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SOLDIER

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BITING BACK

British action
claws territory
from Taliban



BELFAST

No return to
the Troubles



TOP TAKE

Interview:
Gen Dannatt



NEW KIT

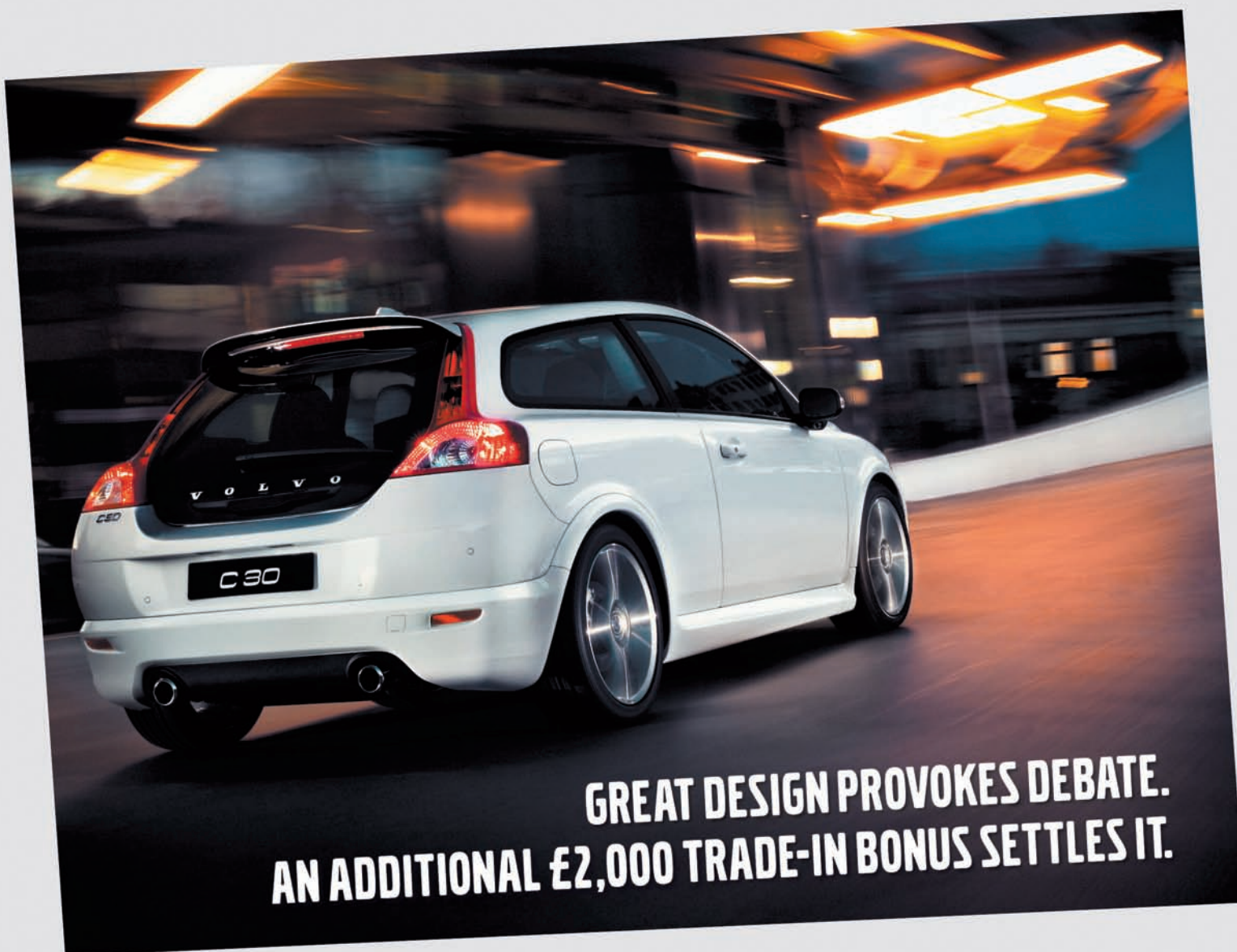
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ARMY



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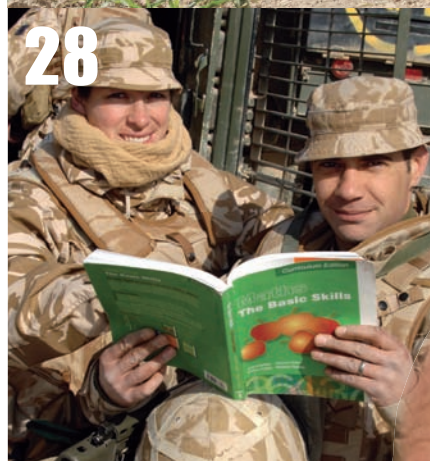
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Cover picture (left): Pte Finau Romano (2 Mercian) patrols through farmers' fields during Op Panther's Claw Picture: Sgt Dan Harmer (RLC)

Background image: The Army's new tactical support vehicle, the Husky TSV(N), is put through its paces at DVD 2009 Picture: Steve Dock



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USE A CONDOM



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ARMY



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those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



"The odd incoming rocket will seem a comparatively trivial incident to the
rocket you'll get from me if your essay is ever late again."

● Aiming high – Pages 24-33

Quick learners

IF SOME university students are to be believed, studying for a degree is the most challenging feat in the world of education and, on the face of it, they may have a point.

Attending lectures, spending hours in the library, contributing to regular seminars – completing a course lasting three or more years is certainly not to be taken lightly.

But a quick comparison with the lengths that soldiers are willing to go to to improve their education blows the tax-dodging brigade's assertion that they have it bad out of the water.

Where uni students fit their learning around perks such as long holidays, trips to the pub and *Countdown*, Service personnel hit the classroom no matter where they are – including on operations.

Speaking to *Soldier* from Helmand, Army educator Capt Verity Smith (AGC(ETS)) explained how she has been visiting forward operating bases in Afghanistan to deliver lessons to troops after they return from patrols which would mentally and physically exhaust the majority of people (Page 19).

Her experience is not unique. Lt Caroline Cox (AGC(ETS)) was delighted with the enthusiasm of the 5 Rifles' soldiers she taught on Op Telic this year, who cracked on with their homework despite being sprawled on the floor in their body armour during a rocket attack (Pages 28-29).

Adapting to learning in such uncompromising environments is difficult, but it has been recognised by those at the top as vital in ensuring that the modern British Army has the skills required to continue to be the best fighting force in the world.

Brig Piers Hankinson of the Land Warfare

Development Group has acknowledged the need for the Army to "learn and adapt" to the current conflict if it is to be fully effective and is helping to develop the Army Knowledge Exchange – a web-based tool where vital lessons can be shared for the benefit of serving soldiers (Page 35).

Education is also a key component in promotion and for troops hoping to one day pass through the hallowed doors of the sergeants' mess, passing Command, Leadership and Management and numeracy and literacy courses is now a necessity (Pages 30-33).

Of course, learning doesn't always have to be in a classroom. Whether it's drawing lessons from past conflicts such as Op Banner to secure a brighter future for a once-troubled province (Pages 43-47) or picking up new skills on training packages like Exercise Flying Rhino (Pages 48-49), the Army's commitment to educating its people is clear to see.

Finally, in a month where 19 British soldiers have died in Afghanistan, two of the nation's most important figures have reiterated their gratitude for the sacrifices being made by those serving on Op Herrick.

In an exclusive letter to *Soldier's* readers, Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated that "every endeavour, everywhere you serve, is making a difference" (Page 63).

And outgoing Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, placed on record his thanks to troops and their families and stressed his belief that, just as Service personnel's skills and hard work ensured a successful outcome in Iraq, so too they will be the factors to bring about success in Afghanistan.

That is perhaps the toughest exam of all. ■

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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET

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Picture: Cpl Dan Bardsley (RLC)

Panther's roar: A guardsman relays information to colleagues as the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards clear a compound during Op Panchai Palang

Taliban struck by Panther's Claw

A MASSIVE operation to push enemy fighters out of Helmand province is succeeding despite the loss of 19 British soldiers in one month, the Chief of the Defence Staff has said.

Air Chief Marshall Sir Jock Stirrup maintained that Op Panchai Palang – Pashtun for Panther's Claw – was helping to bring 100,000 Afghan civilians under the security provided by British troops to allow them to take part in elections later this year.

He said: "The Taliban have identified Helmand as their vital ground – if they lose it they lose everywhere and they are throwing everything they have into it. But they are losing and our commanders on the ground are very clear of that.

"The mission is about supporting the delivery of governance in order to reduce the threat of terrorist groups who are a direct threat to the UK."

In a huge surge into enemy territory, the opening shots of Panchai Palang came as hundreds of British personnel were inserted into position by Chinook helicopters before they began to move in on the enemy heartland of Babaji, north of Lashkar Gar.

Soldiers secured a number of canal and river crossings, laying the groundwork for an International Security Assistance Force base.

The assault was spearheaded by 300 troops from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, who were dropped into position at dawn.

Backed up with air support from a C-130 Spectre gunship, Apache attack helicopters and Harrier ground attack jets, the initial force was quickly bolstered with a 3 Scots contingent in Viking armoured vehicles.

Counter-IED teams and squads from the Royal Engineers were also deployed

to assemble vehicle checkpoints to choke the movement of insurgents.

A similar operation carried out by thousands of United States Marines would also ensure that the Taliban were denied influence among members of the civilian population.

ACM Stirrup confirmed that British troops and their counterparts from the Afghan National Army had been working in a harsh environment and had met tough resistance.

He said: "Our people are fighting in extremely adverse conditions and high temperatures – but they know what they are there to do and are succeeding. We are there to create time and space within which political solutions can be forged."

Senior officers were also satisfied with the progress being made as a result of Panther's Claw. Task Force Helmand spokesman Lt Col Nick Richardson said troops had managed to dent the insurgents' ability to wage war.

He added: "Operation Panchai Palang is a mission to clear and hold one of the few remaining Taliban strongholds – the end result will provide lasting security."

15 THE COST IN POUNDS OF A TICKET TO THE CORPS OF ARMY MUSIC'S **RHYTHM FORCE** CONCERT, FEATURING JOOLS HOLLAND, AT KNELLER HALL ON SEPTEMBER 19. DETAILS AT WWW.ARMY.MOD.UK/MUSIC

NEWS IN BRIEF

A PUBLIC inquiry into the death of an Iraqi civilian who was being held by British soldiers on Op Telic was due to begin as this issue went to press.

Senior officers said they welcomed the high-profile probe into the circumstances surrounding the death of Baha Mousa in September 2006 and stressed that the Army would cooperate fully with the process.

AN ANNUAL service at the National Memorial Arboretum has remembered 66 Servicemen and women who were killed on duty in 2008.

Families were joined at the ceremony by Defence Minister Baroness Ann Taylor and their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

INFANTRY soldiers will receive a full UK driving licence before joining their units on successful completion of the Combat Infantryman's Course.

Eligible troops will start driver training from September 7.

BEACON Barracks in Stafford has been selected as the preferred site for 1 Signal Brigade when it relocates from Germany.

Rhine Garrison is due to close in 2014, with Munster Station shutting in 2016.

Manning nears full strength

THE ARMY can afford to demand excellence from its serving soldiers and recruits in training as manning levels will be at maximum strength by mid-2010, according to the MoD.

With staff numbers operating at full power, Army bosses will take measures to ensure only the best are employed.

The strict levers to keep the Army at around 102,000 personnel is deemed essential as MoD figures show that a one per cent increase in staff could cost £41 million.

Brig Richard Nugee, Director of Manning (Army), explained that the growth must be constrained otherwise the Service's structure would come under threat.

"The impending return to full manning is great news for the Army," he told *Soldier*. "However we must control that growth to ensure we remain structurally sound and continue to provide quality career opportunities to our officers and soldiers."

The rapid growth is positive news for the Army and has helped to bolster unit strengths. It also means that only those who are 100 per cent committed will be taken on.

Soldiers who repeatedly misbehave will be removed to make way for hungry new recruits, and personnel who ask to quit may be allowed to leave before their year's notice is up.

Also, those who request to leave but then change their mind will not automatically have their notice reversed.

The MoD insists that there will not be a freeze on recruitment to prevent over-staffing.

"The Army will continue to recruit the high-quality young people it always has done to ensure long-term success at home and abroad," said Brig Nugee.

"There is nothing new about what we are advocating to control growth; it is part of our normal business and represents good management."

Hard working soldiers will have opportunities for promotion and could progress at the expense of more disruptive colleagues.

"In the past a body was better than no body, now we can make way for fresh talent," said Col Richard Haldenby, Assistant Director of Manning. "It's not so much trying to get rid of people, it's more making sure we have the best."

Bowman system receives a boost

SOLDIERS on operations will have access to better communications after the MoD announced a package of upgrades to the Bowman system.

The department has awarded two contracts to US defence organisation General Dynamics to refresh the comms suite over its lifetime.

The company will also ensure Bowman is maintained and repaired in the field.

The move follows the MoD's purchase of more than 2,000 extra radios which will be used to meet the demands of current operations and training.

Quentin Davies, Minister for Defence Equipment and Support, said the deal would secure the system's future. He added: "Bowman has been successfully used in Iraq and Afghanistan, where secure, faster communications and data exchanging is saving lives."

"It is a key element of a comprehensive suite of communications systems to provide a robust network that allows commanders to exercise command and control effectively."

Bowman was first used on Op Telic in 2005 and the system has now been successfully installed in 13,000 Army vehicles as well as in headquarters, ships and helicopters.

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£18,000	ARMY PRESENTATION TEAM Money donated by members of the general public attending one of the team's dynamic roadshow events (total collected since October 2008)	Army Benevolent Fund, BLESMA & St Dunstan's
2	£17,500	JOHN MACVICAR The managing director of the <i>Shankhill Mirror</i> newspaper has overseen the sale of 13,000 badges to pay for a monument remembering three Scottish soldiers killed by the IRA in 1971	Commemoration fund for Royal Highland Fusiliers John and Joseph McCraig and Dougald McCaughy
3	£9,000	ARMY TRAINING CENTRE PIRBRIGHT An 11-strong team, led by Cpl Nick Westhorpe (RLC), cycled the 1,000 miles from their Surrey base to Pegasus Bridge, Normandy, in just three days	Help for Heroes www.1000cycle.co.uk
4	£3,000	HOME TO HELMAND WO2 Dean Stokes (2 Para) ran, rowed and cycled 5,800km – the equivalent distance of travelling from the UK to Afghanistan – using gym equipment at the Defence Intelligence and Security Centre, Chicksands	Help For Heroes www.justgiving.com/WO2deanstokes
5	£2,000	BOYS IN BLUE Ten Metropolitan Police Officers completed this year's Three Peaks Challenge, scaling Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in 22 hours and 55 minutes	Help For Heroes www.justgiving.com/stevewilliams324
6	£1,500	REME RUNNERS Cfn Craig Hume won a 30-mile Army v Royal Marine race at Bury Down in a time of 5hr 45min. Craftsmen Adam Catchpole, Rob Yandell, Chris Mangham and Neil George also completed the marathon tab	Cystic Fibrosis Trust www.justgiving.com/climbcommando2009

OBITUARIES



CAPT DANIEL SHEPHERD (28)
11 EOD REGIMENT,
THE ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
KIA JULY 20, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

AN "ADORED" officer serving with the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group was killed in an IED blast in Helmand province.

Capt Daniel Shepherd from 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps, died in the Afghanistan danger zone of Nad-e-Ali while commanding an improvised explosive device disposal team.

The talented 28-year-old was working alongside the Royal Engineers search unit to clear a route for an International Security Assistance Force resupply convoy to enable them to move freely through the hazardous area.

Capt Shepherd, from Lincoln, leaves behind his wife Kerry, parents David and Judith and brother Paul.

Following the incident on July 20, Lt Col Roger Lewis, CO of the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group, said: "Dan understood fully the dangerous nature of his job yet every day was the first to put his own life on the line. To have the honour to serve alongside him was a humbling experience; he was an inspiration to all. His soldiers adored him and he reciprocated their loyalty tenfold."

Statements from his wife and family spoke of the Shepherds' pride at the officer's achievements.

"He was doing what he loved. I was so proud of him. I have not lost just a husband but a best friend and he will be missed by everyone," said Kerry.

The family statement added: "We are very proud of our youngest son and husband. He lived life to the full."

The MoD has revealed that electrical engineering graduate Capt Shepherd was due to take up a high-profile appointment at the Permanent Joint Headquarters focused on countering the IED threat.

Experts target IED threat

THE ARMED Forces is to radically change its policy on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by going on the offensive against those at the heart of the bomb-making operations.

IEDs have been responsible for 73 per cent of soldier deaths in Afghanistan since January 2008, with more than 800 attacks recorded in June alone – of which 211 were in Helmand.

Commanders predict that number will rise to more than 1,000 in September when the insurgency will be at its height as poppy farmers reach the end of their season.

"The IED has become the tactic of choice for the insurgent," said Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt. "Their aim is to deny us freedom of movement, lower our morale and ensure that we stay in our bases to deny us access to the people."

"But to do our job we must speak to the people and we have to develop an offensive mindset. We can and must get onto the forward foot."

So far the Army's position has been a defensive one, dealing with devices as and when they occur, but the stepping-up of the Taliban's IED campaign means this is no longer a viable option.

Instead, the MoD has invested millions of pounds in counter measures which include new equipment, enhancements to personal kit and a review of training.

In a triple-pronged approach, the Services have developed three lines of operation – to attack the system, defeat the device and prepare the force.

"There is a 7th Century ideology and mentality allied to 21st Century technology," said Lt Gen Simon Mayall, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Operations). "They are watching us, working out how we are responding to them and then working out our next set of vulnerabilities."

He said that IEDs are simple, cheap and adaptable and are used by insurgents who cannot match British forces for numbers or equipment. To attack their systems, the Services will look at the facilitators – the chemists, suicide recruiters and trainers; the components – the actual parts involved; and the finance which allows the devices to be manufactured.

And for the troops on the ground, better equipment and more highly trained operatives are on the way.



Picture: Steve Dock

"If we can find a way to detect IEDs once they are in the ground then we can save more lives," said head of force protection Brig Ian Cameron-Mowat. "Three thousand-plus vehicles are now fitted with Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) and there is a funded programme to develop more of these."

Although mobile foot patrols already carry portable ECM to try and disrupt the connection between bomber and IED, MoD scientists have developed a more lightweight version to lessen the load on soldiers.

Equipment such as the "Spider" – a multi-frequency decoder – is also waiting for approval.

"We acknowledge that this is a grave and enduring threat," added Lt Gen Simon Mayall.

"We want to reassure everyone that Counter-IED measures are the highest priority in Defence."

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THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO HAVE SIGNED UP TO **SOLDIER'S NEW FACEBOOK GROUP AND FAN PAGE AND TWITTER UPDATES** SINCE THEY WERE LAUNCHED LAST MONTH. TO FIND OUT WHAT THE TEAM IS UP TO, LOG ON TO **WWW.TWITTER.COM/SOLDIERMAGAZINE** OR **HTTP://TINY.CC/YumVY**

Gordon Brown's praise for UK's gold Reserves

THE PRIME Minister has given his personal thanks to Reservists and their employers during a private reception held at 10 Downing Street.

Delaying a phone call to US President Barack Obama to talk to *Soldier*, Gordon Brown took time to praise the work of the Territorial Army and the civilian companies who release their staff to serve in the Armed Forces.

"They are great people, it's a great organisation, and there is great work being done," said Brown. "This is a chance for us to show how proud we are of them."

Personnel from the Armed Forces and their civilian employers were invited into the Prime Minister's home where the country's leader gave an impassioned speech.

"This is a very special day for us to thank the Reservists who are here with us and to thank also all the employers who make it possible for more than 17,000 Reservists to be with our Armed Forces since 2003," he said.



● Territorial Army troops like this London Regiment soldier have won the PM's praise

"I don't think we could have had the operations we've had in the last few years, with the success we've had, without the numbers of Reservists who made themselves available."

Brown added: "There are no better armed forces in the world and I think everybody here who has seen our Armed Forces at work knows that. There is no more professional group of soldiers, sailors and airmen – and Reservists."

Special thanks was also given for SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers),

the MoD campaign set up to gain and maintain the support of employers of TA personnel.

Present at the event was Maj Darryl Stearn (37), Officer Commanding 222 Medical Squadron, 225 Medical Regiment, who has served for 17 years.

"I served on Telic 1 and was on one of the first medical units to go across the line," said the emergency nurse practitioner. "It was scary as it was my first proper operational tour but I enjoyed it and it gave me a

good insight into how the Army works."

Liz Wood, Maj Stearn's boss at the Loughborough walk-in centre where he works, said: "I think it's fantastic to be involved and I support Darryl in all his work. I don't think the full Army would manage without the Reservists."

Martin Mayo, 486 Signals Regiment, who works as a marketing manager for a catering equipment company, also spoke about his time in Iraq.

"We took over from PWRR in Iraq and they'd had a really tough time, so we were all a bit cagey about it," said the 38-year-old. "I was there for two days and got rocketed. Luckily I didn't get injured."

Martin's employer in Ballykinler, Northern Ireland, Martin Duddy, said the Army gives people a chance to learn essential skills.

"I am more than happy to allow employees to go out to support our country," he said. "It's good training and it helps to develop their management skills. The Army is obviously an expert in management and discipline so employees are able to apply those skills to civilian life."

David Yeadle, head of employment policy at manufacturing industry body EEF, added: "When called upon, these men and women serve alongside the Regular Forces with great courage."

60 THE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS FROM 20TH ARMoured BRIGADE'S 200 SIGNAL SQUADRON TO RECEIVE THEIR OP TELIC 13 MEDALS AFTER COMPLETING THE BRITISH ARMY'S FINAL TOUR OF IRAQ. THE COMMUNICATION SPECIALISTS HELPED TO TRAIN THEIR IRAQI COUNTERPARTS BEFORE HANDING OVER TO AMERICAN TROOPS FROM THE US ARMY'S 10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION IN MAY

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE LAST British formation to serve in Iraq have been awarded their medals during a parade in north Germany.

Soldiers from 1 Logistic Support Regiment (1 LSR) were serving in Iraq and Kuwait as part of 20th Armoured Brigade.

The Iron Fist was responsible for escorting the final military convoys across the Iraq border as well as training the logistic elements of the Iraqi Army's 14th Division.

Brig Chris Murray (late RLC) handed the medals out to more than 200 personnel on parade at the Princess Royal Barracks in Gutersloh, Germany.

"We are all bursting with pride for the job you have done and are delighted to count every soldier back off the plane and to welcome you home," said Brig Murray.

"The corps' reputation is high and now increased by 1 LSR closing the chapter of operations in Iraq."

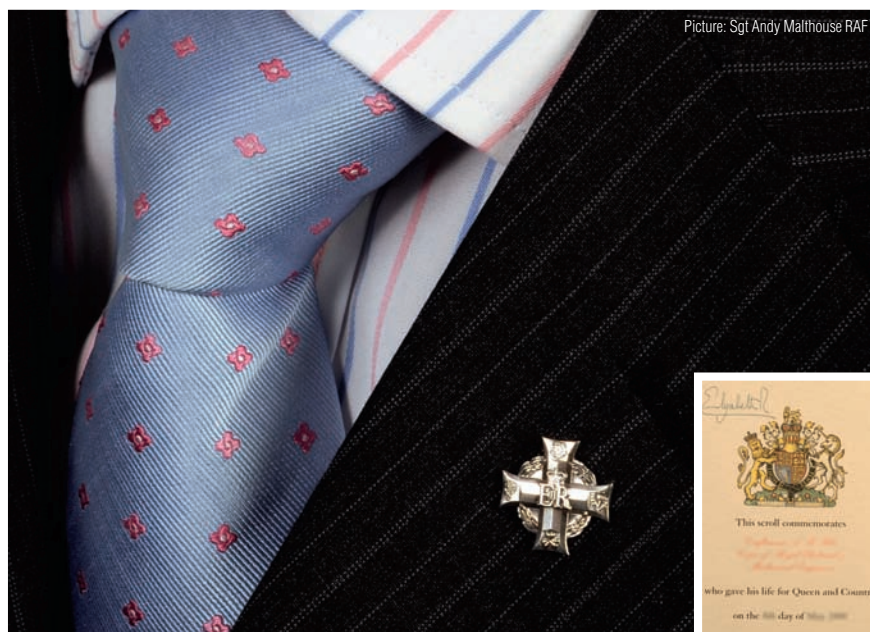
RHEINDAHLEN Support Unit and (former) Osnabruck Garrison have been crowned co-winners of the UK Ambassador's Community Relations prize.

Sir Michael Arthur, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Germany, travelled to Rheindahlen in person to mark the extensive efforts to create and maintain good relationships with civilians.

An MoD spokesman said: "Both citations reviewed the extensive and impressive catalogue of good works leading up to the award."

Osnabruck Garrison closed last year as a result of 4th Mechanized Brigade's move to Catterick.

Col Mark Cuthbert-Brown, the last Deputy Garrison Commander, said: "While focusing on the withdrawal, the last couple of years saw us maintain and improve contacts wherever possible."



Picture: Sgt Andy Malthouse RAF

Badge of honour: Families of the fallen will receive The Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll (inset)

Royal recognition

THE QUEEN has approved a new honour in her own name for families of Servicemen and women who have died on operations or at the hands of terrorists.

Following requests from military chiefs, The Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll has been instituted as national recognition for the families of fallen soldiers to acknowledge their loss and sacrifice.

The Queen said the Cross symbolised the debt owed by the nation to those who died while serving their country.

"This seems a right and proper way of showing our enduring debt to those who are killed while actively protecting what is most dear to us all," said Her Majesty. "The solemn dignity which we attach to the names of those who have fallen is deeply engrained in our national character. As people, we accord this ultimate sacrifice the highest honour and respect."

From August 1 the Elizabeth Cross, which is cast in hallmarked silver, and the Memorial Scroll, which is headed with the Royal Coat of Arms on parchment-style paper, will be granted to qualifying families.

It is the first time since the George Cross was established by the Queen's father King George VI that such an accolade has taken the monarch's name.

Relatives of personnel from the Regular and Reserve Armed Forces or the Royal Fleet Auxiliary who died when deployed on medal-earning operations are eligible for the award.

Families of those who were targeted and killed by terrorists because of their membership of the Armed Forces can also claim the Cross and Scroll.

Defence Secretary Bob Ainsworth said: "We owe so much to those who have died to protect our country and our way of life."

"The Elizabeth Cross was recommended by the military chiefs to Her Majesty to recognise the huge debt this country owes to the families those brave individuals have left behind."

The outgoing Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, added: "Nothing can replace a loved one who has died on operations, but I welcome the institution of the Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll as symbols that the nation recognises their sacrifice and shares in their loss."

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE Rt Revd Dr Stephen Venner is the new Bishop to the Forces.

He succeeds the Rt Revd David Conner, the Dean of Windsor, who has held the post since 2001.

Dr Venner will carry out episcopal duties and will have pastoral oversight

of Anglican chaplains and the Anglican Church within the Armed Forces.

He said: "I am really delighted and privileged to take on the responsibility of Bishop to Her Majesty's Forces. I look forward to being actively involved alongside the Services."

GOOD DRILLS

THE SOLDIER TEAM

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations crowned *Soldier* "best internal magazine" in Britain last month. During an awards dinner at The Artillery Gardens – home of The Honourable Artillery Company – in London, judges described the magazine as "a great product, perfectly tailored in a targeted market" which "has a good balance, is easy to understand and engaging".

RAF REGIMENT

Thanks to an improved recruitment and retention performance, the RAF Regiment



(pictured in Kandahar), which provides protection to air assets and Service personnel in Afghanistan, is to be expanded with the formation of a new Field Squadron and Force Protection Wing Headquarters later this year.

RECRUITMENT OFFICER

A recruiter for 156 (North West) Transport Regiment RLC who rejected the application of a teenager 25 years ago because he could not drive will be feeling rather sheepish. The youngster in question – now 43 – is Lt Col Dominic Morgan, the new commanding officer of the Allerton-based TA regiment.



INJURED PERSONNEL

The clock is ticking for Armed Forces personnel who could claim compensation for injuries attributable to their duty. There is a five-year limit on claims under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and some soldiers could be time-barred after April 7, 2010. Any Service personnel injured while serving after April 6, 2005 is eligible to claim under the scheme.

BAD DRILLS

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE search for 2009's best British military book has begun.

Six titles – *Masters and Commanders* by Andrew Roberts, *A Brief History of Modern Warfare* by Richard Connaughton, *1918 A Very British Victory* by Peter Hart, *Marlborough* by Richard Holmes, *A Cold War* by Brig Ben Barry and *A Million Bullets* by James Fergusson – have made the shortlist for the British Army Military Book of the Year award, the results of which will be announced in September.

To register your vote, visit any Army Library and Information Centre, text 01252 320109 or email pcllibs@alibs.detsa.co.uk

THE spirit of cooperation is alive and well in Afghanistan after a tri-Service team headed to Helmand to lead the Headquarters Joint Force Support Group.

The 115-strong HQ, which contains Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy personnel, is formed around HQ 8 Force Engineer Brigade and will command 2,200 British troops.

THE Services Sound and Vision Corporation has appointed former head of *Sky News* Nick Pollard as its new chief executive.

Pollard (58) said he is keen to provide the “absolute best” programming for personnel, adding: “I am excited to be heading up a corporation which consistently achieves amazing things.”

AUTHORISED digital versions of British Army badges can now be found in an online database.

Regimental cap badges, formation flashes and other Service emblems have been added to the site at www.army.mod.uk/brandportal

SERVICES charity SSAFA Forces Help is appealing for more foster carers in Germany and Cyprus.

For an information pack, contact the fostering senior social work practitioner by calling 0049 5221 178366 or email fsswp@ssafa.org.uk

BLANDFORD-based soldiers are able to grow their own vegetables after the MoD opened its first kitchen garden project.

A football pitch was transformed into 30 plots to create the facility, which will also be used by community groups near the Dorset garrison.

A TRIO of soldiers studying at the Defence School of Photography have earned certificates of merit.

Corporals Kellie Williams, Tom Robinson and Steven Wood received the awards for maintaining an average mark above 80 per cent during the tough eight-month trade course.



Picture: Ben Birchall/PA Wire

1 THE NUMBER OF FEMALE JACKAL DRIVERS IN THE BRITISH ARMY. SSGT CLAIRE GRIFFITHS (INSET) HAS TWICE COME UNDER RPG AND SMALL ARMS FIRE FROM THE TALIBAN DURING COMBAT LOGISTIC PATROLS IN HELMAND PROVINCE

Rehab up for review

DEFENCE Minister Kevan Jones has announced a feasibility study to investigate building a new joint civilian and military rehabilitation centre within the next ten years.

The report will assess the possibility of creating a Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre sharing best practice between the Defence Medical Services and civilian healthcare.

Building on the achievements of Headley Court as a provider of world-class treatment for soldiers needing to adapt from serious injury, the paper will look at whether future care may surpass the facilities in Surrey.

The study, which is being funded by a private benefactor and will examine the costs and implications of a new establishment, will consider potential sites in the Midlands.

Jones said: “The Government is committed to delivering state-of-the-art treatment for our injured Service personnel. They deserve nothing but the best.”

In addition to looking at how to provide treatment for soldiers and civilians, the study will consider other opportunities such as the inclusion of rehabilitation research, development of Paralympic athletes and a “train the trainer” capability to help teach new skills to people living in conflict zones.

Surgeon General Lt Gen Louis Lillywhite said: “Our dedicated and skilled rehabilitation teams already provide a service for our injured personnel that is world class. We want to ensure that the rehabilitation we provide remains at the pinnacle of best practice for years to come.”

3

THE NUMBER OF FIJIAN ARTISTS WHO TOOK A BREAK FROM PACKING UP KIT FROM OP TELIC TO PAINT 4 LSR'S LOGO ON A BLAST WALL AT THEIR BASE IN KUWAIT



Picture: Col Dylan Browne (RAF)

Complaints chief praised for debut year of service

A PARLIAMENTARY committee has commended the leading figure of the MoD's complaints system but admitted that her role does not have enough power.

The Defence Committee report on the Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces concluded that Dr Susan Atkins, who has been in the role for 18 months, had made an "impressive" start to her tenure.

The report also praised her for making frequent voluntary visits to military bases and operational areas.

But the committee claimed that Atkins' powers fell short of those originally envisaged in its *Duty of Care* report and by Sir Nicholas Blake following the Deepcut Review.

In providing strong backing for Atkins' approach, the report highlighted that her requests for more staff had not been taken up by the MoD.

"We are concerned that staff resources requested by the Commissioner in order to undertake her statutory duties were seemingly not given proper priority by the MoD," the report said.

"As a result, the Commissioner's

plans to undertake a sample audit of complaints had to be shelved.

"We recommend that the MoD offers more generous support to the Commissioner in future."

Responding to the observations made by the Defence Committee, Atkins called for the MoD to provide members of the Armed Forces with "the service they deserve".

"I welcome [the] report, which acknowledges the importance of the role of the Commissioner and recognises the difference it can make to the operational effectiveness of the Services," she said.

"My aim is to ensure that Servicemen and women and their families can have confidence in the complaints system.

"Having proved the value of the Office of the Service Complaints Commissioner, the MoD has recognised the importance of having sufficient resources in place to enable me to give members of the Armed Forces the service they deserve.

"We are working with the MoD to ensure that this now happens," Dr Atkins concluded.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ARMED Forces recruits are well-backed in their training and have the strong support of their instructors, according to a report by Government inspectors.

The Ofsted audit of the welfare of recruits and trainees found that progress had been made over the past five years and that overall standards were satisfactory.

But inspectors remained concerned about a number of issues, including the identification of the causes of high dropout rates in some bases.

A PAIR of innovators who helped design life-saving kit for British military personnel have been awarded OBEs in the latest Queen's Birthday Honours.

Alan Hepper (43) contributed to the development of Osprey body armour, while Brian Shrubbsall (61) was recognised for his work on armour systems for most of the UK's heavy armoured vehicles.

Alan said: "To have been part of the team that developed the Osprey, and then to receive comments back from the front line that lives have been saved, has been a proud highlight of my career."

Both men work for the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory.

HOT on the heels of the Classical Brit Award-winning Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the Coldstream Guards have signed a £1 million recording contract with Universal Music.

Graham Jones, director of music for the Coldstream Guards, said: "We're delighted that we will be able to share our music with the wider public."

500

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OBITUARIES



LT COL RUPERT THORNELOE (39)
CO 1ST BATTALION,
WELSH GUARDS
KIA JULY 1, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN



TPR JOSHUA HAMMOND (18)
2ND ROYAL TANK REGIMENT
KIA JULY 1, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

BRITISH Armed Forces were dealt a huge blow when the highest-ranking combat casualty for nearly 30 years was killed by enemy action in southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe (39), commanding officer of the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards, died when a roadside bomb struck the vehicle in which he was travelling near Lashkar Gah in Helmand province.

Tpr Joshua "Hammy" Hammond (18) of 2nd Royal Tank Regiment also died in the IED strike on the armoured Viking vehicle.

Lt Col Thorneloe had left the battlegroup headquarters on a resupply convoy to visit his men, who were conducting a major operation in hostile territory.

The father-of-two was the first commanding officer to be killed on operations since Col "H" Jones VC died leading 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment in an attack on Goose Green during the Falklands War of 1982.

Speaking about the fatalities Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, said: "The deaths of Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe and Tpr Joshua Hammond during Operation Panchai Palang in Helmand province is a devastating blow to the Welsh Guards Battlegroup and to the Army as a whole.

"Lt Col Thorneloe was an outstanding commanding officer and a born leader, who I knew well.

"His courageous, thoughtful stewardship of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards since October last year has seen them superbly prepared for the

demands of Afghanistan."

He added: "Tpr Hammond was a first-class tank crewman who epitomised the spirited and determined approach to operations expected of Royal Armoured Corps soldiers."

The news came on the same day the US Army announced it had launched the largest-ever offensive against the Taliban, with 4,000 marines deployed.

Lt Col Thorneloe's wife, Sally, said the loss would change her life forever.

"Rupert was my very best friend and his death is a devastating blow," she said.

"Our daughters Hannah and Sophie will have to grow up without their beloved daddy, although I will see a part of him in them every day. While he was with us our lives were filled with joy and happiness, they will never be the same again."

In a statement, the family of Tpr Hammond said: "Joshua was a tremendous son.

"He was proud to be a soldier and died doing a job he loved.

"We are devastated by the loss of Joshua, who was a loving son. We are proud of the fact that Joshua was prepared to do his duty, helping the people of Afghanistan."

Maj Charlie Burbridge, OC Egypt Squadron, 2 RTR, added: "Hammy joined 2 RTR in May 2008 and it was clear from the outset that he was going to be a fine soldier.

"He took pride in his fitness and was determined to be the best tank driver he could be. He succeeded."



LCPL DAVID DENNIS (29)
THE LIGHT DRAGOONS
KIA JULY 4, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

A WELL-RESPECTED soldier was killed by an IED strike after helping to secure a helicopter landing site for the extraction of casualties in southern Afghanistan.

LCpl David "Duke" Dennis, The Light Dragoons, was on a bomb clearance operation when the lethal blast went off.

The 29-year-old was on his second Op Herrick tour and had also served in Iraq.

Lt Col Gus Fair, CO of the LD Battlegroup, said: "Duke loved being in the regiment, and the regiment celebrated this popular, genuine and heartfelt soldier."

The quietly-spoken Welshman leaves behind his mother, Adele, his twin brother Gareth and his fiancée Lisa.

Maj Rupert Lyon, OC D Squadron, LD, said that as well as being a good soldier, LCpl Dennis was an "unstoppable" rugby player.

"[He] was a great asset to have on your side during squadron rugby matches. During quiet periods he could often be found in the armoury checking that the weapons were serviceable or otherwise in the gym improving on his already fearsome strength."

Regimental signals officer Capt David Ansell added: "Duke was a dedicated soldier and an absolute rock, who could be depended on no matter the circumstances.

"Nothing was ever too much trouble for him, whether it be at work or for his friends. He was an example to us all."



PTE ROBERT LAWS (18)
2ND BATTALION,
THE MERCIAN REGIMENT
KIA JULY 4, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

AN 18-year-old soldier who fought on the front line in Afghanistan within a year of completing his basic training was killed when his vehicle was hit by an RPG.

Pte Robert Laws had joined B Company, 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment during Herrick 10 after passing the combat infantryman's course in Catterick in March this year.

The popular platoon member was killed as he sat alongside his comrades while operating under the command of the Light Dragoon Battlegroup during Operation Panchai Palang.

Pte Laws, from Bromsgrove, had achieved "best shot" on the light machine gun during his training and had impressed his superiors.

His commanding officer, Lt Col Simon Banton,

said: "Robbie only joined 2 Mercian a very short time ago but had already begun to make his mark. His falling has taken a good soldier from us; a man who was not afraid to move forward, endure hardship and he had the courage to fight the enemy alongside his brothers."

Sgt Maj Paul Muckle, B Coy, 2 Mercian, added: "From the outset he settled well into the platoon and became known for his mischievous sense of humour. Robbie showed great potential during his short time with B Company."

A statement on behalf of Pte Laws' family said: "The parents and close family are immensely proud of their popular and loving son. They would like to thank all their friends for their loving support at this very difficult time."



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IRR

OBITUARIES



LCPL DANE ELSON (22)
1ST BATTALION,
WELSH GUARDS
KIA JULY 5, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

A COURAGEOUS soldier was killed by an IED while providing covering fire for his comrades in Helmand province.

LCpl Dane Elson (22) of the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards was on patrol in Babaji as part of the Light Dragoons Battlegroup when he was caught by the blast.

Speaking of the recently-promoted Javelin operator who had also toured Bosnia and Iraq, Lt Col Gus Fair, CO of the LD Battlegroup, said: "It is typical of the man that he died while providing cover to the rest of his platoon.

"Though he is no longer with us, his fellow Welsh Guardsmen, and the battlegroup, will remember this talented and popular soldier."

The super-fit rugby player, originally from

Zimbabwe but based in Bridgend, Wales, was described as an "awesome leader" by his platoon sergeant.

"He was always first to volunteer, no matter what the job," said Sgt Grant Lewis. "He loved soldiering and was a constant inspiration to those around him."

Secretary of State for Defence, Bob Ainsworth, added: "I was very saddened to learn of the death of LCpl Elson, who had served bravely in Afghanistan, Iraq and Bosnia, and clearly had a bright future and successful Army career ahead of him.

"The respect and warmth with which his friends, colleagues and commanders remember him speaks for itself."



CAPT BEN BABINGTON-BROWNE (27)
22 ENGINEER REGIMENT,
ROYAL ENGINEERS
JULY 6, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

AN INFLUENTIAL officer was killed in a helicopter accident while serving with the International Security Assistance Force in southern Afghanistan.

Capt Ben Babington-Browne (27) of 22 Engineer Regiment died when the Griffon helicopter in which he was travelling crashed during take off at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Mescall in Zabul. The incident also claimed the lives of two Canadian soldiers.

The Iraq veteran was visiting the FOB, 50 miles north east of Kandahar, to undertake an engineering survey.

Lt Col Andrew Noble, commanding officer of 22 Engr Regt, said Capt Babington-Browne was highly respected as a leader.

"He was an outstanding officer who had an extremely bright future in the British Army," the CO added. "The impact he made on us during the time we were privileged to spend with him showed that Ben will have touched many lives.

"I have rarely met a man who was so widely liked and respected in a regiment."

The keen skier leaves behind his mother Nina and brother Daniel. Nina said: "Ben will be so missed by his family and friends who are all heartbroken by his untimely death. One of the brightest stars in the firmament has been lost in the line of a duty which was second only to his love for his family and friends.

"We are all immensely proud of all his considerable achievements in his short life."



TPR CHRISTOPHER WHITESIDE (20)
THE LIGHT DRAGOONS
KIA JULY 7, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

A SOLDIER who battled back from injury to fight the Taliban was killed by an IED blast during a clearance operation in Helmand.

Tpr Christopher "Norman" Whiteside (20) of The Light Dragoons died during Operation Panchai Palang, a taskforce set up to clear Babaji and Malgir of insurgents and restore government control before the Afghan national elections in August.

The talented fencer, who had ambitions of representing Great Britain at the 2012 Olympics, joined the Army in July 2005 as an infantryman in The Queen's Lancashire Regiment but was discharged just over a year later after suffering a serious knee injury.

Determined to serve his country, he joined

The Light Dragoons in March 2008 after returning to full fitness.

His commanding officer, Lt Col Gus Fair, said: "Tpr Whiteside had only been in the regiment for a short time, but had established a reputation as an excellent soldier.

"Fit, robust and determined, he had all the qualities that mark out a soldier of considerable promise, and he was at the top of his peers."

Sgt Keith Bell, C Squadron, LD, added: "Norm died on the battlefield doing what he loved, pushing forward and taking it to the enemy with his mates beside him."

Tpr Whiteside is survived by his mother, Diane and her partner Malcolm, as well as younger brother Dan.



RFN DANIEL HUME (22)
4TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 9, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

AN EXCEPTIONALLY gifted young soldier was killed following an explosion while on foot patrol near Nad-e-Ali in Helmand province.

Rfn Daniel Hume (22), 4th Battalion, The Rifles, arrived in the unit at the end of April, having passed out from the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick as a top student.

His commanding officer, Lt Col Rupert Jones, said: "He was a true professional, utterly determined in everything he did and it was no surprise that he rapidly mastered the skills that he would need in Afghanistan.

"In his short time in Helmand, he came to be a rifleman that both his friends and commanders could totally rely upon, no matter what the task.

"He was a man with boundless energy,

naturally fit and a sportsman with exceptional motivation and will to succeed."

Early promotion beckoned for Rfn Hume, who had his eye on a move to the sniper platoon.

Lt Col Jones added: "The snipers sit at the heart of the Rifles tradition and he would have excelled with them.

"Mature and perceptive, his aspiration for the year was to complete the tour safely. Cruel fate has denied him this."

In a statement, the family of Rfn Hume said: "He was proud to serve his country and was planning to move battalion when he returned so that he could guarantee a speedy return to Afghanistan. His death has left a huge void in our lives, we are fiercely proud of him."

OBITUARIES



PTE JOHN BRACKPOOL (27)
1ST BATTALION,
WELSH GUARDS
KIA JULY 9, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

A RESERVIST soldier who volunteered for a six-month operational tour in Afghanistan was killed after he was struck by enemy fire while on sentry duty.

Pte John "Bracks" Brackpool of 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards died at Char-e-Anjire, just outside Lashkar Gah, when a compound secured as part of Operation Panther's Claw came under attack.

The 27-year-old completed two tours of Kosovo and one of Iraq before leaving the Army and joining Prince of Wales's Company, 1 WG as a Regular Reservist.

Maj Giles Harris, Pte Brackpool's company commander, said: "He was an extremely likeable and engaging man. His laid back attitude and

tremendous sense of humour – most often at his own expense – made him a hugely valued member of his platoon. That an Englishman could be so quickly and genuinely brought into the fold of a Welsh platoon – one which had already seen considerable action before his arrival – was a testament to his remarkable character and good nature."

Platoon commander Lt Dave Harris added: "He had a permanent smile etched across his face and appeared to relish being part of a close-knit team despite the austere conditions.

"He was blessed with a wonderful sense of humour and a truly happy-go-lucky attitude."

Pte Brackpool leaves behind his parents, partner and a young son.



CPL LEE SCOTT (26)
2ND ROYAL TANK REGIMENT
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

A "TRUE tankie" was killed in an explosion while taking part in Operation Panther's Claw in Helmand province.

Cpl Lee "Scotty" Scott (26) of the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment died while leading a section of Viking vehicles.

Nikki, Cpl Scott's wife, said the courageous soldier would live on through his children, Kai and Brooke. "Lee was not only my husband but my best friend," she said. "Ask anyone who was lucky enough to have met him and they'd all tell you the same, he was the most loving, kindest, thoughtful person you could ever meet."

Maj Charlie Burbridge, commander of Egypt Squadron, 2 RTR, added: "He was a highly experienced combat soldier and was always

willing to have a go. Scotty was a central figure in my squadron; fun loving, thoughtful, honest and effective. In short, he was the perfect soldier both in the field and at home."

Cpl Scott's colleagues revealed that he always led by example but refused to be hailed as brave. In a statement, his troop said: "He met his death leading his troop from the front as he insisted he always did. He was fully aware of the dangers this entailed, but it was a mark of the man that he wouldn't ask anyone to do a job that he wouldn't do himself."

Secretary of State for Defence, Bob Ainsworth, added: "I understand that Cpl Scott was a natural soldier and had been succeeding in things beyond his years."



RFN AMINIASI TOGE (26)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 16, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

A COURAGEOUS soldier of great stature was killed while on foot patrol in Afghanistan.

Rfn Aminiasi "Toge" Toge of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles died in an explosion close to Forward Operating Base Keenan, near Gereschk. His platoon had been attached to C Squadron, Light Dragoons as part of a Danish-led battlegroup.

Rfn Toge (26) was born in Suva, Fiji and swapped the southern Pacific paradise for the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick in September 2007. After passing out in April 2008 he was posted to 2 Rifles and deployed to Kosovo before returning to the UK to start pre-deployment training for Helmand province.

Rfn Toge's commanding officer Lt Col Rob Thomson said: "He was one of the toughest

riflemen under my command and he was adored – heart-breakingly so – by all who had the privilege to encounter him.

"We have lost a courageous man of great stature. There was no truer moral compass in the battlegroup but there was mischief too, all very appropriate and all full of fun."

A keen swimmer and outstanding rugby player, he leaves a twin brother, three sisters and devoted parents.

Friend and colleague Rfn Peter White said: "He was the easiest bloke to make friends with and when I was told that we would be in the same platoon I was really pleased. I know that he loved his sisters dearly and he talked about home so much that I want to go to Fiji."



CPL JOSEPH ETHELLES (22)
2ND BATTALION, THE
ROYAL REGIMENT OF FUSILIERS
KIA JULY 19, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN

AN "EAGER and proud" Fusilier died after being caught in an explosion near Sangin in Helmand.

Cpl Joseph "Etch" Etchells was on foot patrol near Forward Operating Base Wishtan when an IED detonated on July 19.

The 22-year-old, from Mossley in Manchester, was a graduate of the Army Foundation College in Harrogate and had served with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers since 2003.

Lt Col Charlie Calder, Cpl Etchells' CO, described the NCO as a "remarkable young man" with a natural gift for soldiering.

He said: "His enthusiasm, determination, loyalty and professionalism would have seen him progress with ease through the ranks.

"He will be remembered for the friendships that he easily made at home, in barracks or facing daily adversity in Afghanistan."

After joining 2 RRF, Cpl Etchells represented his battalion at cricket and cross-country. He deployed to Now Zad, Afghanistan in 2006, earning promotion to lance corporal soon after and becoming a full corporal in June last year.

Friend Fus Craig Ashwell said: "He always aspired to be the best he could be. He looked after the newer blokes, found time for them and made sure they were squared away because that was his nature. His loss has left a void in the company and the battalion."

Cpl Etchells leaves behind fiancée Julie and a young daughter.



**GDSM CHRISTOPHER KING (20)
1ST BATTALION,
COLDSTREAM GUARDS
KIA JULY 9, 2009 – AFGHANISTAN**

A GUARDSMAN who passed out of training less than a year ago has been killed in an IED blast in Helmand province.

Gdsm Christopher King, of 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, was on a foot patrol when the lethal device detonated on July 22. He died immediately.

The 20-year-old, from Birkenhead, was working with a team responsible for the protection of vehicle patrols on Operation Panchai Palang.

Gdsm King's family said he died doing what he wanted to do.

"Chris was a tremendous son, he was proud to be a guardsman and died serving his country doing a job he loved," said a family statement.

"We are very proud of the fact that Chris was prepared to do his duty, helping to secure a lasting peace and provide stability to the people of Afghanistan."

Gdsm King passed out of the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick in August 2008, after which he joined 3 Company, 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

In early 2009 he volunteered to deploy with 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards for a six-month operational tour to Afghanistan, where he served as a rifleman.

Lt Col Toby Gray, commanding officer of 1 Coldm Gds, said that despite his age, Gdsm King could "lead the way".

"From the moment he joined the Army, Gdsm Christopher King constantly showed a desire to challenge himself and improve his professional ability with the aim of becoming the best soldier he could," the CO said.

21 **THE NEW
MINIMUM AGE
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PREVIOUS AGE LIMIT WAS 18**

Hard lines for troops on Herrick's front line

AN ARMY educator who regularly holds lessons at forward operating bases in southern Afghanistan has praised the dedication of her students.

Capt Verity Smith (AGC(ETS)) has helped scores of soldiers pass vital Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) courses during sessions held in makeshift classrooms across Helmand province.

And despite her charges having to study after completing demanding patrols in severe heat, the officer said the troops always showed a willingness to learn.

"I have run junior and senior NCO CLM courses in basic buildings with no air conditioning, but the soldiers are still enthusiastic about it," she said.

"There has been education in the main locations here for some time, but it's fairly new for it to be pushed forward. In an ideal world it would all be done in comfortable classrooms, but out here is one of the only chances to have everyone in the same place without the courses and other commitments you have in the UK.

"There are some people who didn't like school and have some emotional baggage about learning, but once they have that confidence they can push on."



The Army's commitment to educating its soldiers even when they are deployed is part of a wider push to ensure that Servicemen and women have a firm grasp of basic skills.

Capt Smith said that not only do today's troops need to be numerate and literate in order to do their jobs effectively, their hopes of promotion also depend on them gaining a good standard of education.

"There's a huge push in the Army for basic skills and actually to be a good corporal or sergeant you need to be literate and numerate," she said. "Also, out here people have to work out logistics and there is a need for things like patrol reports to be written in clear English, so it's a necessity rather than a nicety."

As well as helping British soldiers, 29-year-old Capt Smith, pictured left, has also spent time in the classroom with the Afghan National Army (ANA) teaching its troops basic English.

"The ANA are a really good bunch of people," she said. "They all know the alphabet to some extent and although some really struggle, I try to teach them things that are both nice to know and operationally useful."

● **Aiming high – Pages 24-33**

Defence debate opens

THE CHANCE for Armed Forces personnel and civilians to comment on a Government document which made key pledges to the Army is open until October 31.

The Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP), which contained more than 40 commitments to end any disadvantages caused by service in the Armed Forces, was published one year ago.

Now the Government has published a consultation paper, open to Service personnel, veterans and all civilians, aimed at gaining views and responses to their strategy.

The first annual report on the command paper will show that compensation has doubled for seriously injured Servicemen and women. It will also highlight that free further education has been provided for Service leavers and that people leaving

the Forces have been helped onto the housing ladder.

But the consultation, headed up by Secretary of State for Defence Bob Ainsworth, will allow respondents to comment on any of the Green Paper's ideas – the benefits, disadvantages and costs – and to add any alternative ideas.

The SPCP – the *Nation's Commitment: Cross Government Support to Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans* – is the first national strategy to improve support for personnel, their families and veterans. Under Secretary of State for Defence, Kevan Jones, said: "Our Armed Forces are the best in the world and it is our duty to ensure that we do everything we can to support them and their families. I am confident that this process will help us deliver real and lasting improvements."

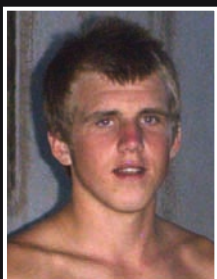
OBITUARIES



CPL JONATHAN HORNE (28)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN



Rfn WILLIAM ALDRIDGE (18)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN



Rfn JAMES BACKHOUSE (18)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN



Rfn JOSEPH MURPHY (18)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

FIVE soldiers who were killed in explosions while on a foot patrol in Helmand province would want their colleagues to continue to take the battle to the Taliban, their CO has emphasised.

Lt Col Rob Thomson, commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, said the deaths of Cpl Jonathan Horne and Rifleman William Aldridge, James Backhouse, Joseph Murphy and Daniel Simpson had been a bitter blow, but that their colleagues were undeterred.

"They fought alongside us and our lives are the worse for them not being here," he added.

"I sensed each rifleman tragically killed in action standing behind us as we returned to our posts and we all knew that each one of those riflemen would have wanted us to 'crack on'. And that is what we shall do – the work is too important; there will be no turning."

The MoD confirmed that the five men had died in two roadside bomb blasts while on patrol near Forward Operating Base Wishtan. A second IED detonated as soldiers attempted to help those who had been wounded in the first blast.

Cpl Horne, who was 28 and from Walsall, joined The Royal Green Jackets in 2004.

Married with three children, the NCO had served in Iraq and Kosovo and had been promoted to corporal during his pre-deployment training for Afghanistan.

His wife Rachel said: "You were so brave and we are all so proud of what you have done – we will always love and miss you and you will forever be in our thoughts."

In a statement, the soldiers of his platoon added: "He was a corporal in rank but a rifleman at heart who would do everything in his power to help people, especially when times were tough."

"He was devoted to all of us, and to his friends and family."

Rfn Aldridge joined 2 Rifles last year after studying at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate. He deployed to Afghanistan after turning 18 in May, having served with distinction with the battalion's rear party in Ballykinler, Northern Ireland.

The martial arts enthusiast, who was originally from Bromyard in Herefordshire, was fiercely proud of being one of the youngest in Helmand.

A statement issued by his family said: "He achieved his dreams by becoming a rifleman and was very aware of the sacrifice that he may have to make. He will leave a huge void in our lives and always remain the perfect son."

Sgt Jamie Moncho, 9 Platoon Sergeant, 2 Rifles, said: "Will had the most promising future and was on track to take part in the next junior NCO cadre, which I have no doubt he would have passed with ease. He is remembered by all, forgotten by none."

Rfn Backhouse, who was 18 and originally from Castleford in Yorkshire, arrived at 2 Rifles in April last year and had been on his first operational deployment.

Remembered for his love of fitness and his desire to be "stronger and faster than the next man", he was killed while clearing the way for his colleagues to follow.

Maj Alistair Field, OC of C Company, 2 Rifles, recalled the young soldier as being motivated,



Rfn DANIEL SIMPSON (20)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA JULY 10, 2009
– AFGHANISTAN

enthusiastic and highly capable.

The officer said: "His sense of service was humbling. Rfn Backhouse was always quick to volunteer for any task, especially those that took the fight to the enemy – there were many of those."

Rfn Murphy joined 2 Rifles in November last year and was immediately immersed in his pre-deployment training.

The 18-year-old former Army Foundation College student had deployed to Sangin in March as a light machine gunner.

He had been carrying his wounded close friend Rfn Simpson to safety after the first explosion when the second IED detonated, killing both of them instantly.

Rfn Murphy's family said in a statement: "He was a fine young man, a dearly loved son, brother, grandson, nephew and cousin who will stay in our hearts forever."

"He died doing the job he loved and our thoughts and prayers go to his comrades."

Capt Edward Poynter, C Company, 2 Rifles, remembered the young soldier as "an exceptional young rifleman who was fiercely proud of his section".

"He gave his life while trying to save that of his fellow rifleman," he added. "The thoughts and prayers of all in C Company are with him and his family."

Originally from Croydon, London, Rfn Simpson was 20 and had served in the Army for two years. He had already been on peacekeeping ops in Kosovo.

Excelling in communications during his pre-deployment training, the father-of-one, who had played junior football for West Ham United, was pressed into action as a platoon signaller in Afghanistan and had already been earmarked for promotion.

His family recalled the young soldier as being a "larger than life character always full of surprises".

Their statement added: "A strong team player who was fiercely loyal to his friends, he could always be relied on to be there when he was needed."

Capt Poynter shared the sentiments. He said: "He had bags of potential and was full of high-octane character – he would have gone a long way."

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- **Colonel David Teeple**, Commander, US Army Armour Centre Command Group, Fort Knox, **US Army**
- **Colonel Mark Goldsack**, Assistant Director Capability, HQ Infantry – Land Warfare Centre, **UK**
- **Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Stuart MBE**, Commander Equipment Capability Op HERRICK & Commanding Officer 4 Close Support Battalion, **Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME), UK**
- **Lieutenant Colonel Jerome Lemaire**, Land Combat Capabilities Architect, **DGA France**
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Stress tends to emerge when you don't feel on top of things. This doesn't necessarily mean you have more on your plate than you can actually cope with – it might just seem that way.

So being more organised, at work and in your home life, can make a big difference. Make a list of what needs doing and identify the priorities, then tick them off as you go. You may even find that the list is shorter than you expected. If the list turns out to be unrealistically long, you might simply have too much stuff in your life. Think seriously about giving up a commitment or two.

And talk to someone you can trust about how and why you're struggling – a problem shared is a problem halved, as they say.

If you work in an office, take regular screen-breaks. Always have a proper lunch-hour away from your desk, don't get into the habit of working beyond your paid hours, and be sure to take up all your holiday. It will make you a better employee.

Your secret weapon is setting aside a few quiet moments each day to do nothing, say nothing, and think about nothing. Find a space away from the noise and bustle, sit down, take some deep breaths and let your shoulder muscles relax. It's like a screen-break for the brain – and it can really help you keep your head straight and your stress down.

PASS AN EXAM

Exam pressure? British soldiers continue to study for – and pass – exams even when they are in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

There's no better preparation for an exam than good old-fashioned revision. Study well in advance of your test – leaving it to the last minute will increase your stress levels and you'll struggle to recall information.

Avoid studying late into the night as this will disrupt your body clock and lead to poor performance. Equally, cut out caffeine and sleep early the night before the exam.

This will ensure you're bright and alert on the day.

Finally, quit any negative thinking. Doubting your ability will hinder your success, so think positive.

Remember – you can do it!



• Extracted from 'BE THE BEST ... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.





Aiming high

From secondary school to the sergeants' mess, *Soldier* looks at how Army education is developing troops' careers both in the classroom and on the battlefield...

Hogyork's express

Forces boarding school works its magic with Service personnel's sons and daughters

Report: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Mike Weston

SCHOOLCHILDREN sit eating their lunch on long oak tables in the magnificently-decorated hall while the capped and gowned headmaster keeps a watchful eye.

There is a distinct buzz in the air as the students prepare for the end-of-term festivities and the chance to win the much-coveted title of best house of the year.

It might sound a bit like Harry Potter and his Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, but The Duke of York's Royal Military School, open exclusively to the children of British Service personnel who

have served for a minimum of four years, is grounded much more firmly in reality.

"When the parents look around, the first thing they always say is 'where are the owls?'," deputy head Beverley Birchley told *Soldier* during a visit to the school.

"Many people are reminded of Harry Potter when they first visit and I think that is because the dining room is very similar to that portrayed in the films.

"Some children are a little homesick when they first arrive but we see ourselves as a home and family away from their actual home and family."

Spread across a 150-acre plot in Dover, the MoD boarding establishment boasts

500 pupils aged 11-18 and offers academic school subjects alongside a Combined Cadet Force programme.

Inside the school's traditional-looking exteriors are extremely modern facilities. The junior boys' common room has air hockey and pool tables, a flat screen television and there is also a postal service that students use to send and receive blueys from parents serving on ops.

Student Aaron Carr (13), who has just completed his second year at the school, explained that although he was worried about making friends at first, the situation did not take long to improve.

"My dad is a staff sergeant in the Royal

Signals and I keep in touch with him," he said. "At first it was hard but now I really enjoy it. Drama is my favourite subject."

The school, which celebrated its centenary this year, started life in 1803 as an asylum for boys and girls whose parents were killed in the Napoleonic Wars.

For the first 100 years the establishment was based in south-west London at the site which now houses Chelsea Hospital, before moving to its new home in Kent.

Many former pupils went on to join the military and several still serve in the Armed Forces today. The Bishop of Liverpool the Right Reverend James Jones, Lord John Carter and rugby legend Maurice Colclough all boarded at the prestigious school.

Birchley explained: "I think one of

‘Some children are a little homesick when they first arrive but we see ourselves as a home and family’

the most surprising revelations is that many soldiers, sailors and airmen do not even know we exist. And at a subsidised rate of £500 per term, parents can send their children to an excellent establishment.

"It is very common to hear that pupils have attended up to 12 primary schools due to the nature of their parents' work. Many of the children say how relieved they are to make friends and keep them by staying at the one school."

Currently the school houses children whose parents are mostly SNCOs and above in rank. Almost three-quarters of pupils are from Army backgrounds and around ten per cent are from the families of Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers.

The pace of operations means that loved-ones of troops can be affected when casualties or fatalities arise and a proportion of those studying at the school have been accepted on compassionate grounds.

"The ethos of the school is definitely

that of military life and what we have here is a community that understands and looks after itself," explained headmaster Charles Johnson.

"What we tend to find is that many of the students are in the same boat and can talk to each other and help each other with the stresses and worries of missing a parent deployed on operations."

The Duke of York's school is now in the process of appealing for academy status to ensure that it continues its outstanding reputation for the next 100 years. If it is successful, it hopes to increase its capacity by another third.

Olivia Jaggard-Hawkins (12), whose father is a serving lieutenant colonel in the Royal Logistic Corps, told *Soldier* that although she did not want to pursue a career in the Forces, she appreciated the range of opportunities offered at the Duke of York's.

She added: "As a year seven you have to wait until your first grand day, where you walk around the flag pole three times before you can become a Dukie – which is a true member of the school." ■



Report: Cliff Caswell

WHEN an alarm warning of incoming rocket fire wailed across her camp in Basra, Lt Caroline Cox suddenly found herself transformed back from teacher to soldier.

The 27-year-old immediately took cover with students still clutching their workbooks as they prepared themselves for imminent attack. Although this final tour of Iraq had proved quieter than any previous Op Telic outing, strikes on the Contingency Operating

Base still had a murderous record for claiming lives – one barrage had already killed a civilian contractor.

"After we heard the alarm go off we all responded by getting down on the floor and staying there, but even in that situation I shall never forget the enthusiasm of the soldiers," Lt Cox said with a smile. "We were still lying down but they had already started looking over the homework I had set.

"The troops I was with were from 5th Battalion, The Rifles and were totally committed to learning. Many worked through their evenings after busy days and sometimes I even had to usher them out of class at 2300."

Working as an operational unit training officer during Op Telic 13 proved to be a demanding role for the newly-commissioned member of the Adjutant Generals' Corps Educational and Training Services (AGC(ETS)) branch. But in an Army placing an increasing importance on the academic development of its troops, helping them achieve their full potential at the sharp end of operations was also one of the most rewarding.

Maintaining mental dexterity and enhancing basic skills have become key elements of soldiering in recent years, and personnel must now prove themselves competent in the classroom if they want to progress through the NCO chain.

This means that keeping up with education is crucial, even if it means studying out on ops as well as at education centres in garrisons. As part of their Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) courses, troops looking for promotion must demonstrate that they can achieve a Level One qualification in literacy and numeracy – the equivalent of GCSE grades D-G.

From 2012, however, anyone who wants to achieve the upper echelons of sergeant, staff sergeant and warrant officer must show they have the equivalent of a Level Two qualification, which takes in the top three GCSE exam pass marks.

The structure of the CLM courses has also been altered to make them more thorough. After attending the relevant arms and Service promotion course, troops now have to undertake further study and complete a new workbook before attending

sessions run by AGC(ETS) learning development officers.

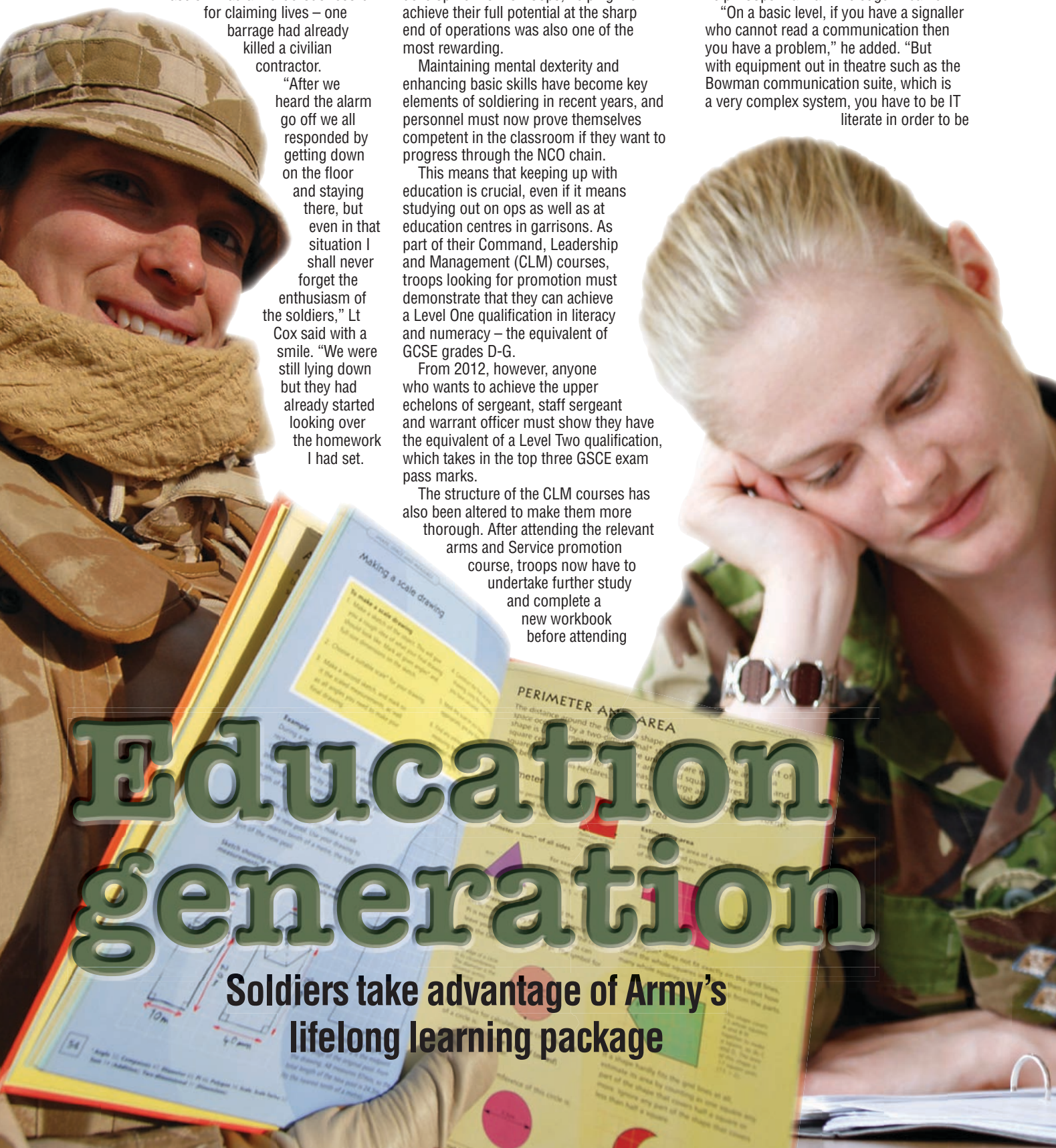
While accepting that bringing some soldiers up to the higher standards would place extra demands on those delivering training, senior officers are convinced the mental dexterity of personnel is vital in the face of difficult ops and new kit.

Maj Stuart Bartrop, who until recently headed up two Army Education Centres for 20th Armoured Brigade in Paderborn, Germany, said the Army's approach of continuous training and mentoring would help troops maintain the edge in battle.

"On a basic level, if you have a signaller who cannot read a communication then you have a problem," he added. "But with equipment out in theatre such as the Bowman communication suite, which is a very complex system, you have to be IT literate in order to be

Education generation

Soldiers take advantage of Army's lifelong learning package



able to get the best out of it.

"However, we have come a long way in terms of developing soldiers in the past ten years. The ethos now is that everyone should have achieved their Level One qualification three years after joining the Army – if they do not have the equivalent [civilian] qualifications already.

"Although there will still be those that cannot do this for a variety of reasons – perhaps issues such as dyslexia – we are available to assist wherever we are needed and will deploy on operations to help troops in theatre."

For the 5 Rifles soldiers who benefited from Lt Cox's classes in Iraq, maintaining the learning process while on Op Telic enabled them to forge ahead with their careers in Germany and turn their attention towards promotion.

"I really hated school and was pretty poor when I was there to be honest," said Rfn Steven Oliver, who has been continuing to build on his education after arriving back in Paderborn. "But thanks to the Army I'm more confident and can find my way around problems even when I get stuck.

"There were times out on Op Telic when I was knackered, and it was difficult knowing that I had homework to do when I came back from a patrol.

"But although it was hard at times, you realise this is something you have to do."

LCpl Mark Deere, who served with the 20th Armoured Brigade surveillance company during the tour, also found

studying a tough challenge. But like Rfn Oliver, he has kept up the momentum of his education in Germany.

"We had classes in theatre every Thursday night and cracked on with our workbooks whenever we could," he said. "In the

surveillance company we were working hard and it was hard to

keep your concentration while studying.

"Our education centre in Germany is brilliant – everybody is here to help you and lifelong learning is something that the Army is taking extremely seriously."

This is certainly true. But with a complex operation under way in Afghanistan and with technically advanced kit providing the battle-winning edge, British soldiers

must have the mental capability to take on the Taliban.

With this in mind, any would-be commanders must be thoroughly prepared. Learning is an integral part of leadership, particularly in a war where staying one step ahead of an astute enemy can mean the difference between life and death. ■

'Everybody is here to help you and lifelong learning is something that the Army is taking extremely seriously'

Far left, Front line foundation: Lt Maz Kingston (AGC(ETS)) delivers basic skills tuition to soldiers on Op Telic 13 Picture: Cpl James Williams (RLC)


Below, Centre of excellence: Lt Caroline Cox (AGC(ETS)) discusses the Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) course workbook with LCpl Mark Deere (5 Rifles) at 41 AEC, Paderborn

Picture: Steve Dock



A high-contrast, black and white silhouette of a soldier in profile, facing right. The soldier is wearing a tactical vest and a helmet. The background is a bright, hazy sky, likely at sunrise or sunset, with a warm glow on the right side. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Out of the

A large, high-contrast silhouette of a soldier operating a machine gun is the central visual element. The soldier is positioned on the left, with their head and hands visible as they aim the weapon. The machine gun is mounted on a tripod and extends across the middle of the frame. A long, coiled ammunition belt hangs down from the gun. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise, creating a strong backlighting effect that silhouettes the soldier and the weapon. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

In a civvy street where redundancies are the stuff of headlines and the economic forecast is of financial meltdown, it is unsurprising that many are looking enviously at the enlightening opportunities offered by the Army.

The contrast could not be starker. At a time of biting recession, soldiers are enjoying subsidised food and accommodation, fully-funded adventurous training and promotion opportunities. And they have just been given a healthy pay rise for the privilege.

Serving in the military is not a career for everyone – increasingly high standards are being demanded and, as well as maintaining their physical fitness, troops must now show their academic dexterity before being

promoted. All personnel must prove that they are capable of meeting lower GCSE grades in literacy and numeracy if they want to climb the career ladder, but in three years the bar is being set higher.

Contenders for sergeant will then have to be capable of hitting top exam passes and will be expected to do it despite the pressures of the job.

But those who pass through the Army's training regime and begin to progress through the command chain have a promising career path mapped out. And there are plenty of responsibilities and rewards en route to the door of the prestigious sergeants' mess. *Soldier* set out to chart the evolution of rank, from humble private to senior NCO. >>

Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock RLC

darkness

SOLDIER CHARTS THE EVOLUTION OF THE NCO, FROM PRIVATE TO RESPONSIBLE RESIDENT OF THE SERGEANTS' MESS

Private

Job: Depends on trade or role; on ops troops may take turns on sentry duty as well as performing general tasks within camp

Promotion: Use the opportunities from Army education staff to beef up your skills. You have to do a Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) package and a junior NCO cadre before you move on

Perks: You'll be living Army life to the full with exercises in countries like Belize, Canada, Jordan and the Falklands plus have access to fully-funded adventurous training

Dosh: £16,230-£25,900

Digs: You'll probably have a communal accommodation block with a single room. You can also get a married quarter

Been there, done that...

"I have just passed English literature to Level One standard thanks to the help I was given on tour in Iraq. In the Army, education takes place in a more grown up environment and you have the opportunity for ongoing learning."

"I've done two years in the Army and am hoping to complete six. I'm going to be looking at trying to achieve the rank of lance corporal over the coming months."

"I hated Phase One training but am loving the Army now. The best part of it is being on operations. I've been serving for a year and have been to Afghanistan. Heading off to new places and going on ops is part of the reason I joined."

Lance Corporal

Job: First taste of leadership; duty NCO responsibilities

Promotion: You have to complete the CLM course for corporal

Perks: Pay rise, job satisfaction, leadership experience, access to junior NCOs' mess

Pay: £19,600-£28,400

Digs: Communal accommodation or married quarter

Been there, done that...

"I get a great sense of job satisfaction from being a lance corporal – it is testing to take that first step because you have to pass a junior NCO cadre."

"I enjoy the responsibility for my rank but the best part of Army life is being with the lads – you get a good banter going and the opportunity to play plenty of sport."

"I had been serving for five years before I was promoted but the change came fairly easily to me. But as a junior NCO, you have to know when to professionally put a bit of distance between you and your mates."



CIVVY STREET

Corporal

Job: You'll be expected to shoulder greater leadership responsibilities. Corporals must often act as a bridge between lower ranks and their sergeants

Promotion: You must complete the CLM course for sergeant. From 2012, this means proving you can achieve top GCSE passes in literacy and numeracy

Perks: Pay rise, job satisfaction, leadership experience, access to junior NCOs' mess

Dosh: £25,200-£32,500

Digs: Communal accommodation or married quarter

Been there, done that...

"Where I am posted everybody has their own room in a communal living area. I'm responsible for looking after the accommodation and the five other soldiers who live there."

"When you make the jump from lance corporal you may well have several friends who have not been promoted – sometimes you must draw the line between friendship and work."

"I took on more duties when I was promoted to corporal, but there are perks to taking on the rank – you have your junior NCO mess where you can meet colleagues. Being a corporal helps you prepare for stepping up to the sergeants' mess."



Sergeant

Job: You'll be into the world of serious management, acting as a bridge between officer and NCO chain and enforcing discipline if anyone falls out of line

Promotion: You have to complete the CLM course for staff sergeant; you'll also have to get some in-rank experience under your belt on exercise and operations

Perks: Access to the sergeants' mess; mess functions; respect; job satisfaction; pay rise

Dosh: £28,600-£36,200

Digs: You've won your right to the sergeants' mess or you can get a married quarter

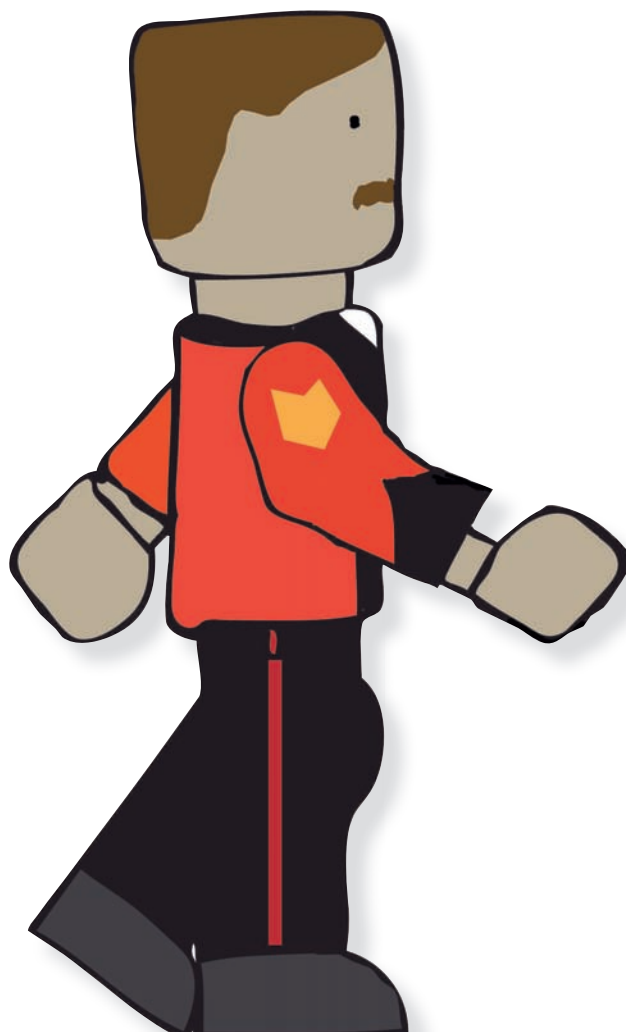
Been there, done that...

"It is quite a different set up when you become a sergeant. You step across a line and cannot be one of the crowd. You must always be there for those under your command."

"Once you have found your feet, you have to establish your own management style, work out how to lead your guys and establish how you expect to be treated by them."

"The pay is better but there is definitely a big step-up in responsibility as opposed to being a corporal when you take on your new rank. I have ten soldiers working for me."

"In the mess you have larger rooms than normal living accommodation and can have your meals there. But the pressures of the job and the workload fall firmly on your shoulders as a leader, and if something goes wrong it is down to you." ■



SERGEANTS' MESS



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Report: Joe Clapson

ACCORDING to philosopher and statesman Sir Francis Bacon “knowledge is power” and following that maxim, the British Army plans to tackle the Taliban with its brains.

A new era of warfare has been launched, with heavy emphasis focused on learning fast lessons from Afghanistan and the improvised nature of the enemy’s tactics and attacks.

As part of Op Entirety, Brig Piers Hankinson has taken charge of the Land Warfare Development Group (LWDG) at Warminster where he has instigated a complete re-think on the Army’s attitude to fighting a “hybrid war”.

In a revealing insight into how British Land Forces will turn to intelligence and smart analysis to gain ground in the conflict zone, Brig Hankinson said the Army must not be a rigid, top-down organisation in the way it thinks.

“We are trying to move away from being a monolithic institute – we have got the brain power and we need to utilise it to broaden our approach,” he told *Soldier*.

“Historically we have prided ourselves on being able to learn and adapt quickly, but my personal view is that we have been slow this time.

“I would say that up to now we have not adequately learnt and adapted to support our soldiers in Afghanistan.”

But the forward-thinking commander at the Land Warfare Centre (LWC) explained that his mission was to relay key information to Army personnel.

“My job now, on a tactical level, is to inform that ‘learn and adapt’ stance to ensure that lessons are learnt for the current conflict.”

With IEDs killing more of our troops than any other weapon, the LWDG, part of the LWC, will develop technological and tactical solutions and deliver the updated messages to soldiers on the ground.

After years of fighting the Taliban with similar strategies and doctrine deployed in Iraq, the Falklands and beyond, the British Army has decided it is time to change.

The message is simple – no two conflicts are the same and lessons must be learnt quickly.

“I believe, until now, we have not given personnel the doctrinal information that they require,” said Brig Hankinson.

“Now we have done by way of the *Counter-Insurgency Manual* – which is web-based.

“We must redirect up-to-the minute doctrine and training to support soldiers and the Army on future

operations. It’s a rapid learning loop.”

In order to accomplish that goal, academics and experienced soldiers are being drafted in to debate military strategy and to impart intelligence on the Army Knowledge Exchange. “We must harness the power of the internet,” said Brig Hankinson. “The Army Knowledge Exchange will be accessible to people all over the world and we welcome academics, allies and cultural advisers.”

Lt Col Judith Dando is working alongside Brig Hankinson to make the Army Knowledge Exchange – branded as AKX – a simple resource to make operations more successful.

“At the moment there is no central hub, so that is what we are creating. We learn the lessons, analyse them and then shove the information out,” she said.

Brig Hankinson wants influential people from all walks of life to engage in a global conversation to benefit our troops and to conquer the unpredictable insurgency. “We want to encourage a culture of debate and exchange of knowledge. At the moment such things are not the currency of debate,” he said.

“I want to be able to harness the input of a sergeant in Afghanistan

and the knowledge of Oxford deans with science experts to improve training in the British Army.

“Afghanistan is a hybrid conflict and my group is very much focused on the future nature of conflict – what is coming next.”

The fully interactive restricted Army Knowledge Exchange should be up and running across the world wide web by January 2010.

The high-tech system will store classified conversations and will be a springboard for wide-ranging debate to connect great minds with young officers.

“I want to harness people’s intellects and their operational experiences and merge it with academia, allies, and Government departments,”

said Brig Hankinson. ■



● Brig Piers Hankinson

Exchange and march: Thanks to Op Entirety, the likes of Pte John Mitchell (3 Scots), pictured resting after a patrol in Sangin Valley, will be better informed on enemy tactics

‘We must redirect up-to-the-minute doctrine and training to support soldiers and the Army on future operations’

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‘I take them at their word’

Government promises on ‘tools of war’ must be kept, says Chief of the General Staff



Top office: Gen Sir Richard Dannatt reflects on his time as CGS during an interview with *Soldier* at MoD Main Building

Picture: Mike Weston

Interview: Joe Clapson

THE OUTGOING Chief of the General Staff has challenged the Government to keep its word on equipment for troops.

In a frank and open interview with *Soldier*, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt also demanded that any future budget cuts after the next General Election should not hit the Armed Forces.

Gen Dannatt ends his tenure at the helm of the British Army on August 28, when he hands over the reins to Gen Sir David Richards, the former commander of Nato forces in Afghanistan.

But following a month that has seen a sharp rise in British deaths in Afghanistan, he has no plans to make a discreet exit, or to take the pressure off Gordon Brown's Government.

"While we are committed, and the Government are committed to the operations in southern Afghanistan, I take them at their word that the vehicles, the equipment, the resources that we need to conduct these operations, we will have," he said.

"I would have been failing in my job in the last few years if I had not insisted that we have the maximum amount of money being spent on equipment and training, and all

the rest of it on operations. And I know my successor will take exactly the same view."

In recent weeks the 58-year-old former infantryman has spoken out over helicopter shortages in Afghanistan. Now he has gone on the record to warn any future occupants of Downing Street against any budget cuts.

The need to save money during the current economic recession is not a reason to jeopardise soldiers' lives, according to Gen Dannatt.

"Whoever wins the next election there is going to be a Defence Review. That's right and proper," said CGS from his office at MoD main building.

"Defence is under a lot of pressure at the present moment and big decisions are going to have to be made.

"One thing we have absolutely got to do, and I will insist on it until my last day in office, is [to ensure] that at the very least we have what we absolutely need to conduct operations successfully in Afghanistan.

"If the nation wants us to fight a war, it has jolly well got to provide us with the tools to do that job – that is first and foremost. Other

discussions can follow."

The soldier's soldier, decorated with the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, the Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, and the Military Cross, went on to heap high praise on those soldiers who fight

on, regardless of the wider political picture.

"I think all of the successes of the last two or three years have been about how the Army has risen to the challenge of successfully concluding our operations in Iraq and rising to the challenge of Afghanistan,

which is a tough and difficult mission," said Gen Dannatt.

"We were conducting two major operations when we had only expected to conduct one. The fact that the Army was able to do it – to shoulder the burden – I think has been a phenomenal achievement."

Clearly overwhelmed with pride, CGS added: "I just say thank you from the bottom of my heart for picking up the burden and running with it."

Never one to shy away from controversial topics when his soldiers' lives lay in the balance, Gen Dannatt also stressed the need

'If the nation wants us to fight a war, it has jolly well got to provide us with the tools to do that job'



Front-line commander: CGS Gen Sir Richard Dannatt visits troops from The Queen's Royal Lancers Battlegroup during a visit to Iraq

Picture: Cpl Russ Nolan, RLC

for more troops of all nationalities to be drafted into Afghanistan's battlefields.

"We can only bring the kind of success that we are trying to achieve where we can bring persistent security to parts of Helmand, by where we physically are," he said. "It's down to the number of boots on the ground."

"I do not mind whose feet are in those boots, whether it's British feet, American feet or Afghan feet – the fact of the matter is we've got to have the maximum number of troops on the ground."

Despite the recent fatalities in Afghanistan, the keen sportsman and father-of-four was upbeat about the future of Op Herrick. For him, failure is not an option.

"We have been successful in Iraq and we will succeed in southern Afghanistan. We must succeed, not just for the people of Afghanistan but for the people of this country as well," said the general.

"It's our tradition to do that and we will not let the nation down."

He was also quick to dispute any suggestion that improvements in equipment would necessarily equate to the Taliban's demise and less deaths to British soldiers.

"It's not just about equipment. Our whole capability is based on a number of things and

equipment is part of it.

"It's much wider than just having better vehicles, that is an important part of it but that's not the complete answer."

Reflecting on his three-year term in charge of the Army, Gen Dannatt insisted his only regrets were the deaths of his soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Are there disappointments? No," he continued. "As far as operations are concerned it is tragic that we have lost 179 of our people in Iraq and [an increasing number] in Afghanistan."

"Each one of those losses is a personal tragedy, so of course as far as that is concerned those are disappointments."

With operations successfully wrapped up in Iraq and a stern warning not to cut the budget for Afghanistan issued, Gen Dannatt had a simple message for those he has led during his time at the top.

"My parting message is

simply one of thanks," he said. "I would like to place on record my thanks to all the Servicemen and women for what they have done in recent years in very difficult circumstances. And of course it's not just to the men and women in uniform, it's in particular to the families. We frankly couldn't do what we do without the support of our close families."

Signing off before he takes up the historic role as Constable of the Tower of London and packs his rod bag for a spot of fishing, Gen Dannatt explained why the British Army should be held in high esteem.

"I stayed for 40 years and only intended on staying for three, so there must be something right about what we do," he said.

"We have a set of core values and make a big effort to live up to them. Selfless commitment, discipline, loyalty, respect for others, courage, integrity – these are really key core values and I think in a sense our attempt to live like that is almost a potential exemplar in the nation." ■





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Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Graeme Main

SOLDIERS suffering from horrendous injuries have been re-inspired to enjoy life by joining forces with world-famous sailors to take part in the most spectacular race of its kind.

The Toe in the Water charity sailing scheme enables wounded and disabled Servicemen and women from the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy to get back into a team environment by taking to the seas and challenging competitively for silverware.

Participants set sail on three top-class boats chartered by Toe in the Water to compete against Olympians and America's Cup sailors in the Isle of Wight's prestigious Round the Island race.

The boats, named *Juno*, *Artimis* and *Toe in the Water*, were crewed by injured tri-Service staff and qualified able-bodied sailors.

Capt Holly King (RAMC), a physiotherapist at Headley Court, founded the groundbreaking charity in 2008 with Tanya Brookfield, whose background is in professional yacht racing.

"We don't see our job as being about helping people with injuries, it's about re-inspiring them," said Tanya.

"All of the guys except one had never sailed until the day before the race and now they are racing against 1,778 other boats including Olympic gold medallist Ben Ainslie and other professional round-the-world sailors.

"It's this type of thing that will inspire soldiers to get back into normal life and give them a new appetite to drive them."

'It's hugely helping my recovery – the mindset of working in a team on a boat is really beneficial'

Soldier caught up with the Army contingent as they trained – many for the first time – on the day before battling against 16,000 fellow racers around the 50-mile course.

Amputee Pte Chris Herbert (4 Yorks) was onboard *Toe in the Water* with Vendee Globe round-the-world sailor Steve White.

The 21-year-old said being introduced to sailing has turned his life around after he lost his leg in an IED blast in Basra, Iraq.

"It's hugely helping my recovery," he said. "The mindset of working in a team on a boat is really beneficial."

Other soldiers cutting through the choppy waters along with boats ranging from small cruisers to powerful maxi-yachts were racing on *Juno*, in the Farr 65 class.

On-board was Cpl Daniel Hutchinson (R Signals), who was hit by a suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan. He suffered massive internal injuries when his vehicle's seatbelt ripped into his ribs and sternum.

He said: "Sailing is brand new to me. It's a real change from the norm. There are a multitude of different injuries on-board and Toe in the Water brings everyone together.

"It's stuff like this that gets soldiers back into the swing of life – it makes you feel as if you are contributing to something."

The Round the Island Race, hosted by the Island Sailing Club, was first held in 1931 and sees competitors vying for the Gold Roman Bowl.

Steering the boat for part of the training exercise was LCpl Martyn Compton (HCR), pictured left, who suffered severe burns in Afghanistan. "Our wagon was in the middle of a convoy and we

got IED'd. It killed all the lads with me, then they [the Taliban] started to shoot RPGs at me.

"I was in flames and received massive burns – it was a pretty bad day at the office but things like Toe in the Water keep me going."

Following a call of "tack" which prompted all crew members to spring into action, Sgt Lisa Gibbons (R Signals), pictured below right, took a break to talk about the charity.

Sgt Gibbons has had her knee reconstructed and has been undergoing rehabilitation at Headley Court after being caught in a mortar attack in Iraq.

"Toe in the Water gets you to meet different people and obviously learn how to sail, which is something completely new for me.

"There's a lot of stigma associated with being downgraded and not being able to go out on operations, so this is the perfect chance to get back into action."

In the Open 60 class, *Artimis* came second with a time of 8hr 27min 53sec. *Toe in the Water* sailed home in fourth place in 10hr 13min 5sec. In the IRC Group O, *Juno* came 30th out of 50 boats with a time of 9hr 42min 17sec.

The Gold Roman Bowl was won by 25-foot Nordic folkboat *Tattarat*. ■

● To find out more and how to get involved go to www.toeinthewater.org or email info@toeinthewater.org

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Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Mike Weston

YOU don't have to travel far in Belfast to find evidence of troubled times. On the former flashpoint estates of the loyalist heartland in Shankill and the nationalist Falls Road, years of anger and pain are immortalised in art.

The stark murals of balaclava-clad men with rifles, memorials to fallen paramilitary fighters and hard line slogans are as uncompromising as the vivid colours in which they are painted.

Once these striking and disturbing images provided the backdrop to the British Army's longest running deployment. In the 37 years of Op Banner, soldiers patrolled these streets day and night, literally risking life and limb in the process.

But like a play that has ended its season at the theatre, the actors in this drama have long left the stage and only the half-dismantled set remains for all to see. The towers, bases and barricades are no more, and the armoured personnel carriers that once rumbled along

this route have been replaced by open top tour buses full of tourists aiming to shoot a slice of history on their digital cameras.

Normalisation has been the watchword for politicians and senior Army officers in the two years since the end of Op Banner. Piece by piece, Northern Ireland has been transformed into a garrison where soldiers now prepare for overseas action. Earlier this year troops from 19 Light Brigade headed out to Afghanistan in the first large scale deployment mounted from the province, but, like a shocking encore to the Troubles, a murderous terrorist ambush hours before they were due to leave for theatre left two soldiers dead and again focused unwelcome media attention on times past.

Spr Mark Quinsey and Spr Patrick Azimkar, both serving with 38 Engineer Regiment, were killed when gunmen opened fire during a pizza delivery outside the gates of Maserreene Barracks in Antrim. The attack, for which a breakaway faction of the IRA claimed

'We're aiming to keep the wives and families busy every weekend and they are being very well looked after'

responsibility, marked a brief but uncomfortable return to a violence that many believed had been consigned to history and left rear party troops facing a tough role.

"There is still a definite dissident Republican threat out there, and we have seen the tragic consequences of that with the deaths of these two soldiers," said Brig George Norton, commander of the resident 38 (Irish) Brigade, which oversees the military infrastructure throughout Northern Ireland.

"But we are doing everything possible to ensure that our soldiers and their families are protected and make sure that anybody who is thinking of attacking us is deterred. I want to reassure the military community that their interests and security are being addressed in every way possible."

Although the alert state had been raised and new measures to combat would-be terrorists

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put in place, Brig Norton explained that vast progress has been made since the days of the Troubles. He said that there was a new commitment to peace, which was underlined by the fact that the killing of the two sappers had been greeted with universal condemnation from all quarters of the civilian populace.

"We have come a long way from the days of Op Banner, during which we lost 700 soldiers and 130 in 1972 alone," he said. "We are now here in Northern Ireland to prepare soldiers for overseas ops – so what happened in Antrim was not only an attack on the security forces but an attack on an element of the community."

For those involved with supporting 19 >>

Fall's gold: Striking murals in Belfast's Catholic heartland were once the backdrop to Op Banner

Light Brigade on the home front, meeting the challenges has proved to be testing. Faced with the dual responsibility of maintaining security in the wake of the raised threat level and providing the backing for front-line ops, the hours have been long and the work demanding.

"The situation means that we now have to provide a quick response force to assist the Northern Ireland Guard Service," said Maj Mal Gill, who has been commanding the rear party for 38 Engineer Regiment. "We have to remain vigilant and make sure that we can react to any potential incident."

"Obviously the families were very shaken up by the incident at Antrim, but the majority have been getting on with their lives and readjusting the way they do business – our role is to make sure we do the best we can to look after them."

A huge emphasis has certainly been placed on ensuring dependants are well supported. With a strong community spirit on bases throughout Northern Ireland, welfare officers have pulled out all the stops to ensure that any problems are swiftly

addressed as well as creating a full programme of social events.

"We're aiming to keep the wives and families busy every weekend and they are being very well looked after," said Capt Andy Pemberton, a welfare officer for 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, who is based on the County Down coast at Ballykinler.

"There is a very good team to help here, and the OC of our rear party made sure everybody involved was picked for their experience. Obviously we are all very busy at the moment, but no more so than those who are out forward in Afghanistan."

Making sure the best are chosen for backing front-line efforts has also been a priority for Maj Sam Pinkney, heading up rear operations for 40 Regiment, Royal Artillery at Lisburn. He said that life on the home front is now

very different from the past.

"There is a misconception about the rear party – a lot of people think those who stay behind are not able to deploy but we have seen a huge change in the nature of operations over the past ten years," he added. "It is now important that we have the right people on the rear party to deal with any issues that arise."

There is no doubt that 19 Light Brigade have faced a double challenge on home soil. As well as playing their part in assisting with security, they have faced the difficulties of providing welfare, dealing with casualties and making sure the administration of those travelling to and returning from theatre is up to scratch.

Yet they are fulfilling this historic role with aplomb. Working in an environment and with a level of stability that would have been totally inconceivable just a few years ago, they are also a key element in the normalisation process and have been instrumental in bringing a new peace to this one-time trouble spot. ■

'A huge emphasis has certainly been placed on making sure dependants are well supported'



AT A GLANCE:

Rear party demands

How 19 Light Brigade are dealing with the unique pressures of a deployment from Northern Ireland

Security

SOLDIERS serving as part of 19 Light Brigade's rear party have had to contend with Northern Ireland's increased alert state in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities.

The troops have formed a quick response force to deal with any potential incident and assist the Guard Service if they are called upon to do so. The commitment has meant several personnel working in shifts in a demanding role.

The killing of two sappers from 38 Engineer Regiment in Antrim saw the introduction of a host of extra security measures to protect soldiers and their families.



Casualties

AS well as the day-to-day sickness and absence reporting, troops have been on hand to help deal with wounded colleagues returning from southern Afghanistan.

Teams of personnel have been flying from Northern Ireland to Birmingham, where they have been ready to meet and assist the injured arriving at Selly Oak Hospital.

Maj Mal Gill, OC rear party for 38 Engineer Regiment, said: "Casualties are brought back to the mainland UK, and it is obviously important that we are there to visit them."

Air bridge

WHILE the main contingent of 19 Light Brigade flew directly from RAF Aldergrove into Kandahar to begin their Op Herrick tour, troops deploying individually have had to return to the UK on civvy flights before heading for Brize Norton.

But as weapons cannot be taken on civilian carriers, guns and kit have had to be transported to the RAF base separately, placing extra admin demands on movers.

Maj Sam Pinkney, OC rear party for 40 Regiment, Royal Artillery, told *Soldier*: "Geographically the 27 miles of Irish Sea make life more difficult than on the mainland.

"You cannot just get the augmentees going to Afghanistan together and put them on an aeroplane – they have to go on a civvy flight and meet their kit at Brize."

Welfare


AS with any rear party, keeping spouses and families occupied and entertained is vitally important and it is an area 19 Light Brigade have taken very seriously.

Unit welfare officers have been working hard to create a packed social calendar and they are also at hand to help families cope with any problems they experience while troops are away.

Capt Ted Heath (REME), unit welfare officer with 19 Combat Service Support Battalion, said: "Living in Northern Ireland is almost like being in a mini Germany.

"The fact that there is a little bit of water between us and the mainland can be an obstacle if somebody wants to go home, so the community here is very close."





Report: Heidi Mines

IN a country with a landscape that already makes tackling the Taliban a difficult task, Afghanistan poses an even more considerable challenge once the summer months roll around.

With temperatures shooting past 40 degrees, soldiers have to fix bayonets and prepare for up-close-and-personal combat with enemy fighters well-versed in concealing themselves in the dusty, high-walled compounds and fields of crops towering several feet into the Helmand province air.

British troops have adapted admirably to the close-quarter contacts, but it is not just their small arms skills that have the Taliban running scared. When things get really hairy, forward air controllers (FACs) are on hand to call in devastating air strikes on anyone foolish enough to stand in the way.

Serving as conduit between air and land, FACs are of vital importance to the International Security Assistance Force mission in the country and the recognised value of well-trained controllers has seen a greater emphasis placed on developing their skills.

Hot line: SSgt Curtis Bradley, attached to 3 RHA, calls in a Tornado GR4 jet during Exercise Flying Rhino

Picture: SSgt Anthony Boocock, RLC



To prepare for the rigours of Op Herrick, several FACs joined Royal Air Force and multinational colleagues in the Czech Republic for 1st (UK) Armoured Division's Exercise Flying Rhino, the largest UK-led air and land demonstration ever held.

"There is nothing else taking place in Europe at the moment that provides the air space, provision of aircraft and the ability to integrate those aircraft into the land environment than what we have here in the Czech Republic," said Brig Rob Weighill, Commander Royal Artillery of Headquarters 1st (UK) Armoured Division.

"I cannot think of another exercise that is run by the British Armed Forces that has as many aircraft dedicated for the length of time that we do."

The live-fire exercise focused on training for a war among people and equipment, delivering brute force within the rules of engagement by harnessing the abilities of pilots, Royal Artillery and Infantry.

Speaking to *Soldier* while demonstrating the state-of-the-art technology used to communicate with the fast-jets zeroing in on their targets, Canadian FAC Master Bombardier Chris Golding said: "This is a unique and beneficial experience."

"It will be extremely likely that allied FACs

will be calling in fire support to multinationals and to have the practise time to work together is great."

One of five forward air controllers from Canada, the 29-year-old, who serves with the 1st Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, lived and worked with his British counterparts throughout the three-week exercise.

Sgt Mark Speight (The Royal Dragoon Guards) explained that FACs have to be able to think on their feet as the window of opportunity to talk to pilots ahead of an air strike is often measured in seconds.

The senior NCO explained: "It's an incredible thought to know that my words are guiding a jet flying at 600mph."

A total of 30 UK and multinational aircraft were deployed throughout the exercise, including RAF Tornado GR4s from 31 Squadron, alongside 3,000 Service personnel from around the world.

Using real-life scenarios plucked from the battlefields of Op Herrick, the training combined the real with the virtual so that every soldier taking part was given relevant experience ahead of future deployments.

"What we are dealing with in Afghanistan is an enemy that is very capable and is operating

largely indiscriminately in certain parts of the country," said Brig Weighill.

"We need to maximise our ability to be able to integrate air [and land] in order to be able to find enemy force elements and then, if necessary, to strike them and to defeat them."

As well as testing the abilities of the FACs, Ex Flying Rhino also provided an ideal proving ground for some of the latest digital kit.

For this, old paper maps were pushed to one side and replaced by computer images which were universally accessible by everyone from the soldiers on the ground to the staff back in headquarters.

The highly-accurate technology reduces the risk of incorrect grids and its use showed how vital it is to deliver up-to-the-minute information.

In providing land and air space for live firing, the Czech Republic made it possible for the British Armed Forces to be brought together and tested alongside their multinational allies.

Only by striking targets with minimal cost to the lives of soldiers and innocent civilians will the battle for hearts and minds in Afghanistan truly be won and Exercise Flying Rhino demonstrated that practice does make perfect. ■

"It's an incredible thought to know that my words are guiding a jet flying at 600mph"

Czech mate

Eastern Europeans welcome allies for forward air controller training exercise

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Driving force

Exhibition reveals
future thinking of
defence kit provision

Bouncing back:
British troops put
the Springer dune
buggy through its
paces during the
Defence Vehicle
Dynamics show in
Bedfordshire

Pictures: Steve Dock
and Andrew Linnett

Report: Cliff Caswell

IN AN interview with *Soldier* before 19 Light Brigade left for Helmand, Brig Tim Radford said he would be commanding the best-equipped deployment ever.

Bolstered with new personal protection kit, the latest vehicles and backed by air power, he was satisfied that his soldiers had all means at their disposal to take the battle to the enemy.

And the commander's assertion was clearly proven at the annual Defence Vehicle Dynamics (DVD) Show, where equipment ranging from the latest body armour to cutting-edge personnel carriers showed the Army is well and truly on an operational footing.

Organised by Defence Equipment and Support and held at the Millbrook proving ground in Bedfordshire, the exhibition was noticeably larger than in previous years, attracting hundreds of military decision-makers and procurement professionals.

Event highlights included the opportunity to ride in vehicles across the former Lotus testing facility's demanding off-road course and watch soldiers demonstrate the Army's haul of new kit procured for Op Herrick.

Osprey assault body armour and Mk 7 combat helmet

MORE than 10,000 sets of this latest body armour combination are destined for southern Afghanistan, with the first deliveries due to reach troops this autumn.

The updated vest is designed with the dismounted infantryman in mind and is an improvement on the original product. The design offers a closer fit with the weight evenly distributed between shoulders and torso. The ballistic plate is a third of the thickness of the standard Osprey package without any detraction in the protection levels.

The helmet is lighter and has been designed for the new suite of sighting systems. Fit has been improved and a modified chinstrap added.

Defence Clothing Team spokesman Lt Col Matthew Tresidder (RE) told *Soldier* that the infantryman would notice the difference with the latest equipment.

He added: "We've acted on feedback from troops on the ground – Osprey offers a great feeling of security but was not optimised for wearing for long durations."



Soldier deployed to the Bedfordshire countryside to sample the kit on offer . . .



Pure Hydration Pump/Lifesaver Bottle

WITH the potential for soldiers in isolated bases to be cut off from supplies, the MoD has been looking at two technologies to help keep thirst at bay.

The Pure Hydration Field Pump System and the Lifesaver bottle, which are currently undergoing trials in theatre, allow troops to take dirty water from a source such as the Helmand River and filter it into a drinkable state.

The Pure Hydration equipment allows soldiers to draw liquid, purify it and pump it back decontaminated into their Camelbak reservoirs.

The Lifesaver bottle is pumped manually to filter water through a membrane. Both systems remove bad news such as bacteria, viruses and pathogens.

Sqn Ldr Mike Cook, who has been leading the project for the Defence Clothing Team, said the kit could prove vital. He added: "Dismounted troops routinely carry five litres of fluid – however if they are operating further forward and running low these filters will provide a safe, emergency source of drinking water."



Combat vehicles break cover

ALL three of the outstanding candidates in the Defence Equipment and Support Vehicle programme were shown to the media for the first time at Millbrook.

Coyote, Husky and Wolfhound are set to provide the same high standards of protection and mobility as their stablemates





on operations, giving them the edge in the fight against the Taliban.

A six-wheeled version of Supacat's acclaimed Jackal 2 patrol vehicle, Coyote offers the same speed and manoeuvrability as its older sister while being able to shift greater loads.

Wolfhound is based on the Mastiff platform and is being built by Integrated Survivability Technologies. As a troop carrier, the vehicle already has a proven reputation and the new

incarnation has the added bonus of having a more powerful engine.

International Navistar's Husky, pictured above, is undergoing trials and will give troops plenty of versatility and protection in both ambulance and load-carrying variants.

Lt Col Nick Wills (QRL), who leads the Defence Equipment and Support Protected Mobility Team, said troops were already familiar with two of the vehicles, as Jackal and Mastiff had been deployed for some time.



Springer dune buggy

IT might look like a bizarre motor show concept vehicle but don't be fooled. The Springer dune buggy has capability in abundance and can provide a bite far bigger than its modest size.

Designed to head out from forward operating bases to retrieve kit dropped off by Nato helicopters, this addition to the vehicle line-up can reach speeds of up to 40mph and is fitted with a full electronic countermeasures suite and armour.

Springer can also be converted into a capable and fearsome weapons platform in its light strike incarnation with the fitting of a GPMG and a .50 cal machine gun.

Early reports suggest that British soldiers are impressed with the vehicle for the versatility it offers, as well as its reputation for being simple to repair and maintain.



Tarian armour

YOU might not believe that a piece of cloth could stop an inbound RPG, but in one of the more extraordinary stories of this year's DVD, Defence chiefs have proved it can do just that.

The Tarian armour package is half the weight of aluminium yet can do the job of bar armour equally as well – and it means that more mine protection can be added where needed as well as allowing vehicles to carry more ammo and supplies.

Staff at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory put the textile-based armour through hundreds of trials, firing rockets, grenades and small arms rounds to ensure it could withstand the daily pressures of southern Afghanistan – and it passed with flying colours.

The package has also been coated with new "dazzle" camouflage designed for use in the desert and dense foliage. The modular design means sections can be taken off and changed according to the operating environment.

Wind of change



Centre stage: Cliff Caswell makes his performance debut at Kneller Hall, the spiritual home of Army music

Caswell dusts off clarinet to sample military music discipline

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Graeme Main

THERE are some people you meet in your childhood whose faces remain etched on your consciousness forever. My music teacher, Tom Lewis, is one such candidate.

In a weekly ritual that began at 1600 every Wednesday, I would zip my clarinet case in a backpack, climb on my bike and cycle the 30-minute journey to the bungalow where the old soldier lived with his wife in a village near Aldershot in Hampshire.

Tom was already in his 70s when I first met him while I was at school two decades ago. A member of a bygone generation, he was a small, bald Geordie with thick-rimmed glasses and was usually clad in well-pressed trousers,

collared shirt and trademark carpet slippers. During lessons he would systematically smoke his way through an entire packet of fags, often conducting my efforts with a lit cigarette as a fog-like haze billowed around the room.

When Tom stubbed out and played, on the other hand, he was totally transformed. It was as if the elderly man rediscovered his youth, providing a masterclass that was as fresh and technically accomplished as it was in the days when he had learned his trade at the Royal School of Military Music, Kneller Hall.

My enthusiasm for the clarinet all but ended when he moved away to South Africa after the death of his wife. Having become busy with my

journalism studies I performed with the old instrument for the last time on September 13, 1992, before I consigned it to the case. Thereafter it only served as a prompt for a childhood story and a lasting memory of an extraordinary mentor and friend.

It is a true irony that the clarinet finally emerged from the darkness 17 years later in the spiritual home of my old teacher. But approaching Kneller Hall's immaculate grounds near Twickenham brought mixed feelings. On one hand, there was immense pride at being invited to the place where Tom had studied before he was called to active service during the Second World War. On the other, the *Media Ops* challenge of re-learning the instrument in three days, rehearsing with a military band and giving a solo performance was terrifying.

"I'm about to give a demonstration for a group of musicians and it's going to be really nerve-wracking to be honest," quipped saxophonist SSgt Geordie Marshall, an instructor with the Corps of Army Music (CAMUS), over coffee on my first day. "I was previously with the band of The Royal Irish Regiment and have been playing for many years, but performing is still scary."

My head was spinning. Although my hands had instinctively assembled the old instrument, and to my relief I could still make a sound, the keys and levers felt disturbingly alien. If a master craftsman like Geordie was worried, then what hope did I realistically have of making it through a live performance? The beads of sweat were already glistening on my forehead and my fingers were slipping all over the place. The sound resembled the rambling improvisation of a drunken jazz player shortly before he is booed off stage and sacked. >>



And then there were the Braille-like dots swimming before me. I had learned to read musical notation but, again, it was a long time ago. Boggling with the likes of crotchets, minims and semibreves while trying to play felt as if I was an uncoordinated learner driver who, as a special bonus, was unable to read road signs.

Enter Frank Slack, a clarinet teacher and former director of music at the school. A veteran of Army bands and the Israeli Orchestra who has countless civilian and military performances under his belt, his help was to prove crucial in keeping me ahead of a learning curve that seemed to be growing steeper by the hour.

But the approach was like shock therapy. Together with accomplished student Jo Nethercott, I embarked on a series of ambitious duets and trios that dragged my fingers kicking and screaming back to life.

Reading and playing proved a near-impossibility at first, but old skills were beginning

to return, even though they demanded every ounce of dexterity and concentration.

Frank gave me some hints on technique and

a couple of scales, which are a small part of the core syllabus for students, to learn. "Everybody here has to do an exam at the end of the year, although it can be brought forward if they are good enough," he smiled. "They have to perform two pieces with the piano and one unaccompanied. They are also tested on some other practical and theory skills."

If this sounds daunting, it is because it is designed to be. Anyone hoping to join the ranks of CAMUS must prove they are up to at least Grade Six standard on an instrument and have the ability to take on the demanding theory components of the course.

But with music and musicians everywhere, the

immersive nature of the environment pulls you quickly into line. For me there was nothing like the exhilaration of being in the middle of a rehearsing band, playing a thumping military march or film theme and taking in the wall of sound it generated.

The sheer diversity of activities was also extraordinary. One moment I was dealing with a pop tune, the next attempting to play and conquer drill on the parade square.

It all demanded total commitment and focus – and I didn't have to keep up my basic military skills and standards

of physical fitness like the troops.

As time progressed in this musical centre of excellence, I could feel the clarinet back within my

'The sound resembled the rambling improvisation of a drunken jazz player'



control. No longer was the instrument driving me, I was again in charge.

The only question was whether it would slide beyond me once faced with performing on my own for my new peer group and commanders.

A few hours before I was due to go on stage Geordie and his pals kindly emailed the entire base to let them know what I was doing. Then I was given a book of studies – pieces of music designed to test your technical prowess – before the veteran sax player helped to guide and mentor me through a few hours of rehearsals.

It was a true throwback to days gone by, playing increasingly difficult musical phrases and re-establishing a firm finger hold over the instrument. If only I had accounted for the awesome attack of nerves and the fact that I had been placed last on a performance list that included a virtuoso pianist, I am sure I would have been fine.

As it was, my first attempt at my short jazz piece suffered, but the second was a passable effort that drew a courteous round of applause. Even the

critiques were decent – “nice tone, good vibrato, confident introduction”.

If only they knew how relieved I was just to have finished, to be out of the pressure cooker environment of solo performance and back in comfortable, familiar territory as a reporter.

Yet drawing a huge sigh of relief, I cannot deny that there was also an enormous sense of satisfaction in at least banishing some of the skill fade of nearly two decades in three days. But you cannot fail to be swept along in Kneller Hall's environment of professionalism, nor leave without feeling uplifted.

For somebody who loves the diversity of music and the exhilaration of performance, signing up for CAMUS is perhaps the soundest career choice you could ever make.

Even in the twilight years of Tom Lewis, the inspiration of his time in the corps shone through his personality and manifested itself in the excellence he demanded from those he taught. I only wish he'd been in the audience. ■





1 Peak performer

YOUNG LBdr Eddie Bingham (RA) has single-handedly covered the Anglesey Coastal Path – all 200km of it. The book says it takes two weeks for the average person; he did it in three days. The soldier then took on 15 peaks in North Wales, each peak higher than 3,000-feet, in just 24 hours. “I decided to do this for the ABF because it’s the Army’s own charity and the lads and families deserve the support the ABF provides,” he said. “The Anglesey coastal walk was the first challenge. It was freezing. I did it on my own at the start of my Christmas leave, and had to carry food, shelter and water. The Fifteen Peaks was something else. I flew into Manchester Airport in early March and then straight to the mountains in Snowdonia; I didn’t even go home to see the family, but they knew that it wasn’t a social visit.”

Total raised: £875



2 Big challenge

FORMER 93rd Signal Squadron (TA) reservist Mike Vallance decided to embark on a six-month, 500km challenge in 2008, which saw him raise £8,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund in memory of Pte Joe Whittaker (20) of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment. Mike competed in nine different marathon walking events across Europe, including the four-day Nijmegen marches and the Real Berlin Marathon. Raising the bar further, Mike and his family have embarked on a more ambitious fund-raising programme for 2009, and are aiming to raise in excess of £10,000 for the ABF. In May, a one day continuous rugby festival and gig was held at Old Leamingtonians RFC, including the inaugural ABF Mens’ Tens Tournament, raising more than £1,000 for the ABF and Combat Stress.

Total raised: £9,000



3 Extreme team

A 10-MAN sapper-heavy team, which included two civilian colleagues from MoD Abbey Wood, undertook an extreme fund-raising event in May 2009 – The Bob Graham Round. The unique challenge in the Lake District involves running up and over 42 fells, climbing a total of 27,000 feet over 72 miles – all in under 24 hours. It is one of the most demanding tests of physical fitness that can be attempted by athletes or mountaineers and 95 per cent of all attempts fail. Many factors can affect such events in the mountains, two of the key ones being weather and injury; the civilian members of the team were hit by both and while the challenge was officially a failure, the party did manage to get around the majority of the peaks within the allocated time – and everyone completed no less than two back-to-back marathons.

Total raised: £26,700

7 Drum fund

SOLDIERS from 47 Regiment Royal Artillery were awarded the ABF Carrington Drum Award in June for their incredible fund-raising endeavours. These efforts included troops

volunteering to pack bags in Asda for donations, taking part in the BUPA Great South Run, Europe’s premier ten-mile road race as well as car washes, sporting events and collecting cash at a Premier League football match. In March this year, 15 members of the regiment successfully completed a 26-mile event at 6,000ft in the heat of the White Sands Desert Missile Range in New Mexico, USA. The group has planned another imaginative programme of charity fund-raising events for 2009/10 so watch out for them!

Total raised: £26,000



8 Six days a week

SETTING out on his own on April 12, 2009, James Ellen – a commissioned officer with the Combined Cadet Force – walked from John O’Groats to Lands End, adding ascents of the three highest peaks in the UK; Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon. He walked for six days a week for a total of ten weeks, covering 1,048 miles while carrying on his back the 20kg of equipment that he needed to be fully self-sufficient. In completing this mammoth challenge, James became the first person to finish the end-to-end journey in this format. His route took him across the UK and the intrepid walker linked up with some of Britain’s major footpaths such as the Great Glen Way, West Highland Way, Cumbria Way, Offas Dyke Path and the South West Coast Path.

Total raised: £1,182.50



Shock omission: The spectacular Music on Fire event, held every two years at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, did not make the cut for the Army Benevolent Fund’s top ten

Picture: Graeme Main



4 Biggest curry

SGT Andy Brown explains: "On Op Herrick 10, we faced the challenge of feeding up to 8,500 personnel daily. As if that wasn't enough, I had the crazy idea of getting involved with the Army Benevolent Fund's Big Curry." From start to finish Andy only had six weeks to complete the task. While planning, SSgt Jay Bartlett – the ration SNCO – suggested he got everyone involved. Facing up to yet another challenge, Sgt Brown got to work to get all locations within Helmand, totalling more than 106 military chefs, to produce the goods and serve up Afghanistan's biggest curry. But he managed it – the event was held on April 25, 2009 and the chefs set about creating a magnificent feast. The total amount raised was fantastic and I would like to thank everyone who served on Op Herrick 10 for their kind contributions.

Total raised: £4,190



5 Raise a million

PROJECT 65 was set up to raise funds for six organisations which provide the vital care and support needed by wounded Armed Forces personnel and their families. Focusing on challenge events that involve both military and civilian personnel, Project 65 aims to raise £1 million by 2011. As part of the commemorations of the 65th anniversary of D-Day, almost 200 runners left Tarrant Rushton Airfield in Dorset and made their way towards a ferry at Portsmouth. Following a six-hour crossing to Normandy they formed into six groups on the Caen Canal towpath and ran the final three miles to Pegasus Bridge, covering 65 miles in less than 22 hours. More than £150,000 has been raised so far for The Royal British Legion, BLESMA, St Dunstan's, RAF Benevolent Fund, Army Benevolent Fund and Help for Heroes.

Total raised: £150,000



6 Boxing night

ON St George's Day 2009, soldiers from the Royal Engineers serving with 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineers Group travelled from Nottingham to the Troxy in the East End of London for a gripping night of boxing. They joined a star-studded crowd featuring the best of British boxing past and present including Michael Watson, Julius Francis and Terry Marsh. The troops provided support for fellow soldier and professional boxer, 22-year-old Rfn Ross "The Boss" Burkinshaw from Sheffield, currently serving with 3 Rifles, who competed for the English Super Flyweight title against Mike Robinson from Liverpool in the night's main event. Robinson started quickly, landing some good shots, but patient Burkinshaw picked up the intensity, took control of the contest and stopped his opponent in the seventh to win the title.

Total raised: £20,000

RANKED

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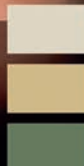
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9 Memorial garden

KINGSMAN Jamie Hancock was killed in Iraq on November 6, 2006. In his memory, his mother Lynda Ledwith opened a memorial garden in order to help raise funds for the Army Benevolent Fund. Several of Kgn Hancock's family and friends, including members of Jamie's unit, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, attended the opening of the garden. Lynda said: "What I want to get across to people is that I think our British soldiers are the best in the world and they do a great job wherever they are. They need our support."

Total raised: £22,647

10 Food fund

AS part of this year's Big Curry campaign, Lt Col Stephanie Jackman (CO Glasgow OTC) organised and ran an event at Glasgow University along with the support of local restaurant, Ashoka Ashton Lane. Army officer cadets from Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities' Officer Training Corps competed against the restaurant to see who could produce Glasgow's best curry, with six dishes being sold for £2 a portion on the day. Members of the public were asked to vote for their favourite curry and the Army chefs came out on top.

Total raised: £856



Last month

JOBS FOR THE GIRLS

1. Nuts and bolts 2. It's good to talk
3. Pooch power 4. Bright sparks
5. Flying high 6. Big guns
7. Top of the cops 8. Keep on trucking
9. Weapons experts 10. Life savers

June's *Ranked*

BEST BITS OF BEING AN ARMY BRIDE

1. Homecoming 2. Community
3. Travel 4. Friends
5. Children 6. Social life
7. Spring cleaning 8. Job security
9. Men in uniform 10. Absence

May's *Ranked*

TELC TALKING POINTS

1. Is this the way 2. Arabian Knights
3. Radio gaga 4. Vote of approval
5. Lynx tragedy 6. Gardener's world
7. Great Danes 8. Top of the pops
9. Master speaker 10. Demolition day

April's *Ranked*

GREATEST SPORTING MOMENTS

1. Dame at the double 2. Ruck star
3. Desert oar-kid 4. Nagano nod
5. Golden gloves 6. Taylor-made move
7. Ice queen 8. Medal soldier
9. Melbourne master
10. Old man winter

Author

THIS month's *Ranked* comes courtesy of ABF controller Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter, who commissioned into the Grenadier Guards in 1964 and clocked up nearly 40 years of service before retiring in 2001.

He said: "We are working to provide support to soldiers, former soldiers and their families in times of need. Because we are dependent on donations, we must raise around £6 million each year to continue our vital work with members of the Army family. These range from children of serving soldiers to veterans of great age.

"To make this happen, I and my team work with a network of regional fund-raisers across the UK and in other countries such as Cyprus and Germany.

"The outcome is that every single fund-raiser and fund-raising event makes a difference to those who need it most."



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In Afghanistan, you are protecting the people by facing down the Taliban and the insurgency. The Helmand Task Force is working with the Afghans and our civilian experts so that the ground you have cleared is held and development can begin.

The security created by Operation Panther's Claw should help an extra 80,000 vote in this month's elections.

And as you continue to drive the Taliban further back, we can help Governor Mangal build up the police, basic justice, roads, power, health clinics and alternatives to poppy farming – proving there is a better alternative to the Taliban.

Recently I visited PJHQ and I am getting regular updates from the Chiefs and from commanders on the ground about the operation. I also discussed Afghanistan with President Obama and other world leaders at the recent G8 summit, making clear that the international community has to show its resolve.

And I have stressed to President Karzai the importance of getting more Afghan troops deployed into Helmand and urged the Nato Secretary General to work on burden sharing.

Your effort comes with danger and a human cost, I know. But I also know that despite recent casualties, you are making considerable progress.

All urgent operational equipment needs will be met. We now have over twice the



Prime praise: Gordon Brown contacted *Soldier* to voice his thanks to those serving on the front lines of Helmand

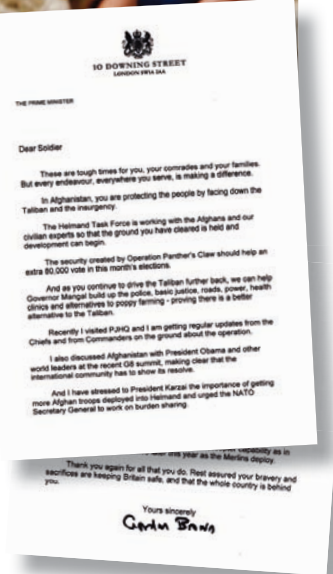
Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere RLC

number of troops in Afghanistan as three years ago, but spending on equipment has gone up five-fold, and rightly so.

More than 1,000 new protected vehicles have been bought, including 280 Mastiffs which offer world-leading protection against IEDs – your greatest threat in theatre – and the new Ridgbacks will go out to Afghanistan soon.

There is already almost twice as much helicopter capability as in late 2006 and more will arrive later this year as the Merlins deploy.

Thank you again for all that you do. Rest assured your bravery and sacrifices are keeping Britain safe, and that the whole country is behind you. – **Gordon Brown, Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street.**



I RECENTLY started a long course which requires me to move between three units over a period of 18 months, and this follows a posting which allowed me to live in my own home with my partner of five years.

Since we are not married I can only claim Get You Home (Travel) (GYH(T)) and, since I am still paying my mortgage, this means that I am out of pocket.

My circumstances would be easier to accept if it wasn't for the fact that my married counterparts can claim Longer Separation Allowance (LSA) and Incidental Expenses (IE) for the duration of the course. I feel that I am being discriminated against because I do not have a ring on my finger to justify my relationship.

Other armies have realised that some couples do not wish to get married, or not as quickly, and are happy for partnerships to prove that their relationship is long-term and afford them the same rights as married personnel. Why not the British? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: You have not explained where you live or where the courses are, so it is difficult to give an accurate response to your specific case.



As generic guidance, if a single soldier is temporarily assigned to a long course, he/she should be eligible for LSA or GYH(T) plus IE. If a single soldier is permanently assigned to a long course, then Disturbance Allowance can be claimed when he/she changes accommodation, but not LSA or IE. The soldier may also still be eligible for GYH(T) to a qualifying residence in a separate location.

I also wish to reassure everyone that your Personal Status Category (PStatCat) is immaterial to your entitlement to claim GYH(T). You should be able to claim GYH(T) providing that you are in the same theatre as your qualifying residence, able to travel to it at weekends, and can prove your genuine financial commitment to that property.

Similarly, eligibility for IE is unrelated to your PStatCat.

That said, MoD policy is that eligibility for certain allowances varies with PStatCat. The policy related to the recognition of partners is under review. However, the issues are extremely complex and they are unlikely to be resolved quickly.

Pride before a fall?

I READ with interest your article on Tpr James Wharton (The Household Cavalry Regiment), "Pride, not prejudice" (July), which tackled the issue of homosexuality within the modern army.

I too was proud of how you handled this subject and am pleased that the debate is now open and honest, and that the prejudices and misconceptions were dealt with in such a balanced manner. I agree that a soldier's sexuality is irrelevant and that individuals should be judged on their performance alone.

My concern is that we must resist defining ourselves as sub groups, be that LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] soldiers or black officers, a trend which can be divisive and operationally damaging.

Equality works best when minorities are not perceived as victims requiring support or different treatment, a point well made by Tpr Wharton's article. However, soldiers being granted permission to attend a political rally, such as Gay Pride, in uniform is a mistake, as is the inclusion of single issue pressure groups such as Stonewall in Army personnel policy.

It has the danger of opening us up to other political demands. If Pride is ok, why



not the Countryside Alliance or even such unpleasant organisations as the British National Party. I'd hate to see the day that the Army ends up like the police, where the competing agendas of minority groups – backed by associations – create degrees of mistrust within the force as a whole. – **Maj C Ball, Isle of Wight.**

PS...

I HAVE just seen the front cover of July's *Soldier* and read the associated articles in the magazine. If being gay in the Army is no big deal, why does the magazine feel the need to flaunt the issue so vigorously?

Sexuality has nothing to do with a soldier's ability and has nothing to do with soldiering. What are you going to put on the front page next? Heterosexuals, bisexuals or preferably, and it's only a suggestion, soldiers soldiering. – **CSgt McConnell.**



The editor, happy to listen to all reasonable requests, types: Does this month's cover (above right) fit the bill?

WE all know that the military has to accept homosexuality into its ranks, so was it really necessary to splash it on the front cover of July's *Soldier*? There have been many individuals pictured on the front page of previous issues and you've never felt the need to add "heterosexual" to the picture before.

I believe that, given the option, the military would never have accepted gay soldiers into its ranks, so please keep the subject as low-key as possible. – **Victor Hunt, Belfast.**



I HAVE absolutely no interest whatsoever in the sexual preferences of Tpr James Wharton, nor for that matter of any other Serviceman, woman or civilian.

Surely if the Army fully integrates homosexuals, to draw attention to them is to differentiate them. Why anyone's sexual propensities need to be highlighted in this way is inappropriate and in the worst possible taste.

With soldiers drawn from both sexes and from every part of society, I dare say that there are many aspects of individuals' private lives which cause no harm to others and need not concern us.

One final point; the photograph accompanying the feature [left] shows a trooper of the Household Cavalry whose turn out is frankly a disgrace to his regiment. I care not that he is

homosexual, but I care (on behalf of his regiment) about his shabby appearance. What about taking some pride in that? – Billy Smart, Marchamley, Shrewsbury.

I WAS disheartened to see the Army's decision to allow soldiers and officers to march in uniform at this year's Gay Pride. The issue is not one of diversity or equality, but concerns the use of uniform by an individual to promote their personal views, which is inappropriate.

Can I take it that the same precedent must now be applied to all minority, or indeed majority, groups who wish to wear uniform at a public event? To do so would be equally inappropriate and is surely the reason why Queen's Regulations forbid the wearing of uniform at political events. – **Capt P Bray.**

PS...

WHILE I'm delighted that Service personnel are now permitted the same freedoms as those in civilian life to enter into consenting relationships with partners of their choice, I find it somewhat distasteful to shout about one's private life. I would no more wish to hold forth at length about a heterosexual relationship than I would about a homosexual one. Let's keep it professional when in uniform and loving with the partner of your choice off-duty, folks! – **Megan Robertson, ex-Cheshire Regt.**

'US should follow lead of her allies'

I WAS an openly gay man in the US Navy for six years and served under the "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) policy. It was like being treated as a contestant on a reality TV show... "who wants to be America's next discharged soldier".

There seem to be some people who are fearful that gays in the military will jeopardise our troops, but none of my commanders saw me as a threat or as a liability. I am proof that DADT is not needed and does not work. I want other gay men and women serving in the military to be able to coexist with their straight counterparts as a cohesive unit. Life is about moving forward, upwards and onwards. – **Robaire Watson, www.Robaires.com**



Tolerance 'champions' guilty of discrimination

HAVING read the set of features highlighting the support being given to gay and lesbian personnel in the Army, "Equal partners" (July), I felt I had to put pen to paper.

I do so not to criticise the MoD policy, but to draw attention to the fact that although the "Service has become one of the leading champions of tolerance and respect" for gay couples (albeit only as a result of European court action), the same cannot be said for heterosexual couples living together.

I have been in a steady relationship for more than ten years and my partner and I have the same emotional and financial commitments to each other as any married couple, be they Mr and Mrs, Mr and Mr or Mrs and Mrs.

Who may I ask is fighting our corner in the pursuit of equal rights?

This issue has been raised before and while the powers that be have stated "that our policies are in the process of review", nothing has materialised.



As a Non-Regular Permanent Staff soldier any changes to policy would be of minimal effect to me personally, but I know that I speak for a large number of Servicemen and women out there who are still in the Regular Forces and are being actively discriminated against.

When will perks such as entitlement to married quarters be given to couples who don't have a Marriage Certificate or Civil Partnership? – **WO2 (SQMS) R Vickers, 204 General Hospital.**

PS...

I'M writing in response to the letter from a soldier bemoaning a lack of further commitment bonuses, "More to life than money" (July).

I have never received any kind of financial bonus during my 22 years of service in the British Army and I can't believe how money-orientated the younger generation, which the Armed Forces are fighting so hard to retain, has become.

Whatever happened to pride in the job? The soldier in question seems to be in uniform for financial bonuses and nothing else. – **Sgt S Day, Commcen, NCSA Sector, Brunssum.**

CREDIT where credit is due, the MoD has announced it will give a symbol of the nation's gratitude to the families of fallen soldiers in the form of the Elizabeth Cross.

Would it be too much to ask them to spare a thought for the living? Now is the time to ensure no veteran of any era is cast to the sidelines without any official medal to proudly wear on parade. Now is the time to follow the lead of our Commonwealth cousins and issue a Defence Medal to all. – **Tony Morland, Salisbury.**



I'M the mother of Sophie King from the Dolly Rockers and always surf the net to read what is being said about the girls.

I have never been so proud as I was when I saw your feature on the band, "Army barmy barbies" (July).

Sophie's great, great grandfather died during the Battle of the Somme and our soldiers are so dear to my heart.

The girls have the British flag displayed on all their promotions and understand that our country would be nothing without our brave and heroic soldiers. – **Karen Williams.**

'Cowboy' complaint

I HAVE a gripe regarding a particular duty that is mandatory for all full corporals stationed at Javelin Barracks in Germany.

Station Orderly Corporal (SOC) – now otherwise known as the "Canteen Cowboy" – is a 24-hour duty responsible for, among other things, "the conduct and access of all personnel using the Naafi bar facilities and surrounding areas".

In essence, being a SOC at a Pay As You Dine site involves standing next to the till during meal times and providing hungry eater certificates to those soldiers without any money.

Why can't the Naafi staff sitting at the tills issue the hungry eater certificates? After all they are just a receipt.

The Canteen Cowboy is also required to sit inside the junior ranks' Naafi bar during opening hours.

The orders state "the SOC is to intervene directly if individuals give abuse, have had too much to drink or are involved in an argument, and you are then to remove these individuals from the premises".

Why are corporals being made to act as doormen and police our peers?

Last time I looked at my wage slip the payment came from Her Majesty's Forces not Naafi.



"You certainly take your 'Canteen Cowboy' duty very seriously, Cpl Wayne."

I kindly invite regimental sergeant majors to comment. Gripe over. – **Name and address supplied.**



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Stamp out 'bling' and buy

I HAVE read with interest the many letters which have appeared on these pages regarding the wearing of "bling".

During 15 years of service I was presented with medals – awards I am entitled to and have earned.

Therefore I get very angry when I see others wearing medals on Remembrance Sunday that they have purchased.

Many ex-Servicemen now seem to be buying the Golden Jubilee Medal [pictured right] and wearing it alongside any official medals.

They have no right to do so. As they were not officially awarded the medal it should be worn on their right chest next to other paid-for commemoratives.

With the number of medals now on display, some individuals will soon resemble Russian generals of old.

Buying medals demeans all of those who have been officially decorated. – **Kevin Walker, County Antrim.**



Trouble keeping trim



Picture: Mike Weston

HOPEFULLY *Soldier* may be of assistance in ascertaining the reason why my hedges have not been cut after 21 months of constant lobbying.

I have formally complained to Defence Estates via letter, email and telephone, and the Service liaison complaints manager has assured me that my hedges are the highest priority. Sadly, I am being "reassured" every two weeks.

The photograph, left, was taken towards the end of May and shows that the height of the hedge has now reached my bedroom window. – **WO2 (SQMS) P Davenport, MoD Arcnott, Bicester.**

Nicky Sly, Defence Estates, responds: There is currently a hedge reduction program in place across England and Wales. The occupant will be included in this and should be visited by grounds maintenance shortly to reduce the height of his hedge to 1.6 metres.

Couple's capital concerns

MY wife and I are serving officers and currently live in Service Families Accommodation, however we also own a property which is let by a private tenant.

I would be grateful if you could offer some direction on our liability for Capital Gains Tax when we come to sell the house. It is my understanding that we will have to pay out on the grounds that the property is not our primary principal residence.

Are there allowances made for serving personnel to mitigate for the fact that it is impracticable for us to live in our own property? – **Capt O Church, QRL.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: I regret that personal taxation is not

something that I can give you guidance on, particularly as the policy relating to Capital Gains Tax belongs to another Government department.

However, in general terms, it's likely that you would need to prove your service in the Army was preventing you from living in the house.

If you and your spouse are posted overseas then this is relatively clear, but if one of you is in the UK then it is not so simple. Another factor may be whether you funded the purchase of the house with a buy-to-let mortgage or otherwise.

I recommend that you contact the Services Insurance and Investment Advisory Panel (www.siiap.org).

PS...

I COULD not agree more with the letter in your June issue which questioned the need for Future Army Dress.

The last thing we need is to be carting "barracks dress" around the world with all the production, issue, storage and movements costs involved.

Combat 95 is popular, practical and delivers an appropriate and positive corporate image. Contrary to some suggestions, when worn properly it is smart and entirely fit for purpose. We do not need or want a new issue of barracks dress. – **Lt Col Andy Gladen, Land Battlespace Systems Dept, Fort Halstead.**

Short fuse over gong

I SERVED in the Army for 12 years during the 1960s and 70s and left the Service with no medals.

Five of my years in uniform were spent with a bomb disposal unit which had never officially been "stood down" post-1945 due to the continued need to dispose of German ordnance.

If anything the unit's taskings became more dangerous as the years passed, with unexploded bombs becoming increasingly unstable.

I, along with many others, faced daily dangers just as life-threatening as those encountered in operational theatres, but apparently deserve nothing for my efforts.

The General Service Medal with bomb and mine clearance clasp was awarded to bomb disposal units from 1945-49. Why was the award discontinued when the dangerous work it recognised continues to this very day?

I volunteered to serve my country and it would be nice to have a tangible symbol of my service to pass on to my sons, as my grandfather did to me. – **Ex-sapper R Robinson, Uckfield, East Sussex.**



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"So much for your 'book last minute' idea. Another fine mess you've got us into."

I'm a married soldier living in Service Families Accommodation and attended a military course earlier this year.

I booked accommodation for myself and other soldiers from my unit well in advance and we were given rooms "in barracks".

As a result, we incurred single accommodation and Contribution In Lieu Of Council Tax (CLOCT) charges for the duration of the course, and, as we were staying on a Pay As You Dine site, had to pay for our own food.

In contrast, those soldiers on the course who left it to the last minute to book rooms could not be accommodated on camp and were put up in a hotel. Not only did they have their accommodation paid for, but they were also given approximately £25 a day to cover food bills.

My soldiers are out of pocket as a result of my good planning. Where is the justice in that?

The moral of the story seems to be to book "lastminute.com" to avoid charges. – Sgt D J Brady, 14 (EW) Signal Regiment.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: As a senior NCO I think you know that the correct actions were taken by you; that is planning ahead and booking early. That said, I can understand your frustration.

You should not have been charged for your accommodation or CLOCT since you should have been classed as involuntary separated for the duration of the course.

You should also have been advised to claim Incidental Expenses at £5 per day in the UK or £10 per day overseas.

The rules state that personnel should not be able to book hotel accommodation without first having a non-availability certificate. This is not intended to punish conscientious soldiers, but to avoid wasting the MoD's limited resources on hotels wherever possible.

Those who are lazy, or cannot plan, should have to explain to their commanding officers why they are squandering the unit's precious travel and subsistence budget.

I trust that administrative staff and budget managers reading this will vet non-availability certificates rigorously.

Parity for prairie party

I WAS employed as part of the activation party at British Army Training Unit Suffield (Batus) in Canada, which was responsible for readying the military fleet for this year's Exercise Medicine Man season.

Based in Crowfoot Camp, members of the team had to pay for their own laundry, phone cards and the other bits and bobs that accompany such a deployment.

Despite this, we were told that we were not entitled to claim Incidental Expenses (IE) or temporary staff Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) as we were classed as exercising troops.

This caused some dismay as we had been carrying on the work of the winter repair teams and did not begin our exercise phase until the start of Med Man 1 in May.

The winter repair teams received the IE and LOA for the duration of their stay at Batus and in previous years activation party staff have received their entitlements as laid down in relevant JSPs for the entire activation period.

Other groups that worked with us ahead of the exercise season received IE and LOA, as they were being housed in permanent staff accommodation.

When approached by our chain of command, the Regimental Administrative Officer (RAO) at Batus suggested that if we felt so strongly about the issue then we should contact *Soldier* in a bid to get this money-saving matter resolved.

As soldiers we expect to be detailed for deployments which take us away from our friends and families.

However, the retention of soldiers is not helped by individuals who employ bureaucratic indifference. – SSgt Jung, Activation Party, 1 Lincs BG, Batus.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A) writes: The RAO at Batus was correct and you were receiving the right allowances for your status. That said I have sympathy with your position and am endeavouring to resolve the inequity.

To explain the detail, Batus has permanent staff, temporary staff and exercising troops. You were part of an activation party for a battlegroup, which is classified as exercising troops.

Activation parties normally spend around three weeks in Camp Crowfoot – where Field Conditions (FC) have been declared – before deploying on exercise (although I know that your stay lasted around seven-and-a-half weeks).

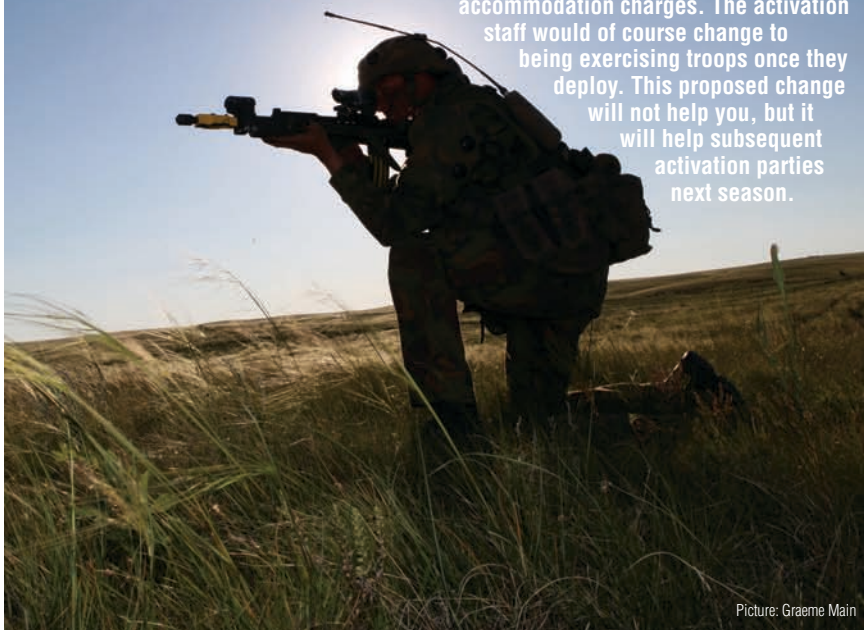
The FC mean that you do not pay food or accommodation charges and, while in Camp Crowfoot, a free laundry service is available from the QMs. On this basis, activation parties get exercise rates of LOA, which are set at 50 per cent of the full rate.

The winter repair programme spend five months at Batus and are classified as temporary staff. They do not deploy on exercise. For this reason, FC have not been declared.

Winter repair programme staff pay for their food and, where appropriate, accommodation, receive temporary duty rates of LOA, which are set at 75 per cent of the full rate, as well as receiving IE.


I have asked whether it is appropriate for you to have been considered as exercising troops when you were clearly not on exercise.
















Classifying activation parties as temporary duty before they deploy onto the prairie would mean that they could claim a higher (temporary duty) rate of LOA and IE, but would pay food and accommodation charges. The activation staff would of course change to being exercising troops once they deploy. This proposed change will not help you, but it will help subsequent activation parties next season.



Picture: Graeme Main

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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Picture: Mike Weston

Must try harder: While institutes such as the Duke of York's Royal Military School provide a settled, high-quality education (Pages 26-27), Julie McCarthy believes that more needs to be done by the Government to counter the effects of the Army's nomadic lifestyle on the children of Armed Forces personnel

Still room for improvement

THIS time last year saw the arrival of the Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP) and with it a promise from Prime Minister Gordon Brown that "those who serve must not be disadvantaged by virtue of what they do".

The welfare blueprint also boasted four enduring principals; as much lifestyle choice as any citizen, continuity of public services, proper return for sacrifice, and that the Armed Forces' constituency matters.

So has the paper made a major difference to you? Unless you are an injured soldier or a veteran, then I would suggest not.

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme has been enhanced and the disabled facilities grant, access to affordable housing and education and training for Service leavers are notable improvements.

In addition, concessionary travel has made using public transport either free or heavily discounted for veterans, injured personnel and widows.

But what about those currently serving and their families? The Department of Health has done a lot of work to try and ensure access to National Health Service dentists and there have been advancements

in communication and identification of hot spots, which have subsequently attracted greater funding.

All of the issues raised regarding Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) personnel and their families should see some legislation progress by April 2010. The changes will ensure children born to F&C soldiers outside of the UK can be registered as British citizens and access to the "Life in the UK" test in other countries will be improved.

National Insurance credits for the time dependants spend away from the UK on postings will also be introduced next April. Too late to help me for my seven years in Germany, but hopefully it will assist a number of you in the future.

However, there are still areas that need some work. The section of the paper on school admissions did not go far enough.

For those families moving mid-year there is no removal of the disadvantages that they face. The Army Families Federation (AFF) needs evidence to highlight the difficulties soldiers' loved ones encounter and I urge any

of you who have problems to let us or the Children's Education Advisory Service know.

The most positive thing to have come out of the SPCP is that other Government departments are considering military personnel and their families when planning and constructing policy. Departments are issuing guidance to local authorities and agencies about the difficulties being faced by military families and how they can alleviate them.

July saw the launch of a consultation paper as the next step in the SPCP process. One of the ideas in the paper is a charter for the Armed Forces community – an

extension to the military covenant to cover all members of the Services.

A straw poll here in the AFF offices suggests that people would like to see modern, well-maintained homes; sufficient notice of postings and better public transport links to the semi-rural areas where most of our communities are based. Will the charter provide these – not excessive – requests? Probably not. ■

“The section of the paper on school admissions did not go far enough”

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TEN details have been changed on this picture of the Springer support vehicle at Millbrook proving ground. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 813, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by August 28.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the October issue.

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June competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Col J Maciejewski**, HQ 3 Div, Bulford. Runners-up **Mrs Hilary Walls**, 232 (Cornwall) Tpt Sqn RLC(V), Bodmin and **Sqn Ldr Allan Jones**, HQ No.1 Welsh Wing ATC, Maindy Barracks, Cardiff, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: buoy; right hand mast head; graphic on Pico logo; buoyancy bag on mast; logo on dinghy hull; boom on dinghy; chair under palm tree; blue badge on red T-shirt; kicking strap; tiller extension.



WITH the sudden resignation of Defence Secretary John Hutton, it is perhaps unsurprising that readers of the June edition picked up on the vacancy as the topic of choice.

Perhaps it was the pleading look on Gordon Brown's face or the appealing open hands. Or it might simply have been the "don't look at me" expression on the faces of the troops, which were typical of theatre audiences when a magician asks for a volunteer to join him on stage.

Whatever the reason, there were plenty of caption contenders based around Gordy's desire to fill the vacancy at MoD Main Building in Whitehall.

John Mill of Dundee provided a typical offering with **"Please lads, can't one of you do the Secretary of State for Defence job"**, while Simon Harrison from Ludgershall came up with the inspired **"And this week's contestant on Who**



Top Gun tribute: "Bob, you are still dangerous. But you can be our wingman any time"

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by August 28. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of Patrick Bishop's *Ground Truth: 3 Para Return to Afghanistan*, which is reviewed on Pages 94-95 of this issue.

Wants to Be Defence Secretary is...

But given recent events at Westminster, our pick of the crop came from Mr Clarke of Berkshire who quotes the PM as saying: **"I've got a clean pair of hands – trust me I'm a politician"**. He wins our copy of *Territorials: A Century of Service*.



Picture: LA(Phot) Kelly McAlinden

Picture: Cpl Rupert Freer (RLC)

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British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gtne.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association: 0121 2360058; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstons.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

August 1-31: Task Force Falklands. National Army Museum, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

August 8-9: Essex Classic Military Vehicle Show. Damyns Hall Aerodrome.

August 20-December 31: Outbreak 1939. Imperial War Museum, London. Free admission.

August 29-31: Kemble Military Show. Exhibits and special events for the whole family. Gates open 0930. Enquiries 01453 8909201.

September 5-6: Duxford Air Show. Cambridge. Information and tickets: www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

September 5-6: Navy Days 2009. Plymouth Dock Yard. A show for the whole family. Discounts on advanced bookings from the ticket hotline 08445 787878. For more information visit www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navydays

September 12-13: Royal British Legion County Rally and Military Heritage weekend at Oakhampton Army Training Camp. Free entry. Exhibits and events for the whole family. Come and show your support and appreciation for the Armed Forces past and present.

SEARCHLINE

The **Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland** (1973-2007) is searching for ex-Red Paw badge members. If you were a dog handler in NI please contact Robert Shevill, 99 Carnarc Crescent, Inverness IV3 8SJ or visit the association's website at www.armydogunit-ni.co.uk

Donna Smurthwaite is looking for anyone who served with her brother **Lee Smurthwaite (Light Dragoons)** in the mid 1990s. Lee died in April 2009. Donna is hoping to put a book together for his daughter. Contact Donna Smurthwaite, Chief Clerk, Babbage Building, Blandford Camp, Dorset DT11 8RH or email usso-hq-chclck@mod.uk

Maureen Trevanion from Australia wishes to return a WW1 medal found in her grandfather's belongings to the family of **8124 Cpl F (Frank) J Travis KOSR**. Cpl Travis transferred to the Seaforth Highlanders some time early in 1917, new regimental number (203771). Email maureen.trevanion@defence.gov.au

Shaz Hamoudi is searching for her son's father, **Colin Davies** (nicknamed George). Aged around 53 years. He was based in Aldershot in 1988 in an Army band. If any one knows of his whereabouts or Colin if you read this message please get in touch by email sharonhamoudi@hotmail.com

2010 is the **150th Anniversary of the Cadet Movement**, a milestone that is being marked by events throughout the UK next year. As part of the preparations for Cadet 150 we are trying to track down former cadets. If you are a former cadet please make yourself known to the Army Cadet Force Association, Holderness House, 51-61 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4DW or email headmarcon@armycadets.com or visit www.armycadets.com and www.cadet150.org

Michael James Bell is looking for his father **Sgt Noel Bell (REME)** who was serving in Munster, Germany in the late 1970s. My parents divorced in 1982 when he went to the Falklands. Dad please get in touch. Email michael2kernal@yahoo.co.uk

The **Royal Signals Association** branch in South Wales invites all serving and ex-signallers living or working in the area to join the branch, which meets at the Royal Navy Club in Llanelli in addition to social events. Any ex-Armed Forces

personnel who do not have a local branch of their regiment or corps within easy reach are welcome to join as associate members. Contact Gerald Dean on 01792 891855 or Bert Colderick on 01792 232687.

Gwyn Phillips is looking for lost mates from **7 Squadron, 14 Signal Regiment, Droitwich Comcen** 1959 to 1961, especially **Tony Ennis, Norman Ridley and William (Bill) Jeffries, REME**. Call 01554 754805 or email gwyn.p@virgin.net

Waterloo 200 is approved by the Government to oversee the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. The organisation is looking for serving soldiers of all ranks who are direct descendants of someone who fought at Waterloo. If they have a Waterloo medal so much the better. Contact Janice Simmonds in Public Relations (Army) on 0207 218 3588 (mil 9621 83588) or email DMC-PRArmyGroup@mod.uk providing your name, rank, unit, contact details and family connection to the battle. For more information on Waterloo 200 visit www.waterloo200.org

Lesley Johnson, grandson of RSM Sydney Johnson, is seeking the family fo **John Pardoe (Pardor)** to return a photograph. His DOB is October 27, 1903. John joined the 60th Rifles in September 1932 and died March 9, 1933 in a training accident. Contact Lesley by email at leejw1@btinternet.com

REUNIONS

Staffordshire Regimental Association: Reunion and dinner on August 22 at Swynnerton Training Camp, near Stone, Staffordshire. Details from Helen Rayson, RHQ Mercian, Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9PY or phone 01543 434390.

43 (Wx) Brigade. Did you work for the Brigade before they left for Bulford in 1999? A reunion will be held on August 22 at Wyvern Barracks, Exeter. Details from Lynda Milne on 01392 492433 or by email at lynda.milne352@land.mod.uk

Armourers' Association: Reunion dinner on September 5 at the Victory Services Club, London. Membership is open to all armourers, gun fitters and weapon artificers, serving or retired. Contact the secretary, Chris Dennis on 01905 755334 or email willow18@tiscali.co.uk

King's School CCF: Annual past and present dinner, September 6. Details from Sgt Matt Ireland (matt@mattireland.co.uk or www.kingsccf.co.uk).

7 Armoured Workshop REME: Reunion September 3-6, at Fallingbostal. Did you serve there 1986-1992? Collection from airport, accommodation, messing and events have been taken care of. Contact Chris Fletcher by email chris.fletcher@options-for-life.com or phone 0049 5161 941215.

Men of Quebec: 250th anniversary of the Battle of Quebec. A reunion and family day at Roberts Barracks, Larkhill, Salisbury on September 12. Men of Quebec and partners contact Lt Nicholas Sharp on 01980 845757 or email nicholas.sharp348@mod.co.uk or Sgt Zak Thorpe on 07841 906427.

Royal Hampshire Regiment: Reunion luncheon for Territorial battalions, September 26, relocated to Newburgh House, Winchester SO23 8UY, midday for 1300. Contact Maj Ian Taylor, 4 Cedar Wood Close, Fair Oak, Eastleigh, Hants SO50 7LN, phone 02380 694771 or email ian.p.b.taylor@btinternet.com

Glosters Band and Drums: Reunion on October 3 at The Dowty Sports and Social Society.

Royal Devon Yeomanry: Reunion dinner on October 17 in Barnstaple. All past and present members and attached ranks of the Royal Devon Yeomanry Artillery and D Squadron, The Wessex Yeomanry. Ladies please attend. Contact the PSAO D Sqn by phone on 01271 345471 or email rwxy-dsqn-psao@mod.uk

289 Para/Cdo Regiment/Battery: All ranks reunion October 24 at Napier House, Grove Park, London. Open to all personnel (and partners) who served in 289 in any formation and rank. Contact Capt B W Exley, 265 Bty RA, Napier House, Baring Road, London SE12 0BH, phone 0208 860 1444 or email 106-265-psao@mod.uk

93 (E Lincs) Signal Squadron (V): 40th anniversary dinner will be held on October 24. Preceded by Evensong in Blackburn Cathedral on September 27 at 1600. Contact Capt Dale Ikin on 01254 262444 or email 38sr-93-psao@mod.uk

South Nottingham Hussars: Reunion, Remembrance Dinner and Church Service on November 7-8, at the TA Centre, Bulwell Nottingham. Past and present members with partners welcome. Remembrance Service at St Mary's Church. All ex-members of HM Forces with families very welcome. For tickets for the dinner contact Capt C Dibb by phone on 0115 926 8063.

Singapore Schools: Reunion for former pupils of all military schools, to be held on March 20, 2010, at the Ramada Hotel, Hatfield. Contact singapore.school.reunion@googlemail.com or www.singas.co.uk

RAMC Reunited: Reunion for National Service, Regular, TA or widow(er) of a former RAMC member. You and a partner are invited to attend on April 12-14, 2010 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Mick McCran, 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ enclosing a (C5 SAE) or email michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

COMPETITIONS

Ciara Fantasy Ride, winners: Tracey Gellatly, Rattray, Perthshire; Sgt S Bighi, BFPO 567; Col P Madej, Polish Army, Warsaw; Cpl R Ealand, Catterick; Mike Lee, Bulford Camp, Wilts.

Prime Offering, winner: WO2 J Thomson, UKNDA, Corsham.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

August: No presentations. **Sept:** 22, Stafford; 23, Birmingham; 30, Hereford. **October (dates TBC):** Brighton; Redhill; Gravesend.

ICE-COOL CHARGERS UP FOR GRABS



On the charge: The innovative Icepaq allows music lovers to keep the tunes flowing at all times

POWER TRIP

WHETHER it's being used on the bus, on the slopes or on ops, Apple's iPod has become an iconic, must-have accessory for music lovers all over the world.

The gadget's popularity is easy to understand given its small size, sleek looks and ability to store thousands of tracks on its hard drive.

But as with all portable electronics, the iPod – as well as its well-to-do brother the iPhone – does suffer one major drawback. Listening to tunes sucks the devices' non-removable batteries at a fairly rapid rate and the only way to get the music playing once more is to plug the unit into the mains or a computer.

The problem is especially felt by soldiers on exercise and operations where finding a power source to recharge the Apple gizmos is not always a possibility.

But fed up with a lack of juice plunging their headphones into silence, a British company has come up with an ingenious solution by inventing the coolly-named Icepaq.

Packed into a case even smaller than the iPod itself, the Icepaq is a re-usable, portable charger that plugs into the bottom of every Apple model except for the iPod Shuffle.

A handy bar on the front of the device lets users know how much spare power they have in reserve, and a single charge of the product provides up to two-and-a-half hours

of music. And when the Icepaq is running on empty, owners can recharge the battery through a mains socket or USB connection so that it is ready to step back into the breach when their iPod battery bar next reaches zero.

Soldier has teamed up with Icepaq to offer two readers the chance to get their hands on one of the devices, which set audiophiles back £26.99 in the shops. For your chance to win, answer this question:

Which company makes the iPhone and iPod?

Answers by postcard to *Soldier*, Parsons House, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by August 28.

● *Soldier* readers can also claim an exclusive 25 per cent discount off the cost of an Icepaq.

To take advantage of the offer, which is available now, visit the company's website – www.icepaq.co.uk – and visit the "register with our online shop" page.

Complete the registration form, entering the word **SOLDIER** in the field marked "company". You will then receive an email within 24 hours confirming that you can enjoy the generous discount. ■

Web watch

SERVICES

www.armylibraries.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoverynpn.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

www.forceshomes.co.uk

Finding homes for military personnel. We organise your mortgage, search for your ideal property, manage the complete purchase, arrange the letting if required, and we pay all your professional and legal fees.

www.army.mod.uk

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

www.sftf.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

www.armedforces.co.uk

Over 2,000 pages of Defence information, including defence projects and equipment, technology information, military books and defence supplier's details.

www.militarymayhem.net

Military Mayhem Show, Farming World, Faversham, Kent, August 22-23 2009 – supporting Help for Heroes.

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.hmforces.co.uk

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www.forcesequine.co.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

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www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

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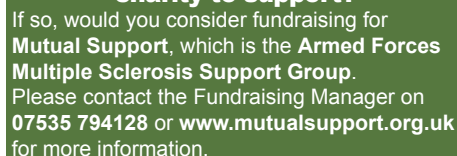
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Ann-Marie, 5'5", (33), fair skin, brown hair and dark brown eyes. Enjoys reading, alternative therapies, English literature, poetry, walking, the Internet and her children. Looking to make friends and build trust with people. Separated after 15 years of marriage and looking for friendship nothing more. P053

Dave, late 50s, sell by date not up yet, enjoys the countryside and animals. A genuine bloke seeking like-minded hirsute male pen pals. Genuine replies only please 25-45. P054

Karon, (41), petite, blonde with blue eyes. Enjoys the theatre, nights out, the countryside, walks and music. Nice natured and happy person seeking pen pals, 30-45. P055

Lana, 5'3", brown hair and brown eyes. Enjoys sport, reading and music. Seeking pen pal, any age group. P056

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REVIEWS



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Stars take on
hungry killers

Movies

AUGUST REVIEW



Fang-tastic: Mathew Horne and James Corden step into unfamiliar territory in the amusingly-titled comedy horror *Lesbian Vampire Killers*, which is out to own now on Blu-Ray and DVD



Vampire slayers

Gavin and Stacey duo get more than they bargained for in monster horror

WHEN escaping the pressures of everyday life with a weekend in the country you expect fresh air, a slow pace and some much-needed peace and quiet.

But in comedy-horror *Lesbian Vampire Killers*, such blissful plans are far from becoming a reality.

Starring James Corden and Matthew Horne, of ever-increasing *Gavin and Stacey* fame, the film features two no-hopers who find themselves stranded in a Norfolk village where all of the women have been enslaved by a legendary vampire curse.

And when the two unlikely heroes become targets for the lesbian vampires they have no option but to become lesbian vampire killers.

Corden, who plays down-on-his-luck Fletch, describes their attackers as having striking similarities with traditional vampires as their lust for blood rages.

He said: "I guess their vampire traits are the same, in that they like to suck blood from people and they come out at night, but they are the most vamped up vampires you've ever seen."

"They can be killed in the same way, yes, with silver bullets, holy water, staked through the heart. We've got a great scene with holy water coming from a shower. That's a favourite."

The bizarre plot has been described as having elements of the classic British film *Withnail and I*, where two young actors get more than they bargained for when escaping to the country.

Other comparisons have been made with the hit comedy *Shaun of the Dead*, an acknowledgement Corden reluctantly accepts.

"If our film were compared in a positive light with that film, then I would be nothing but proud, because that for me is one of the best British films of the past ten years."

"I didn't realise how long ago *Shaun of the Dead* was, because it still seems fresh and current. But if we're going to stand this up and say, 'this is *Shaun of the Dead*', we're tits," he said.

On its cinema release the film attracted inevitable backlash from some lesbian and feminist groups but Horne, who stars as the just-dumped Jimmy, has been quick to defend it.

He said: "I think that was inevitable and the simple argument for them is that – and I don't take them too seriously, maybe I should – it can also be read as a feminist text movie, because they are strong women."

"We are dumped and ditched by strong women and we're attacked by strong women and these are strong women who can destroy men and want to destroy mankind."

"All of my female friends and all of my friends just burst out laughing when they hear the title. I think it's a really



exciting title that makes people want to see it."

Since *Gavin and Stacey* launched itself into the public consciousness, the Corden/Horne partnership has become hot property in the UK and abroad.

The duo have been labelled as fitting neatly into the straight man/funny man genre that served the likes of Morecambe and Wise so well, but Horne believes he and Corden have carved out a slightly different niche for themselves.

"There is a certain dynamic set up whereby I think I'm funny in a different way to how James is funny," he explained.

"I have quite a bit of slapstick, so it's not as simple as one of us does that and the other does the witty banter.

"It's funny in different ways – it's more clown/straight man but more blurred. I haven't seen enough of it in action and haven't watched enough of us to analyse it that much. I don't know what it is yet, so it's still evolving.

"And when we do our sketch show it will evolve even more and I think by the end of that I'll probably know exactly what it is."

● *Lesbian Vampire Killers* is out now on Blu-ray and DVD, courtesy of Momentum Pictures. ■



Wild Geese II, out to own on DVD now

AS LOOSELY related to *The Wild Geese* as *Platoon* is to *Private Ryan*. A United States television network wants Rudolph Hess (ask your dad) sprung from Spandau Prison in West Germany in order to unlock historical secrets; a host of double-crossing and political twists ensue. I would imagine this was the bee's knees in its day; 24 years on it struggles to impress as the acting is wooden and the special effects are "of their day". With a cast of 1980s greats, this is one for the Sunday papers to give out for free I'm afraid.

Capt Neil Johnson, AAC



Awaydays, out on DVD from September 28

AWAYDAYS delivers a compelling story coupled with extreme scenes of violence that allows the film to appeal to a wide audience. Portraying the struggle of maintaining family life when combined with the destructive path of sex, drugs and rock and roll, I think this is destined to be seen as a true British classic that will undoubtedly expand the ever-growing admiration for **Stephen Graham**. Also, and rarely for a Brit-flick of this type, **Danny Dyer** was nowhere to be seen which was a real treat.

Pte Peter Joyes, R Anglian



This is Spinal Tap, on DVD from September 7

A THOROUGHLY-DESERVED reissue for one of the greatest comedies of all time, this spoof documentary (or "rockumentary") of hapless metal band Spinal Tap just continues to get better with age. The movie speaks for itself but the extras are equally good. The concert feature has its moments, mainly the backstage inserts, and the audio commentary by the characters is laugh-out-loud funny. This is one of the most amusing films ever made and you and your mates will be quoting from it ad nauseam.

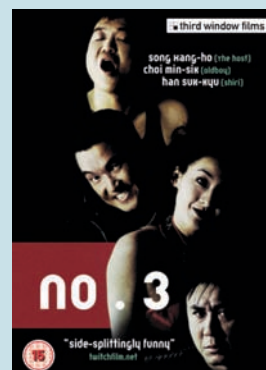
Daniel King, MoD



Cradle Will Fall, out on DVD from August 10

BASED on a real event, *Cradle Will Fall* is a brutal horror film by first time directors **Lars Jacobson** and **Amardeep Kaleka**. The plot concerns a mother raising her four children at an isolated farmhouse; the father working away for much of the time. As the mother becomes increasingly depressed and violent, Jimmy, her eldest child, becomes the protector of his siblings against their mother's brutal and terrifying attacks. A pretty good horror and genuinely frightening in places.

LCpl MacCallum, Int Corps



No. 3, out to own on DVD from August 10

THE title refers to the low rank of a would-be crime boss in this Korean-produced action comedy which parodies a lot of the tough gangster films which regularly make their way out of South East Asian cinema. It's fast-moving and full of action, but *No. 3* is unfortunately hampered by some poorly translated subtitles which means it works better as a thriller than a comedy, although even then it is still quite difficult to follow. Worth a look then, but difficult to recommend to anyone but the biggest fans of the genre.

Daniel King, MoD



Win: Streets of Blood and a DVD player

AN ALL-STAR cast including **Val Kilmer**, **Sharon Stone** and **Curtis Jackson** gets embroiled in the seedy criminal underworld of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in this gritty thriller. *Soldier* has teamed up with Momentum Pictures to offer one reader a copy of the film and a DVD player to watch it on. Four runners-up will each receive a copy of the DVD. To enter, answer the following question: **Curtis Jackson is a successful rapper under what name?** Answers on a postcard to the usual address or email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by August 28.

Games

AUGUST REVIEW



Massive attack: Players can take up arms with Allies on the Western front or play as Germany against the Soviets



Continental war

Theatre Europe is the battleground for sprawling real-time strategy epic

Preview: Cliff Caswell

WHEN Belarusian video games guru Victor Kislyi embarked on creating a new strategy title set during the Second World War, he found his military experience gave him a unique understanding of a soldier's mindset on the battlefield.

The former artillery lieutenant, who had the job of directing Katyusha rocket fire while serving in his country's reserve forces, already had a grasp of tactics. And his training had showed him the highs and lows of leadership, which proved decisive in defining the ethos behind the PC epic *Order of War*.

"The military experience helped me a lot – for three years of my life I was with the army every week and responsible for 88mm rocket artillery," said Kislyi, the chief executive officer of software developer Wargaming.net.

"From a personal perspective, everybody in my home country during the 1940s was caught up in the Second

World War and the soil was literally spilt with blood.

"Belarus had a population of around ten million people before the fighting and some sources say that up to 30 per cent of them died. So the conflict is obviously an important part of our history – one of my grandfathers actually served as an infantryman."

In a video games market awash with titles set during the 1939-45 period, it takes a brave developer to venture into this territory again. Thankfully, from the early previews, the experience of Kislyi and his team seems to have paid off – *Order of War* looks to be a real-time strategy offering of polish and realism.

While sharing some similarities with the likes of THQ's *Company of Heroes*, the latest game is set apart from its contemporaries by its enormous scale. Rather than just focusing on isolated skirmishes or a particular group of men, players have the opportunity to take command at brigade and divisional level across a playing area that stretches for

many hundreds of miles. There are two campaigns available. On the Western front, the scenario is based around the Americans pushing through Europe in the fighting that followed the D-Day landings in Normandy. In the East, there is the more challenging prospect of managing the German response to the Soviets.

"We've been working on *Order of War* for the last three years and it has taken a lot of time and effort to get it right," said Kislyi. "We went out and got all the *Osprey* military books about the weapons, uniforms and equipment of the era. Everybody involved in the project has done a great deal of reading.

"Researching the Eastern front was not too difficult for us – obviously many of our family members were involved in it. But to make the game polished we also involved a military adviser who had served for a number of years in areas including Iraq."

Soldier was given some time with the Allied campaign and we were



particularly impressed with the interface, which allows you to do everything from calling air strikes to directing artillery with a few decisive clicks.

The difficulty levels of the game are also well structured, with the easy setting pitting you against a benign enemy force while a ruthless AI kicks in at the higher echelons.

"We wanted to make it easier to issue orders to troops than in, for example, the *Total War* series of games, so that you can control hundreds of men through the mouse," said Kislyi. "The missions also vary in length, from around half-an-hour at the beginning and working up to 90 minutes towards the end of the campaigns."

The hard work of Wargaming.net is already reaping rewards. The title has been firing the interest of some real-life military and political figures, who have suggested the engine could be used for serious training applications. Kislyi said he was delighted to have met the Belarusian defence secretary ahead of the title's scheduled release by publisher Square Enix next month.

Whether the game mechanics are taken up as a tactical aid remains to be seen, but *Order of War* plays well and has been devised from a standpoint of experience and passion. You can't ask for more. ■



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10, PSP

THE usual annual spruce-up of the EA Sports golf franchise brings a host of refinements to the long-running series. Latest features include improvements to the weather conditions and new game modes to add more variety to the challenge. *Tiger Woods* will undoubtedly appeal to fans of the sport and might even suck in a few armchair enthusiasts who despise the thought of a long walk around 18 holes while getting more angry with each progressive shot. The game is certainly well suited to the PSP's platform and controls.



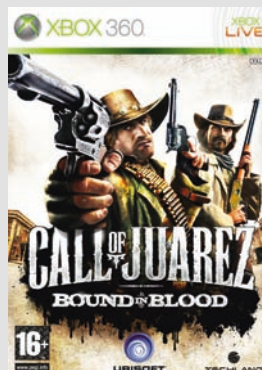
Operation Flashpoint 2, all formats

THE engine of the original *Operation Flashpoint* PC game was a huge hit with the British Army – it was adapted to power the JCOVE convoy training tool. But this latest instalment in the series looks as if it could yet win itself a new legion of fans. Subtitled *Dragon Rising*, players join a battalion of US Marines attempting to liberate an island from invading Chinese troops. As the battle progresses, there are ample opportunities to get into the thick of the action, from special operations to all-out assaults. *Dragon Rising* is set for release in the autumn.



Rock Band: Unplugged, PSP only

AFTER a successful spell on full-sized consoles, the *Rock Band* series has arrived on the PSP with the tongue-in-cheek *Unplugged* sidestrap. With no plastic instruments to pick up, this offering has less instant appeal but is good fun nonetheless. Players have to keep track of a musical stave, playing in time by using the D-pad and buttons. When you complete a phrase, you have to jump to the next instrument and get into the swing if you are to avoid being booted off stage. A selection of songs from the likes of **Bon Jovi** complete the experience.



Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood, Xbox 360

UBISOFT has pulled off another winner with this sequel to its Wild West actioner. *Bound in Blood*, which centres on the adventures of the McCall brothers, has an improved storyline, infinitely better playability and is a more enjoyable experience than the original title. That is not to say it is without fault – some poor dialogue, several minor glitches and a lack of co-op play are the most notable. But Ubisoft can be forgiven this with a game that has the feel of a Western version of the *Brothers in Arms* series.

Maj Neil Powell, AGC (ETS)



Fight Night Round 4, Xbox 360 & PS3

INCREDIBLE graphics depicting boxing champions past and present sound the victory bell for this silky-smooth animated version of the sweet science. The realistic gameplay and jaw-dropping slow motion shots of boxers hitting the sweat-soaked canvas are seriously impressive. The legacy mode lets you train your own fighter from "bum" to "greatest of all time" depending on how hard you work in the gym before stepping into the ring. Fight on the inside, float like a butterfly or land a perfectly-timed counter-punch in this top-drawer offering.



IL2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey, Xbox 360 & PS3

FOLLOWING the highly successful PC games, the *IL2 Sturmovik* series has been unleashed onto consoles with devastating promise. Putting players in the cockpit of more than 40 Second World War fighters and bombers, virtual pilots can fly in every major European campaign of the conflict, from the Battle of Britain to the brutal culmination in the skies over Berlin. *Soldier* sampled a late-build demo of the game and was impressed with the quality of the graphics and the level of realism involved. *Birds of Prey* is scheduled to be released in stores next month.

Music

AUGUST REVIEW



Soul men: The Soldiers, Sgt Gary Chilton, Tpr Ryan Idzi and Sgt Richie Maddox, are planning an assault on the charts with their first album release



Band of brothers

Conflict-savvy soldiers take on the might of the UK music industry

Interview: Heidi Mines

ARMED with microphones instead of SA80s, a group of soldiers hope to make it into the history books by becoming the first serving band of UK troops to release a pop album into the mainstream charts.

Tpr Ryan Idzi of 1st The Queens Dragoon Guards and sergeants Gary Chilton and Richie Maddox, both of the Corps of Army Music, have teamed up to form The Soldiers.

The threesome, who started working with music producers almost a year ago, have recently signed to Rhino Records – a subsidiary of label Warner records.

However, during an exclusive interview with *Soldier*, the band explained that previous experience of rejection means they will always keep their feet firmly on the ground.

Indeed, the road to success has been far from easy for the troop of singers who have endured everything from Simon Cowell's cutting comments to

performances being interrupted by insurgent rocket attacks.

But despite the many knock-backs and industry let-downs, the Army trio will soon release their debut single.

"I still haven't got my head around all this," said Tpr Idzi, who at 24 is the youngest member of the band.

"All the lads have been so supportive and those who have listened to the demo have already said they would buy the album."

The former *X-Factor* contestant added that he struggled through the early audition stages of the ITV talent show because of stage fright.

Tpr Idzi explained: "I managed to get to the boot camp stage of the programme but unfortunately didn't get any further. I really suffer with nerves singing on my own, but with the other two singing with me I'll be fine."

The first single to be released by the band will be *Coming Home*, which was written by legendary songwriter and The Soldiers' co-producer Nick Patrick,

who has worked with Katherine Jenkins and Russell Watson.

The track, which features Chilton on lead vocals, is an impressive ballad with a strong, powerful sound and an emotive chorus.

Speaking to *Soldier* during a short break from putting the final touches to the album, Chilton (41) explained that although the group is elated to be releasing a debut album, their fierce loyalty to the Army comes above anything else.

"We all have a responsibility to go back to work and we are soldiers first at the end of the day. The production team has been very understanding and has always worked around our Army careers," said the married father-of-two.

Encompassing almost six-decades worth of Army experience, including tours of Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, the band are used to operational theatres. And with the call of future tours in Afghanistan looming on the horizon, The Soldiers



have devised timetables that work around essential Army training and pre-deployment exercises.

The band hope to show the world that they can sing and serve as a reminder to the public of the military personnel who put their lives at risk on a daily basis on operations.

Throwing his weight behind the band, fellow producer and music industry professional Jeff Chegwin said the group is a cut above former ITV drama *Soldier Soldier's* singing duo Robson and Jerome – who the singers have, perhaps inevitably, been compared to.

"These soldiers are the real deal. I think the formula we have here is very powerful," added London-based Chegwin. "The Army are very much at the forefront at the moment and we think it is important to bring the Service and the soldiers that bit closer to the people of the UK."

Predicting that the band will win over the hearts and minds of the British public by singing familiar songs, Chegwin concluded: "They are three regular guys who are definitely heroes in the eyes of many people." ■

For an exclusive first listen of The Soldiers' debut single visit
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



Hook Me Up (The Veronicas)

ALTHOUGH **The Veronicas** debut album may have passed you by, this second offering from Aussie twins **Lisa** and **Jessica Origliasso** is a curiously catchy cacophony that could well be the soundtrack of the summer. Dubbed electro-pop, the unique sound conjures thoughts of *American Idol* **Kelly Clarkson** with a Casio keyboard demo accompaniment and is a guilty pleasure. In summary, this is brilliant, upbeat, enjoyable pop, which for credibility reasons I wouldn't buy. Actually, I probably would, but I certainly wouldn't admit to it.

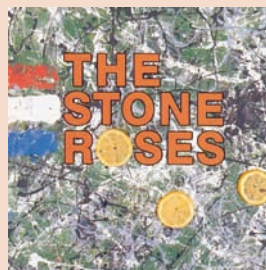
Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC



Un (Dan Black)

DAN Black's oddly-named album *Un* is a mixed bag of good and not so good. Having played at Glastonbury earlier this year, I am certain that plenty of sales will have followed from his live performances. However, the pseudo-electro pop and whining, desperate attempts at **Daftpunk**-esque vocals all add up to a recipe for disaster. The dreadful use of samples is nothing short of samey throughout the entire album. Every track contains lyrics and sounds distinctly similar to the previous. That the estate of **Notorious B.I.G** pulled permission for Black to use samples from *Hypnotize* speaks volumes.

Capt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish



The Stone Roses 20th Anniversary edition (The Stone Roses)

IN 1989 Manchester-based band **The Stone Roses** released their self-titled debut album. That summer, by word-of-mouth alone, the record was blasting out from the windows of every workplace, nightclub and bedsit in the north west. The sound is an effortless mixture of dance and rock music fused together with layers of melodic guitar, chunky bass and angry lyrics. This re-master boasts a clearer and louder sound, unreleased demos and all the B-sides. Buying this album is an absolute must unless you are a fan of manufactured boy bands.

Cpl Bernie Smyth, REME



Evacuate the Dancefloor (Cascada)

CASCADA'S music is at its best blaring out of speakers and the feel-good tunes always make you want to dance with your mates. The Euro-pop act, fronted by English-German singer **Natalie Horler**, creates upbeat tracks that are a great addition to any party. The songs that really stand out are *Breathless* and UK chart-topper and title track *Evacuate the Dancefloor*. I have to admit that although I am a big fan, some of the tunes can become a bit samey. However, if you are in the right mood and you like clubbing, you will definitely not be disappointed.

Alex Sutton



Humbug (Arctic Monkeys)

THE Sheffield boys have done it again with an excellent third album. Proving their worth and longevity, **Arctic Monkeys** have produced some of their best work to date. Long-awaited by fans, *Humbug* will be released later this month after which the Monkeys will perform their new material at the Reading and Leeds festivals. The album has been co-produced by **James Ford** and **Queens Of The Stone Age's Josh Homme** and their unique influences really shine through. The best tracks are *My Propeller* and *Cornerstone*. A cracking album which definitely does not disappoint.



Battlefield (Jordin Sparks)

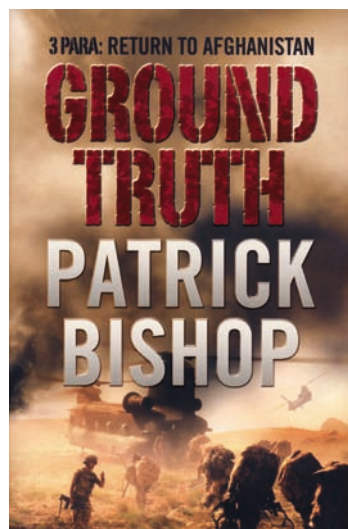
JORDIN Sparks returns with a new album of R&B tracks which stick to the formula that propelled the *American Idol*-winner's debut album into the US top ten. To mark the release of *Battlefield*, *Soldier* has teamed up with record label RCA/Sony to give away five copies of the album. To stand a chance of getting your hands on one, answer this question:

Who did Jordin Sparks duet with on her 2008 hit single No Air?

Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us no later than August 28.

Books

AUGUST REVIEW



Old territory: Patrick Bishop's *Ground Truth* charts the highs and lows of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment's return to action in Helmand province



Picture: Sgt Anthony Boocock, RLC

A book deal too far?

***Soldier* explores whether 3 Para sequel can pierce Afghan account apathy**

Ground Truth by Patrick Bishop
(Harper Press, hardback, £18.99)

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

NO cap badge appears to have been left unturned by the ranks of writers clamouring to provide saturation coverage of operations in southern Afghanistan.

And with the military literature marketplace already awash with accounts of the fighting, it is difficult to see how any new title can hope to capture public attention and achieve widespread success.

This view, however, is challenged by the author of *Ground Truth*, who has released a sequel to his highly-regarded *3 Para*, which chronicled the battalion's first tour of Helmand province in 2006.

Rejoining the paratroopers on their return to Afghanistan last summer, Patrick Bishop was again granted unrestricted access to the unit and that, coupled with his own experience of the previous tour, has paid dividends.

The story begins like most Herrick deployments – joining the soldiers as they lift off the tarmac at RAF Brize Norton – and Bishop's narrative quickly brings the reader up to speed with changes in personalities and the battalion's new, wide-ranging role as the Reserve Battlegroup South.

What follows is an absorbing tale of life on operations, which draws on vivid first-hand accounts from across the rank spectrum.

And from the soldiers' stories it is clear that the war of 2008 was radically different from the pitched battles fought by the paratroopers in 2006. Since 3 Para's last visit, the Taliban had adapted their tactics and weaponry and represented a more ruthless and determined enemy.

Amid the tales of heroism, the author poses some searching questions. The debate over whether members of the "Playstation generation" are cut out for combat in one of the most gruelling campaigns in modern warfare is considered. And so too are the

complexities of multinational operations and their effectiveness.

As Bishop follows 3 Para on a series of demanding missions he uses each opportunity to explain the intricacies of command in Afghanistan from section level right through to brigade, division and beyond.

Those ops include some return matches on the battlegrounds of Sangin and Musa Qala, and some very unusual tasks that not many members of the battalion would have anticipated prior to leaving Colchester.

One such mission required the rapid deployment of 3 Para in a fire brigade role to the area surrounding Kandahar in the wake of a Taliban assault on a coalition prison facility.

Much to the embarrassment of the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan government, the jailbreak on June 13, 2008 resulted in the escape of 1,100 prisoners.

It was the heli-lift of 3 Para into Kandahar that did much to stabilise the situation and calm the local population.



Despite the scale and drama of the prison bust it was an event firmly placed in the shade by the large-scale operation that dominated 3 Para's tour.

Op Oqab Tsuka – the escort and delivery of a huge turbine to the Kajaki dam – attracted the attention of the world's media and surpassed even the British Army's reputation for ingenuity.

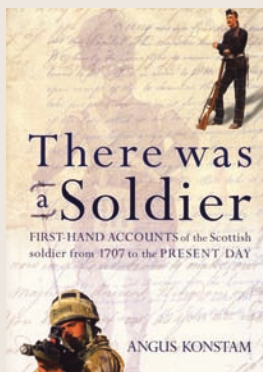
The final chapters of this frank and absorbing book recount the epic feat of military logistics undertaken by the troops of 16 Air Assault Brigade.

The success of the turbine mission was well documented at the time but this reviewer still enjoyed reading about the nitty-gritty of Oqab Tsuka.

The same can be said of *Ground Truth*. As well as holding the readers' attention it captures a sense of the courage, humour and sheer resilience of the British soldier in the heat and dust of the long-haul to secure Afghanistan.

The day of the Afghan account may well be numbered, but I think Bishop's latest offering is an exception and will survive the test of time. ■

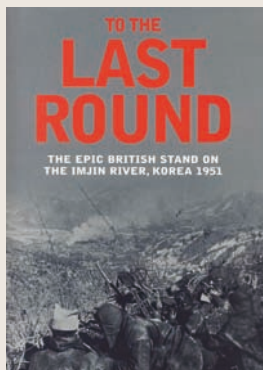
To join the ranks of our reviews team (books, movies, games, music) email styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk



There Was A Soldier by Angus Konstam

SOLDIERS and officers from north of the border provided **Angus Konstam** with a wealth of personal correspondence and documents for this fascinating insight into campaigns past and present. From the Act of the Union through to Op Telic, these accounts bring history to life. Whether quoting a company commander with the Chindits or a tank commander in the Western Desert, the author also gives a useful background to the conflicts discussed. One of the better books in this genre.

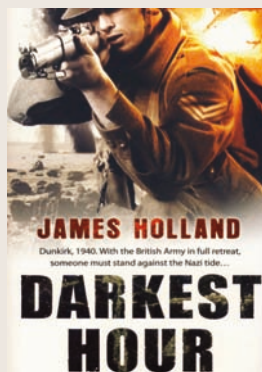
Capt Shaun Fardy, AGC



To The Last Round by Andrew Salmon

PUTTING the Battle of Imjin into both historical and present-day context, this title skillfully deals with the controversy of why the Glosters were allowed to be surrounded and left to fight. Though a minor tactical engagement in a much bigger war, this is a story of human determination that inspired the world. **Salmon** uses vivid first-hand accounts to present a detailed chronology of the action. A superb book which showcases British courage during a now almost forgotten last stand.

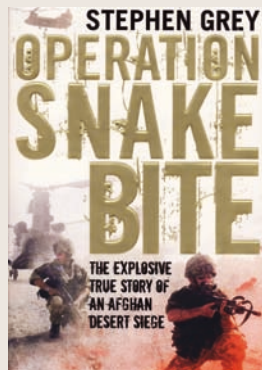
Maj Eddie Elms, AGC



Darkest Hour by James Holland

THIS second fictional tour of duty for Sgt Jack Tanner follows his adventures with the British Expeditionary Force as they fight their way through France and Belgium to the beaches of Dunkirk. Trapped behind enemy lines, Tanner and his platoon are pitted against, among others, his scheming sergeant major and a sinister Nazi commander. The stuff of comic books, this is a well-researched page-turner that keeps you hungry for more. An exciting tale full of historical details and action.

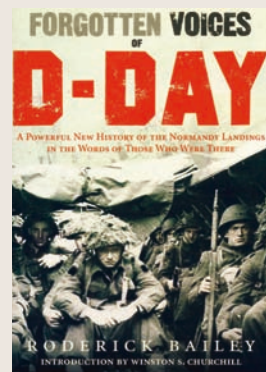
Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH



Operation Snake Bite by Stephen Grey

THE British and US assault on Musa Qala in December 2007 began in a moment of near-farce, led to ferocious fighting, and was won when alert observers spotted the Taliban command centre. The BBC reported dead Afghan women and children and next to these innocents' bodies was the imprint of a Taliban mortar position. **Grey** tells the story with immediacy, drama and sometimes anger. If the rapid shifts of fighting are occasionally confusing, that is the fog of war. A gripping and moving account.

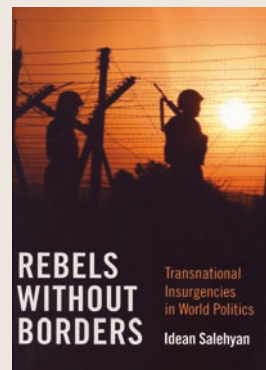
Dr Rodney Atwood



Forgotten Voices of D-Day by Roderick Bailey

THE publication of this latest title in the *Forgotten Voices* series, on the 65th anniversary of D-Day, is timely. The actions featured had huge significance in the battle that unfolded, ranging from Maj John Howard's glider assault on Pegasus Bridge to the genesis of the Mulberry Harbour project. All accounts are sharp and concise, giving the reader a visualisation of the enormous scale of the op. It's the bravery, occasional hilarity and considerable tragedy that illuminate this outstanding book.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Rebels Without Borders by Idean Salehyan

THIS well-written text adds another layer to the archetypal analysis of modern warfare, focusing on the influence of transnational insurgencies on conflict from a geo-political perspective. **Salehyan** discusses the use that insurgents make of sanctuaries away from the battlefield and the complications this poses for intelligence gathering, counter-insurgency ops and peacekeeping. *Rebels Without Borders* takes effort to read, but rewards those with persistence.

Capt Fraser Dowling, AGC



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SOLDIERSPORT

KENDO KINGS
Army on top in
martial art's
military debut

Striking gold: Capt Paul Reynolds (REME) won the inaugural kendo competition at the Inter-Services martial arts tournament in Lincolnshire

Picture: Graeme Main



Kick start: Taekwondo team members LCpl Ram Kumar Rai and Cpr Nir Kedem (both RE) practise their moves ahead of the Inter-Services tournament

Martial masters

Karate squad lead the way as agile Army fighters come out on top

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

AGGRESSIVE fighting and strong discipline ensured the Army enjoyed a triumphant weekend at the Inter-Services martial arts championships in Lincolnshire.

A superb haul of 18 gold medals from the karate team was the highlight while the kendo squad added to the gold rush in what was a highly successful debut for their art at the tournament, which was held at RAF Cranwell.

Individual wins in the kata, pattern and fighting disciplines of karate were matched in the team events.

The kendo squad followed suit with

victories in both their individual and team battles.

Although taekwondo did not enjoy such highs, the medal return was still its best yet, with a win in the female junior grade and second place finishes in the junior team fighting and senior team pattern disciplines.

Speaking after the championships, team manager WO2 Lionel Zefferdt (Rifles) said: "In karate we dominated even more this year and in taekwondo we have never won so many medals.

"Kendo was an inaugural event and we fought very well. Nobody knew what the standards would be in the other teams so I am delighted to win."

The success of the weekend

reaffirmed the Army's dominance within the Services, with karate being particularly strong.

Zefferdt said: "This just shows the strength in depth we have. Not only did we win and come second but all the semi finals were Army fighters, we were that good.

"There was no way it would be anything other than an Army win.

"Taekwondo is improving. We now have a team which can hopefully stick together and continue to progress."

He added: "The championships were fought in good spirits and the standard was very high. We are absolutely delighted and the association continues to move forward with strength." ■

KENDO ATTITUDE

KENDO made its inaugural appearance at the Inter-Services martial arts championships and the British Army was quick to establish its dominance in the new event.

Capt Paul Reynolds (REME) led a seven-strong squad in the competition and triumphed in the individual competition before adding to his haul with the team gold.

It was a trip into the unknown for the 38-year-old as it was the first time the Army had locked horns with its Royal Navy and Royal Air Force rivals.

Reynolds, captain of the kendo team, told *SoldierSport*: "The standard was very good. Sometimes it can become more like stick fighting as opposed to kendo and if people are not particularly good it can look scrappy.

"But there was none of that and that is indicative of the standard we are at.



"I knew we had a good squad. The seven guys are all of a good level and we have trained very hard. I was quietly confident and it all came off. It looks very positive for the future."

Kendo is fought using a bamboo sword and to score the player must strike well-defined targets – protected by armour – on their opponent's body.

The Army added kendo to its martial arts programme six years ago and runs introductory courses for Servicemen.

It was this course that introduced Reynolds to the art.

He said: "A friend of mine who did the initial course recommended it and my interest stems from there.

"The fighting is quite hard and fast but this is a martial art and not a sport so there is a lot of tradition as well."

For anyone interested in trying kendo, Reynolds has one message: "Come along and have a look at the course for yourself.

"There is no requirement to buy equipment or pay expensive association fees.

"It is a really good taster session, the number of returnees is testament to that."

● The next introductory course will be held in March. For more information on this and other courses run by the Army Martial Arts Association, email lionelz@hotmail.co.uk ■

SPORT SHORTS

THE former boss of the British Olympics Association placed his golden touch on this month's Army Sports Lottery which netted one lucky lance corporal £20,000.

Simon Clegg, formerly of 7 Para RHA, pressed the button to boost the bank balances of several soldiers.

Clegg, who steered British athletes to their best medal haul for 100 years at the 2008 Beijing Olympics also chose Aldershot Garrison to be the British Olympic team's training venue ahead of London 2012.

After carrying out his lottery duties Clegg, who started out as a private soldier and rose through the ranks to become a major, said it was his Army background that launched his career.

"I'm absolutely convinced that I would not have the job now, or the previous job, if I had not been in the Army," explained the new Ipswich Town chief executive.

THE Adjutant General's Corps Polo Cup will be held from midday on Monday, August 31.

Three matches have been scheduled for the tournament, which will be raising money for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families' Association.

The Royal Navy take on the Royal Air Force, while 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery go head-to-head with the Adjutant General's Corps and the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst play the London University Officer Training Corps.

For more information, email Maj Gillian Shaw at agcpolo@hotmail.co.uk

THE Army water-ski and wakeboard championships will be held next month and organisers are appealing for competitors to join the event.

Skiers and boarders of all abilities are encouraged to take part and the competition will act as preliminaries for the Inter-Services championships a week later.

WMSki's Summer Lake at Cotswold Water Park is hosting the event from September 7 to 11, with participants split into novice/beginners, intermediate or advance ability groups.

The cost will be around £100 per entry. For further details, contact Lt Col Ian Marlow on 96218 2845, Capt Kerry Gospel on 94214 5433 or SSgt Mark Tillet on 94674 8398.

A DOMINANT display from the Army polo team saw them triumph in their Rundle Cup clash with the Royal Navy.

An eager crowd at Tedworth House, in Tidworth, enjoyed an incident-packed four chukkas, with the Army side winning by four-and-a-half points.

Both teams wore black armbands in memory of eight soldiers who died in Afghanistan the previous day.

KARATE KID



KEVIN Hall hopes to make big waves in karate over the coming years.

The confident 22-year-old is about to start training with the national squad and has set himself a four-year target to reach the sport's elite level.

Cfn Hall (REME) is a four-time Army champion and added to his haul with a successful weekend at the Inter-Services martial arts championships.

The County Durham-native said:

"I've been given a four-year window by the Army to push for karate being in the Olympics and for me to be a part of the national team."

After predicting a successful weekend at the Inter-Services he delivered on his promise, taking gold medals in the individual pattern and fighting, with further success in the team events of the same disciplines.

Hall trains every day, with additional sessions every Monday and Thursday, and the benefits are obvious.

He said: "I have been doing a lot of training, three hours a day during the week, and I am a lot fitter." ■



Charging on: The Army women's four (from front) Lt Heather Stanning (RA), Capt Alex Hayes (RE), Lt Ali Oyston (Int Corps) and Lt Verity Morris (AGC (SPS))

Oar-some foursome

Army athletes finish with 100 per cent record in Inter-Services races

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graham Harrison

A SENSATIONAL display of power over the water saw the Army dominate the Joint Services Rowing Regatta.

Held in far-from-ideal conditions at Dorney rowing lake – the future home of the 2012 Olympic Games Regatta – the team emerged victorious in all of its gala races to continue its fine form of recent years.

Among the highlights of the day was a stunning performance in the women's Inter-Service fours, with the Army crew gliding home in a time of 3min 29sec in the face of strong crosswinds.

Speaking after the race Lt Ali Oyston (Int Corps), captain of Army women's rowing and part of the victorious four, said: "We are really pleased. This is our most important event and we are delighted to defend last year's title.

"We did not have a great start but in conditions like this it is all about getting

the boat moving. From about 250 metres in we started to cruise.

"We were quietly confident and determined to do well but there is a lot to lose when everyone expects the Army to win."

After witnessing the outstanding form of the women's crew the men followed suit in their equivalent race, again leaving the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force trailing in their wake to race home in 3min 24sec.

Crew member Maj Oliver Cave (AAC) said: "It was a good win.

"We were probably going in as favourites but the RAF had one of its strongest crews for a long, long time.

"We had to change boats just before the race, which is far from perfect, so we had a boat we were not used to and was not set up for us.

"We rushed to the start so to win is a great feeling."

The winning crew doubled-up and returned to the water for the regatta's final event – the men's Inter-Service

eights – with the Army securing yet another victory.

Lt Sam Cooper (REME), captain of Army men's rowing, told *SoldierSport* he was thrilled with the performance of his squad given the fact at least eight key members were missing.

He said: "It has been a pretty good day and it is great to know that we have such a strong squad.

"We had a lot of rowers away on operations and pre-deployment training which has resulted in some doubling up, but we have been working hard and it has all gone to plan."

Maj Mike Schofield (RE), secretary of the Army Rowing Clubs Association, was delighted with the team's performances on what was an unprecedented day of success for the Service's competitors.

He said: "It was a great day for the Army. The standard of competition was a lot higher than expected and I was incredibly pleased to see so many crews and Servicemen taking part." ■

REGATTA STAR AIMS FOR 2012 GAMES

OLYMPIC hopeful Lt Heather Stanning is the latest rowing star to emerge from the Army ranks.

The 24-year-old, of 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery, showcased her talents at the Joint Services Regatta as she steps up her bid to make the Great Britain team for London 2012.

After securing early success in the women's open single skulls she proved her versatility by joining the victorious crews in the women's Inter-Service fours and the women's open eights.

Her road to success started at the University of Bath, where she joined the Amateur Rowing Association's World Class Start programme under coach Paul Stannard.

In 2007 Stanning won gold in the pairs at the World Rowing U23 Championships in what was her first Great Britain team selection.

After leaving Sandhurst she was commissioned into the Royal Artillery



in August 2008 and now balances her career as an Army officer with a hectic training schedule.

Stanning told *SoldierSport*: "The regiment has been quite good. At the moment I train before and after work.

"I joined the battery just as they came back from tour so it is a quieter time for them, but next year I will have to play it by ear."

Inevitably there will be strong competition for the Olympic team and although Stanning names the pair as her boat of choice she is willing to prove her versatility once more to secure her place.

She added: "For 2012 there has been a big push by the Government for all sports. There are a lot of people who want to be in their home Olympics and I am one of them.

"I have got the history of the U23s and the Army is being very supportive. I am in the early stages and we will have to see how next year goes." ■

SPORT FOR ALL

ALTHOUGH rowing is often viewed as an officer's sport within the Army, Sgt Dan Clifton (R Signals) is living proof that is not the case.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* at the Joint Services Rowing Regatta, Clifton said that the sport had given him a host of opportunities.

He said: "The Army offered a two-week course in 2004 and various members of the regiment came down to give it a go.

"I enjoyed it that much I signed up for the instructors course and I have been here every year since.

"I have rowed with various regiments and civilian clubs but my main aim now is to push the sport in the Royal Signals.

"It is an enjoyable sport which is easier than it looks.

"It is not elitist and there are very few people I know who have tried it and did not want to come back."

● The next rowing introductory course will be held in October.

Anyone interested in taking part should email armyrowing@armymail.mod.uk or call 07885 038642. ■

THE OFFICIAL BRITISH ARMY FITNESS GUIDE

UPPER BODY EXERCISES

BENCH PRESS WITH DUMBBELLS

This is a good alternative to press-ups, working the chest, shoulders and triceps. Lie on a bench or step with a dumbbell in each hand, resting just above your chest. Extend the arms upwards, keeping them level with your breastbone, in an arc-like motion until your arms are fully outstretched. Pause, then lower and repeat.

BICEPS CURL WITH DUMBBELLS

This exercise targets the biceps on the front of the upper arm used in pull-ups. Stand with feet hip-distance apart, a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing your thighs. Bend your elbows to raise the weights up, allowing the arm to rotate so that when the weights reach the front of your shoulders, the palms are facing you. Pause, lower and repeat.

STANDING FLIES

This exercise is a good shoulder strengthener. Stand with feet hip-distance apart, a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing thighs. Extend the arms out to the sides, taking the weights to shoulder height, then lower.

SHOULDER PRESS

This exercise focuses on the shoulders but also works the upper chest, triceps and the upper back. Stand or sit with feet hip-distance apart, a dumbbell in each hand resting on your shoulders, facing forwards. Extend the arms in an arc-like motion above the head until they meet at the top. Pause, then lower and repeat.

SINGLE ARM ROW

This is a good alternative to the pull-up if you don't have the right equipment. It mimics the underhand grip most closely. Kneel side-on to a bench with a dumbbell in the hand furthest from the bench. Have your back straight, stomach pulled in and neck in line with the spine. Start with the arm relaxed, hanging straight down. Then, keeping the back still, bend the arm at the elbow to bring the weight up to the front of the shoulder. Pause, lower and repeat.

Soldier readers can buy the Official British Army Fitness Guide, published by Guardian Books, for the discounted price of only £8.99 plus postage and packing (RRP £12.99). Visit guardianbooks.co.uk or call 0845 606 4232 and quote "Soldier"



Swim stars

A TEAM of Service personnel from Headley Court have completed a gruelling 22-mile swimming relay across the English Channel.

Taking part in the Channel Eagle 09 challenge through the Battle Back programme, the group completed their swim in a time of 13hr 21min.

Among those taking part in the event was Gdsm Scott Blaney (Grenadier Guards) who lost a leg while serving in Afghanistan in 2007.

He said: "The training was pretty tough but we were all in the mindset to tackle the Channel. It was a great achievement to reach the finish line for me and the whole Battle Back team."

After initial treatment at Birmingham's Selly Oak Hospital and rehabilitation at Headley Court, the 23-year-old returned to duty and became the first amputee to guard the Tower of London.

LCpl Damian Manning (RSME) was also part of the Battle Back team. He lost his leg in Afghanistan in 2006 but thanks to extensive rehabilitation is now back on full duty as an engineer.

The swim saw the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force go head-to-head in the tri-Service cross channel relay race from Dover to Cap Gris Nez in France.

Navy swimmers were first out of the water in a time of 10hr 5min with the Army finishing second in 10hr 20min.

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ARMY



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Lucky for some: A 14-strong crew made up of serving soldiers has taken to the ocean waves for a year-long sailing expedition

Picture: LA(PHOT) Christopher Browne

Oceans' thirteen

Soldiers raise the stakes by embarking on round-the-world expedition

Interviews: Richard Long

ARMY sailors have taken to the high seas as part of the Joint Services Exercise Transglobe.

The challenge has made a welcome return after an absence of ten years and will see crews tested to the limit on the world's most challenging oceans.

With the race divided into 13 legs the Army will be at sea for a year as soldiers from different regiments and corps man each stage on the Challenge 67 craft, which was purpose-built for sailing around the world.

REME soldiers were given the honour of leading the charge and left Gosport last month on a 1,600-mile course to the Canary Islands.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* on the eve of the challenge, 2nd Lt Bob Ling said: "We have been training hard for a week. It is about getting to know one another and understanding the jobs required. We have been getting quite slick.

"On this trip the biggest challenge is getting across the Bay of Biscay – it can be an animal and there are some big waves. You can go three or four days without any sleep."

Although Transglobe is primarily a training exercise there is no lack of competitive spirit as crews from the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force

will all be at sea together.

Maj Jerry Smith (RE), the Army representative on the exercise steering group, said: "We would not expect these guys to be taking it easy, they will be sailing hard and to the best of their abilities. This is about teamwork and getting on with the job in hand – once you are on the boat you cannot get off until it is tied up at the other end."

Transglobe is aimed at all personnel and is not dependent on previous experience of sailing.

Each crew will have a skipper and mate with the remaining 12 members coming from varying backgrounds.

The REME crew ranges from soldiers with 20 years experience to those with just a handful.

Maj Smith, who will be part of the third leg crew from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town, added: "There was no limitation on those wanting to apply. It never set out to be a challenge for the gladiators of sailing. It is for anyone who wanted to have a go."

Transglobe will also provide sailing opportunities for injured and recovering Servicemen based at Headley Court.

With support from Battle Back, four personnel will join the eleventh leg.

And race crews will also get to put their skills to the test through participation in the Sydney to Hobart

Fastnet race and Antigua Race Week.

The boats are due to return home next year and plans are already in place to hold the challenge on regular five-year cycles.

● To follow the progress of the Army crews over the next year visit www.exercisetransglobe.com ■

EX TRANSGLOBE ROUTE

1. Gosport to Lanzarote
2. Lanzarote to Rio de Janeiro
3. Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town
4. Cape Town to Perth
5. Perth to Sydney
6. Sydney to Hobart Race
7. Hobart to Auckland
8. Auckland to Montevideo
9. Montevideo to Antigua
10. Antigua Race Week
11. Antigua to Charleston
12. Charleston to Boston
13. Boston to Gosport



THE world-famous Lord's cricket ground hosts the final match in this year's Inter-Services cricket festival as the Army takes on the Royal Navy on Thursday, August 6. As part of their preparations the side was put through its paces against Free Foresters (pictured) and an Essex Academy XI. The festival also sees the Army pit their wits against the Royal Air Force at the Fleet Road cricket ground, Aldershot, on Tuesday, August 4. Lord's opens at 1000 on match day with play starting at 1100. Admission costs £12 for adults and £6 for under-16s and over-65s, and tickets can be bought at the ground or in advance by calling 01252 334415.

Picture: Graeme Main

Top guns tackle revamped competition

SHARP-SHOOTING marksmen vying for a prestigious medal took part in an overhauled competition focused on military operations.

More than 500 competitors drawn from the Regular and Territorial Army undertook "relevant" challenges over three days at the Army Operational Shooting Championships.

The soldiers were fighting for the sought-after Queen's Medal and the right to wear the coveted "Army 100 Badge" which is worn by the Army's top 100 marksmen and women.

WO2 Morgan Cook (Int Corps) won the award, while 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles came out on top in the unit competition.

Commanding officer of the championships, Lt Col Lester Holley (RGR), explained the changed ethos of the competition.

"In the past it was a bit like a sport, whereas now we are making the matches and match conditions relevant to operational environments," he said. "It's all about relevancy to soldiers."

All entrants were required to wear full combat body armour, webbing and a helmet while carrying out energy-sapping tasks and shooting at targets.

The Parachute Regiment Cup event required soldiers to carry a 13.5-stone dummy 300 metres before firing at targets over a 600-metre range.

The officer revealed that shooting

competitions are unpopular with soldiers because the Army is lacking accurate marksmen.

But he added that troops returning from operations said improved shooting skill levels were essential.

"We have spoken to units coming back from Afghanistan and all have commented on the seriousness of shooting accuracy," he said.

Cyprus-based 2nd Lt Ben Ashwell (2 PWRR), who returned from Afghanistan just before the competition, said: "The Parachute Regiment Cup was the most relevant to what we were doing on Herrick – casevac, followed by ammo resupply. It was exactly the same as what we had done on ops." ■

SPORT SHORTS

ASHES STARS HONOUR WAR DEAD
ENGLAND'S cricketers paid their respects to those who died in the First World War as part of their preparations for the current Ashes series.

The team visited Ypres, in Belgium, where members laid wreaths at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing during the Last Post ceremony.

They also visited the Tyne Cot cemetery, where 12,000 Commonwealth soldiers are buried, before attending a service at the Oxford Road Cemetery.

During the ceremony a stone cricket ball was laid on the grave of former England spinner Colin Blythe, who died at the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

England captain Andrew Strauss said:

"It is important to take a step back from cricket at times and this visit was a deeply moving and humbling experience for all of the players and management.

"We learned a great deal about the sacrifices made by a previous generation of England cricketers and I would like to thank the people of Ypres for making us so welcome."

Boxers go for gold

BOXERS from the Army have set their sights on fighting for Great Britain and challenging for gold at the 2012 Olympics.

Lightweight fighter LCpl Martin Stead (13 Air Assault RLC) and flyweight colleague Spr Adam Whitfield (26 Engineer Regiment) are both in the running to join Team GB.

The pair were monitored and assessed by eagle-eyed coaches, including former middleweight professional Richie Woodhall, during a three-day performance camp held at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield.

"It was more intense than usual training because we were constantly being watched and recorded," Stead (25) told *SoldierSport*.

"Everything was monitored to see how fit we were and we were also sparring with the best lads in Britain.

"The Army ethos has really helped me with discipline and attitude."

Whitfield (20) believed that his Army

training had ensured that he was well-prepared for the assessment.

"I think the camp went well and my fitness meant I came in front of the other lads at my weight on the runs," he said. "Boxing is all about your engine and if you don't have the stamina you won't survive."

The talented soldiers were also quick to speak of their gratitude for the steadfast support they have received from their respective chains of command.

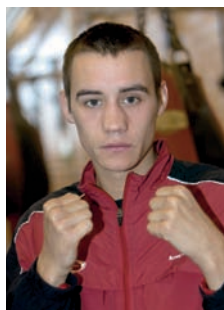
"I would like to thank my CO for supporting me in my quest to make it to the 2012 Olympics," said junior NCO Stead.

"It really means a lot to have the Army's backing."

Whitfield added: "I must

thank my unit for letting me box and hopefully I will repay them with success in the future."

The next GB training camp is on September 25, where if selected the soldiers will be rewarded with another chance to shine. ■



● LCpl Martin Stead

RHINOS TAMED BY ARMY'S RUGBY LEAGUE STARS

A RESOLUTE and disciplined display saw the Army Rugby League team triumph in a highly-charged test match with the South African national side.

The narrow 38-34 victory was the highlight of the team's 15th anniversary tour of the country, which featured a gruelling schedule of three games in the space of just six days.

A fantastic first half saw the Army build a commanding 24-6 lead in the face of some brutal defence from the home team.

But the revitalised Rhinos took to the field for the second period and the Army were confronted with the direct running the South Africans are famed for.

Their pace and effective width saw the hosts score a series of tries but the Army continued adding to the

scoreboard to maintain their lead and record an epic victory.

Head coach and team manager Maj Rich Naivalurua (REME) said: "After many years of playing and coaching Rugby League I have never been so proud of an Army team.

"This squad has come together to put in a performance of the utmost spirit and discipline, this is one of the proudest moments of my rugby career."

Team captain WO2 Sly Silvester (RAMC) added: "That was a test match, probably the most intense and brutal test I have ever been involved in. I cannot put into words how proud I am of the team for playing with such composure throughout."

The tour also featured a 40-22 victory against the South African A side. ■

BORO LAUNCH TICKET OFFER

FARNBOROUGH Football Club will be offering reduced prices to any military personnel who produce a valid ID card at its turnstiles, meaning games at Cherrywood Road will cost just £7. The offer also extends to season tickets, which will cost £125.

To support the launch of the scheme

Boro donated a percentage of its gate receipts from the pre-season clash with a Swansea City XI to Help for Heroes.

Throughout the season Boro will also take part in a number of games against various military sides. The first match will be on Monday, November 2, when they take on the Army U23 development team at The Military Stadium, Aldershot.

SPORT SHORTS

A TEAM of cadets from Winchester College has raised £6,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund by completing the demanding Cat-to-Cat challenge.

Cycling, sailing, kayaking and running were all included in the event, which was completed in 24 hours and followed five months of hard training.

The cadets started in the Isle of Wight where they cycled a 38km route from St Catherine's Hill to Cowes before sailing across the Solent to the mouth of Itchen for the start of a 6km kayak trip to Woodmill.

The team then completed an 18km run to St Catherine's Hill, Winchester.

AN official opening for the new Catterick Leisure Centre has been planned for September 2.

The facility was formally handed over to the MoD by Carillion Building in June and is now in the final stages of its fit-out phase, which will see all the equipment delivered and installed.

THE Armed Forces Rally Team headed north of the border for the RSAC Scottish Rally.

Held over 44 miles, the course offered just six stages meaning crews had to be quick off the mark to guarantee a competitive time.

Flt Lt Steve Partridge and Maj James Sunderland secured victory in the Land Rover class in 58min 3sec.

Cpl Duncan Lilwall and Flt Lt Craig Teasdale kept their title hopes on track by finishing second with the final place on the podium taken by Cpl George Morrison and Cpl Curtis McKerlie.

The team heads to Iceland for Rally Reykjavik later this month.

AN intrepid team will be giving their support to Help for Heroes by completing the Three Peaks Challenge.

Barry Rennick, Amar Chundavadra and Gavin Truslove will be climbing the highest mountains of Scotland, England and Wales in a 24-hour period starting on the afternoon of August 14.

They are dedicating their efforts to Capt Tom Sawyer (RA), who was killed in action in Afghanistan in January.

● To donate to the team, visit www.justgiving.com/simplemen3peak

A RECORD number of entrants took part in the annual Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers and Army Air Corps triathlon championships.

Around 100 competitors arrived at the start line for the Wiltshire-based challenge, which represented a 50 per cent increase on last year's numbers.

SSgt Glyn Painter (7 AA REME), based in Wattisham, claimed both the male individual winner's trophy and the over-35's trophy at the championships, which were held in Tidworth.

final word



We asked 19 Light Brigade troops about life as a rear party in Northern Ireland

INTERVIEWS: CLIFF CASWELL
PICTURES: MIKE WESTON



LCPL DANIEL RAWE (RE)

With all the extra security, this has been a different type of rear party for us. I'm on the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) with 38 Engineer Regiment and have been very busy. Our movement is restricted too – we are not allowed to go running outside the camp, but when you do get out into the community everybody is quite friendly. It was a complete shock when our soldiers were killed.



SPR RICHARD WATSON (RE)

The 38 Engr Regt rear party is like any other, but things were always going to step up a gear after we had two of our soldiers killed. A QRF has been set up to deal with any potential incident. However there is a good sense of community on base. When we lost our two colleagues, everybody was there for each other – we were able to talk through what had happened.



SPR DAVE HICKS (RE)

This is the first time I've ever been on a rear party and I'm involved in servicing our Land Rover fleet. Living in Northern Ireland is really what you make of it – if you want it to be rubbish then it will be. I mostly head back to mainland UK during leave periods. I'd like to get out to Afghanistan although I know I would be scared – we have just lost a soldier and another recently came back injured.



GNR CLAYTON WILKINSON (RA)

I'm disappointed about not being on operations. At the moment I am still waiting for my passport to arrive, so I have been unable to go out to Herrick. The people here are very friendly, but I know that you have to be careful in the province. Despite that, I'm really enjoying Army life with 40 Regiment RA and can't wait to go out on operations in Afghanistan.



SGT MAX MAXWELL (REME)

I'm running the Light Aid Detachment for the 38 Engr Regt rear party. I've been very busy each day but I'm dealing with the workload. I stayed behind because of a back injury. I was here during the Troubles and it is really strange not seeing people in green kit and going out on patrols. The deaths of our two soldiers was a shock, but everyone supports each other.



SSGT NEIL WILLETTS (RLC)

In my view there is no more pressure here in Northern Ireland than at home in the UK, but you are more security conscious – you don't travel around in uniform and there are areas that are out of bounds. I'm looking at the possibility of settling here. Life is just as good as it is on the mainland and at the moment I get 12 free travel warrants a year to return home.



GNR MATT IRVING (RA)

I'm one of the youngest with 40 Regt RA at Lisburn. I am not old enough to deploy at the moment. I was disappointed not to go on operations but hopefully I will have the opportunity to go to Afghanistan next year. Although I've only been with the regiment for three weeks, it is clear that being part of a rear party in Northern Ireland is different to the rest of Britain.



LCPL LEROY McSHANE (RE)

I have a number of jobs at 38 Engr Regt, which include being a QRF commander. I've been working shifts and it has been busy. I like Northern Ireland – the girls are awesome, and we had such strong support from the community when our two soldiers were killed, but your options are limited when you are out. You just have to try to keep under the radar.

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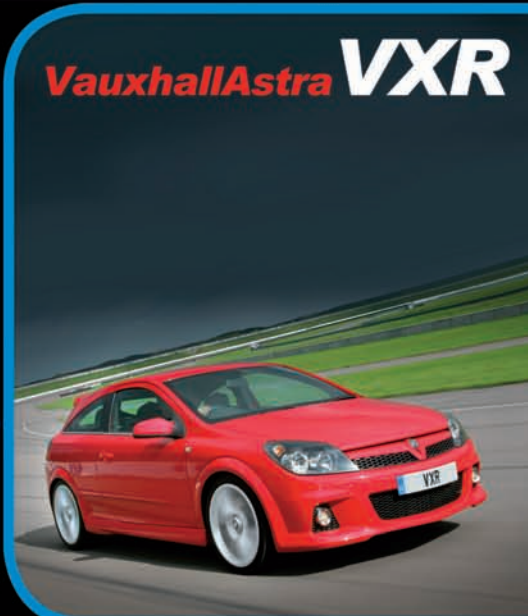
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