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Picture: Steve Dock

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I enjoy pushing the limits

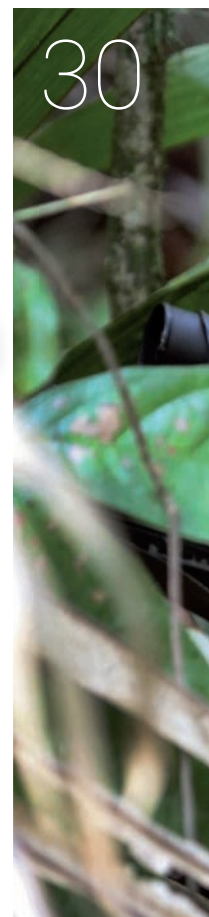
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Chris Bonington reveals what makes him tick

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Pondering the perks of adventurous training



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“They need to stop, think and adapt”



“The team showed immense dedication to training and that paid off”



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Embracing adventure



WELCOME to your new-look magazine, courtesy of *Soldier's* talented design team.

I hope the fresh format allows you to enjoy an even more colourful mix of news, views and striking photographs from across the Service.

We kick off 2017 with an in-depth look at the daunting missions facing the military's fearless Antarctic adventurers this month (pages 13 and 42).

In fact, adventure became something of a theme as we put the issue together – with climbing legend Chris Bonington, adventurous training in Bavaria and jungle drills in Belize all featuring heavily.

Is the prospect of civvy street looming in 2017? Be sure to check out some handy CV tips on page 41.

Enjoy! ■

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

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ALONG with news and glimpses behind the scenes at *Soldier*, we publish a link to the magazine at www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine and [@soldiermagazine](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine) on Twitter.

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Ready to react: The restructure will help front-line fighting units to respond faster to ever-changing threats

Picture: Ian Griffiths

Rapid-fire change

Details of latest overhaul revealed to ranks

CHANGES to front-line fighting units have been detailed by the Army's top brass.

They will mean some regiments adopt specialist roles, while others move location or get disbanded, with personnel redistributed to other similar formations.

A number of new Reserve units will also be created.

The alterations stem from the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and are designed to enable the Service to counter a wider range of threats.

However, Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Nicholas Carter, said that no cap badges would disappear and no jobs would be lost.

"We are modernising the Army's ability to fight at the divisional level," he commented.

The main change is to 3rd (UK) Division. From the end of the decade it will be made up of four brigades – two armoured infantry and two so-called strike brigades – rather than three armoured infantry formations.

The new strike brigades will include a mixture of armoured cavalry equipped with the new Ajax platform

and infantry operating the new mechanised infantry vehicle.

The first brigade will be formed in 2019 and based mainly around Catterick and Salisbury Plain.

A number of units will be allocated to support it, beginning with 3 Medical Regiment, 21 Engineer Regiment, 1 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps and 1 Close Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

In addition, two new specialised Infantry battalions will be created this year. These will be 4th Battalion, The Rifles and 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

Two further specialised Infantry battalions will be formed by 2019. These will be 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and 2nd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – both joining the group in Aldershot by 2020.

Their role will be to operate in overseas regions long-term, gaining in-depth knowledge of the local terrain, culture and language.

Troops are advised to speak to their chain of command for more information on what affects them.



The first strike brigade's combat units comprise:

- ✱ Household Cavalry Regiment
- ✱ The King's Royal Hussars
- ✱ 1st Battalion, Scots Guards
- ✱ 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Units to be disbanded are:

- ✱ 35 Engineer Regiment, RE
- ✱ HQ 102 Logistic Brigade
- ✱ HQ 64 Works Group, RE
- ✱ 2 Medical Regiment, AMS
- ✱ 33 Field Hospital, AMS
- ✱ 4 Regiment, RMP
- ✱ 104 Battalion, REME
- ✱ 105 Battalion, REME
- ✱ 106 Battalion, REME

SOLDIER

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A taste of Army events across the world

GLOBAL SITREP

Picture: Steve Dock



1. BELIZE

JUNGLE TRAINING JUICED UP

THE pace of activities at the British Army Training and Support Unit Belize continues to increase, with two company-level exercises taking place simultaneously for the first time since the facility reached initial operating capability in 2015. Troops from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards and students on the Infantry Battle School's platoon commanders' course spent a month learning to survive and fight in the jungle (page 30). A total of 18 personnel and three families are now permanently stationed at Price Barracks, which is due to host eight packages this year.



2. KENYA

MEDEVAC MISSION OVER

THE Army Air Corps has ended its commitment to the British Army Training Unit Kenya (Batuk) – bringing three-and-a-half years of medevac support to exercising troops, permanent staff and their dependents to a close. Having begun with 25 Flight, the role has been performed by the Batuk Aviation Support Squadron since September 2015 with the Lynx Mk9A helicopter (shown above) the platform of choice. In this time personnel have completed 1,300 flying hours and more than 100 evacuations ranging from heart attacks to snake bites. The role will now be performed by a defence contractor.

COLD CONTINGENT

Personnel take on the Antarctic on two separate missions – pages 13 and 42



1. BELIZE

IN NUMBERS:

12

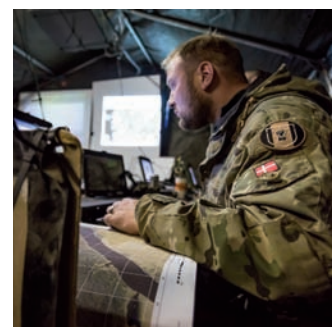
Length, in weeks, of the platoon commanders' course. Turn to page 30 for the full story on the tough jungle phase in Belize.



3. GERMANY

TASK FORCE FAITH

MEMBERS of 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade completed final validation tasks at Sennelager before taking over as Nato's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) for 2017. The training capped more than a year of preparations for the role and involved setting up a task force headquarters and controlling a complex multinational mission. "It was a fantastic opportunity for the soldiers to prove our collective readiness," said Brig Mike Elviss, who leads the brigade and the 250 personnel from 14 Nato member nations that make up the VJTF's HQ. "I have absolute faith in our ability to plan and execute any type of operation, against any type of adversary."



Picture: Dominic King

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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6. UK BRIGHT SPARKIES

TROOPS from 16 Air Assault Brigade's Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers went head-to-head to mark the anniversary of the corps adopting St Eligius as its patron saint. The competition saw troops repair a broken vehicle against the clock and build carts to race. 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery Workshop emerged as winners from eight teams and were presented with the LCpl James McCue Trophy, named after the soldier killed in Iraq.



4. HONG KONG STANDING ON CEREMONY

SOLDIERS from the Army School of Ceremonial passed on their expertise to members of the Hong Kong police force during a two-week deployment to the territory. The four-strong contingent focused on drill training with the organisation's warrant officers as well as offering guidance to its pipe band and corps of drums. Personnel from Hong Kong have attended various courses at the school's home in Catterick (shown above) and the return trip came at the request of the force's inspector.

“It'd be a brave person who closes this facility down”

Mountain adventure in Germany set to stay – page 22



Picture: Cpl Georgina Coupe, RLC

5. IRAQ THE FIGHTBACK CONTINUES

PERSONNEL from 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment have become the latest troops to deploy to Iraq in support of the international fight against Isis. The 150-strong contingent has been tasked with protecting a wider Army formation that will spend six months training the country's security forces. As part of their preparations the 2 Lancs soldiers (shown above) took part in a mission rehearsal exercise on the Stanta ranges in Norfolk, where they practised the different scenarios they could face in theatre. "Motivation and morale is high," said Maj Nick Higgins, officer commanding B Company. "The deployment is very different to what we've done before and that makes it interesting."



"I pushed my body to failure but made it through"

– Athlete hits world stage, page 75

HIKING IN THE HIMALAYAS

■ A CLIMBING team comprising ten Reserve and three Regular soldiers achieved its lofty objectives of reaching Everest Base Camp and scaling Kala Patthar in the Himalayas.

Exercise Cockney Kala Patthar saw the personnel from 151 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps and 10 The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment arrive at the locations at 5,364m and 5,545m respectively.

On arriving at Base Camp there were double celebrations for Reservist SSgt Kelvin Davies who was handed his stripes to confirm his promotion from sergeant.

The Gurkha 200 team that attempted to summit Mount Everest back in 2015 will return to Nepal in March to take on the challenge again.

Once settled and acclimatised at Base Camp the troops, led by Maj Andrew Todd (RGR), will set off for the 8,848m peak.

A spokesman for the expedition said: "Many of the Gurkha 200 team were at Everest Base Camp when the earthquake hit in 2015.

"They were the only climbers up Everest who didn't lose any members of their group on that fateful day.

"This is unfinished business and the same line-up, with one or two new additions, will now attempt to put the first serving Gurkha on the summit of Everest in 2017."



Picture: Queen's Gurkha Engineers

Rugged rebuild:
Sappers construct a quake-resistant school

'Amazing' Gurkha feat

GURKHA soldiers have completed their mission to help Nepal recover from the devastating earthquakes that hit the country in April 2015.

Operation Marmat saw the Brigade of Gurkhas provide aid to thousands of the country's citizens over the last 18 months.

During the final chapter around 90 troops from the Queen's Gurkha Engineers built a quake-resistant school and a number of homes for Army veterans in Lamjung district, which had been left ruined by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake.

Maj Robert Oakes (RE) said the mission had been a real test of flexibility and ingenuity.

He added: "We've had to adapt some local construction techniques, in extreme terrain and weather.

"The Gurkha sappers, with wider Brigade of Gurkhas and Army personnel supporting them, have

achieved some amazing feats in a very short space of time."

Prior to the final building project the Servicemen assisted the immediate humanitarian relief effort and spent eight months working with the Gurkha Welfare Trust (GWT) to help veterans and their communities.

The soldiers' contribution was part of the charity's wider ambition to help build or repair more than 1,700 homes, 600 water supply systems and 220 schools across Nepal by 2020.

The head of GWT's earthquake response, John White, commented: "Op Marmat offered a true 'Rolls Royce' solution.

"The work they've carried out serves as an example to other construction teams working in the hills and they've been generous in sharing their expertise with our own staff and local labourers.

"The Brigade of Gurkhas brought a huge boost to our response."

2 LANCS LAUDED

TROOPS from 2nd Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, who helped flood-hit communities in the north of England, received a judges' special recognition award at *The Sun's* Millies ceremony.

The "Hero at Home" prize went to bomb disposal experts at 11 EOD Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps for making safe hundreds of explosive devices in 2016.





A personal view from Sara Baade, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation...

'HOUSING ON HORIZON IN 2017'

As a new year begins I would like to reflect on what the Army Families Federation achieved in the last 12 months and what we hope 2017 will bring.

Last year saw some very positive changes for the people we represent.

We campaigned on a number of different platforms but for me the highlight was securing fairer and better conditions for those posted abroad.

These include families moving overseas finally being able to suspend their UK mobile phone contracts and, depending on their mortgage provider, being able to rent out their homes without facing higher charges or having to change their existing deal.

Spouses and partners will now also find it easier to access student loans whilst posted overseas.

We will be building on these foundations throughout 2017, putting the needs of all Army families at the heart of everything we do.

Key on our horizon is the potential implementation of the future

accommodation model (FAM).

We recently launched our AFF FAM manifesto, which is a direct result of the feedback families gave us in our Big Survey 2016. The document outlines the key actions we believe must be taken for this process to be viable, and, most importantly, fair.

This year will also see our transition work ramp up. Together with the other families federations we want to get to grips with the issues that the move to civvy street poses.

As part of this we want to recruit eight families who will be leaving the Army this year. If you are interested in being involved, do get in touch.

As ever, I am always keen to hear from people on what works or doesn't work for them, and would encourage everyone serving to utilise the AFF as and when you need us. We are proud to be the voice of Army families and take that responsibility incredibly seriously.

www.aff.org.uk

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**WE ARE
PROUD TO BE
THE VOICE
OF FAMILIES**

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AMMO WARNING ISSUED

■ UNITS are being warned to tighten their security procedures for equipment that could be dangerous if it got into the wrong hands.

Following a number of incidents, a reminder has been issued of the importance of correct management of items attractive to criminal and terrorist organisations (ACTO) such as ammunition, weapons and other front-line kit.

In two separate cases, three Servicemen pleaded guilty to stealing military gear including stun grenades, night vision goggles, guns and explosives – some of which was sold to foreign buyers.

The recent direction reiterates the regulations on the storage, accounting and control measures for ACTO material, as well as the methods and timelines for reporting any lapses.

For full details read **ABN 155/16**.



VETS FACE FRESH PROBE

■ TWO former paratroopers have become the first personnel to face prosecution for actions while deployed in Northern Ireland.

The as-yet-unnamed pair have been accused of the 1972 killing of Official IRA commander John McCann in Belfast.

The veterans, both based in England, are expected to appear in court in Northern Ireland in the next few months.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is currently reviewing around 3,200 homicides between 1969 and 2004. While not specifically targeting military personnel, 238 of those cases involved British troops.

Assistant Chief Constable Mark Hamilton, Head of the PSNI's Legacy and Justice Department, commented: "There is no new single probe or bespoke inquiry into deaths attributed to the British Army."

An MoD spokesman added: "Members of the military affected by this process will be supported throughout and will receive free MoD legal representation."

Veterans can gain legal support via charities such as The Royal British Legion.

GUNNERS' JUNGLE PILGRIMAGE

TROOPS from 19 Regiment, Royal Artillery retraced the "death marches" taken by British and Australian prisoners through the jungles of Borneo in 1945 at the hands of the Japanese.

More than 2,400 Allied prisoners were interned at Sandakan with around 1,000 forced to march to Ranau, 260 kilometres away. Just six Servicemen survived.

The ten-strong team of Gunners spent two weeks following their route and also met elderly locals who remembered the wartime atrocities. Capt Rob Wills described the experience as "extremely powerful".





“You’re either at the standard or you’re not”

– No mercy in jungle, page 30

MARCHWOOD CHANGES

■ OPERATIONAL control of the Marchwood Sea Mounting Centre has been handed over to the company Solent Gateway Ltd (SGL).

It is the final asset disposal project of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and forms a 35-year agreement between the locally-based logistics firm and the MoD.

As part of the deal, the Army will continue to use the site (shown below) for sea mounting activities and SGL will maintain the port facilities.

It will also be able to make use of the capabilities provided by 17 Port and Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps.

In return, the business will provide a deployable sponsored Reservist element to supplement the work of the unit.



APP FOR ABSENTEES

■ A SOLDIER has helped develop an app that allows troops to read bedtime stories to their children on a tablet when overseas.

Story Snap records a parent’s voice, page by page, as they read through their chosen book.

The narration and illustrated pages are synchronised and saved to the device, and the story can then be shared with up to three other users.

“There have been some great responses and comments about the beta-test version on social media,” said Capt James Thomas (PWRR), whose wife, Helena, took the lead on producing the online tool.

“I think it will be such a benefit for families, especially those in the Forces.”

Story Snap, which is free to download, will be launched officially in April.

For details visit www.storystsnap.org



■ ARMY musicians took centre stage at Cadogan Hall during a two-night run of the military concert *Scarlet and Gold*. The colourful show featured the five bands of the Foot Guards as well as the fanfare trumpeters, Household Cavalry Band and Countess of Wessex’s String Orchestra.

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Hats off to new rule

“
The Army
isn’t stuck
in the mud
”



S ERVICEWOMEN can now choose to remove their headdress in places of worship, following a change in policy.

Under previous regulations, female personnel had to wear headgear in consecrated buildings, while males

did not. But following a letter to *Soldier* (October 2016), the Army dress committee confirmed that it would review the issue.

Kestrel Simson (ex-QRH) of Personnel Services Group said that the decision was a sign of the military moving with the times.

“It used to be the norm that females wore hats in church but the younger generation rarely do now and the letter writer argued it was a thing of the past,” explained the retired lieutenant colonel.

“Those who wish to wear headdress for religious reasons may still do so – it’s entirely optional.

“This is a positive outcome to someone raising a question and shows that the Army isn’t stuck in the mud.”

For full details read **ABN 156/16**.

● **Talkback** – page 49



Survival mode

– page 32



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

TRIPLE amputee Mark Ormrod has launched a new film project to document a year in the life of a wounded ex-Serviceman. The former Royal Marine is hoping to highlight the various roles he now performs – including father, entrepreneur, fundraiser and motivational speaker – to help those in a similar position see that obstacles can be overcome. He plans to release the film towards the end of this year and is appealing for funding to boost the project. Visit www.markormrod.com



Picture: Cpl Timothy Jones, RLC



Ice Maidens close-in on mission

THE all-female team of soldiers planning to cross Antarctica in October has been narrowed down to seven individuals following a training package in Norway.

Held in Porsangermoen in the Arctic Circle, the latest selection phase saw 12 hopefuls digging snow holes, pulling their bodyweight in supplies on sledges and learning how to survive a fall through the ice or into a crevasse.

Exercise Ice Maiden, as the expedition is known, will see the Servicewomen walk 1,700 kilometres across the continent in temperatures as low as -80 degrees Celsius.

Team leader Capt Nics Weatherill

(RAMC) said the training had been a good test: "It's enabled us to see how the team works, what everybody's strengths and weaknesses are and what they can work on," commented the officer.

A further selection event will take place before a final team of five is chosen to take on the challenge.

If successful they will become the first all-female military team to complete the feat, following in the footsteps of the Spear 17 team who were on a separate mission to cross Antarctica as this issue went to press.

Turn to page 42 for more on the current expedition, which is being staged in honour of the late polar explorer Henry Worsley.

IN NUMBERS

£2 million

Amount awarded to military charity Combat Stress from the Libor fund – money from banking fines which is now being used to benefit Armed Forces charities and other good causes.



“My OC threatened to demote me if I didn't join

Corporals' mess controversy continues

TALKBACK
PAGE 47

SPINE LINE COMPETITION

WIN



LAST month's spine line clues were inspired by the latest operational honours and awards. (Sgt Rory) Bowden, (SSgt Carl) Bushell, (Maj Julia) Symons and (Cpl Daniel) Wells were all listed Army recipients.

This month, courtesy of Fit Skincare (www.fitskincare.co.uk), we have a gift pack of luxury male grooming products worth £150 to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by January 31. Good luck!

HANDHELD HELP

■ FROM this month the Army Knowledge Exchange (AKX) can be accessed worldwide from soldiers' personal devices.

The content has been replicated on a new website, AKX Online, via the Defence Gateway, and is due to go live from January 12.

It will provide both Regular and Reserve personnel, who often have limited access to DII, with current operational information, the Defence Learning Environment, the Army Library Information Service and Defence Connect.





“The casualty rate is high and I’ve lost an awful lot of friends”

– Top climber talks risk, page 18

EARLY RELEASE OFFER

■ PERSONNEL due to leave the Army before March 31 this year – or who have an outstanding application for premature voluntary retirement by that date – can now apply for early release.

The minimum notice period is six weeks so applications must be made before February 6.

Successful troops will forego entitlement to graduated resettlement time, unused annual leave and terminal leave.

Anyone considering applying should seek advice from their education and resettlement officer.

For more information read **ABN 166/16**.

WALTER MITTY WARNING

■ PEOPLE who lie about their military achievements – so called Walter Mittys – could soon face up to three months in prison or an unlimited fine after proposals for a new stolen valour law were backed by the government.

It is already an offence for someone to wear a medal they are not entitled to but only if for financial gain.

If introduced, the new rule would cover those not looking to cash in.

However, it would make an exception for family members who wear their relatives’ medals as a sign of respect.

Last year more than 11,500 people signed an e-petition calling for the instatement of a stolen valour law similar to that in the USA.

A parliamentary committee will now examine the proposal in detail.

Turn to page 35 for more.

SAPPER SCOOPS AWARD

■ A ROYAL Engineer has been named Armed Forces Technician of the Year by the Institution of Engineering and Technology.

SSgt Nicholas Statham (pictured) was chosen from a shortlist of three for his work designing and project-managing the construction of a mission-critical fuel storage facility at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus.



‘I don’t know any other Reserves who’ve been in so long’



■ A JUNIOR NCO is preparing to mark 40 years as a part-time soldier.

“I’ve seen huge changes – especially in kit,” Cpl Nick Bryan of 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment told *Soldier*.

His service dates back to July 1977. But even at the not-so-tender age of 57 this soldier can give younger members of his unit a run for their money.

“Being a tree surgeon keeps me pretty fit so I don’t have any problems,” he continued.

“What’s kept me in is the excitement. It’s great meeting new people.”

The job has even seen Cpl Bryan meet royalty and work as an extra on hit films *Gladiator* and *Saving Private Ryan*.

“I feel privileged; I don’t know any other Reserves who’ve been in so long,” the Serviceman added.

“The opportunities the Army Reserve give you today are probably better than for Regulars.

“It just gets better.”

Picture: Graeme Main

Flexible working shift

THE joint personnel administration (JPA) system has been updated so that requests for regular flexible working and certain leave options can now be made online.

They include regular working from home, compressed hours, variable start and finish times, enhanced leave, call forward of leave, transfer of leave between Service spouses or civil partners, career intermissions and special unpaid leave.

Submissions to change existing work patterns that fall into any of these categories must also now be made online.

The new digital service has been

designed to reduce administration, minimise clerical errors and speed up decision making, with results fed back to personnel via JPA too.

It is also designed to make things clearer for troops, as the rationale behind each decision is tracked and recorded by the system.

Eventually the Ministry of Defence wants to use this online function to gauge how flexible working is being used, record which types are the most popular and, ultimately, improve its offering in this area.

For further information on the updated system read **DIB2016/32** and **JSP 750**.



GIVEAWAY GRATITUDE

Thanks to the following companies for digging deep to offer some fantastic prizes: **Alan Bick Jewellery**, **Bonusprint**, **Champneys**, **ChrisElli**, **DIWAH**, **Edifier**, **Fur Feather & Fin**, **Go Outdoors**, **Haynes Manuals**, **Lindy**, **National Express**, **Plustek**, **ProofCam**, **Ramside Spa**, **Rotary Watches**, **Royal Albert Hall**, **Snuggpak**, **The Bluebeards Revenge**, **Watches2U**.

Our festive Facebook competition was a roaring success last month, with troops winning some impressive gifts, from outdoor gear to diamond jewellery...



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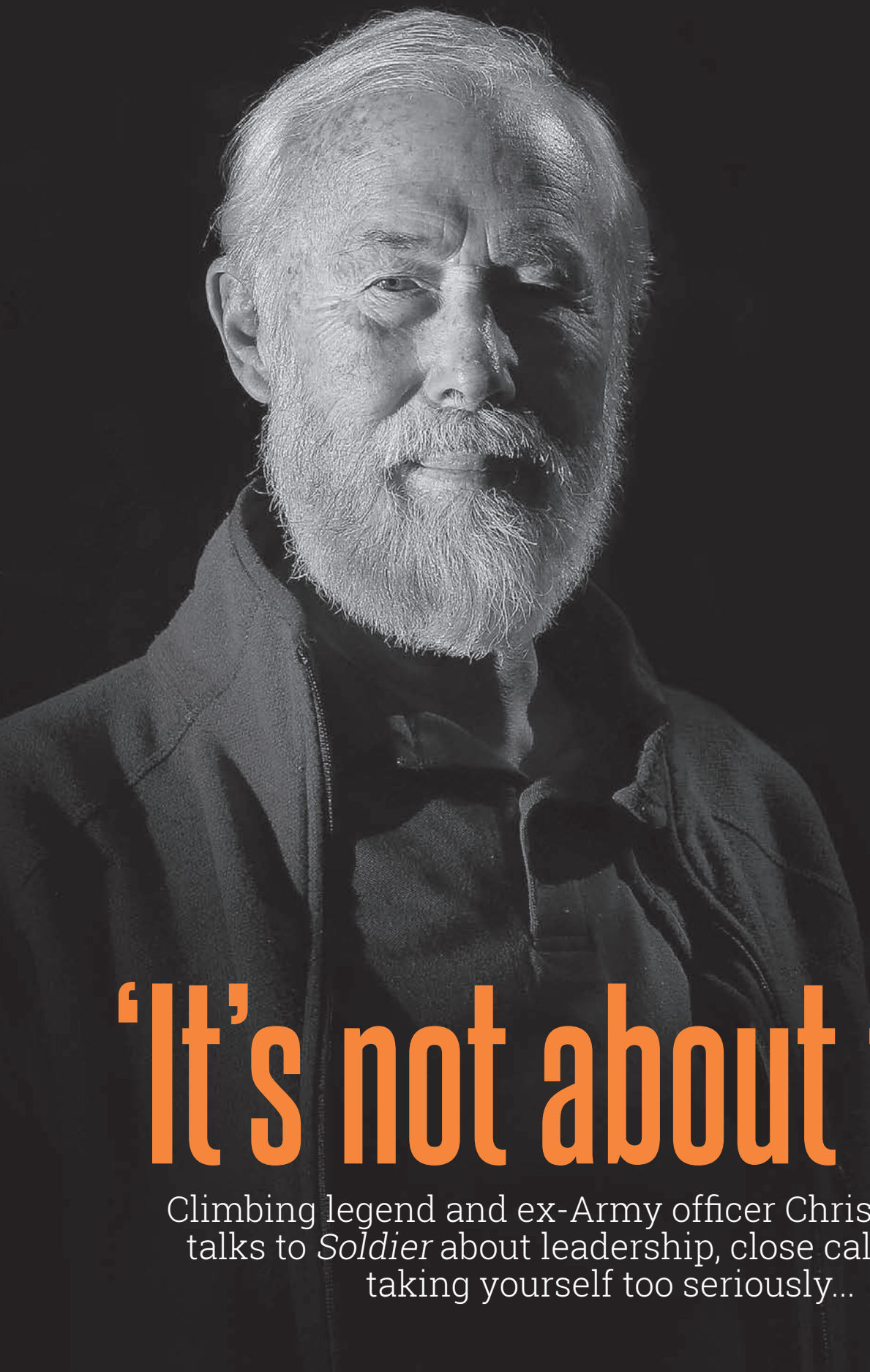
PADDLE POWER

ARMY kayakers tackle the wave on their way to victory at the Inter-Services Freestyle Championships. Coinciding with a civilian event known as the SAS Hurley Classic, the contest saw around 20 military personnel paddling alongside 250 British and international competitors. The soldiers also secured two top-ten finishes in the World Eskimo Rolling Championships, in which participants complete as many underwater rolls as possible.

Picture: Cpl James McAllister (RLC)







Name: Sir Chris Bonington

Age: 82

Military career: Served in the Royal Tank Regiment and at the Army Outward Bound School from 1956-61

Profile: Britain's best-known climber, he has led and taken part in 19 Himalayan expeditions, including four to Everest, as well as many first ascents in the great mountain ranges of the world.

'It's not about fear'

Climbing legend and ex-Army officer Chris Bonington talks to *Soldier* about leadership, close calls and not taking yourself too seriously...



I look back on my time in the Services with huge affection

I started in the Royal Air Force. I wanted to be a pilot but once I got into an aeroplane it was clear I wasn't very good at it. So I went to Sandhurst instead and thoroughly enjoyed it. I opted for the Royal Tank Regiment, partly because a distant relative of mine had served. I've always been a passionate follower of military history and saw myself as a Rommel or Guderian.

The Army teaches you so much about leadership

I had three tanks, with 12 people. They were all stropky national servicemen and I still remember them fondly. I thought I knew it all, as one does leaving Sandhurst, but of course you don't know a thing and I made lots of mistakes in my first few weeks. Then I realised, thank goodness, that command is not about the pips on your shoulder, it is having the respect of the people under you. You have to be honest with them, work with them and create a team, but also be part of that team.

I saw an advert for the Army Outward Bound School in Towyn

It had only just started up and I immediately applied to join. My colonel said it was a terribly bad career move but at that stage my

regiment was based in Libya, miles from any climbing, and I really wanted to be in a mountaineering environment. In 1961 I was invited on a civilian expedition to the Himalayas but I'd already been on a military trek the previous year and I was told I really ought to do some soldiering instead. So I left and got a management traineeship with Unilever. But then another expedition came up and my boss politely suggested I decide what I really wanted to do with my time. I chose climbing but I never imagined I could make a career out of it.



Adventurous training is incredibly valuable...

...as it was in the 1950s. Back then we were fighting the Cold War and the Russians seemed a threat but you weren't faced with the huge stress that the modern soldier is in places like Afghanistan or Iraq. When you go out on expeditions, whether it's climbing or something else, you are actually facing real adventure; situations where your life could be at risk. That kind of experiential training, which is fun but demanding, makes you think and is very useful.

I enjoy pushing the limits

The south-west face of Everest was a huge problem. It was a massive objective and no one gave us much chance of success. Six expeditions had tried and failed, including our first attempt, and I realised then

Adventurous training

that it was primarily a logistical issue – having the right team in the right place to actually get two people in a position to make a bid for the summit. Climbers are individualists and when only two out of a big group can reach the top it means very talented mountaineers have to sacrifice their own chances of summiting to set up the penultimate section. Building that kind of team spirit is challenging as a leader. In the Army you have the authority that comes with rank but in climbing you are entirely dependent on your ability to command the respect of your fellow mountaineers. At times you may have to make decisions that get in the way of the personal ambitions of your friends.

I have had stacks of failures...

...but I don't regret them. You've given it your best shot and my philosophy is that I live in the moment. I look to the future. I think it's important to learn from the past because the past has happened, but it's a matter of just getting on with it.



Climbers are attracted to risk and danger

The outcome is uncertain, as is your own continued existence. The casualty rate is high and I've lost an awful lot of friends. I'm saddened but I don't have a sense of guilt because we all went into it with the same idea. I've never thought of giving up. ➔

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I've been unbelievably lucky...

.. on at least ten occasions or more. One was fairly recently, when I was climbing Lochnagar with my brother Gerald. I was leading the penultimate pitch and couldn't find a proper belay and because we were near the top I made a stupid mistake. I put my ice axe blades in the snow and started to bring Gerald up but he fell. It catapulted me right out of my totally inadequate belay and suddenly I was hurtling down headfirst. I'd put just one running belay in a crack on the way up but I forgot about that as I was falling and thought this was definitely it. The rope came tight on that tiny bit of metal and I hit the snow but because it was steep it absorbed a lot of the kinetic energy. I only broke a few ribs. There were a couple of guys behind us looking on in horror. Afterwards we carried on together and as we neared the top all the snow to the right of us, hundreds of tonnes, broke away. If we hadn't had that accident and stopped we would all have been in its path.

It's not about fear

It's making the best of the situation. In 1977 I was climbing The Ogre. There were four of us making the final push and one, Doug Scott, fell and broke both his legs. Then we had a long, drawn-out epic to get down. It took us five days. We'd run out of food, got caught by a storm, I fell and broke my ribs. We had to spend two nights in our bivouac during a white-out because we couldn't see the next section. I was coughing up blood and knew I was coming down with pneumonia and that if we didn't get down soon I would

probably die. But strangely we didn't get depressed by it. You just concentrate on staying alive.

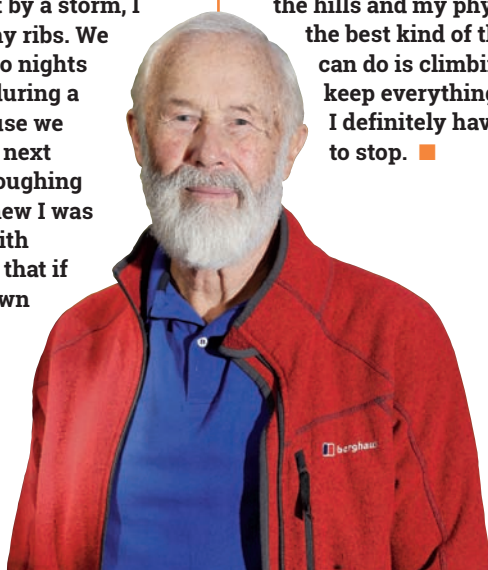


One must never take oneself too seriously

It's great when you're walking in the hills and someone sees you and says "it's fantastic to meet you" and wants to shake your hand; that's wonderful. But at times you can be brought down to earth. I asked two of my grandchildren – Emily and Will – who their heroes are and with no hesitation whatsoever they said "Bear Grylls". Then Emily looked at me and said "it's okay, you're our second hero".

There's no way I'm slowing down

When you're 80 you don't climb to the same standard as when you were 60. I've got a brand new hip and I pulled my back badly climbing the Old Man of Hoy a few years ago. But I love being in the hills and my physio says the best kind of therapy I can do is climbing walls to keep everything moving. I definitely have no plans to stop. ■



Living the high life

Chris Bonington has achieved a long list of impressive feats in a career spanning some 65 years:

Among his many first ascents are Annapurna II (Nepal, 1960), Nupste (Nepal, 1961), The Old Man of Hoy (Scotland, 1966), The Ogre (Pakistan, 1977), Mount Kongur (China, 1981), Panch Chuli by the west ridge (India, 1992), The Needle (Greenland, 1993) and Danga (Nepal, 2000).

In 1975 he led the first successful expedition to conquer Everest by the south-west face and in 1985 summited the mountain at the age of 55.

Top of the world: Sir Chis Bonington, left, and Ang Lhakpa at the summit of Everest in 1985





Inside and out: Drei Muhlen Lodge at JSMTC (Bavaria) which hosts units on multi-activity weeks

“
We are really
trying to push
what is on
offer here
”

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Steve Dock

As the morning mist rolls across the treetops a group of novice climbers gather their kit in preparation for another adrenalin-fuelled day on the cliff face.

Likewise, a cohort of paragliders awaits the latest weather updates before taking flight among the breathtaking vistas found within the valley's idyllic setting.

The Joint Service Mountain Training Centre (JSMTC) Bavaria wing is a hive of activity and will remain so in the long term.

With the Army's footprint in Germany rapidly diminishing there are few enduring commitments left in a country that has been a mainstay of British soldiers for decades.

But with adventurous training continuing to play a prominent role in Service life this European outpost is here to stay.

As well as climbing and paragliding the centre offers a summer programme that features kayaking, hill walking and rock climbing. As soon as the weather turns and the snow starts to fall the skiers hit town for an action-packed winter season.

The headquarters in Oberstdorf can accommodate up to 60 personnel and has the aim of developing future leaders and instructors.

And a few kilometres away in Wertach there are two further lodges that can be used for units planning multi-activity weeks.

While the opportunities are plentiful they are not just restricted to Germany. The wing's instructors also run a series of concentrations throughout the year that allow participants to build experience or push for further qualifications in their chosen disciplines.

Courses include Alpine paddling in Slovenia, ice climbing in Canada, mountaineering in Switzerland and paragliding in Spain.

"Although Headquarters British Forces Germany is drawing down, all adventurous training facilities will remain," Maj Jen Painting (AGC (ETS)), the wing's OC, told *Soldier* during a recent visit.

"We are really trying to push what is on offer here, particularly in Wertach. We have had 15 years of Afghanistan and there are officers out there who have not had the experience of organising AT or planning where to go.

"This means the knowledge and awareness of these lodges isn't that great.

"A young lieutenant may be tasked with arranging a trip. They can bring their troops to Wertach and their food, bedding and accommodation is provided. We can also offer equipment and instructors if needed.

"It is a totally different environment and you cannot undertake skiing or Alpine paragliding anywhere else.

"This is a resource that cannot be replicated. As soldiers we can pull off Sennelager training area and do something similar on Salisbury Plain but that cannot be done with AT."

To broaden its appeal the centre has adapted the accommodation on offer in Wertach to meet the needs of wounded, injured and sick soldiers.



BRAVING BAVARIA

Troops quench their thirst for adventure in Germany's mountainous terrain



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Rock climbing instructor Jonathan Logan negotiates his way to the top of the indoor climbing wall at JMSTC (Bavaria)

“We want someone to come off a wall understanding how to react to stress”

For more details on all courses and programmes available to Service personnel visit www.atga.mod.uk or go to the **JSMTC** page on Facebook

This includes low-level bedspaces and lighting, ramps, wheelchair-accessible wet rooms and a treatment room for physiotherapists and other medical personnel.

An ongoing investment is also made in various bits of kit and equipment to ensure it meets the required safety standards and a new kayak fleet was purchased last year.

While this means troops have everything they need to undertake the activities on offer the instructors are looking for a greater return than simply seeing their students climb competently by the end of the week.

“Someone like Chris Bonington would say AT is also about personal and leadership development,” Maj Painting added. “We try to push that as well.

“We are doing lots of work on delivering hard skills but we are also thinking about growth mindset, as opposed to a fixed mindset.

“We want someone to come off a climbing wall understanding how to react in a stressful environment. They can then apply that knowledge in an operational setting and it will make them a better soldier for it.

“A fixed mindset is a person saying ‘I can’t do that’. Imagine having that thought process on patrol in southern Afghanistan.

“For us it is about changing that way of thinking so they say ‘I can do that’ and then give it a go.

“The training delivered here has a disproportionate effect on developing people. They are exposed to so many challenges, experiences and environments that are outside the norm and that allows them to see the difference this can make.”

With a background in education and training, along with a passion for all things AT, the role ticks all the boxes for the officer and the same applies for wing sergeant major SSgt Luke Kemp (RAPTC).

He arrived in Bavaria in February 2015 and recently had his posting extended to 2019.

“I wanted to come here for the environment – the mountains and skiing,” the senior NCO explained. “It was a step up from my previous post in North Wales.

“It is an amazing place. This is the only capability we have to deliver skiing in the Army and it is a good base for activities like Alpine mountaineering and white water kayaking.

“It would be a brave person who decides to close this facility down.”

With instructors making such glowing endorsements it is fair to say the decision to keep AT in Germany is the right one.

The slopes around Oberstdorf will prove a popular destination for thrill-seeking soldiers this winter but once the snow melts the excitement doesn’t stop.

The next summer cycle will swiftly follow and those plotting an overseas expedition in 2017 should give serious consideration to this Bavarian backdrop. ■

Ready to rock

THE foundation rock-climbing course is one of the many programmes delivered by permanent staff at the JSMTc Bavaria wing.

Designed for novice climbers, the five-day programme forms the first step in a five-tier scheme for those wanting to become fully qualified instructors.

Visiting personnel learn the fundamentals of top and bottom roping, abseiling, climbing movements, belaying and lead climbing.

Their time is split between outdoor rock faces and an indoor centre featuring walls and bouldering facilities.

"This is the first step to me becoming a supervisor," said Cpl Mark McMahon (R Irish, pictured above). "In the future I want to take guys out from my battalion.

"I love climbing. I get a lot out of it in terms of strength and fitness but also on the mental side – you are pushing yourself to do things that may not feel natural and that translates quite well to our day job in the Army.

"You can go climbing in the UK but the quality out here is very good and I think soldiers should utilise the chance to travel to Germany.

"As a civvy this trip would cost a lot of money. Our travel and accommodation is covered, it is a great course and the climbing in and around Oberstdorf is brilliant."

Fellow student Cpl Kieran Dale (REME) is hoping to transfer to the Royal Army Physical Training Corps and completing courses such as these will strengthen his cause when it comes to selection.

"You can do this sort of thing back in the UK but you have work and there are other distractions to contend with," the NCO told *Soldier*.

"But out here it is just rock climbing. You don't have other things at the back of your mind – you can just relax and focus.

"I would not have had the chance to do activities like this if it wasn't for adventurous training.

"In many ways it is as important as normal exercises. It can push people outside of their comfort zones and it is good for team building and leadership.

"I will be going home as a more confident soldier."

“
I get a lot out
of it in terms
of strength
and fitness
but also on the
mental side
”



Students learning multi-pitch climbs on the Tryfanbach (Little Tryfan) while at the JSMTc in Wales

High flyers

WHILE paragliding is available in the UK the backdrop falls way short of the Alpine splendour found in Bavaria.

The most recent elementary and club pilot courses featured a healthy mix of Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel who arrived in Germany with a thirst to fly.

Despite being a relatively new pursuit in the world of adventurous training, the programmes have been fully subscribed throughout the year and some of the top performers returned to the skies for a concentration exercise in Spain before Christmas.

Chief line instructor Dickie Davies told *Soldier* the activity is the ideal test for Servicemen and women given the values it promotes.

"This pushes them outside their comfort zone but not their ability zone," the former soldier, who served in the Royal Artillery, explained.

"There are no safety ropes or harnesses and that makes the training quite arduous.

"It is about developing individual courage and leadership skills through controlled exposure to risk. Doing that in a challenging outdoor environment will enhance their operational capability."

For student WO2 Paul Crichton (AGC (MPGS)) the ten-day course marked only his second spell of adventurous training in a career spanning more than 20 years.

With 310 soldiers working below him he will be actively encouraging future participation in the course given the benefits it delivers.

"It is about team bonding," he said. "It is also good for fitness and gives you a beneficial two-week break from the workplace.

"Some of the lads here see this as R 'n' R. The workload becomes more considerable the higher up the ranks you go and that is the case for me.

"I didn't realise the Army still had AT centres in Germany so it has been great to come out here – the weather is better and the environment is fantastic.

"The quality of instruction on this course is better than anything I've seen before; they are all ex-military and that really helps.

"The Army is always promoting AT but where do you go if you want some guidance? This has been a great eye-opener in that respect."

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them outside
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The Army participates in a broad range of outdoor activities, which include:

- Canoeing/kayaking
- Caving
- Freefall parachuting
- Gliding
- Mountaineering
- Mountain biking
- Offshore sailing
- Paragliding
- Skiing
- Sub-aqua diving

Interviews: Joe Clapson. Pictures: Graeme Main



LCPL AMIT SHAKYA

“All AT requires courage and gives you the chance to learn a new skill from scratch and to progress to become a leader. I recently went kayaking and it was brilliant – initially I was scared but by the end I was able to do it on my own. With everything the training offers it definitely makes you a better soldier and person.”

PTE NILE JANJUA

“During phase one I loved AT but I haven’t had a chance to do much since. It is valuable for building team spirit and I would like to get out into the winter environment because I think it makes better soldiers.”



“This sort of training gives us a fantastic opportunity to get away from the green side of the Army and build cohesion among troops. It’s good for taking you out of your comfort zone by putting you in situations you haven’t faced before.”

SSGT MARK PINDER



SGT SELORM FIAKEGBE

“AT is really good because it takes you out of the monotony of the military environment and allows colleagues to bond. As soldiers we don’t always know what we’re going to face so being put in situations where you need to assess risks is very valuable.”



LCPL NATHAN SYNAN

“I am very big on skiing and in the four years I’ve been in the Army I’ve managed to get five weeks on the slopes. Serving as a soldier makes amazing activities like this – or parachuting and paragliding – accessible. It’s one of the biggest advantages of the job and a brilliant recruitment tool too.”



SNOW BRAINER

BACK on home turf in the UK, *Soldier* asked members of 10 The Queen’s Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment for their top adventurous training memories and why they think such activities are important. From privates to senior NCOs, and skiing to mountain biking, the comments reveal an aspect of military life that is highly valued.

PTE BIRAJ RAI

“It is so important for building confidence. I recently did some mountain biking and it gives you guts to speak up and take charge. It definitely made me a better leader; in everyday life I wouldn’t get the chance to build my personal skills in this way.”





I'M AN OFFICER,

This young infantryman could soon be leading troops into battle as a platoon commander. Only one thing stands in his way; the Belizean jungle...

GET ME OUT OF HERE!

“T

HEY should be the calm in the storm.

“A good platoon commander is at ease and can see that bigger picture.

“While his section commanders are out frenetically doing their business he needs to be cool and controlled and be thinking one step ahead.”

That’s the assessment of Maj Ben Salt (Rifles), officer commanding of the Infantry Battle School’s platoon commanders’ division.

The 38-year-old and his team are looking on as students conduct an attack on a drug cartel’s jungle lair, one of the final serials on the 12-week course that prepares newly-

commissioned officers to lead an infantry platoon.

Having undergone two months of rigorous training in Brecon, the last phase of the programme sees the young infantrymen move to Belize, where a fresh set of challenges awaits them.

Just surviving in the rainforest is no small task, but taking on the enemy in relentless heat and dense undergrowth is another thing entirely.

“They can’t just take the model they’ve been using back home and apply it here,” continues Maj Salt.

“They need to stop, think and adapt.

“While everyone is getting caught up in the action the platoon commander needs to take a step back – that ‘Condor moment’, as we call it.

“That’s more difficult in the jungle environment, which is why coming here is so important.”

Aptly named Exercise Grim Warrior, the package begins with acclimatisation and survival drills, before gradually ramping up in complexity until the new officers are working together in a company-sized formation as part of a demanding counter-narcotics operation.

Throughout their training the troops rotate around different platoon appointments so that they understand how the chain of command functions at every level.

For 2nd Lt Charlie Gale (Lancs) his stint as platoon sergeant saw him having to step up and take the lead when his commander was “killed” during an ambush.

Describing the challenge of making decisions under pressure and on unfamiliar ground, the 25-year-old says: “First off when you’re attacking you have to weigh up whether your force is capable of taking the objective.

“We had intelligence that we outnumbered the enemy by a significant amount.

“You also have to assess the ground.

“We were assaulting a strongly defended position so you have to consider whether it’s worth pushing on or if you should stop and reassess.

“In that scenario we had already hit them with an ambush so it made sense to press on because they were on the back foot.

“The biggest difficulty out here is that you can’t see – you have five metres’ visibility in front of you so it’s hard to keep a grasp on where your men are.

“You have to be very patient with guys who are struggling through hard terrain – crawling, getting caught up in everything – to make sure you allow them to do their job.

“You really have to rely on your section commanders so you can deal with what’s going on.

“It’s chaotic and there’s a tendency for the whole thing to get out of control so you have to be extremely methodical in everything you do to prevent that happening.”

When the environment seems every bit as hostile as the enemy the odds of success can appear slim, so it is the job of the jungle warfare instructors to ensure the students become comfortable operating under the canopy.

As CSgt Mark Fairbrother (Scots) explains, once they do so they recognise how the terrain can actually work to their advantage.

“There’s a bit of a shock of capture at first,” the 33-year-old says.

“You’re either soaking with sweat or rain and your feet are constantly wet, but you need to be able to admin yourself properly.

“Even moving in a tactical formation from A to B is very difficult due to the dense vegetation and the high temperatures.

“But once you start to acclimatise you start seeing what the jungle can provide you as opposed to thinking ‘this is tragic for me.’ ➔





“
The biggest
difficulty
is that you
can't see
”



“It gives you capabilities that you don't have anywhere else, in particular the way you can carry out close target reconnaissance, set ambushes and get closer to the killing area.

“At the same time it makes leadership more difficult because often you can look left and right and not see anyone, so your control measures have to be tight.

“There's a robust thought process that needs to go into every single wee detail to make sure you can achieve your mission.”

As well as developing leadership and decision making, the team's mantra is that graduates of the course should be both competent and confident.

“The end state is that they need to be credible,” adds CSgt Fairbrother.

“They need to be commanders of men and having been a private soldier, lance corporal, corporal and sergeant throughout my career, and worked for a number of platoon commanders, I know – at least I think I do – a good leader and that's the point I try and take with me when I say ‘I'm happy for this officer to go and command men back at his battalion.’”

Away from the mission to secure the drug lords' camp, another platoon is planning a reconnaissance of tomorrow's objective.

The troops stop in an orange grove during a brief lull in activity and 2nd Lt Anthony Strain (R Welsh) reflects on what he thinks marks someone out as a proficient platoon commander.

“The guys doing well here are the ones who work incredibly hard for those working for them,” comments the 24-year-old.

“Rather than expecting people to work for you, you need to go out of your way to make things easier for those around you at all times.

“It's noticeable when you're not in command yourself



SURVIVAL MODE

Jungle warfare instructor Sgt Daniel Langridge (Gren Gds, right) shares his top five tips for staying ahead of the game under the canopy



> Have a good sense of humour

You can't beat the jungle and when you're constantly getting caught up in vines, going up and down hills, crossing rivers or you're finally a little bit dry and it starts raining again you need to be able to laugh it off. If you don't, eventually your mind is going to start going and your mental robustness will ebb as well.



> Always keep your dry kit dry

In a humid environment like the rainforest

from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep, it's more than likely you're going to be wet-through. If you don't have dry kit to change into at night your body will start to suffer. You'll get crotch rot and your feet will start deteriorating, and it can take you out of the battle and have a detrimental effect on your unit.



> Embrace the environment

People see the rainforest as an obstacle and try and fight against it but you have to remember; the jungle

is neutral – it's not your friend and it's not your enemy. It can feel threatening but if you understand the environment and prepare yourself mentally and physically it's not hostile at all and can actually work in your favour.



> Everything weighs something

In the jungle the logistics chain is extended significantly so you'll be carrying everything you need on your back – rations, six litres of water, all your radios and spare batteries. If you start adding to that, even if it's

just packing two karabiners instead of one, it all weighs something. Over a certain period of time that can wear you down.



> You're only as sharp as your parang

Keep your parang sharp and your mind sharp as well!



who does that and who doesn't."

The 67 students that make up the latest cohort are a mixed bag of different infantry cap badges, as well as a number of light-role cavalry officers, whose jobs will also require them to understand dismounted close combat.

Each course also has up to 12 slots for personnel from foreign armies.

But whatever a graduate's branch of service or nationality, staff at the Infantry Battle School aim to give them an edge over any future enemy.

"As weapon proliferation grows, the technical gap between us and some other countries is getting smaller," explains Maj Salt.

"But one thing you can't replace is leadership, command and basic skills.

"Mastery of our craft is our new objective.

"Here we try to enable them to do something that can't be replicated by potential adversaries."

And in an uncertain world, that ability to fight in any environment while shouldering the burden of command is vital.


Lt Col Alex Rennie (Scots), commanding officer of the Infantry Battle School, explains that it is for this very reason that the course is so arduous.

"We've had guys, literally the week after they've finished this package, out in Afghanistan, in the green zone, commanding their platoons," he says.

"There's no lead into that – you're either at the standard or you're not.

"And that's what the training team work toward.

"We have some fantastic instructors here with lots of operational experience, who understand how to get people to perform and it's for them to get these young men – and potentially women in the future – to the level necessary."

The jungle won't prepare troops for every challenging situation they may face as leaders but those who survive the trials and tribulations of the rainforest can be sure they will start their Service careers on the front foot. 

JUNGLE DUTIES

From the streets of London to the Central American rainforest – in less than a week

● JUST days after performing ceremonial duties around the capital, soldiers from the Household Division found themselves in Belize acting as the opposition force as part of Exercise Grim Warrior.

Having undergone the same acclimatisation and survival package as the would-be platoon commanders, three sections drawn from the Grenadier Guards, Scots Guards and Coldstream Guards played the role of drug cartel members during a counter-narcotics scenario.

For many fresh out of training themselves, it was not only their first time in a jungle environment but their first major exercise.

Gdsm Frazer McKay (SG, pictured right) described what he made of the transition from tunic and bearskin to green kit.

"The ceremonial stuff is an honour and a unique job, especially with big events like Trooping the Colour, but you don't want to do it forever," he said.

"This kind of thing, more than anything, is why you join up.

"Going straight into an exercise is difficult because skill fade is quite a big thing but the lance sergeants are patient and give you little reminders.

"The jungle isn't as bad as everyone says it is.

"Pretty much from the moment we deployed onto the area it rained solidly for three days, which wasn't nice, but when it's dry it's not too bad and if you stay on top of your admin it's fine.

"The terrain is a bit overwhelming, it's like something out of *Jurassic Park*.

"Our first camp was in an orchard, right by a waterfall and you could pick the fruit off the trees and eat them – you don't get that anywhere else.

"It's pitch black within the space of half an hour and you can hear all sorts of strange stuff in the dark.

"We spotted hundreds of spiders with eyes that glowed green when you shone your head torch on them.

"I also had a scorpion on my kit but you just flick them off.

"You wouldn't want to be in the jungle forever either, so it's good that we have the balance between our roles."



▲ EMBEDDED alongside the British personnel for the first time during Exercise Grim Warrior were members of the Belize Defence Force, giving the British officers early experience of defence engagement.

Maj Salt explained that it represented a valuable opportunity to develop the students' emotional intelligence.

"In the new character of war that we're in at the moment there's a lot of emphasis put on working with other countries," he said.

"So by integrating the Belizean personnel the students can experience the frictions, but also the opportunities, that that presents.

"There will be differences in language and tactics but, equally, platoon commanders will be able to see how they work in the jungle and that they can be a useful asset.

"When they go on deployments like Operation Shader, for example, having that humility and understanding that the Peshmerga offer something valuable will be extremely worthwhile.

"Many people think of defence engagement as just going to another country but it's also about overseas students coming to the UK and as the platoon commanders' division we help facilitate that.

"We have up to 12 international students on any course and we link into the British brigades that have affiliations to certain parts of the world in order to help them get a better understanding of their region and build up networks there." ■



‘IT’S A REAL PROBLEM’

The politician behind the proposed ‘Walter Mitty’ law tells *Soldier* about his mission to criminalise military pretenders...

“I CANNOT stress enough, the purpose of this is not to deal with those helpless characters who are simply deluded,” Dartford MP

Gareth Johnson says.

The Conservative politician is responsible for the Awards for Valour (Protection) Bill, which has

got government support and is now very likely to become law.

“It’s intended to deal with those really quite manipulative individuals who are deliberately setting out to undermine genuine heroes.”

He continues: “It’s a wonderful sight to see personnel displaying their medals. →

THE GREAT PRETENT

BOGUS HERO EXPOSED AS FAKE

Veteran questioned after being caught parading with 'impossible' medal haul

Soldier who lied about service record says he's sorry, hands back medals

Veterans vow to find bogus Remembrance Day marcher



"So it's necessary for the public to have confidence and know when they see them that these people are the genuine article.

"Otherwise the whole system becomes undermined; veterans become undermined."

With a number of MPs having served in the Armed Forces, Mr Johnson is not necessarily the most likely politician to be targeting those who pose as veterans – or Walter Mittys, as they are known.

But he introduced what is called a private member's bill – legislation that is not part of a government's plans but can be proposed by an individual MP – after witnessing the problem first-hand at his local Royal British Legion branch where he is president.

"We've had a couple of incidents there where people have pretended to have served and they have had to be asked to leave," he says.

"It's a real problem and, anecdotally, it appears to be growing.

"I thought that was wrong."

If the bill is to be made into law, Walter Mittys could face up to three months in prison or an unlimited fine.

However, some have questioned whether it is really in the public interest to jail such

individuals (see right).

Soldier readers have suggested that community punishments where offenders are ordered to clean up war memorials, for example, would be far more appropriate in some cases.

"One of the reasons why it's necessary for the offence to be imprisonable is because the courts then have the option to impose community-based penalties," Mr Johnson explains.

"If it were only punishable by fine, that would not be the case.

"I think that only the most extreme person would be considered for prison.

"Part of the reason is also to act as a deterrent for those who may be minded to curry favour and steal valour."

Following the bill passing its second reading in parliament at the end of last year, it will now move to what is known as the committee stage where experts go through the details with a fine-toothed comb and make any amendments.

"I think it's necessary for people to have confidence in the current medal system," Mr Johnson concludes.

"A lot of countries around the world have a stolen valour law and Britain should be the same." ■



OTHERWISE
THE WHOLE
SYSTEM
BECOMES
UNDERMINED;
VETERANS
BECOME
UNDERMINED



Gareth Johnson MP

FRONT-LINE FRAUD

● **HOW** can you tell if someone is being dishonest about their military accomplishments? *Soldier* asked the Walter Mitty Hunters Club, an anonymous network of veterans who make it their mission to expose bogus claims, when an individual's behaviour should start ringing some alarm bells...

1. If someone is **talking** about their military background at every opportunity and constantly hinting of their days on "black ops".

Decorated
SAS war
veteran is
uncovered
as a fake

ARMY VETERAN UNMASKED AS
'WALTER MITTY' WHO BOUGH
MEDALS IN A SHOP

REMEMBRANCE DAY
'IMPOSTER' CHARGED

The men who impersonate military
personnel for stolen glory



Could you spot a bogus soldier?

2. If **medals are being worn in the wrong order** for the age of the person in question, and **not correctly mounted**. Gallantry medals are easy to check via the London Gazette online.
3. If the person looks blankly at you when you mention **easy acronyms** taught in basic training, for example "clap".
4. If **they can't remember their service number** when asked, then make their excuses and disappear.
5. If they **break out in a sweat** when you mention the Walter Mitty Hunters Club!



PUBLIC VOTE

Should Walter Mittys
be criminalised? We
took the debate to our
Facebook page and here
is what you had to say...

“What harm are these people actually doing to
vets and society?

Nothing!

The MP who brought this up in the
Commons should be ashamed.

He should have brought up the need of
Servicemen who are suffering in public life.

Bob Watt, ex-RM

“Good, the worst
thing you can
do is steal
valour earned
by someone
else.”

Rob Wilkinson,
civvy

“Don't send them
to jail; send them
to the units that
they are **Walting**
and let them deal
with them.

Paul Stewart,
ex-RA

“Ok but how is this going to be policed?
I can't see the overstretched police asking
people to prove they've earned their medals.”

Stick Delaney, ex-R Signals

“A waste of
taxpayers' money
better spent on
veterans.
Police should
fine the Walts a
penalty charge,
which is sent
directly to
veterans' charities.

Bypass the
court system, save
money and send it
where it's needed.

Also humiliate
the Walts by
exposing them in
their local press.

Win/win for me.

Mac McKenzie, ex-
RGJ

“Making it a crime to
falsely wear medals
that they have no right
to wear is something I
am all in favour of, but
imprisoning them is
a waste of taxpayers'
money.

Better that they
are made to repay
their debt through
community payback
orders that directly
benefit veterans such as
cleaning the cenotaphs
in their local area,
doing gardening for a
housebound veteran or
serving at a veterans'
breakfast club.

**David Jamieson, ex-
RAF**

“I can appreciate the offence caused
by Walter Mittys to military personnel
and their families, especially when you
consider the sacrifice that is made to
acquire such honours. However, we
should not forget that Walter Mittys
are not exclusive to the military; they
can be doctors, firefighters or police
officers as well.

Once we start criminalising based
on offence caused rather than
harm then it won't be unreasonable
for other groups seeking similar
legislation.

We have to ask who, generally, is
your typical Walter Mitty? Many will
be elderly, many will have mental
health issues, many will be entirely
harmless to society.

It has recently been reported that
our prisons are near to capacity and
some with massive overcrowding
issues.

What is to be gained by imprisoning
deluded, harmless, old men for up to
six months?

This appears to be just another
populist policy with no thought
process behind it.

Cpl Ian Forbes, R Signals



→ EXPERT OPINION

Do people who pretend to be heroes have something wrong with them? A military psychologist tells *Soldier*

THERE are two types of people who lie about their achievements on the battlefield, according to military psychologist Leanne Simpson.

Based at Bangor University, the PhD candidate is being funded by the MoD to research mental robustness in soldiers and she believes that some Walter Mitty characters deserve pity over condemnation.

"On the one hand you have veterans who exaggerate, and on the other there are people with no military links who completely make things up," she explains.

"That's an important distinction.

"No research has really been done; it's a hugely understudied area.

"But evidence suggests that the individuals who make it up from scratch are relatively few and far between."

Nevertheless, those who do go down either road cause understandable offence to personnel and their families who have often sacrificed everything for Queen and country. So why do it?

"I don't think we fully understand what's going on," Simpson admits.

"With exaggerators, they seem to think it's okay and then regret it later.

"At the time they don't realise they are doing anything wrong – everyone exaggerates, after all.

"They might do it to bolster their ego but often they don't consider the repercussions.

"Sometimes they've just said

something once, then it's spiralled and they have to stick to it.

"But those who have done the most tend to speak up the least.

"If you sense someone is talking-up their career, that sounds alarm bells.

"Veterans in treatment who exaggerate sometimes do it for compensation purposes, but that can complicate their diagnosis and the development of treatment plans."

When it comes to civilian fantasists, the psychologist says their behaviour could be explained by personality disorders or even psychosis.

"We consider them to have abnormal personalities and there will be a proportion suffering with mental health problems," Simpson continues.

"In that case we should feel quite sorry for them."

A law change would not only act as a deterrent, then, but also help those who need support to find their way to appropriate treatment through the criminal justice system.

She explains: "At the moment if someone is wearing a medal falsely because they want attention, there's nothing we can do about that.

"But in future you will be able to report it to someone, and the court can then decide if intervention might be needed.

"If there is psychosis there and a person genuinely believes they have done something they haven't, clearly they need help." ■



**THOSE WHO
HAVE DONE
THE MOST
TEND TO
SPEAK UP
THE LEAST**



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Image: Ben Rishton & family, Andy Garthwaite and Les Fryatt, Soldiers' Charity beneficiaries

5 TIPS

YOU'VE done your resettlement training and browsed the web non-stop, but if the thought of applying for your first civvy job is still filling you with dread it might be time to try the following advice from career mentor Jamie Swinstead (ex-Scots). He is one of the Barclays employees helping the Veterans Employment Transition Support project (www.veteranemployment.co.uk) to match ex-soldiers with their ideal position.

2 Attend a workshop



CV writing is a skill so it's important to get some guidance. Sign yourself up to one of the CV workshops that are run at garrisons and training days across the UK by Barclays and the Career Transition Partnership. A mentor can help translate your military experience into language that is going to grab the attention of an employer.

3 Learn the lingo

The military often uses specialist language that is difficult for civilians to comprehend, and the reverse is also true. Start trying to grasp the lingo of the corporate world so you can speak to potential employers in a way they understand. Look at a few examples or get yourself a book on CV writing to pick up some of the best buzzwords.

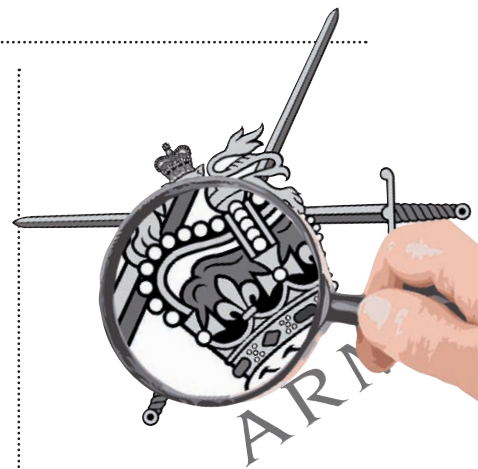
SCALABLE **GAME CHANGER** **AMPLIFY** **ROAD MAP** **LADDER-UP** **ONBOARDING** **CIRCLE BACK**

1 Make sure you're applying for the right role

This might sound obvious, but before you even put pen to paper ask yourself if this is the right job for you. So many of the military leavers who I deal with feel the need to take the first thing they find, but there's a lot to be said for doing your homework and asking yourself a few questions. What are your interests, and does this job reflect those? Do the values of the company you're applying to match with your own? Skills are something you can learn but if your heart isn't in it you're unlikely to get what you want.

4 Tailor it

There's no such thing as a one-size-fits-all CV. You should rewrite it for every position you apply for. Read the job description from front to back, then read it again and highlight the main things they are looking for. This will give you a list of keywords to drop into your CV and covering letter, to show the employer that you understand what they want.



Getting a friendly eye to look over your CV – someone who has been in your position – can help you spot things that you might have missed. Veterans Employment Transition Support is a completely free service that is open to anyone who has served in the Armed Forces. It has the tools to help, whether you are looking for your first career out of the military or a change in civilian job.

5 Get advice



“
It is not a
challenge
for the faint-
hearted
”

WHEN former Army officer Henry Worsley (ex-Rifles) closed in on his bid to complete the first ever unsupported solo trek across Antarctica last year, he had to be airlifted off the ice just 120 miles short of his destination.

Hours later, a serious infection claimed his life and sent shockwaves through the adventuring community.

That tragedy, along with the brutal reality of one of the world's most inhospitable environments, will be etched in the minds of soldiers from 1st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade this month as they try to complete a gruelling coast-to-coast traverse of Antarctica in honour of the late veteran.

Covering more than 1,100 miles of polar wilderness, it is not a challenge for the faint-hearted.

Having set out from Hercules Inlet on November 16, the South Pole Expedition Army Reserves (Spear 17) team were on a 730-mile unsupported journey to the South Pole as this issue went to press.

If they arrive there in strong shape, the troops will take on fresh supplies before continuing on a further 400-mile journey across the polar plateau to the Shackleton Glacier before finishing at the Ross Ice Shelf at the end of the month.

Here, *Soldier* gets the inside track on the audacious attempt and how it has unfolded so far...

**The South Pole Expedition
Army Reserves team
make their way across
Union Glacier on their
unsupported journey to the
South Pole**

Pictures: Jodie Willard and
John Robertson



Words: Joe Clapson

‘MORE PEOPLE HAVE LANDED ON THE MOON’

British soldiers are amid a daring attempt to complete the Antarctica mission that last year claimed the life of polar explorer Henry Worsley. As predicted, it's not been an easy task...



SOME BLOGGING HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SPEAR 17 TEAM:

NOV 16

Just after lunch today we boarded the Twin Otter plane and took the short flight across to Hercules Inlet, where we were dropped off. Conditions were great on the frozen ocean by the coastline of Antarctica, the sun was out with very light winds, and we set off. Within a couple of miles we'd come off the frozen ice shelf and climbed back onto the continent of Antarctica, which was absolutely incredible.

WO1 Lou Rudd

NOV 24

We've discovered another joy of strong wind and low temperatures. I was getting particularly chilly in the nether regions, and there's a phenomenon called "polar penis", which sounds hilarious but as it turns out is incredibly unpleasant and really quite painful. Fortunately, I now have a large thick woollen hat stuffed down in that region.

Tpr Alex Brazier

DEC 1

I've picked up some pain in my right heel and the Achilles' tendon, which is rather frustrating. I've been taking some medication to cope with the pain. And of course, some good music always helps. I've been listening to some of Ollie's Spice Girls, as well as decent music of my own – Dire Straits, Fleetwood Mac, Queen... The team is doing good, although Jamie's feet absolutely stink rotten – probably because they're bleeding every day.

Tpr Chris Brooke



£100,000

amount the adventurers are aiming to raise for ABF The Soldiers' Charity

Each day the soldiers will take on **6,500 calories** but they will burn up to **10,000**

The team is pulling all their food and equipment in special pulks, which each weighed more than **100kg** at the start of the journey

The temperature on the polar plateau could be as low as **-50 degrees Celsius**

More than 4,000 people have reached the summit of Mount Everest but **only six** have walked across Antarctica without assistance

GLACIAL FIGURES

THE TEAM



Name
WO1 LOU RUDD

Day job
REGULAR SOLDIER



TPR OLLIE STOTEN

DOCTOR



TPR ALEX BRAZIER

DOCTOR



LCPL ALUN GEORGE

IT SPECIALIST



TPR JAMIE FACER-CHILDS

DOCTOR



TPR CHRIS BROOKE

PARAMEDIC

RESPECTING A HERO

👤 THE team is in the experienced hands of expedition leader WO1 Lou Rudd, a Regular soldier who reached the South Pole on a previous adventure with Henry Worsley in 2012.

"More people have landed on the moon than have walked across the continent of Antarctica," he explained.

"Once we reach the Pole we hope to push on as a tribute to the legacy of Henry; we are setting out to finish the journey he started.

"We are following in the footsteps of explorers like Shackleton and Scott and my friend and fellow adventurer joins those polar greats as he tested himself to the limits of endurance."

“We are following in the footsteps of explorers like Shackleton and Scott”

FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

👤 HENRY Worsley's ill-fated expedition followed in the footsteps of his idol, Sir Ernest Shackleton (statue shown right), who tried to cross Antarctica back in 1914. The trip saw the renowned explorer's ship *Endurance* become trapped in ice before sinking ten months later, but remarkably none of the crew died.

Mr Worsley was a distant relative of Frank Worsley, the captain of *Endurance*, and it is this mission that the Spear 17 team is therefore also emulating.



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‘I won’t be broken’

“I will no doubt be given extra duties”

I HAVE been with 9 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps since last April and have never been a member of the corporals’ mess.

I was recently informed that I had been enrolled into it, without anyone telling me, when I first arrived and, as a result, owed around £70.

I talked to my officer commanding and explained that this was the first time I’d seen the bill.

I also stated that apart from the mess being optional, I had a legitimate religious reason for choosing not to be a member because I’m a Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

My period of worship is Friday night through Saturday so I wouldn’t be able to attend many functions.

When I’m ordered to do duty tasks during that time I carry them out without question, but when there’s a choice I prefer the Bible.

The OC took the trouble to explain to me the benefits of membership and implied that I could be demoted if I didn’t join.

I know from reading previous letters on this subject in *Soldier* that joining a corporals’ mess is purely optional and not something you are forced into.

There are so many people here who would rather not be a part of it but they are scared by the oppressive attitude from higher up the chain of command.

I will, no doubt, be given extra duties because of my decision, but they will be hidden in the system and I won’t be able to do anything about it.

This is what you get when you stand

up for what you believe in. – LCpl Trevor Boulyn, RLC

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Personnel Capability Directorate, responds: Corporals’ messes are not formally established in the way that officers’, warrant officers’ and sergeants’ messes are. These have mandatory enrolment, entitlement to mess functions and subscriptions are charged.

But corporals’ mess membership is voluntary and commanding officers are responsible for ensuring that no individual is compelled to join, prevented from leaving or forced to pay subscriptions.

Nor should anybody be disadvantaged in any way as a result of their decision.

However, there are numerous benefits to corporals’ messes that should be seriously considered.

They support junior NCO development and ethos and they provide valuable opportunities to develop management and supervisory responsibilities.

They are also a convenient social body for junior NCOs and their partners and act as a stepping stone to the warrant officers’ and sergeants’ mess.

In the new year we will be conducting further research with key stakeholders to determine the appetite for and implications of establishing corporals’ messes on a more formal footing.

Talkback

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
 🐦 [@soldiermagazine](https://twitter.com/soldiermagazine)

RANT OF THE MONTH



Get it off your chest
and on social media



www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine

As Alex Brazier of the Spear 17 expedition found out (page 44), "polar penis" is no laughing matter, but it did cause a swelling of social media chat...



Daniel Bland

Is that a condition where your penis always points to true north?



Sara Sammon

Is putting your hat down there

helping? That would not be a good place for frostbite. As a nurse my head is going in ten thousand places a minute thinking how to help. How about a sock or two first then the hat? Hope this goes away.



Will Hanan

It was well worth the trip just for the penis legacy!



Alex Jack Underwood

Take care all, and the entire *Sun/Daily*

Mail reading population now know about your polar penis. On the plus side, a female comedian commented "any woman who doesn't find him bl**dy gorgeous must be blind". So you've got a guaranteed date when you get back!



Claire Dawson

You're famous! Keep going and looking forward to hearing all about it when you get back!

Saying sorry for



“The company is inept at following Armed Forces rules”

DESPITE making an early application for substitute Service single accommodation after moving to a new post, I have been forced to live in hotels for three months.

I've had to move from one to another every seven to nine days.

I complained to the supplier, Mears Group, detailing all the distress caused by being homeless and from having to move my belongings around because I don't have personal storage, yet they've still not found me a suitable quarter.

I'd also like to highlight the immorality of the cost to the taxpayer – between August and October last year Mears spent £7,697 on housing me.

The company is inept at following Armed Forces rules, offering me one property in a location outside the stipulated travel radius and lacking the furniture required.

I've looked at property rental prices in the area where I work and they average £600 per month, or £7,200 a year.

That's cheaper than the cost of putting me in hotels for three months so why doesn't the Service allow me to find a place on my own, for which it pays.

The alternative is to continue haemorrhaging public funds.

How will the Army address this shoddy management? – **SSgt Candis Turnbull, RAMC**

Andrea Nixon, Deputy Head of Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Service Delivery Accommodation Strategic

Support, replies: I would like to apologise and acknowledge Mears Group has struggled to meet the requirements of the contract.

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) always takes these issues very seriously and works alongside this company and many others to address them as quickly as possible.

The cost of temporary housing is borne by Mears, which means they are highly incentivised to find you substitute accommodation.

As the contract performance improves, the number of personnel and the time they spend in temporary housing will reduce.

We would like to see use of this measure exceed two or three weeks only in very exceptional cases.

Mears' contract has been set in line with the living accommodation policy in **JSP 464** but on occasions, and driven by market availability, we may have to offer property that does not exactly match its criteria.

However, permission must be sought first from the local unit or station commander.

I assure you that Mears has put in place a comprehensive long-term plan that has significantly improved their service.

The DIO is also constantly monitoring the situation and looking for ways to further enhance performance so your feedback is much appreciated. ■

I've spent months
ringing the supplier

TALKBACK

poor substitutes

● I AM a regimental sergeant major with more than 25 years' service in the Army and have taken up a posting at a Reserve unit.

I applied for single living accommodation but was told none was available so I applied for substitute Service single accommodation, which I'm still waiting for.

I have spent months ringing Mears Group, almost daily with no success.

I was always told someone would ring me back but they never have.

I complained to Mears and the DIO but have not received any correspondence in return.

Two months on, I finally received confirmation that they'd found me a property but the agent I met did not work for Mears, which was a major surprise, and the property was even more of a shock.

It looked as if it had been taken from the set of *Shameless*.

Also, I noticed someone else in the apartment – and it was at this stage Mears informed me I'd be sharing.

To add to the disappointment, there was damp in the living room and kitchen, mould on the window sills, poor decoration throughout, no curtains or lampshades, missing furniture and the exterior needed severe maintenance.

I told Mears I would not accept it.

They subsequently informed me the problems had been rectified but when I asked them about the damp and mould, I was told nothing had been done.

I said I wouldn't accept the property and they said I was effectively removing myself from the application process.

I have had no correspondence from the DIO since then.

I have been advised by my military housing liaison officer to apply for surplus Service family accommodation (SFA) but CarillionAmey informed me none was available.

Having driven around the local SFA estate I know there are at least 30 properties lying empty.

I am currently residing in

transit accommodation, with no solution on the horizon. – **WO1 Mark Berry, RA**

Andrea Nixon, Deputy Head of DIO, Service Delivery Accommodation Strategic Support, replies: I apologise for the poor service you have received from Mears Group.

The communication has not been good enough and the company's improvement plan includes technical changes to the phone system to ensure each call is put through to the right team as well as customer service training events.

Mears works with a company called Vibrant that carries out viewings and their staff now carry Mears ID cards.

I agree the condition of the property you viewed was unacceptable; this is also an area that Mears have improved upon.

The viewing appointment is an opportunity to review the condition, and any works agreed will be completed ahead of the actual move in where practically possible.

Both Mears and DIO believed your offer was in accordance with the contract and in line with the Service living accommodation policy contained in **JSP 464**.

I am sure you will be aware that only one offer is made and when a property has been refused we are required to refer the individual to the housing colonel for advice.

Personnel eligible for SFA but not entitled can apply for a surplus

licence and we are encouraging this by working with the chain of command to advertise the fact. However, empty properties are not necessarily surplus and may be allocated or part of an upgrade programme.

I am concerned that you remain in transit accommodation so I have asked my team to review your case urgently.

Sometimes a
lick of paint
isn't enough

“It looked
as if it
had been
taken from
the set of
Shameless”

HEAD CASE CLOSED

● I FULLY agree with the author of the letter in the October issue regarding women being required to wear headgear in church.

It is an outdated custom and bears no relation whatsoever to current civilian practice.

I served in the Reserves for 27 years and am now a civilian padre still regularly involved in church parades and always found it an incongruent, untidy and unnecessary tradition.

The sooner women are spared this outdated and alienating regulation the better. – **Chris Oldroyd, Haslemere**

Brig John Donnelly, Director of Army Personnel Services, responds: I am pleased to inform you that we listened to the argument and subsequently the Army dress committee agreed that it was no longer appropriate to require Servicewomen to retain their headdress when in a consecrated building.

Female personnel may now remove their headdress when entering a church or other religious building, in accordance with its customs, if they wish.

Hats off to new
rule – page 12



GOT A GRIPE?

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

🐦 @soldiermagazine

ADVANCE OF PAY PUZZLER

● TEN years ago I took out a long service advance of pay (LSAP) of £8,000 to buy my first house.

Since then an insurance fee of around £1.70 per month has been deducted from my account.

When I first took out the advance I was told that interest, not insurance, would be deductible from any sum taken above £5,000.

So what is this levy exactly? I don't want it but I still pay for it.

I found a plethora of forums online asking the same thing but never with a straight answer.

I'd like a refund but am I eligible for one? – **Name and address supplied**

Brig Chris Ghika, Director Personnel Capability, responds: As long as you are living in your property you will not be charged any interest on your advance – this would only be incurred if you were renting your house out.

What you are actually paying is the LSAP waiver premium.

This equates to 30 pence per £100, so a loan of £8,000 should incur a monthly tariff of around £2.40.

All personnel who took advantage of LSAP are subject to this charge, which ensures that in certain circumstances such as death, invalidity after taking the advance, or exceptionally in the case of premature discharge or release, the outstanding amount of the loan can be waived.

This should have been made clear in the terms and conditions as well as the fact it was a mandatory levy.

I sympathise with your difficulty in tracking down information on this issue.

JSP 752 and **2013DIN1-053** have information on the LSAP waiver premium.

Not knowing the full circumstances of your case, the best advice I can offer is you consult the Pay and Allowances Casework and Complaints Cell to discuss your situation.

“Common sense needs to be applied”

Commuter chaos



ON applying for Service family accommodation (SFA) at Lyneham I was informed the nearest available quarter was in Swindon.

I was told the property was under ten miles away as the crow flies and therefore within the allocation limit.

I looked at an online route planner and it calculated the journey as just over 12 miles and taking 27 minutes on a traffic-free day.

I explained to the desk officer I didn't want the quarter because the drive would take me through the centre of Swindon, therefore taking around one hour each way.

However, he told me commuting time was irrelevant.

I was offered a three-bedroom unit below my entitlement within Lyneham but it was too small because I have two children and, as I'm unaccompanied, potentially require a nanny.

I have since accepted a quarter above my entitlement but I've been informed that as it was a personal choice I will pay its full expense.

Also, if I had accepted the original accommodation my motor mileage would have been paid for but as I'm now taking a quarter above my entitlement I bear the brunt of this cost.

There needs to be some common sense applied to quarter allocation with a realistic look at what the commuting journey time is, not just distance as the crow flies. – **Maj Athena Webb, REME**

Andrea Nixon, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Deputy Head Service Delivery Accommodation Strategic Support, replies: It is clear there has

been some misunderstanding of the policy and local rules in this case and I apologise for that.

I do note, however, that the correct outcome has ultimately been achieved, as detailed below.

JSP 464's ten-mile rule for this housing is based on radius from the property, not a driving route.

The initial allocation of a property in South Cerney met this criteria but should not have been offered to you as these units have been purchased to specifically support personnel stationed there.

When the below-entitlement SFA within Lyneham was agreed as being unsuitable, CarillionAmey's occupancy services team found an over-entitlement option, which you accepted. Regrettably, there was a further human error at this stage as it was noted as a personal choice.

This should have been recorded as being for service reasons as a property to entitlement could not be provided and this may have led to the understandable but mistaken belief you are being overcharged.

In fact, when above-entitlement SFA is allocated for service reasons, the charge would be the actual band fee for the type of property occupied, which in this case is £8.16 per day.

Although the records incorrectly show the property has been allocated for personal rather than service reasons, the correct charges have actually been applied.

Clearly errors were made and I will ensure those lessons are learnt.

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Living as a member of a Forces family is an unusual experience and not normally one understood by those unfamiliar with service life. Civilians



Steven Jandrell - Principal

find it difficult to imagine a job where you can be moved at little or no notice and where you can be sent into a hostile zone with no regular means of contacting your family.

Rest assured, we understand the pressures that your family has to go through. About a fifth of our pupils come from Forces backgrounds and we work hard to support those children and the difficulties they face being away from home and worrying about their serving parents.

The College has seen another outstanding year with its A level results. 87% of grades at A level were A*-A and 98% were A*-B.

The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's,

which offers students the opportunity to do more vocational subjects at BTEC, celebrated some of its best results ever. 84% of grades at A level were A*-A and 96% of grades were A*-B. The Faculty's 91% Distinction*-Distinction pass rate at BTEC (equating in UCAS points to an A/A* grade at A level) shows equal strength in these qualifications.

Over the last few years our Combined Cadet Force has gone from strength to strength and we have a thriving contingent with cadets split between the Air Force and the Army.

With the backing of The Collegiate Charitable Foundation we are able to guarantee that your contribution to fees is no more than £895 per child per term. This makes us one of the most competitively priced boarding schools in the United Kingdom for Forces children.

With our investment now standing at £100m, 2016 has seen more facilities come online including 8 new grassed sports pitches with over 100 floodlights, state-of-the-art gym and

Activity Centre with further developments underway for 2017.

Please see our dedicated sports village website

(www.sportsvillageqe.org) for further information, including Elite Rugby (supported by Yorkshire Carnegie) and Netball (with Yorkshire Jets). With the number of young people we have living on campus it is important that there is always a range of things to do in their spare time. This is the idea behind our new Activity Centre, packed full of all the favourite things young people like. It combines outdoor energetic activities and challenges such as a huge climbing tower, assault course, trampolines, roller booting, go-karts, Segways and a professionally built BMX track with indoor activities like electronic games, musical activities plus much more. Don't just take our word for it, pay us a visit and see for yourself.

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**UK's 2016 Top 20
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based on Telegraph rankings for
% A*/A grade A levels

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3	Magdalen College School	87.85
4	North London Collegiate School	87.44
5	Queen Ethelburga's College	86.86
6	Wycombe Abbey School	85.81
7	King Edward's School, Birmingham	85.59
8	The Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's	83.67
9	Guildford High School for Girls	83.64
10	James Allen's Girls' School	82.91
11	Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls	81.89
12	Withington Girls' School	81.43
13	The Perse School	80.22
14	St John's College, Cardiff	80.17
15	Brighton College	79.13
16	The Stephen Perse Foundation	79.03
17	Royal Grammar School	78.49
18	Concord College	78.47
19	Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School	78.46
20	King's College School (KCS)	76.99

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→ **Our boarding facilities are the best in Europe. No one else even comes close.**

Every bedroom has its own private shower and toilet plus telephone, voice mail, large plasma TV/DVD player + gaming port (on timer), a Sony PS3, fridge, microwave, trouser press and hot drinks facilities. House staff are friendly and caring.

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→ **More British Forces children than any other boarding school - because we care.**

We understand the needs of Service families with staff who are married to serving members of the Forces. With years of experience in ensuring our 300 + Forces children settle well, are confident and successful. Easy to get to by road, rail and air. Dedicated, professional, friendly and helpful staff go the "extra mile" to ensure your child is happy and doing well. We have Forces families from all over the UK.

→ **Over £100m invested in new facilities in the last 8 years.**

Why choose an independent school education for your child if you qualify for CEA? If you made a list, the same reasons would keep appearing. We think the list might include: happy children, academic results, a personalised approach, top quality teachers with specialised expertise, good discipline, latest technology and superb facilities, excellent pastoral care, excellent sport, first class boarding accommodation, diverse experience, small classes, university success, excellent career prospects, first class confidence and self assurance. If you want the best for your child, and to stand a chance of achieving most of this list, we believe you would need to pick one of the top 10 UK Independent boarding schools as ranked by the Sunday Times. BUT, most importantly of all, we unashamedly also offer TLC - tender, loving care!



BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



APPOINTMENTS

Lt Gen Patrick Sanders appointed Commander Field Army, succeeding **Lt Gen Sir James Rupert Everard** who is to be promoted to the rank of general and appointed Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe in March.



CAREERS

Veteran Employment Transition Support programme, aimed at connecting ex-Forces personnel with employers. For details visit www.veteranemployment.co.uk

Transition Force provides personalised career support to ex-Service personnel nationwide. To register visit www.transitionforce.com/events

Ex-Military Recruitment helps veterans of specialist technical regiments trained in electrical and mechanical engineering, logistics and telecommunications to find similar civilian careers. For details visit www.xmr.co.uk

HighGround is a charity providing land-based skills to serving and former Army personnel, helping them move into civilian life. Log on to www.highground-uk.org for more



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Sgt Jamie Barber, JEWOSC, RAF Waddington



DIARY

January 21-22: The Adventure Travel Show, Olympia, London. Quote "Soldier" to save £4 on the door price when booking online at www.adventureshow.com or call 0871 230 7159 (charges apply)



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
0845 241 4820

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
www.afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01252 311221; www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
www.afma.org.uk

Army Families Federation:
01264 382324; mil 94391 2324;
www.aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:
www.armylgbt.org.uk;
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries: 01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124; www.blesma.org

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

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
01372 841600;
www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569; www.erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901
www.felixfund.org.uk

Forcesline:
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065;
Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
01722 436575

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association:

www.nesa.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
www.ngvfa.org.uk

Poppyscotland: 0131 557 2782;
www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Remount:
01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Royal British Legion Scotland:
0131 550 1583;
www.legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
01622 795900; www.rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
0131 556 0091; www.svrnline.org

SPACES (Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services):
01748 833797; www.spaces.org.uk

SSAFA:
0845 1300 975; www.ssafa.org.uk

Stoll (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation):
020 7385 2110; info@stoll.org.uk;
www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400 www.nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star & Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676; www.starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

uk4u Thanks!:
01798 812081; www.uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)
www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 163/16: Extension of Reserves commitment bonus to Army Medical Services and Royal Army Chaplains Department professionally qualified

officers

ABN 162/16: Introduction of the Army Reserves Reinforcement Group

ABN 161/16: Army participation in the Invictus Games 2017

ABN 160/16: Current account switch service

ABN 159/16: Automation of flexible working applications

ABN 158/16: Speakout helpline – Christmas stand-down

ABN 157/16: Changes to the Army recovery capabilities assessment board

ABN 156/16: Wearing of female headdress in consecrated building

ABN 155/16: Management of items attractive to criminal and terrorist organisations

ABN 154/16: National Anti-Bullying Week 2016

ABN 153/16: Civil servant compensation scheme reforms

ABN 152/16: Four themes of Army health

ABN 151/16: AGAI Vol 1, Ch 7 – Physical Training AEL 83, November 2016

ABN 150/16: Army TLB apprenticeship launch

DIN 2016DIN01-178: Ministry of Defence Police: Annual pay award

DIN 2016DIN01-177: Re-subordination of HG Surgeon General personnel division

DIN 2016DIN01-176: National insurance credits for spouses and civil partners accompanying Service personnel on overseas assignments

DIN 2016DIN01-173: Civilian employees posted to non-operational hardship locations

DIN 2016DIN01-172: The Reserve Land Forces regulations 2016

DIN 2016DIN01-171: Service pupil premium details for 2016/17

DIN 2016DIN01-170: MoD civilian consultants pay award 2016

DIN 2016DIN04-218: Distribution of maritime spare gear lists via a web-enabled application

DIN 2016DIN04-217: The use of cartridge .50in electric EOD propelling L1A1 and L3A1

DIN 2016DIN04-216: Intended out-of-service date – declaration of obsolete hand tool

DIN 2016DIN04-213: Amendments to operational medical modules contents –

Continued on page 54

Intelligence continued

inclusion of Nomad Pro II mobile dental x-ray system within medical modules

DIN 2016DIN04-212: UCR – CereTom portable head and neck CT scanner

DIN 2016DIN04-211: Declaration of obsolescence – PSC 510

DIN 2016DIN04-210: Declaration of obsolescence – VSC 501

DIN 2016DIN04-209: Declaration of out-of-service date for Sea Skua missile system

DIN 2016DIN04-208: Weapon equipment – declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2016DIN04-207: Land deployed gateway – introduction to service and asset management

DIN 2016DIN04-206: Notification of contract LSL/DC/0007: Saddlery and harness

DIN 2016DIN04-205: Airborne Forces equipment CSPEP Mk 3 location identification

DIN 2016DIN04-204: Movement of private vehicles at public expense

DIN 2016DIN04-203: The withdrawal of fixed direction fragmentation weapon drill

DIN 2016DIN04-202: Declaration of obsolete platform cockpit access step

DIN 2016DIN04-201: Obsolete DMCs 7DE, 7MTE and 7NL

DIN 2016DIN04-200: Requesting HQWE (DRASH) James accounting, spares, repair and training

DIN 2016DIN04-199: Introduction of new handheld eddy current flaw detector – Ether NDT AeroCheck+

DIN 2016DIN04-198: Confirmed out-of-service date for air-launched anti-radiation missile system

DIN 2016DIN04-197: Revised out-of-service date for the 0.22in No 8 Mk 1 cadet rifle

DIN 2016DIN04-196: Accounting for Tricat hardware on MJDI

DIN 2016DIN04-195: Introduction into service of the Lifesmoke Mk 9

DIN 2016DIN04-193: Declaration of obsolescent ground support equipment pump inflating manual

DIN 2016DIN04-192: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – September 2016

DIN 2016DIN04-191: Correct use of the Advanced Respirator Test System (Arts) and guidance on the purchase of permanent Arts facilities

DIN 2016DIN07-148: Temporary

landing zone safety officer course dates 2017

DIN 2016DIN07-147: Exercise Channel Express 2017

DIN 2016DIN07-146: 2017 Senior Sigint advisor training course

DIN 2016DIN07-145: Exercise Rucksack – medical instruction

DIN 2016DIN07-143: Defence technical undergraduate scheme

DIN 2016DIN07-142: Joint Service adventure training air activities – paragliding, parachuting and gliding – course schedules 2017/18

DIN 2016DIN07-141: Qualified helicopter tactics instructor course

DIN 2016DIN08-012: Insurance brokerage advice and assistance

DIN 2016DIN08-011: Claims for loss of, or damage to, personal property (regulation claims)

DIN 2016DIN10-053: Army Telemark championship general instruction – Ex Telemark Titan 2017



REUNIONS

223 Durham Field Ambulance reunion on April 1, 2017 at the Barnard Armoury, Greenwell Road, Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham, DL5 4EW from

1900. All members welcome. Bring photographs and memorabilia.

13 (Martinique) 1809 Battery reunion on April 7-9, 2017 at the Copthorne Hotel, Merry Hill, Dudley. For details email k.brooksusher@hotmail.co.uk

Army Apprentices National Memorial Trust annual reunion weekend on May 6-7, 2017 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. All ex-apprentices welcome to attend. For further details contact mohope118@gmail.com



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to armymediacomm-aeg-mailbox@mod.uk with the event you are interested in attending.

January: 17, Liverpool

NO. 902

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



TEN details have been changed in this picture of a team preparing a display at the dismounted close combat sensors stakeholder demonstration day at Roke Manor Research, Romsey.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 902, Soldier**, Ordnance

Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU no later than January 31.

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

First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a Manfrotto TwistGrip universal

smartphone clamp worth £40, a great device for those interested in smartphone photography.

The winner will be announced in the March issue. Usual rules apply. **November's winner:** Timothy Moore Pontypridd. **Runners up:** LCpl Joleen Blair and Cpl Roxan Alexander, Wimbish.





Can I join?

Membership of the Army Sports Lottery (ASL) is open to all members of the Regular Army; payment is deducted at source by JPA.

All members of the Army Reserve are eligible to join; payment is made in advance by cheque or online via WorldPay.

Military Support Force/Retired Officers/Retired Other Ranks who are ex-Army, whether working or retired are eligible. Payment is as for the Army Reserve.

To apply, complete and return JS Form JPA E015, available through your local Gymnasium, Unit Admin Office or our Website.



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Every ASL ticket is entered into a weekly prize draw with the opportunity of winning weekly cash prizes totalling **£25K**. In July and December a Super Draw is held when all prizes are doubled.

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CONTACT US

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REVIEWS

BOOKS

DEBRIEFING THE PRESIDENT

Ex-CIA analyst sheds light on Saddam

AS fly-on-the-wall moments go, few episodes in recent history can be more tantalising than the interrogation of Saddam Hussein.

Ten years on from his execution in December 2006, the story of exactly what took place between the former Iraqi leader and the American intelligence officials who questioned him has been revealed in a new book, *Debriefing the President*.

Its author, ex-CIA analyst John Nixon, was the man who positively identified Saddam immediately after his capture in Tikrit in 2003, before spending a month cross-examining him in an attempt to lift the veil on his regime. »

Picture: US Department of Defense

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MOVIES

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MUSIC

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TOP GEAR

BOOKS



Speaking to *Soldier* from his home near Washington he described the surreal experience of meeting one of the 20th century's most notorious despots in the flesh after years of studying him from afar.

"The first day or two I was like 'wow, I can't believe I'm here doing this,'" he said.

"As an analyst you read about this individual and build a picture up in your mind in which they become kind of omnipotent, or all-seeing.

"It was a humbling experience when I walked in there and saw this Arab grandfather.

"But in many ways I felt very comfortable speaking with him because I had read so much about him.

"He was incredibly narcissistic; he loved talking about himself.

"It was sort of like reading a bad Washington memoir in the sense that everything positive that was done was because of him and everything negative that happened was because he was poorly served by incompetent people working below him.

"In some ways it was like talking to a 15-year-old: 'everyone's against me', 'I can't win', 'even if I come clean on my weapons of mass destruction, or lack of them, no one's going to believe me so why should I try?'."

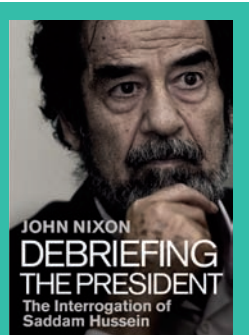
Sometimes threatening but frequently humorous, Saddam proved himself to be as complex and enigmatic in person as his public persona.

He was concerned with his place in history but surprisingly disengaged in foreign affairs; neither worldly nor intellectual, but shrewd and charismatic – even in his straitened circumstances.

"He had incredible political skills," explained Nixon.

"When he walked into a room the whole feeling changed and I can just imagine what he must have been like at the height of his power, with his entourage and his Armani suits.

"With us he was dressed in a dishdasha and quilted jacket but he still



John Nixon's *Debriefing the President* (Bantam Press) is out now, priced £16.99

“

In some ways it was like talking to a 15-year-old

”

had a way about him that was kind of overwhelming."

Over time it became clear that many of the assumptions that underpinned the coalition invasion of Iraq had been based on false premises.

But when Nixon returned to the US and debriefed George Bush on his findings the president showed no interest in the nuances of the region's political landscape or in anything that contradicted his view.

The chapters on these meetings in the Oval Office are some of the most compelling – and damning – passages in the book.

"That more than anything else is what led me to leave the intelligence community," said Nixon.

"From when I joined the CIA I always had this feeling that what I said mattered – it might not swing policy but my viewpoint would be useful.

"But throughout the Bush administration that belief slowly withered away and when I met him I felt like I was with a bunch of rednecks on a Saturday night, drinking Budweiser, and I remember thinking, 'it doesn't matter what I say, they've got their minds made up'.

"I realised that politics is always going to win out over the facts. It's really unfortunate."

There's no doubt certain parts of the text will make uncomfortable reading for the Bush administration and the

senior CIA managers at the time.

In fact, the agency took five years to clear the title for publication and significant chunks remain redacted.

But Nixon is unapologetic.

"Everything in the book is true," the author said.

"There's no agenda here, other than I wanted to tell the truth and I wanted people to understand this is exactly what happened.

"Even if everything else is based on lies, this one sliver of history is solid because there's nothing made up."

His account also deals with his continued discomfort at his involvement in an ill-conceived war.

Reflecting on what has happened in the region since, he said: "Saddam was a pretty brutal guy, but Iraq was a tough country to govern as we've subsequently seen.

"We created a power vacuum that we failed to fill.

"I don't approve of the methods, but in light of what has come afterwards I do have a grudging respect for his ability to retain control.

"At the agency a number of analysts and myself would later say we kind of missed him." ■

REVIEW: BECKY CLARK

VERDICT:

The gripping behind-the-scenes story of Saddam Hussein's downfall and a misconceived war

★★★★★

SOLDIER SELECTS



Enduring the Whirlwind

by Gregory Liedtke

THIS impressive book challenges the generally accepted narrative

of the war on the Eastern Front. Using extensive primary and secondary sources, combined with an avalanche of data and technical reports, the author sets about busting almost every myth surrounding the struggle in Russia. Backed up by a wealth of evidence, his compelling narrative makes the case that the Germans were not vastly outnumbered by the Red Army, nor was it hopelessly undermined by interference from on high. The accepted reasons for defeat are far more complex and in many cases, they are simply not true. This is a fascinating read.

Mike Peters, ex-AAC



From the Marne to Verdun

Translated by Ian Sumner

THIS is the war diary of French officer, Capt

Charles Delvert, an educated man and brave soldier who was wounded several times in action. More importantly for the reader, he was an astute observer with a keen eye for character, detail, the ironies of command and the stupidities and horror of conflict. Ian Sumner's translation, the first into English, has successfully captured Delvert's spirit. The account ends in the terrible fighting at Verdun, where his front-line service ended. This is a realistic and moving description of a company commander's experiences in the trenches; not to be missed by students of the Western Front.

Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian



Victoria Cross Heroes

by Michael Ashcroft

TO date, 1,363 Victoria Crosses have been

awarded. This is Michael Ashcroft's second book on the history of the decoration and in this offering he highlights the stories of 60 recipients and how they earned Britain's highest gallantry medal. Each tale will make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. They reveal the mindset of these brave men, who shrugged off their hero status with an "I was only doing my job" attitude. Somehow, I don't think so. The fact that royalties are being donated to military charities is another good reason to buy this fascinating title.

Tony David, ex-RE



Hunting Hitler's Nukes

by Damien Lewis

BILLED as the story behind the battle for civilisation, this gripping

title examines the race between Nazi scientists working to build the atomic bomb and the British and Norwegian Commandos who tried to stop them. The first suicidal raids to disrupt the Germans' production of heavy water were codenamed Grouse, Gunnerside and Freshman. The author details each of these disastrous operations before the final act of derring-do; the sinking of a ferry containing the last remaining supplies of raw materials. Every bit as compelling as the famous *Heroes of Telemark* film, this book is a must for anyone with a fondness for the Commandos.

LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

MOVIES

PICK OF THE MONTH:

DECISIVE VICTORY

Liam Neeson's Korean war movie scores highly

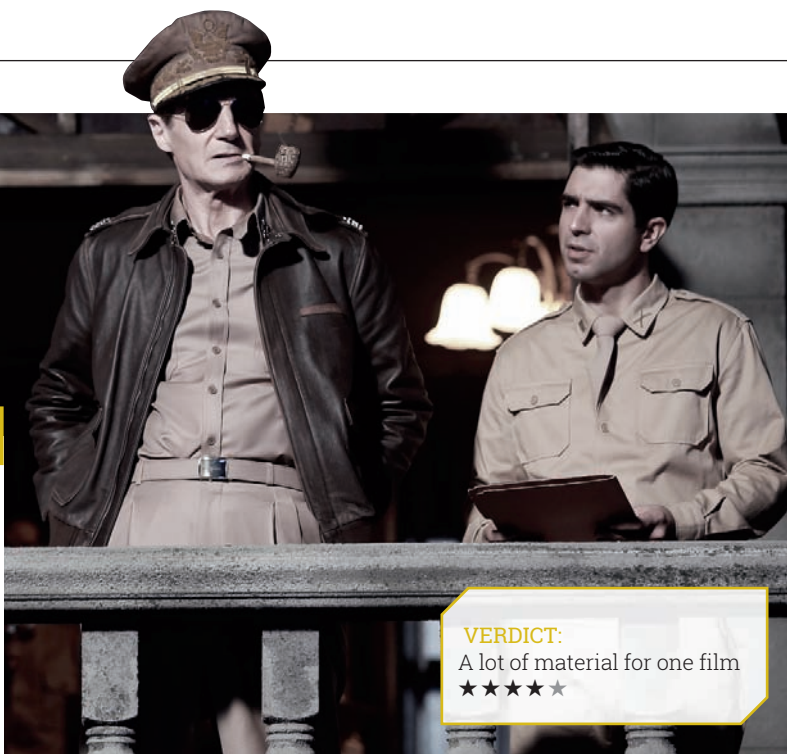
➤ *OPERATION Chromite* is a fictionalised portrayal of the outrageously daring undercover mission led by South Korean navy special forces captain, Jang Hak-Soo (**Lee Jung-Jae**).

Out in cinemas and on digital platforms now, it is **Liam Neeson's** first role in a war movie in more than a decade.

The plot focuses on the clandestine task that paved the way for the Battle of Incheon – often regarded as one of the greatest landing operations in military history.

And its special effects and battle scenes are certainly impressive.

A seven-man team goes undercover under the direction of UN Supreme



VERDICT:

A lot of material for one film

★★★★★

Commander Gen Douglas MacArthur (Neeson) to infiltrate the North Korean command centre in Incheon.

But the officers' cover is blown and they have one final chance to regain control of the city and recover their footing in the conflict.

This all seems too grand a subject for a single movie; in my view it could have been told better over a longer format.

However, with its scenes focused on the mission of Capt Hak-Soo, there is a frenetic pace to the film. It is filled with taut suspense.

I watched the subtitled version but would love to see the movie dubbed because it is so distracting.

Overall, the only negative thing about *Operation Chromite* is the fact the characters are a touch one-dimensional, possibly due to the time constraints involved.

Although this does detract from the title, this is without doubt a story that deserves to be told and I would highly recommend it to anyone. ■

REVIEW: CPL ADAM JACKSON, PARA

DVD RELEASES



War Dogs

Out now

BASED on a true story, this rather predictable title follows the antics of two small-time arms dealers living in Miami Beach during the Iraq War. After stumbling upon a little-known government initiative that allows small

businesses to bid on US military contracts, the pair rake in the big bucks. But when they land themselves a 300 million dollar arms deal to supply the Afghan military they enter very deep water. This film has a bit of everything, from comedy to gangsters. And the predictability doesn't really detract from the overall storyline, which will have you in stitches and cringing throughout.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE

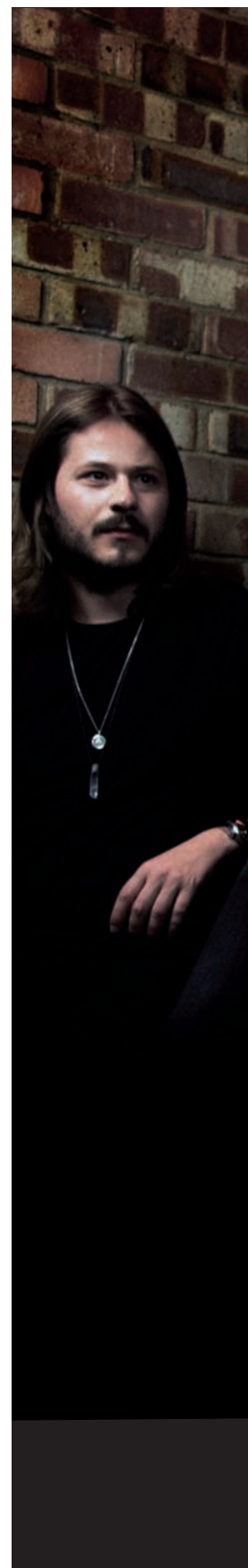


The Accountant

Out January 10

DON'T be fooled by the straight-sounding title, **Ben Affleck** stars in this first-rate film that has everything. The hero is as hard as tungsten, as bright as Einstein and – for a snazzy twist to the tale – he's right off the autistic scale. Staying one step ahead of the government and assorted criminals, he has to negotiate the intricacies of tax codes, dum-dum bullets and a tortured childhood. The scriptwriter deserves the highest praise for this feature, as does Affleck for his deadpan delivery. I laughed, I squirmed, I ducked and I genuinely did not predict the final twist in the plot. Watch this movie now.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC





Ex-Service chief charts 70 years of British Army history

PICK OF THE MONTH:

NIGHT PEOPLE

by You Me at Six

➤ ADDRESSING MPs on the parliamentary culture, media and sport select committee is about as far removed from the rock 'n' roll lifestyle that an artist can get.

But when unscrupulous third parties are forming a barrier between musicians and their adoring public the need to make allies in high places becomes apparent.

You Me at Six frontman Josh Franceschi did just that when he recently took his fight against ticket tout websites to the House of Commons after becoming increasingly frustrated at the way fans are being charged exorbitant prices to see the acts they love.

Having argued his case the debate still rumbles on and the singer's focus has now switched to the impending release of new offering *Night People*.

VERDICT:

A new headline act is born
★★★★★

The record marks the fifth chapter in a career that has gathered significant momentum since the band formed in 2004, the culmination of which saw previous album *Cavalier Youth* top the charts.

Reflecting on such success was a key part of the process this time round and the members were quick to reaffirm their goals as they returned to the studio.

"We'd forgotten about some of the stuff we had done," Franceschi said. "So much has happened over the course of ten years' hard work.

"The idea was to list the things that gave us an injection of confidence before we started.

"It was us saying 'that's what we've done now, but we want to play bigger venues and headline more festivals; that was the benchmark and we can't go back, we can only go further'. It's our launch pad."

Acts such as **Biffy Clyro** and **Foals** have made an impressive march towards the top of the British rock tree in recent years and judging by the tracks on this album You Me at Six will not be far behind in 2017.

The experience garnered during a decade of hard toil is evident throughout as a succession of polished songs assault the eardrums in style.

Take on the World has all the hallmarks of a classic stadium anthem, while *Swear* and *Make Your Move* deliver energy, drive and expert musicianship in equal measure.

The trend is maintained as the tunes continue to roll and as a newcomer to the band and their music it was hard not to be impressed by this album.

The next instalment can't come soon enough. ■

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG

MUSIC RELEASES

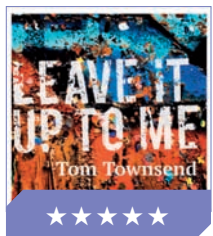


Mirage by Fleetwood Mac

IF you're into
**Fleetwood
Mac** you
probably own

most of the old classic albums by now, so I'm not sure why you would buy this remastered release of *Mirage* for the sake of slightly improved sound quality. The record reached number one in 1982 but for me, apart from *Gypsy*, it always lacked the standout hits of *Rumours* or *Tango in the Night*. That said, the deluxe and expanded versions contain some decent extras such as outtakes, rare and unreleased tracks and live performances – including the brilliant early hit, *The Chain*. These additional glimpses back to a time when the band's notoriously difficult personal relationships were worse than ever are probably the most interesting thing about this set. Unless you're a major fan I wouldn't invest in this.

Becky Clark, Soldier



Leave It Up To Me by Tom Townsend

I LISTEN to lots
of new material,
especially

when it is written, performed and produced by a real musician. Although he has yet to breakthrough, **Tom Townsend** is a talented multi-instrumentalist who picked up the guitar at the age of nine. His 20-year career has been grounded in blues and jazz and he has toured with lots of artists as well as being a regular performer in Yorkshire. In 2015 Tom set up Village Records, a label designed to produce and release his own tunes and this is the latest offering. The sound is enigmatic and strong, with a definite down-to-earth feel, and his world-class acoustic guitar playing fronts some amazing musicianship. Open a beer, put your feet up and relax to something that sounds familiar, different and new, all at the same time.

Alan Bartlett, ex-RAF



Blue and Lonesome by The Rolling Stones

HAVING
embarked
on a

seemingly never-ending cycle of touring and stadium shows, new material from rock icons **The Rolling Stones** has been few and far between in recent years. So the release of *Blue and Lonesome* has been met with warm enthusiasm from those longing for a fresh venture from **Mick Jagger** et al. This 12-track collection of blues covers pays homage to the music that influenced the group's early years – an era when they were arguably at the peak of their powers. The passion for this genre oozes out of every song and the band members sound as tight as ever – even after six decades on the main stage. It is an expertly produced record that serves as a true labour of love and proves well worth the wait. A must-have for Stones fans.

Richard Long, Soldier

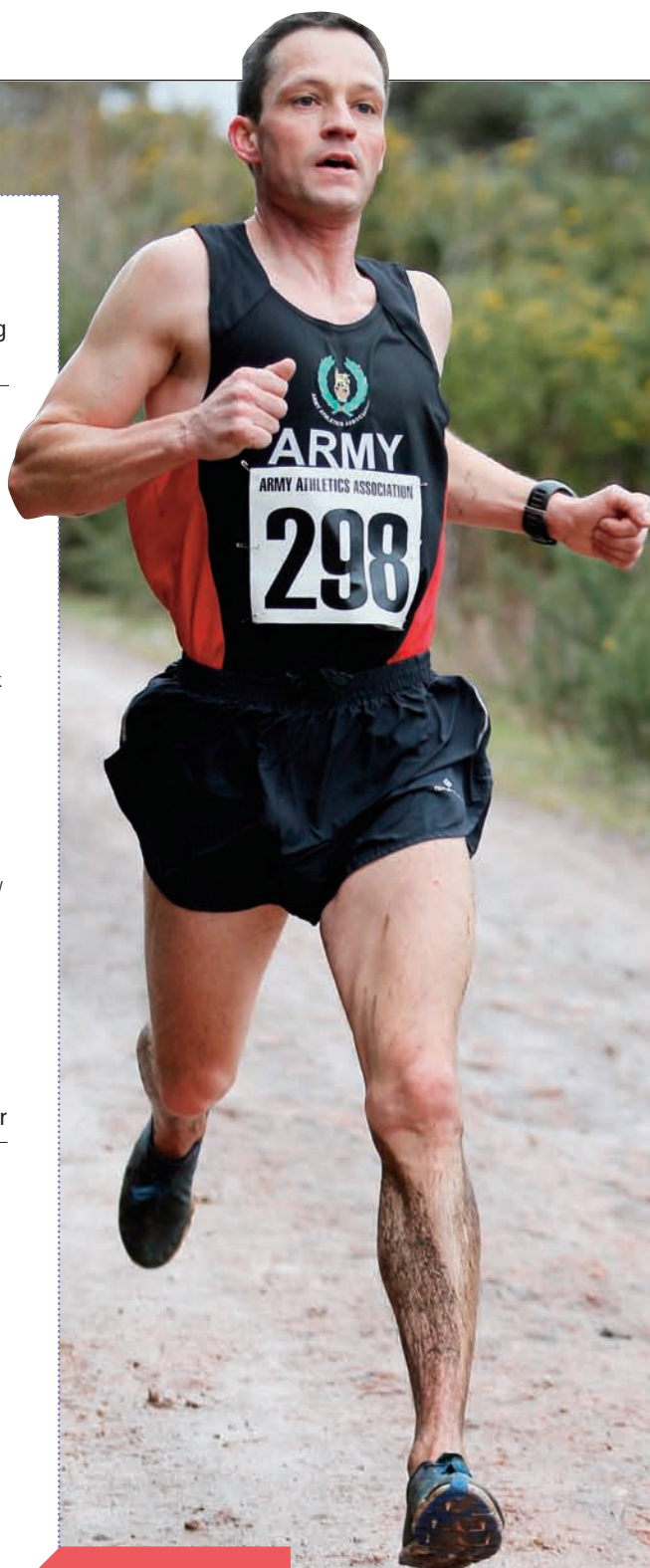


Singles by New Order

THIS is a
remastered
version of
the 2005
release with

improved production and some minor changes in content. For those familiar with **New Order** there will be no surprises; it is a comprehensive overview of their singles back catalogue. For those less familiar, it gives a good introduction to the band's work and evolution. Formed from the remnants of **Joy Division** after the suicide of singer **Ian Curtis**, the group developed a style that combined new wave and synth. Over the years the music became increasingly dance-influenced and this progression is captured throughout this excellent offering. Revered by fans and critics alike they have a unique sound and have been extremely influential, however, this is not easy listening. I suspect you will either love it or hate it.

Pat Jordan, ex-RAMC



PICK OF THE MONTH:

RUGGED PERFORMERS

Athlete Maj Ady Whitwam (RLC) and his Army team colleagues cast their eyes over the products that make life on the road more bearable...



£59.99

VERDICT:

Perfect kit for testing the trails

★★★★★

Magnum UST trainers

◀ THIS impressive footwear is billed as a versatile shoe that offers protection from injury and provides the best comfort and breathability during your hard work.

Not quite in keeping with this vision but in a bid to give these shoes a good run for their money, they were put through their paces on a ten-day Army distance running training camp in Cyprus.

The theory was that they would be tested on benign, flat, fairly forgiving surfaces on one extreme and then rugged, uneven, rocky terrain on another.

Roads and trail routes were a staple diet for those on the camp so the versatility and protective nature of the shoes was given a thorough going-over.

They were found to be surprisingly comfortable and delivered more grip than most trainers the team had previously encountered.

But the key selling point is the protection offered to the wearer and this has come at the expense of flexibility and lightness.

For the purist runner, this factor was considered crucial and sadly limited their appeal when faced with quick bursts on daily road challenges.

However, the solid last and reassuring upper ensured that the Magnum UST lived up to the billing when tested off-road, giving much-needed protection from rolled ankles.

Not recommended for the seasoned athlete but for those seeking a workhorse shoe for general fitness purposes, these are ideal. ■



£12

★★★★★

Activbod Roller Gel

NONE of the testers had used this before, meaning they were all open-minded about what it might feel like and what it might do to help recovery from exercise. The warmth of the gel and the associated tingle ensured the application was comfortable, a bit like a roller ball deodorant. The approach prevented transfer to hands, and potentially eyes, and was thought much safer and more hygienic than other products on the market. After initial use, there was a real sense of the active ingredients (ginger, rosemary and arnica) working, which gave comforting sensations and helped to dampen the worst aspects of muscle fatigue. A real positive during routines and post-exercise.



£9.99

★★★★★

Excilor 3-in-1 Protection Spray

EASY to use and comfortable to apply, this product is designed for barefoot sports but is also an option for athletes wearing training shoes and socks. It was sprayed prior to a run and was found to dry very quickly with no discernable film of grease. Two-and-a-half hours later it was applied again and formed a comforting aspect to the post-workout admin. All-in-all, this product was a popular, if unexpected, hit with the team. My fellow runners seemed surprised at the quick-drying comfort and were reassured that it was helping to protect against skin ailments such as athlete's foot. It comes highly recommended.



£12

★★★★★

Activbod Body Lotion

TRIALLED in the heat of Cyprus, this cooling lotion was applied post-exercise in the early evening after the routine of cool-down and showering. Comfortable to use and with a pleasant scent, the soothing lotion is enhanced by a deodorising element that both moisturised and offered mild relief to dry skin. While it's hard to cool skin temperature completely in this environment, the effect definitely reduced overall sensations of heat and tingle. For the body conscious and socially-minded team members, the residual shine to the skin was much appreciated and the subtle aroma added an extra something. As part of an athlete's training and competition bag, this product is right at home.



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SOLDIER SPORT

Sports Editor: Richard Long
Photographers: Graeme Main and Steve Dock

MAKING A SPLASH >>

ARMY swimmers took to the pool for the annual Inter-Corps Championships – where six new records were set. Read about the competition on page 76...

ON THE ROAD: THE ARMY
PLAYERS RETURN TO ACTION
AT THE SCOTTISH OPEN IN
EDINBURGH ON JANUARY 14

JUDO



TROOPS ON TRIAL

SQUAD members Capt Alex Paske (RE, above), Cpl Sarah Hawkes (AGC (RMP)) and LCpl Russell Parker (RL, below) were in action at the Team GB trials as this issue went to press.

"They have the potential to do very well," manager WO2 Lee Brown (REME) said. "Russell is a fantastic player and Alex has been doing this since day one. They are so fluid.

"Sarah is coming back from an injury so we'll see how she does.

"All three had some arduous training during the UK Armed Forces tour of Japan and that can only hold them in good stead.

"But it is not just about these guys. There are other new players who have the potential to do just as well. We now have to get them out there and build the experience they need to succeed."

Judo has been a happy hunting ground for soldiers seeking international recognition. Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (RTR) and LCpl Victor Ahiavor (RRF) both represented Ghana at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, with the former also competing at the London Olympics.



If you are interested in starting
or returning to the sport of judo
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MASTERS OF THE MAT



**"THE
QUALITY
OF JUDO
WAS
SUPERB"**

THE Army's judo players confirmed their status as the side to beat at Inter-Services level with another dominant display against their Forces rivals.

Victories in the main team championship, kyu grade competition and masters event was followed by a runner-up slot in the women's contest, while a host of individual honours were added to an impressive medal haul.

The absence of some key Royal Air Force performers helped their cause but with the Reds now boasting impressive strength in depth it is doubtful if their inclusion would have altered the final outcome.

In fact, injury deprived the soldiers of their top two female players and their presence in Shrivenham may well have delivered a fourth team crown.

"I was really pleased with

them," manager WO2 Lee Brown (REME) told *SoldierSport*. "They performed out of their skin.

"The RAF made a massive effort to bring players along and they were missing some top athletes but I can't take anything away from our team – the quality of judo was superb."

The likes of Tpr Emmanuel Nartey (RTR) and LCpl Victor Ahiavor (RRF) have led the charge in recent times but the set-up's new breed are now pushing for a place on the main stage and a recent tour of Japan with the UK Armed Forces helped boost their experience.

The two-week trip featured a strict programme of technical and strength and conditioning workouts that were followed by three-hour sparring sessions.

A final test saw the personnel take on the Tsukuba University judo team, who recorded a narrow win over the tourists. ■

ROBOTIC TARGETS

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Deploy in simple & complex scenarios

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SOLID ARMOUR

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SMART SOFTWARE

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PUNCTURE-PROOF

Field-replaceable wheels with filled tires. Hub caps are armoured for extra protection.

» RUGBY UNION





AFTER A MAN-OF-THE-MATCH DISPLAY AGAINST FIJI LCPL SEMESA ROKODUGUNI WAS DROPPED FOR THE FINAL TWO MATCHES OF ENGLAND'S AUTUMN SERIES

TRIALISTS STEP UP

REDS OPEN THE DOOR TO NEW TALENT AS BID TO RECLAIM INTER-SERVICES TITLE GAINS MOMENTUM

HAVING seen their rivals emerge from the shadows to become major players on the Inter-Services stage, the Army's rugby union stars are on a mission to reaffirm their position as the military's premier outfit.

More than 50 players recently took to the turf under the watchful eye of head coach Maj Andy Sanger (RE) as the Reds hosted a two-day trial in a bid to unearth new talent.

The process has not been implemented in recent seasons given the established nature of the squad but with the soldiers last winning the Forces showdown in 2014 the management team is leaving no stone unturned when it comes to preparing for the competition's latest instalment.

Featuring training drills and matches, the trials offered a welcome chance to shine for those who have starred at Premiership and corps level and Sanger was impressed by the skills on display.

"It was an absolute success," he told *SoldierSport*. "It shows there is an open and fair process in terms of selection.

"We have been very proactive in getting out to watch games this season.

"While the trials did not necessarily identify new talent they confirmed that the players we have spotted this year are at the standard needed to represent the Army.

"We integrated some

established players with the group, such as LCpl James Dixon (RE) and Rgr Chris Latham (R Irish), and they really bought into what we were trying to achieve.

"It also gave an opportunity to those from less established regiments and corps.

"There were a couple of Reserve soldiers present as well so it was a good mix."

Sanger was keen to stress that there is no set pathway to the senior side and highlighted recent examples of players emerging in different ways.

LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) came through a similar trials process five years ago and has since become an England international, while Cpl Matt Dawson progressed from the Intelligence Corps team to start for the Army against the Royal Navy at Twickenham last season (pictured left).

Another of those to make the grade is LCpl Ross Parkins (RLC) who enjoyed a run as skipper of the under-23s and is now pushing hard for a place in the full set-up.

With the Army's 2017 campaign getting underway against Cambridge University this month some of the successful trialists will be tested in a match scenario.

Other highlights ahead of the Inter-Services include fixtures against Russia, Sale Sharks and Bedford in the annual Mobbs Memorial Match.



**"IT
SHOWS
WE ARE
OPEN
AND
FAIR"**

But despite falling short in recent times the coach will not be making drastic changes to his approach.

"We've made some slight alterations, although we were not doing things massively wrong," Sanger explained.

"The other two Services have improved but what is really noticeable this year is the backing we are getting from the chain of command.

"I'm also now in charge of the players contracted to club sides and they will be available for our build-up games to the Inter-Services and those matches as well. That is going to make a huge difference."

The drive to improve has also seen squad members pushed towards civilian clubs and the Reds now have 38 individuals performing at national league level or above.

And in another exciting move they will be able to call upon the services of centre Sig Ravai Fatiaki (R Signals) after he recently completed his phase one training.

A Fiji international, he boasts Premiership experience with Worcester Warriors and will offer a welcome addition to the backs division.

"He is a quality player and we are looking forward to seeing him in action," Sanger said. ■

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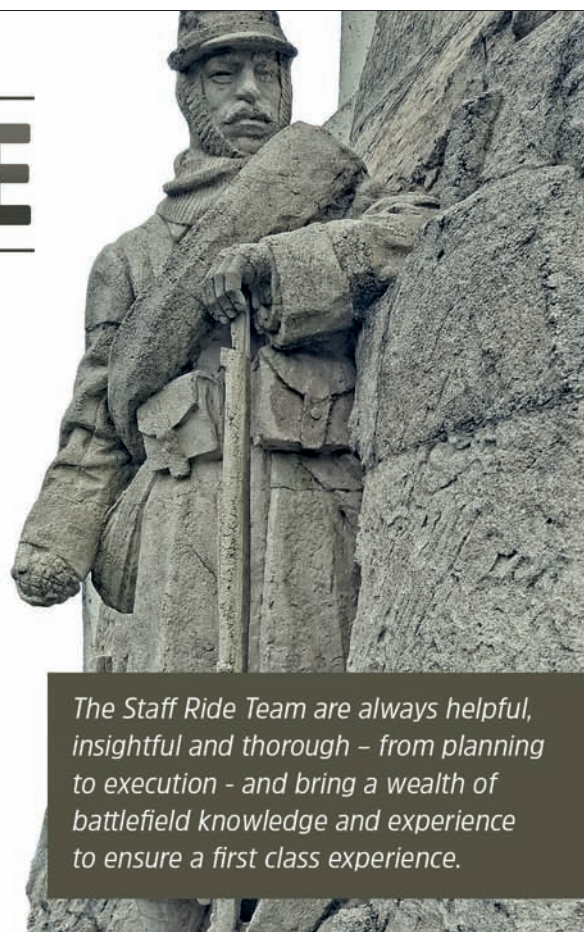
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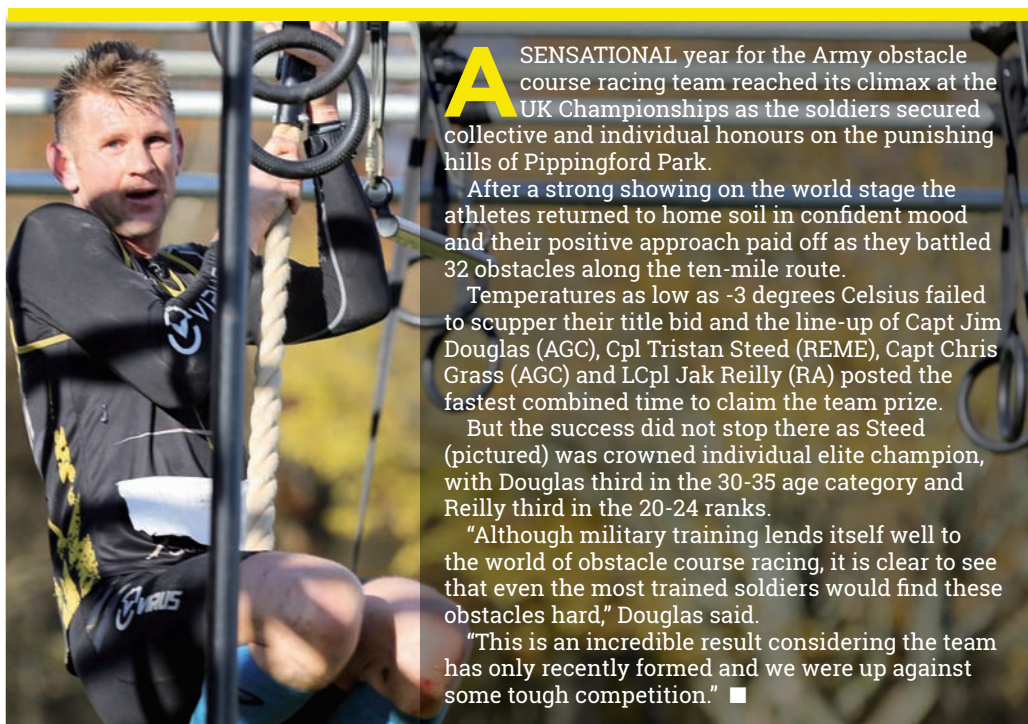


The Staff Ride Team are always helpful, insightful and thorough – from planning to execution – and bring a wealth of battlefield knowledge and experience to ensure a first class experience.

KING OF THE COURSE: STEED
ALSO FINISHED FIFTH AT THE
SPARTAN RACE EUROPEAN
CHAMPIONSHIPS IN 2016

OBSTACLE COURSE

COURSE CONQUERED



A SENSATIONAL year for the Army obstacle course racing team reached its climax at the UK Championships as the soldiers secured collective and individual honours on the punishing hills of Pippingford Park.

After a strong showing on the world stage the athletes returned to home soil in confident mood and their positive approach paid off as they battled 32 obstacles along the ten-mile route.

Temperatures as low as -3 degrees Celsius failed to scupper their title bid and the line-up of Capt Jim Douglas (AGC), Cpl Tristan Steed (REME), Capt Chris Grass (AGC) and LCpl Jak Reilly (RA) posted the fastest combined time to claim the team prize.

But the success did not stop there as Steed (pictured) was crowned individual elite champion, with Douglas third in the 30-35 age category and Reilly third in the 20-24 ranks.

"Although military training lends itself well to the world of obstacle course racing, it is clear to see that even the most trained soldiers would find these obstacles hard," Douglas said.

"This is an incredible result considering the team has only recently formed and we were up against some tough competition." ■

Picture: Epic Action Imagery



● **ENDURANCE** athlete CSjt Mark Holloway (Rifles) overcame cramping, vomiting and a shoulder injury to finish 12th at the World's Toughest Mudder. The soldier excelled in a field of 1,300 competitors and completed 17 full laps of the five-mile course – an effort that saw him successfully tackle 425 obstacles. He was also ranked as the number one contender from the UK and Europe. "This event was the hardest thing I have ever done," he said. "I pushed my body to failure but made it through to the end."

**"I
PUSHED
MY
BODY TO
FAILURE"**

SPORT SHORTS



Young guns let title slip

THE Army under-23 rugby union side will have to wait another year for Inter-Services glory after their latest campaign ended with a draw against the Royal Air Force.

Having suffered a narrow defeat to the Royal Navy in their opening match the Reds were looking to go one better as they travelled to RAF Halton but the coveted win proved elusive.

The teams were locked at 3-3 at the end of a low-key first half but with the points flowing more freely after the break the contest ended 18-18.



Crusaders make the call

THE Army Crusaders football team is looking to recruit new players to boost its numbers.

Open to Regular and Reserve officers, the side averages two games a month but the hectic nature of the day job means fresh blood is needed to strengthen the talent pool.

"We take the game seriously and it is a chance to get together, play football and socialise afterwards," said skipper Lt Dan Walker (AGC (SPS)).

Email daniel.walker513@mod.uk

GAME BRIEF

DATE: December 1, 2016
COMPETITION: Inter-Corps Swimming and Water Polo Championship finals
VENUE: Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre



THE Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers claimed the men's water polo title for a second successive year. They beat the Royal Logistic Corps 7-3 in the tournament final. Elsewhere, the Army Medical Services added further silverware to their haul as they took top spot in the women's standings.

COACH'S COMMENTS:

"IT WAS THE BEST INTER-CORPS GALA AND WATER POLO CONTEST THAT I HAVE SEEN IN EIGHT YEARS AS MANAGER."



CORPS QUALITY SHINES BRIGHT

**INTER-CORPS
SWIMMING
CHAMPIONSHIPS**

MEN

INF

WOMEN

AMS



RECORDS tumbled in the pool as the pick of the Service's swimmers took to the water for the annual Inter-Corps Championships.

Six competition-best times were broken on an afternoon of scintillating action as the soldiers ended the year on a high after some encouraging displays at Inter-Services level.

SSgt Marcus Croft (RA) was the only athlete to set a new male record as his effort of 26.24sec was good enough for top spot in the masters' 50-metre freestyle.

Elsewhere, it was all about the women. Pte Rachel Ward (AMS) posted a time of 34.63sec to reign supreme in the 50-metre backstroke and teammate Pte Emily Allsopp swam 1min 8.81sec to claim the 100-metre backstroke crown.

LCpl Cat Green (Int Corps) was the final individual record breaker with 2min 27.19sec in the 200-metre freestyle.

The Army Medical Services dominated the women's

competition and it was no surprise to see the team shatter more times in the relays.

The 4x50-metre breaststroke line-up was the first to strike and the swimmers in the 4x50-metre medley soon followed suit.

Unsurprisingly, the AMS also scooped the female collective honours – finishing 18 points clear of the Royal Engineers in second – but the men's competition proved a much closer affair with the Infantry eventually triumphing.

As well as settling corps bragging rights the event serves as a talent identification process for the Army team and manager Lt Col Rob Healey (R Signals) was impressed by what he saw.

He said: "We've got some girls from the Royal Military Police who look really good, some young Intelligence Corps guys and some AMS swimmers who are going to make the senior squad next year."

"We've been desperate for new talent to come through." ■

MONTH IN SPORT

January's key fixtures...



WHAT: Cambridge Uni v Army rugby union
WHEN: January 18
WHERE: Cambridge
NEED TO KNOW:

The Army begin preparations for another Inter-Services campaign in this curtain-raiser, which is followed by a clash with Oxford University



WHAT: Army Ski Championships
WHEN: January 24 to February 3
WHERE: Serre Chevalier, France
NEED TO KNOW: The annual action on the piste comes hot on the heels of Exercises Spartan Hike and Pipedown, the competition's semi-finals, and athletes will be looking to earn a place on the Army team for the Inter-Services



WHAT: Army v Middlesex – Southern Counties Cup
WHEN: January 25 (1945 kick-off)

WHERE: Army Military Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: A frozen pitch saw this match postponed before Christmas and the Reds will be looking to hit form in the first match of 2017

KAYAK IN NUMBERS

TRAINING DAYS AHEAD OF THE EVENT

3

DEGREES AND UNDER

0

ENTRANTS

20

SUCCESSIVE TITLES FOR THE ARMY

2

HURLEY PADDLERS

250

ARMY CANOE DISCIPLINES

6

KAYAKING



Picture: Cpl James McAllister, RLC

HURLEY HEROES DELIVER

SUB-ZERO temperatures failed to thwart the Army's paddlers in their pursuit of glory at the Inter-Services Kayaking Championships.

Staged within the SAS Hurley Classic civilian event, the competition saw the soldiers hit peak form to claim the silverware for a second successive season.

A 20-strong contingent of Forces athletes assembled for the showdown, which featured a wider field of around 250 top-class competitors.

Maj Tony Hellier (RGR) was the Reds' top performer as he finished second in the military showpiece and with

his teammates dominating the top-five the overall result was never in doubt.

WO2 Stephen Robinson (AAC) was third, with Cpl Adam Biggs fourth.

Sgt Sulette Klopper (RA) showed impressive commitment to finish third in the women's competition.

"Despite freezing conditions, the team showed immense dedication to training and that paid off in the Inter-Services," Hellier said.

The Army A team secured fifth place in the Hurley collective event to become the highest placed military side. The Reds' other outfits were eighth and thirteenth. ■

● SEVEN Army fighters were called upon to represent England at the World Union Karate Federation European Championships. The soldiers did not disappoint and contributed ten medals towards the team's overall haul of 66. Pte Chris Rowan (Para, pictured) was among the standout performers as he took gold in the senior Ippon Kumite.





SPORT SHORTS



Invictus athletes required

AN appeal has been launched for wounded, injured and sick soldiers to join the British team at this year's Invictus Games.

The sporting showpiece will be staged in Toronto in September and features 11 disciplines including archery, athletics and swimming.

Organisers want to hear from those who believe participating in the event will help their recovery pathway.

They must have medical and chain-of-command clearance and then will be considered "on duty" for all training and the Games themselves.

Those interested should email ukinvictus@helpforheroes.org.uk by January 31.



League launches lessons

THE next Army Rugby League level two coaching course will be held at MoD Lyneham from January 30 to February 2.

Places cost £250 per person, which includes continuing professional development workshops, and further details are available from Maj Brett Bader (RA) on 07810 503533 or 540bader@armymail.mod.uk

WARRIORS AT WORK

THE Force's cardiovascular stars returned to action in the opening round of the British Army Warrior Fitness southern league.

A total of 12 teams took to the floor for the Pirbright event, which featured four energy-sapping rounds that culminated in a victory for the three-man outfit from 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment.

Athletes from ATC Pirbright won the women's event.

The competition opened with a gruelling sled push relay and was followed by a maximum power output deadlift and a ten-minute maximum calorie row. It concluded with a broad jump, pull-up and bench press relay.

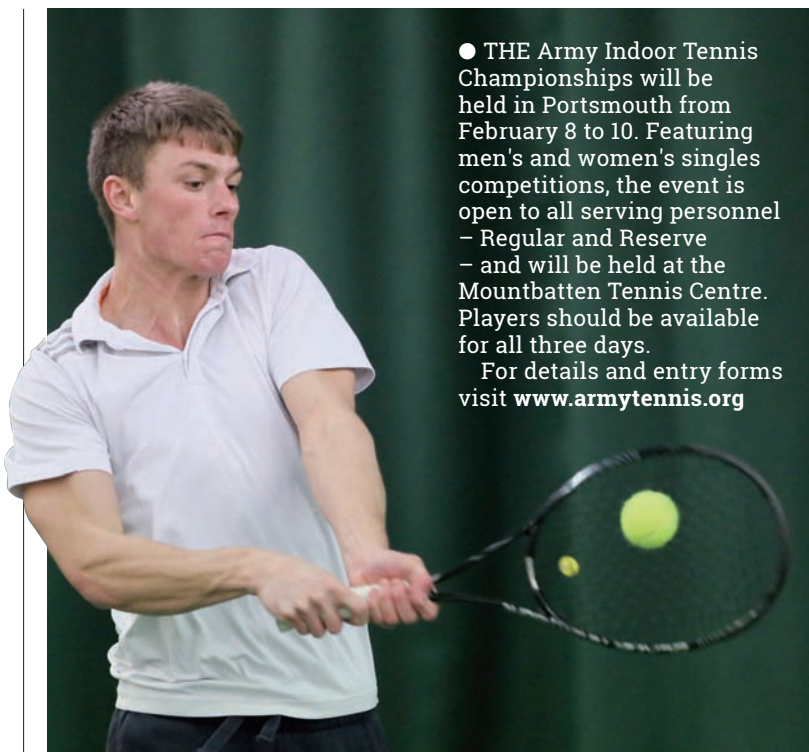
A further four rounds will follow – the first of which is being staged in Pirbright this month – and the top three teams will go on to compete at the Army finals in July.

"It is still early days," organiser SSgt Brett Steels (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport*. "It is all about getting the word out there."

"This competition allows soldiers to further their fitness levels in a competitive environment." ■



**"IT IS
ALL
ABOUT
GETTING
THE
WORD
OUT
THERE"**



● THE Army Indoor Tennis Championships will be held in Portsmouth from February 8 to 10. Featuring men's and women's singles competitions, the event is open to all serving personnel – Regular and Reserve – and will be held at the Mountbatten Tennis Centre. Players should be available for all three days.

For details and entry forms visit www.armytennis.org

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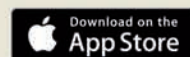
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» IN NUMBERS

108

Events and athletic competitions hosted at all levels by the Larkhill-based formation

FIVE

International athletes on the unit's books - including tae kwon do ace Bdr Yamikani Guba

22

Players who represented various Army teams

MAJOR PLAYERS

WITH another sporting year now underway the athletes of 14 Regiment, Royal Artillery will be striving to beat their achievements of 2016.

Success across the board saw the formation claim the major units prize at the last Army Sports Awards and here we take a look at the accomplishments they will look to trump over the coming months...



NINE

Titles won at Royal Artillery contests including basketball, hockey and tennis

92

Sportsmen and women selected for Royal Artillery teams competing at corps level

26

Different sports participated in over the past 12 months



Final word

Interviews: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock



Gdsm Ben Hall

I spent six weeks in Kenya and that was a lot worse. The terrain was bad, the movement was quicker than in the jungle and the heat was much worse.

Gdsm Josh Sanchez

My hardest day was the 13-hour ambush here. We started at six in the evening and it went on until seven in the morning.



Gdsm Robert Cox

I was expecting this to be tough but it just hasn't stopped raining and it's impossible to keep things dry. My flysheet came loose and my hammock got saturated. You get through it by having a bit of a swear and a giggle with your mates.



Sgt Liam Rowley

The "Fan Dance" on the platoon commanders' battle course is still burned in my memory. We had a 12-mile march across the Pen y Fan in snow, which was pretty demanding. You just have to tell yourself to keep going.

Gdsm Sam Blackburn

We deployed to Romania and being in the anti-tank platoon means you carry a lot of heavy equipment. Tabbing uphill with a Javelin and all your other kit is quite hard work but rewarding.



Gdsm Kawa Yatevatu

Going on exercise in winter back in the UK is a challenge for me because I come from a hot country. During the final exercise in Otterburn it took us three days to dig our trench but I saw it as a man test.



What is the toughest training package the Army has ever thrown at you?

Soldier quizzed troops from 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards during jungle training in Belize (page 30)

Gdsm Curtis Ferrell

The light role reconnaissance commanders' course. Some of the insertion tabs were pretty emotional, the routes are arduous and you're carrying all the kit you need to set up an observation post.

LSgt Lee Porter

Cambrian Patrol is the worst thing I've ever done. Never again!



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