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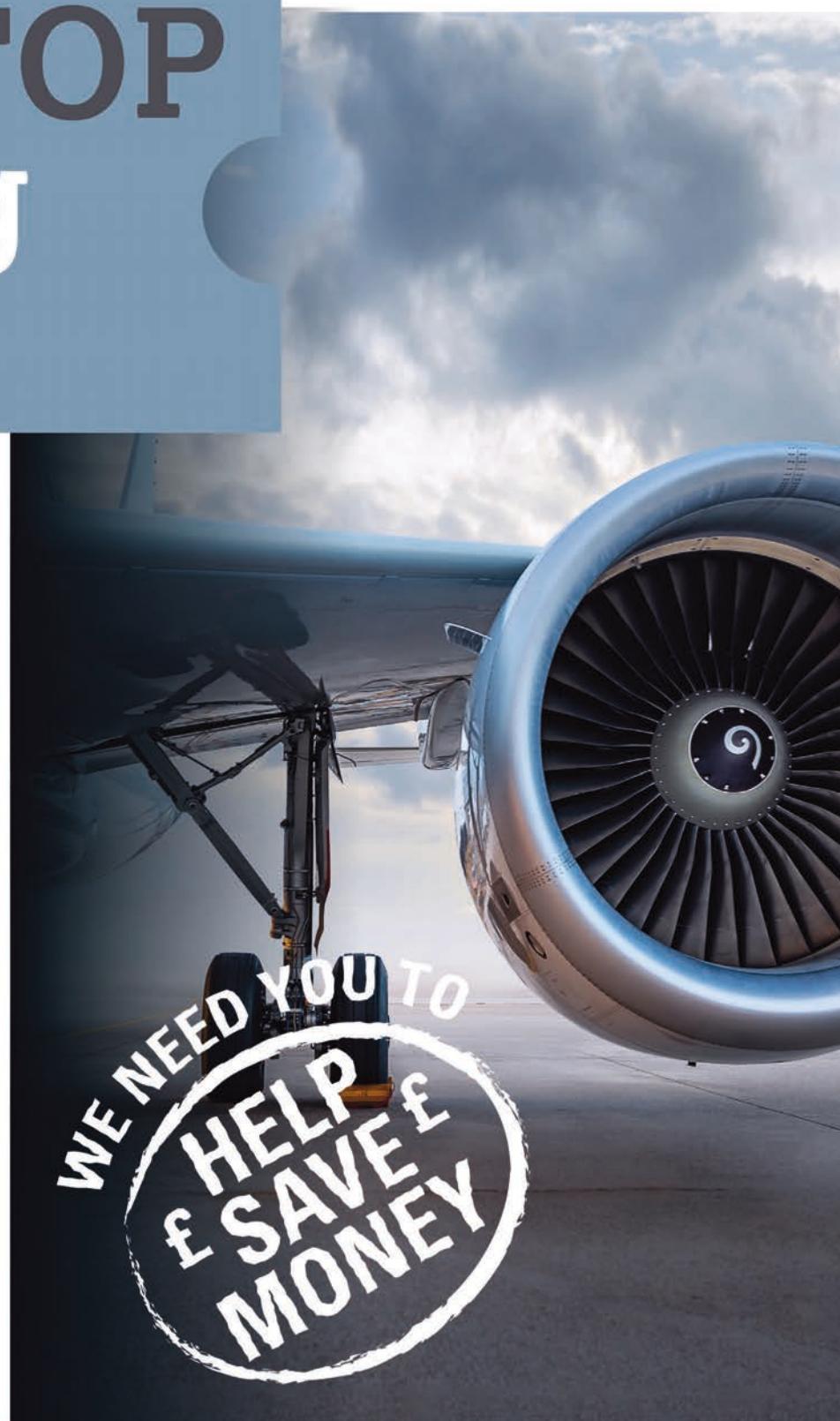
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Cover picture: Hugo Burnand/Royal Household 2023

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You have my
admiration for
all that you do



A new era dawns – p32



Picture: Sgt Chris Morgan, WG



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

I would be most grateful if you could convey my warmest possible thanks to all the men and women of the Armed Forces – and the civil servants of the Ministry of Defence – for their exceptional contribution to my, and my wife's, Coronation.

I was deeply impressed by the faultless precision of the servicemen and women who took part in the processions and by the exemplary bearing of those lining the route. The contribution of so many military bands added to the unforgettable highlights of this memorable day and provided the most wonderful musical accompaniment for all those watching and listening. I also particularly appreciated the involvement of Armed Forces personnel from across the Commonwealth, and from the British Overseas Territories.

In reflecting on the extraordinary pride which I felt in presenting new Colours and Standards to the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and units of the British Army just nine days ago, it was clear that the same dedication and effort was seen throughout a truly memorable weekend, including the ceremonial gun salutes ashore and at sea, and the magnificent flypast. I am also anxious for those working in support to know that their contribution is recognized, as well as being extremely grateful to the many people, military and civilian, who worked with such diligence behind the scenes over many weeks to ensure the success of this occasion.

Her Majesty The Queen and I are conscious that this splendid effort took place in addition to your normal duties at home and overseas, and your ceaseless striving to keep the nation safe. You have my admiration for all that you do and my wife and I are enormously proud of you all.

Charles R



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Picture: LPhot Gareth Smith, RN

'It'll take a while for it to sink in'

Personnel reflect on a day of service like no other...

TRADITION met technology as troops took part in the biggest ceremonial event seen in the UK for 70 years.

Some 7,000 personnel were on duty at the Coronation of King Charles, which bore the same hallmarks of pageantry that marked the crowning of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, but was very much a 21st century affair in more ways than one.

For the first time in history on a parade of such scale, the entire cohort stepped off simultaneously, thanks to a beat delivered into earpieces worn by key figures such as drummers and London District garrison sergeant major WO1 Vern Stokes (Coldrm Gds).

The impressive feat – necessitated by a processional route of less than 1.5 miles – saw 4,000 troops from all three Services and more than 40 Commonwealth nations begin marching in unison as they accompanied the King and Queen from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace.

Sgt Fred Green (AGC (SPS)), one of 27 from his corps selected to take part, described the moment as "fantastic".

He added: "I'm fairly tall, so could see quite a large chunk of the parade. Watching thousands of troops stepping off in one go was quite a sight."

And while the late Queen's

Coronation was the first to be televised, her heir's was the first to take place in the age of social media.

Scores of personnel went online to share their excitement and pride on the day, as well as during the extensive rehearsals that preceded the event.

Having logged more than 230,800 steps on his fitness tracker, Sgt Green (shown right) tweeted his calculation that he and his colleagues had covered some 110 miles in the process.

But he told *Soldier* that as a fan of drill, the effort had been worth it.

"It was very surreal to be marching off a train at Waterloo and later hearing the cheers from thousands of troops reverberating around

> continued page 15



Picture: Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF

“
It was quite
a sight
”



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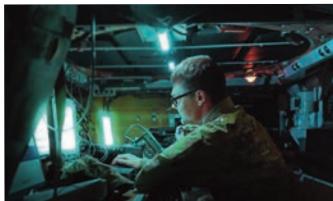
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GLOBAL SITREP



1. TEXAS SCALING UP

THE latest iteration of Exercise Warfighter saw some 1,500 soldiers from across 3rd (United Kingdom) Division undergoing simulated manoeuvres alongside their American counterparts.

While numbering around 10,000 troops in reality, the force was working to a virtual scenario encompassing hundreds of thousands of personnel deployed on global operations on land, sea and air – the vast scale replicating the grim possibility of all-out war with a peer enemy.

For the British contingent, the key aims were testing and validating the division's ability to conduct large scale ops, while also further developing how Future Soldier concepts such as the 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team

can be used to full effect.

Communications throughout the package were supplied by troops from 3rd (UK) Division Signal Regiment, who travelled to Fort Cavazos more than two months ahead of their colleagues to link up the British and US systems.

Commanding officer Lt Col Rob Harris said: "There's always more to learn, but from a signals perspective our ability to deliver command and control for the divisional headquarters in a warfighting scenario was tested and proven."

And their efforts paid off, with the after-action review finding the formation to have outperformed its larger American counterpart in terms of lethality and the number of assets lost to the enemy.

2. GEORGIA RINGING THE CHANGES

BRITISH personnel heading stateside for bilateral drills will no longer train at Fort Benning after the camp's redesignation as Fort Moore.

Now named after legendary Vietnam War leader Gen Hal Moore, the base is one of several locations familiar to UK troops to be rebranded due to their association with Confederate commanders from the Civil War.

Among the other facilities affected are Fort Polk in Louisiana, which this month will become Fort Johnson in tribute to Sgt William Henry Johnson, a black soldier decorated for his actions in the First World War.

Fort Hood in Texas is to be known as Fort Cavazos, honouring the first latino four-star general, Gen Richard Cavazos.

And Fort Bragg in North Carolina is now Fort Liberty.



3. SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHLANDER LAID TO REST

TROOPS from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland took part in the funeral of a British infantryman killed during the American Revolutionary War nearly 250 years ago.

A total of 14 sets of remains were found during excavations at the site of the 1780 Battle of Camden; 12 Continental Army soldiers, one loyalist and one member of the 71st Regiment of Foot, known as Fraser's Highlanders – an antecedent formation of the Scottish personnel.

All were laid to rest with full military honours. Pallbearer Cpl Callum Fraser (Scots) said the

ceremony had been "humbling and thought-provoking".

"Thinking back to the history, and hundreds of years later being able to give the soldier the send-off he deserves is something I'll always be proud of," he added.

The exhumation and reinterment are to be the topic of a new documentary by historian Dan Snow.



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5. ESTONIA

4. FRANCE

6. AZORES



6. AZORES VETERANS DIG DEEP

FORMER Household Division troops faced a tough test of stamina on the volcanic island of Sao Miguel in aid of military charity SSAFA.

A team comprising 25 veterans of all ages completed a gruelling 110km ultramarathon across the mid-Atlantic Portuguese territory.

With a combined tally of 70 operations under their belts – including Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan – several of the group have suffered physical or mental injuries. To help them raise money for fellow veterans in need head to [justgiving.com/team/azores](https://www.justgiving.com/team/azores)

4. FRANCE

TAKING THE HIGH ROAD

THE horse ride of a lifetime through the rugged Pyrenees mountains beckons for a group of military spouses.

Following the remote trails used by refugees fleeing to Spain from occupied France in the Second World War, the eight-strong Ride to Freedom team will trek 130km, sleeping under canvas and spending up to seven hours a day in the saddle.



The trip is the latest staged by Forces Wives Challenge, which offers adventurous pursuits to partners of Service personnel.

Among those taking part is Stephanie Quintrell, a keen horse rider who became dependent on a wheelchair in 2019 due to a neurological illness.

Following a training session at Royal Artillery Saddle Club Larkhill (pictured) she said: "The minute I was back in the saddle I felt like a spark had been ignited within me again."

The team are also raising money for the Armed Forces Equine Charity. To support them visit [justgiving.com/page/ride-to-freedom](https://www.justgiving.com/page/ride-to-freedom)

5. ESTONIA ADVANCE PARTY

PATHFINDERS from the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team inserted covertly into Estonia as part of Exercise Swift Response.

Having dropped from an RAF C-17 at 12,000 feet, they worked with Polish counterparts to mark an area for colleagues from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment to jump into under cover of darkness ahead of a mission to secure Nurmsi airfield.

The drills, which also included US, Czech, Latvian and Estonian personnel, were staged alongside activities in Spain and Greece under this year's Exercise Defender.



Pictures: Cpl Lee Matthews, RAF and Wojciech Pomper Arts

BLOOD BREAKTHROUGH

FRONT-LINE medical personnel will soon have a lifesaving product in their toolkit to help treat the most seriously injured soldiers.

Defence chiefs have confirmed that a £4.9 million project to produce dried plasma – which helps blood to clot – will cut the time it takes to treat severe trauma.

There are also hopes that the so-called Blood Far Forward initiative could have knock-on benefits for civilian ambulance crews on the home front in future.

Consultant anaesthetist Lt Col Oli Bartels (RAMC), a veteran of Op Herrick, described the initiative as a "significant development".

He pointed out that plasma must commonly be frozen to keep it in optimal condition – meaning that it has to be stowed in cold stores en route to operations. But the new product could be kept at room temperature for easy transportation.

While the UK sometimes sourced



Picture: Graeme Main

dried plasma from Nato allies, a home production line would make it more readily available.

The officer told *Soldier*: "If you need a product to be frozen in the first instance, then you clearly have more of an issue when you're moving it around. Cutting out the requirement for freezers makes the process easier and ultimately means we can shift the plasma further forward."

"In the future we may also use drones to deliver these products."

The three-year plasma project is being overseen by Surgeon General Maj Gen Tim Hodgetts and conducted by NHS Blood and Transplant with technical support from American health giant Velico.

The initiative is being spearheaded by a number of UK clinical trials.

“
We can shift
the plasma
further forward
”

Units move swiftly to



Experience from Op Pitting proves vital for personnel in Sudan

MEMBERS of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have been reflecting on a job well done following their short-notice deployment to help evacuate eligible citizens from the crisis in Sudan.

Two of the unit's companies were recalled from their role in Exercise Wessex Storm on Salisbury Plain to bolster the effort, with troops travelling overnight to their Colchester base before boarding onward flights to RAF Akrotiri, and then the African country.

Once on the ground in Port Sudan they conducted a range of tasks, including the processing of those with documents for travel to the UK, providing security for convoys from Khartoum, identifying suitable locations for refuge, and offering humanitarian assistance with food, blankets, medical support and other vital supplies.

They also played a crucial role in the evacuation of US nationals via ferries to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

"I'm proud of what we achieved," commanding officer Lt Col Will Hunt (pictured above) told *Soldier*.

"We had 657 personnel from the Air Manoeuvre Battlegroup get forward to Cyprus; to turn that around so quickly was very impressive."

"We have done a lot of training for warfighting over the past year and have an exercise in Kenya coming up,

but we had the ability to get out there and do something very different that required us to have a separate mindset and show huge compassion."

WO1 Shaun McGlynn had just taken on the role of regimental sergeant major when the call to deploy was made, meaning he was in at the deep end on the first day in the job.

Once the initial challenge of recalling troops from exercise was complete, he was able to focus on the new task at hand, and said the experience troops gained on Op Pitting proved vital.

"That gave them the skillset needed to speak to people and find out what their problems are," he explained.

"There were a variety of different nationalities who needed help."

"You don't go on exercise practising this stuff, but they proved they can turn their hand to anything and be compassionate when it is needed."

"Nothing is ever straightforward with a mission like this, but getting the battalion out could not have gone any smoother. Within 72 hours we had 700 people in Cyprus ready to go."

WO1 McGlynn also praised the efforts of 3 Para's junior soldiers, who worked long days in searing heat.

"They were digging out blind," he continued. "They worked extremely hard in the ten days they were there. For a young private or lance corporal who'd



“
You don't go
on exercise
practising this
”



evacuate UK citizens



Pictures: PO Anton Hoare, RN

not been in such an environment before it was a huge responsibility."

One of those was Pte Sapoulo Logan. He was among the paratroopers exercising on Salisbury Plain when news of the mobilisation came through and was then required to hit the ground running on his arrival in Sudan.

"At the start it was chaotic due to the lack of communication between the civilian agencies," he said. "We took over and put better systems in place.

"In terms of the humanitarian piece, it was a case of being patient, but also firm with the rules.

"The hardest part was realising that people were prepared to leave their entire families behind just to get out. There was a father with a British passport, but the rest of his family did not have one, and it was so difficult not being able to turn round and say 'no, that's not right'. Culturally, things are totally different."

Elsewhere, soldiers from 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment conducted urgent damage repair to the airfield at Wadi Sayyidna (pictured above).

The facility was used by multiple nations to evacuate entitled personnel but was in a poor state of repair, a problem exacerbated by the high tempo of military transport aircraft for which it was not designed.

It was the first time combat engineer airfield damage repair was conducted on operations since the Falklands War.

And personnel from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment worked to support the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in evacuating civilian UK nationals, as well as those from other nations, from the airport at Wadi Sayyidna.

Coincidentally, within days of their return 3 Para and 23 Para Engr Regt contested the Army FA Challenge Cup final. See page 62 for a full report. ■

■ IT isn't what you think; the soldier from the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment is actually "laying down" his horse – a battle tactic of old, used to conceal and protect cavalry units from enemy gunfire. The routine was part of the Musical Ride, the impressive annual display at the Royal Windsor Horse Show, where soldiers from The Life Guards and The Blues and Royals perform, to music, a series of stunning manoeuvres used by the regiment in the days when it still fought on horseback.

Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



FEMALE VETS SUPPORT BID

■ A STUDY into support for female ex-Forces personnel is set to be published soon amid concerns that some leavers might be missing out on help.

The research will include a series of recommendations to underpin a new Women Veterans' Strategy later this year.

Defence chiefs have voiced concern that Servicewomen hanging up their boots might not be receiving the same levels of assistance as their male counterparts.

Armed Forces Minister Johnny Mercer said it was "vital" that female personnel had the help they needed after making the transition to civvy street.

The MP and ex-Royal Artillery officer said areas such as mental health, physical welfare and civilian employment would come under scrutiny.

Several charities have called for researchers to embrace a broad remit, indicating that the effects of musculoskeletal injuries on female veterans should be included on their agenda.

Meanwhile, the Call of Duty Endowment – a cause run by American gaming firm Activision Blizzard – has confirmed that it is working with Brit colleagues to help more female veterans into civvy employment.

“
They proved
they can turn
their hand to
anything
”



MILITARY CHECKMATES

■ CHESS enthusiasts from across the military community converged on RAF Wittering for this year's Armed Forces Championships.

A record 83 players turned out for the contest, among them current and ex-members of all three Services and the MoD – including 19 from the Army – with defending champion WO1 Dave Onley (R Signals) retaining his title.

Grandmaster Keith Arkell also took on 33 opponents simultaneously before match play got under way.

Armed Forces chess association chairman Flt Lt Ben Woolf (RAF) attributed the increase in entrants – up by more than 30 on last year – in part to shows such as Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit*.

"During lockdown people also started playing on the web" he said.

The next fixture is the Inter-Services Championships, held online on June 14, 21 and 28.

To enquire email ben.woolf222@mod.gov.uk

View from the GROUND

Picture: LPhot Gareth Smith, RN



THE adjutant of the Army's regional bands unexpectedly found himself on parade at the Coronation – stepping in after a colleague injured his ankle.

Veteran percussionist Capt Stuart Marsh (RCam) took up a snare drum and had a rapid run through before boarding a train to the capital and forming up.

He admitted that the day – during which he joined the ranks of the British Army Band Colchester – had been one of the high points of his 31-year career.

We asked him how he felt about his Coronation mobilisation...

Did you have much time to prepare for the parade? A little – I did take part in two rehearsals. I've been a percussionist for a long time although I hadn't actually performed with the snare drum for a bit.

Were you nervous? No – quite the opposite. This was a once-in-a-lifetime event. I've been on a drum horse with The Household Cavalry Regiment and was at Her Late Majesty's Diamond, Golden and Platinum Jubilees, but the Coronation was a unique occasion.

Any stand-out memories? Aside from the parade and seeing so many spectators in London that day, boarding a special military train at Farnborough station in Hampshire to travel to the capital was a bit surreal.



Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

“Put simply, it was amazing – we rose to the challenge”

Perfect performance

Military musicians hit the right note on Coronation and concert days

PROUD Army musicians paraded in their hundreds as they provided the fitting soundtrack to the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

In a spectacular showcase of talent, personnel delighted crowds as they flawlessly carried off a diverse programme of tunes.

They went on to accompany a star-studded line-up of acts – including Lionel Ritchie and Take That – in a concert at Windsor Castle a day later.

The mood was summed up by Maj Stewart Halliday (RCam), director of music at the Band of the Coldstream Guards, who told *Soldier*: “Put simply it was amazing – the musicians rose to the challenge.

“I had the privilege of being assistant conductor at the concert and

it was wonderful to see our personnel accompany world-class performers.”

In all, 14 Army bands – with 440 personnel – were represented at the Coronation alongside colleagues from the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

The Household Division Orchestra convened for the Windsor concert and were impressively conducted by Lt Col David Barringer (RCam, pictured), who also oversaw the Coronation's wider musical performance.

Maj Halliday added that all bands had put in hundreds of hours of preparation ahead of the big day.

“The procession music, which has been recorded and will be available to buy, was also carefully selected at the highest levels to reflect all branches of the Armed Forces,” he added. ■

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



MARATHON EFFORT IN MEMORY OF DAD

THE courageous son of a fusilier who was murdered in a terrorist act a decade ago has donned his walking boots to help a charity that has been supporting him.

Jack Rigby – who was just two when his dad Lee was stabbed to death in Woolwich – walked some 26 miles over the course of last month to raise money for Scotty's Little Soldiers.

The youngster said he wanted to assist

the cause after it offered him breaks away and other activities after his father died.

“I want to raise £1,000 for every year my dad has been gone, which would really help Scotty's to continue to help me and hundreds of other children,” he said.

Visit scottylittlesoldiers.co.uk





Wessex looks east

Pictures: Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC and Graeme Main



Exercise planners integrate lessons learnt in Ukraine

THE Combat Ready Training Centre (CRT) took into account major lessons being fed back from Ukraine when planning the latest iteration of Exercise Wessex Storm.

The package saw the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles and 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment battlegroups – supported by aviation, artillery and logistical specialists – participate in five weeks of activity on Salisbury Plain and across the south of England and Wales.

As part of the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, this was their training for a readiness tasking as the Army's global response force (GRF).

"We tried to make the exercise as immersive as possible," said Lt Col Rich Grover (Mercian, pictured right), commanding officer of CRTC, which is part of the Collective Training Group.

"We wanted to challenge our soldiers to not only consider what they can see on the ground in front of them, but what can affect them from above; the UAS in the sky or electronic signatures that can be traced.

"It's a question of training them to be more lethal in terms of rapidly identifying the enemy and killing them as quickly as possible, but also to be more dynamic so they survive longer.

"We want to ensure they understand emissions control and camouflage and concealment – if a UAS is overhead what is it looking for and can they be detected?

"It could be radio signals or it could be spotting key visual features such as command posts, antenna or vehicles grouped together.

"We needed to get troops to



recognise the threat and be ready to move quickly enough to stay ahead of the enemy targeting chain."

CRTC, which delivers combat readiness training and organises all battlegroup-level exercises in the UK and Germany, also trialled new technology to enhance training including a system called Scopic, which simulates fighting a near-peer enemy by generating massed formations of armour and soldiers.

"We can overlay them on our live-firing," explained Lt Col Grover.

"Personnel could see the enemy coming on their Scopic headsets.

"The way we worked it, the simulated vehicles and troops advanced to specific locations and then the soldiers removed their headsets and fired at those positions.

"This provided an effective blend of live and virtual, improving the training experience for all.

"It is about keeping pace and transforming to stay relevant; making our training as realistic and challenging as possible – and it will continue to improve for future packages." ■

“
We’re training them to be more lethal
”



Picture: Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC

SADDLED UP SILENCE

■ DURING Exercise Wessex Storm, troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles practised using the Talaria off-road electric bike.

Personnel tested the platforms in a number of scenarios, taking advantage of their light weight, portability and silent running.

With interchangeable batteries, a range of up to 63 miles and a top speed of up to 43mph, they were used to move stealthily around the battlefield. For more experimentation on Wessex Storm see page 26.

PIRBRIGHT BOOST

■ WORK on a new £11 million welfare centre at ATC Pirbright is under way.

Due for completion next year, the two-storey Alexander Barracks Soldiers' Centre will provide retail and food outlets, as well as a gathering space for families attending pass out parades.

It will replace existing welfare facilities that are spread across the site.

CANINE THERAPY



Pictures: Shutterstock

A CHARITY that promotes canine assisted therapy is offering its services to Army units. Warminster-based Dogs for Health works with the elderly and those in care with the aim of promoting well-being by reducing stress, social isolation and anxiety. The team is now looking to visit military bases across the south to help boost troops' mental health. To organise an event or for more details contact info@dogsforhealth.org.uk

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Picture: Ssgt Dek Taylor, RLC

Coronation jubilation

> continued from page 7

Buckingham Palace," he continued, describing the moment personnel gathered in the garden to give three cheers to the monarch.

"It will take a while for the enormity of it to sink in. This wasn't just a once-in-a-generation event – it was once in four generations, and for a soldier that's something you can only dream of doing."

In related news, the announcement of the eligibility criteria for the Coronation

Medal was warmly received by the military community.

Despite fears that only those actively involved in the event would qualify, Culture Secretary Lucy

Frazer confirmed individuals with at least five years' service would also have the right to wear the gong, which bears the portraits of the King and Queen.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "Our deployments are in their names and our allegiance is sworn by each and every one of us. The Coronation Medal will celebrate that bond and allow huge numbers of Service personnel to reaffirm that linkage." ■



IN PICTURES

Your socials on the day...



GENERAL FOR A DAY

How would you use your newfound rank? news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

FOR me, the thing that needs to be looked at is the offer of sport and adventurous training.

If I was a general, I would make it mandatory for a quota on both to be met at every unit.

More and more people are complaining and signing off from the military having not experienced the full potential of what the Army has to offer – sport and AT being two of those.

I have smashed sports throughout my career in uniform and have no intention of signing off as I've had so many good experiences outside my working life. But that is not the case for everyone.

A lot of people are scared to ask to do AT, or perhaps don't know the process of booking it. And if they do ask, they're often told 'you have work to do, there is no opportunity for that'.

In the past, on my MPAR, it was written that I was of little use to my unit as I was playing sport once a month.

You should not be seen as a detriment to your unit just because you play sport.

In terms of phys, three

45-minute sessions of PT are allocated each week.

For AT there could be a yearly requirement for everyone to complete five days, unless it impacts on their operational effectiveness. We should not be saying 'no' to sports.

Personally, I have not had the opportunity to do AT yet, but I've played rugby at corps and Army level and was involved in one of the first international women's rugby tours.

That has shown me a different aspect of military life and has increased my mental well-being massively – it gives me something to look forward to.

Away from sport and AT, I would try to introduce a better reward system for Service personnel.

If anyone does something good, they'll get a CO's coin and a pat on the back. But given the amount of time we give to the Army, I think something else is needed.

This is a relatively hard one, but it could be vouchers or gift cards, or even branded kit and equipment that would be helpful for your career.

“
A lot of people are scared to ask to do AT
”

Rank/name:

OCdt Tegan Shone

Cap badge:

REME

Role: Former avionics technician with 662 Squadron, 3 Regiment, Army Air Corps but will be part of the September intake at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst

Age: 21

Years in: 4



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

My story

Maj Charlotte Hayes (REME) has two young children and has been in the Army for nearly 20 years



"BOTH my spouse and I have served – my husband, who was in The Rifles, is out now.

"I'm leaving soon too, as I'd like to spend more time with my family.

"I've loved Army life but it is definitely different from civvy street in terms of the pressures it can exert on loved ones.

"Children, in particular, can often move home and school several times, and their parents can be deployed on operations for months at a time or go away on exercise.

"You can be called to go at short notice too, which really hits family life.

"My children, now aged nine and five, have been affected themselves. I was on Op Herrick while my husband did three tours each in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as serving in Northern Ireland during his career.

"Because kids might not have their parent or carer around all the time to talk about something that is worrying them, services such as Kooth have to be a good thing.

"A place of safety that they can access online themselves to help maintain their mental resilience – as well as to talk to mental health experts – is ideal.

"It would be good, however, to see services tailored to younger children too."

DISCOUNT FIRM DONATION

ARMED Forces charities are poised to benefit from a huge cash windfall from the Defence Discount Service.

Bosses at the organisation, which offers a £4.99 card that unlocks savings at shops, restaurants and other venues, said £270,000 had been handed over to help the military community in the past 12 months.

The outfit has been donating a percentage of revenue raised to charities since its launch just over a decade ago.

A number of good causes – including the Army Welfare Service – will benefit from the latest donation.

Defence Discount Service chief exec Tom Dalby said: "We are thrilled to be able to support these important initiatives."

Visit defencediscountservice.co.uk for more information.

They can face unique challenges



Picture: Graeme Main

Support for kids kicks off

Online service provides discreet mental health advice from experts

YOUNGSTERS from Armed Forces families are benefiting from a recently launched online portal to support their mental health and help them speak to professionals if needed.

The Kooth digital platform gives those aged between 11 and 19 opportunities to chat with their peers and use a library of self-help articles, useful forums and discussion boards.

They can also have private one-to-one sessions with experts to talk through any specific issues while remaining anonymous throughout their visit.

Military health bosses believe that the portal – which is available around the clock – can help youngsters dealing with the difficult demands of Service life.

"Those with a parent serving can face unique challenges, such as moving from place-to-place with their family, living overseas, attending several schools and leaving friends behind," Rebecca Wakefield, chief community development officer with the Army Welfare Service, pointed out.

"Being part of an Armed Forces family can also mean long periods of separation from a serving parent when they are deployed or away training."

Those using the system for the first time are asked to register with the month and year of birth, gender and chosen username.

Kooth clinical director Dr Lynne Green said the provider, which is accredited by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, has a similar tool for civvy firms and university students.

The platform, which attracts around 4,000 logins per day, allows people to seek support without judgement and at their own pace, she added.

"It is not often easy to ask for help with mental health and well-being concerns," Green continued.

"Digital services can help to reduce stigma while our clinical practitioners and professional counsellors provide help at a range of levels."

Log on to kooth.com/mod to find out more about the service and to sign up.

UPGRADE OF DEFENCE FIRE ENGINE FLEET COMPLETE

A £90 MILLION transformation programme of Defence Fire and Rescue's firefighting fleet has finished. A total of 138 state-of-the-art vehicles were bought under the project to replace ageing platforms at stations across the MoD estate. The scheme also included the refurbishment of ten existing fire engines. The move has brought several benefits including improved safety – with personnel now having the ability to fight fires from within the cab of their appliance – and lower fuel consumption, as well as reduced smoke and CO₂ emissions.



Picture: Cpl Phil Dye, RAF



MY STORY IS NOT UNIQUE

Starting out as a serviceman was good for a time. But life became a struggle and I couldn't see the light.

When I needed help SSAFA was there. Offering a hand-up so I could start again.

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity

Regulars | Reserves | Veterans | Families

FIND OUT HOW WE
HELP THE ARMED
FORCES COMMUNITY



ssafa.org.uk/leave

UNSTOPPABLE HARI



■ MORE than 700 people put their best foot forward during Walking With the Wounded's annual **Cumbrian Challenge**. Some 190 teams tackled routes of up to 31km, raising **£311,000** in the process for struggling veterans – the highest total to date.



Picture: Martin Lynn

A LOOK FROM BROOK



WINNER of the Princess Elizabeth Cup for the best turned-out soldier in the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment – Tpr Amy Brook (LG) – pictured with her military working horse Viking. Alongside seven other finalists, the 21-year-old will become the first female to form part of the King's Retinue at Trooping the Colour later this month. "The Blues and Royals have won the cup for a decade so I'm so pleased to bring it back for The Life Guards," she commented.

“
I'm so
pleased to
bring it back
”

NEPALESE recruits have hailed Gurkha soldier-turned-record breaking climber Hari Budha Magar as inspirational after he became the first ever double above-knee amputee to scale Everest.

The veteran, who lost both legs to an IED strike in Afghanistan in 2010, reached the top of the world's highest peak shortly before this edition went to press, realising a boyhood dream and shattering perceptions on disability.

Trainee rifleman Kaushal Gurung said the mountaineer's accomplishment was an example to him and others learning the basics of soldiering at Infantry Training Centre Catterick.

"His journey has shown me the path of bravery, motivation and to keep moving forward," he added.

"If one chapter ends, another is always waiting for you. He has

inspired me to have faith in myself and work hard to finish my course and become a Gurkha."

Fellow recruit Alon Rai agreed – dubbing the daring mountaineer "a living legend".

"He faced more adversity than most can conceive of," he added.

Magar and his team, led by ex-Special Forces climber Krish Thapa, battled bad weather throughout their attempt.

"It was harder than I could have ever imagined," Magar said. "We just had to carry on and push for the top, no matter how much it hurt.

"If I can climb to the top of the world then anyone, regardless of disability, can achieve their dream."

The veteran hopes to raise £884,900, the height of Everest in metres plus two zeros, for military causes. Visit [crowdfunder.co.uk/p/harieverestappeal](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/harieverestappeal)



Picture: Graeme Main

Free Wi-Fi incoming

£150m upgrade for the entire Army estate has already begun...

PERSONNEL are to benefit from improved Wi-Fi across Army sites as part of a major investment aimed at boosting connectivity.

Announced as part of the Future Soldier programme in 2021, estate-wide internet access is being rolled out across all of the Service's 598 locations – with work at 40, including ITC Catterick, Gloucester's Imjin Barracks, Bovington Camp and the Army Aviation Centre, already complete.

A substantial undertaking, it is the second biggest networking infrastructure project in the UK at an approximate cost of £150 million over the next ten years.

It will deliver a huge capability boost, supporting business outputs, experimentation and the digital estate, while soldiers can expect dramatically improved personal access to free, fast

and reliable internet – something many have long been calling for.

The plan covers all buildings in the sites being equipped, including offices, hangars, training facilities, technical accommodation and workshops.

All recreation spaces – single living accommodation blocks, messes, sports and dining facilities – will also be covered by the free service.

The project has also provided support to operations, including access for Ukrainian recruits and the staff helping to deliver training.

A further 200 Regular and Reserve sites will be equipped this year, with the remainder of the estate planned for 2024/25.

Information campaigns will be launched at camps when work has been completed, telling personnel how to log on. ■



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, offers his take on Service life...

'VE been reflecting a lot on resilience this month – for several reasons. Not least because, as this edition hits the shelves, I and hundreds of other military personnel and civilians will be drawing on every ounce as we take on the Cateran Yomp for ABF The Soldier's Charity.

There's been an increase in the number of serving troops taking part and that's great because it's a fantastic test of mental and physical stamina.

For me, if a soldier knows that they can conquer 54 miles in 24 hours then they can do anything.

Unfortunately, my diary in recent weeks has prevented me doing as much training as I'd have liked – especially as I rashly promised to do it in body armour. So I'll be relying on 20-odd years of resilience to get me through.

Like many Servicemen and women, one of my key motivators is not letting people down, so when the going gets tough I focus on that, as well as using visualisation techniques.

As the analogy goes: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. In other words, take things step by step and don't fixate on the end piece.

I often hear people

saying today's recruits are less robust, but evolution doesn't suddenly go backwards within a couple of generations – we all have it in us, we just have to push our boundaries sometimes.

Resilience of a different kind was on display at the Coronation of King Charles III.

It was an incredible experience, but while the public saw the glossy, finished product, they didn't see the long hours of rehearsals and kit prep that went on beforehand.

I visited some of the concentration areas where training took place and not one single person complained – the aura of positivity was unbelievable.

On top of that, the support staff from 101 Operational Sustainment Brigade and other units did some phenomenal work in the background to make sure everyone was looked after and got to where they needed to be at the right time.

And they did it all with smiles on their faces despite the pressure, knowing that they wouldn't be at the forefront of activity on the day.

The whole thing is something that everyone involved will remember for the rest of their lives.

“
It brought home the versatility of our troops
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Picture: Graeme Main

Q What are your go-to morale sweets on long tabs?

A Any type of Haribo – the soldier's favourite



Picture: Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC

Getting on with the day job

ALL eyes may have been focused on the Coronation, but it was business as usual elsewhere in the Army.

In between rehearsals I visited personnel from the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team, who were doing an outstanding job on Exercise Wessex Storm.

It was 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles and The Royal Irish Regiment who were being put through their paces and it really brought

home to me the versatility of our troops.

Within a couple of weeks I saw the full spectrum – from ceremonial excellence to high-end combined arms training, with soldiers in full green kit and cam cream.

And with the operation in Sudan still in the back of our minds, it shows we can deliver on our commitments at home and around the world to the highest standard, no matter the ask.

WHY THE BIG PICTURE MATTERS

■ UNDERSTANDING the Army's overarching vision might seem unnecessary to more junior soldiers, but it informs what happens at the tactical end.

So I'd urge everyone down to NCO level to read the Army Command Plan and discuss it with their troops.

It sets out where we are and where we're going in the near future. The key objectives are to mobilise our fighting power, modernise our capability and transform the organisation as well as our approach to people.

We would all like new tanks, more helicopters, better equipment and to be on tour all the time, but understanding the bigger picture helps us understand what the priorities are and the context of our jobs.

The document is available now on the Army Knowledge Exchange and I encourage the chain of command to actively engage with it.

WEED TO KILL

SKILLS & DRILLS / EXPERIENCE / RULES & REGS / MENTAL HEALTH / NUTRITION



How difficult is it really?

There's quite a lot to get your head around. In essence it's two instruments, the chanter and the bagpipes. You start with the finger positions and the notes, beginning with simple scales and later adding embellishments.

What makes a good piper?

Strong intercostal muscles – your lips and diaphragm take a bit of a beating. And you need to be able to multitask. We're playing from memory, while marching in time – you have to be on your game.

PIPE DREAMS

Could you cut it as an Army bagpiper?

► WHETHER it's at the Coronation of King Charles III, the Edinburgh Tattoo or a Burns' Night knees-up in the mess, there's no denying military pipers bring a certain presence to proceedings.

But mastering the notoriously complex instrument? Surely that's something best left to elite musicians, born and raised in the tradition.

Not so, says Gnr Robert Procter of Bolton-based Reserve outfit, 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery Pipes and Drums.

Having started playing in 2011 as a civvy, he went from complete beginner to performing at the Olympic Games torch relay the following year, and later enlisted as a Reservist.

These days he travels the country with his bandmates (pictured) to lend a unique sound to events such as this month's Armed Forces Day.

Here, he tells *Soldier* about the enduring appeal of the pipes and how it's easier than you might think.

funerals and New Year's Eve – it's the full spectrum of emotion.

How can people get involved?

Seek out your nearest military band and speak to the pipe major. If you're based in Catterick, there are two or three phenomenal bands that you'd be crazy not to engage with while you have the chance. Or there may be a civilian band closer to you. There's not many of us, so most pipers are happy to support others on their journey. Don't hold back!

What do you love about the pipes?

The fact that if you play it right you can make memories for everybody around you, not just yourself. The pipes resonate with people. From weddings to





Musicians of the 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery Pipes and Drums ahead of a dinner night at the Honourable Artillery Company in London. From left; pipe major LBdr Gary Burgess, civilian member Kieran Barry, Gnr Robert Procter and Gnr Wayne Burgess. To follow the band on Facebook search @103regtpipesanddrums

Gnr Procter's top threes...

Tunes

- 1** **Dark Island** "A lovely piece of music. It was played at my wedding."
- 2** **Campbell's Farewell to Redcastle** "I felt like I'd arrived when I cracked this classic."
- 3** **Itchy Fingers** "A fun, upbeat tune."

Military moments

- 1** Meeting the King, or Prince Charles as he was then, after the Platinum Jubilee last year
- 2** My first solo, piping in front of dignitaries at Fulwood Barracks, Preston
- 3** My first time playing alongside the pipes and drums of our sister regiment 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery in Larkhill

The soldier's return

How a Falklands War artefact led to a mission of reconciliation



► MARK Eyles-Thomas was a teenager when he joined 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment shortly before Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982.

But he could never have foreseen how the chance acquisition of a helmet worn by an enemy combatant would bring him full circle some 40 years later.

GI WAS just 17 years old when I fought during Op Corporate in the South Atlantic.

So in 2022, when I had the chance to meet some of the combatants we faced all those years ago, there were many conflicting emotions on the 14-hour flight to Argentina.

There was a bizarre reason for the trip – a military helmet.

It had belonged to a man I had never met, who had fought on the opposite side of the war. And I was taking it 7,000 miles back to his country.

This all started well over a decade ago, when I had written a book about my experiences in the 1982 conflict, including the Battle for Mount Longdon.

I held a signing event for the launch and set out a table with some of my

memorabilia from the era.

But it was then that a visitor came by and said that I was "missing an object from the other side". He went out and returned to leave a helmet, before disappearing in short order.

The kit was clearly Argentine but I paid little attention at the time. I packed it up – and it was only after recently finding it in some personal effects that I took a closer look and noticed the name 'Sirtori' on the lining.

With my curiosity piqued I asked a friend – who is also a historian – for assistance. He noted that the helmet cover was of a type worn by the Argentine marines.

But I wanted to know about the owner – and further research uncovered details of a Daniel Sirtori who had seen action against 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards at

Mount Tumbledown on the last day of the war.

Although he survived the battle, the conscript – from the Tierra del Fuego-based 5th Marine Infantry Battalion – sadly took his own life in 1999.

However, with assistance from a military researcher in Argentina, I managed to establish contact with Daniel's daughter Virginia and her partner Carlos.

We chatted online and I began thinking about how I could return her father's helmet – particularly as the couple had founded a museum about the war in their home city of Chajari.

I didn't want to send it through the postal system – and I had concerns about taking it on board a commercial flight with all the related security.

But then the nation's UK ambassador Javier Figueroa stepped in, kindly arranging to have the helmet sent via



Know your limit

Get clued up on alcohol and safety critical duties

▶ YOU wouldn't get behind the wheel of a car while drunk, but did you know that the acceptable alcohol level for certain soldiering tasks is just one quarter of the drink drive limit?

Even a small amount of booze in your system can reduce your performance during so-called safety critical duties – and because everyone processes alcohol at different rates, you could accidentally find yourself over the limit long after you downed your last pint.

Here, Lt Col Lee Rickard (RLC) from Army Personnel Services Group outlines what you should know to avoid putting yourself, your colleagues and your career at serious risk...

Safety critical duties (SCD) include, but are not limited to:

- Handling a firearm and ammunition together
- Working with explosives, including fuses, charges or propellants
- Firing or giving orders to fire
- Calculating, setting or giving instructions on a target area
- Aviation, including ground and air crews



Alcohol limits for SCD:

9mcg Breath **per 100ml**
(compared to 35mcg for driving)

20mg Blood **per 100ml**
(compared to 80mg for driving)

Q&A

Why isn't the limit zero?

For some individuals, small amounts of alcohol occur naturally in their body so a certain tolerance level is permitted. However, it will not reach the designated lower limit – this will only happen when someone has drunk booze recently.

How long should I leave between drinking and performing an SCD?

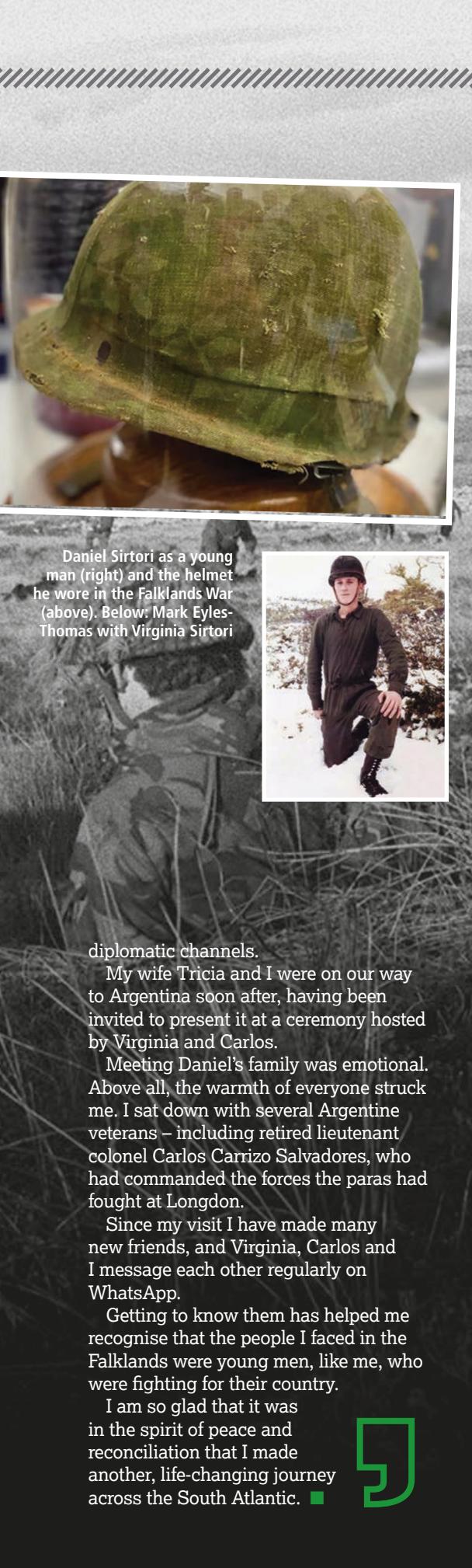
This is not possible to predict accurately because factors such as

age, weight, sex, metabolism and medications affect how quickly your system clears alcohol – but at least 48 hours is recommended.

Who can order me to be tested?

Your commanding officer has the authority to require someone be tested if they have reasonable cause to suspect they are impaired or over the prescribed limit.

For full details read
JSP 835 Chapter 5



Daniel Sirtori as a young man (right) and the helmet he wore in the Falklands War (above). Below: Mark Eyles-Thomas with Virginia Sirtori

diplomatic channels.

My wife Tricia and I were on our way to Argentina soon after, having been invited to present it at a ceremony hosted by Virginia and Carlos.

Meeting Daniel's family was emotional. Above all, the warmth of everyone struck me. I sat down with several Argentine veterans – including retired lieutenant colonel Carlos Carrizo Salvadores, who had commanded the forces the parillas had fought at Longdon.

Since my visit I have made many new friends, and Virginia, Carlos and I message each other regularly on WhatsApp.

Getting to know them has helped me recognise that the people I faced in the Falklands were young men, like me, who were fighting for their country.

I am so glad that it was in the spirit of peace and reconciliation that I made another, life-changing journey across the South Atlantic. ■



Rising from a fall



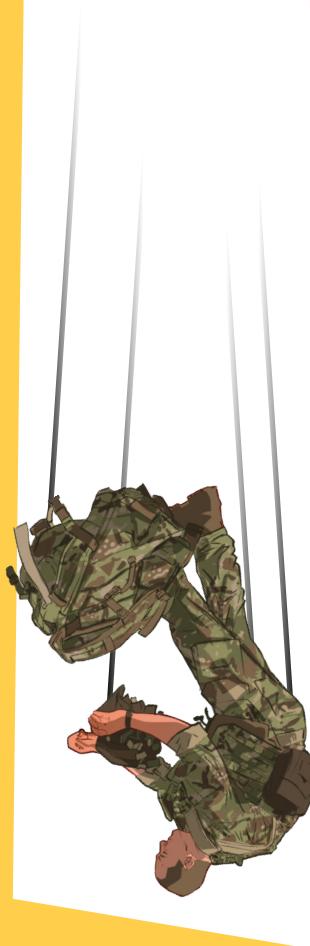
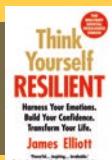
How to regroup after a setback

► HAVING overcome an abusive childhood and homelessness to join The Parachute Regiment, former corporal James Elliott went on to serve in Afghanistan and develop the Armed Forces' first mental resilience training.

Now using his experiences to help vulnerable veterans and coach sports teams, the 35-year-old has published a book, *Think Yourself Resilient* – part of which looks at bouncing back when stuff goes wrong.

Here, he explains why troops should embrace failure rather than fear it.

Think Yourself Resilient by James Elliott is out now, published by Thread



The British Army's attitude to failure is complicated.

On the one hand, the recruitment campaign says "fail, learn, win", but the competitive nature of most soldiers is to win at all costs – or risk dishonour to their cap badge and unit. So which mentality is best?

Science shows it's the first.

The brain is a complex series of interconnected neurons, communicating electrical pulses and hormonal exchanges at lightning speed. When there is information it doesn't understand, it must change and adapt – a process called neuroplasticity.

For example, we are all familiar with the drill "weapon fires, weapon fires, weapon stops". When a stoppage occurs, you turn the rifle to the side and carry out the immediate action drill. Your brain recognises what is happening and the necessary electrical pulses and hormones are exchanged to respond.

So to learn, we must first be wrong.

As the Nobel Prize winning physicist Niels Bohr said, "an expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field". Fail, learn, win indeed!

Making the most of failure...

- 1 Think of brain health.** Exercise, good food, hydration and sleep all promote neural plasticity.
- 2 Start small.** The brain can absorb terabytes of data, but huge amounts of that is discarded – so make small changes to learn and embed new information.
- 3 Work out how you learn.** We all do it differently, depending on genetics, upbringing and health. Some people prefer visuals, others getting hands on or recording things.
- 4 Don't stress it.** Cortisol is the stress hormone and it impairs neural plasticity. Control the controllable, make the best of the situation that you have and trust the process of fail to learn. Every pro was once a beginner.

Spice up your scoff

Try replacing your weekend takeaway with this delicious lean Gurkha recipe

► CURRIES are a staple of the British diet. And thanks to the Army's contingent of legendary Gurkha chefs, those in uniform are never too far from a delicious feed providing they know the right people.

For those who don't, we've done the hard work for you. Why not try replacing your weekend takeaway with this healthy serving of spice instead?

Chuck it all together in the morning and it'll be ready for evening scran.



CHICKEN TANDOORI

Ingredients

Whole chicken - 1.1.5kg
Onions - 170g
Yoghurt - 142ml
Garlic cloves - 4
Ginger - 28g
Ground coriander - 1 tsp
Ground cumin - 1 tsp
Chilli powder - 1/2 tsp
Garam masala - 1 tsp
Vinegar - 1 tbs
Worcester sauce - 1 tbs
Butter - 28g
Juice of two lemons
Salt to season



Kit list

- Knife (kukri not compulsory)
- Pestle and mortar - or something to smash with
- Spoon or whisk
- Oven
- Bowl
- Baking tray

1 Clean the **chicken**, then make three or four cuts on each side of the bird.

2 Grind the **onion**, **garlic** and **ginger** to a paste, then add the **coriander**, **cumin**, **chilli** and **salt**.

3 Beat the **yoghurt** in a bowl, add the **paste**, **vinegar**, **worcester sauce** and **half the lemon juice**. Mix thoroughly.

4 Rub the mixture on the

chicken and allow to marinate for five hours.

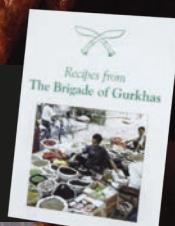
5 Roast in oven according to instructions on the chicken.

6 Cut the cooked chicken into ten portions, and arrange over a serving dish.

7 Brush with **melted butter**, sprinkle with **garam masala** and remaining **lemon juice** and serve to your hungry guests.

Taken from *Recipes from The Brigade of Gurkhas*

● Buy it for £3.75 at thegurkhamuseum.co.uk



Upgrading infantry units for urban conflict is a priority

THE second round of Exercise Wessex Storm for 2023 may have revolved around 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles and 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment being tested as part of the Army's Global Response Force, but in the background another important development was taking shape.

The Experimentation and Trials Group (ETG) and its in-house unit, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, plugged into various stages of the exercise to develop a radical new concept for urban combat.

It's a project that, judging by the progress so far, will almost certainly lead to big changes for infanteers in the not-too-distant future.

It is also the foundation stone of a long-term plan to integrate robotic and autonomous systems across a brigade combat team by 2025 and a complete division by 2035. The target right now, though, is to successfully incorporate these technologies into infantry sub-units, making them more effective for fighting in built-up areas.

According to senior ETG personnel, the results from the project – called Urban Phalanx after the ancient Greek military

formation – have been so compelling they are impossible to turn a blind eye to.

"We've been working on this new formula over the past few months and the evidence we have gathered to date, including on this exercise, demonstrates we are on to a winner," ETG's Maj Alex Bayliss (Gren Gds) tells *Soldier*.

The group's trials have been underpinned by research from senior Army experts, Royal Marines urban combat specialists, the US Marine Corps' Warfighting Laboratory and DSTL-led testing and simulation.

All the while, a close eye has been continuously cast over the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

"The war there has raised a number of issues as we've been developing this," continues the officer.

“We’ve been intently watching an adversary we pace ourselves against. They have mass fires, serious electronic warfare and Istar capability and we know we must contest in a very different way compared with Afghanistan or Iraq.”

One notable aspect of the war between near-peer forces in Ukraine has been how the urban landscape causes fighting to quickly break down into a series of clashes between small, dislocated units at very close quarters. »



“

The new company structure is significantly more potent, with loads more situational awareness, more anti-armour and anti-structure capability

”



Charged up

What do personnel testing the Phalanx structure think?

“ This project is about gaining advantage and speeding up the kill chain through the application of current and future capabilities. We have used some new kit and some that's not so new such as the 81mm mortar, sniper rifle and Javelin, but by orchestrating them differently – at company level and below and not as a battlegroup asset – we have delivered effects quicker, **making us more lethal and survivable.** ”

One of our most important observations from exercises like

Wessex Storm is that to sustain a company of

this type takes more than rations, bullets,

bombs and water, it takes the protection

of a comms network and the power to

make it and the drones work. These are

new factors that need to be planned for.

On this package we have been aggregating

data we've gathered over the last 12 months

and it is overwhelming – two Phalanx platoons

with a manoeuvre support group and a smaller CSS enabling

group behind it **can deliver the British Army significant advantage.** ”



Lt Col Mike Wade-Smith, R Yorks

“ Traditionally with three infantry sections you have assault, suppress and reserve, but with the Phalanx platoon we have three sections, each containing two fire teams, to punch around. Thanks to the use of the DSA tool and the drones **I can coordinate the battle space really well.** When we did a defence of Copehill Down **we ended up killing two tanks** because I had the ability to load the dice in my favour. Having sections of soldiers and fire support teams feed data to their DSAs from our Istar assets and drones means **we can quickly identify and hit urban targets with more lethality.** ”

That's our main takeaway I'd say, although we have also identified some problems along the way. For example, there are three different batteries we need for the two radios we've been using. With power becoming ever more important, everyone should be on the same battery type, whether they are a commander or soldier. I can't swap or even rebalance my soldiers' batteries because I'm kitted out with a different type to them, so we made sure that has been fed back up the chain. ”



Lt Dan Matthews, R Yorks

» In this type of battle, huge responsibility is placed on the shoulders of junior leaders.

These personnel must make quick and effective decisions under extreme pressure, yet at the same time act as information sources for senior commanders during skirmishes that are often fluid and fast-moving.

This aspect of their role will only increase in scope in the future. Situational awareness systems that are coming their way, such as the now-familiar Atak tool, provide real-time pictures of troop movements, targets, casualties and strategic locations as well as relaying data from various sensors such as drones and comms from higher command.

As a result, one of the ETG's overarching goals is to determine how junior commanders can exploit all these information feeds to more effectively deploy their troops – not to mention a wide array of back-up weapons they'll be able to directly call upon – without their ability to control the battle being eroded.

This has led to an alteration in the structure of formations down to section level that effectively provides more support for these key personnel operating on the front line.

“The first change sees sections containing ten soldiers instead of eight,” explains Maj Bayliss.

“There are still two four-person fire teams, but in our structure they are led by a section commander who sits alongside a dedicated systems operator who has access to data from drones, controls communications and updates the Atak system.

“The set-up increases their lethality by removing the section commander from the fire team, and that allows him or her to focus on leading the group and managing the huge amounts of information now arriving via the systems operator.

“We first tried it on a small scale on Project Convergence last year and during Wessex Storm we've repeated the experiment with more people and equipment and put it into a TES simulation – and the results were fantastic.”

The trial platoon structure contains three of these revised sections, who in turn are led by a commander with a dedicated systems operator on their shoulder, plus a sergeant focusing on communications sitting alongside them.

Every platoon also has its own team armed with Carl Gustaf weapon systems, a significant number of which have just been procured by the MoD.

“It's a fantastic piece of kit because it's compact, you can use many different types of ammunition – anti-tank, anti-structure,



“Overall the concept is good. Lethality is definitely enhanced but the supply side is the challenge. With a 36-man platoon the admin burden has grown; but **the supply chain hasn't been modified to support us yet** so the platoon sergeant is more of a CQMS than before. It can be done, maybe with a 2iC dedicated to manage the resupply and admin side, but it all depends on how frequently the missions come in. If it's too soon we won't have time to recharge the various batteries we need. Also, **you can't man-pack all the kit we need under the new structure** – generators and batteries, for instance, are required for all the devices being used. It's a question of getting it all forward quickly enough. We have been using jumbo electric powerpacks that run silently and replace noisy diesel generators to power up everyone's devices, but a few of them are required for each platoon and they weigh around 5kg each. **You need dedicated transport** just to move those around. ”

Sgt Andy Bagshaw, Mercian



“On the whole, I'm a fan of the Phalanx concept. It may take time to integrate it as it does employ more commanders but that's a good thing as it **brings better command and control**. The DSA really comes into its own there. There is more pressure on junior NCOs overall, but that's a good thing too as **more responsibility is placed at a lower level** where quick decisions need to be made. As a fire team commander, I have a lot more to do, through doing section 2iC work and having to employ **more of a tactical mindset**, but it's great. For example, I'm free to take a building how I see it, there and then, because the technology we're using in this structure allows me to do that. ”

LCpl Luke O'Neil, R Yorks



high explosive, smoke and so on – and you can reuse it, unlike the NLAW, which is a bulky tube that once fired is thrown away,” explains Maj Bayliss.

As a result, the modified platoon now contains a minimum of 36 personnel instead of the usual 25-30.

The company structure is also revised, with two of the above platoons instead of three, but the overall size has grown to around 130 people thanks to the inclusion of a manoeuvre support group with a smaller combat service support team.

These troops operate many of the weapons found in a traditional support company, and during Wessex Storm they were mounted in a fleet of 4x4 pick-up trucks so they could travel fast and relatively discreetly down narrow streets if necessary, to where they were needed in the battle space.

The team is equipped with three Javelin anti-tank detachments (which offer greater range than the Carl Gustafs) and two »





“
You need to
be fit, you
need to be
up for it, you
need the will
to win
”



The Phalanx structure allows data from a wide range of situational awareness kit to be managed and exploited where it's most needed – at the front line. Feeds from drones, Atak systems and other sensors give more decision-making power to sub-unit commanders, who can deploy troops and back-up weapons quickly and more effectively.

AT A GLANCE NEW UNIT STRUCTURE

TECH THAT MEANS SUB-UNIT COMMANDERS CAN TAKE MORE DECISIONS



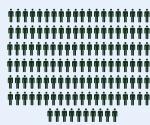
SECTIONS OF 10

Two four-person fire teams, with a section commander overseeing alongside a systems operator



PLATOONS OF 36+

Three sections led by a commander, plus a systems operator, a sergeant on comms and a Carl Gustaf team



COMPANIES OF 130

Two large platoons plus a potent manoeuvre support group



» highly mobile 81mm mortars (see panel right). It also has two teams, each consisting of a driver, patrol commander and a systems operator, who manage the deployment of long-range drones and loitering munitions.

For Wessex Storm, the ETG also gave the manoeuvre support group a Coyote vehicle fitted with Brimstone missiles to enable precision long-range fires (pictured above left).

"Overall, the new company structure is significantly more potent, with loads more situational awareness at all levels, more anti-armour and anti-structure capability throughout and highly mobile fire support with rockets and mortars," notes Maj Bayliss.

"On this exercise our drones, especially the beyond line-of-sight platforms, revealed where the enemy was coming from. We could then layer fires on to their positions with precision weapons, loitering munitions and the 81mm mortar.

"It proved a fantastic formula, with the enemy often destroyed before a proper shooting match could break out.

"For the individual, the combat fundamentals are the same as ever – you need to be fit, you need to be up for it, you need the will to win. But the technology – in particular electronic warfare, the situational awareness systems, our precision fires and the feed from drones – mean the sub-unit commander can take decisions that used to sit at unit level, and we're finding that is reducing the time it takes to kill the enemy."

There is some more work to be done to refine details of the new structure, in particular finding solutions to power requirements (see "Charged up").

This will be explored further during exercises in the UK later this year and at the next Project Convergence in the US, where the Phalanx concept will be rolled out across a small battlegroup.

However, the ETG's results have revealed that the adoption of this new formula would almost certainly produce a step-change in lethality and survivability for infantry companies executing urban missions – and those results cannot be ignored. ■



New moves

The ETG used Ex Wessex Storm to enhance mortar team tactics

“ Mortaring up to now has been three barrels, 40 metres apart, sat on a mortar line eight hours a day, but you just can't afford to do that anymore," Sgt Jason Morris (R Yorks) tells *Soldier*. "Ukraine has shown us – if we weren't already aware – that things like drones have changed the game. Sit still and you'll get wiped out.

"At Wessex Storm we've been working on a few things that we are recommending up the chain – and one is a restructure of the mortar teams.

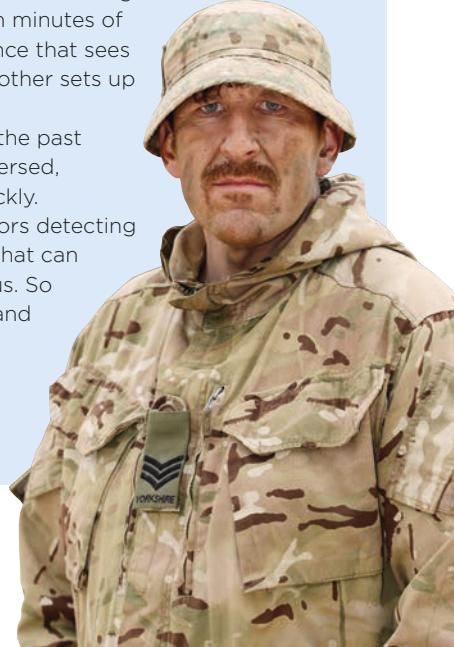
"Normally, you have three barrels with three people on each barrel, controlled by a command post operator, their assistant and a section commander. But the future, in my opinion, is each company having two barrels, each manned by four personnel – two operators and two qualified to do targeting on the fire control application.

"They will conduct double checks on the input of coordinates, operate the Wingman – a piece of kit that detects drones to prevent us being spotted – and act as drivers.

"Each team has its own agile 4x4 Ford Ranger-type vehicle, ready to move within minutes of firing, working in a phased sequence that sees one team shoot and move as the other sets up somewhere else.

"We've been practising this for the past three weeks, operating more dispersed, firing, packing up and leaving quickly.

"Meanwhile, the forward operators detecting the enemy have their own drone that can ping a grid of the target back to us. So the combination of revised TTPs and changing the way we use kit has made us more agile and deadly.



A NEW ERA DAWNS

Ceremonial masters deliver perfect platform for commander-in-chief



Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Graeme Main and SSgt Dek Taylor, RLC

IT WAS one for the history books. After days of intense rehearsals, the 7,000 troops taking part in the Coronation of King Charles III did their cap badges, the Army and the nation proud with a flawless display of pomp and ceremony.

Six months in the planning, Operation Golden Orb was a full-scale military manoeuvre that left nothing to chance, every step choreographed in meticulous detail from start to finish.

The day began in the small hours – when personnel, in full regalia, boarded trains to London from a number of transport hubs to take their positions for the much-anticipated spectacle.

The first of two processions saw members of the Household

Cavalry Mounted Regiment escorting the King and Queen from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey ahead of the Coronation ceremony.

Once the service was under way, a specially selected group of guardsmen played a role in one of the most crucial rituals, the Act of Consecration – holding ornate screens to shield the monarch from view during his anointing with holy oil.

Finally, more than 4,000 Servicemen and women, including some 400 from across the Commonwealth, accompanied their newly crowned commander-in-chief back along Whitehall and The Mall to Buckingham Palace, flanked all the way by cheering crowds.

The parade – the likes of which had not been seen since

“The effort everyone put in was incredible”



Thousands of Army personnel due to take part in the Coronation procession travelled to London via train in the early hours, arriving at Waterloo Station. A few hours later they would help to make history

Elizabeth II was crowned in 1953 – culminated in a royal salute and a thunderous three cheers from all personnel assembled on the palace lawn, prompting a smile and a visible sigh from the King, whose expression until then had remained sombre.

Given the significance of the occasion, perhaps there was a moment of relief for His Majesty at a job well done, just as there was for the troops involved – none more so than for WO1 Vern Stokes (Coldm Gds, pictured), who as the garrison sergeant major of London District had been the lynchpin behind the ceremonial element.

Speaking to *Soldier* shortly afterwards, the senior



Serviceman said he “couldn’t have been happier” with the outcome, and praised the dedication of all those who had been on parade.

“The effort everyone put in was incredible,” he continued. “It was the culmination of ten days of very hard work – they had really been put through their paces in the rehearsals, working long hours and into the nights preparing their kit for the next day.

“It was an exhausting programme, but it had to be because there was only one standard that we had to achieve and that was excellence.”

The planning involved having to come up with previously untested solutions to the constraints of the parade route, »



► which at 1.42 miles was too short to accommodate the personnel in the customary format.

As WO1 Stokes explained, had the ranks stepped off in turn as usual, the front of the procession would have reached the palace before the rear had even begun, so the decision was taken to widen the rows and compress the spacing. However, this created a new problem, for which the answer lay in technology.

“Normally, when designing these big parades you split them down into groups and each one is supported by one or two bands,” he added.

“But then they have to separate them by time and distance otherwise the music interferes with the other groups.

“So we came up with the idea of having what is called a click track in the bass drummer and drum majors’ ears, meaning they could set the beat at the same time.

“We didn’t know whether it was going to work until about a week beforehand when we tried it at Pirbright, but thankfully it did and it was fantastic because it meant that on the day, no matter where you were stood along the route, you heard the same music from 19 bands.”

Having also devised a brand new drill movement to reduce the width of the rows down to six soldiers to enable them to fit through the gate of Buckingham Palace, the stage was set for the finale in the garden.

Reminiscent of an 18th century battlefield diorama, the sight and sound of thousands of troops signalling their commitment to the monarch as one proved remarkably poignant – for those present as well as many more following events on television,

with retired officer and BBC commentator Brig Greville Bibby (ex-Coldm Gds) moved almost to tears in the studio.

Reflecting on the heartfelt moment, WO1 Stokes said it had allowed everyone present to show their personal affection for their commander-in-chief.

“It was very emotional,” he admitted. “I think even His Majesty was taken aback by the scale – from where I was standing I could see the expression on his face and his chest expanding, which I think showed his appreciation for the Armed Forces.

“The three cheers really hit the nail on the head and gave everyone, including the Commonwealth troops who had travelled so far, an opportunity to be part of the event and see the King rather than just march past the palace.

“Everyone was excited to take part and immensely proud that they had done it.

“Just like the members of the public I spoke to earlier, there was a feeling of jubilation at being present and representing their country on such a special day.”

King Charles III comes to the throne during a time of great change – just as the nation must also adjust to a new monarch after 70 years.

There will no doubt be challenges ahead. But as he officially embarks on his reign, he can rest safe in the knowledge that the loyalty of the troops who served his mother so faithfully remains undiminished.

And the Servicemen and women who demonstrated the sentiment through their professionalism and commitment on the day can look back on a once-in-a-career experience and say, “I was there”. ■





“There was only one standard that we had to achieve – excellence”

VIEW FROM THE GROUND...



“The three cheers moment was spine-tingling – you could actually feel the ground shake”

Cpl Danny Burgess, Para



“As part of the Mounted Band of the Household Cavalry I definitely had one of the best views. My horse, Quillen, was amazing and I felt so proud to play a role in this historic occasion”

LCoH Alison Swindles, RCam

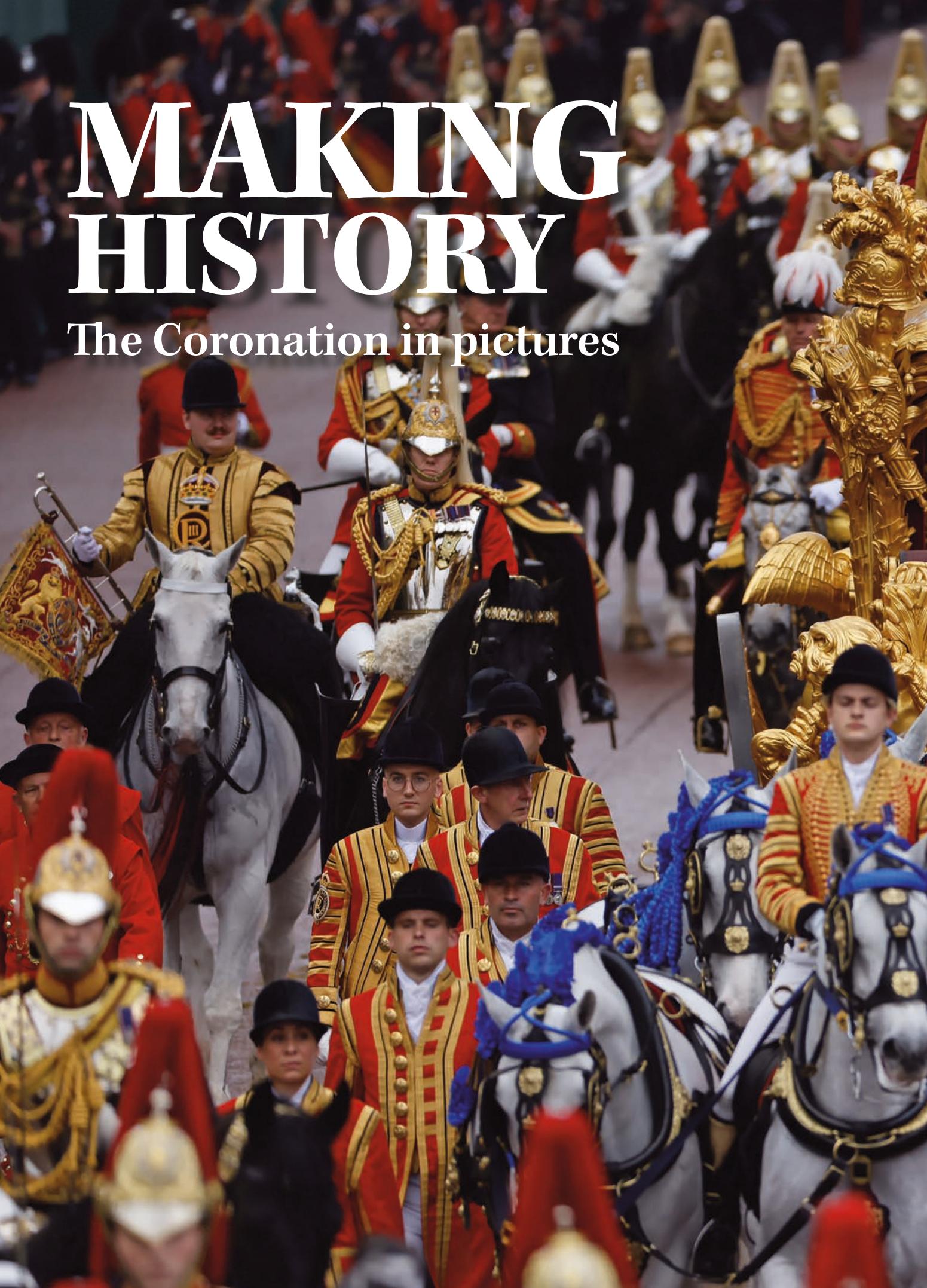


“Being part of something of that magnitude, that represents centuries of history, was incredible – it’s one I’m sure I’ll bore the grandchildren with in years to come”

Sig Richard Steele, R Signals

MAKING HISTORY

The Coronation in pictures













Pictures: Graeme Main; WO1 Rupert Frere, Sgt Dek Traylor, Cpl Ed Wright, Cpl Simon Lucas, all RLC; PO (Phot) Joel Rouse, PO (Phot) Daniel Shepherd, both RN; Sgt Ellie Marriott, AS1 Ryan Murphy, AS1 Samantha Holden, all RAF





FRAME BY FRAME

The Coronation as it unfolded

T-minus ten days: Rehearsals begin in earnest at locations such as Pirbright, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and RAF Odiham...

...before full overnight run-throughs in London while the city slept

Coronation day began with an 0330 wake-up call, final kit checks and an early commute into London

1020: The King and Queen depart Buckingham Palace for Westminster Abbey in the Diamond Jubilee state coach, accompanied by the Sovereign's Escort of the Household Cavalry

1100: The Coronation service begins. Guardsmen shield the King from view during the Act of Consecration

1430: Curtailed thanks to poor weather, the fly-past features Army, RAF and Naval helicopters, as well as the Red Arrows

Shortly after 1330: Their Majesties appear on the west terrace of the palace, where they received a royal salute and three cheers from the assembled personnel

1300: King Charles and Queen Camilla leave Westminster Abbey, this time in the gold state coach for the return journey to Buckingham Palace, accompanied by more than 4,000 troops

COMMUNITY MINDED

Coronation volunteer drive strikes a chord with military personnel

BRITISH soldiers are renowned for their public-spirited ways. From the selfless commitment they demonstrate on operations to the fundraising feats and community projects they pull off in slower times, King Charles III's sense of altruism is certainly replicated across his Army.

So when last month's Coronation was followed by a day-long volunteer drive – The Big Help Out – it struck a chord with those who serve King and country.

Here, three Servicemen tell *Soldier* what they get out of giving up their free time to support other people...

Interviews: Cliff Caswell



'It's a privileged position... I've never looked back'

Name: LCpl Adam Lomax

Cap badge: Intelligence Corps

Age: 31

Day job: Linguist

Volunteering role:

Community volunteer coordinator, SSAFA

“ Being a volunteer is a really fulfilling experience; I couldn't recommend it more.

My charity, SSAFA, helps the Armed Forces family in many ways but I'm involved with supporting people in the community.

We assist clients with anything from washing up and shopping to giving lifts to medical appointments and signposting them to help.

I look after a team of local volunteers, ensuring they are fit and well, that their training is up-to-date and that they have an opportunity to talk through any issues they might have encountered.

It's really fulfilling and is my way of giving something back to the community.

I joined SSAFA after a former boss gave me a flyer on the charity and encouraged me to find out more. I went on to the website, filled in the paperwork and have never looked back.

Since then I've attained a



few qualifications too.

I've served in the Army for the last four years – having joined a little later in life.

Enlisting is something I never regretted, and I love being a soldier. However,

I try not to bring too much of myself into the volunteering role. That side of my life is about other people and those we're helping.

All of us involved in the community with SSAFA are in a deeply privileged position. We are with people at their lowest points but we also see many happier moments – for example, when they turn a corner and life changes for the better.

This, for me, is when I experience the greatest personal satisfaction.

I'd definitely recommend the charity to others.



'Volunteering has shaped my life'

Name: WO2 Kurt Harkness

Cap badge: Royal Artillery

Age: 38

Day job: Artillery adviser, 12th Armoured Brigade Combat Team

Volunteering role: Military co-responder

“ I've been with the military co-responders since 2018, when I read about the initiative in *Soldier*. I saw that the job involved helping out colleagues from South Central Ambulance Service, pairing up with a fellow volunteer and deploying in cars on five-hour shifts.

It sounded interesting – particularly as my interest in the health field had been fired up after carrying out some specialist medical training before a stint on



Operation Herrick.

After a few years assisting with the co-responders, my qualifications now include a blue light driver ticket. It's been quite a journey and I'm joining the ambulance service full-time when I leave the Army next year.

Volunteering for me was all about giving something back – purely and simply. I wanted to help out and that is its own reward.

When you're able to assist people with everything from falls to life-saving treatment such as CPR you have a great feeling.

During Covid, the co-responders also came together as a unit to provide military assistance to the civilian authorities.

But this is clearly not a role for everyone – and initially you go along as an observer

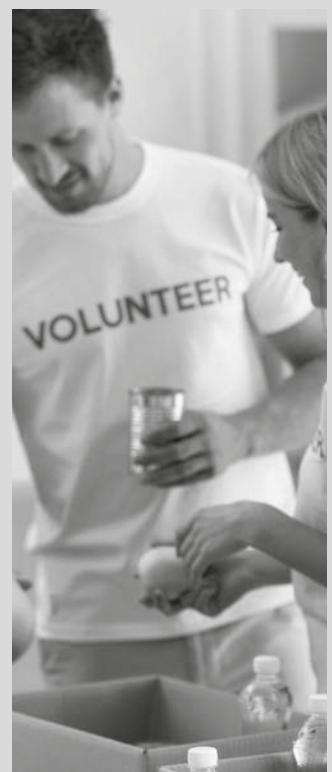


for a couple of shifts.

If you sign up, you're enlisted on courses starting with basic first aid with further opportunities as you accrue experience.

The Army's chain of command has been brilliant with the co-responder scheme. While all of the volunteers aim to give 20 hours a month, there is some flexibility around this given the pressures of military life – and the ability to resume your role after a break should you need to deploy on operations or exercise.

I'd urge anyone to think about helping. As well as achieving my aim of giving something back, volunteering has also shaped my life – and given me the direction towards a new career.



»

'I was a visiting officer and wanted to do more'

Name: CSgt Tam Miller

Cap badge: Scots Guards

Age: 55

Day job: Full-time

Reserve service – West Midlands Outreach Team, Army Recruiting Group

Volunteering role: Royal British Legion vice-chair, Staffordshire County Branch secretary, Aldridge

“ I became a volunteer with The Royal British Legion while still serving as a Regular, nearly 20 years ago now. I was a visiting officer for a triple amputee, who had been wounded on operations, and felt that I wanted to do more



to help.

Over the years, I have been involved in all kinds of activities and won two national awards for my work.

Most recently, I helped out during the Covid lockdowns, checking on people's welfare and seeing that the vulnerable had their shopping done. I've done some befriending work with our veterans too.

These days I work at a national level with the charity, as well as serving as secretary of my local branch in Aldridge, West Midlands.

I've helped to raise £500,000 over the years through some fun events – one that stands out in particular was walking the entire length of the Welsh coast, some 760 miles.

As well as the camaraderie and huge personal

satisfaction from working with the charity, it is great to help those in need.

The military family has given me so much – a great life and regular salary – so I'm driven by wanting to give something back.

The Legion has also assisted me in the past when I had to deal with resettlement issues at the end of my Regular career.

Serving soldiers gain a great deal from volunteering. They already tend to look after one another and assist others, and our veterans always enjoy meeting and talking to them about shared experiences.

Better than anyone, those who are still in the Army also understand the issues that personnel are facing on a day-to-day basis, and can put this invaluable knowledge to good use.

In return, volunteers accrue experience of charity work that could stand them in good stead when they hang up their boots and head for a new career on civvy street.

Joining the Legion doesn't cost a penny for soldiers or former personnel – and you're among good friends.





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IT IS a name that mystifies the Gurkha troops operating some 1,600 miles beyond the shores of their Brunei base – the Mount Bundy Training Area.

An alien-like world stretching beyond the city of Darwin in Australia's remote Northern Territory, the staging post for Exercise Pacific Kukri is a flat scrubland, at times scorched black by bushfires.

There are neither towering peaks nor rocky crags to justify the odd moniker.

"This is a strange location," quips Maj Jack Millar, officer commanding C Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles as he savours the cooler evening temperature.

Even now – a month away from the depths of midwinter – the daytime mercury has been climbing steadily to a blistering 35 degrees centigrade.

"The place actually looks like how I imagined Mordor, the haunt of Sauron's evil armies in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*," he continues.

"It is harsh and, while it has a million trees across it, their thin canopy offers little shade from the sun – the experience here is quite intense."

As well as being exposed to the elements, Maj Millar – a veteran of ops in Mali and Afghanistan – points out that the area's sparse cover makes it a nightmarish venue for combined arms manoeuvre as well as planning basic tasks such as mortar or rocket attacks.

But working with colleagues from the host nation's 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment plus the US Marine Corps, the soldiers under his command are proving their mettle.

"These are Gurkhas," he says with a smile. "It is their nature to eat challenges for breakfast and they are taking the situation out here in their stride."

The exercise is certainly designed to push infanteers to their limits with both setting and serials accurately replicating a plausible regional conflict.

In an environment far removed from landlocked Eastern Europe, where the war in Ukraine is currently the focus of attention, potential Antipodean actions are likely to be prosecuted over sprawling distances, across seas and island settings – placing huge demands on the logistic chain.

This strain – and likely austere conditions for front-line forces – would require stringent professional soldiering standards and top-notch personal admin. And with a simulated campaign against a Nepalese-generated opposing force coupled with a live-firing package, the six-week training schedule has been a chance for personnel to flex their collective muscle.

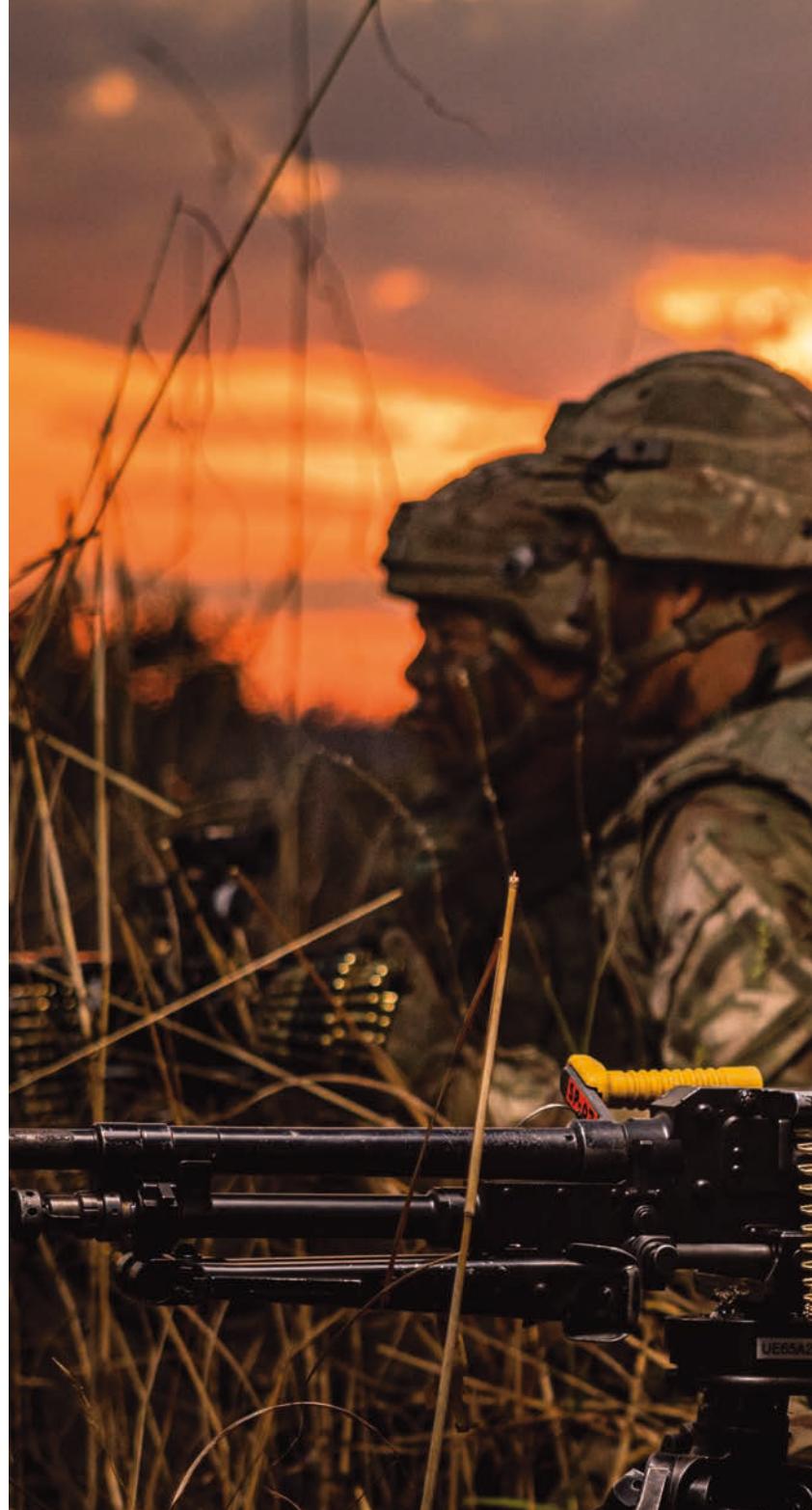
In this multinational environment, troops have been embedded within each other's cohorts as they hone operational protocols. They have also been using a range of support weapons, including the Javelin missile, plus artillery.

With British defence chiefs and allies renewing their focus on the Indo-Pacific as potential adversaries step up their military activity in the region, Maj Millar highlights that the exercise has had a sense of real-time relevance.

It built on recent deployments to the likes of Japan as well as further significant manoeuvres planned for Indonesia in the coming months. »

Pictures: Sgt Ben Beale, RLC

Words: Cliff Caswell



AT THE



“

It is their nature
to eat challenges
for breakfast

”

CUTTING EDGE

Gurkhas show their mettle in the far-flung outback



“Our objective is to provide the Army with the ability to operate in this part of the world, should it be required to do so,” the officer adds.

“We are also demonstrating that we can work seamlessly with allies – there are some 700 British, US and Australian personnel on the training area and we are definitely learning a great deal from each other.

“Both of our allied forces are staffed with highly professional troops and are easy to work with – we’d have absolutely no problems deploying together.”

The ability to work with a spectrum of other nations is certainly critical – and Pacific Kukri underscores the diverse nature of the skills that personnel must possess if they are to prosecute global warfighting operations.

Combat in an Indo-Pacific theatre would be a very different experience to conventional missions closer to home – requiring the ability to function with a different set of partners, less familiar military cultures and at extreme distances.

But in a world that seems to be becoming increasingly unpredictable, preparation for all eventualities and a broad spectrum of events is key. ■



FACT FILE: Mount Bundey Training Area

Opened: 1988

Location: Northern Territory, Australia

Size: 117,300 hectares



Digging in down under

We asked Gurkha riflemen on Pacific Kukri for their views on the training...

"Working with colleagues from the Royal Australian Regiment and US Marine Corps has been amazing – we've had the opportunity to look at how they operate and plan our tactics together. A high point for me so far has been the building clearance serials – we're constantly learning a lot from each other."

Cpl Santosh Shresta



"Having three different forces working together has been fantastic. Our company had one platoon embedded with the Australian Defence Force and they sent one of theirs too. We are building up our knowledge of each other's methods."

Cpl Umesh Malla



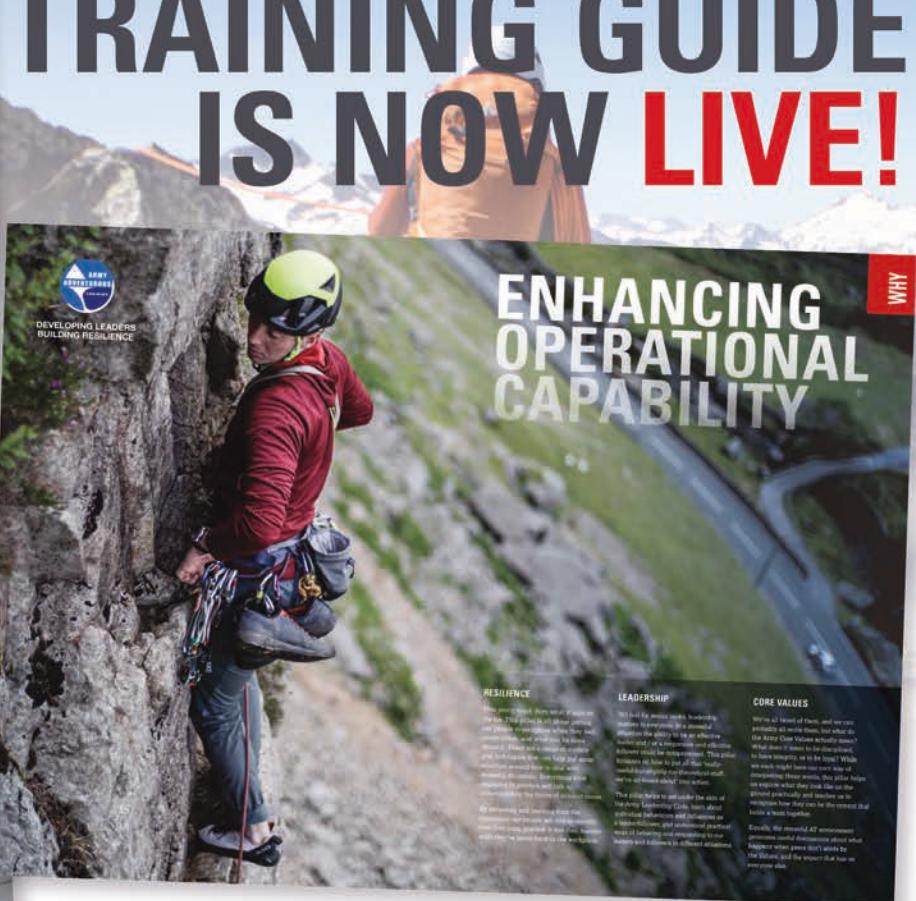
"I'm enjoying the exercise, although the training area environment is a hard place to live and work. It's pretty much flat and the bushes can get in the way of business. But the opportunity to collaborate with our multinational partners is great – we are building some strong relationships."

Sgt Sandesh Sherchan



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TANKS TO TRACK

Could you ID these military
monsters on the battlefield?



THE bitter land battle in Ukraine has shown

that armoured warfare is far from being a thing of the past.

So it will surprise few to learn that combat ID – the training that helps troops distinguish friendly military hardware from foe – is soon to be reintroduced into individual training requirements by the Field Army.

In the meantime, the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School's Anti-Tank Division gives *Soldier* a run-down of the seven main battle tanks that every Serviceman and woman should be able to identify...

CHALLENGER 2 UK MAIN BATTLE TANK

Distinguished by a flat-sided, welded turret and obvious thermal observation and gunnery sight (Togs) box where the main armament meets the turret



The 120mm main armament has a prominent fume extractor which is bulbous towards the top rather than cylindrical.

The gun also has a muzzle reference system at the end indicating that it has an advanced fire control system

The turret has a very slab-like appearance, with "flat cheeks"

M1A2 ABRAMS

USA



LEOPARD 2 A7

GERMANY, PLUS OTHER NATO ALLIES



Features a distinctive array of periscopes on the upper forward part of the turret roof

It has a large periscope sight on the left side of the turret roof and its sides have vertical lower sections

LE CLERC

FRANCE



Exhaust outlet is on the left side of the hull above last road wheel

The turret is central on the hull, with engine and transmission at the rear

It has a circular turret, raised cupola with external 12.5mm machine gun on roof and 125mm main armament with thermal sleeve and fume extractor

The most common Russian MBT on the battlefield, it has a well sloped glacis plate featuring a distinctive V splash plate. The driver's position is top centre

T-72B3(M)

RUSSIA

The hull looks very similar to the T-72B3 due to having the new long side skirts, the bar armour around the rear quarter and the new exhaust system

The commander now has a remote weapon station with an independent sight with it, giving the T-90M a hunter killer capability

Russia's most advanced in-service MBT. The turret is highly modernised, with Shtora active protection system boxes either side of the main armament

T-90M

RUSSIA

Turret is based on Cold War-era T-64B, but the hull is a new design. Noticeable features are the driver's position and three periscopes as opposed to the other T series which have one

Relikt reactive armour plates on hull and the turret. Plates are visible as rectangular blocks

Rear parts of the hull and turret are covered by cage armour to protect against rocket-propelled grenades

T-80BVM

RUSSIA



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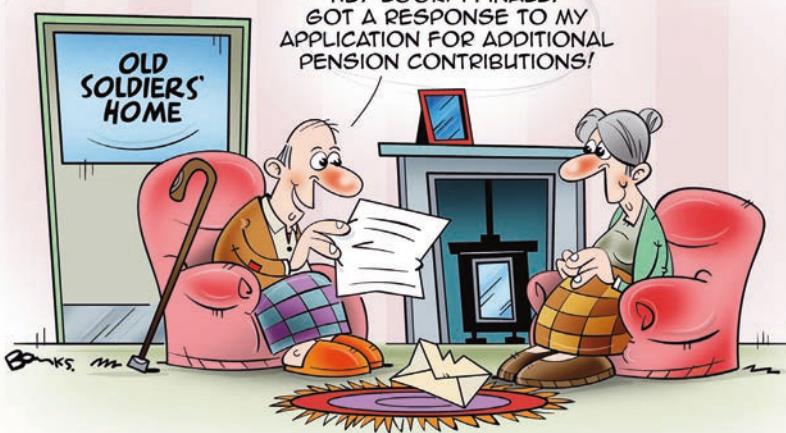


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ARMY



Pension booster fizzles out

THE process for applying for additional pension contributions is unworkable. I have written in and heard nothing back – and it's the second time that this has happened.

Applying by post to an office that rarely replies, and which seems to lose the paperwork, is simply not how we should be doing business in the 21st century.

We should be encouraging soldiers to contribute to their pensions as well as highlighting the considerable tax benefits that come with it.

Instead, we are asked to apply by post every 12 months and often without response. When will this be made an online process? – **Name and address supplied**

Col Louise Green, Assistant Head, Army Remuneration, replies: Defence Business Services are improving digitisation of their provision, and e-forms are part of this work.

More frequently used forms and processes, such as the pension claim forms, are being prioritised over the Armed Forces pension scheme (AFPS) form 6 that you used.

In the interim, you still need to

submit this by post.

I apologise for the lack of a reply to your application. This is unacceptable, and I will pass your case on to DBS.

I am pleased, though, that you are taking the trouble to apply for additional voluntary contributions.

The benefits of purchasing added pension in AFPS 15 are numerous.

For a start, you receive a defined benefit as opposed to most private schemes where the income you get depends on investment performance.

It is also tax efficient as the money you pay in to improve your pension comes out of your pay before tax.

Also, the increase in pension will feed any early departure payment lump sums and income streams.

For wider awareness, obtaining a quote for added pension does not commit you to anything at all.

The contract for this begins if you accept the quote in writing using the AFPS form 6A.

The contract is renewed each year to provide you with flexibility. People's circumstances change and this approach ensures individuals can adjust contributions each year.

'PAY-AS-YOU-DINE DONE DISERVICE BY GENERAL FOR A DAY'

IN THE General for a Day column in the May issue, Sgt Luke Cutler raised the problem – as he saw it – of contractors being employed to do jobs and roles that soldiers are trained to do.

Among them was the provision of food by these outside companies since Army chefs were taken out of the cookhouses – a topic he was pretty damning about.

Why then, if the food is "terrible", is there a long queue of civilians in our pay-as-you-dine operation at every meal time?

Many of these individuals are relatively high-earning, so I don't believe their presence can only be due to the cheap meal prices on offer compared to the cafe located outside the wire. – **Keith Winkworth, Blackwater**

“
It's not
how we
should do
business
”

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

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

The Open University Disabled Veterans' Scholarship Fund has opened for 2023. With 50 places available from this autumn, successful applicants will receive up to 360 credits – equivalent to a full honours degree – to study short or longer courses. Expert disability advisers are also on hand to provide guidance. For details visit open.ac.uk

JobOppO House is an app containing career resources and introduction opportunities for Service leavers. There are already more than 2,000 people in its community. Download now from the Apple/Google stores.



COMPETITIONS

April 2023

HOAY (Majority earbuds) winner:
Megan Lawson, North Yorkshire.



SEARCHLINE

Armed Forces charity Little Troopers has opened a therapy programme for teenagers feeling the impact of family life in the military. It offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified therapist for those up to age 18. Referrals can be made by a parent, school, community group or welfare worker. Visit littletroopers.net

The University of Chester's Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans wants to learn more about the experiences of former British Army personnel from the Indian subcontinent and West Indies. The research – funded by charity The Forces in Mind Trust – is examining how service shaped the lives of ex-troops and their loved ones. Contact veterans@chester.ac.uk



WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are always a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with

pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families. 0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

If you are concerned about someone else's health or your own you can get confidential, free advice from your medical officer during routine hours, or your unit duty officer.

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or
mil 96770 4656
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

Confidential, freephone and outside the chain of command 0800 014 2381

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been

introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet. Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

This can be a considerable burden, made worse by dealing with it alone. The following organisations can provide support.

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988
forcespensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000
nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK 0808 8020 133

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

A network of people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding compassionate group supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information 07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797
spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres can be found across the UK. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence Connect or email rc-pers-arc-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation afvbc.net

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123
samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services 0808 802 8080
britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone to talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. Charities and organisations that can also provide support include:

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline
0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity
0300 123 3393
mind.org

NHS
General mental health support
nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage
A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on nhs.uk to find your local team.

Samaritans
116 123
samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond
A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans
0333 900 1028
theripplepond.org

Togetherall
A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE
Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking
02394 216 816 aurorand.org.uk

ManKind
Support for male domestic abuse victims
01823 334244
mankind.org.uk

Relate
Relationship support relate.org.uk

 **REUNIONS**

25th Anniversary of the **Artillery Clerks' Association** in Larkhill on June 23-25. Visit artyclerkassn.org

Parachute Regimental Association and 23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance remembrance parade and service at the National Memorial Arboretum, July 8, with lunch to follow. Email royhatchbem48@gmail.com

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of The King's Troop behind the scenes at this year's Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 973, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by June 30. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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The winners' names will appear in the August issue and all the usual competition rules apply.



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REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

Too Thin for a Shroud

New account reconsiders events surrounding Falklands attack

IT WAS a day of infamy for the Army – June 8, 1982 – when the transport ship Sir Galahad was set ablaze during an Argentine air strike.

Troops were caught in an inferno as the Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel was hit by three 500lb-bombs during an attack by Skyhawk jets in the last days of the Falklands conflict.

The raid on the ship, and sister vessel Sir Tristram, claimed more than 50 lives – the vast majority from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards – in the largest single loss of life for the British military since the Second World War.

Questions were inevitably raised over the incident and an inquiry was held immediately after the campaign.

But despite the case officially being closed, the whys and wherefores of the attack have continued to be the subject of discussion.

Even the Argentine forward artillery observer who called in the attack admitted his surprise at seeing British forces landing in full view, not far from his position on Mount Harriet, when he spoke to *Soldier* about the conflict some two decades later.

Now Crispin Black, who was on the Galahad as a 22-year-old junior officer with the Welsh Guards, has added his voice to the debate with a new analysis





that challenges the official chain of events leading up to the disaster and its aftermath.

Putting the case in his book *Too Thin for a Shroud*, the retired lieutenant colonel draws on recently declassified documents from the National Archives.

The resulting list of flaws he highlights start with a confused chain of command at the highest levels of the Task Force sent to restore British rule to the islands, to communication issues that left shipping vulnerable.

He also asserts that his battalion – which had been sent to the islands as part of 5th Infantry Brigade to reinforce 3 Commando colleagues – did not have adequate kit for the environment or onset of harsh Antarctic winter conditions.

Unsurprisingly, Black's various assertions have been fiercely contested by the surviving senior officers concerned.

In a rebuttal in *The Daily Telegraph*, former 3 Commando Brigade commander Maj Gen Julian Thompson and Rear Admiral Jeremy Larken, who captained HMS Fearless, stated that the author had "misrepresented" events and that the infantrymen had not disembarked from the Galahad as ordered.

"The foundation cause of the tragedy was that the battalion was sent south at all – it was ill-prepared as countless contemporaneous accountss suggest," the letter added.

Yet Black, who went on to conclude a 21-year military career as an intelligence adviser to then PM Tony Blair, has refused to give ground, standing by his research and conclusion that the Welsh Guards should not be blamed.

Despite being mired in controversy from the outset, *Too Thin for a Shroud* does make for compelling reading.

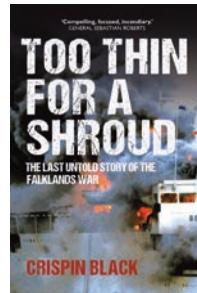
Black has an evocative writing style and his account is at its most absorbing in the telling of the human story.

The author's analysis is interwoven by a powerful narrative that portrays the appalling sights, smells and sounds of a fateful day as recalled through his personal perspective and testimonies of junior officer colleagues.

As for Black's conclusions drawn from the newly released documents, the claims and counter-claims could easily form the basis for further, deeper debate. But this would need to be set in the context of a campaign that was planned in haste and prosecuted at extreme distance – as well as the fact that some of those whose decisions are questioned are no longer alive to defend themselves.

This should not, however, discourage discussion and attempts to learn lessons.

Crispin Black was an eyewitness to the Sir Galahad tragedy at close quarters, and his opinion is worthy of consideration from this perspective alone. ■



VERDICT:

Controversial and compelling in equal measure
★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

Q&A: *Too Thin for a Shroud* author Crispin Black

Why did you decide to return to these events?

It was during the activities marking four decades since the conflict last year, when the war was being analysed again. A previously unpublished obituary of 5th Infantry Brigade commander Brig Sir Tony Wilson that appeared in *The Times*, which coincided with the date of the Sir Galahad attack, spurred me on to write the book.

Were you surprised at the controversy generated?

No – I received some criticism while writing it and have had more since publication from those who contest my account. But there have been positive comments too, not least from some of the veterans, as well as favourable reviews.

You clearly think a great deal of your former comrades

The Welsh Guards were great – I particularly miss their dark sense of humour. But they were gentle too. Even after all that happened, I remember their kindness to the Argentine prisoners – particularly calming down one conscript being repatriated on the Canberra, who was visibly shaking.

How did your life change after the attack?

I've had nightmares of the fire – post-trauma was generally less well understood then and there wasn't the decompression in Cyprus given to those returning from more recent operations.

Did it alter your outlook in any positive ways?

Ultimately, I saw how people can step up to the plate and mature extremely quickly. There was a lot of heroism among the soldiers during the attack on RFA Sir Galahad on June 8, 1982 and lives were saved as a result.

CV: Crispin Black

Commissioned into:
Welsh Guards

Period of service:
1981-2002

Rank on retirement:
Lieutenant colonel

Operational experience:
Included the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Cyprus and the Balkans



MORE TOP PICKS

MOVIES



The Laureate

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Review:
WO1 Mike Owens, RE



General Talk

FEATURING one-to-one chats with some of the most influential military personalities – and with an impressively expanding library since its relatively recent launch – this series from ABF The Soldiers' Charity goes from strength to strength, and comes highly recommended. Host Harry Bucknall (ex-Coldrm Gds) delivers an insightful line of questioning. ■



Review:
Cliff Caswell, Soldier

PODCASTS



What Ifs and Maybes

Tom Grennan

THE arrival of **Tom Grennan's** album **What Ifs and Maybes** has been hotly anticipated. With track *Here* already gracing the airwaves, and a UK arena tour under his belt, the 27-year-old Bedford boy is on the rise to super-stardom in 2023. Speaking about this month's release, he said: "It's about going with your gut, not your head, because you never know what's going to happen. I'm not afraid to jump into the unknown, because it's exciting! It's about rolling the dice and living your best life with nothing to lose." A familiar philosophy to many in uniform. ■

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BOXER LCpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) reached the pinnacle of the sport's domestic level with victory at the National Amateur Championships. She was one of three fighters to achieve top honours in a thrilling month in the ring. Read a full report on pages 64-65...



HISTORY MAKERS

WINNING skipper LCpl Dominic Walmsley praised the commitment shown by both sides after they played out one of the most entertaining Army FA Challenge Cup finals in recent years.

"From the first minute it was tough," he told *SoldierSport*. "For them to score so early was damaging for morale, but we got the ball down and the Para mentality kicked in from then until the final minute.

"I thought the winning goal was going to come and we managed to get the job done.

"We've had some good results in the competition and only conceded two or three times on our way to the final, so we were confident coming in. However, that early goal gave us a definite reality check.

"We knew 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment would be fit and fight to the end, which is when both teams were flooding people forward.

"We were both pushing for the goal – it's the airborne way.

"This is a massive result for 3 Para. We're not known as a footballing unit, so to come here and win this competition for the first time is huge."



PARAS STRIKE LATE TO SEAL CUP CROWN



SUBSTITUTE LCpl Jason Keelan was the hero for 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment as his injury-time strike secured a dramatic victory in the Army FA Challenge Cup final.

The clash with 23 Parachute Engineer Regiment looked destined for extra time with the scores locked at 2-2 and just seconds remaining, but wide man Keelan had other ideas as he calmly slotted at the far post to seal his team's first silverware in the competition's 122-year history.

The goal was an agonising blow for the Sappers, who more than played their part in a thrilling encounter that, on another day, could have easily fallen in their favour.

And from the early exchanges it appeared as though the tie would edge their way. Striker LCpl Ashley Tandy drew an excellent save from 3 Para keeper Pte Reece McNab in the first minute, and then dragged a shot wide of the far post as he ran clear moments later.

However, they were rewarded in the seventh minute as a low cross found Spr Callum Vincent, who had

the simple task of converting from close range.

The champions-elect steadied the ship and found an equaliser with their first attempt on goal – a superb first-time drive from Cpl Mark Kenny that arrowed into the bottom corner from 25 yards.

Tandy was again thwarted by McNab in the 58th minute, the keeper tipping a cross-goal shot onto the post, and from the resulting clearance Cpl Peter Dante saw an effort from the edge of the area cannon off the Engineers' crossbar.

Having missed three earlier opportunities Tandy finally got the goal his play deserved as he ghosted in at the far post to tap home on the hour mark. He was then hauled down in the area by Capt Stuart Mott, only for McNab to deny Vincent from the penalty spot.

The miss was punished in the 71st minute as Dante's shot dropped to Pte Ryan Waterhouse, who bundled home the equaliser to set up a grandstand finish.

And Keelan duly delivered as Waterhouse's long throw caused havoc in the Sappers' defence and his left-footed shot found the bottom corner. ■



Pictures: Allianz Photography

TROPHIES WON AND LOST IN TWICKENHAM TEST

T PROVED to be a day of mixed emotions at Twickenham as rugby union's Inter-Services silverware was shared between the Army and Royal Navy.

A hat-trick of tries from Spr Cameron McDonald (RE, pictured right) was not enough to steer the men to victory as they crashed to a 39-22 defeat – their first loss in the historic fixture since 2010.

The result marked the end of a transitional season for the Reds, who saw Lt Col Tim Osman (RA) replace Capt Mal Roberts (RLC) as head coach before Christmas and 12 players make their senior debuts this year.

Fly half AET Jordan Gott slotted five first-half penalties as the Army's ill-discipline was punished and Osman said his players must learn from their mistakes moving forward.

"There's some decent talent in the group, and they'll be better for this experience," he added. "Nobody likes losing games on big stages, so we've got to suck

that up, get on with it and come back stronger next year.

"People say you learn from your mistakes, and we have to make sure we do that."

"The Navy stopped us playing. Their defence was on point throughout and our penalty count, particularly in the first half, was way too high."

"Once you get on the wrong side of the referee you're going to struggle against a decent team."

While the men were left to reflect on what might have been it was business as usual for the women, who recorded another big win over the Senior Service.

Star forward Bdr Beth Dainton (RA) stole the headlines as her four tries paved the way for a 67-5 victory – a result that followed a 36-8 triumph over the Royal Air Force in April.

The soldiers crossed for 11 scores on the day, with Pte Courtney Pursglove (RLC, main picture) capping another sensational Twickenham display with a hat-trick.



"WE'VE GOT TO SUCK IT UP"

As well as firing in the pack, Dainton showcased her pace and dynamism with two superb solo efforts from range – the first of which saw her sprinting home from 80 metres.

Gnr Charlotte Tweddle (RA), Sgt Louise Dodd (QARANC), 2Lt Hannah Gilmour (RE) and skipper SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)) were also on target.

Despite the result, head coach WO2 Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) said the game was more difficult than it appeared.

"It wasn't our best performance, especially the first half, and it was a physical match," she added.

"Credit to the Navy for that, you can see they've got a lot of structure, and they defended really well."

"Our tries in the first half were solo efforts, so it was nice to see us putting processes into place after the break."

"We scored some individual tries, but it's because of the work we did to create that space." ■



TITLE TREBLE TOASTED

BOXERS REFLECT ON NATIONAL SUCCESSES AND THE IN-RING CHALLENGES TO COME

THE Army boxing team extended its proud record of producing fighters capable of delivering on the biggest stage as three new names were added to its list of national champions.

LCpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) and Pte Jerry-Lee Palmer (RLC) both fought their way to victories in the finals of the England Boxing National Amateur Championships in Newcastle, results that earnt the duo talent assessments with the esteemed Team GB set-up.

Stuart (main picture), who lost in the semi-finals last season, defeated M31's Michelle Cox via a unanimous verdict to seal the honours in the 63kg ranks and told *SoldierSport* the tactics devised in the build-up to the bout worked to perfection on the day.

"Like me, she fought in the quarter- and semi-finals so we had the chance to see her in action, review the footage and come up with a gameplan," the fighter explained.

"She is a lot taller than me, so the idea was for me to get inside and box from there – it worked every time."

"When I was announced as the winner it was surreal. I've watched that moment back and I could see it was a bit of a shock – as a fighter this is something you think about for so long, so for it to actually happen was unbelievable."

"And being in my hometown, it was perfect."

Stuart, who has dropped down a weight division this season, was due to compete in the Elite Three Nations competition as this issue went to press and will have trials with Team GB this month.

"I naturally came down and this is a better weight for me; I feel the best I've ever felt, I'm fast and strong," she said.

"I'm now at my peak and I'll go into the trials relaxed, hoping to perform well."

"Karriss Artingstall led the way in terms of Team GB; she hadn't boxed until she joined the Army programme and then came out as an Olympic medallist. That is something I want to achieve."

Reservist Palmer is in her first year on the Army team and victory over Telford's Mary-Kate Smith proved to be a case of third time lucky in the finals of the national showdown.

The 75kg star lost last year's contest on a split decision and said joining the Service squad gave her the winning edge this time round.

"It has given me that extra one per cent," Palmer explained. "Having multiple coaches with so much experience to share has made a real difference."

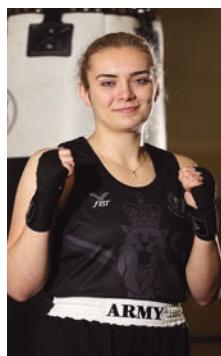
"In the gym you have more eyes on you and they can pick up on mistakes and the silly things you're not getting right – I've never had that before."

"It was a tough fight, and she really brought it to me, but in the end, we got the win."

"To do that with such an amazing team behind me was a fantastic experience."

Palmer was pleased with her efforts at the subsequent GB assessment and is now waiting for news on what happens next.

"It was a fabulous experience," she added. "A national title was the goal for this season, and I got an England vest on the back of that. So an email from GB inviting me back would be the



**"I FEEL
THE BEST
I'VE EVER
FELT –
I'M FAST
AND
STRONG"**

cherry on top."

Gdsm Joe Wright (WG) followed in the duo's footsteps with victory at the Welsh Boxing National Elite Championships.

The soldier, who is in his first full season with the Army team, defeated Chepstow's Ethan Jones via a unanimous verdict to claim the 60kg title – forming the biggest result in his career to date.

"We saw him in the semi-finals so had lots of things to work on," Wright said. "He was shorter than me so we thought we could win on the jab and the one-two."

"We knew he would want to get close, so it was a case of tying him up and making sure he could not get shots off."

"I was so happy when I was announced as the winner."

"I felt I had won all three rounds and was confident I'd get the result; the adrenalin rush lasted for hours."

Wright, who was competing alongside Stuart and Palmer at the Three Nations, joined the Army with the specific aim of pushing for a place on the boxing squad and has been delighted with his achievements in his debut season.

"By training three times a day I have progressed so much," the soldier explained.

"The coaches have huge experience and you would not get that anywhere else."

"We have trained with the likes of England and Scotland, as well as professional boxers, so I have had the best sparring in the country."

"My aim now is to keep winning, get more experience and win another Welsh title next year." ■

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Picture: ASCB/Lee Crabb

AHEAD OF THE FIELD

THE Adjutant General's Corps' women's team mounted a successful defence of their Inter-Corps Hockey Championships title in Aldershot.

Goals from Capt Georgie Edwards and Cpl Heidi Jolley helped them to a 2-0 win over the Army Medical Services, who defended resolutely in the first half before succumbing after the break.

"They were very strong, but once that first goal came our spirits lifted," AGC skipper SSgt Emily Lewis said.

"The standard of corps hockey has risen over the years and every game is getting harder."

There was a dramatic conclusion to the men's final, with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers scoring two goals in the last five minutes to draw 3-3 with the Infantry. The contest was then decided by penalties, with the Infantry prevailing 4-3.



Festival line-up confirmed

 CROSSLFIELDS Amateur Rugby League Football Club stages the Tom Sefton Trophy Festival on June 24.

The day will feature three military fixtures as the Army take on the hosts, while their development team face the Royal Marines. The Mercian Regiment and The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment will also do battle in Warrington.

REDS REMAIN TOP OF THE TIER

GOALS from LCpl May Percival and 2Lt Ella Bromley (both RLC) steered the Army women to a 2-0 win in the final of the England Hockey Tier Three Championships.

Victory over Reading's third team at the Lee Valley Hockey Centre saw the soldiers lift the trophy for a second successive season and ensured they ended the campaign on a high after their disappointment at the Inter-Services.

"We are so excited to defend the title," skipper Sgt Lucy Reading (QARANC) told *SoldierSport*. "It was a cracking game, a real physical and competitive match."

"Reading had a lot of talented youngsters but our fitness, and strength in depth, won it for us."

"The pressure was on, but we really enjoyed the occasion. It was a great final, with a big crowd watching."

Having won the competition for the past two years, Reading said she is hoping the team can progress a level next season and test themselves in the Tier Two Championships.

"We stayed at tier three as we had a number of new players in the squad," she added. "Having so much fresh talent in the team is fantastic and we want to go to tier two next year." ■



Picture: ASCB/Cat Gorn

**"WE
WANT
TO GO
TO TIER
TWO
NEXT
YEAR"**



Picture: Allign Photography

● A FIRST-HALF scoring spree helped 12th Regiment, Royal Artillery avenge their loss in last season's Army Premiership Cup final and reign supreme in 2023. The Stormers led The Royal Welsh 24-0 at the interval of this year's tie and went on to record a 29-12 victory at Newbury RFC. 1st Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment won the Premiership Shield.



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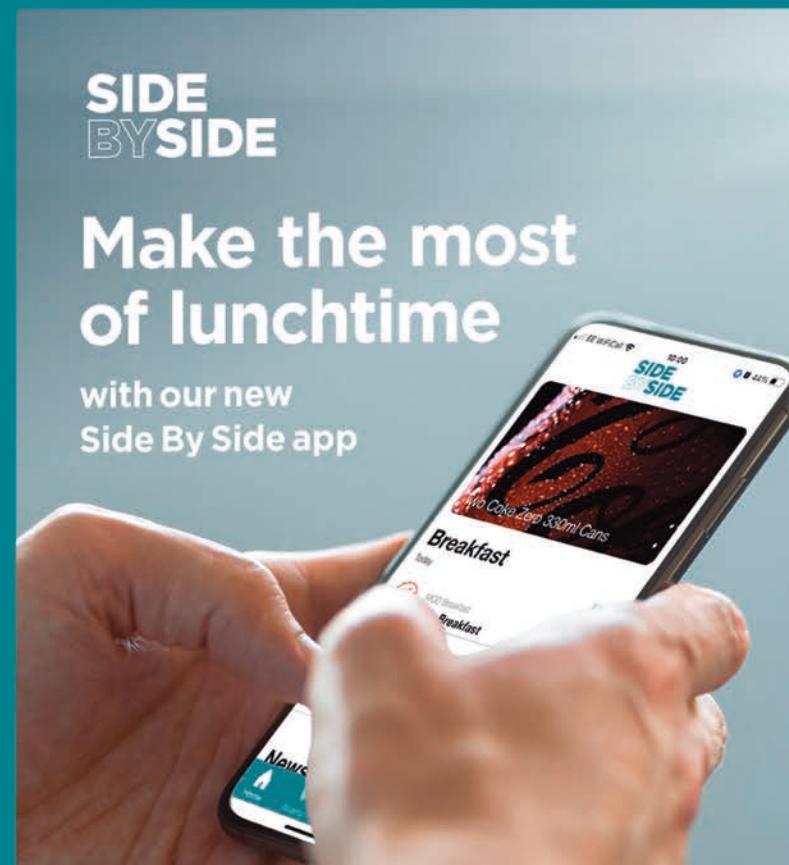
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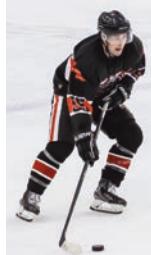
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MONTH IN SPORT

June's key fixtures...



WHAT: Inter-Services Ice Hockey Champs
WHEN: June 6 to 8
WHERE: Ice Sheffield
NEED TO KNOW: The Army Blades won

back-to-back games to lift the trophy last season – their first title since 2018. Corps sides will also compete in the Tri-Service Championships



WHAT: Women's Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships
WHEN: June 8
WHERE: Arundel
NEED TO KNOW: Having established a position of dominance in recent years, the Army cruised to another title last season and will be strong favourites to secure more silverware this time round



WHAT: Army and Inter-Services Sport Climbing Championships
WHEN: June 12 to 16
WHERE: Caernarfon
NEED TO KNOW: Athletes start the week by competing for Army honours, with the top performers going on to represent the Service against their military rivals in men's, women's and under-25s' events



COURT STARS PRIMED FOR CROWN TEST



WE WANT THEM TO ENJOY IT"

THE Army's volleyball players head into this month's Crown Services tournament on the back of mixed results in their opening round of Inter-Services fixtures.

While the women's and mixed teams both scored 3-0 wins over the Royal Air Force there was disappointment for the men, who lost by just two points in a final set decider to slip to a 3-2 defeat.

Victory for the airmen saw them clinch the title following their earlier success against the Royal Navy, but silverware is very much up for grabs for the other squads as they face the Senior Service this month.

Those matches will be played in the build-up to the Crown Services, which will see the Army again face their military rivals as well as the police, fire and prison services.

Women's head coach WO2 Nikki White (AGC (SPS)) is targeting a trophy double in what will be her final tournaments in the job, and she is confident her players will produce.

"It was a convincing win

against the RAF," the coach, who is stepping down to focus on her role with UKAF, told *SoldierSport*. "We had a three-day tour to Guernsey beforehand and the team really bonded – you could see relationships forming.

"The Navy haven't beaten us in recent times and I'm not expecting us to lose.

"The squads in the Crowns are a lot stronger this year, the police in particular, so it is going to be very competitive. But if we work as well as we did in Guernsey, we have a great chance of winning."

Men's head coach WO2 Alex Menya (AGC (SPS)) said he was unable to field his strongest team against the RAF but was hoping to welcome key personnel back ahead of the Crown Services.

"We are the defending champions so there will be a bit more pressure on us," he added. "It is about the players showcasing their potential. For me, participation is the most important thing – we want them to enjoy playing; winning is a bonus." ■



PARAS POWER THEIR WAY TO ANOTHER TEAM TITLE

BOXERS from The Parachute Regiment maintained their recent fine form in the ring to claim another Army Inter-Unit Team Championship title.

In the two previous competitions it was fighters from 3rd Battalion who lifted the prestigious trophy but this season it was the turn of 2nd Battalion, who battled their way to a 5-4 victory over their rivals from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment in the Aldershot showpiece.

The Paras started a competitive night in style as Pte Dylan Murdough sealed a unanimous verdict over Pte Alex Mason at featherweight.

After a cagey opening round Murdough found his range in the second, when he landed a flurry of punches to assume control. The onslaught continued in the third, with a stinging right-hand shot moments before the final bell underlining his superiority.

The Vikings – competing in their first ever final – restored parity at light welterweight, with Pte Lucas Forinton defeating Pte Michael Cummins via a unanimous decision.

Both fighters came out on the front foot but it was Forinton who landed the cleaner shots in the eyes of the judges and his victory paved the way for a storming display from teammate Pte Indy Cuthbert.

Facing Pte Dan Dolan at welterweight, the Royal Anglian conceded a height and reach advantage but it proved to be of little consequence as he produced a masterclass over three rounds to take the contest on a unanimous verdict.

Cpl Zac Andrews drew the Paras level as he triumphed on a split decision in a tight light middleweight contest with LCpl Kieran Cocker, and they edged ahead when Pte Ryan Walker beat Pte Jack Lovesey by the same outcome at middleweight.

The airborne outfit's run

continued as Pte Joe Drury claimed the light heavyweight honours with another split decision win, this time over LCpl Charlie Maryon.

And they secured the title in the next bout, where LCpl Tony Jones outfought Pte Brodie Farrell to seal a unanimous verdict at cruiserweight.

"This is everything we wanted," Jones (pictured left) said as he reflected on the team's win. "All the hard work, effort and training we have put in has paid off; the lads left everything in the ring."

"The Royal Anglians have performed a lot better than we thought. They have some great fighters who have obviously trained very hard."

Despite missing out on the trophy the Vikings ended the night on a high as Cpl Danny Call and Pte Baz Diggins claimed wins over Pte Ed Unden and LCpl Liam Lyndsey at heavyweight and super heavyweight respectively. ■





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RAIN DAMPENS SPIRITS AS REDS RETAIN T20 CROWN

SKIPPER Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) spoke of the Army's disappointment at not being able to win the trophy on the field after heavy rain washed out the deciding fixture in this season's Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships.

Downpours at Lord's saw the Royal Air Force abandon their chase of 150 after just seven overs and, as they were four runs behind the required rate set by the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method, it was the soldiers who celebrated victory in overwhelming circumstances.

It was a frustrating outcome to a match that looked to be going down to the wire after some late innings impetus allowed the Reds to post a challenging total with the bat.

Opener Cpl Varun Bali (AGC (SPS)) gave them the perfect start with a rapid-fire 25 from 13 balls but his departure sparked a regular fall of wickets that saw

the defending champions slump to 88-6.

However, a lower order charge from Sgt Denson Narayan (RLC) and Spr Aidan Hawkesworth (RE) brought them back into contention and when Pte Jake Benson (RLC) launched the final delivery for six, the Reds found themselves posting the highest total of the day.

The RAF made a swift start in response before Benson bowled dangerman Cpl Tom Shorthouse for 24. The spinner then claimed the wicket of Fg Off Touseef Ahmed with the last ball before the heavens opened to limit the airmen to 45-2.

"You always want to finish the 20 overs and win in the correct manner," Boynton told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"But at the same time, you have to respect the decision to call the game off. At that point we were in a good position as we were ahead of the rate.



**"YOU
ALWAYS
WANT
TO
FINISH
THE 20
OVERS"**

"We didn't play our best. We hit a six from the last ball of the innings to push our score to 150 and then took a catch before we came off for rain, so it was a game of small margins. Getting the early wicket of Tom Shorthouse was also massive for us.

"Our batting is our strength every season but when we get to Lord's it is the bowlers who do the job.

"Had we stayed on I'm confident that would have been the case again this year. Yes, we celebrated the victory, but we wanted to do it on the field."

It was the bowlers who were at the fore in the Army's 19-run triumph over the Royal Navy in their first match of the day.

After being asked to bat first the soldiers struggled for momentum as early wickets halted their progress.

A 48-run stand between Cpl Liam Fletcher (REME, left)

and 2Lt Oskar Kolk (Para) was the highlight along with some lofty blows from Boynton, who launched spinner LH James Chadwick for three sixes in his opening over.

A late rally from WO2 Ross Dearden (RE) saw them finish on 145-7.

The Navy made a hesitant start in reply before Bdr Nick Schofield (RA) trapped AET Ben Johnston leg before to open the Army's account. Fellow opener Capt William Rogers followed four overs later but LET Rhodri Davies and Mne Finlay Marks steadied the ship.

However, when the former was bowled by Hawkesworth (main picture) for 24 the Senior Service crashed from 71-2 to 126 all out.

Narayan and Schofield claimed three wickets apiece, while the soldiers' sharpness in the field resulted in three run outs.

Attention now turns to the 50-over format and Boynton said he will move forward with the same squad of players.

"It is a great group and the support we have had from the coaching team has been outstanding," he added.

"The future of Army cricket is bright, and the other Services do not have the same luxury of players joining who are at such a high level. I'm excited about what we can achieve over the next couple of years." ■



LORD'S IN NUMBERS

ARMY PLAYERS NAMED IN THE UKAF WOMEN'S STARTING XI

10

WICKETS, FOR 16 RUNS, FOR BDR NICK SCHOFIELD AGAINST THE NAVY - THE ARMY'S BEST BOWLING FIGURES ON THE DAY

3

REDS' PLAYERS MADE THEIR LORD'S DEBUT IN THIS YEAR'S CONTEST

5

SIXES STRUCK BY ARMY BATSMEN ACROSS GAMES WITH THE NAVY AND RAF

10



UKAF CRUISE TO LORD'S WIN

ARMY players took centre stage as the UK Armed Forces women scored an emphatic win over Marylebone Cricket Club in their second Twenty20 outing at Lord's.

Fielding first, the military outfit set the tone with a disciplined bowling effort spearheaded by veterans SSgt Amanda Potgieter (REME) and Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS)).

The duo offered little in the way of scoring opportunities as their rivals struggled to take advantage of the powerplay, with the pressure resulting in the run out of opener Esther De Lange for just two.

After seeing her first over leak 11 runs, LCpl Megan Richards (Int Corps) hit back in style as Ekil Latif was stumped for eight. The medium pacer then claimed the scalp of the dangerous Sian Kelly for 28 to finish with figures of 2-22.

The MCC's struggles with the bat continued through the

latter overs as an acceleration in the run rate failed to materialise.

Vaggers held a simple catch from Amelia Kite to give the Royal Navy's Surg Lt Cdr Anna Sales a first wicket at the home of cricket, before Cfn Shema Wright (REME) struck in the final over to restrict the opposition to 97-5.

With a below-par target in their sights UKAF's batters made short work of the run chase. Skipper Lt Connie Cant (RA) launched a maximum over the short leg-side boundary to start the innings in style before holing out to mid on off the bowling of Kite.

Her departure saw Potgieter join Lt Georgina Dean (REME) at the crease and the duo scored boundaries at ease as they raced towards victory.

The former was dropped twice on her way to an unbeaten 32, while Dean (pictured) hit six fours and two sixes to finish 44 not out as UKAF won by nine wickets. ■



The thermal clip-on system, or T-Cos, is game-changing. Being like binoculars you have thermal and night vision on the move instead of stopping to look through a weapon sight and it links to the dismounted situational awareness kit.

Lt Dan Matthews



The DSA radios we've been using on Wessex Storm are great – far better to use than Bowman, being lighter and smaller and easier to change frequencies and channels.

LCpl Luke O'Neil



I think the drones we've been working with, especially the beyond-line-of-sight versions, are so useful because we can see the enemy two or three kilometres away. They are easy to use – after ten minutes of tuition and practice you can operate them effectively.

Pte James Young

Interviews: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main



For me, the unmanned ground vehicle has made a bad impression. When we first got to Exercise Wessex Storm we were told it would be used for casualties and resupply, but because of health and safety regs we haven't actually used it for that and we've just been lugging it around. Even if we do use it for casualties, soldiers carry the injured much faster. With it being electronic as well, the person on the ground can't fix it if it goes wrong so it would just get left behind.

Pte Jaden Lacey



I've been impressed by the Arills (assault rifle in-line low light sight) – its thermal imaging is very clear. The only downside is that when it runs out of power you can't look through it and the battery life is pretty limited.

Pte Troy Wilks

The Jim Compact sight system is superb and each infantry section should have one. Operators can perform surveillance and do real-time photo and video recording and streaming. It can spot targets about five clicks away, has both thermal and low-level light capabilities and can laser targets and relay position information up the chain.

Sgt Jason Morris



Tried and tested

We asked experimenting troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment what kit has made the greatest impression on them to date...

The Muns night sight we've been trying on the Sharpshooter is designed for operating over long distances in the dark and has really impressed me so far.

The image it produces is amazingly clear, but one negative is that it's a bit heavy.

Pte Aborosio Sovatabua





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