 0800 731 4880

Others UK 1980 630854

Operations worldwide Paradigm Homelink Access Number *2999@thePINprompt

Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society 01372 841600; www.combatstress.com

Consumer Credit Counselling Service Free

Confidential Helpline 0800 1381111

Family Escort Service 020 7463 9249

Gulf Veterans Association 0191 230 1065 www.gulfveteransassociation.co.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office 01722 436575

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group) 01666 824709

National Gulf Veterans and Families Association Office (0900-1700) 01482 808730; 24-hour helpline on 01482 833812; www.ngvfa.com

Regular Forces Employment Association 0207 321 2011; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion's Legionline 0845 7725 725; www.britishlegion.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre 01622 717202/718484; www.rbli.co.uk

ESHRA Ex-Service Homes Referral Agency 020 7839 4466 www.eshra.com or eshra@britishlegion.org.uk

St Dunstan's Home for blind ex-Servicemen and women 020 7723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association) Falklands conflict veterans 01495 227577 e-mail: densama@aol.com

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

Service Children's Education 01980 618244

Services Cotswold Centre 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help 020 7403 8783; www.ssafa.org.uk

SSAFA Forces Help Housing Advisory Service 01722 436400

Veterans' Agency (includes War Pensions Agency) 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Victim Support Western Europe (SSAFA Forces Help) in Germany 02161 47 2272; from outside Germany 0049 2161 47 2272

WRVS General enquiries 02920 739906; www.wrvs.org.uk



DATES

MAY

29: Trooping the Colour, Major General's Review, Horse Guards. Tickets: 020 7414 2479.

JUNE

5: Trooping the Colour, Colonel's Review, Horse Guards. Tickets: 020 7414 2479.

12: Queen's Birthday Parade, Horse Guards. 020 7414 2479.

JULY

3-4: Aldershot Army Show, Queens Avenue, Aldershot. For information call 01252 349539 or see www.armyshow.co.uk.

9-10: 'Music on Fire' spectacular, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 1930hrs. Massed bands, an orchestra, pipes and drums and a choir accompanied by an array of special effects. Proceeds going to the Army Benevolent Fund. Ticket hotline 020 8675 3582 or visit www.musiconfire.com.

17: The 2004 Military Tattoo, Manchester Evening News Arena, 1400 and 1930. Music from the Band of The Parachute Regiment, Pipes and Drums of the Scots Guards Association, and the GMP Band. Ticket hotline 0161 4839395 or e-mail tony@silks025.freeserve.co.uk.

17-18: Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford, Glos. Celebrating 50 years of C-130 Hercules, 30 years of Hawk and 40th display season of Red Arrows. Also hosting tri-Service Defence 2004. Advance tickets £24.95 until Mar 1, £29.95 thereafter, £35 on day. Available at www.airtattoo.com or call 0870 758 1918.

AUGUST

6-28: Edinburgh Tattoo. Booking on 08707 5551188 or at www.edintattoo.co.uk

28-30: Military Odyssey. Kent County Ground, Detling. Enquiries 01829 730830. www.military-odyssey.com

■ **THE Allied Museum** in Berlin is preparing an exhibition which will throw light on the history of the three Western military liaison missions in Potsdam.

Today, the history of the Allied military missions is almost unknown to the public, so in close cooperation with institutions in the USA, Great Britain and France, the Allied Museum has been able to compile material on the history of the Western missions for an exhibition. It will be open until late August 2004.

Sign of the times

IT is a sign of changing times when an Army officer is left at home "looking after the baby" while his womenfolk are off serving Queen and country in distant lands. Just such an arrangement has befallen **Capt Ron Henderson** SASC, right, serving with Director Infantry Training Advisory Group TA.

Ron's wife, **Maj Jennie Henderson** QARANC, far right, is serving with 22 Field Hospital in Basra on Op Telic. She is a reservist who was mobilised in November 2003 for a six-month tour. Gemma, their daughter, seen below left, with her fiancé, Justin, is a corporal serving with 110 Pro Coy RMP and is on six-month detachment in Basra.

To further complicate matters for the Henderson family, Gemma is due to be married on June 26, and her future husband is a Regular soldier, at present on six-month detachment in Basra with 101 Pro Coy RMP. Their marriage was due to take place in October, but it had to be postponed due to them being posted to Basra.

Ron has had his fair share of Army life, having served for 26 years: ten with The Parachute Regiment and 16 with the Small Arms School Corps. Now he is quite happy staying at home, playing mum to his 23-year-old son Philip, seen left!



War grave search service

THE Great War Grave Search, which finds and photographs War Graves in France and Belgium at the request of relatives, experiences a very varied background of people making requests.

Robert and Paulette Millar started helping relatives on a non profit-making basis four years ago. With a fee just enough to cover their costs, the team will provide clients with between four and six photographs of their lost relatives' graves.

Many do not know where their relatives are buried, so at no cost the team searches Commonwealth War Graves Commission records to confirm the location. "We once spent nearly two days looking at through 400 records for a Private

Jones in a Welsh Regiment, who we found eventually," said Robert.

"We bear all the costs up front ourselves and rely on people to reimburse us on our return when they have received their photographs."

The Great War Grave Search has photographed more than 150 First and Second World War headstones and memorial inscriptions from Normandy to Antwerp and Dunkirk to Rouen. Some have been sent to relatives in Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

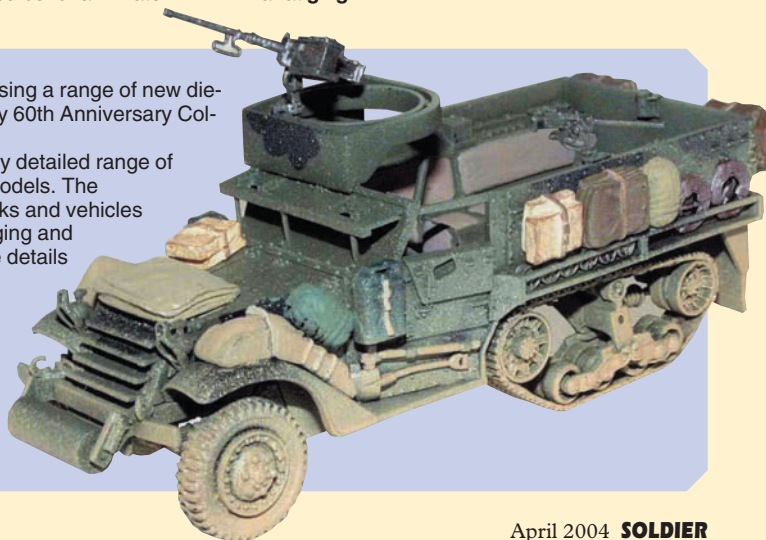
The Great War Grave Search can be contacted on **01303 894767** or e-mail Robert and Paulette Millar at gwgs@wwl.demon.co.uk.



■ **CORGI Classics** are releasing a range of new die-cast models called the D-Day 60th Anniversary Collection 1944-2004.

The collection is a superbly detailed range of limited edition 1:50 scaled models. The authentically researched tanks and vehicles come in presentation packaging and an information booklet. More details on www.corgiclassics.com.

The model featured is an **M3 White Halftrack** used by the **29th Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, 4th Canadian Armoured Division**



TA gunnery honours

IT was one of the finest moments of **Maj Ian Oldershaw's** 28-year TA career when he was handed the Queen's Cup at the Guildhall in London. Ian, who commands the 307 South Notts Hussars, said his soldiers had to beat gunnery teams from throughout England to win their trophy.

"It is 20 years exactly since the Queen's Cup last came to Nottingham," said Ian. "Our young men and women proved they were the finest shots in the TA with a 105mm gun."

His soldiers topped off their triumph by mounting a guard of honour for the Royal Artillery Association's award ceremony, in London. Forty members of the Bulwell-based unit went on parade in full ceremonial dress to the tune of a band dressed in the military style of the 1700s.

The presentation was made to the South Notts Hussars by the Lord Mayor of London. He took the salute together with The Master Gunner, St. James' Park, Gen Sir Alex Harley.



Proud duo: Capt Oldershaw, right, holds the Queen's Cup in company with Geoffrey Bond, Sheriff of the City of London, who is also a resident of Nottingham

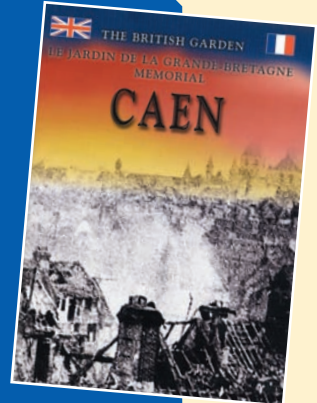
Memorial garden for Caen

A group called **The British Friends of Normandy** have produced a booklet about the new British Memorial Garden in Normandy, which is situated alongside Caen's Memorial Museum.

With the help of Reg Maxwell, the director of the Botanical Gardens in Belfast, a beautiful garden has been created. The centrepiece is a Fountain of Spirits commemorating all those who lost their lives in the battle for Normandy.

An official Royal opening of the garden will take place on June 5. HQ 3 Division will be providing a guard of honour and there will be two bands and a Beat Retreat ceremony.

The booklet sells for £3.50 plus 50p postage, all funds going to the upkeep of the garden. It can be obtained from **The British Friends of Normandy, c/o The Military History Officer, Museum Road, Portsmouth PO1 2LJ.**



■ **SHELTER**, the UK'S leading housing charity, is looking for teams with a sense of adventure and a feel for the great outdoors to take part in its annual **Three Peaks Challenge** to climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in one weekend. For information call **08457 458 45900**, visit the website **www.shelter.org.uk/threepaks** or e-mail **send-for-it@shelter.org.uk**.

Basra reunion

FIJIAN soldier **Pte Kitioni Rawalai** of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots, was reunited with his father thanks to a chance meeting between his Regimental Sergeant Major and a group of ex-Fijian soldiers at Basra International Airport.

WO1 Bob Welsh, RSM 1 RS, said: "I was amazed to find that one of the Fijian men had a son serving in the battalion. 'We invited Mr Rawalai Senior, an ex-RSM in the Fijian Army, to Cherokee Camp on the outskirts of Basra where he spent the night catching up with his son and exchanging family news before heading on to Mosul the next day."

It later transpired that due to operational commitments on both of their parts they had not seen each other for four years."

Pte Rawalai said: "It was incredible. I never expected to meet my father here in Iraq. It was great to see him."



Family ties: Pte Kitioni Rawalai, 1 RS, is reunited with his father in Basra

Major stake in operation Gecko

AN international charity founded by a British Army officer and an American woman has been able to provide rapid financial help to the British Civil Military Co-operation (CIMIC) team in Kabul.

Gecko (Greater Education for the Children of Kabul) was set up in February 2002 by Maj Jonny Crook while he was serving in Kabul. It all started when a response to an appeal for humanitarian assistance came from Peiggi Clements, a mother from Phoenix, Arizona. Out of this the charity was born.

In just over two years since its inception, Gecko has donated medical equipment and an ambulance to the Afghan Health Ministry; provided stationery, desks and chairs for

schools, found spare parts for four civilian ambulances, distributed tons of second-hand clothing and raised just short of £10,000 for CIMIC projects.

Following a story in the February issue of *Soldier*, Gecko was again able to provide assistance for the repair of an ambulance by donating £3,800 to Capt Jeff Heaps, head of the UK CIMIC team.

Future objectives include gaining recognition from the UN as a humanitarian organisation and organising the airlift of donated material to Kabul.

Gecko can be contacted on **07747 008585** or for more information check out their website at **www.gecko-az.org**

'Outstanding' volunteer

BRIG Jonathan Powe, recently appointed 42 (NW) Brigade Commander, presents **Cpl David Scholfield**, right, with a Multi-National Certificate of Commendation for the outstanding role he played as a volunteer in the Gulf. He was also part of the Lancastrian Cumbrian Volunteers team that won the Derby Trophy at Halkyn Moor.

Brig Powe recently completed a five-month tour as Chief of Staff to the Senior British Military Adviser to US Central Command before taking up his present post.





Edited by Andy Simms E-mail: asimms@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Retail reconnaissance

Switched on . . .



TIMELY INVENTION ▲

SUUNTO'S X6HRM wrist-top for athletes features a heart-rate monitor, altimeter, barometer, compass and clinometer.

The stainless steel watch face also incorporates a vast, multi-faceted log book, from which information can be downloaded and recorded on most PCs.

① £375, from www.suunto.com (01294 316306).

BRIGHT IDEA ▼

HARNESSING advanced LED technology, the Inova 24/7 packs eight lighting functions into a rugged ultrasonically sealed polymer casing measuring less than 3x2x1 inches.

Capable of projecting light up to 75 feet, the Inova's functions include: low output white, signal strobe, SOS signal, night vision red, high visibility distress strobe, emergency beacon and locator beam.

① £54.95, from www.h3products.com



POCKET GUIDE ▲

THIS 6.6 ounce PDA-come-GPS has 32MB of RAM, a backlit 16-bit colour display and is accurate to within 15 metres.

Garmin's iQue 3600 uses moving maps and its bundled software includes a GPS clock, address lookup, mapping, tracking, trip computer, route generator and turn-by-turn voice guidance programs.

① £575, from www.gadgetshop.com (0870 8400567).

Game on . . .

SAVAGE, PC

CLAIMING to be the first Real-Time Strategy Shooter (RTSS) on the market, Digital Jester's *Savage* redefines the first-person shooter and real-time strategy genres by combining elements of both into one cohesive online experience.

Set on Earth in the distant future, the game supports up to 64 players (32 versus 32), and is based on the battle for control raging between humans and beasts.

Gamers can choose to be one of the game's two commanders, one on each team, and play an in-depth real-time strategy, or adopt the role of a warrior and participate in intense first-person combat. As the commander gamers will have to tackle resource management, develop technologies, plan assaults and lead real human players into battle. While as a warrior they will need to master many unique weapons, powerful units and siege vehicles in order to fight a fast-paced battle.

Already a huge success with American gamers, this special European version of *Savage* includes the following extra features: a 64-page strategy pack; exclusive maps; server vouchers for free sessions on www.jolt.co.uk; a Samurai Wars expansion, which transforms the game's characters and locations into feudal Japan; and a bonus tutorial disc.

VERDICT: Two games for the price of one. 9/10

OUT NOW

BYTE-SIZE NEWS



COURTESY of Digital Jester, *Soldier* has three prize bundles containing a copy of *Savage* for the PC and a T-shirt, up for grabs.

For your chance to win, simply tell us the maximum number of players that can take part in each game of *Savage*.

Winners will be drawn at random from the correct answers received by April 30. Usual rules apply.

LONDON-based developer Argonaut has revealed that it is working on a game based on Warner Bros' forthcoming summer action movie *Catwoman*.

Scheduled for release alongside the film in July, the company will no doubt be hoping that the title's eponymous lead character – played by Oscar-winner Halle Berry in the movie – will enjoy the same popularity as gaming's current leading lady, Lara Croft.

FOLLOWING on from *Tomb Raider* and *Deus Ex*, Eidos has announced that it has optioned the film and television rights to its video game franchise *Fear Effect* to producer and director Uwe Boll.

"*Fear Effect* is a fantastic game with a dark story," explained Boll. "I want to create an action film in the vein of *Charlie's Angels* but portray its sexy heroines Hana and Rain in a much edgier fashion."

ELECTRONIC Arts has signed an exclusive deal with Marvel which will enable the publishing company to develop a series of games featuring the comic book empire's best known superheroes. The only major franchise missing from the agreement is *The Hulk*.

ROGUE OPS, PS2, XBOX, GC

AS Nikki Connors, a highly-trained counter-terrorist operative and former Green Beret, gamers are tasked with infiltrating Omega 19, a sinister organisation which has acquired an arsenal of deadly Cold War era weaponry, in Capcom's *Rogue Ops*.

Even though Connors has an extensive array of weapons at her disposal, including a taser, pistol, dart gun, grenades and mines, *Rogue Ops'* gameplay focuses on stealth over direct confrontation, with mission success relying heavily on going undetected.

Players can hide in the shadows, seek refuge in environmental objects, avoid leaving the spilt blood of their victims, and peer round corners in a bid to evade the attentions of the numerous sentries they will encounter during the game's eight missions. A host of cutting-edge spy tools, such as fly-cams, retina scanners and thermal optical camouflage, can also be used to prevent detection. Those gamers who opt for the gung-ho approach may achieve some success, but with limited ammunition only the sharpest of shooters will survive.

Unlike so many other games of this ilk, *Rogue Ops'* heightened enemy AI means that once alerted, guards and other computer controlled characters will not stop



investigating suspicious circumstances until they track down the cause. This unique and long overdue feature means that enemies will not forget all about being in a gunfight just because the player has disappeared from their field of vision.

VERDICT: Better than Bond. 8/10

OUT NOW

WIN!

SOLDIER has teamed up with Capcom to offer readers the opportunity to save the world from Omega 19.

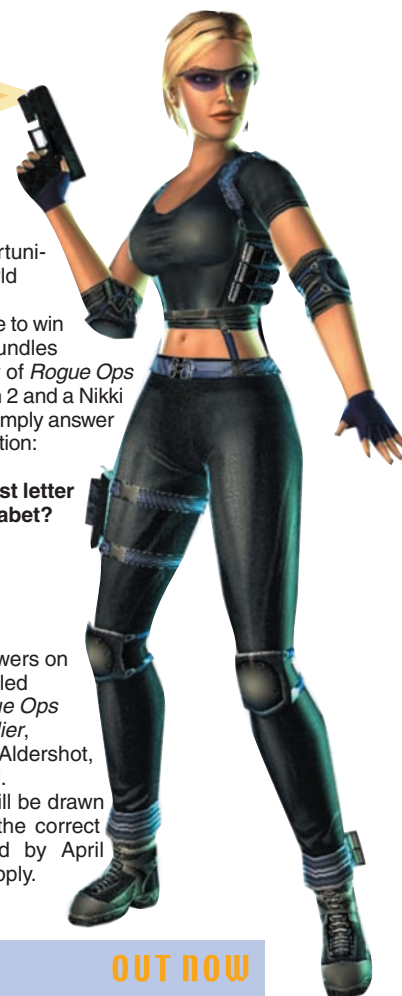
For your chance to win one of ten prize bundles containing a copy of *Rogue Ops* for the PlayStation 2 and a Nikki Connors T-shirt, simply answer the following question:

Omega is the last letter of which alphabet?

- a) Welsh
- b) Greek
- c) American

Send your answers on a postcard or sealed envelope to *Rogue Ops* competition, *Soldier*, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU.

The winners will be drawn at random from the correct answers received by April 30. Usual rules apply.



CASTLEVANIA, PS2

ARMED with a dagger, holy water and obligatory cross, players take on the role of a nobleman searching for his missing love within the expansive castle of a master vampire in Konami's latest addition to the *Castlevania* series.

The action-adventure game, which acts as a prelude to previous *Castlevania* titles, boasts 3D graphics that show off the beautifully realised rooms of Dracula's castle, as well as the traps and decaying adversaries which reside in them.



VERDICT: Well worth sinking your teeth into. 8/10

OUT NOW

BOMBASTIC, PS2

TETRIS meets *Bomberman* in this fast-paced puzzle title from Capcom, which puts gamers in control of a veritable minefield of explosive moving dice.

Players are challenged to connect dice in matching combinations, such as four fours or six sixes, causing them to explode and clear each stage.

With seven modes of play, including a war mode which pits five characters against each other in a battle of survival, *Bombastic* offers more than the average puzzler.



VERDICT: Simple yet addictive. 7/10

OUT NOW

URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER, ALL OUT NOW



VERDICT: Footy with no rules. 7/10

WITH not a square inch of turf in sight, this arcade-style four-on-four street soccer title from Acclaim takes place against a background of graffiti-strewn city environments.

Players can choose to control one of ten individual street gangs, each sporting their own distinct playing styles, clothing and footwear, in five different game modes. Tracks from, among others, Queens of the Stone Age, Feeder, TLC and Kid Frost accompany the action.

JAK II: RENEGADE, PS2



VERDICT: Jak is back. 8/10

DEVELOPER'S Naughty Dog, the team behind the multi-million selling *Crash Bandicoot* series, claim that this sequel to *Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy* is bigger, better and smarter than its predecessor.

And true to their word, this plot-driven action-adventure takes players on a journey through a massive metropolis that is three times as large as the entire world of the first game and introduces them to characters with advanced AI and who are made up of 15,000 polygons, versus the 4,000 used in the original.

OUT NOW



Human face of war by a small-screen icon

IT is no secret that Rageh Omaar, already an award-winning TV journalist, became an icon for his BBC reports from Baghdad during the 2003 war, particularly among women viewers. So popular was the 36-year-old Somali born correspondent that T-shirts bearing his image became fashion chic. His elegant insight into the Iraqi capital and its people before and during the war – **Revolution Day** (Penguin Viking, £17.99) is written

from the perspective of one who reported from Iraq for six years before the conflict and who was one of about 100 foreign journalists who remained in Baghdad through the war.

Matthew Hervey goes back into battle

BRIGADIER Allan Mallinson's fifth Matthew Hervey novel, *The Sabre's Edge*, now out in paperback (Bantam, £6.99) became a *Sunday Times* best-seller. True to form, the author, now retired from the Army, has produced number six at the gallop. In **Rumours of War** (Bantam, £16.99) our hero, newly returned from India in 1826, embarks on his next adventure – back to the Peninsula, where he had his first taste of action, to fight a new battle. He also has to contend with the attentions of his new friend, Lady Katherine Greville . . .

Salacious tales from the Crimean War

IT is surprising that, almost 150 years after it was fought, there is still a wealth of unpublished information about one of the most famous conflicts in history. Yet **The National Army Museum Book of the Crimean War: The Untold Stories** by Alastair Massie (Sidgwick & Jackson, £25) draws on first-hand accounts, ranging from the barely literate letters of private soldiers to the copious correspondence of Lord Raglan, to unearth the kind of juicy tales today's tabloids would break the bank for – everything from friendly fire incidents and looting to amputations, decapitations, sexual disease and transvestism.

The sun als

Thanks to the war Falkland Islanders can now walk tall

A Falkland Islander Till I Die by Terence Severine Betts (The Book Guild, £20).

Review: Graham Bound

IT takes some time for the significance of wars, their causes, whys, wherefores and morality, to become fully understood. Americans are still trying to get their heads around Vietnam, and ten years from now we will probably still be debating the Iraq war.

Oh, then, for a simple conflict; one like the Falklands. No ambiguity there, surely. British territory was invaded and the British people who lived there were denied their freedom. The war was an unpleasant necessity to restore the bucolic life of a simple people. And when it was all over, everything was just as good as it always had been.

Well, it wasn't quite like that. Suspicions that the story of the Falklands is actually rather more complex and slightly more troubling are not new, but they have not been raised as a major theme in a book before.

Falkland author Terry Betts does this in his story about growing up in the Islands, enduring the war and grasping the opportunities of the post-conflict years. It is a deceptively folksy story, in places inelegantly written, that nevertheless raises some uncomfortable issues.

The first clue to Betts's implicit thesis lies in the title. He does not call this 500-plus page doorstop of a book "British until I die". Betts makes it clear that his love and loyalty is to the islands, which were in 1982 a colony, with all the baggage of economic exploitation and subservience that go with that status.

It should be stressed that the author is grateful to the ordinary men who died evicting the Argentines – indeed his deep thanks verges on guilt. But he paints a picture of a neglectful mother country that denied him an education beyond the age of 14, denied his parents a decent standard of living and gave the Islands' economic wealth to London-based companies.

In the decades before the war Islands society was clearly stratified; a British class system in miniature, in which the people of Betts's background (hard-working but poor labouring stock) did not join the colonial administrators to drink gin and tonics. They were much more likely to have served them.

The author's brother was so incensed at what he saw and felt that he actually sided

with the Argentines. As Terry made his way out of occupied Stanley to help British troops, Alex, the older sibling, threw his lot in with the enemy.

When the war was over, Alex went into exile in Argentina and wrote his own book condemning the British. Remarkably, the two brothers later met at the UN, where one was helping the British delegation to debate the Falklands and the other was arguing for the Argentines. It makes powerful reading.



so rises



Falklands 1982: Soldiers are silhouetted against the setting sun as dusk falls over San Carlos Bay in this picture by *Soldier* photographer Paul Haley. The war ensured the sun did not set on this British territory for ever

from a fishing industry that could be invested in schools, medical facilities, roads and houses. Development money and advisers poured in, and (above all) democracy was introduced.

Islanders were empowered. Soon the class system was shattered and absentee landlords sold-up and went. Islanders – the likes of Terry Betts – were energetically taking their islands ahead. Betts strings the story out for rather too long, but it is still remarkable.

Had it not been for the war, the neglect would have continued, and the last demoralised islander would probably have put the lights out and left a long time ago. As it is, they are burning brightly and Islanders now walk tall.

*Graham Bound, a Falkland Islander by birth, is Editor of the Ministry of Defence newspaper, *Focus*.

Soldier ordering service

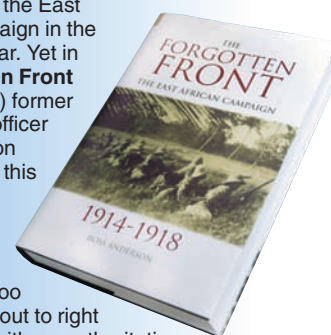
All books mentioned on these pages are available from Helion & Company, who can also supply 14,500 in-print military books and operate a free booksearch; p&p is extra. All major credit/switch cards taken. Please allow up to 28 days for delivery. Helion & Company, 26 Willow Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1UE, England (tel 0121 705 3393; fax 0121 711 4075). E-mail: books@helion.co.uk Website: <http://www.helion.co.uk>

War not only ended the hated Argentine occupation, it also forced the British government to change its derisory attitude to islanders. While attention was diverted by the rapture of victory, Whitehall went to work rectifying the now embarrassing injustices.

Locally-born people were quietly given the right to live and work in Britain. An exclusive economic zone was declared in the seas around the islands, giving them wealth

Medical supply problem almost wiped out Army

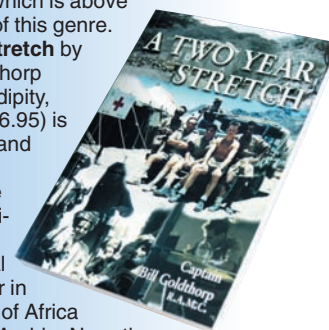
ONE of the greatest films of all time, *The African Queen*, was inspired by an episode of the East African Campaign in the First World War. Yet in **The Forgotten Front** (Tempus, £25) former British Army officer Ross Anderson contends that this theatre of the conflict has languished in undeserved obscurity for too long. He sets out to right this injustice with an authoritative account which discloses how mismanagement led to the British Army, commanded by Gen Smuts, being virtually wiped out by illness because critical medical supplies failed to reach the soldiers.



Moon rockets and brass bands in darkest Africa

FROM time to time a service memoir comes along which is above the usual run of this genre.

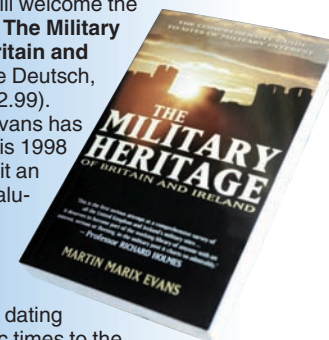
A Two Year Stretch by Capt Bill Goldthorp RAMC (Serendipity, paperback, £16.95) is a lively, funny and well-written account of the author's experiences as a young National Service doctor in primitive parts of Africa and Southern Arabia. Narrative under such subject headings as "The Squitters: an attack of" may not be Booker Prize material, but the author manages to turn even this universally grim experience into a witty anecdote, with allusions to moon rockets and the Black Dyke Mills Brass Band.



Tourist's guide to military history

THOSE with an interest in visiting military sites will welcome the new edition of **The Military Heritage of Britain and Ireland** (Andre Deutsch, paperback, £12.99).

Martin Marx Evans has fully updated his 1998 guide to make it an even more invaluable reference work. Listed and described here are more than 750 sites, dating from prehistoric times to the Cold War. Here you will find information on 100 battlefields, 400 fortifications, more than 250 museums, and 45 graveyards and major memorials, including Commonwealth, American and European listed forces.





IN BRIEF

Fusiliers' key role in the battle for Basra

THE First Fusiliers Battle-group played a key role in Operation Telic. One of the largest such formations ever to be deployed by the UK, it saw action as the first unit of the 1st UK Armoured Division into Iraq and played a vital role in the battle for Basra.

It seized the bridgehead for the remainder of the Desert Rats' advance into Iraq, fought on the bridges across the Shatt-al-Basra waterway, conducted raids and patrols into the city and then eventually captured the north of Basra on April 6.

Hackles Raised (Gateway, large-format softback) uses personal anecdotes to tell the story of one unit's preparation and conduct of modern high-intensity warfare.

Amplly illustrated with excellent action pho-

tographs and containing personal accounts conveying the skill and bravery of those who took part, the book is dedicated to three soldiers killed in action – Cpl Steven Albutt QRL, Tpr David Clarke QRL, and Fus Kelan Turrington RRF.

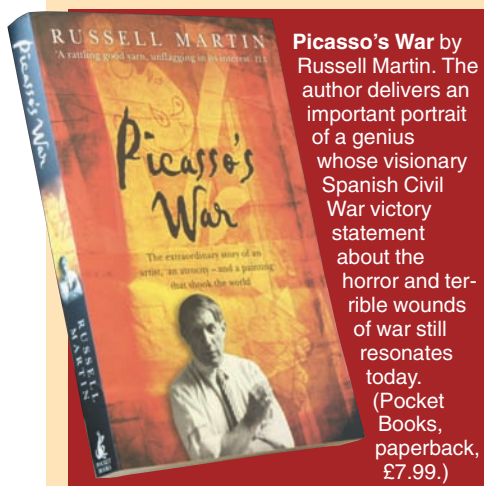
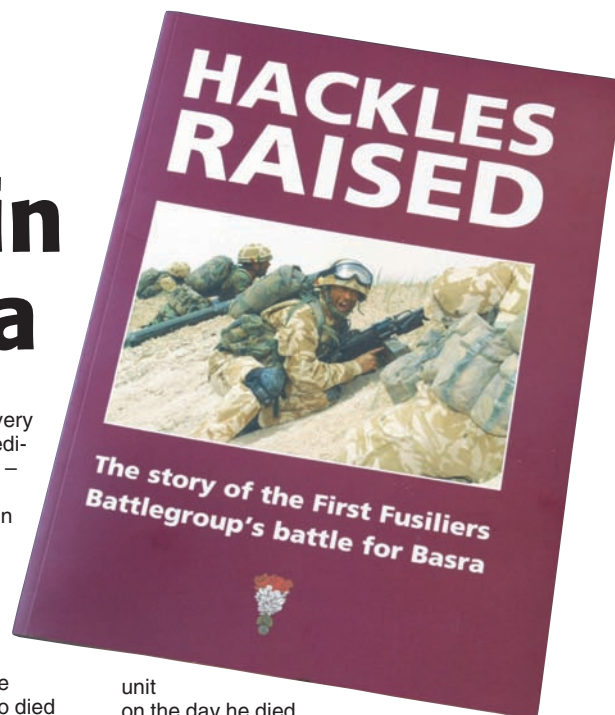
It is available only from the PRI, 1 RRF, BFPO 23, and costs £9.99 plus £1 p&p.

For every copy sold, £1 will be donated to a charity established by the parents of Fus Turrington, MiD, the youngest soldier killed in combat, who died as the battle-group secured north Basra. In his last letter home, Kelan wrote movingly of the plight of young children who followed the

unit

on the day he died.

The money raised will help to restore a school and a clinic in Iraq, providing furnishings, computers, and training for doctors.



Picasso's War by Russell Martin. The author delivers an important portrait of a genius whose visionary Spanish Civil War victory statement about the horror and terrible wounds of war still resonates today. (Pocket Books, paperback, £7.99.)

War Stories by Harold Evans. Former *Sunday Times* editor describes how war has been reported from the mid-19th century, using vignettes from journalists past and present in this 96-pager. (Bunker Hill, £9.95.)

Old Ironsides by Frank Kitson. Military biography of Oliver Cromwell by the retired general reveals how and why this gentleman farmer was so successful as a commander. (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.99.)

1066: The Battles of York, Stamford Bridge and Hastings by Peter Marren. It was a year of destiny for the British Isles. This book explains what really happened and why. (Pen & Sword, paperback, £9.95.)

A Guide to Irish Military Heritage by Brian Hanley. In the 20th Century alone, Irish men and women fought in two world wars, a revolution and civil war in Ireland itself. Though often tragic, this military past is of great interest to Irish people at home and abroad. (Four Courts Press, £9.94.)

Jarhead: A Soldier's Story of Modern War by Anthony Swofford. The author, at 19, was a scout-sniper in the first Gulf War. This tells of his time in the desert, and the aftermath. (Scribner, paperback, £6.99.)

Moon Over Malaya, A Tale of the Argylls and Marines by Jonathan Moffatt and Audrey Holmes McCormick. What really happened in Singapore and Malaya during the dark days from December 1941 to February 1942. (Tempus, paperback, £12.99.)

The China Dragon's Tales: The 1st Battalion by Ian Cull. The fifth book by the Royal Berkshire Regiment Great War Project. (Wardrobe Museum Trust, large-format paperback, £14.95. Tel 01722 419419 or visit www.thewardrobe.org.uk)

Walking the London Blitz by Clive Harris. Sixty years after the Blitz, London may be a very different scene, but with the aid of this fascinating book it is still possible to understand the events that took place. (Pen & Sword, paperback, £12.95.)

Forty Men – Eight Horses by Douglas Arthur. The story of the "106th of Shaw Street", a Liverpool Territorial Yeomanry Regiment. More than half of its men were killed during the retreat from Greece in 1941 and the exhausted survivors were evacuated to Crete to become PoWs. (Vanguard Press, paperback, £8.99.)

Tragedy of Fear by Edward Harris. Fly-on-the-wall account of the events around the birth of Vietnam's independence in the early 1950s. The author worked closely with Lord Louis Mountbatten in the tortuous path towards a negotiating position with Ho Chi Minh. (Fairfield Press, £8.95.)

The Gestapo by Rupert Butler. Guide to Henrich Himmler's evil organisation, which was responsible for the internal security of

Sorry, RGJ: In our review of Mark Urban's *Rifles* (Books, March) we said that the 95th Rifles was a predecessor of the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment. In fact the modern successor to the 95th is The Royal Green Jackets.

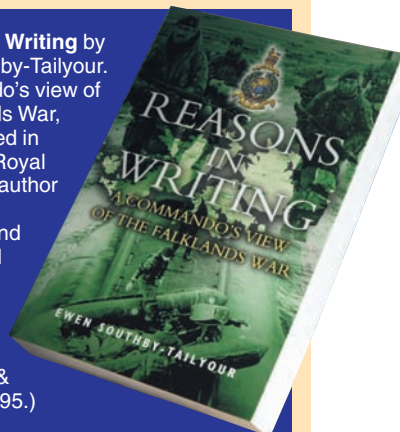
the Reich and the murder of thousands of resistance members, spies and other enemies of the Nazis. (Pen & Sword, 19.95.)

British and Commonwealth Armies 1944-45 by Mark Bevis. A complete guide to the organisation and order of battle, following on from the author's previous volume covering 1939-43. (Helion, large-format paperback, £16.95.)

Famous British Battles by Geoffrey Regan. More than 900 years of military conflict, from Stamford Bridge to Goose Green, focusing on the incidents and personalities. First published 1997. (Carlton, £14.99.)

Evader by Derek Shuff. The epic story of the first British airman to be rescued by the Comète Escape Line in the Second World War. (Spellmount, £18.99.)

Reasons in Writing by Ewen Southby-Tailyour. A Commando's view of the Falklands War, first published in 1993. As a Royal Marine, the author charted the waters around the Falkland Islands before the Argentine invasion of 1982. (Pen & Sword, £14.95.)



SOLDIER to soldier

No more Deepcuts

A FEW minutes of the BBC's popular Five Live "Drive" programme neatly encapsulated important strands of the public reaction to the Surrey Police's damning "Fifth Report" into the deaths of recruits in training at Deepcut.

The mother of one of the young men found to have committed suicide told the radio station's many listeners that she would strongly discourage any parent from allowing their child to join the British Army.

She was followed on air by Falklands veteran Simon Weston, who spoke of the need – and reasons – for robust training in a service whose primary business is to be ready for war.

◆ ◆ ◆

He recalled his own early – sometimes bewildering – days as a recruit and the support that had allowed him to grow up and enjoy the experience. He had nothing but praise for his military training.

Simon, whose battles with his own dreadful injuries have made him a hero in the eyes of many of us, had one thing in common with the Deepcut mother – a deep abhorrence for systematic bullying.

There may sometimes be a fine line between robust encouragement and thuggery, but it is a line the Army very rarely crosses. When it does, the impact echoes far beyond the establishment in which it has taken place.

◆ ◆ ◆

The name of Deepcut will, in most of our memories, be forever tainted by the deaths of those young recruits.

Surrey Police criticises the Army's failure to protect trainees there between 1995 and 2002 – a horribly long time. It blamed the high risk of suicide on the low ratio of supervisors to recruits.

"Accumulating evidence," it said, "should have compelled the Army to act decisively some years ago." It has acted now and the regime and systems in place at Deepcut, and all other training establishments, are today very different. It mustn't happen again.

Home truths

Sue Bonney

Realistic cash in real terms?

YOU could have knocked me down with a wotsit.

For weeks there has been nothing but gloom and doom on the future of the Defence budget, with Treasury tigers rumoured to be waiting to pounce, and wholesale financial slaughter facing all we held dear.

Rumours of budget holders being forced to seek cuts were rife. Dark clouds loomed. But wait, what's that? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No . . . it's Super Chancellor. Just as we were bracing ourselves for the worst on Budget Day, Mr Brown took a somewhat unexpected and surprising stance on the Defence budget, defending it heroically from all those dastardly Tories who would freeze it and impose "Cuts in Real Terms".

Well, there's a turn-up

Apparently, Mr Brown would not dream of doing such a thing. Fie upon them, and shame. No! He will give us "real-term increases". Well, there's a turn-up. Good grief. And praise be. All hail Gordon the Great.

And there we were, thinking he was the bad guy, completely fooled by his dour, bushy eyebrow disguise, when all the time he was really our knight in shining armour. Defence need not, apparently, fear the public spending review in July.

At least, I think that's what he said.

It's hard to see how the Army can go on doing what it's doing, and sort out kit shortages, and plan for the future, and recruit more soldiers so that the gap between tours here, there and everywhere can be increased and separation reduced, and still have folks on hand to dash off to Kosovo and the like at the drop of a hat, without there being some realistic cash.

Not to mention the dire need for accommodation upgrades in barracks and quarters. Let's hope "real-term increases" means everyone can stop



A personal view
from Sue Bonney,
Editor of the AFF
Families Journal

looking gloomily for cuts like Eeyore for thistles, and that some welfare initiatives can go ahead, rather than be put on hold yet again.

Or do you think that might be being just a tad optimistic? In real terms, I mean?

And if there's any spare . . .

Speaking purely personally, I wouldn't object if, should they find some spare cash, it could be splashed on spouses being included in real-term resettlement. Especially maturer spouses, no names, no pack drill, who have spent three decades moving between the UK and overseas, missing out on most opportunities to accrue a pension – state or otherwise – with nothing remotely resembling a career.

Jobs yes. Odd jobs, oh yes. But career? It's wife-of-this and wife-of-that when we're useful and doing our bit, but when it comes to a bit of assistance and advice on what happens once you're on the pension heap (sorry – HIS pension heap), you are invisible – not even a thank you,

Mrs Atkins.

So while he's off on his courses, being counselled and informed and CV'd, nary a kind word is cast your way. As usual, it's get on with it yourself, love. No sessions for you on what

you might think of doing next, or what might be on offer to you as you, too, head for civvy street.

I really fancied doing a bricklaying course because I've been wanting to build walls in our garden for ages.

Before they all write to me, I know some resettlement centres do include spouses in some sessions, but in reality and officially, resettlement is not a joint affair.

Which, when you consider just how much a soldier's job affects every aspect of their spouse's life, doesn't seem quite fair. Although, in real terms, it is par for the course.

Even the bricklaying one.

‘Speaking purely personally, I wouldn't object if, should they find some spare cash, it could be splashed on spouses being included in real-term resettlement’



WRITE TO: SOLDIER, ORDNANCE ROAD, ALDERSHOT, HANTS GU11 2DU
 ● E-mail: mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

You can beat bowel cancer ... I did

YOUR article on bowel cancer ("Don't blush, look before you flush", Feb) prompted me to write about my experience over the past ten months.

In late February last year I deployed on OP Telic with Number 1 Company, Irish Guards. A few weeks later I noticed dark red blood when I cleaned myself and thought it was a piles problem, which I had had on and off for about two years.

I decided to see a doctor and a week later reported to the field hospital outside Basra. The doctor, who has my deepest gratitude and probably saved my life, told me he was going to casevac me back to the UK because I did not have piles.

On May 5 I arrived at the Military District Hospital Unit in the Friarage Hospital at Northallerton, near Catterick and over the next ten days had several examinations and a biopsy.

Ten days later the doctor told me I had bowel cancer. He explained everything to me and my wife, who was seven months pregnant with our second child.

My only question was would I live to see my unborn child and my two-year-old grow up. The doctor couldn't give me an answer but said the operation was curative rather than to prolong life.

I went back to Germany, boxed up my

kit, gave it to the CQMS, and said goodbye to my friends.

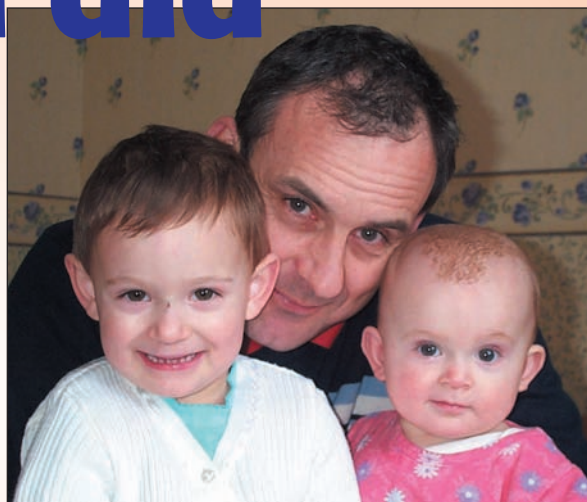
On June 2 a large section of my lower intestine and rectum was removed and I was fitted with a colostomy bag, which I will use for the rest of my life.

After two days I was sitting in a chair, and a few days later walking.

On the day I was told the cancer had been removed and that there was no need for chemotherapy or radiotherapy my wife gave birth to our second daughter. Both are fine.

On June 12 – barely eight weeks after that bleed in Iraq – I was discharged from hospital. On September 1 I returned to duty with the Irish Guards in Germany. Now training colour sergeant with the Guards Company in Catterick, I am running again and playing golf.

I am also helping with a charity called A Celebration of Life After Cancer by modelling at a fashion show in the Tall Trees Hotel in Yarm, North Yorks on



Happy family: A healthy again CSgt Geoff Johnson poses for a photograph with his daughters, Rebecca and Hannah

April 27-28. And I've been selected for promotion to WO2.

My message to the guys out there? If you have the slightest doubt about bowel cancer, get it checked – quickly. Your career will not stop unless you let it.

I would be happy to talk to anyone who has worries about bowel cancer via my e-mail address, GSJ58@aol.com. – **CSgt Geoff Johnson, IG, Gds Coy, Helles Barracks, Catterick.**

■ See Cancer Challenge, facing page.

● Former soldier Phil Morris and Cpl Mick Riley RLC, both of whom survived testicular cancer, have set up a website advising men on how to check themselves. You can find the Phil Morris testicular cancer awareness site at www.checkemlads.com

Oasis ban is unreasonable

IN response to the letter and response regarding the Naafi Oasis facility in February's edition, I would like to offer my view on the policy adopted by certain units regarding the use of welfare facilities on Shaibah Logistics Base (SLB).

I think it is unreasonable to set restrictions on a soldier's use after 1830 of the Oasis, or indeed any other facility which serves alcohol.

It presumes that the soldier would not enjoy the facility if he or she could not drink alcohol, or that perhaps they may be tempted to contravene unit standing orders. This creates a situation that is unfair, divisive and, in my opinion, not warranted.

Many soldiers, on or off duty, on oper-

ational tours or in peacetime locations, enjoy social life without the requirement to drink alcohol and feel under no peer pressure in such an environment. A blanket ban suggests a lack of trust by unit commanders.

All soldiers in SLB are adults and should be expected to be responsible for their own actions, not subjected to unfavourable treatment at a CO's discretion.

We want to hear from you ... but please be brief

YOUR letters provide a real insight into the issues at the top of officers' and soldiers' agenda wherever the Army is deployed ... but please keep them brief. E-mails MUST include your name and

location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). Anonymous letters go straight in the bin. The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style.

PISCATOR



"Chance would be a fine thing."

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Army Benevolent Fund. To mark 60 years of caring for soldiers, ex-soldiers and their families in times of real need we're hoping to raise more money than ever for the Army family. Can you help? For a fundraising pack, please call 020 7591 2042 or send an e-mail to enquiries@armybenevolentfund.com



**ARMY
BENEVOLENT
FUND**
SUPPORTING THE BEST



Call 020 7591 2000 or visit www.armybenfund.org

Mountains of kit down Essex way

OVER the past year we have noticed an increasing number of soldiers purchasing items from outlets such as ourselves. The most requested items include desert DPM trousers and shirts, and desert boots, (along with No 2 dress tunics, trousers and even shoulder insignia,



Mrs J A White, DLO, replies: The MoD has acknowledged, in its "lessons identified" process, shortcomings in the provision of equipment to some troops, partly through inadequate assets-tracking in theatre. I can assure readers the areas highlighted for improvement are being fully investigated.

As for kit available from MoD outlets, generally items that become obsolete or surplus to requirement are forwarded to the MoD's contractor, Field Textiles, for sale or disposal by the Disposals Services Agency (DSA). They are then sold on a wholesale basis.

The DSA has sole authority to dispose of all MoD (including agencies) surplus equip-

ment and excess stock. Without being able to see the items in question it is not possible to identify whether items are current issue. In relation to the boots being sold by Field Textiles, it is likely that these are out-of-date items, and regarded by us as unserviceable. Regarding the flak jackets with Kevlar, we have ascertained from the DSA that a batch of approximately 2,000 flak jackets (Mk 2, ex-Northern Ireland body armour covers and filler) were declared as surplus or unfit for purpose. Field Textiles are selling them on with the proviso that they require refurbishment before use. This was the only large-scale number of jackets sent to Field Textiles in the past two years.

including Union Jacks). This equipment, and more, is available from the MoD outlet in Essex, which has mountains of boots at £2 a pair and enough Kevlar and flak vests at under £15 each to equip an army. — **Rob Franks and Chris Bell, c/o The Camden Army Store.**

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PS...

Excuses and pay

THERE is no such thing as an excuse for pay mistakes in an organisation which boasts that people are its most valuable resource. I note, however, that your correspondent, P T Williams of Worthy Down (Feb), thinks otherwise.

I have not read *The Big Book of Excuses* by S P Spay, from which, presumably, he drew a curious justification for pay cock-ups. I have also flicked through *The Real World* by W I Seup and I note two things – first that civilian employers rarely overpay their workforce, and secondly, that the civilian world is awash with people up to their eyeballs in debt.

P T Williams is welcome to borrow my copy. Perhaps someone will be kind enough to lend him a book on human nature and another on soldiers. — Maj J S Moore AGC (RMP), MDA, Shrivenham.

Cancer challenge

STAFF from Colon Cancer Concern (CCC) visited Aldershot in October to raise awareness of bowel cancer among the British Army personnel based there.

We would like to thank all concerned for making us welcome and being so receptive to our message. The articles that appeared in the February editions of *Soldier* and *Aldershot Garrison Herald* were the icing on the cake.

But we need your help again. During 2004 we need to raise £50,000 over and above our normal fundraising to support the increased use of our information services. Are you and your mates up for a parachute drop challenge? If so contact CCC on 020 7381 9711 and ask for the fundraising department. Any other ideas you have are very welcome. — Terry Swan, Community Fundraising Officer, CCC.

Credit union gap

AS a British ex-Serviceman living in Australia, and enjoying all the advantages of a credit union, I was puzzled by SO2a3's reply to Sgt Martin Walton's prize letter (Nov). It stated that the small size of British Armed Forces makes such a venture unlikely to be commercially and economically viable.

If size is, as SO2a3 says, so important, how is it that the far smaller, though no less effective Australian Armed Forces have for some years now had the benefit of their very own credit union? — Bob Gibson, ex-Scots Guards.

Essex ACF history

ESSEX Army Cadet Force Retired Officers' Association wants to produce a history of the Essex Army Cadet Force, including the metropolitan Essex area, pre-1967. This is a huge task and we would appreciate anecdotes or documents from ex-officers, adult instructors and cadets. — D G Mullis, 11 Ingrebourne Gardens, Upminster, Essex RM14 1BG or e-mail vernonny@giomail.co.uk



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Low-tech weapon system shows promise

WITH April 1 in mind, I thought readers would be interested in a new weapons system being tested by the Army. The Mk 1 and Mk 2 Bricks are quiet, easy to use, made of hardened clay with low infra-red signature, and neither shows up on radar.

The Mk 1 (General Service) Brick is the standard weapon system designed for the infantry. The Mk 2 (Special Missions) Brick, pictured, is lighter, modified by having its centre removed or a series of holes drilled through it. This version,

intended for use on deep penetration missions, lacks the power and range of the Mk 1 GS Brick.

Its designers claim the Brick is easy to use, has little recoil, comes with ultra-low profile sights, and can be fitted with tritium inserts when required for night bricking.

Instructions for use are very simple: To load, place in hand and grasp firmly; to unload, open hand and release brick. In hand-to-hand combat, keep hold of brick



and smash into enemy's body. It can also be hand-launched in an anti-personnel or anti-vehicle role. A fair degree of accuracy is possible and sub-calibre bricks are

widely available for training purposes.

In parallel, the MoD is also testing a battlefield delivery system to be called the Mk 3 Combat Hod. – **Cpl K L Gittins AGC (MPGS), Cambs.**

Soldier-parents need all-day crèches

MY wife and I are both serving soldiers and have a seven-month-old child. Life is pretty hectic to say the least.

The Army has made many giant leaps forward in its treatment of families but seems to have forgotten one minor detail which impacts on every family with children. Childcare facilities are often run for only half a day. Our child attends a German crèche, which is fantastic but expensive.

With Government initiatives to encourage mothers back to work, couldn't the Army look at running or subsidising crèches which are open for a full working day? I suggest each unit organises a full-time

crèche, run by qualified staff, tailored to the needs of the unit. This facility could potentially have an overnight facility as and when it was required.

Many schools in the UK offer after-school care facilities to bridge the gap between the end of the school day and the parents' working day. That could be looked at too, couldn't it?

Large companies in the UK already provide crèche facilities for their staff, and as the Army is one of the biggest employers in Britain, isn't it about time we caught up? – **Name and address supplied, British Forces Germany.**



Reply from PS4(A) and UKSC(G):

The writer's solution is not as simple as he thinks. The simple answer to the provision of 24-hour support during the prolonged absence of parents is to use foster parents. But the Army accepts this may not apply to the author or other British Forces Germany families.

The points raised by the author were highlighted in the BFG Review on the Provision of Childcare in 2003. As a result, a working party was set up to prepare a case to support an application for a grant from public funds to cover the difference between realistic parental contributions and actual operating costs of day-care provision within BFG.

Day-care provision within BFG is self-financing and any new initiatives will require funding. This will not happen overnight. Yes, the Government has many initiatives to get

mothers back to work, but funding available in the UK is not available overseas. The MoD has provided funding for free nursery education for three- and four-year-olds for parents who want it, and in many cases this puts BFG ahead of the UK.

Garrisons in BFG do have after-school clubs and registered childminders, some of whom provide overnight care. It is also relevant that 24-hour childcare in England is new (the first facility in the UK is yet to open at a cost of £45 a day, according to the *Daily Mail* of Feb 26) and will be considerably more expensive than current garrison provision.

However, the advantage of using registered childcare is that families claiming Working Tax Credit may receive up to 70 per cent childcare costs subject to maximum limits.

Workers within BFG day-care provision are recruited from the Service community. They

have to register and be inspected by the MoD-accredited British Forces Early Years Service and are required to undertake ongoing training. Every attempt is made to comply with English legislation in respect of experience, training and qualifications.

Of note is a protocol signed last year with Ofsted, which allows registered childminders to transfer between England and overseas and vice versa on a fast-track system.

But the responsibility for childcare remains with Service personnel and they must choose what best suits their child's needs and their finances. Help in obtaining details of registered childminders is available from Army Welfare Service staffs and HIVES.

Although the writer may not see the benefits of current work going on, it is hoped provision of childcare within BFG will continue to develop.



The one and only

WHAT a cracking article accompanied by Graeme Main's stunning portrait of Dame Vera Lynn in your March edition. Dame Vera is the one and only Forces

Sweetheart, and among us Burma Stars, a legend. Your article will be passed around at our next branch meeting and I know it will give as much pleasure to the members there as it has given me. If you haven't stood in the Albert Hall

singing *Land of Hope and Glory* with Dame Vera Lynn leading the singing, you haven't lived. Well done Dame Vera and well done *Soldier*. – **Dan Hordle, Chairman, Northwich Branch, Burma Star Association.**

THEN AND THEN



25 YEARS AGO

From *Soldier*, April 1979: The Army can boast that it constantly bears in mind every one of its serving soldiers – that “mind” being the multi-million character memory bank of the Royal Army Pay Corps computer in its complex on Worthy Down near Winchester. The Army pioneered the introduction of large-scale commercial computers in the UK.

50 YEARS AGO

From *Soldier*, April 1954: In Egypt's Canal Zone, a detachment of the anti-tank platoon of the 1st Battalion, Scots Guards, above, sets out on a desert exercise in a sawn-off Stuart tank. Inset: A new headache for bandits on the jungle roads of Malaya – the Army's new battle-wagon, the Saracen, is operating in small numbers with the 12th Royal Lancers.

Guard service soldiers 'working excess hours'

I JOINED the Military Provost Guard Service three years ago under the impression that recruitment and retention were on the increase but I would query this by raising the following points.

New sites are opening undermanned, with staff coming in from other areas. MPGS personnel enlist on local service engagements but a large number are working in excess of the European Union working times directive and are some-

times having to travel 200 miles from their “selected local areas” on a long-term basis.

When staff put in a posting preference form to Headquarters MPGS via site managers, these seem only to be actioned in conjunction with promotion boards.

Is it not possible for sites to be fully manned by personnel working within their specified local areas? – **Name and address supplied.**



Maj Tom Greenwood, MPGS SO2, replies: One of the strengths of the MPGS is the ability of soldiers to choose the area in which they serve.

They will remain there, or within a 21-mile radius, on detachment for their service career. MPGS soldiers are eligible for service accommodation and most of the allowances available to General Service soldiers.

Some parts of the country are very popular and soldiers are prepared to serve elsewhere until a vacancy in the area of their choice becomes available. The point here is that soldiers choose where they want to serve.

We are not aware of units where soldiers are working excessive hours. The unit they guard controls the working hours for MPGS soldiers and where there are vacancies, the unit either rearranges the guard responsibilities or brings in assistance.

Some units do need more help than others and we are working as hard as we can to recruit soldiers for these sites. Posting preference pro forma are sent through the chain of command to MCM Division, which controls postings for MPGS, as for any other soldier, in the interests of the service, but with the individuals' aspirations a very close second.

PS...

That's old Bill...

I MUST confess to not reading the January 2004 issue of *Soldier* immediately. It lay on my desk for some days before a number of phone calls alerted me to Page 77 and the Then and Then article from 25 years ago. I was most surprised to feature in such an article, but I was that soldier.

Most of the calls were from so-called friends asking if I was the soldier pictured from 50 years ago; nevertheless it was surprising how many people, both serving and non-serving, took the trouble to track me down to have a go. You have wide-ranging readers. – Maj (QM) Bill McCrorie, Defence School of Languages, Bucks.



At the risk of prompting another spate of calls from old friends, the photograph from our archives, right, shows the then Sgt Bill McCrorie RMP, right, on patrol with a colleague in Gibraltar in 1979. – Editor

Warrants a mention

I WONDERED if my personal claim to fame is worth a mention. I am one of what must be only a few serving members of the Forces with three Royal Warrants. They were presented as follows. My first was presented after 25 years from 1967 to 1992 as a Regular soldier, ending up as a warrant officer. I joined the Territorial Army as a private soldier in 1992, attaining the rank of WO in 1996, at which point a second Royal Warrant was presented to me. I left the TA in 2001 and became a staff sergeant (Non-Regular Permanent Staff). I was promoted to WO2 in 2002, so received a third Royal Warrant. – WO2 (NRPS) C O Stride, 150 (Northumbrian) Transport Regiment, RLC (V), Hull.

Last word on medals

WITH reference to “Chest full of medals”, (March), to keep it short and sweet, material regulations for the Army state: medal ribbons should be placed side by side, up to and including a quantity of six medals. Thereafter, ribbons should be overlapped, with the senior ribbons nearest the centre of the chest being left fully exposed. The overlap of ribbons will vary depending on the number of medals worn and the size of the individual's chest. At no time should more than two thirds of any ribbon be covered by another. The overlap of each ribbon should be equal.

– G McKay, Master Tailor, Scots Guards, Germany.

TALKBACK

Vox pop

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on an issue

Cold comfort

We asked soldiers from 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery how the Army's cold-weather kit and sleeping bag fared against the sub-zero conditions they encountered on exercise in the Arctic Circle in northern Norway

Gnr Ben Goymour, 79 Bty

All the lads have been surviving perfectly well with the issued kit. I personally believe that poor admin, not the kit, is to blame for those soldiers who have gone down with cold-weather injuries. I hear moans about the sleeping bags all the time, but I can honestly say that I've never been cold in an issue doss bag.



Gnr Jamie Baldwin, 79 Bty

I have had no problems at all with the kit we have been issued and have been impressed with most of it. If anything needs changing it's the glove system and not the sleeping bag. When the contact gloves get wet they are almost impossible to get dry when you're in the field.



Gnr Nick Mouyiassi, 8 Bty

It would be nice to be issued with more Arctic socks as we are given only four pairs and you get through them fairly quickly. As far as the sleeping bag goes, it is fine in terms of keeping you warm but takes up too much room and could do with being a bit smaller. If I came back to Norway again I'd probably buy a more compact bag.



LBdr Nathan Morrin, 8 Bty

On this exercise we were issued with new-style boots, gaiters, gloves and hat, so there isn't really anything to complain about. One night during the exercise the temperature dropped to minus 22C and I was still toasty in my Army sleeping bag.



Bdr Marc Harrower, 79 Bty

This is the fifth time I have been to Norway and I know from experience that what we get now is a lot better than the kit that used to be issued. The sleeping bag is the only item that hasn't changed during my ten years in the Army. It is not very warm and takes up a lot of your bergen, which is why I have spent nearly £200 on one of my own.



Gnr Travis Rurze, 79 Bty

I've got no real complaints about the cold weather gear at all. I know that a lot has been said about the Army sleeping bag not being up to the job, but it's kept me warm at night so I personally have no problem with it.



Bdr Rob Walsh, 8 Bty

The kit we have been issued this year is the best we have ever been given. We've now got new boots and on this exercise I have been trialling new snowshoes and skis, so things are getting better and better. As for all the bad press surrounding the sleeping bag, it is adequate for the task and does what it is designed to do.



Gnr Craig Stott, 8 Bty

This is the best kit we've ever been issued for a cold climate. The gloves are excellent because you now get two different inners and Gore-Tex outer and the sleeping bag has kept me really warm. Personally, I wouldn't swap the Army doss bag for anything.



LBdr Kev Sidebottom, 8 Bty

All the kit we've been issued on this exercise is brand new and has served us well. On the novice course you are only allowed to use the Army kit and there weren't any dramas. The sleeping bags are actually pretty good and the only people who seem to have encountered problems with them are those who have had them for a long time and washed them a lot.



Interviews: Andy Simms Pictures: Graeme Main



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