

M A G A Z I N E O F T H E B R I T I S H A R M Y

SOLDIER

JUNE 2009 £3.50

Lovers' leap

Embedded bliss of
being married to the job

BRIDAL PARTY

Celebrating the best
bits of being a 'wife of'

TROUBLE AND STRIFE

Forces couple's mission
to save Service marriages



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SOLDIER

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Cover picture (left): Former AGC clerk Helen Barnett tackles Service marriage

Picture: Phillip Nash Photography

Background image: A British soldier stands by during a crowd control exercise in Kenya

Picture: Mike Weston

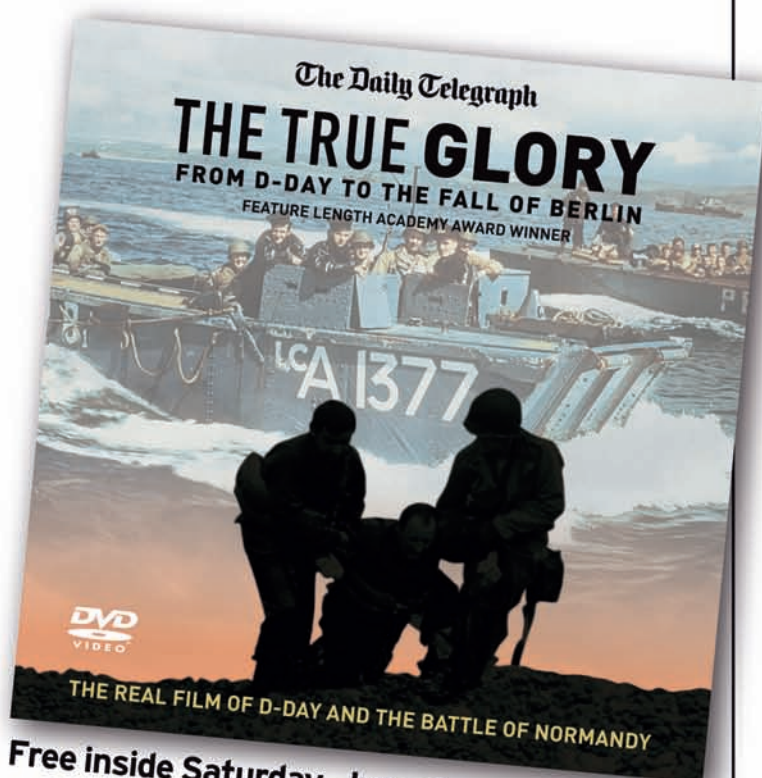


3 free DVDs inside the Telegraph on D-Day weekend



This year marks the 65th anniversary of D-Day. To commemorate this significant event in history, the Telegraph is giving away three DVDs free inside the paper.

Free inside on Saturday, June 6 is *The True Glory* - widely regarded as one of the greatest war documentaries ever made. Then, free inside on Sunday, June 7 is the naval classic *In Which we Serve*, featuring Noel Coward, plus *Reach for the Sky* starring Kenneth Moore.



Free inside Saturday, June 6



Plus, free inside on Sunday, June 7

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SOLDIER

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this magazine please recycle it.



"This could take more than seven sessions. For a start Mrs Ingram, when your husband wrote
"get thee to a nunnery", I really don't think he expected you to take him literally!"

● Embedded bliss – Pages 22-25

Married to the job

LOOKING for differences between
Servicemen and women and their
civilian counterparts is a little bit like
shooting fish in a barrel.

Just consider each group's places of work.
Those of us outside the military are often
found dwelling in offices, ties half undone
and shirts hanging out until 1700 rolls
around and we can clock out.

Not so for our brothers and sisters in
green. A soldiers' office is more
likely to be an operational
front line, and their standard
of dress makes other
professions look like extras
from *The Royle Family*.

But perhaps the widest gulf
between civvy street and the Army is the
tenacity of Service couples to make their
relationships work.

Those who don't sign up might have to
cope with the odd week apart for business
trips or the stress of moving house once or
twice in a lifetime, but military marriages
face a full-on assault from six-month tours,
regular postings around the world and
the stress of knowing that a loved one is
doing their job in one of the most testing
environments on the face of the planet.

The pressures placed on Service families
are vast, but they do not come without
unique – and significant – benefits.

Whether it's the unbreakable sense of
community gained from living "on patch",
the unrivalled opportunities to travel around
the world or the rock-solid job security,
being a "wife of" or "husband of" is not a

thankless task according to Julie McCarthy,
chief executive of the Army Families
Federation, in June's *Ranked* (Pages 28-30).

Where civilian and Service married life
do match up is in their potential for conflict.
Couples inevitably have their differences
and it is good to know that military-specific
schemes such as The Marriage Course
(Pages 22-25) are available to offer specialist
help in strengthening the foundations of even
the rockiest relationship.

Further support for
unavoidable issues, such as
taking care of sick children,
is also on offer from charities
such as the Army Benevolent
Fund (Pages 26-27).

All of this help means that soldiers can
concentrate on continuing to do what they
do better than any other force in the world.
Taking on the Taliban is not an easy task, but
thanks to innovative training exercises that
recreate the conditions found on Op Herrick
thousands of miles away in Africa (Pages
33-41) or even the slightly less-glamorous
climes of Norfolk (Page 15), Britain's
troops are well-prepared to tackle whatever
Helmand might throw their way.

Continued investment in kit that makes
the MPs' expense claims seem minute,
including a new Jackal (Pages 54-55), means
that husbands and wives can spend less
time worrying about safety and more time
concentrating on maintaining a happy home.

Finally, well done to the Army Rugby
Union team for recording an eighth
successive Inter-Services tournament win. ■

**'Being a wife of or
husband of is not
a thankless task'**

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Picture: Mike Weston

Stand by for action: A greater emphasis on training and an overhaul of command structures will better shape the Reserve Forces for the modern front line

Power in reserve

Review calls for volunteers to be better prepared for 21st Century ops

COMMAND and control structures in the Territorial Army must be clearer if the organisation is to square up to the demands of current operations, a study has concluded.

In announcing the findings of the Strategic Review of the Reserve Forces, a team led by Maj Gen Nick Cottam found that the organisation and training of volunteers needed reform as more soldiers deployed to the front lines of southern Afghanistan.

The team also believed that “complex and administrative barriers” between Regular and TA troops’ terms and conditions of service needed to be addressed.

The latest review represents the first time that the Reserve Forces have been probed in their own right, reflecting the growing importance placed on them.

Among its key criticisms, the report highlighted that command structures were overly complex and that training opportunities were inconsistent.

There were also concerns that many of the volunteer soldiers’ civilian skills were not being identified and the report sug-

gested that a better system was needed to establish exactly where their talents could be used.

The MoD has pledged to act on all seven of the review team’s strategic recommendations and 89 other findings, agreeing they were “critical” to defence.

A spokesman for the department said the Reserve Forces command systems were being addressed as part of the Fu-

ture Army Structures initiative which will ultimately see the TA being further integrated with the Regulars.

A detailed examination of training issues is also under way, with the focus on ensuring that Reserve units are fully prepared. More emphasis is being placed on making sure they are up to date with annual competency standards and are able to fully participate in exercises.

Board releases Deepcut findings

IT would not be in the public interest to pursue a further investigation into the deaths of soldiers at Deepcut, the Armed Forces Minister has said.

Speaking after the board of inquiry (BOI) reports into the deaths of Pte James Collinson and Pte Geoff Gray – who were two of four troops to die at the Surrey base between 1995 and 2002 – Bob Ainsworth said the recommendations from several investigations have now been adopted.

Ainsworth added in a ministerial state-

ment to the House of Commons: “The release on these BOIs does not alter our position on the need for a public inquiry.

“Given the range of investigations that have now taken place, we do not believe there is any wider public or Service interest in pursuing one.”

The BOI reports made 20 recommendations relating to the welfare of soldiers, all of which had been raised in previous reviews about the Deepcut cases and had been acted upon, Ainsworth added.

Four soldiers killed in a day of anguish

Quartet fall as insurgents intensify attacks throughout Helmand province

FRIENDS and colleagues have been remembering four well-respected soldiers who were killed during a black 24 hours in Afghanistan.

Cpl Sean Binnie of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland and Rfn Adrian Sheldon of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles both died during separate attacks on May 7.

On the same day a suicide attack claimed the lives of Sgt Ben Ross of the Royal Military Police and Cpl Kumar Pun, serving with 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

Cpl Binnie, who was 22 and had been married for just six months, was helping to mentor the Afghan National Army when he was shot in a firefight.

The NCO, who signed up in 2003, had already served in the Falkland Islands and Iraq.

Lt Col Simon Banton, CO of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team Battlegroup, said: "It was no surprise when Sean was taken from us leading from the front and taking the battle to the enemy."

Rfn Sheldon, who was 25 and originally from Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Mansfield, was killed when his Jackal armoured vehicle was caught in an explosion near Sangin.



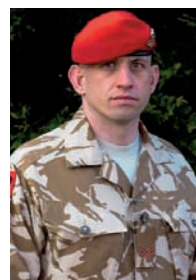
● Cpl Sean Binnie



● Rfn Adrian Sheldon



● Cpl Kumar Pun



● Sgt Ben Ross

The former student at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate had served on operations in Kosovo and Iraq.

Lt Col Rob Thomson, CO of 2 Rifles, described Rfn Sheldon as "an outstanding role model" who had "an enviable depth and maturity to his character".

Sgt Ross and Cpl Pun had been on patrol around the settlement of Gereschk when their Jackal was hit by a suicide bomber. Both had been involved in mentoring the Afghan police.

Cpl Pun, who was 31, passed the selection test to join the Gurkhas in 1996. He had served on operational deployments in Kosovo and Bosnia.

His OC, Maj Chris Conroy, said: "He was unstintingly professional, calm

and respectful of all, never failing to offer help."

Sgt Ross had completed 13 years of service, beginning in The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards before transferring to the RMP in 2003.

The Welsh-born 34-year-old was a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan and had been serving with 173 Provost Company, 3rd Regiment RMP. Maj Adam Quantrell, his OC, said the NCO's death was a huge blow and that his thoughts were with Sgt Ross's widow, a serving military policewoman.

Maj Quantrell said: "Dedication, sacrifice and leadership were Sgt Ross's mantras and they are the best words to describe him."

Task force resolute despite further fatalities

COMMANDERS and soldiers in Afghanistan have pledged that they will continue to take the battle to the enemy despite the loss of two colleagues from the Welsh Guards.

Friends of the men, who died as a result of enemy action during separate contacts in Helmand province, said they would "do them proud".

LSgt Tobie Fasfous was caught in an explosion while on a patrol near Forward Operating Base Keenan, north-east of Gereschk, on April 28.

Lt Mark Evison died in Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham on May 12, three days after being involved in a contact with the Taliban while on a patrol in Nad-e-Ali. He was evacuated back to the UK after receiving a single gunshot wound to the shoulder.

LSgt Fasfous, who was 29, joined the Army in 2001 and was a qualified sniper. He



● LSgt Tobie Fasfous



● Lt Mark Evison

had already served with distinction in Iraq and Bosnia, where he forged a reputation for his knowledge of local customs, culture and language.

A graduate of Oxford Brookes University, Lt Evison had commissioned into the Welsh Guards after passing out of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2007. He had served on exercise in Canada and Germany

before beginning his pre-deployment training for his first tour of Afghanistan.

The 26-year-old's qualities were summed up by friend and fellow platoon commander Lt David Harris who said: "We will continue to remember him and are determined to do him proud in Afghanistan."

Lt Col Rupert Thorneloe, CO of 1 WG, said that both men had brought strong leadership to the battalion, adding that his thoughts were with their loved ones.

He said of LSgt Fasfous: "He was a superb soldier – one of the best of his generation. He was also a great character and a thoroughly decent man. His loss has been an enormous blow."

The CO added of Lt Evison: "He was a remarkable young man. He took great care of his soldiers and was ever-generous and patient with those less able than himself."



Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere RLC

Full on firepower: British resupply wagons are being heavily protected and provided with top cover from Army Apache attack helicopters and Nato fast jets

Convoys in contact

Logisticians brave enemy assaults to keep front-line troops in battle

SOLDIERS from units based in Northern Ireland have been crossing some of the world's most hostile terrain in a move to resupply those on the front line in Afghanistan.

The Combat Support Logistic Regiment of 19 Light Brigade has mounted five large armed convoys from Camp Bastion to bases as far away as Sangin – a journey of three days.

Pushing through enemy attacks and across difficult environments, the huge wagon trains made up of around 70 vehicles have been protected by an infantry platoon and are provided with top cover by Apache attack helicopters and Nato fast jets.

Cpl Craig Robinson, who commanded a lead Mastiff patrol vehicle during the lengthy resupply tasks, said the convoys had the ability to hit back hard against the Taliban.

"As force protection platoon we have enormous firepower and with all the other assets in support, the combat logistic patrol is a formidable fighting force," he said.

"We spread our vehicles among the convoy to provide protection against any insurgent small arms fire and RPG at-

tacks. We also choose routes where the insurgents are less likely to lay IEDs which often means the roughest ones."

Officer commanding 10 Close Support Squadron, Maj Rob Tasker, said the convoys had a dual role.

He added: "The logistics patrols are so big and so well armed that they

achieve more than a traditional convoy. They can pick up intelligence and dominate the battlefield, denying the enemy freedom of movement.

"The terrain imposes a huge strain on our crews and their vehicles, but we're fortunate in having extremely capable men and women."

Ops build on Afghan success

THE battle against the Taliban in southern Afghanistan stepped up a gear after troops from 19 Light Brigade embarked on a series of operations.

Personnel from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland wasted little time in launching Operation Sarak One to help protect the road running through the area of Maywand in Kandahar province.

The Black Watch were airlifted in by Chinook and cleared the area under top cover provided by UK Apache and US Cobra attack helicopters.

It was the first battlegroup-size operation 3 Scots had carried out since deploying to Iraq in 2004 and CO Lt Col Stephen Cartwright was satisfied with the outcome.

He said: "There were no engagements with insurgents and we conducted a number of shuras with local elders.

"The Afghan people were pleased to see the Afghan National Army (ANA) being supported by Isaf forces in this remote area."

In neighbouring Helmand province, soldiers from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment provided counterparts from the ANA with mentoring and support during two days of fierce fighting with insurgents in and around Lashkar Gar.

Op Zafar succeeded in pushing the Taliban out of several villages around the provincial capital before the Royal Engineers moved in to build a permanent base for the Afghan forces.

IN BRIEF

● A FLEET of the latest Lynx helicopters will be heading to Afghanistan in the next five years, ministers have confirmed.

Deliveries of the AW159 Wildcat will be made to the Army and Royal Navy from 2014, with 62 aircraft spread across the two Services.

The Army variant will perform a wide range of battlefield tasks including reconnaissance and force protection.

● A PROFESSIONAL photographer is showing his appreciation for the Armed Forces by giving Service personnel a 10 per cent discount.

Farnham-based Phillip Nash Photography has introduced the offer to cover wedding and portrait shoots and will provide soldiers with free family portrait sittings.

The discount also applies to the company's "trash the dress" service, which allows brides to undergo photoshoots wearing their wedding dress, as seen on the cover of this month's *Soldier*. For more information, contact the studio on 01252 821623.

● SOLDIERS can look forward to a new and more comfortable uniform when they attend formal functions.

The updated Number 2 (Service) Dress boasts an all-wool barathea cloth and a more comfortable, longer-lasting fit.

The previous pattern was 25 years old and made from a cheaper fibre. Soldiers will be issued the dress during a four-year roll-out period.

● THE draw of an Army career is stronger than ever in the north of England after 18 men became the largest single group ever to enlist in The Yorkshire Regiment.

The future soldiers, aged between 18 and 24, took their oaths at Leeds Civic Hall and are now learning their trade at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

● GEN Sir Richard Dannatt, the Chief of the General Staff, is among the speakers at this year's Regimental Sergeant Majors' Convention at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The event takes place between June 30 and July 3 and will feature a series of lectures by special guests.

Further information is available by contacting staff assistant WO1 Darren Bainbridge on 01276 412250.

● THE Victory Services Club in London's West End is encouraging serving and retired soldiers to use its facilities after the completion of a significant new building project.

The Centenary Wing at the all-ranks club features digital television, free Wi-Fi connection and air conditioning. Visit www.vsc.co.uk for further information.

Re-think on terror fight

MoD to rebalance resources to fight new threat

A PACKAGE of "deep and wide-ranging changes" to the Armed Forces will be needed in the future if the UK is to stay a step ahead of terrorists, the Defence Secretary has said.

In a speech at the Institute for Public Policy Research in London, John Hutton said troops were locked in battle with an enemy that had torn up the rules of traditional conflict.

His suggested moves to counter the menace include the introduction of more counter-terror specialists and a "rebalancing of investment, technology, equipment and people to meet the challenge of irregular warfare".

Hutton also believed that there was scope for the MoD to achieve better value in the future and maintained that expenditure needed to be properly evaluated and justified.

Hutton said: "We must be ready to consider wide-ranging changes to our Forces – changes that will help our people prosecute campaigns even more effectively and safely in future.

"Earlier this month we saw real leadership from President Obama and Secretary Gates to set the United States military policy on a new course, re-prioritising effort on a huge scale. We need to see a similar readjustment in the UK in the years ahead."

The Defence Secretary believed a "blurring of distinctions" between overseas ops and domestic security meant Government departments would need to work more closely together.

Hutton said: "Our efforts overseas have made great inroads into the threat before it appears on the streets of Britain. But we also have to be prepared to protect our population.

"We need to ensure that support to the front line and every pound we spend in support of our Forces is agile and adaptable to the realities of modern conflict.

"I am committed to ensuring this is the case and I believe there is still significant scope for achieving better value for money at the MoD and its agencies," Hutton concluded.

Concern mounts over rights ruling

MINISTRY of Defence officials have been considering their position after losing the latest stage of a legal battle stemming from the death of a soldier in Iraq.

Lawyers representing the department have been given leave to take their case before the House of Lords after the Court of Appeal confirmed that the Human Rights Act still applied to British soldiers serving on operations overseas.

The latest decision follows a ruling in a judicial review relating to the circumstances surrounding the death of Pte Jason Smith, who died from heat stroke during Op Telic six years ago.

The legal process, which was launched following the inquest into his death, had concluded that the MoD had an obligation to avoid or minimise risks to the lives of its troops wherever they were serving.

But the department had argued that it could not offer the freedoms that the Human Rights Act sought to guarantee during fast moving ops in a foreign country.

The MoD stressed that the ruling will not

alter commanders' authority to make operational decisions or leave them open to personal legal challenges.

The department also said it has never sought to deny the rights of Service personnel and that safety remained a priority.

A spokesman added: "The MoD accepts that there are limited circumstances when Armed Forces personnel come within the UK's jurisdiction for the purposes of the European Convention on Human Rights when they are deployed overseas.

"This includes the sad circumstances of Pte Smith's death, where he was under the UK's authority when receiving attention on a UK-controlled Army base.

"But in the heat of battle during dynamic and fast-moving military operations on foreign territory, the UK could not secure the rights and freedoms the Human Rights Act seeks to guarantee.

"We are concerned by the attempt to insert lawyers into the chain of command in the middle of a battle, which would create hesitation and potentially greater risk."



Picture: Cpl Steven Hughes RLC

Ongoing reminder: The memorial wall at the British HQ in Basra will continue to tell the human cost of Iraq after it is returned to the UK and reassembled

Tellic remembered

Dannatt leads tributes as troops reflect on years of success and sacrifice

COURAGEOUS British soldiers can “take great pride in a job well done” following the end of their successful mission in southern Iraq, the Chief of the General Staff has said.

In a statement to troops and their families, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt paid tribute to their determination in seeing through a difficult six-year operation.

The senior officer was speaking as members of the 20th Armoured Brigade joined together in Basra to reflect on the lives of 178 Service personnel and one MoD civilian lost during the campaign.

He added: “It has been a high price to pay but, as we prepare to leave a stable and secure southern Iraq, I firmly believe that their sacrifice has not been in vain.

“As in any operation of this nature and complexity, things did not always develop as we might have expected – it is critical that we learn from our experiences and implement the lessons.”

Gen Dannatt added that the successful mentoring of Iraqi soldiers and police meant that they were now “fully up to the task” of taking over security in Basra.

He said: “We have achieved a successful outcome. The key to success was always going to be in helping the Iraqis to tackle their own problems.

“But looking ahead, our Army will also play a part in Britain’s enduring bilateral relationship with Iraq, taking the lead in assistance with Iraqi officer training and

continuing to contribute staff to the Coalition Headquarters in Baghdad.”

Gen Dannatt went on to thank the soldiers who had taken part in the Tellic draw down and praised them for their work. “I am certain the professionalism demonstrated over the past six years will continue,” he added.

Iraq monument to be repatriated

A MEMORIAL wall in Basra that was built to commemorate the fallen of the Op Tellic campaign is being dismantled and returned to the UK, it has been confirmed.

As this issue went to press, sappers from the 20th Armoured Brigade were taking apart the monument brick-by-brick ready for it to be packed for repatriation.

The wall, which was built in 2006 and lists the names of all British personnel who were killed during the six-year Op Tellic mission, will be rebuilt at an as yet unconfirmed location. However, *Soldier* understands that the National Memorial

Arboretum in Staffordshire is one of the venues under consideration.

Members of 37 Armoured Engineer Squadron, part of 35 Engineer Regiment, who painstakingly worked to take down the monument, said it was an honour to be chosen for the job. Officer commanding Maj Andrew Garrow said: “This was not my first Tellic – I have known people out there who have died.

“So this task was very significant to me and all of the guys who worked on it. Taking all the plaques back to the UK is a great privilege and an honour.”

IN BRIEF

● ARMY officers serving with Land Forces are set to become greener in the future with the introduction of a fleet of environmentally friendly cars with greater fuel efficiency.

Military fleet managers have announced the arrival of the latest Toyota Prius, a petrol-electric hybrid vehicle that produces significantly fewer emissions and uses far less petrol than its more traditionally powered stablemates.

Around 50 of the new cars will replace aging Vauxhall Vectras as Grade B staff transport. Some 500 Corsas and Astras will also be exchanged for newer versions while a further 30 vehicles will be traded in for smaller models in a move to cut carbon emissions.

● **SERVING soldiers and their families can now keep up to date with all the latest military news, interviews and debate** care of a new station launched by Garrison Radio.

Broadcasting from its Catterick base, Armytalk is available on medium wave in the Yorkshire Forces community and across the world via the internet.

Station boss Mark Page, a former Radio 1 DJ, said: "All the garrison stations generate lots of speech, so turning this into a complimentary brand made lots of sense."

"It is also cutting-edge in that it is a completely automated radio station with no live presenters, so it is very cost effective," he added. See www.armytalk.co.uk for details.

● BRITISH soldiers are forming up on parade for next month's London Pride event as they mark the ninth anniversary of the welcoming of gay and lesbian troops into the Army's ranks.

Personnel from all three Services will be joining the parade, briefly breaking from the main event to march past MoD Main Building in Whitehall.

It is the second year that soldiers have been permitted to take part in the Pride event in uniform.

Further information is available by accessing document 2009DIN01-100 on the DIN website.

● AN organisation that provides Christian Bibles to Servicemen and women has produced a booklet to help soldiers deal with the pressures of operational deployments.

Combat the Stress, published by The Naval, Military and Air Force Bible Society, gives direction to scripture to assist military personnel to cope with emotional issues while on tour.

More than 5,000 copies of the booklet have been distributed to units including Headley Court and Selly Oak Hospital this year. Visit www.nmafb.org for further information.

Dannatt sets Army agenda

Flexibility is key for future actions, says General

THE outgoing Chief of the General Staff has saluted the civilian public for the strong support shown to soldiers returning from difficult missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In his latest report on issues raised by his briefing team, Gen Sir Richard Dannatt welcomed the "interest and empathy" in the welfare of the Armed Forces and their operational effectiveness.

But he added: "While I know that we are grateful for this, it should serve to remind us of the trust in which we are held and the expectation that we will merit that trust."

"I see this report as an essential element in assisting me in ensuring that we will continue to meet this commitment, and I would ask that you keep talking to my briefing team."

Gen Dannatt emphasised that success on current ops remained a key priority along with improving the quality of ac-

commodation for troops and families.

He also stressed his resolve to continuously review the Army's standing against evolving threats, making sure that troops were equipped with the kit and tactics to respond to them under his *Transforming in Contact* initiative.

Measures to keep the military up-to-speed included the introduction of an additional divisional and two brigade headquarters, and refinements to pre-deployment training.

"*Transforming in Contact* describes my ambition for the Army to evaluate where it is and where it needs to go to meet the threat in an ever-changing environment and then to restructure, re-equip and re-train accordingly," he said.

"Success on operations continues to be our highest priority – conditions are now right to concentrate efforts in Afghanistan where there has been slow but steady progress."



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

Big cat poised to take on Taliban

A HI-TECH version of the Panther patrol vehicle is on the prowl for the Taliban after more than 60 modified versions were delivered to troops in Afghanistan.

The command and liaison truck has been adapted for the rigours of Helmand with a rear-view camera, protected engine compartment, theatre-specific electronic counter measures and space for a fourth crew member among the improvements made.

Panther, which is being used by the Army's close support logistic troops, is already fitted with a remote-controlled weapon system, day and night thermal imaging and blast protection as standard.

Weighing in at more than seven tonnes, the truck is armed with a 7.62mm general purpose machine gun. More than 400 of the specialist vehicles are being built by BAE Systems under a £160 million contract.



Picture: Mike Weston

Flashback: Gurkhas on an exercise during the 1980s. Nepalese soldiers with at least four years' service have now been granted the right to stay in the UK

Gurkhas here to stay

Nepalese veterans victorious in second round of immigration rights fight

JUBILANT Gurkha veterans have been celebrating after winning full rights to settle in the UK.

As this issue went to press, the Home Office confirmed all veterans who had retired before July 1 1997 and had four years' service would now be granted settlement rights together with their wives and children.

The news, which was announced in the House of Commons by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, was greeted with scenes of elation by campaigners gathered outside the Palace of Westminster.

Smith said: "Generations of Gurkhas have served the UK with great courage, sacrifice and distinction and they continue to make a valued contribution to our operations around the world.

"We respect the will of the House of Commons on this issue and that is why I have announced a new policy, the basis of which we have worked on with the Home Affairs Select Committee and Gurkha representatives."

Last month the Government was forced to climb down on its initial set of

proposed rules after MPs and campaigners claimed the bar had been set so high that very few would successfully be able to apply.

The plans, which demanded former soldiers hold at least ten years' service and three years' continuous residence in the UK, were comprehensively rejected

after a successful motion led by the Liberal Democrats.

News of the new proposals was welcomed by veterans groups. Royal British Legion chairman Peter Cleminson said: "The announcement is consistent with the nation's obligation to the Gurkhas and the military covenant."

MoD defends kit provision record

DEFENCE Equipment Minister Quentin Davies has moved to allay concerns over kit provision after questions were raised over the delivery of major projects.

The Public Accounts Committee had criticised the MoD for its "disappointing" performance in procuring 20 of its largest kit projects during 2007-08.

The report revealed that there had been a collective delay in the introduction of the initiatives of 96 months and that they had exceeded the budget by £205 million.

But in response, Davies maintained that the MoD had delivered £5.8 billion of kit to

the Forces in addition to scores of Urgent Operational Requirements (UORs).

He was adamant that the British military was as well equipped as its contemporaries in other countries.

Davies added: "Some 240 UORs have been delivered, including more Mastiff and Jackal vehicles and improved protection for our fleet of Warriors.

"Delays to projects in the report, while regrettable, have not led to gaps in our front-line capability."

The Government would provide a full response in due course, Davies added.

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- the welfare co-ordinators

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support



Picture: Andy Cargill

Pure theatre: British soldiers are being given a highly authentic taste of southern Afghanistan on home soil thanks to a new training facility in the heart of Norfolk. The custom-built Middle East-style village and urban complex were designed by the Operational Training Advisory Group and are populated by real Afghan nationals, who play both local residents and insurgents. Gen Sir David Richards, Commander-in-Chief Land Forces, said: "Our excellent fighting soldiers need to operate from the same type of place that they will use in Afghanistan and be put to the test in as realistic a manner as we can devise."

Steadfast support

Scores will fly the flag to show their backing for new Armed Forces Day

HUNDREDS of local authorities around the UK are among those who have thrown their weight behind the first Armed Forces Day in a strong show of support for Service personnel past and present.

As this issue went to press, the MoD confirmed that a legion of councils, businesses and individuals had pledged to raise a special flag for the event at 1030 on Saturday June 27.

Sales of the flags, which cost £10, have helped to raise money for the Forces' Children's Trust, a charity that is dedicated to helping youngsters who have lost a parent on an overseas operation.

The celebrations will include a showcase event at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham, Kent, as well as other activities around the UK.

Ministers have been delighted with the level of public support for Armed Forces Day, which replaces the old Veterans' Day and follows a recent surge of national pride in the Services.

Launching the flag campaign while visiting British personnel serving in Afghanistan's Helmand province, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said the pub-

lic owed their Servicemen and women a "huge debt of gratitude". He added: "Our troops risk their lives fighting the agents of terror to keep Britain safe and stand up for the UK's interests across the world."

Brown's message was endorsed by Veterans' Minister Kevan Jones who said

the event was an opportunity for reflection. He added: "Armed Forces Day is to celebrate what our veterans have already achieved, what our current personnel continue to achieve and the offer the Forces have for future generations."

● www.armedforcesday.org.uk

Relatives of battle victims sought

DESCENDANTS of soldiers killed in a First World War action are being urged to come forward as excavation work begins on a series of mass burial sites.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has launched a website in a bid to trace the families of troops who died at the Battle of Fromelles in northern France after records of the missing pinpointed the names of those likely to be found.

The graves were recently discovered around the area of Pheasant Wood, where it is believed that the Germans buried the bodies of dead Allied troops in July 1916.

A full archaeological excavation of the area began in May after a limited dig last

year. It is believed the remains of 400 British and Australian troops could be found.

Veterans' Minister Kevan Jones urged families who believed they may have lost a relative during the fighting to make sure they checked the new website. He said: "These men gave their lives for their country and everything possible will be done to lay them to rest with the full military honours they deserve."

"We need the British public to look back at their family trees if they believe there is a chance that their grandfather or great-grandfather died at Fromelles."

● www.cwgc.org/fromelles



IRR

UNDER BODY ARMOUR COMBAT SHIRT £39.95

Manufactured by a UK-MoD approved supplier, this latest technology DPM Under Body Armour Combat Shirt (UBACS) is designed specially to be worn under the very latest issue body armour systems (including Osprey) and assault vests. A natural successor for the Soldier'95 shirt, this next generation lightweight and breathable garment features IRR (infra-red reflective) DPM sleeves made from full UK MoD spec fire retardant polycotton. Also features zipper neck, padded shoulders, large patch pockets, padded elbows, padded arms, lower arm pockets, adjustable cuffs and velcro strips for your blood group and Union Flag patches (available separately). Trunk is constructed from brown anti-static Coolmax fabric which is UV-protective - keeping you cool and dry. Available in sizes S-XL (small - chest up to 82cm; medium - chest up to 96cm; large - chest up to 110cm, XL - chest up to 124cm). CB220DPM.





Picture: Steve Dock

The thick of it: Youngsters whose dads are serving with the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards were given a taste of life in the field during a special event at the custom-made Gurkha jungle training area in Aldershot. Children aged between eight and 12 slept out in the open and learned survival skills including how to prepare a meal during the 24 hours of *I'm a Mini Mick, Get Me Out of Here*. The event was the brainchild of welfare officer Capt Frankie Howell and SSgt Allan Oakes. Capt Howell said: "It was the perfect opportunity to get our children understanding a bit more about what their parents do away from home."

Catering goes green

Army chefs' new home attracts high praise for its sustainable credentials

PREPARING food is even more enjoyable for caterers at the Defence Food Services School (DFSS) after they settled in to a new high-tech base.

Since moving from their historic home in Aldershot, troops have been appreciating the raft of refinements at their Worthy Down HQ, including better-equipped kitchens and open areas.

The building has also been winning high praise for its green credentials. A compost machine, which ensures waste food is recycled, and ultra-violet cooker lights designed to vaporise fat are among dozens of environmentally friendly initiatives installed in the facility.

"We have very different kitchens now compared to those we had before," explained Maj James Marshall (RLC), the school's chief of staff. "They are bigger and airier – it used to get very hot during sessions but now it is much cooler."

"The facilities we have here are also of a far higher quality than those of a civilian catering college. For example, students have their own work surface, fridge, storage area and stove."

The sentiments were shared by instructor WO1 Darren Gregory (RLC) who added: "The building we are in now

is much smarter and better-equipped than St Omer Barracks in Aldershot. The place was really dated.

"I don't think it was an inspiring environment for chefs coming in whereas here it is a completely different story."

The DFSS trains up to 300 basic chefs a year. Most come directly from Phase

One training and they are put straight onto the 16-week course in a bid to get them turning out top-notch scoff for hungry soldiers as soon as possible.

Although the majority of their training is done indoors, the chefs also learn field cookery where the emphasis is on working in austere operational conditions.

Soldier Oli tells tots about ops

A GIFTED former PE teacher has put pen to paper to give young children a snapshot of what happens when their mum or dad goes away on operations.

Kirsty Marvell first had the idea of writing a rhyming picture book after her serving husband, Maj Oli Stokes (1 PWRR), embarked on a tour in the Middle East following the birth of her first child.

Having finally published the tale of *Soldier Oli*, she admitted to being delighted at her book's potential to bring comfort to the children of Service personnel as well as raising cash for charity.

Marvell recalled: "When my husband went to Iraq, along with most of the other soldiers who were living in our street, our

son was too young to realise that daddy was going away for such a long time. I decided to write my story to help children understand that although someone in their family may go away, they will come back home again."

Marvell also believed that youngsters should have pride in their Army families. She added: "I thought it important for children, who may well have soldiers as their role models, to have a book where the soldier is the main character."

Soldier Oli is priced at £5, including postage, with 50p from each sale donated to the Army Benevolent Fund.

● www.soldieroli.com



Picture: Julian Simmonds

Loud and proud: The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards won the hearts and minds of the UK public for an album that was recorded in southern Iraq during 2008

True Brits win big

Troops command theatre audience for 'most dangerous album ever made'

B RITISH soldiers have made history by beating scores of top acts to win one of the music industry's most prestigious accolades.

The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards became the first military band to scoop a Classical Brit Award for their CD *Spirit of the Glen – Journey* in a ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall.

And the musicians, who narrowly missed out last year when they were beaten by popular outfit Blake, were delighted when they accepted their award from Classic FM's Simon Bates.

In making the first-ever album recorded in an operational theatre, the soldiers braved the summer heat of Iraq, which topped 50C, and the ever-present threat of rocket attacks in what has been dubbed by critics as the most dangerous album ever made.

The talented troops also had to strike a fine balance between performing their vital day job of crewing Challenger 2 main battle tanks and keeping their musical skills up to a high standard.

But their efforts paid off as they overcame a host of acclaimed rival acts, including opera singer and Forces

sweetheart Katherine Jenkins, to gain first place in a public vote.

The troops delivered a special rendition of *Amazing Grace* during the awards ceremony and dedicated the performance to their colleagues in the Armed Forces.

Lt Col Jonathan Biggart, the regiment's commanding officer, told reporters that

he was incredibly proud to have received the award. He added: "It is a fitting testament to the achievements of these talented musicians who are first and foremost tank crewmen and display such incredible flexibility in their work."

"We were fortunate that Basra was quiet at the time of the recording, which allowed it to take place."

Troops gallop to Middle East

EQUITATION experts from the Household Cavalry will be showcasing their talents outside of Europe for the first time after accepting an invitation to perform in the United Arab Emirates.

The regiment's Musical Ride – a 35-man team that puts on displays to music – will travel to Abu Dhabi in October to give four performances at the 2009 International Hunting and Equine Exhibition.

Speaking during a visit from a delegation from the Gulf state, Col Toby Browne, Silver Stick-in-Waiting, said: "It is a huge honour for the Household Cavalry to be invited to Abu Dhabi to perform in such won-

derful surroundings and to a whole new and appreciative audience."

The Musical Ride's 28 horses will be travelling to the UAE in the air-conditioned luxury of Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed Al Maktoum's private aircraft.

The stables and arenas in Abu Dhabi will also be climate-controlled to ensure the horses do not suffer from the heat.

Gen Lord Charles Guthrie, Colonel of the Life Guards, added: "This invitation demonstrates the deep-rooted and positive relationship between the two countries."

● www.musicalride.co.uk

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Eyes: Brown Blood Group: O Negative

Marks and Scars visible: 2 inch scar on Forehead

Assessment of Military Conduct

Military Conduct: 5 - Unsatisfactory

Note. The range of Military Conduct Gradings possible are:

1 Exemplary 2 Very Good 3 Satisfactory 4 Fair 5 Unsatisfactory

Private Caine made a promising start to his military career. He completed initial training and was posted to Germany, where he continued to develop his academical and vocational knowledge. During this time he exercised in Cyprus, Kenya and Canada; demonstrating his ability to operate as an effective team member and demonstrate his sporting ability.

Unfortunately, Private Caine failed a random drug test and was discharged for taking a class A drug; this is incompatible with Service life. I am unable to recommend Private Caine for any form of employment that may impact on health and safety or where other employees rely on his actions.



BE THE BEST

... at just about everything



PREDICT THE WEATHER

1. Red sky at night, shepherd's delight

It's not just a rhyme, there's science to it. A red sky at sunset is often a sign of a dry high-pressure system stirring dust into the air and moving towards you. "Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning" means that the high pressure has passed, trailing a less pleasant, moist low-pressure system in its wake.

2. Use your nose

In low pressure, plants release their waste. So a smell of compost may indicate that rain is coming in the near future. Swamps also release methane just before a storm, and flowers smell their strongest before rain. Wind can pick up at the start of a low pressure weather system, also indicating the possibility of rain.

3. Look to the skies

A rainbow in the west means rain is heading your way – in the east it's already passed. Clouds are reasonably accurate indicators of weather. Cloud layers going in different directions usually mean bad weather is on the way, while clouds that look like fish scales mean rain within 36 hours.

4. Observe animals

If a storm is brewing, cows will huddle together and lie down. Flocks of birds flying low or sitting on power lines indicate bad weather. When those birds fly high, fair weather will be on the way.

TELL THE TIME BY THE SUN

1. Rise and set

You'll need to have an idea of the times of sunrise and sunset for this to work. Let's say the sun rises at 0600 and sets at 1800 (that's roughly average) with the sun at its highest point halfway through at noon.

2. Mark off the sky

Using landmarks on the ground, plot the course of the sun through the sky for an hour or two. Then estimate its entire arc over the course of the day and divide that arc into quarters (see above). Each quarter represents three hours of the day. So if the sun's in the first quarter, it's between 0600 and 0900. If it's two-thirds of the way through that quarter, it's 0800.

3. Get your timing right

Remember, the accuracy of your timing depends on having a good idea of the times of sunrise and sunset. You'll have to adjust those times depending on the time of year and your location; in London, for example, the earliest sunrise of the year is around 0445, the latest sunset 2120. Use a book of tables to find sunrise and sunset times where you are.



• 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'.

Embedded bliss

Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Graeme Main

TO love until death do us part is a traditional marriage vow the world over, but for some Army couples enforced separation is cutting short that once-heartfelt promise.

Earlier this year, Chief of the General Staff Gen Sir Richard Dannatt spoke aloud the murmurs of many – that the stress of deployment is reaping a profound toll on Service marriages. In a recent speech in which he acknowledged the impact of lengthy separation on relationships, he said: “Many families and marriages have unfortunately fallen victim to the relentless pace of operations.

We have seriously stretched our soldiers – both their goodwill and their families.”

This rise in the number of divorces has been enough to jolt the Army into restructuring – with an additional decree that soldiers will have 30 months between tours to spend more time at home. Yet for those already trapped in the bickering nightmare of an unhappy relationship there is a glimmer of hope in the form of a little known service called The Marriage Course. >>





Cake decoration: The Too Good To Eat Cake Company
www.thetogoodtoeatcakecompany.co.uk

Piece of cake: Extra support for Service marriages is on offer from a new course run by an Army couple

>> Originally devised by a vicar and his wife back in 1996, the course can be held anywhere from churches to homes, and has been especially adapted for Service families by Maj Rhett Parkinson (RE) and Liesel, his wife of 15 years.

The couple, who have three children and live in Paderborn, Germany, have often endured long periods of separation and decided to run their own course after watching friends go through similar difficulties only to finally end up in the divorce courts.

"We started holding The Marriage Course in Hohne in 2004 and very quickly people were asking specific questions about practical ways of dealing with separation," said Maj Parkinson.

"It's all very well telling people to communicate effectively but when you are apart for six months it's difficult. You don't get married to be apart but in the Army you have to get on with it. It is part of life – there is a sense of inevitability about it."

Eventually coming up with an additional subject – called dealing with involuntary separation – the Parkinsons have had increasing numbers of people turn up to their programme, which consists of seven "dinner dates".

These focus on the couples meeting up to have a meal and discuss issues on a certain topic. There is no group work and the emphasis is on airing deep-rooted issues in a safe and controlled environment.

"When they are talking we turn up the music so they have to lean together to talk more intimately," explained Liesel.

"They know they are in public so they can't have that blazing row they might have got into the habit of having when they are on their own."

"We do get very good feedback and if the problem can't be solved on the course we always point them towards professional services."

The Parkinsons themselves have dealt with repeated tours of Bosnia and Iraq and more than 15 house moves in as

many years. Yet when apart they rely on the support of friends and colleagues and ensure they send regular emails and pick up the phone to bridge the miles.

"There is always a sense of real loss and guilt when I leave Liesel and the kids behind as I'm literally stepping out of their lives for quite a few months," said Rhett. "It's strange, but when you

come back home on R&R it's like being on holiday and is very nice, but at the same time there's a part of my mind that's thinking about the guys that are still out there getting on with the job and I then feel guilty for not being there."

This feeling of divided loyalties is common among returning soldiers, as is their difficulty in fitting back into the day-to-day routine of family life according to Relate counsellor Denise Knowles.

"It's hard for soldiers to reintegrate when they come back and it's the same for the wife and children – they have had very different experiences," she said.

"Once the soldier gets over that initial euphoria of being safe and at home, they still have to get on with the normal nitty-gritty of life and that can be the difficult part."

"Looking after the children, cleaning and ironing – these tasks still need to be done and they can feel as though they have been away all this time and their partner is not putting aside enough time for them."

She explained that Army wives can often become more independent following their partner's deployment as they have had to cope on their own, which can lead to the soldier feeling as though he is no longer needed.

Adding that both partners will inevitably feel sad at the separation, she said that uncertainty and the reality of war can also cause severe anxiety on the part of the person left behind.

"Most partners say goodbye to their husband every morning and expect to see them every evening," said Denise. "For Army wives there is an expectation they will see them in six months' time but they really don't know because there are so many other factors involved."

Yet the high profile acknowledgement of the widening gulfs in Service marriages by Gen Dannatt and the Army as a whole could go a long way towards encouraging soldiers to seek help, where previously they may have viewed it as a personal weakness and kept the problem bottled up inside.

If both partners want the marriage to work and can acknowledge their problems openly with each other, there is a chance to secure long-lasting happiness. Denise's advice includes discussing feelings to ensure couples are both on the same wavelength, and then doing something about it like visiting Relate or military welfare services.

In Germany, Relate sessions are free and in England there is no charge for the first meeting.

"It's about saying to themselves that if they are upset and want to do something about it then go and seek help," added Denise. "Sometimes couples in the Services think this is what they signed up for – but it certainly isn't and they don't have to settle for it. Go and seek help." ♥

“It’s all very well telling people to communicate effectively but when you are apart for six months it’s difficult”



Navy wife and American psychologist Kathleen Vestan Logan has identified seven emotional stages of deployment, which form the basis of the Parkinson's dealing with involuntary separation sessions:

1 – Anticipation of loss

THIS typically occurs four to six weeks before the partner leaves and is marked by increasing tension.

2 – Detachment and withdrawal

FINAL days before departure. Couples feel as though they should be enjoying their last days together but feel despair – they want to get on with the leaving part.

3 – Emotional disorganisation

FIRST six weeks after departure. An initial sense of relief is replaced by guilt, numbness, aimlessness and loss of purpose for one left behind. Deployed partner feels loneliness and frustration.

4 – Recovery and stabilisation

PARTNER at home starts to cope and adopts the role of "single spouse". Stress levels drop.

5 – Anticipation of homecoming

SIX weeks before return. Mixture of emotions – apprehension or excitement. The soldier may be worried about whether they will be accepted back and will feel restless and confused.

6 – Renegotiation of marriage

SIX weeks after reunion. Couples are physically but not emotionally together. The one who was left behind may feel a loss of freedom, disorganised and out of control. Sex may seem frightening. Couples need to spend time together before they can expect intimacy.

7 – Reintegration and stabilisation

UP to 12 weeks later – new routines established and spouses feel relaxed and comfortable again.



Love doctor: Maj Rhett Parkinson (RE), pictured left, is helping to cure damaged Service marriages

Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Steve Dock

FOR Royal Artillery sergeant Paul Young and his wife Julie, each day is a carbon copy of the last.

Unable to go on holiday, visit friends or take a trip to the supermarket, the couple devote all their time to their five children – of which four have severe learning difficulties.

Their daily household routine is the glue that holds them all together. Disruption to feeding or bedtime can distress their four boys who rely solely upon their parents to understand their needs.

"Life is difficult," said Julie, who lives with her family at Bovington Camp. "Every day is a rigid routine – if things aren't in the right place or put in a certain way it upsets the whole house."

"For a long time I was virtually housebound as I need another adult with me when I take the boys out and that just isn't always possible."

For Paul, an instructor at nearby Blandford Camp, and Julie the support of the Army Welfare Services and charities has brightened a potentially dreary future.

Nearly £8,000 of funding from the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) and The Royal British Legion meant the couple could build a sensory room in their home filled with colour, light, different textures and materials, a ball pit, toys, mirrors and soft mats – all of which help them to communicate with their children.

With the exception of their 12-year-old daughter Coral, each of their children suffers from a range of disabilities – Khaïton-Blake (4)

is severely autistic, Corben (5) is under assessment for autism and has a severe language disorder, Cruz (2) has global developmental delay and Kage-Dean (17 months) has dystonic cerebral palsy as a result of premature birth.

"The room was built

around Khaïton's needs initially," said Julie. "He experiences things on a sensory level – he can't speak or let us know what he needs so we can use the room and body language to understand him. He is in his own world all the time. This is the only way we can reach him."

"The colours in the bubble tube can be changed to show that we want him to be calm for example, he can see himself in the mirror and build up his own identity, and the ball pit gives sensory feedback."

"Khaïton can feel the balls as he plays in there – he can't feel things like we can – he needs quite a lot of pressure on him to be able to feel. If you were to give him a hug, for example, you have to really squeeze him so he knows what's happening."

The other children, except Coral and Kage-Dean, also use the room to play and explore – giving their parents a small respite from the demands of their lively young family.

Paul, whose unit will not be deploying him due to the time he needs to spend with his children, said the support he received from the ABF and his Army unit was invaluable.

"We are so grateful," he added. "Things have settled into a pattern and this is normal life for us."

"There are families out there who can still continue with their Army career as long as they have the support and benefits from the Army system."

For more than six decades the helping hand of the Army Benevolent Fund has been giving soldiers, veterans and families such as the Youngs a vital boost.

Known as "The Soldier's Charity" it supports people from every background and age – with numbers standing at around 3,200 every year.

"We are about supporting anyone who has served in the Army and their families," explained ABF Controller Maj Gen Sir Evelyn Webb-Carter. "We will help them in any way we can when they have a need for it. These can be families in financial difficulties, soldiers who are injured or ill, or homeless veterans –



basically if we can help them then we will."

Often put in touch with those who need help by agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, The Royal British Legion and Army regiments, the ABF will assess the needs of the person and dispatch the money within 48 hours.

Sometimes the funding goes towards short term projects such as the sensory room, and other times it can pay for bereaved children's

school fees or cover the cost of nursing home bills for veterans.

The ABF's annual pot of £7 million has been boosted over the past few years by the public's increased concern for the welfare of its soldiers – a much needed phenomenon according to Webb-Carter.

"People understand that war is not the soldiers' fault," he said. "There is so much support for them out there and we are seeing a lot more help."

"However there are also a lot more people needing our help."

There has been a 40 per cent increase in cases due to the economy and people finding it hard to keep up with their finances. We will help in whatever way we can – they just need to ask."

For the Youngs, the support of the ABF and other military agencies has been invaluable in helping make life much more comfortable.

"We get a lot of support," said Julie. "It is fantastic to see the way our children can now communicate with us. It was Khaïton's fourth birthday in May and he blew out the candles on his cake for the first time ever. It can be hard to have children with difficulties but their smallest achievements are our greatest rewards." ■

Brighter future: Financial help from charities including the Army Benevolent Fund and support from Army Welfare Services have helped to transform the lives of Sgt Paul Young's (RA) family, including 17-month-old Kage-Dean (right), who suffers from dystonic cerebral palsy



Family fortunes

Charities' welfare windfall helps Army's children in need





1 Homecoming

WHAT else could have been at number one? The feeling of happiness when your soldier comes home from tour cannot be surpassed. Counting down the sleeps until they're home is murder, especially when the flights are delayed or dates are changed at short notice. Then there's the frustration of knowing they're on the way but they've got to go into barracks first to sort out their admin. But eventually it arrives; you've had a haircut, your make-up is perfect, your clothes have been planned for weeks and the diet worked a treat – everything is ready. They knock on the door or step off the coach and let's face it – none of that matters. All that counts is that they're home, they're safe and they're back with you.

2 Community

THE housing may leave something to be desired but an Army patch is still a fabulous community in which to live and bring up children. There are very few areas that you could move to in civvy street where you can rely on the offer of a brew, help with baby-sitting or any one of a million other daily tasks that demand attention as soon as you get the keys to your house. What's more, the help Army families can give to each other comes with that all important understanding; someone else who knows what it's like to be holding fort at home while your soldier's deployed, or how it feels to miss the patch and friends you've just left, your family and even that job that you really enjoyed but had to give up.

3 Travel

WE all know – or know of – the lucky people who have had "those" postings; the spells following the other half to sunshine destinations that are guaranteed to draw envious glances from friends and family on civvy street. America, Canada, Australia, Belize, Brunei, Naples, Lisbon – the opportunities to experience life in some truly exciting places are there and they are enticing, but why does that perfect placement never happen to us? When the postings dart is being thrown at the locations dartboard, the only places it ever seems to land are the rather uninspiring Salisbury Plain or Catterick! Still, hope springs eternal and there is always the chance that next time the dream will actually come true.

7 Spring cleaning

OK, so you might think I'm taking the proverbial with this one, but it's my experience that the chance to have a good clear out is really quite therapeutic. How many people do you know who are constantly bemoaning the amount of junk they've accumulated over the years? From old bottles of mustard at the back of the fridge to the contents of mouldy cardboard boxes lurking in the garage, few stones are left unturned when it comes to packing up at the old and unpacking at the new. Admittedly it would be nice if you could keep your freezer frozen every move, as peas with every meal in the weeks leading up to a move does get a bit tiresome.

8 Job security

AN enduring positive of Army life, regardless of the current perilous state of the global economy, is the job security of a military career. How many people do you know on civvy street who are worried about their jobs, their mortgages and their future? And while other employers are closing down their pension schemes, the Army's not only remains open – it is also kept well-funded. There is no denying that Army life presents a set of challenges, but in these economically dark times it also has its benefits. >>

Author

JULIE McCarthy signed up for life as an Army wife in 1994 when she married Lee, who is in the REME. Currently based in Arborfield, near Reading, with their three boys, the couple have had to move to no less than nine houses and four schools. The family have also had to cope with a spattering of operational tours and a grand total of zero exotic postings. Julie is chief executive of the Army Families Federation and is enjoying the experience of Lee being 'husband of'.



RANKED

THE BEST BITS OF BEING AN ARMY BRIDE



4 Friends

THE Services prove the theory that we are only ever six steps removed from each other, but in the Army it feels more like only two steps. How many times have you arrived at a new posting to find out your next-door neighbours' posting-before-last was with your buddy who you've just left behind in Tidworth? Moving every couple of years gives us the chance to meet new people and along the way we make some really great friends. We have a particularly healthy attitude to friendships too – great friends for the posting, move on, try and keep in touch but life has a habit of getting in the way. Ten years later you're posted together again and it's like you've never been apart!

5 Children

HEARING my children speak with unabashed pride about their daddy's career in the Army is a truly wonderful thing. It's undeniable that they miss him when he's away, but that is tempered by the fact that they know he's doing something very important which can ultimately play a part in saving peoples' lives, or "rescuing people from the bad men" as my four-year-old puts it. Moving around the country has helped to provide my children with a wider view of society and the world, they've met lots of friends and are very sociable. Four schools by year four isn't funny, but they adapt, they learn and they make me very proud.

6 Social life

IF nothing else, the Army knows how to party! I know I can't speak for everyone, but there's a lot of fun in heading out for an Army do. Good food, the chance for a tippie (or ten) and usually a disco. What more could a girl want? Of course we could do without the restrictions on when we are allowed to go to the bathroom and the trauma of seeing someone else in the same dress, but we can't have everything. On a more serious note, Army functions provide entertainment you would be unlikely to experience elsewhere.



9 Men in uniform

OK, so it might be a bit risqué, but as far as I am concerned this is still a perfectly valid point. Even if you don't consciously "go" for men in uniform, there's certainly no harm in enjoying the perks of seeing your other half looking smart in his blues or mess dress! And who can honestly say that they do not feel a swell of pride when Remembrance Day comes around and they see the effort that their partner puts into making sure that his Service dress is perfect? The process might take a bit of time, but the immaculately-turned out soldier who comes out at the other end makes it all worthwhile. Move over firemen, the boys in green are coming.

10 Absence

MAYBE it's because we love the homecoming so much or maybe we get used to time on our own, but every Army wife I know agrees that while we love our men dearly, there is a time when we think "isn't it time for you to go away again?". Not for the six-month tours, but for a month or so on exercise – just enough to clean the house, have a night out with the girls and then really enjoy having them home again.



Last month

TELIC 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

March's *Ranked*

GREATEST BATTLEFIELD BREAKTHROUGHS

1. Penicillin
2. Chain mail
3. The rifle
4. Gore-Tex
5. Bowman
6. Bailey bridge
7. T34
8. Polygonal fortress
9. Barbed wire
10. Gaming

I WOULD rank venues as one of the best things about getting married in the Forces. I was married at Sandhurst (below) in 2004 and have subsequently attended receptions at Minley Manor and Larkhill. These locations provide awesome settings for celebrations and offer wedding photographs at a very reasonable price. Our civilian guests are often in awe of the history and traditions associated with our messes. I would thoroughly recommend using our finer establishments as a lavish backdrop to an extraordinary day. – *Capt James Mato Richards.*



● Next month in *Ranked*, we examine the best jobs for the girls. Email suggestions to styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk ■



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Playing the part: A Kenyan man takes on the role of an Afghan villager as 11 Light Brigade tackle Exercise Grand Prix in preparation for Op Herrick

DOUBLE VISION

With Op Herrick deployments coming thick and fast, *Soldier* takes a closer look at the austere African training areas becoming the ideal proving grounds for troops heading to the not-so-unique terrain of southern Afghanistan

Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Mike Weston

AS the sun reaches its height in the turquoise Kenyan sky, the soldiers of Queen's Company, 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards scan the hillside with practised eyes.

The camp atmosphere is jovial and chatter echoes around the dusty enclave, but the men know that peace at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Balaclava is rare.

Built just a few hundred yards away from a village full of suspicious residents, another day of difficulties lies ahead as Exercise Grand Prix 6 aims to test these soldiers to their limit before their Afghan deployment in the autumn.

Queen's Company – whose 2007 Herrick tour was made famous by BBC documentary *Taking on the Taliban* – will return to Afghanistan with 11 Light Brigade

in October and, as part of Grand Prix, they have taken on some of their most crucial training to date.

Kenya provides rich terrain for soldiers to hone their skills in a hot, dusty climate with conditions similar to those of current operational theatres. But this time the exercise aims not only to concentrate on weaponry and firepower, but also on building relations with the native people. Words, as well as guns and muscle, now form the arsenal needed to knock out the Taliban for good.

To give the soldiers a taste of the type of tactics they will have to adopt, five villages have been built to house thousands of Kenyans who have been employed as extras for the duration of the exercise.

In the simmering daytime heat the locals go about their business, but the dark underbelly of insurgency runs deep. As such, part of their brief is to cause trouble

for the British FOBs and to regard the occupying military forces with more than a hint of suspicion.

"This patrol base is coordinated like it would be in Afghanistan," explained Cpl Martin Moore (Gren Gds), stationed at FOB Balaclava. "It gets us used to setting up a base in close proximity to local villages.

"This is definitely the best place we've trained in to get us ready for Afghanistan. In fact in some ways it is tougher here than it is there. Here you get attacked by everything – the locals, the wildlife and the insects – it's never-ending.

"Training on Salisbury Plain, for example, is good but you never get the feeling that you are really in Afghanistan. Here you can just about believe it."

With a company strength of around 130, including medics, infantrymen, sappers and red caps, the battlegroup conducts regular patrols, holds shuras with village elders to establish working relations and reacts to large scale incidents such as simulated helicopter crashes.

Each cap badge is crucial to the battlegroup mix – the next time all these soldiers meet will be in Afghanistan as

OP CHARM OFFENSIVE

11 Light Brigade ramp up their efforts to win hearts and minds as Helmand beckons

part of 11 Lt Bde for Op Herrick 11.

Sgt Martin Hughes (RA) heads up part of the battlegroup's fire support team and said the training had been second to none.

"It's a really good opportunity for us to attach ourselves to the Grenadier Guards so we get to know the people we will be working with out in Afghanistan," he said.

"When we were told we were coming here we weren't sure what we would get out of it but now we can see it was a chance to see where we fit in.

"There are a few of our guys who weren't able to come out and do this which is a shame because it's important for us to see how the different parts work.

"Before we came down to the FOB we were in Archer's Post where we were live firing mortars. We also spent two to three days conducting infantry attacks, which are about six hours each and really hard going. The whole combination of training we're getting out here is really gearing us up for the tour."

For their part, the Kenyans have been ramping up their

role as a native village – and one that is particularly wary of the intruders seemingly taking over their lands.

When holding shuras with battlegroup commanders, the "elders" argue for hours about the rights of their people and direct their hostility towards the soldiers who have to choose their reactions very carefully.

Riots and violence are also thoroughly orchestrated, with each village entrusted to a British soldier to organise and coordinate their response to the foreign fighters.

WO2 Terry Coakley (4 Log Sp Regt RLC) is

the manager of Kabaka village near FOB Balaclava and is responsible for making life in Kenya distinctly uncomfortable for the Guards.

"I manage the civilian reaction to the serials we have here," he explained. "I live with them in a hut for the entire duration of Grand Prix and they have really taken to me. They like to work and are grateful for the opportunity of employment.

"They built and painted the village themselves to make it look as realistic as possible and they work hard to understand

what we are asking them to do.

"It makes it much more realistic for the lads than if we use other British soldiers as the enemy – they have to deal with a whole different culture and way of living. They really have to build bridges here. It's testing for them to have to go completely out of their comfort zone." ■

‘THE WHOLE COMBINATION OF TRAINING WE’RE GETTING OUT HERE IS REALLY GEARING US UP FOR THE TOUR’

War and peace: 11 Lt Bde practise their crowd control amid daily attacks from rioting Kenyans



Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Mike Weston

IT WAS Napoleon who first acknowledged the importance of refuelling troops for battle by stating that “an army marches on its stomach”.

Striking a chord with logistic regiments across the UK, the famous quote marks a recognition of the work done behind the scenes to get a soldier ready for ops.

It may not be the sexy side of combat, but without the refuelling of vehicles, the supply of food, water and ammunition and the maintenance of vehicles, the fight could never truly be won.

So for the first time, 10 Transport Regiment, The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment, part of 101 Logistic Brigade, have been working alongside the battlegroup they will be supporting when they leave for the dust of Afghanistan in October.

Under Exercise Grand Prix Viper 2 the loggies were based at Sosian – a wide-open sprawl of wilderness in western Kenya – and almost three hours drive away from the Grenadier Guards they were working to support.

“This is fantastic training,” said Brig Angus Fay, commander 101

Log Bde. “In fact I would say it's the best training we have had in a long time as the battlegroup we are working with here is the one we will support in the future.

“It is the first time ever that we have done this and coordinated our efforts to provide sophisticated services. This is about as close as we get to the real thing – we can take what we are learning here forward and continue to build on it. It is excellent experience for the soldiers.”

Crucial to their deployment as part of 11 Light Brigade on Op Herrick 11, the exercise demonstrated a real-time situation where the convoys were under constant threat from insurgent attacks as they made their way to resupply the Guards' battlegroup.

Before leaving on their precarious journey, the Gurkhas briefed their commanders using maps drawn in the dirt to show potential threats and demonstrate their protective tactics.

The distances covered to reach the battlegroup were representative of those they will face in southern Afghanistan, forcing the loggies to plan ahead in terms of quantity of supply as constant convoys will not always be possible

The sheer distance and off-road nature of driving is also a training opportunity unique to the Army in Kenya – there is nowhere in the UK that provides the terrain needed for this type of activity.

Capt Giles Sugden, adjutant of 10



LONG WAY DOWN

**Kenyan wilderness provides rich training
for loggies' inaugural exercise to support
teeth arm battlegroup**

QOGLR, said the exercise gave the loggies a deeper insight into how they fit in to the wider picture once on deployment.

"There is no training area in the UK that would facilitate this type of driving training," he explained.

"This is the first time the logistic regiment has been out here on this serial in Kenya. We have never operated as a regiment in support of a battlegroup or brigade before. We have learnt to integrate and support a brigade and they have learnt the same with us. You couldn't ask for a better training opportunity."

To increase the authenticity of the exercise, the loggies shipped out their entire fleet of vehicles – around 90 in total, including Oshkosh water and fuel tankers and Drops

vehicles. After arriving at the port of Mombasa these were driven to Sosian in a mammoth four-day convoy over narrow rocky tracks and rough terrain.

"There is a training element to us bringing all our vehicles over," explained Capt Sugden. "This helps the soldiers to learn all the way through the exercise. They will experience exactly what it feels like to be in the heat and dust with heavy logistic support vehicles."

"For example, visibility is limited because of the dust clouds and the terrain is tough on the vehicles –

they may experience problems that need to be fixed. This is all increasing the soldiers' awareness for deployment to Helmand province."

When the regiment leaves for its tour of Afghanistan it will often be a long and perilous path they must travel on their mission to refuel those on the front line, forcing them to beef up in all areas of combat to protect their cargo.

To ensure they are at the top of their game, the exercise also

allowed the Gurkhas to sharpen their general soldiering skills with time on the firing range, looking at equipment care, communications and first aid.

"This is what the soldiers here join the Army to do," added Capt Sugden. "They have really risen to the challenge. They love coming out here and taking part in this exercise – they have been really enthusiastic as it shows them the way forward."

"Obviously we're hoping we can do this again but we'll see what happens in the future. For the type of soldiering we will be expected to do I think this has been an essential part of our training." ■

Supply and demand: Oshkosh tankers and support troops from 10 QOGLR test their logistic and military skills during Ex Grand Prix Viper 2

'THIS IS ABOUT AS CLOSE AS WE GET TO THE REAL THING – WE CAN TAKE WHAT WE ARE LEARNING HERE FORWARD AND CONTINUE TO BUILD ON IT'



Leading lights



Report: Heidi Mines

Picture: Steve Dock

LURKING in the grassy undergrowth, soldiers waited for the cover of darkness before beginning their attack.

As a cool evening turned slowly to night, a stream of green lights meandered one-by-one in the direction of the high ground that loomed ahead.

The glow sticks attached to the soldiers' helmets were the only clue that British troops were creeping towards their enemy.

Suddenly the procession halted and the silence was punctuated by a flurry of whispers passed down the chain of waiting warriors. Soon the lights were extinguished and their carriers dropped to the ground in total darkness.

After receiving the go-ahead to press on, the soldiers continued to their final destination, where a cacophony of firing weapons filled the air with an intensity to match even the noisiest Guy Fawkes' night.

With the darkness pierced by muzzle flashes and sky-bound flares, the camouflaged faces of the soldiers became visible for the first time and the looks of determination on the young men showed they meant business.

Fighting side-by-side in the South African outback, the mixture of gunners, infantrymen, cavalrymen, engineers and

Gurkhas were on exercise to prepare for a future deployment to Afghanistan as part of 11 Light Brigade.

The troops, who were hand-picked following a selection course that firmly separated the men from the boys, were brought together to form the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF).

Operating in the far reaches of Afghanistan's badlands, the BRF will take on the key responsibility of gathering surveillance and intelligence for the brigade commander later in the year.

"We looked for aptitude, enthusiasm and professionalism," Maj Gordon Clifford (HCR), BRF Squadron Leader, told *Soldier*.

"We will be expected to be the brigade commander's eyes and ears rather than operate through the main battlegroup, which may bring numerous and challenging tasks our way.

"We can be asked to assess the atmospherics of areas that haven't been operated in by coalition forces previously."

The night-time assault witnessed by *Soldier* represented the initial phase of training on Exercise Kalahari Thorn, which took place in Northern Cape, South Africa.

Despite the slick skills and drills demonstrated by the group of around 100 soldiers, this was the first time they had been brought together since their rigorous selection process.

The combat training ground, set in the mining area of Lohatlha, provided 140 hectares of terrain for live firing.

Under the watchful eye of British Army instructors, the soldiers were put through a sequence of demanding serials devised to bring everyone to a common standard.

The rusty red stains imprinted on the

soldiers' desert uniforms by the native soil and seemingly never-ending rain were testament to the fact that their time in South Africa was anything but easy.

Being pushed to the limits in all conditions is essential practise for the reconnaissance force, as the highly-skilled asset traditionally launches long-range patrols away from the relative safety and protection of the forward operating bases in and around Helmand province.

And the training took on added relevance as Lohatlha's terrain, lined with mountains and abundant high ground, provided a landscape similar to that of Afghanistan.

"Recent operations have shown that one BRF patrol was deployed in the field for more than four months and we have to be

prepared to do that," explained Maj Clifford. "The training ground here gives us an out of area context. It provides all of us with an opportunity to exercise in unfamiliar terrain and that is going to be very beneficial."

Stood-up solely for their forthcoming deployment to Afghanistan, 11 Light Brigade will bring a wealth of experience to theatre as some of its soldiers have served on the front line as recently as last year.

When it came to selecting the best to deploy on lengthy and hazardous missions for the BRF, there was an experienced pool to choose from.

The elite group honing their skills in South Africa could face months alone in the desert relying on airdrops and their job will undoubtedly be dangerous.

But this small team of highly-trained individuals are fully-focused on becoming an integral part of the British Army's efforts in Afghanistan and are looking forward to proving themselves as the cream of the crop of 11 Light Brigade. ■

"It provides us with an opportunity to exercise in unfamiliar terrain"

Brigade specialists rehearse Afghan mission in Africa's grasslands



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Home from home

Specialist soldiers help build Herrick community spirit

Interviews: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Steve Dock

WITH the odd exception, soldiers signing up to serve with 11 Light Brigade's Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) often find themselves way ahead of the operational front line.

The eyes and ears of the brigade are trained to deploy to remote locations in the field for months at a time, relying on airdrops for essential resupplies.

As a self-contained unit which leaves the security of its camp for extended periods, the band of brothers' small community is perfectly-equipped to ensure its members can rely on each other.

And whether the BRF will need a prescription of painkillers from the pharmacy or its own bomb disposal expert to extract soldiers from a minefield, the group will have expert help close at hand.

LCoH Ben Scollick (HCR), Regimental Combat Medical Technician

AS and when the BRF are required to mount long desert patrols, I will go with them. I will be the only combat medic on the ground within a small team so it is important that I get to know everyone and what their personal ailments are.

The most common complaints I'm likely to deal with will be aches and pains



and, for the time of year, cold weather injuries. I am also trained in primary health care so I will be able to prescribe basic medicines.

But my biggest concern will obviously be trauma from IED or mine-strikes, which have been a cause of injury for past BRF teams.

I know that it will be my responsibility to tend to any casualties until a medical emergency response team is able to get out to us, but I am definitely looking forward to the challenge.

I am well aware that I will also be at risk while treating casualties in battle, but at the end of the day the people who could get injured will be my mates and there is no question that I will be doing my utmost to help them.

Cpl Jodie Pickard (RLC attached to 2 Yorks), Chef

I WILL go out to Afghanistan later this year and I expect to be working from the forward operating bases and cooking for the BRF guys whenever they come back from an operation or stay in camp.

It's important to get to know the guys and what food they like, as I know that good scoff can equal high morale.

Last year, I was asked to take on a challenge with another chef to make a meal for 20 civilians from two boxes of ration packs. The twist was that we were on a ferry sailing across the River Mersey in Liverpool. We made shepherd's pie and apple crumble so it is possible to be really creative and I owe it to the lads to make an effort.

My challenge in theatre will be to make great meals, so I have found being on exercise really beneficial as I can get to know the BRF team and what food they enjoy.

I might come under threat but that is part of my job as I am a soldier first.



LSgt Glynn Bellman (Coldm Gds), Forward Air Controller

THE BRF's Forward Air Controller (FAC) coordinates the fast-air and rotary wing – attack helicopters, calling in the strike assets when needed.

My job will either be back at the base with the fire support team calling in what is needed there and then, or, if the situation dictates, I will push forward with the troops on the ground so I can get eyes on the target and strike from there.

I will have a demanding role, as I will be one of two FACs with the reconnaissance team so I have to be prepared to move and work across the BRF. I deployed to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 7 but just two months into the tour I was seriously injured in an explosion which killed the top gunner of the vehicle I was in and left me with a broken back, leg and ankle. I had compression injuries similar to those of someone who has ejected from a jet.

It was no one's fault – there will always be casualties and it was just my turn that day.

Sgt Stuart Kerray (RE), Combat Engineer

BEING part of a small team of engineers working alongside the BRF, my role will be to clear mines, look for IEDs, search buildings and provide combat support.

I'm already a combat engineer and part of the fighting team but if we are needed to clear ordnance then we can move to that role and be at the front deploying on long range patrols.

The biggest threat I'm expecting will be IEDs. There could be a huge responsibility on the shoulders of the engineer, who will be mostly working alone rather than in a team.

I am trained to do this – it's a hairy job but someone has to do it. ■



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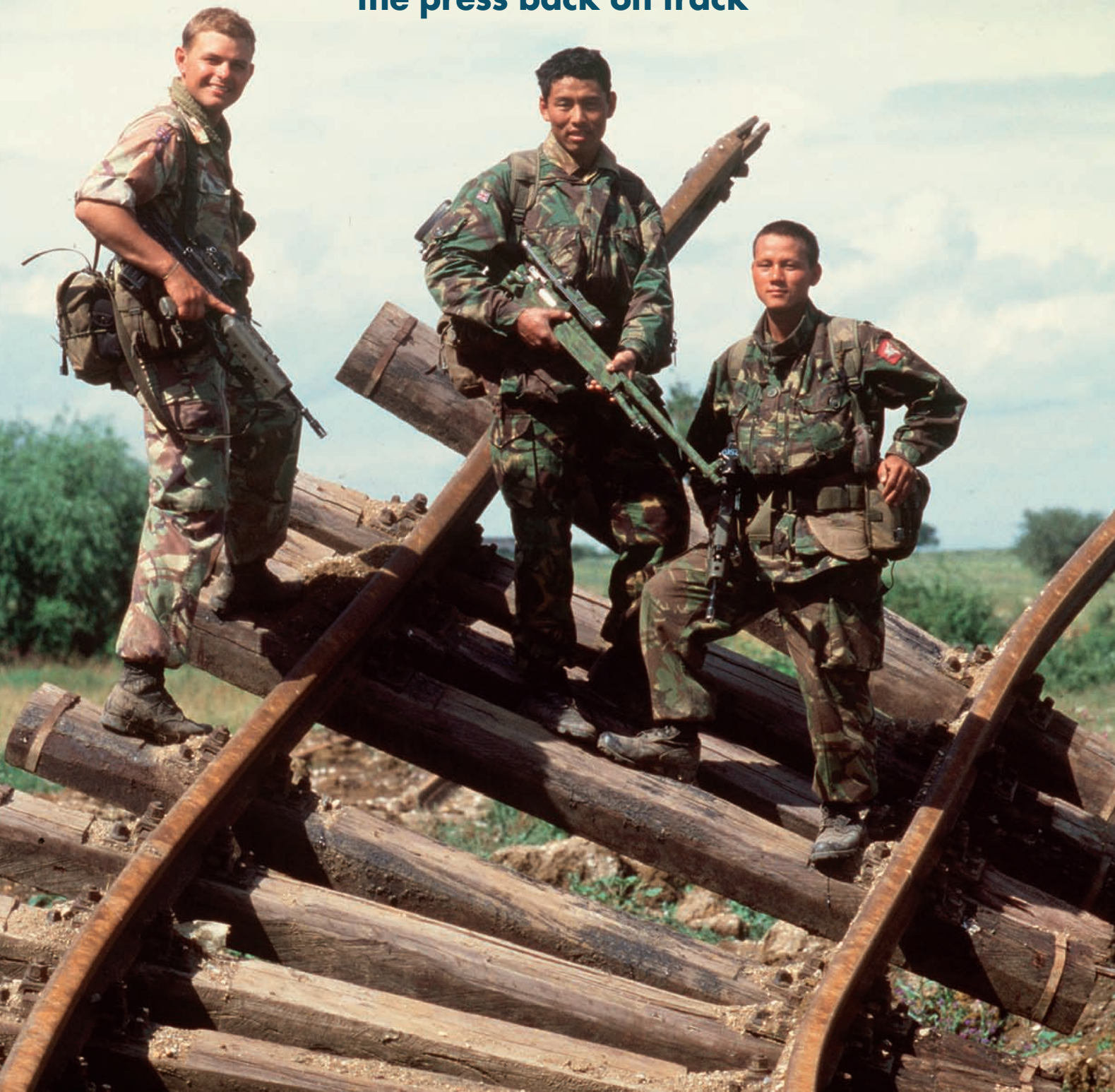
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Main line media

**How conflict in Kosovo helped
bring the Army's relationship with
the press back on track**





Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Mike Weston

It was a campaign that would come to dominate the lives of thousands of British soldiers – and a place that would become synonymous with violence and bloodshed.

A decade ago in Kosovo, the ugly sound bite “ethnic cleansing” had once again reared its head as Serbian security forces attempted to stamp out an Albanian rebellion and hold onto their southern province.

Hundreds were dying or being driven from their homes in the crisis, and the new Balkans flashpoint looked as if it had the potential to spread to neighbouring states. However, Nato’s decision to intervene remained controversial, both in the international community and among the British people.

But as the Alliance moved to carry out its first offensive action in 50 years, a radically different media ops effort was key

in delivering the message to the sceptics about why military action in a tiny former Yugoslav province was justified.

And its legacy continues to influence operations today.

Using the latest technology to bring up-to-the-minute news while delivering regular press briefings and providing information over the internet, the campaign would change the face of press liaison and create a model for actions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The coverage of the Kosovo campaign of 1999 proved to be a different prospect for the soldiers who had responsibility for dealing with the TV and newspapers. In the short time since the Gulf War, the number of channels delivering

‘In 1992 the Army had a very much hands-off approach to the media’

rolling news over satellite and cable networks had multiplied ferociously and the rapid growth of the web added a truly global dimension to the coverage.

But the issue of how to engage with journalists ran deeper than simply addressing new technology.

Col Bob Stewart, who commanded 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment in Bosnia, believed that reporters had an important part to play in operations and admitted that he was frustrated that this had not been recognised by his superiors.

“Back in 1992 the Army had a very much hands-off approach to the media, and within weeks of arriving in theatre I thought that way was wrong – reporters were part of the solution because they gave us the opportunity to explain what we were doing.

“Kosovo, however, was much different to those early days in Bosnia, and since then the MoD has realised media ops is very much part of mainstream ops – you only have to look at *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*





to see how it has all changed.”

Journalists were certainly kept far better engaged in the Kosovo campaign than in any previous action. During the air conflict and peacekeeping operations, a press liaison team led by Nato spokesman Jamie Shea ensured there were regular updates, with the team leader winning acclaim for his very open and informal style.

The Alliance’s military media ops teams had been squaring up to the challenges of the Balkans campaign for some time. On exercise they found themselves with the task of assisting mock journalists and the concept of simulated press – or simpress

– is now embedded as a vital serial in manoeuvres today.

Retired officer Col Stuart Green, who headed up press operations in both British Forces Germany and at Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in Northwood during the later stages of his career, believed Kosovo heralded a new era of communication. “I remember visiting Pristina after our soldiers had arrived and realising how, in a short three or four years, we had moved from effectively being reactive to the media to realising that we needed to engage it,” he recalled. “In many ways we had gone from standing still to racing ahead at 60mph.

“Previously there had been a system under which any journalists that wanted information went to the MoD press office in London and there was never any contact with them at PJHQ. These days we are even

helping to get them out to theatre.”

The military’s relationship with the media has continued to evolve to embrace new ideas and technologies, with initiatives such as blogging and the use of YouTube among the latest means of engaging journalists and the wider public about the Army’s work. The UK’s involvement in Kosovo may have drawn to a close, but the influence of the campaign is far reaching.

“I think that Jamie Shea brought the importance of media operations to the fore back in 1999,” said Maj Paul Smyth, who worked in a press liaison role for 2nd Battalion, The Rifles during the last major British deployment to the Balkans last year.

“But things have continued to change a lot since then – ten years ago there was no Twitter or blogging but we have learned a great deal and we are constantly evolving to tell the British public and the wider world what the Army is doing.” ■

MEDIA MOGUL

Ten years on, Nato stalwart Jamie Shea reflects on the legacy of the last Balkans op

Interview: Cliff Caswell

AS NATO embarked on its first offensive mission in nearly 50 years of history, the man responsible for announcing the action was propelled onto the front line.

Spokesman Jamie Shea found himself in the glare of the media spotlight as alliance aircraft began a series of attacks to stop Serbia's campaign against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. But from the outset he realised it would not be an easy task – the military intervention had divided world opinion and he knew it fell to him to defend Operation Allied Force against the ranks of dissenting voices.

"The 78-day conflict phase of the Kosovo mission was intense and there were times when we were not as well prepared as we should have been," Shea, 55, a modern languages graduate from Oxford's Lincoln College admitted. "We did not always have the information we needed to convince the press.

"However, all of us started to get a great deal more professional towards the end of the air operations and managed to get our senior military officers to be much more forthcoming – we were like a football team delivering our best in the 91st minute."

The learning curve might have proved steep but Shea had become something of a household name as the air campaign drew to a close. His personality in front of the cameras – defined by his calm demeanour and trademark east London accent – would also provide the template for the proactive style of media ops deployed today.

A decade after the beginning of the Kosovo mission, however, and with Nato now involved in Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Shea is philosophical about the wider legacy of the Balkans conflict. While the action halted Serbian aggression and forced the extradition of leader Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes, he was saddened that the underlying problems were still unresolved.

Around 16,000 multinational troops remain in the tiny state, violence continues to flare sporadically between resident Serbs and Albanians and Kosovo's declaration of independence last year was shunned by large swathes of the international community.

"A decade ago I failed to realise what a long-term slog the campaign would turn out to be," admitted Shea, who is now Nato's director of policy planning based in Belgium. "When the conflict was over, there was a sense that the problems would be sorted out.

"But now we are heading towards the 10th anniversary of our intervention and Kosovo has declared an independence that not everybody recognises, the unemployment situation is still quite bad and it looks like soldiers are going to be there for some time yet."

Shea was adamant, however, that a key lesson of Kosovo was that there were no "quick fixes" to complex modern conflicts. Military force alone was not a solution and long-

term co-operation with civilian agencies was vital to success.

This reality had been confirmed during the most recent stages of the mission in southern Afghanistan, where reconstruction efforts had been slow to get off the ground and were constantly hampered by the ever-present spectre of terrorist attacks.

"One of the problems that we have in current campaigns is that the fighting phases are getting shorter and shorter and the peace implementation parts are much longer," he said.

"We also have situations now, as we have seen with the Taliban fighters, where the violence stops for a time and then comes back again at some point.

"In the days of Bosnia and Kosovo we

were not losing soldiers because of hostile action. But with Afghanistan, more than 1,000 troops have been lost and people have had to get on with reconstruction work while also having to be ready to drop back into combat mode when needed. This has put a great strain on our forces."

Shea also believed the rebuilding efforts in the most recent campaign had been further compounded because organisations such as aid agencies were heavily

committed in other areas of the world, such as Somalia and the Congo.

"If you look back to the 1990s, reconstruction in the Balkans was a priority for everyone but this has not been the case with Afghanistan," he asserted.

"We have had to compete for resources in a way that has not happened before."

Despite the scale of the challenges ahead, however, Shea said he was still a staunch believer in Nato and was convinced that the alliance was working for the greater good.

"After the Kosovo air campaign was over I did have some offers from civilian companies to go and do their public relations for them, but I wasn't interested," he said. "I had always enjoyed my life where I was, and that hasn't changed even though I am constantly dealing with topics that are not easy.

"I think it is fair to say today that every time Nato takes on an operation, it is effectively putting its credibility on the line," Shea concluded. "The alliance can provide a real opportunity to change things and to affect outcomes and processes for the better.

"But looking back on what happened in Kosovo you realise that building peace does take time – as much as the initial campaigns may be a success, the real problems come afterwards. And the use of force only gives you the chance to solve them." ■

On the front line: Jamie Shea briefs the press at the height of the Kosovo campaign *Picture: Nato archive*



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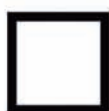
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HANDS ON SURVIVAL

CHECK FOR LUMPS



Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Sgt Chris Halton RLC

WHEN experienced NCO Andy McNab returned to the UK after being held as a prisoner of war during the 1991 Gulf conflict, he was acutely aware that he had undergone a major change.

Having been incarcerated in Abu Graib jail in Baghdad and subjected to horrific torture after a mission behind enemy lines was compromised, the soldier quickly realised that life would never be the same again.

But soon after arriving home, he was invited to visit a psychologist which, he maintains, helped him come to terms with his wartime experiences and banished any problems that could have emerged later in life.

"I'd never heard about that type of treatment," McNab told *Soldier*.

"The guy that I was talking to had also helped people affected by the Lockerbie bombing and made me realise that I was experiencing a normal reaction to an abnormal situation."

Nearly two decades after the former NCO's return from Iraq, there is now a keener appreciation of mental health issues within the MoD and NHS.

A mental welfare pilot study, launched by the MoD and the Department of Health, led to the creation of five specialist clinics around the UK to determine whether there is a need for this scheme.

The Veterans' Mental Health Pilot Studies were created to make sure NHS professionals have the knowledge to treat former troops with mental health issues.

The initiative – which is backed by Service charity Combat Stress – allows veterans and their families to get help at an outlet convenient to the patient.

A community veterans' mental health therapist who understands the pressures experienced by troops is responsible for each facility.

Dr Graham Fawcett, who heads up the service at the scheme's London centre, said: "The therapies we provide have proven success rates and we want to continue to work with the charities that are out there to help ex-Forces personnel get better."

A further scheme – Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) – trains senior soldiers to support colleagues and spot any potential issues early on. Anyone likely to require further help can be signposted to the medical chain.

Maj Skid Dorney (Gren Gds), who leads the TRiM Training Cell based at the Army Medical Directorate in Camberley, said more than 1,500 personnel were now qualified as TRiM practitioners.

A new TRiM co-ordinators course, designed for those overseeing the initiative on operations, has been introduced with

the aim of further bolstering good practice in the field.

Maj Dorney added: "We are running courses at the rate of around three a week, with two in the UK and one in Germany. We have trained troops from 20th Armoured Brigade in Iraq and 19 Light Brigade deployed in Afghanistan. Courses have also been run in Cyprus, Kuwait and Gibraltar.

"Officers and NCOs are very enthusiastic about what we are doing, particularly as the troops serving on the ground like TRiM and it is well supported within the chain of command."

Maj Dorney stressed that the initiative did not involve medical treatment or counselling. "The

people who do the interviewing just need to be good communicators, good listeners and have credibility with their peers," he said.

With plenty going on in the battle to keep soldiers and veterans mentally fit, personnel are now better supported in their psychological well being than at any time in the past.

As doctors and health professionals continue to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding the stresses of the battlefield, the backing can only improve in future. In the words of Andy McNab: "Mental health issues affect everybody, either directly or indirectly – I want to encourage people to come forward and talk." ■

● For veterans mental health enquiries see www.veterans-uk.info

To contact the TRiM training cell
email: MoD.camberley@btconnect.com

IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Mental health schemes help soldiers look out for each other

Flash point: British troops are being trained to spot the early signs of stress and help colleagues deal with the sights, sounds and experiences they encounter on operations

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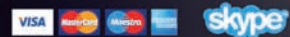
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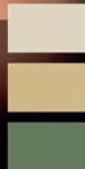
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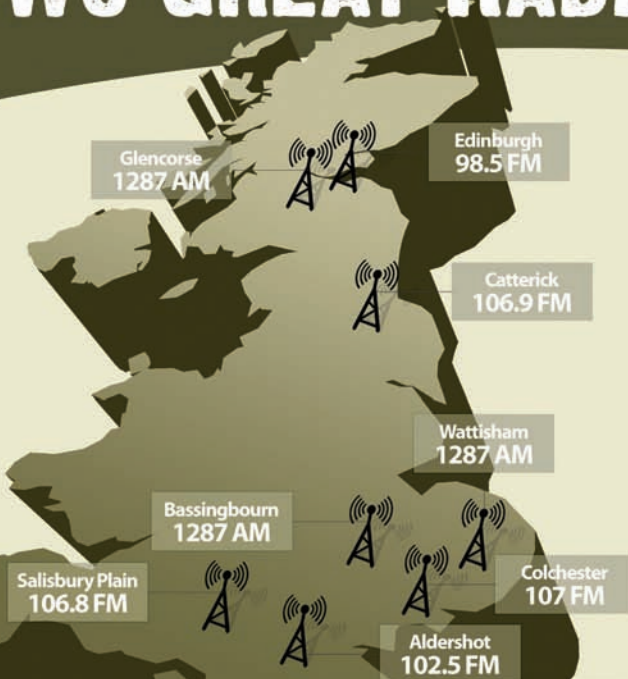
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ONE MESSAGE

The lost boys

**Veterans return to remember
the dead on the Italian
battlefields of their youth**

Remains of the day: British soldiers
march with the burnt out ruins of
Monte Cassino in the background



Report: Heidi Mines
Pictures: Mike Weston

ON a jagged mountain overlooking the Italian town of Cassino is an impressive monastery which dominates the vista for miles. But in the shadows of its breathtaking presence lie hundreds upon hundreds of graves.

Buried beneath the spectacular scenery are the remains of the Allied soldiers who died during the Monte Cassino battles of 1944, where the fighting was appalling enough to draw comparisons to the horrors of the Western Front in the Great War.

Overshadowed by D-Day, Monte Cassino has become known as the forgotten fight of the Second World War.

But the campaign's surviving veterans will never forget and that is why they made an emotional return to the town, which lies 75 miles from Rome, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the battle last month.

"There was no question that we wouldn't go back," said Robert Stevens, a former driver attached to the Royal Corps of Signals who was sent to Italy and experienced some horrendous fighting while serving with the British

8th Army at Monte Cassino.

"It was hell. We were so scared. Anyone who says they didn't feel terrified is lying."

Monte Cassino lay in an area that Hitler saw as strategically important. The dictator was determined to contest every inch of ground in the region and ordered the construction of a defensive line about 100 miles south of Rome.

The Gustav Line was set up on terrain that was ideal for defending forces due to the abundance of high ground that lined Route Six, the major road from Naples to Rome.

From the monastery, the German enemy could see for miles, an advantage that led to Allied soldiers dying in their droves as they attempted to clear the route to the Mediterranean country's capital.

Many of the veterans who spoke to *Soldier* told of the tense waiting game of lying in trenches and of never daring to move in the daylight.

The constant bombardment of ammunition aimed at the soldiers left many shaking so violently that

even lighting a cigarette was difficult, and enemy smoke shells created an unearthly haze that made it impossible for them to distinguish between night and day.

"I remember laying in a slit trench not moving and not even going to the toilet – you just had to hold it," recalled 89-year-old Robert.

"Such was the strength of the German position at the top of the mountain. The slightest movement and they would fire off rounds that would come whizzing past our heads."

But it wasn't just those on the front line who were forced to think on their feet. For Alec Brooman, overseeing the

mobile prisoner of war camps was a weighty responsibility.

Between August 17-23, 1944 his role was to transport enemy captives from the Cassino front line to an American prison in Naples either in cattle trucks or by rail.

Alec recalled going days without sleep as he was forced to make tough decisions. From allowing female

"It was hell. We were so scared. Anyone who says they didn't feel terrified is lying"

● **ALTHOUGH** Robert's memories of Monte Cassino are painful, they are mixed with the delight of finding his true love.

While he was posted near Rome after the end of the war, he and his friends gatecrashed a party where he saw what he describes as "a vision".

For a moment, the misery of the previous months disappeared as he met the eyes of his future wife.

"I was surprised when he called and said he wanted to see me," said Vera Stevens, who recently shared her 62nd wedding anniversary with Robert.

"I asked when he would like to meet up and he said 'how about now' – and then he stepped out from underneath the house. Although I had a very strict father he told me to follow my heart and he would support whoever I chose to marry. I chose Bob."

The 80-year-old added: "It was hard going back to London with him – it didn't help that it was the coldest winter ever on record in Britain and, as a result, a lot of the Italian girls went back home."

Vera also has chilling memories of Cassino and Rome, for at that time many Italian civilians lost their lives.

She said: "Although neither Bob or I could communicate very well we were united by the fact that we shared the same horrendous experiences."



Below, Then and now: Vera and Robert Stevens met among the ruins of Italy's bombed out terrain. Sixty-two years on, their love remains strong
Inset, Blushing bride: The couple's special day in 1947

Prison break: Alex Brooman, pictured right, was in charge of the mobile prisoner-of-war camps in 1943. During the journey between Cassino and Naples, not one PoW tried to escape



refugees off the trucks for a comfort stop to firing shots in the air to assert his authority over SS soldiers, his quick thinking and human approach led to the operation running without a hitch.

"I always got the feeling the Germans, who were tired and weary, were grateful for being treated humanely," said the 93-year-old from Sevenoaks, Kent.

"People always asked me if anyone tried to escape or sabotage the vehicles, but no one did – they knew that to be in our hands meant they were safe.

"I decided that a lot of private vendettas in Italy were resolved during the last stages of the war and that the underground movement really established itself – of course that is my opinion."

Alec told *Soldier* that his strangest experience came when he met a female Yugoslavian partisan who had captured German defenders during the battles.

"I was told to pick up enemy soldiers from a grid reference – we waited and then a woman jumped down in front of us with ammunition strapped to her.

"She turned out to be fighting against the Germans and as we led the prisoners away, I remember thinking what a marvellous woman. These were difficult times and you just accepted what happened."

It took four months and as many battles to conquer the area and it proved to be a long and bitter struggle that became one of the hardest of the Second World War.

The eventual fall of Rome on June 4, 1944 took a back seat to the news of the D-Day landings in Normandy and the Italian arena would later become a lesser-known story.

Winston Churchill stated at the time: "A nation that forgets its past has no future." And as Robert held the photos of his friends, some of whom never came home, he concluded: "I really hope that no one ever forgets." ■



Left, Bloody memories: William "Nobby" Clarke, served with 25th Regiment, Royal Artillery at Cassino. Recalling the destruction of the monastery by the Americans, he said: "I remember it vividly as the bombing happened 24 hours earlier than planned.

"We heard this big roar, the noise was frightening. All we could do was jump into our slit trenches and wait."

The Monte Cassino monastery has since been rebuilt.





Jackal and hide

Improved patrol vehicle on track to tear into the enemy

Report: Samantha Chapman
Pictures: Graeme Main

B RITISH soldiers will be showing the enemy their teeth when the brand new Jackal 2 paces its way to the front line in southern Afghanistan.

With a bigger engine, extra crew-seat and longer body this is a much beefier vehicle than its predecessor, and is primarily aimed at giving troops more room for their equipment.

Designed by Supacat and built by Babcock, around 110 Jackal 2s have been bought by the MoD as part of the £700 million Protected Mobility Package announced last year, and will start to be sent to Afghanistan next month.

Agile and highly mobile like their scavenger namesake they can follow the enemy across the most difficult and harshest terrain – a quality that goes down well with the soldiers who drive them.

“I think it’s a really good piece of kit,” said LCpl Chris McGuinness (5 Scots), a Jackal vehicle commander who has just returned from Helmand.

“It handles in a very similar way to Jackal 1 – in fact it’s basically the same. When

we were out in Afghanistan we did suggest some improvements but they were really minor things like extra space to carry our personal weapons.

“The Jackal is an absolutely perfect vehicle for the terrain out there and it’s great if they’ve found a way to improve on that.”

The new modifications also mean the Jackal 2 is faster – keeping on the tail of the Taliban with its 6.7 litre engine and top speed of 80mph on roads and 55mph cross-country.

Previous problems with the vehicle commander getting muzzle blast from the gunner have been rectified with the ring mount pushed further forward. Room for a stretcher has also been incorporated for casevac situations – with the side door able to be pushed back by 180 degrees to allow the wounded soldier to lie on the floor.

Programme manager Steve O’Leary of Defence Equipment and Support is responsible for implementing the modifications, which had been suggested

by drivers on operations.

“I went out there to speak to the guys and see what we could do to make Jackal better,” he said. “The point is that nobody moans about this vehicle – it has been really well received. It gives good

situational awareness because its crew can see for miles. That is a key part of its appeal.”

He said the main differences were a better Bowman system that is vehicle- rather than battery-powered, an extra body length of 14 inches,

jerrycan holders and more space in the back, an extra seat, a better air filter system to avoid breakdowns and steps at the front to make it easier to dismount.

“The Urgent Operational Requirement was to buy more Jackals and we just happened to be able to enhance it,” added O’Leary. “It ticks all the right boxes and it is right up there with the soldiers’ favourite vehicles.” ■

‘It ticks all the right boxes and it is right up there with the soldiers’ favourite vehicles’

JACKAL 2



Gunner's ring mount moved to reduce muzzle blast



Doors hinged to open up to 180 degrees to improve access and allow space for a stretcher



Jackal 2 has a 6.7 litre engine, is 14 inches longer and has a vehicle-powered Bowman communication system



Improved air filter system and a step installed to ease dismounting



Jerrycan storage and extra seat



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BLAST FROM THE PAST

Combat shotgun gives
troops the edge in Green
Zone's close quarter battles

Up close and personal: The
Benelli M4 Combat Shotgun
is being deployed to troops in
Afghanistan's Helmand province

Picture: Iain Hamer

Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Steve Dock

BRITISH soldiers at the forefront of fighting in southern Afghanistan have been given a new punch care of the latest addition to their armoury.

In a move to hit the Taliban at close range, troops are being armed with the combat shotgun to deal with enemy fighters concealing themselves in Helmand province's Green Zone.

The semi-automatic 12-gauge Benelli M4 weapon was procured and dispatched to theatre less than six months after being requested as an Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR) by 16 Air Assault Brigade during their 2008 tour.

The kit was picked after the Infantry Trials and Development Unit (ITDU) tested and evaluated several shotguns. A number of modifications were made to the chosen model, including a new grip to make firing easier while wearing Osprey body armour and a sophisticated Eotech holographic sighting system.

The weapon, which has an eight-round magazine, is also fitted with a three-position telescopic stock, and troops are also being issued with special pouches to carry the ammunition required to deliver the knockout blow to where it is needed.

Soldiers from 19 Light Brigade are the first to be armed with the combat shotgun, and early reports from the front line suggest it is already proving its worth. The lead scout with each section or patrol is now being equipped with the firearm.

"With this equipment we have given the soldiers an excellent suppression weapon that is accurate and highly reliable," said Maj Phil Nathan (Lancs), who was involved in testing the kit at ITDU. "It is very simple but extremely effective."

"The guys that have had experience of it so far have given it a very positive reception,

and there is plenty of scope to develop its use in theatre in the future.

"Although this gun has been procured as a UOR, care has also been taken to make sure that there are plenty of them available for the soldiers to train with in the UK."

While combat shotguns have been a feature of British operations in the past, the appearance of the Benelli M4 in southern Afghanistan marks the first time for many years that they have been widely deployed in a front-line role.

The weapon has its modern roots in the First World War, when American personnel employed the trench gun in fighting on the Western Front. This short-barrelled pump-action weapon, which was equipped with a bayonet, immediately terrified German troops and proved a deadly house-clearing tool.

British personnel last deployed shotguns on a large scale in the fighting of the Malayan Emergency of the

1950s where, like Afghanistan, there was close-range combat in a remote and extreme environment. Since then they have been restricted to niche roles and have only been carried by soldiers in specialist actions.

"Effectively we have come full circle in Op Herrick," said Maj Nathan. "The shotgun is needed for dismounted infantry patrols in the Green Zone where there is thick vegetation similar to that in the jungle combat we've seen before."

"It is exactly designed for these types of close range engagements, giving you plenty of coverage and stopping power – in short, you have more chance of hitting somebody with it."

"There is also plenty of growth potential in the weapon. For example, it could be used in urban environments where the

escalation of force is required, but we will only know that when it has been in theatre for some time."

Soldier was given a preview of the combat shotgun in action during a firepower demonstration on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, where its knockout potential in dealing with the close quarter threats of Helmand was clear to see.

Firearms specialists were also convinced that the appearance of the Benelli M4 would be a huge benefit to British troops facing an unconventional enemy in theatre.

Weapons expert Richard Jones, who heads up the Yorkshire-based National Firearms Centre, said the latest addition to the Army's armoury would prove useful.

He added: "In recent years there has been a need for a tactical shotgun, which is easier to handle than a rifle and more convenient for scenarios such as house clearing. In situations such as fighting in built up areas, the tactical shotgun has its place." ■

Hot shot: A soldier from 3rd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment displays the 12-gauge combat shotgun at the Land Combat Firepower Demonstration on Salisbury Plain

'The shotgun is needed for dismounted infantry patrols in the Green Zone where there is thick vegetation similar to that in the jungle combat we've seen before'

12-Gauge Benelli M4 Combat Shotgun





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Sticks and stones

... may break Cliff's bones, but the ancient sport
of shinty might just kill him







Report: Cliff Caswell

Pictures: Graeme Main

IT was a brutal age where warfare meant hacking limbs from your opponent, where crimes were punished by a slow death and where a visit to the doc meant a prescription for a course of leeches.

By all accounts, the residents of ancient Britain were never the most squeamish of people. With diseases like bubonic plague rife and surgical procedures that involved patients being opened up with a saw while still fully conscious, you could be forgiven for thinking that life was absolutely no fun at all.

But the people who lived through that violent period in the Scottish Highlands did find time for rest and recuperation by inventing a game called shinty.

Unfettered by inconveniences such as complex rules or the wagging finger of the nanny state, this escape from the brutal world around involved setting up two pairs of goalposts, arming two teams with big sticks and giving them a hard leather ball to play for. No doubt that the players back then were comforted by the fact that a surgeon was on hand to deal with any agonising injuries.

Fast forward a thousand years or so, and I'm paying for a bacon sandwich at a near-empty motorway service area en route to Howe Barracks in Canterbury for an introduction to this oldest of sports. The young woman behind the till is looking at me incredulously. In Batman style, her unlikely sportsman of a customer has just changed from civilian attire into a black *Soldier* T-shirt, shorts and red socks stuffed with shin pads. But he is more super-size me than superhero.

"Oh, I'm playing shinty today – it's similar to hockey but a bit more physical," I sheepishly

offer by way of an explanation. She casts a piteous glance at my porky frame before replying: "It sounds dangerous to me. It sounds like you could get hurt."

The bacon buttie repeats on me and the question of why I am allowing myself to play a lawless game with a group of Scottish infantrymen resonates through my head. After running away from a mock riot and being soundly beaten by a Gurkha curry it should be obvious that courting trouble never pays off.

And this latest challenge looks like it could do an amateur like me some serious damage. Modern shinty might be more refined, but it still has relatively few rules. Combining the speed of hockey with rugby's aggression and an injury potential similar to being hit with a golf club, it requires a blend of fitness, skill and supreme courage.

Played on a pitch that is around 50 per cent larger than a rugby field, the game involves teams of a dozen battling for their opponents' goal while fighting tooth and nail to protect their own. Only the keeper can handle the ball – he's allowed to palm it away – although other players can use any part of their body bar their head to block it before playing it on with their stick.

This may sound fine in principle, but when you realise that the sport's elite can smash a sphere the same size and weight as a baseball to speeds of 100mph, the prospect of using your anatomy as a human shield becomes less appealing. And with sticks flying in bone-crunching tackles, pain is a very real risk.

Shinty veteran Capt Stoddy Stoddard has arranged the Canterbury training camp to put together a Royal Regiment of Scotland team to compete in two Highland competitions – the Sutherland and Bullough Cups. The players vying for a place in the squad include two vicars, a doctor and a selection of the Infantry's finest. They take to the game quickly, with the exception of the journalist embedded in their ranks, who is distinctly unsuitable.

"Come on, you are bottling this Cliff," the Scots team boss remarks as I am clattered by two huge soldiers. An icy wind is blowing across the fields and fingers smashed by

sticks quickly turn numb. But Stoddy points out that there is no place for cowardice on the pitch – by his rationale a lack of conviction will get you hurt, and I am certainly getting hurt.

Stoddy decides enough is enough and it is time to introduce me to the finer points of ball control. He quickly discovers that my phobia of the game is growing by the second as he starts throwing me a succession of spheres to play off my chest. "Run to the ball," he orders.

For five minutes or so I deliberately dodge the incoming shots. When I finally muster the courage to bring down a ball it whacks into my sternum. It's no fun at all but these balls are coming at nothing like the speed that a stick at maximum swing could deliver.

Blocking is another terrifying aspect of shinty and challenging an opponent requires complete focus if you are to avoid injury. In short, it involves planting your stick firmly in front of the ball to stop the other side's attempt at possession before taking ownership yourself. The issue is that unless you are decisive, you are likely to suffer broken bones in your hands.

I'm ready to give up, but I throw all my remaining courage into this one remaining drill. Even played slowly against Stoddy I still felt the full force of the challenge tear through my wrists and resonate around the rest of my body.

My muddled hands are shaking with a mixture of vibration, fear and cold and I know my brush with shinty is well and truly over. I have no hope of selection here and my new aversion to men with big sticks renders me out of this demanding game.

Yet watching a match later on, it strikes me that this is the ultimate sport for the infantryman. It demands skill and teamwork that extends far beyond the field. This is about life-long friendships and entire Scottish communities revolve around their teams.

"There are only two places on earth where men are equal," remarks one of the coaches. "When they are buried in the ground and playing on the shinty field."

There is a great deal of truth in this statement. I may have been terrible, but these players have welcomed me as one of their own and for a few hours on a Saturday morning I have been part of a fraternity that stretches across the centuries. If only this was a suitable game for the risk averse. ■

‘There are only two places on earth where men are equal, when they are buried in the ground and playing on the shinty field’

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TALKBACK

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

I AM writing in response to the article on the need to modernise the Guards' ceremonial uniform in order to cut costs, "Changing the Guards" (April).

This story led me to question the requirement for Future Army Dress (FAD). Surely the introduction of newly designed barrack dress will place an unnecessary strain on the Defence budget. Barrack dress serves no purpose other than to make soldiers look smarter when not working in the field or areas such as the vehicle park or workshop.

I also remember how unpopular the old barrack dress of the 1980s and early 1990s was. Combat 95 on the other hand is practical, comfortable and popular among both officers and soldiers alike. Furthermore it presents the corporate image of soldiers to the public during this period of high operational tempo. Soldiers wearing desert combats when parading through town and city centres on returning from ops are testament to this.

How can the cost of introducing FAD into the Army be justified during the current economic climate? – Name and address supplied.

The editor writes: A decent thread of an argument – albeit based on our April Fool.



Picture: Cpl Adrian Harlen RLC

United on the battlefield, but divided on home front

THIS is the first time I've felt the need to write to *Soldier* in almost 15 years of service. But this is an issue that I, and many others I know, feel strongly about – that of rank integration within Service Families Accommodation (SFA) estates.

I have been advised that accommodation is allocated on a welfare and requirement basis, regardless of rank. In theory, this should be satisfactory. However, integration can lead to familiarity which, according to the old adage, will ultimately breed contempt and a lot of, if not all, senior soldiers feel that they have earned the right to be segregated from their subordinates.

An extreme case scenario could be that of a junior soldier being moved into SFA next to that of a superior from the same sub-unit.



PRIZE LETTER . . .

The two soldiers, and their families, could become extremely close friends outside of the workplace. On ops, the superior may have to issue an order to the junior soldier that may involve extreme danger, with far-reaching consequences for both families. Also, if disciplinary action is required to be initiated by the superior against the subordinate, there may be unnecessary reluctance for fear of either damaging their friendship or that of their wives.

Segregation exists among single soldiers, namely in the form of the mess, where senior ranks and officers are housed and dine separately.

While not wishing to sound like a dinosaur, certain values and traditions need to be maintained. The current state of affairs is alarming and will ultimately prove to be the undoing of the very fabric that makes the British Army the most professional in the world. – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Your letter makes some very interesting

and important points. You may not be aware that, apart from officers and other ranks, there has never been a laid down policy of segregating ranks within married quarter estates.

In the past, when married quarters were "owned" by each Service and, to a certain extent, units or a barracks, families officers and estate wardens generally endeavoured to do so. However since SFA became a tri-Service asset, Defence Estates (DE) must, for better or worse, make best use of the houses that it has to accommodate all our families, and it is for this reason that allocation for soldiers is driven by family size.

That this is not ideal is recognised at the highest level, but is a lesser evil than failing to house everyone. The MoD already struggles to improve the existing housing stocks and simply cannot afford to build new estates on a large scale.

The only consolation is that, in larger garrisons with more SFA, DE do still try to broadly group soldiers by rank.

Hold-up in homecoming

THREE weeks in advance of my end-of-tour (EOT) date I submitted a request to the Contingency Operating Base (COB) travel cell for transport from Basra to Brize, with a view to demobilising through Chilwell before flying to my home station in Cyprus via RAF Akrotiri.

The day before my departure date I went to collect my travel details only to be informed that the Force Movement Control Cell's (FMCC) computers were down and I would have to return the following day.

While waiting, I tried to arrange my onward transport from Chilwell and was told by movers in the UK that I was not booked on the Akrotiri flight I had requested and that the next available flight was four days later.

The following day I spoke with FMCC, who clarified that they had only received my booking from the COB travel cell ten days previously (despite my original bid being placed more than 20 days ahead of my EOT).

On arrival at Chilwell, ironically after a stop at RAF Akrotiri en route to the UK, I was informed that the Cyprus flight had been fully booked for weeks.

On the morning I'd hoped to be flying to Akrotiri I bumped into a fellow officer



returning from a battlefield tour, which I discovered was responsible for taking up the bulk of the seats on my desired flight. Now I'm unsure how onerous battlefield tours are these days, but surely an individual returning from an operational theatre should take priority.

Furthermore, spending nearly five days in a room at Gateway House with no transport is hardly the ideal way to decompress. – **Capt K Russell, AGC(RMP), Episkopi.**

Capt Robert Williams (RLC), SO3 Movement Ops, HQ Land Forces,

responds: It is clear from Capt Russell's letter that a breakdown in communications occurred between the individual, the FMCC and COB travel cell during the booking of his flights.

Personnel returning from operational theatres should receive confirmation of their flights at least three days before departure and this was certainly the case for Op Telic.

The FMCC booked the onward flight from RAF Brize Norton to RAF Akrotiri, but sadly there were no flights back to Cyprus on the same day. While every effort is made to get personnel back to their home station as quickly as possible, occasionally individuals will have to wait for connecting flights, which may result in a stay at RAF Brize Norton.

This letter highlights the continued importance of effective communication. In order for the movements community to improve its processes and provide the best support to those deploying or returning from operations, personnel are encouraged to raise issues through their chain of command.

PS...

IS there any guarantee that the recent increase in insurance premiums for British Service personnel who have taken out PAX insurance is not being used to finance the bonuses of AIG executives?

If it is proved so, I think that I will "quantitatively ease" my way out of this insurance scheme! – **A concerned officer.**

● Can we bank on our Pax policies? – Page 69

IN a reply to a letter in March's *Talkback*, "Heat rising over insulation issue", Nicki Sly of Defence Estates (DE) writes: "SFA is provided to entitled personnel under a licence to occupy. As there is no tenancy, there is therefore no landlord/tenant relationship."

If that is the case, would somebody please explain exactly what our relationship is with DE? I often hear people who own and then let out a property complaining of the obligations they must meet as landlords. These comments are often followed by observations about what would happen if they, as landlords, provided the same level of service as DE.

I, like I suspect many others, was not aware that DE was not my landlord. It begs the question, who does carry out the functions of landlord for us and what obligations do they have? – **Maj W A Evers, SO2 ES Ops, 1 (UK) Armd Div.**

Don't forget the Lynx effect



IT was recently brought to my attention that the Army is considering moving to a one-tier pay scheme. Some will consider this just and fair, but I, regrettably, have a major problem with the idea.

While I believe that everyone in the Armed Forces deserves a healthy pay rise, why should we all be paid the same when the implications of certain soldiers getting their jobs wrong far outweigh those of others?

For example, as an aircraft technician – and I know some of you reading this will now hate me – I can be solely responsible for putting a Lynx helicopter, with a potential crew of 11, in the air. How does that responsibility match up to other jobs in the Army? And to clear up a myth, no we don't receive any additional technician pay. – **Sgt I Morrison, 667 (D&T) Sqn HQ AAC.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: **You are correct, the MoD is about to look at a variety of pay structures as potential alternatives to Pay 2000 and one of the systems to be considered is a form of "single pay spine". However this term is misleading – it does not mean that all trades will be paid the same.**

The basis of our current pay structure, and a common feature of the alternatives under consideration, is Job Evaluation (JE).

JE is the scoring system which determines the job weight and subsequent pay range allocation for a trade and takes into account technical knowledge as well as the level of responsibility it holds.

All that said, the review team has not even formed up so we are a long way off any decisions, never mind changes.

PS...

MORE than 30 years ago I served with 2nd Battalion, The Light Infantry and would like to take time to say how proud I am of today's soldiers. You are doing a great job and I know it must be difficult when some at home do not understand, or oppose, the job that you are doing on behalf of the Government.

Today's Army is a far cry from the one I knew. We hear so very often that today's young men and women are not a match on the generations that went before them. This is rubbish. If anything, today's soldiers are doing far better – under greater pressure – and face daily dangers with courage and honour.

I salute every one of you. Well done lads and lasses, you are the best. – **David Speight**, Tingley, Wakefield.



"It's a 'no thank you' from me, Jenkins... I just can't abide these Bolshie types."

I'm looking for some advice on the Army's tattoo policy on behalf of my brother.

He's currently trying to join the Royal Engineers, but has been told by the local Army Careers Information Office that they will not take his application any further until he has a tattoo removed from his neck.

The current guidelines state that the tattoo or branding must not be visible with a shirt collar on. We've checked this, and with a normal shirt and tie combination and Combat 95 shirt, the tattoo is barely visible.

Should the recruiter not have taken a photo and sought advice before making a decision themselves? – **Mr C Jackson**.



Home comforts: Cpl Stu Wright (RDG) shows off his new Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (Slam) barrack room – complete with en suite – at Richmondshire Lines, Catterick Garrison following 4th Mechanized Brigade's move to the super garrison from Osnabruck, Germany in November last year

Make all our soldiers Slam-dog millionaires

WHEN in the UK, many soldiers live in accommodation that consists of a room measuring ten square feet or less, a space in which they must house all their personal possessions and Army kit. If the soldier is lucky their room may contain a sink.

For many, this accommodation represents their only place of residence and, while happy to put up with anything on tour, they are understandably fed up with these conditions on home soil. Compare a soldier's lot to the experience of some asylum seekers who, on arrival in the UK, are given a fully-furnished council flat – complete with kitchen, sitting room and bathroom.

Soldiers are British taxpayers and many of us have been for a long time. We are willing to lay down our lives for our country, so surely it is not too much to ask that we are extended the same treatment as visitors to our shores.

Give us the same standard of accommodation and we'll be happy. – **A concerned JNCO**.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: I think the comparison of your accommodation with that of an asylum seeker is unfortunate, however, I do agree that much of our accommodation is below the standard which our soldiers deserve.

Within the severe financial constraints we are under, everything possible is being done to improve it and we will be attempting to provide some extra condition improvement work to existing buildings for those not moving into Slam [Single Living Accommodation Modernisation], pictured above.

The bottom line is that we have insufficient funding to improve as much of our accommodation as we need as quickly as we would like.

'Full board? I'd rather go self-catering'

I'm writing to you in the hope that you can help me with a Pay As You Dine (PAYD) dilemma.

My camp is about eight miles from anywhere, so the only viable eating establishment is the cookhouse on site.

I don't want to eat the food provided (at an increased price and subject to strict portion control) and would much rather make my own. However, we are being told that we can not have any cooking equipment in the barrack block for fire safety reasons.

Under PAYD am I not entitled to have the option of preparing my own food? – **Name and address supplied**.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: The simple answer to your question is no – PAYD is not a system by which the Army offers you an alternative option to cook your own food.

PAYD is about providing you with a choice of food, and you paying for what

you eat in the catering facilities provided on camp. I suggest you take up the issue of the increased price and strict portion control with the chain of command and specifically the quartermaster who deals with this part of the contract.

I hope you are aware that the core menu, when taken in full, provides you with a balanced healthy diet, delivers a minimum of 3,300 calories per day and all for a daily price of £4.07.

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Can we bank on PAX policies?

WHY is nobody in the MoD advising our troops that PAX is underwritten by America Insurance Group UK Limited, part of AIG Inc?

The UK branch of this firm is being investigated by the serious fraud office for the part it played in the collapse of its American cousin, which had to be bailed out by the US Government to the tune of more than \$150 billion.

No wonder PAX is putting up its premiums! What would happen if the underwriters were declared bankrupt? Would all the tri-Service troops who have collectively invested thousands of pounds in PAX over the years suddenly become uninsured? In such an event, what would happen, god forbid, if someone were to be critically injured? No payout?

Imagine the confusion out in theatre if AIG do close their doors for business. How will individuals organise life/accident insurance from a forward operating base in Afghanistan? – **A worried soldier.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A) responds: Your letter raises two key issues; the viability of AIG and the responsibility of the MoD in advising its serving personnel about personal insurance.

It would be inappropriate to comment on the commercial concerns that you have raised in your letter. However, AIG UK have issued a statement to clarify their position: “We continue to service our



I WAS pleased to read about 3 Para's success in the Army boxing championships in the last issue. However, to spare our blushes when we meet past opponents in the future, I'd like to clarify a few points. The battalion have now won the title four times (in 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009). We didn't enter in 2006 or 2008 due to operational commitments. This year 3 Para beat 13 Air Assault Support Regt RLC 7-2 in the quarter-finals, 2 Light Support Regt RLC 9-0 in the semi-finals, and 2 Lancs 5-4 in the final. – **Capt Ian McLeish, 3 Para.**

clients, paying claims, renewing policies and issuing new policies – and we want to assure you that recent events will have no impact on the PAX Personal Accident and Optional Life insurance that has been purchased by members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

“AIG UK Limited is a UK insurance company, regulated by the FSA [Financial Services Authority] which requires it to hold sufficient funds to pay all claims made by policy holders.”

Ultimately, any decision you make regarding personal accident or life insurance is a private matter. That said, the Army recognises that it has a duty to ensure that products such as PAX are presented accurately to its soldiers.

My staff and others within MoD provide briefings to the chain of command,

focussing on those about to deploy. The value of PAX is that it offers personal accident insurance in all circumstances, whether on or off operations; such cover is difficult to obtain from other insurers. Whatever you choose to do, I urge you to both ensure that you have adequate cover and to read the small print.

You may also be interested to know that the MoD already provides compensation for injury or death caused by service through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. In addition, subject to a minimum service of two years for Regulars and one day for Reserves, a lump sum will also be paid for those still serving. Neither scheme requires any personal contribution. Your personal insurance should complement rather than replace this provision.

PS...

I VISIT the *Soldier* website now and again and read through all the entries concerning “bling”, National Service and a lack of medals. I know it's frustrating, but we have to look at the bigger picture and realise that the MoD will never sanction the approval of a National Defence Medal. It's time we got used to the idea. Wear your blazers and ties and be happy with that. – **Daniel Riccio, Liverpool.**

I'VE been reading with interest your *Be the best... at just about everything* feature (Page 21) and thought I'd write in with a tip which might prove particularly useful to your readers.

Here's how to remove the smell of sweat from shirts:

- Dissolve six aspirins in a cup or mug of water.
- Pour enough of the mixture to soak the armpits of the shirt.
- Leave overnight.
- Wash as normal.

It really does work. –

Miss Christine Rodgers

CBO, CSS Branch, 38 (Irish) Brigade.



A plum job, *Soldier*

I'M writing in response to last month's prize letter about testicular cancer awareness and **checkemlads.com**.

As the subject of your original story, I thought I'd update the readership on our campaign. Since *Soldier's* article in 2005, the website has gone from strength-to-strength and we have been granted official charity status.

In addition to the advice and support offered by the site and its forums, we have continued to deliver briefings to military units at home and overseas, to schools and colleges and, most recently, to the police force.

Your letter serves as a timely reminder to all young men within the military community of the importance of self examination. If caught early, testicular cancer can be cured with no major side effects – and the author of last month's letter is testimony to that.

However, a failure to recognise the signs and symptoms can prove fatal. Testicular cancer is an extremely aggressive disease and can kill in a short period of time. Two

minutes checking really could save your life.

I am currently serving in Gutersloh and remain available to deliver briefings and support to units and medical centres throughout BFG, and

Philly Morris, from the checkemlads team, is available to do the same in UK. If any reader is worried about any aspect of the disease, they can contact us through **www.checkemlads.com**

Thanks again for the article, *Soldier* and checkemlads may have just saved another life! And to the author of the letter, congratulations on finding a lump, getting it seen and, more importantly, bringing this issue back to the forefront of readers' minds.

– **Sgt M G Riley, 1 Log Sp Regt, BFPO 17.**





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Concept of 'close shave' redefined

I'M sure that the paying customers of your magazine are sick to the back teeth of reading about medals, commemorative or otherwise.

For those who did not get to read March's issue, a letter from Mr Walter Rimmer states "...many Armed Forces personnel who spent time in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan served behind the front line but were still decorated".

Bizarrely, Mr Rimmer then goes on to justify Cold War veterans being worthy of receiving a medal, writing "we were on constant alert and did many exercises on the border" and "Royal Air Force pilots flew with their aircraft armed and had many a close shave near the border".

I do not wish to debate this particular issue, but I do wish to vent my anger at such statements. In light of the tragic loss



of two Royal Engineers in Northern Ireland, *Soldier* readers will undoubtedly be aware that because Op Banner is no more, the General Service Medal is no longer issued for this theatre.

And yet as a result of recent events, the threat very much remains. Moreover, having

watched all the memorial service coverage on the news channels and seeing all of the extra security checks that were taking place, I feel that this puts the very idea of "many a close shave" firmly into perspective.

The fact is that be it behind or on the front line with bayonets fixed, we are all part of an organisation that is always on alert and unequivocally as integral as each other.

For those of you who feel you deserve recognition, campaign by all means, but please do not keep bringing it here.

More importantly, never attempt to play down the seriousness of being behind the front line in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Iraq or Afghanistan.

There are many rear echelon personnel who have lost their lives as a result of hostile action in every one of these conflicts. – SSgt Paul Martin, 73 Avn Sqn.

Time to reward return tours

I'M writing to ask why, on completion of a tour, we are given Nato medals which we are not allowed to wear. What a waste of money!

This money could be better spent on a bar for existing awards or a second official medal to reward those who complete return visits to theatres such as Afghanistan.

I've deployed to Afghanistan several times, on Op Fingal and Op Herrick, but only have one medal. Why not give the guys recognition for the number of tours completed in a theatre where contacts are frequent? – Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Great care is given to the formulation of medal policy.

When there is no British medal for a campaign and a suitable allied award



is issued, permission is given to accept and wear that medal.

In Afghanistan there is a British medal for the theatre. So the Nato Isaf medal, if received, may be retained only as a keepsake.

Currently repeat tours are recognised by the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (pictured). This is a valued award indicating at least three years of operational service. The matter of recognition for repeat tours, and the nature of clasps, is under consideration by the three Services.

Whatever is decided we must preserve the clarity, coherence and accurate administration of our medal policy. The expense involved is not great; the key is not to cheapen our medals as that would be costly to our reputation.

PS...



I SERVED for nine years in the Royal Air Force and have read with interest the *Talkback* letters regarding so-called "bling" medals.

I was awarded a General Service Medal (GSM) for my time in South Arabia in 1966/67. Of my time in uniform as an RAF policeman and dog handler, I spent five years overseas – having twice been posted to Germany and once to Aden.

I wear my GSM with pride, but it does not recognise the part I played in Aden. Is it any wonder that ex-Servicemen purchase commemoratives? I don't have any "bling" medals, but would like something on the end of a ribbon to recognise my efforts rather than a cheap machine-pressed badge that tells people nothing more than that its wearer was a member of the Armed Forces.

I've been approached by members of the public who have no idea what the Veteran's Badge is, which just about reflects its importance to those who have not served. – Mel Price, ex-RAF.

Recommendation long overdue

I SPENT 11 years in the British Army and five in the Royal Navy and believe this accumulated service should qualify for the Long Service and Good Conduct medal (LS&GC).

While I know that both Services have a different medal and ribbon, why can't the LS&GC be awarded in the respective style of the individual's current post? I qualified for a 16-year pension, so why can't the same rules apply to this medal?

It is not uncommon for a person to transfer or enlist into another service and the issues of pay, entitlements and qualification for awards should be addressed for those who do serve across



the Forces. A combination of a lack of support and knowledge at APC Glasgow contributed to my recommendation for the award not arriving on my colonel's desk before I left the Army. If I was originally entitled to the medal, can it still be awarded even though I am now a civilian? – Ex-Cpl J Savory, AGC.

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, Medal Office, writes: The LS&GC (pictured) is awarded to serving personnel, on the recommendation of their commanding officer. As you're no longer serving, I regret to inform you that you are ineligible for the award.

● AM I the last serving recipient of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)? I was awarded the medal in December 1981. – Capt E D Williams.

Lt Col (Retd) Peter Lockyer, Medal Office, replies: It looks as though Capt Williams is the last serving DCM recipient in the Regular Army. A Capt Meredith was awarded a DCM during Op Corporate and is recorded as currently serving in the Volunteer Reserves.

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Picture: Cpl Rob Knight

Vote of confidence: Having provided the stability to allow others to have their say at the ballot box – such as these women in Al Hillah, pictured during the vote for the ratification of the new Iraqi constitution in October 2005 – Julie McCarthy is urging soldiers to ensure their own voices are heard on home soil

Battle of Britain's ballot box

MUCH is being made in the press about when the Government will call a general election, but Gordon Brown is hardly likely to go to the vote in the next few months and certainly not until the debacle around MPs expenses has been sorted out.

Regardless of the timing it is imperative that members of the Armed Forces and their families exercise their right to vote as it is politicians, not commanders, who send our troops into battle.

Yet how many of you reading this are registered to vote and will do so at this month's European and local elections?

Many areas of society find it difficult to relate to politics and politicians; I certainly do and I think that this is true of many of my peers. It is a symptom of our mobile lifestyle that few of us feel a tie to the area that we live in, never mind an inclination to get involved in local politics.

But even when posted overseas we pay Council Tax in the form of CIOCT (Cash In Lieu of Council Tax) and so have a vested interest in ensuring that all politicians from the local council to the Government, and those at the European Parliament, understand the needs of the Service community. It is hardly surprising, however, that so many of us feel removed from the political process as registering as a voter

and exercising that right is so difficult for Servicemen and women and their families.

All Service personnel and their spouses or civil partners have the option to register as Service voters. The qualifying address in this case is the household in the UK where they would be living if they were not in the Services. This supposedly has the advantage that the registration remains constant despite moving on posting – but how do you choose what that address should be?

For years I was registered at my parents' address in Darlington but, having left home at 18, to still be voting there at the age of 37 when I have no tie to the local area other than my childhood home seems nonsensical.

Away from Darlington there were two options open to me as a Service voter; a proxy vote or a postal vote. For a number of years I used the former, with my father as the nominated proxy. After a rather fiery discussion about politics in the pub – were the Liberal Democrats a real political party? (my father thought not) – I realised that no matter where I asked for my

X to be placed, my dad could do whatever he liked once in that voting booth.

And it's not just parents who do as they please with the ballot paper. I know at least one Service wife who used her husband's proxy to vote against his preferred party for years. Hardly democracy in action.

I am now a postal voter at the address

of a house I own in Cornwall. I have some ties to the area and, living in England, feel some buy-in when voting. Those overseas, especially those in isolated detachments or far flung places, are not so lucky. Ballot papers in the English system are only produced 11 days before an election and so trying to get them through the BFPO system, filled in and

returned in time is nigh on impossible.

There is some sympathy for our plight within the MoD and the wider Government. But there seems to be an inability to actually enable those who have created democracy for citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan to exercise their own democratic right as freely and easily. ■

‘There seems to be an inability to enable those who have created democracy for citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan to exercise their own democratic right as freely and easily’

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HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

WIN £100



TEN details have been changed on this picture from the British Forces Adventurous Training Centre in St George's Caye, Belize.

Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 811, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by June 30.

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 July issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

April competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Sgt B Crawford**, 1 Rifles, Chepstow.

Runners-up **Mr J Dickinson**, 217 (Wy) Tpt Sqn, Leeds and **Mr R Wild**, QM(A) Dept, 9 Regt AAC, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: logo on back of Navy shirt; "NAVY" on back of sock; white stripe on Army shirt; logo on rugby ball; ARU badge on black shorts; logo on black T-shirt; letter "b" on hoarding; logo on ARU shirt; logo on upper left arm of Navy shirt; sunglasses on spectator.



WITH the *Daily Telegraph* reporting that the spending on his constituency home was so extensive that even his gardener questioned whether some of the costs were strictly necessary, David Miliband will no doubt be surprised to learn that his *Freeze Frame* debut (picture below right) prompted not a single comment on the issue of MPs' expenses.

Braced for a deluge of cynical swipes at the Foreign Secretary's alleged financial faux pas, *Soldier* HQ instead – somewhat bizarrely – discovered a mailbag full of references to children's games.

Perhaps inspired by Millsy's fresh-faced appearance, LCpl O'Brien's "I wish he'd hurry up with that yo-yo, I want a go" and SSgt Marie McChesney's "Ah Mr Miliband, this is Qasem, he too wishes to know how to play rock-paper-scissors" were typical of the entries received.

However, our prize copy of Felicity



Judging by the muted response given to Gordy's a cappella rendition of Simply Red classic *Money's Too Tight To Mention* by coalition troops at Camp Bastion, the Prime Minister was going to have to significantly fine tune his act before taking to the *Britain's Got Talent* stage

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by June 30. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Territorials: A Century of Service*, a tribute to the rich and proud military tradition of citizen service in defence of Britain.

Goodall's *The People's War: Reliving Life on the Home Front in World War II* goes to Mr Barker of Grantham, who envisaged the Labour frontbencher on the campaign trail – "David tries hypnotism in a bid to win extra votes".



Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere

Picture: Cpl Anthony Stinson RAF

BULLETIN BOARD

DEFENCE DIRECTORY

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

Armed Forces Humanist Association: www.armedforceshumanists.org.uk

Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01722 436569; www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association: 0208 590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries.ceas@gt.net.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) 0044 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94560 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-dunstans.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help: 0207 403 8783; Western Europe 02161 472 3392

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency: 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); Medical Assessment: 0800 169 5401

Victim Support: Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900; www.victimsupport.org

WRVS: 02920 232668

COMPETITIONS

Sweat Vests winners: C Griffiths, Inf Battle School, Brecon; Tracey Gelbratly, Blairgowrie, Perthshire; Capt G Miller, Tarleton, Preston; Cpl E O'Hara, 35 Engr Regt, BFPO 22; M Woods, Frimley, Surrey; Mrs Draycott, Boscombe

Down, Wilts; Maj T Cunningham, Scot Tpt Regt RLC, Dunfermline; Maj A Swain, 42 Engr Regt, Hermitage; SSgt P Criddle, 3 Log Sp Regt, Abingdon; LCpl Wilks, HQ RLC TA, Grantham; Mrs J Weale, HQ Hereford Garrison; LCpl V Leay, Birkenhead; Sgt O Holbourn, MT BUOTC, Bristol; Maj J Baker, 100 Regt RA(V), Luton; Maj D Goodacre, Land System RM, Bristol.

DEFENCE DIARY

June 1-30: Caught on Canvas. Collection of outstanding paintings. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

June 8: Sir Galahad Memorial service. St Mary's Church, Swansea at 1000. www.samawales.co.uk

June 13: Trooping The Colour. Horse Guards Parade, London. Tickets from Brigade Major, HQ Household Division, Horse Guards, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AX.

June 26: The Heroes' Festival. Call 07957 958188 or visit www.theheroesfestival.co.uk

Until June 30: Celebrity speakers and family events: Check dates with National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

July 4: The Three Musketeers. In aid of Help for Heroes. Wintershill Hall, Durlley SO32 2AL. Book online at www.illyria.uk.com/2009

July 18: Colchester Military Festival. Abbey Field, Colchester. Tickets from Colchester Visitor Information Centre on 01206 282920.

September 5-6: Duxford Air Show. Cambridge. Information and tickets: www.iwm.org.uk/duxford

September 27: Jersey Marathon Relay Race. Charity event. Free accommodation and transport, no entry fee. Write to Gregor Menzies, Island Mill LO, Home Affairs Dept, Le Quesne TA Centre, Mount Bingham, St Helier, Jersey JE2 4XY, call 01534 619580 or email imlo@jerseyidsqn.co.uk

Until September 09: Remembering The Great War. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. Tel: 0207 730 0717.

Until November 1: From War to Windrush. Imperial War Museum, London.

Until mid-November: Lecture days and special events. Imperial War Museum, Duxford, Cambridge CB22 4QR. Telephone 01223 835000 or www.iwm.org.uk/duxford for events list.

Until January 3, 2010: The Extraordinary Life of Prisoners of War. Imperial War Museum North. www.iwm.org.uk/north

REUNIONS

251 Medical Sqn (251 Fd Ambulance): Reunion on June 20 at the TA Centre, Dykelands Road, Seaburn, Sunderland SR6 8DP. All ex-members welcome. For details contact Graeme New on 07769 948685 or graemenew@btinternet.com

RAMC Corps weekend: Fun day June 20 at Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale, Aldershot. All ranks, Regular, TA, past and present with families welcome. Units will compete in a "potted-sports" event. Activities for children. Church parade on

June 21, Aldershot Garrison Church. Further details from Maj D Ralph on 01252 868851 or by email at ocdeoh@dmstcigs.mod.uk

Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire Yeomanries: Reunion June 27 at 1800 at the TA Centre, Marsh Lane, Luton, Beds. Current and former members of 52 Hy Regt, 79 HAA Regt, 86 Fd Regt, 135 Fd Regt, 148 Fd Regt, 191 Fd Regt, 286 Fd Regt, 305 Fd Regt, 479 HAA Regt, 286 Fd Regt and 100 Fd Regt. Contact Hon Sec on 07753 344621 or email k8putthekettleon@hotmail.co.uk

National Service Veterans Association: Dinner dance on June 27 at Clarendon Suites, Stirling Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. Contact Derek Hughes on 0121 355 3145 or Ron Bourne on 0121 689 1591.

Royal Green Jackets: Reunion on July 11 at ATR(W), Sir John Moore Barracks, Winchester. Open to all past and present riflemen. Contact Maj (Retd) R Stanger, WDSU Worthy Down, Winchester on 01962 887916 or email oispsvcs-wdsu@dcppa-wd.mod.uk

657 Sqn Army Air Corps: Reunion, all past and present members invited. July 31 at The Meade Hall, Crown and Cushion Pub. Details from SSgt Eddie Smith at reunion657@hotmail.co.uk

Queen's Own Buffs: Reunion August 2 in Canterbury. Contact H Delo by phone weekdays only (1000-1600) on 01843 842357 or email TheDelos@ldelo.freeserve.co.uk

19 Signal Regiment: Reunion September 11-13 at Warwick. Open to all who served in 19 Air Formation Signals from 1943 to 1971 and CAFSO Branch, Far East Air Force. Enquiries to Dennis Isaacs on 01783 762745.

Queen's School Rheindahlen: Reunion for former pupils and staff in London on September 19. For details visit www.queensschoolrheindahlenassociation.co.uk

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

3 Royal Anglian (Pompadoours): Reunion of admin and support staff on September 26 at Braintree. Details from Nigel Hunt via email at nigel.hunt417@mod.uk

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

June: 9, Abingdon; 10, Basingstoke; 23, Darlington; 24, Newcastle; 25, Hull. **July:** 14, Hackney; 15, Islington; 16, Lambeth. **August:** No presentations.

SEARCHLINE

Dr Carl von Savigny is looking for eye witnesses, as well as their relatives and friends, of the **SS Sebastiano Venier (Jason)** incident of December 9, 1941 for a film documentary. During Rommel's Africa campaign, the Italian vessel left Benghazi, in Libya, carrying 2,000 PoWs. The ship was attacked five miles south of Navarino on the Greek Peloponnese, but reached shore at Point Methoni, near Pilos, with the help of one German engineer. Contact Dr von Savigny, c/o MPR, Prinzregentenstr. 25, D-81679 Munich, Germany or email c.savigny@web.de

Brian Lefley is trying to locate a photograph of the old **Pinjab/Quetta Army Quarters** in Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants, which was taken in the 1950s. The estate housed mainly RAMC personnel. Contact Brian at 11 Newlands Drive, Prestwich, Manchester M25 3BU or by email at brianwilliamlefeley@yahoo.com

Calling all men of the new Rifle Regiments and the former Royal Green Jackets and their antecedents in the former regiments. **The Riflemen's Club** is forming on Cyprus and those ex and serving members of the regiment are entitled to apply for membership. Contact David Smith at 57A Voskou Villas, 25 March Street, 7040 Voroklini, Larnaca, Cyprus or email davidsmith_gis@hotmail.com

Lesley Johnson, grandson of RSM Sydney Johnson, is seeking the family of **John Pardoe (Pardor)** to return a photograph. His DOB is October 27, 1902. John joined the 60th Rifles in September 1932 and died March 9, 1933 in a training accident. Contact Lesley by email leejw1@btinternet.com

Windsor School Hamm (1953-83) is searching for ex-pupils, staff and anyone connected to the school. A thriving society holds regular reunions and publishes newsletters and membership registers. Details to Ann Blunn, 6 Merrytree Close, West Wellow, Romsey, Hants SO51 6RB or email rwagb@btinternet.com

Sven Gopel is trying to find his grandfather, **Charley Pitchford**, who was a soldier during WW2. He was based in Luneburg, Germany and met my grandmother Thea Dehning. Charley was Scottish and is believed to have lived in Stone. Contact Sven Gopel/Dehning, Medebekskamp 21, 21339 Luneburg, Germany or email svengoepel@t-online.de

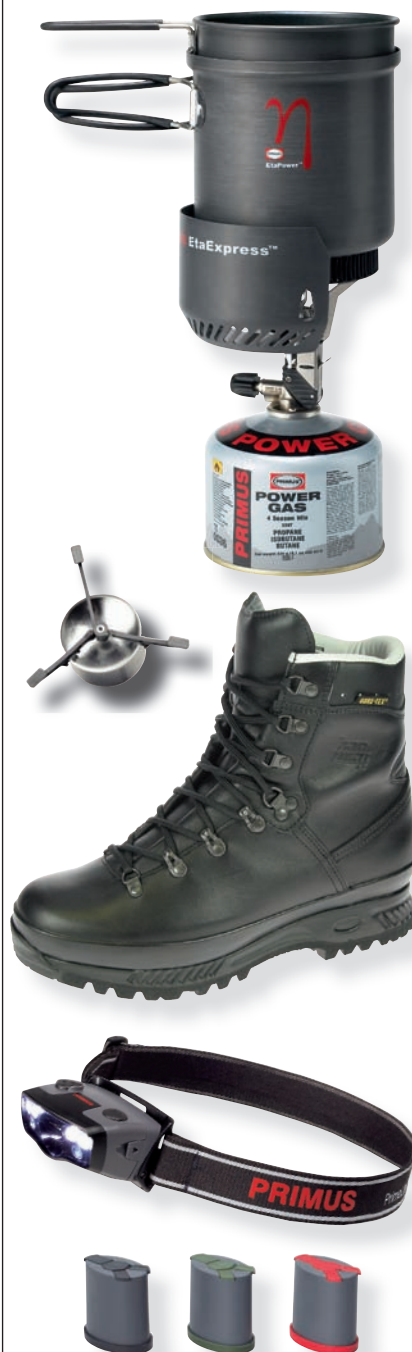
Where are you now members of **Cutforth Platoon, RAOC Junior Leaders**, at Blackdown 1971-73? Sixteen members are planning a reunion and are looking for the remainder of the platoon. We are searching for **Heydon James, Steve Boyle, Jim Miller, Keith Tomlinson, Tony Brown, Jim Cullen, Jock Mosley, Brian Lawrenson, Jim Young and Mick Moore**. Contact Phil Wall at philwall@ntlworld.com

Kerrie Henkel is trying to trace information about her grandfather **Pte Alfred Robert Henkel**. He looked after PoWs at Murchison until his discharge in 1945. Alfred also embarked on the *Devonshire* and was listed as "ships staff". Contact Kerrie by emailing kmcc@chariot.net.au

Martin Gorner, son of an RAF Master Signaller, is seeking **Brig J E A Baird CBE**, or his family, to return a flying log book that was found amongst his father's belongings. The log book dates from 1954-1955 and relates to trips mainly in the Sharjah to Bahrain area. Martin feels the log book would be of more value to the brigadier or his descendants. Contact Martin Gorner at 12 Blankney Close, Saxilby, Lincoln LN1 2JA.

PRIZE PACKAGE

PRIME OFFERING



P PRIMUS and Hanwag have joined forces to offer *Soldier* readers a prize package worth £275 and consisting of a Primus EtaExpress stove, Hanwag Special Force GTX boots, Primus cartridge footrest, Primus LED PrimeLite CA Headtorch and Primus Spice Jar.

The Primus EtaExpress stove (SRP: £60) has received rave reviews because of its low energy consumption – its efficiency rate of more than 70 per cent makes it twice as efficient as traditional stoves. This nifty one-man stove and its components (a burner, detachable windscreen, auto igniter and lid/pan) fit conveniently inside its one litre, titanium-coated pot. Even a 230g gas cartridge (not supplied but sold separately) will fit.

The Primus LED PrimeLite CA Headtorch gives off up to 80 lumens of bright light with its three AAA batteries and has six settings, from a main 75 metre beam to a 12 metre night vision red light mode. Its storage bag also acts as a shade for general lighting.

Hanwag's legendary Special Force GTX boots (SRP: £175) offer you immediate comfort as they mould to the contours of your feet giving you confidence to tackle the most arduous environments.

The full grain, black leather upper and Gore-Tex® lining of these boots provides extreme durability and water resistance. The Vibram® Fuora outsole is durable, anti-clogging and offers high traction, long-lasting grip and protection. The lower mid sole has full heel-to-toe shock-absorption for fatigue relief and maximum comfort while the upper mid sole is curved and graduated with flex nylon to provide the ultimate in torsional rigidity.

To find out more, contact Rosker on 023 925 28711 or sales@rosker.co.uk or visit www.rosker.co.uk for stockist details.

● To enter, answer the following question: **What is the Primus EtaExpress stove's efficiency rate?** Answers by postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by June 30. Usual competition rules apply.



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.recoverypnp.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

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.army.mod.uk

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.forcesresources.co.uk

Lists hundreds of BFPO-friendly companies, a forum, classifieds section and information on the EHIC and much more.

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.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.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

New unofficial online HQ for the British Army. Free - featuring active forums, benefit updates, military news and videos. Plus civilian jobs by Monster.co.uk

www.forcesgirls.co.uk

A friendly, free community - an easy way of making new friends and getting support from others who understand.

www.militarymayhem.net

Military Mayhem Show, Farming World, Faversham, Kent, August 22-23 2009 - supporting Help for Heroes.

www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equitation. Here you will be able to find the information & links you need to keep you up to date with what's going on.

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HELPING HANDS

www.wrvs.org.uk

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www.tnauk.org.uk

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www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families

www.veterans-aid.net

Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.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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MOD LINKS

www.army.mod.uk

Official website of the British Army.

www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

The latest information on match reports, fixtures, ticket and equipment sales, and contact details for all Army Rugby Union teams. See how the most popular and successful sports team in the Army is doing.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to? Are you Doing Alright?



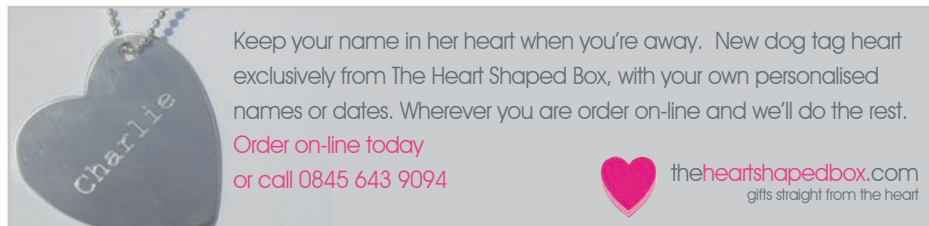
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Roxanna, 5'8", (41), dark hair and green eyes. Enjoys singing, writing lyrics, music, writing novels, swimming and playing badminton. Would love to correspond with soldiers for friendship, 21+. P037

Sue, 5'5", (39), blonde hair and brown eyes. Enjoys music 70s & 80s, pen palling, reading, the cinema and travelling. Would like to hear from anyone who likes writing and receiving letters, any age group. P038

Jo, tall, single, very dry sense of humour who likes to write and loves to laugh. She is like Marmite, love me or hate me. Enjoys music and reading. Looking for a penfriend, over 35 preferred. P039

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Twig, 5'3", blonde with medium build. Enjoys music, travelling, walking, keeping fit, cosy nights in but loves going out clubbing. Easy going and will answer all letters, seeking soldier pen pals, 28+. P042

Valerie, (35), curvy single mum of one would like single male pen pals serving in the UK and abroad, 20-45. Enjoys watching DVDs, listening to music, walks down by the river, having chats and company. P043

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REVIEWS

A man with a short haircut, wearing dark sunglasses, a black puffer jacket over a black and white checkered shirt, and a white t-shirt with a graphic. He is pointing his right index finger towards the camera. He is wearing a gold watch on his left wrist. The background is a wall covered in colorful graffiti and tags.

ISN'T IT IRONIK

Brit rapper backs
Forces festival

SPACED OUT

Surreal alien shooter
invades Nintendo Wii

FRACTURED FAMILIES

Home front heartache for
Second World War wives

UNDERCOVER BROTHERS

Norway's fight against Nazi
rule comes to the big screen



Winter warfare: Members of the Norwegian resistance movement braved Scandinavia's killer climate to sabotage the Nazi occupiers during the Second World War



Undercover brothers

Hero saboteur recalls the bravery that helped save Norway from the Nazis

Interview: Stephen Tyler

DESPITE embarking on hundreds of suicidal sabotage missions against the Nazis in Second World War Norway, resistance fighter Gunnar Sonstebj remembers one routine visit to an Oslo apartment as being his closest call with death.

Walking up the stairs towards the flat, Sonstebj pulled the key out of his pocket and moved to put it into the lock of the door.

But years of living underground had tuned his senses to danger and something told him not to go ahead.

The decision saved Sonstebj's life. The apartment had been compromised and three Gestapo officers – two Norwegian and one German – lay in wait inside hoping to capture the man who was playing havoc with the Nazi's occupation of the Scandinavian country.

Instead of unlocking the door himself, Sonstebj rang the bell. The officer who opened up was startled to see the saboteur stood in front of him and the

Norwegian took his chance to knock the pistol out of the Nazi's hand and run away into the night, dodging the bullets being fired at him by the chasing pack.

The incredible bravery shown by Sonstebj and his colleagues in Company Linge, a special operations unit that conducted sabotage missions in occupied Norway, has now been recreated in *Max Manus: Man of War*.

Already the most-viewed movie ever to be shown at cinemas in its native country, its worldwide release is set to shine a global light on the part that ordinary men and women played in derailing the German war effort from deep behind enemy lines.

And rather than relying on film critics and actors to sing its praises, *Max Manus* has received the backing of the soldiers whose story it tells.

"It's an extraordinary film," Sonstebj told *Soldier*. "When I saw it the first time I thought it gave the reality of what happened very well.

"You cannot explain it so well in a book, but with this film you see it all –

the troubles, the Gestapo, everything."

Starting with scenes of the title character fighting for his country in Finland, the film follows a group of twenty-something men who are determined to prevent the Nazis from gaining a firm foothold in Norway.

After initial steps such as printing an illegal newspaper, Sonstebj and hundreds of other freedom fighters travelled to Scotland to train with the Special Operations Executive.

Parachuting back into Scandinavia, the saboteurs were forced to live a cloak-and-dagger lifestyle as they tried to halt the enemy war machine.

Among the many acts of sabotage, *Max Manus* highlights the treacherous task undertaken by many resistance fighters of sneaking into ship yards and destroying German vessels by attaching limpet mines below the waterline.

Sonstebj himself was responsible for blowing up a forced labour office, stealing ration books to prevent a cut in food supplies, destroying industrial and weapon plants and incapacitating



more than 40 aircraft. His actions earned him medals from both his country and abroad and he remains Norway's most-decorated man.

But the bravery of Sonstebj and his comrades came at a heavy price. For those caught by enemy fire, death was often preferable to being taken prisoner by the Germans and subjected to the horrendous torture shown in the film.

"The interrogation was terrible and people would take their own lives rather than give out information. Being captured meant being taken for torture and that fear is in the film," said Sonstebj.

Now aged 91, the Norwegian has travelled the world to promote the movie and has also visited United States Special Forces, who made him the first non-American to be presented with the Special Operations Command Medal.

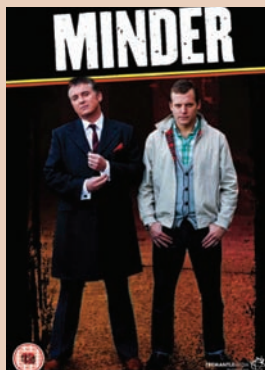
And despite everything he encountered while fighting for his country, Sonstebj said that he is in awe of the the modern-day soldier.

"I still have a lot of close contact with the military and I think that today's troops are wonderful," he said. "They have excellent training and they do a difficult job, but they do it very well. The Norwegian and British Armies are of course very close and I hope they continue to work well together." ■



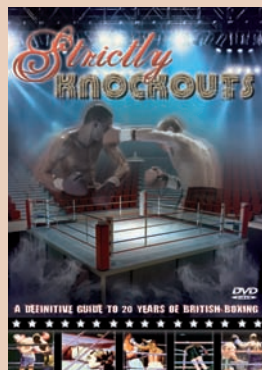
Max Manus: Man of War, out on DVD from June 15

THIS humbling look at the selfless actions of Norway's resistance fighters in the Second World War gives a fascinating insight into the lengths some people went to in order to stop the Nazis. With a mix of suspenseful scenes showing saboteurs conducting stealth operations and all-out action in the form of fire fights in central Oslo, it is easy to see why this is the biggest-grossing film in the history of Norwegian cinema. Strong acting performances give the main characters real depth and the use of subtitles does not detract from the film's overall quality.



Minder, out to own on DVD now

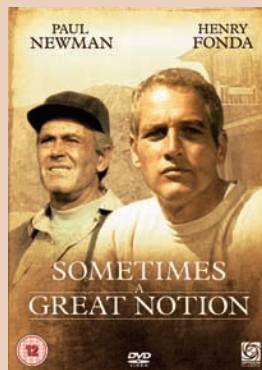
ARCHIE and Jamie replace Arthur and Terry, otherwise the winning formula from the original series is brought bang up to date. The fight scenes are hit-and-miss and the chance meeting between the two lead players is hard to swallow, but don't let this detract from the slick script, tragic destruction of the English language by Archie (**Shane Ritchie**) and cameos by some minor celebs (**Rik Mayall** my personal favourite). Blend *Life on Mars* with *Snatch* and you'll be in the ball park. **Capt Neil Johnson, 9 Regt AAC**



Strictly Knockouts, out on DVD from June 1

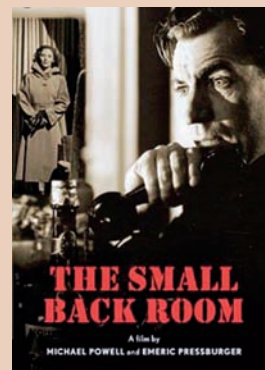
STRICTLY Knockouts delivers the audience with the best KOs from the last twenty years of boxing. It displays the best of the British boxers, including Chris Eubank's explosive entry fight. However, the narrator's anecdotes provide more cheesy lines than a 1980's Arnie film and that adds a twist of comedy into the mix. Dodgy voiceovers aside, this DVD offers an interesting insight into the best bits of British Boxing and is enjoyable whether you are a fan of the sport or not.

Pte Peter Joyes, R Anglian



Sometimes a Great Notion, out on DVD now

DIRECTED by the late **Paul Newman**, *Sometimes a Great Notion* has a stellar cast. **Henry Fonda** and Newman star as father and son lumberjacks defying a strike imposed by the loggers of their Oregon town. While distracted, Fonda's on-screen wife embarks on an illicit relationship with her brother-in-law. Tensions rise between the strikers and strikebreakers leading to sabotage and violence. Adapted from a novel, this is a classic movie with two Hollywood legends. A must see. **LCpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps**



The Small Back Room, out to own on DVD now

THE Small Back Room follows the story of a scientist working with a specialist team during the Second World War. He is brought in to solve the growing problem of booby-trapped devices being dropped from Nazi bombers. I wasted two hours of my life watching this – it was released in 1949 and is of its time, so why anyone would take the trouble to re-release it on DVD is beyond me. The plot is gloomy, the action non-existent and the acting dreadful. This film is best left well alone.

Maj Eddie Elms, 10 AEC



Hansel and Gretel, out to own on DVD now

HANSEL and Gretel is a South Korean fantasy-horror that comes across as dark and menacing with a disturbing aftertaste like a pilchard-filled chocolate truffle. When our young star crashes his car on a forest road he wanders into a saccharine sweet family home that he cannot escape. The kids are weird and the parents aren't all they first appear. There are some genuinely creepy moments that had me glancing over my shoulder, but like the last hard toffee in the Quality Street tin, this is one to avoid. **Capt Neil Johnson, 9 Regt AAC**

Games

J U N E R E V I E W



World ablaze: An imperious incoming alien army represents the cannon fodder for video gamers in *The Conduit*



Space invasion

Intergalactic bad guys threaten Washington DC in multiplayer Wii actioner

Preview: Cliff Caswell

IT is mankind's worst nightmare yet again – an alien attack, vicious beasts hell-bent on taking over the planet and a shady government department populated by men in dark glasses struggling to contain the extraterrestrial menace.

The well-trodden storyline could be enough to bring a groan to the lips of all but the most hardened sci-fi fans. But thankfully *The Conduit* – Sega's latest outing on the Wii – more than makes up for the comprehensive lack of originality in one of the most playable first-person shooters *Soldier* has seen on the Nintendo console.

The game scores highly on two counts – firstly it looks the part, with outstanding graphics and a beautifully rendered Washington DC in which the action takes place. And secondly, the multiplayer options, in which players can shoot it out with up to a dozen friends, are playable and exhilarating.

"Although alien invasions have been done before, the way we have presented the scenario in *The Conduit* is pretty unique," said Eric Nofsinger, chief creative officer with the US-based developer High Voltage Software. "You get to play an agent called Michael Ford, who is working for a shady government organisation."

"We have included a deep storyline for players that want to find it, and it is there if you just go out and hunt around. For example, you'll discover clues about what is happening in many secret messages posted throughout the game world as well as by watching videos on TV monitors and listening in on radio broadcasts."

Anyone who just wants to jump in, however, can disregard the plot, take up arms and go into battle. And there is plenty of ordnance with which you can dispatch your foes in conventional style as well as some more unorthodox, unearthly hardware.

"There are all kinds of weapons

available, which include fun human stuff such as shotguns, sniper rifles and hand grenades, but we also wanted to have some alien equipment too," said Nofsinger. "We've used the specialist control function of the Wii to make it easy to get straight into the action and start shooting."

The efforts of the High Voltage team have certainly paid off. *Soldier* sampled a late build demo of the multiplayer environments and was particularly impressed with the presentation as well as the slickness and pace of the action.

Controls are kept mercifully simple, with the Nunchuck stick used to move your character around and lob grenades, and the Wii Mote used to direct your gun and dispatch your foes.

The variety provided by several game modes, ranging from the traditional death match to capturing a football and holding onto it while avoiding being zapped by multiple opponents, is the icing on the cake.

The Conduit also supports the new



Wii Speak accessory, which allows players to talk online to the six counterparts who are closest to them in the game world and get involved in talking tactics or hurling insults in the heat of battle.

"We really have been trying very hard to push the hardware capabilities of the Nintendo console, and I hope that we have set a new standard for graphics on the system," asserted Nofsinger. "The Wii doesn't have high definition output or a hard drive so there were several confines we had to work in.

"But as much as I am proud of what we have achieved, I think there is still more that can be done in the future.

"There are some enhancements that we can make with the engine which hold great promise and I'm very much looking forward to building on our work."

The Conduit certainly offers a tantalising glimpse of the Wii's online capabilities. But future aspirations aside, this is one of the most enjoyable shooters we've played on the Nintendo console for some time. In combination with a few beers and a takeaway madras, this game offers a near-perfect evening in. The world of aliens and dodgy shadowy agents has never been so much fun. ■



Bayonetta, Xbox 360 & PS3

SEXY female sprites have long been a feature of fighting games such as *Tekken*, but we're the first to admit that we've never seen anything quite like *Bayonetta*. A sword-wielding dominatrix with pistols for stiletto heels, this foxy lady is a witch dedicated to battling dark forces using all the weapons, spells and feminine charm at her disposal. Bizarre story aside, the demo *Soldier* sampled showed huge promise, with slick martial arts action matched with beautifully drawn characters and locations. *Bayonetta* looks great and oozes class.



Red Steel 2, Nintendo Wii

BACK for another episode of Japanese combat, this latest outing from Ubisoft is the follow-up to one of the launch titles on the Nintendo Wii. Set this time in a high-tech metropolis, *Red Steel 2* is poised to be among the first titles to use the new MotionPlus accessory which, the publisher claims, means players will be able to more accurately replicate their fighting moves on screen. The game offers plenty of Samurai action and it will be interesting to see whether the title can repeat the success of the original when it is released later in the summer.



Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena, Xbox 360

CASTING a digital **Vin Diesel** in the leading role, this sci-fi jaunt sees players stranded on a spacecraft full of mercenaries bent on doing you in. This new *Riddick* adventure, subtitled *Assault on Dark Athena*, delivers on all fronts and is perhaps best described as *Splinter Cell* on steroids. The game has a foreboding atmosphere, similar to movies such as *Event Horizon*, and the claustrophobia of deep space is captured well. A remastered version of the original *Riddick* game, *Escape from Butcher Bay*, is included in the pack.



Battlestations Pacific, Xbox 360 & PC

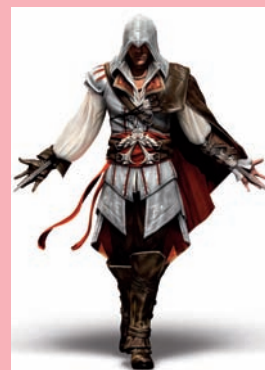
THIS Second World War action title gives you the chance to recreate battles that decided the war in the Far East. Players have the opportunity to command the US Forces against the Japanese in historic encounters or fight with a Rising Sun war machine through hypothetical battles. We sampled the PC version of the game and had hours of fun in single player, while online and skirmish modes complete the package. The only gripe is the controls, which are initially hard to get to grips with.

Sgt Dan Cooper RE



Project Reality retail version, PC

AFTER attracting a healthy following from the British Army for its modification of EA's *Battlefield 2*, the development team behind *Project Reality* has now started work on a full stand alone version of the game. Having been granted the rights to an original engine after winning the Modification of the Year competition, designers are now bringing a realistic combat title featuring the military forces of the world to the masses. WO2 Craig Turner (LD), a military adviser on the project, believed a working demo should be available in around a year.



Assassin's Creed 2, Xbox 360

NEARLY two years after the Middle East hit man first became a cult personality with gamers, a second instalment of hit title *Assassin's Creed* is planned for the summer. The latest game swaps the Holy Land of the Middle Ages for Renaissance Italy, where new character Ezio is out for revenge after being betrayed by a rival family. An epic storyline is promised, with greater mission variety than the original game plus a host of new weaponry and a more complex character progression system. Early indications suggest this sequel offers significant potential.

Music

JUNE REVIEW



Rapper's delight: Urban star Ironik will be performing live at the Festival for Heroes concert on June 20 (visit www.festivalforheroes.com for more details)



Iconic Ironik

UK rapper waxes lyrical to raise funds for The Royal British Legion

Interview: Heidi Mines

AS urban music continues its relentless march from the underground scene to mainstream, James Charters – better known as Ironik – has proved that home-grown R&B talent can hold its own in the tough terrain of the UK charts.

The hardworking artist, who prides himself on rapping about issues close to his heart, has recently hurtled to fame with hit single *Tiny Dancer (Hold me Closer)*, which features Elton John and urban star Chipmunk.

And with the re-release of his album *No Point in Wasting Tears* selling well and praise flying in from music industry greats, there really is no stopping the former DJ and MC.

The rapper is known to sing about social issues and notably tackled the increase of kids killing kids in gang-related crimes on Britain's streets in his first single *Stay With Me*.

Anti-gang violence is a subject the 21-year-old is so passionate about that he has become a key member of an anti-knife campaign for *MTV Base*, which led to the role model's latest job as an ambassador for The Prince's Trust.

And so it was no surprise that when the star was asked to headline the first music and entertainment event for The Royal British Legion – Festival for Heroes – he jumped at the chance.

Ironik will share the stage at the concert, which takes place later this month, with The Automatic, Gabrielle and a host of other big-name music and stand-up acts.

The talented performer wanted to show his admiration for serving troops through what he knows best, his music. But by his own admission, he would be too afraid to join the Army.

"I never joined the Forces but I have a lot of respect for the soldiers. I cannot believe that people my age or younger are fighting on the front line," said the

Arsenal fan. "I am too scared to join the Army myself. I am a mummy's boy."

"I am supporting the concert because I appreciate all the people who are brave enough to fight for their country, from the older veterans to the young guys and girls out there now."

Influenced by the likes of Estelle and Dizzee Rascal, the busy artist has sampled old school king of pop Elton John for his latest tune.

As well as storming the UK charts, the fledgling rapper has received John's personal stamp of approval. The multi-platinum selling singer and songwriter said: "Tupac and Kanye West are just two artists I've let sample my records – that says everything about how much I rate Ironik!"

And the star from Highgate, London, who started DJing in the UK and Europe when he was 13 years old, said that he hoped the track would bring the older and younger generations together.

The nephew of *Twice as Nice* founder



Picture: Steve Dock

Steve Gordon, Ironik has always been surrounded by the music industry, and as a teenager could already boast being a producer, writer and rap artist.

However, his feet are kept firmly on the ground by the supportive and tough guidance of his manager – his mother.

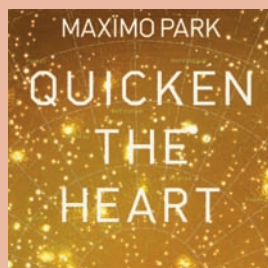
“My main influence is my mum. She has inspired me to do a lot of things in life and she keeps me motivated. I started at a real young age and it is finally paying off for me now,” concluded the performer, who chose his stage name with the help of school friends by searching through the dictionary.

On meeting the R&B star it is hard not to be endeared by his warm and honest nature and his strong respect for his family and the Armed Forces. It is easy to see why he is a role model for young people today.

Ironik explained that he draws his inspiration from the lives of everyday people and asks a lot of questions, the answers to which lend themselves to the lyrics in all of his music.

Perhaps in a Britain where the youth are blamed for much that is wrong with society, Ironik is proof that nice guys do not finish last. ■

● www.myspace.com/djironik



Quicken The Heart (Maximo Park)

CHAMPIONED by Radio One's **Greg James**, **Maximo Park** have returned with their aptly named third album *Quicken The Heart*. Picking up from where their last album *Our Earthly Pleasures* left off, the band have pushed onwards and upwards in exploring the new dimensions of their sound. However, they haven't lost their pop roots and lead singer **Paul Smith's** distinctive vocals are still as strong as ever. Favourite tracks are *Wraithlike*, which gets the album off to a great start, and the rousing *The Kids Are Sick Again*. Roll on the tour dates, as this five-piece are excellent live.



Britain's Got Talent (Escala)

FOLLOWING their huge success on last year's TV contest *Britain's Got Talent*, uber-sleek electric string quartet **Escala** are having a bash at pop stardom. The album includes highly polished versions of their live performances as well as some popular covers, such as a classical rendition of the **Wings** hit *Live and Let Die* and **Led Zeppelin's** *Kashmir*. High-octane and full of presence, this is an interesting group to watch. The contemporary twist of such classical instruments won't be everyone's cup of tea but oldies and fans of classical-cum-pop music should love it.

Cpl Tom Robinson, RLC



West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum (Kasabian)

BEFORE listening to this album I was not a fan of **Kasabian** and, after hearing it, I haven't changed my mind. According to the band, their bizarrely titled album takes the listener on a journey. But it was one on which I was a very reluctant passenger. At best I would class a few tracks as catchy, whereas some tunes, particularly *Swarfiga*, were positively vacuous. I'm sure true Kasabian fans will enjoy this album but if, like me, you have a low tolerance for sentimental Brit pop with sloppy guitar playing then this is definitely one to avoid.

Capt F Dowling, AGC (ETS)



It's Blitz! (Yeah Yeah Yeahs)

THE alternative rock trio from New York have previously enjoyed making quite a racket. On this album, their third, they have introduced a touch of subtlety which has managed to give their sound a more rounded feel. They have also experimented with elements of dance and keyboards which does define each song in its own right and avoids similarity across the set. Singer **Karen O's** vocals still resemble a strangled cat at times but it's all part of the charm. I'm not sure how the album will be perceived by purists but it should increase their overflowing global fanbase.

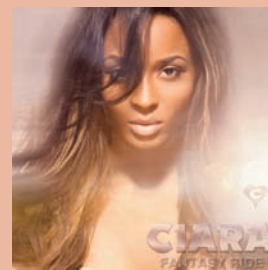
Sgt Charlie Lloyd, RLC



Always The Sun (Richard Durand)

RICHARD Durand's new album *Always The Sun* is like taking a trip back in time. Returning to the summer of 1999 and the dawn of trance, his style is nothing that we haven't heard before. Yet this is a techno treat, but toned down and mellow – it is a mix of the dance band **Orbital** and the familiar sound of **Robert Miles** with a bit of electronica chucked in for good measure. This is a sound that reminds me of good times in Ibiza. Many of the tracks take you on an up-tempo journey, on to a bit of a comedown before the teaser as it builds to a crescendo. Hands in the air!

Capt Jim Berry, 1 R Irish

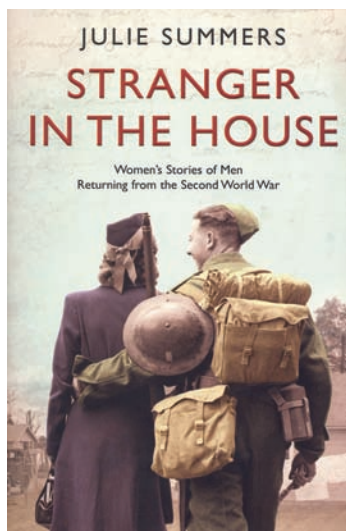


Fantasy Ride (Ciara)

ONCE the protege of **Missy Elliott**, the beautiful **Ciara** has returned with an incredibly sexy image and has worked with the likes of **T-Pain** and **Justin Timberlake** on her new record, *Fantasy Ride*. To mark the latest release **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. Which R&B grammy award-winning singer features on Ciara's single *Love Sex Magic*? Answers to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by June 30.

Books

JUNE REVIEW



Generation gap: In sharp contrast to the support afforded to the families of those returning from operations today (right), Julie Summers (inset) reveals that no such help was extended to the wives of Second World War veterans



Home front heartache

Author captures plight of fractured families in the aftermath of conflict

Stranger in the House by Julie Summers
(Simon and Schuster, hardback, £18.99)

Interview: Samantha Chapman

WHEN the killing fields of the Second World War finally fell silent in 1945 millions of soldiers returned to their homes and attempted to slot back into the lives they had left behind.

Yet these were changed men. Once bank clerks, postmen and bakers, they were altered forever by the harrowing events they had endured. The women they returned to were also different – they had survived without their husbands and grown accustomed to their absence. Once thrown back into the family unit there was often huge tension and, at that time, the Government offered no help on bridging the gulfs that now existed between them.

It is this feeling of tentative unfamiliarity that author and historian Julie Summers recreates with her book *Stranger in the House*, for which she interviewed more than 100 wives,

mothers and children about their experiences of soldiers returning home.

While much has been written about the men's ordeals, there has been nothing until now on how women felt when their partners came back.

"For many it was the first time they had ever spoken about it," said Summers. "A lot of people broke down and wept. I think some felt very disloyal by talking about it. In 1947 divorce was very much a taboo so it was not an option – they just had to endure and get on with it."

While today there are welfare packages, support groups and a strong sense of Army solidarity for wives whose husbands fight in foreign lands, the same cannot be said for 1940s Britain.

"I was very struck by how much help there was for the men returning home," said the author. "There were booklets to tell them how to settle down – all sorts of things. But for the women there was nothing. I just don't think they even thought about it."

"Some of the stories were very sad. One woman told of her father who

came home and refused to eat indoors – he would take his food and sit on the porch. I thought that was a fascinating memory, and even more so because they never asked why."

Summers herself comes from a military background, her grandfather being Lt Col Philip Toosey whose capture by the Japanese in Singapore provided the inspiration for *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Although the film is only loosely based on Toosey's experiences of the PoW camps, Summers researched her grandfather's life and wrote *The Colonel of Tamarkan*.

"He took 701 men out to Singapore and he brought home 300," she said. "He was a wreck when he came home. His wife took one look at him and decided to sleep in another room. His daughter didn't want him to touch her as she didn't know who he was; she'd never met him. It took her 20 years to get to know her father."

The sadness experienced by many of the women is underlined time and time again in *Stranger in the House*. Some of the wives, now in their 80s, speak of



Main picture: LA(Phot) Caroline Davies Inset: Steve Dock

finding it hard to accept that their role had been diminished by their husband's return. Having been in charge of the finances, they now had to ask for money from their partners.

Although the issue was kept behind closed doors for decades, the difficulties created by the separation of military families are still experienced today. Gen Sir Richard Dannatt, Chief of the General Staff, has openly spoken of the high divorce rates in the Army and of his goal to reduce tour frequencies to allow families to spend more time together. Today, at the very least, the problem is one that is openly acknowledged.

"In the 1940s there was not a lot of information on the help women were entitled to," added Summers. "Widowed mothers could get a pension and help with schooling and housing, but few ever took that up because they just didn't know it existed. In 1972 the Widows Federation was launched and that basically provided them with somewhere to go for help – but that was a long time after the war. Their lives were hard, and they stayed hard for years and years." ■

Readers can buy the *Stranger in the House* audio book at the discounted price of £12.99. Visit www.chromeaudio.com and enter the promotional code SOLDIER.



Burma 1942 by R Tanner and D Tanner

THIS excellent title describes the withdrawal of 2nd Battalion, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry across Burma. Facing a ferocious Japanese advance, the retreat was every man for themselves. Principally *Burma 1942* explores information in adversity; what soldiers remember and what they forget, and, above all, why. If, in future generations, we are to consult meaningful records of current ops, this book is important reading on capturing recollections. **Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE**



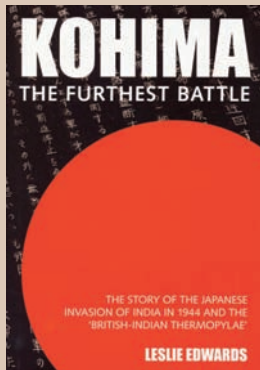
Great British Weapons by George Courtauld

ALTHOUGH billed as "the ultimate guide for history fanatics", I found this book something of a disappointment. Restrained by size, it cannot hope to cover all British weaponry, but the selection presented is subjective to say the least. While the write-ups are accurate they are fairly basic, as are the drawings (there being no photographs). This is definitely not the book for you if you have any modicum of knowledge of weaponry, however it would make a good present for children. A four out of ten from me. **Maj Jonathan Craig, PWRR**



One Dog at a Time by Pen Farthing

FARTHING'S story of his attempt to rescue stray dogs during his tour of Helmand is an amazing tale of one man's determination to make a difference. The book chronicles the Royal Marine's deployment and the series of events which led him to set up his own charity, Nowzad Dogs. This is a gripping read that drags you along page by page. Towards the end I was unable to put it down until I knew the fates of the dogs the author had befriended. A must-read for animal lovers and those looking for something a bit different. **Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH**



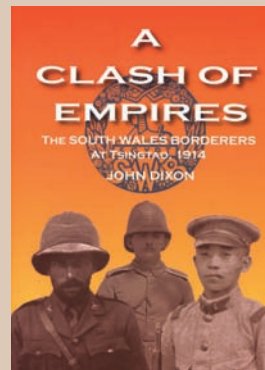
Kohima: The Furthest Battle by Leslie Edwards

DESCRIBED by Mountbatten as the "British-Indian Thermopylae", the epic battle between Slim's Forgotten Fourteenth Army, the jungle and an unrelenting Japanese foe at Kohima resulted in one of Britain's greatest military victories. This book has to be the most exhaustive account published, with the author delivering well-written and highly-detailed chapters. A disappointing paucity of photographs is counter-balanced by a series of comprehensive maps. An authoritative history of one of our finest triumphs. **Maj Mike Peters, AAC**



The Reluctant Hero by Willie Apiata VC

ON July 2, 2007 **Cpl Willie Apiata** became the first and, so far, only New Zealander to win a Victoria Cross for his actions in Afghanistan. This autobiographical review chronicles the soldier's life from early childhood to celebrity – a status hard earned for carrying a gravely wounded comrade to safety while under fire in 2004. Although the story told is sometimes predictable, it does offer an interesting insight into the workings of the NZ Army and its Special Forces, and the character of an outstandingly brave soldier. **Maj Eddie Elms, AGC**



A Clash of Empires by John Dixon

WITH few Brits aware of our Army's part in the Far Eastern fighting of 1914, this book is a welcome offering. It recounts the role of the South Wales Borderers (SWB) in the capture of Tsingtao. Landing on the Chinese coast alongside Japanese forces, the siege lasted more than a month. Although well-trained for such an op, the SWB were peripheral in the final attack, which may explain why German prisoners flashed their bottoms at them. The Japanese by contrast gave them a rousing Banzai cheer. **Dr Rodney Atwood**



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SOLDIERSPORT

STRAIGHT EIGHT

Record-breaking Reds
continue winning run



Formidable force: Army stars (from left) LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE), LCpl Matt Dwyer (WG), LCpl Chris Budgen (R Welsh) and LSgt Chris Scarf (WG) helped secure a 50-7 Inter-Services win over the Royal Navy at Twickenham

Picture: Graeme Main



Straight eight

Record victory for Army as Royal Navy are terrorised at Twickenham

Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH seven consecutive Inter-Services Rugby Union Babcock Trophy defeats against the Army already blotting their record

books, the players and staff of the Royal Navy must have believed that things could only get better in 2009.

Like their rivals in red, the Senior Service dispatched the Royal Air Force and headed to last month's Twickenham showdown hopeful that their momentum would carry them over the finish line.

But the Army team that lay in wait at rugby HQ had other ideas. A blistering attacking display produced a try after just three minutes and the reigning champions went on to cross the line a further seven times en route to an utterly emphatic 50-7 victory.

It was only the second occasion that either team had posted a half-century on their opponents – the previous time coming in the Army's 53-16 rout in 2003 – and the 43-point winning margin was the biggest on record.

The noisy Reds contingent among the 55,803 crowd travelled to West

London expecting a dominant performance after the Army's 67-11 demolition of the RAF and the line-up of head coach WO2 Andy Price (WG) – who deployed on Op Herrick two days after the match – highlighted his desire to put the Navy to the sword.

An exciting back division featuring the Fijian flair of Pte Jack Prasad (Scots), LCpl Malakai Magnus (RLC) and Spr Gus Qasevakatini (RE) alongside the guile of fullback WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC) offered an abundance of options on the front foot.

The forwards, including skipper Capt Mark Lee (AGC(ALS)), bullied the Navy off the ball time and time again, with LCpl Chris Budgen (RWelsh) leading a ferocious front row alongside LCpl Matt Dwyer (WG) and LCpl Melvyn Lewis (WG).

Scrum half Capt Ian Martin's (Yorks) sneaky try from the blind side early on unsettled the Blues and Roberts made

REDS' WINNING RUN



2002: 18-13

2003: 53-16

2004: 32-16

2005: 41-15

2006: 9-3

2007: 39-25

2008: 22-11

2009: 50-7



it 7-0 with a superb conversion from the left touchline.

Try as they might, the Navy could not break out of their own half and wave after wave of Army pressure resulted in a try on 15 minutes for Cpl Ben Hughes (RE), who was making a record 29th appearance for the side.

With the defensive line emphatically stopping any Navy advances, the Reds' backs made the most of the firm foundations to score again after 30 minutes as a cruel bounce from a Prasad kick saw the ball elude POAET Dave Pascoe and end up in the hands of Qasevakatini, who galloped free and scored under the posts.

Prasad, who has won nine international caps, was at the heart of another great move five minutes later as his intricate footwork drew in the defence, leaving Magnus free to run into space and score, opening up a 24-0 half-time lead.

As in the first period, it took little more than three minutes of the final 40 for the Army to claim a try. Qasevakatini broke down the line and fed Pte Apolosi Satala (Scots) who bided his time until Prasad arrived on his shoulder, received the ball and mesmerised the defensive line en route to his first five points.

With the fleet-footed backs beginning to hog the limelight, Budgen took it on himself to bring the focus back onto

the Army's engine room with a series of bruising runs.

It was one of the New Zealand-born front row's assaults that laid the foundations for the Army's next score, with Roberts collecting the ball and launching a kick over the top which allowed Qasevakatini to claim his second try.

The tricky Fijian completed a memorable hat-trick with a brilliant solo run that summed up the Army's attacking style. Qasevakatini outjumped Magnus as the pair went for the same lofted ball and the sapper ran rings around the Navy's frail defence, showing incredible character and strength to force himself over the line.

LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE), who formed an irrepressible partnership with Capt Paul Gittins (AMS) at centre, combined well with Satala to set up lock Capt Rob Sugden (Coldm Gds) for the Reds' eighth and final try.

A late consolation converted score from Navy captain Pascoe provided the only dampener to one of the Army's greatest Inter-Services performances. ■

Above (from left), Marching on: WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC) lines up a conversion; LCpl Chris Budgen (R Welsh) on the rampage with support from Capt Mark Lee (AGC(ALS)); Pte Apolosi Satala (Scots) breaks a tackle; LCpl Gerhard Wessels (RE) looks to offload; Fijian international fly half Pte Jack Prasad (Scots) attempts to skip past a Royal Navy tackle

ARMY 50 - 7 ROYAL NAVY

Army: Lewis; Dwyer; Budgen; Sugden; Ball; Satala; Lee; Hughes; Martin; Prasad; Magnus; Gittins; Wessels; Qasevakatini; Roberts.
Subs: Scothern; Ross-Allen; Scart; Koroiyadi; Chennell; Cummings; Saulailai.

Tries: Qasevakatini (3), Martin, Hughes, Magnus, Prasad, Sugden.
Conversions: Roberts (3), Martin, Prasad.

SoldierSport man of the match:
LCpl Chris Budgen (R Welsh, below)





Ride on: Capt Paul Adams (AGC(ETS)) has not ruled out qualifying for a future Olympic eventing tournament on eight-year-old gelding Algorithm (inset)

Horse power

Top marque steed helps Army rider gallop into world eventing elite

Interview: Stephen Tyler
Picture: Graeme Main

TURNING up for his first foray into three-day eventing's international level of competition in 2007, Capt Paul Adams felt like a go-kart driver pulling into a pit lane full of Ferraris.

For all his talent, the officer was testing his mettle against the cream of the sport's crop on a steed whose racing pedigree lagged way behind its rivals.

But while his horse may not have delivered him to the top of the podium, the experience proved invaluable and Adams has spent the ensuing two years steadily climbing the sport's world rankings.

His rise from 3,000th in 2007 to 190th today has been achieved thanks to the development of Algorithm, the eight-year-old gelding Adams believes is

destined for big things – hopefully with the Army man at the reins.

"I think ultimately he could be an Olympic horse," he told *SoldierSport*. "The horses at the top level are between 12 and 16-years-old with ten years of competitive experience so that is what we are aiming for.

"Being successful is about putting together a good squad of horses and we have had to make some decisions about how good some of ours were going to be. It is not a level playing field if you don't do that because you

end up against guys on horses that are five times better."

As important as the quality of his animal is, Adams's relentless march up the international pecking order has been equally reliant on his dedication and discipline.

Coming from a family that breeds

ponies in Hampshire's New Forest, Adams grew up around horses and became good enough to work as a self-employed riding instructor before the call of the Army led him to sign up for officer training nine years ago.

He combined the notoriously busy schedule at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst with looking after two horses and the only periods of time he has spent out of the saddle have been during two tours of Iraq.

But for all his willingness, Adams failed to break into eventing's elite until he went on attachment to a French Army unit in Fontainebleau.

Because three-day eventing has stayed true to its military roots over the Channel, Adams found himself working alongside international-standard riders who had equally high-quality horses.

"It is the third highest participative sport over there after football and rugby and at most Olympics at least one or

'Of course I would like to qualify for the Olympics'

SOLDIERSPORT'S GUIDE TO EVENTING

INVENTED to test a cavalryman's skills, the roots of eventing lay firmly in the military. The sport requires riders to demonstrate their skills in three disciplines:

● DRESSAGE

RIDERS must perform a specific series of movements under the critical gaze of a panel of expert judges who look for balance, rhythm, suppleness and the degree to which the rider and the horse work together. Each movement is scored on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the highest. Errors are especially costly in the dressage phase – three mistakes and a rider is immediately eliminated.

● CROSS COUNTRY

THE second discipline is fraught with danger as the rider and horse have to negotiate a course containing as many as 40 obstacles including solid walls, steep drops and water jumps.

Potential for injury is high and the penalties are harsh – overall scores can be badly hit by riders taking too long to get around the course or by hitting too many of the obstacles.

● SHOW JUMPING

A TECHNICAL test of fitness and athleticism as riders and horses leap over up to 20 brightly-coloured collapsable barriers in a specific order during a timed round held in an arena.

Penalties are incurred for hitting the top pole of any of the fences, horses refusing to jump and exceeding the time limit.

Riders face disqualification from the event for jumping in the wrong order, if their horse has two displays of disobedience or for falling off their horse.

The winner is the rider with the fewest penalties.



two of the French team will be from the Army," he explained.

"Being around that environment helped bring my riding on and made me realise exactly what would be required to break into the big league."

On top of the mental and physical strain of guiding his horse through the three eventing disciplines, Adams has the added pressure of knowing that his world ranking relies on gaining a steady stream of points throughout the year.

With a spring tour to Portugal recently completed and a summer season that will take in Austria, Slovakia, France and the Czech Republic due to start as this issue went to press, Adams is doing everything possible to keep his tally ticking over.

But although the strength of the British squad makes him realistic about his chances of making the 2012 Olympics in London – 15 riders are ranked within the world's top 50 – Adams has not ruled out making it to the biggest stage of all before he climbs out of the saddle for good.

"It takes a lot more points to move up the rankings once you get to the top 150 and the guys at the top have serious cash behind them, so we have to be realistic about what we can achieve," he said. "Of course I would like to qualify for the Olympics, but I am ranked 35th in the UK and you need to be in the top five to make the cut.

"All we can do is get ourselves into a position where we are as high in the rankings as possible, develop the horses and work towards that aspiration."

If Adams is to ride out in an Olympic arena in 2012 or 2016, he will need the continued support of his wife and fellow AGC officer Capt Violet Adams.

Violet, who is a keen rider herself, takes responsibility for preparing her husband's horses for events and the pair insist that their ambitions would quickly fall by the wayside if they did not work as a team.

"You can't compete without help and this is definitely a team effort between the two of us," said Paul Adams. "It's me that goes in the ring and produces a 90 second performance, but that's because of the months of work that go into it beforehand.

"I look at it using a motor racing analogy. Michael Schumacher was a fantastic driver, but unless he had a pit crew who understood his car he would never have won anything."

Although he competes in the sport's upper echelons, Adams said that eventing is readily-available to complete beginners thanks to the Army's network of saddle clubs.

And he was quick to dismiss the misconception that equitation was an officer-only sport.

"The saddle clubs are fantastic and without them my riding would have gone out of the window.

"They offer a facility that would cost a fortune on civvy street and have horses that are there specifically to help people learn how to ride.

"It's an amazing service that is there for everyone and it's crazy that it is not more widely used." ■

THE OFFICIAL BRITISH ARMY FITNESS GUIDE

LOWER BODY EXERCISES

STANDARD SQUAT

This compound exercise works the quads, glutes, hamstrings and calves.

Start with your feet hip-distance apart, toes turned slightly upwards and hands crossed over your chest. Keeping your torso as upright as possible, bend the knees, leading with the bottom to lower towards the floor.

Do not bend further than a 90 degree angle at the knees. Pause in the lowered position, then raise and repeat.

MAKE IT EASIER:

QUARTER SQUAT

Use the same technique as for the standard squat, but bend only to 45 degrees rather than 90 degrees.

MAKE IT HARDER:

SQUAT WITH POWERBAG

Start in the same stance as for the standard squat, but this time instead of having your arms crossed over your chest, cradle a Powerbag, medicine ball or weight in front of you.

Keep it close to your torso to avoid putting excessive strain on your back and perform the squat as before.

FORWARD LUNGE

This compound exercise works the quads, glutes and hamstrings. The inner thighs and hips also work to balance and stabilise you.

Start with feet together and lunge forward, allowing the back knee to travel towards the floor and the front knee to bend. Push back up through the front heel and repeat with the opposite leg.

MAKE IT EASIER:

BACKWARDS LUNGE

From a start position, lunge backwards with the right leg allowing the right knee to travel towards the floor and the left knee to bend so it is above the left ankle.

Push back up through the front heel to return to standing.

MAKE IT HARDER:

LUNGE JUMP

This challenging exercise brings in speed, coordination and explosiveness. Start in a lunge position as in the stationary lunge.

From here, leap up into the air, swapping feet midway so that you land back in a lunge position on the other leg. Alternate from leg-to-leg to complete the set.

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 www.guardianbooks.co.uk or call 0845 606 4232 and quote "Soldier"





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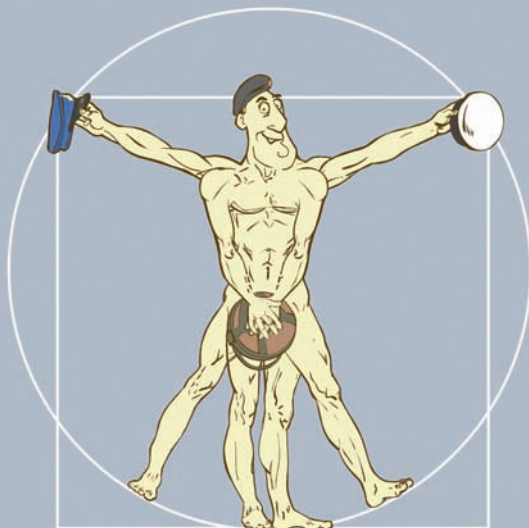
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Photo © Nick Putnam



Clockwise from left: Army players halt a British Students opponent; Cpl Lee Innes (RE) holds off a challenge; Pte Gareth Lodge (Para) goes on the rampage

Students pass Army test

Service Rugby League side taken to class by up-and-coming opposition

A GUTSY second-half performance saved the Army Rugby League first team from a crushing defeat as the Reds put up a good fight against a British Students side at Aldershot.

The home team struggled to break out of their own half during an electric opening 30 minutes during which the students ran in four tries.

But with all signs pointing towards a heavy loss, the Army showed remarkable tenacity to claw a try back through skipper Pte Gareth Lodge (Para) before the half-time whistle.

The Reds showed greater attacking intent in the final period, but two breakaway scores from the visitors brought the final score to 28-6.

Speaking after the match, Lodge praised his teammates for not letting their heads drop after the early setback.

"After the first 25 minutes we thought it was going to be a whitewash," he told *SoldierSport*. "But the guys stood

up to the task and we came out all guns blazing in the second half.

"I'm pleased with how we pulled ourselves back into the game."

The early pressure on the Army line at the Military Stadium was intense as British Students dominated possession, eventually scoring the game's first try after 12 minutes.

A second four-pointer followed as the Reds struggled to contain their opponents' free-flowing rugby. The students ability to zip the ball across their back line created gains in each phase of play and the quick passing brought a third score after 20 minutes as they moved the ball across the pitch to create an opening in the corner.

Try number four followed shortly after, but the Army did not let their heads drop and the team's first significant spell of possession was rewarded when Lodge crashed through to score under the posts, with dual-

coder Cpl Ceri Cummings (REME) adding two points from the conversion.

With the momentum in their favour, the Reds came out with renewed vigour in the second half and kept the students pegged back inside their own 22 as they attempted to further reduce the deficit.

The Army's pressure resulted in two players breaking through and touching down, only for the referee to inexplicably rule out both tries.

Further chances went begging and the visitors added two more scores in the closing minutes.

Due to players deploying on operations and going on courses, Lodge estimated that 60 soldiers will have taken their place in the Army line-up by the end of the season.

"We are always missing guys and that makes it hard to find any consistency," he added. "But we are still stronger than we were last year because we are finding a lot of new lads." ■

ATHLETIC EDGE

SOLDIERSPORT has teamed up with the UK Athletics Association (UKA) to offer readers discounted entry to England's biggest track and field meetings.

Some of the sport's biggest stars will be competing in the country throughout the summer, including at the Aviva world trials and UK championships in Birmingham from July 10-12, the Aviva

London Grand Prix on July 24-25 and the Aviva British Grand Prix in Gateshead on August 31.

To claim 20 per cent off the ticket price for these and all other major UKA events, ring 08000 556056 and quote code SOL20. Visit www.uka.org.uk for dates of other meetings.

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with the world of athletics, UKA has also launched free magazine **SPIKES**.

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SPORT SHORTS

ARMY table tennis players fell agonisingly short of ending the Royal Air Force's 26-year Inter-Services domination after losing the 2009 tournament on count-back.

Heading to Portsmouth full of confidence, the Army A team took the individual men's and women's titles through WO2 Wally Mahaffy (R Irish) and SSgt Hilary Greig (CAMUS).

The successful duo also added the mixed doubles title to their medal haul, while Army champion Pte Eric Amoah (RLC) went through the tournament undefeated until illness forced him to retire from the men's semi-final.

But despite posting their best performance for more than a quarter of a century in securing a 5-5 draw overall, the RAF retained their crown on count-back after winning just two more games than their opponents.

Army Table Tennis Association secretary WO2 John McFaul (AGC(RMP)) told *SoldierSport* that the Army squad are looking forward to launching a fresh title challenge in the 2010 championships, which will be held at Aldershot.

THE third annual Wattisham Airfield Triathlon helped raise more than £5,000 for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association Forces Help.

A strong field of 220 competitors lined up at the Suffolk base for individual, relay and team races.

The fully-subscribed event was won by SSgt Glyn Painter (REME), while Army Triathlon Association member Louise Elliot took the honours in the women's individual contest.

For information about next year's triathlon, which organisers plan to increase in size, visit www.wattishamtriathlon.co.uk

BRITISH Lions star John Bentley is among the stars due to square up to a Combined Services select team in a charity match taking place in Yorkshire early this month.

The dual-code winger will be competing in the exhibition Rugby Union match at Moortown RUFC on June 6, the 65th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

A seven-a-side tournament for the over-40s is also planned for the day, which has been organised to raise money for Help for Heroes.

Moortown club manager Debbie Sowrey said: "We've got former internationals from both codes coming as well as players who've represented the north of England, Yorkshire and all the major northern club sides."

For more information, contact Sowrey on 07910 771443 or email debbiesowrey@hotmail.com

SETTING SAIL

CHALLENGER, a 67ft steel-hulled yacht, is put through its paces in the Solent by Army personnel ahead of the launch of Exercise Transglobe.

The 12-month, round-the-world expedition gets under way in Portsmouth on July 11 and will see soldiers taking part in 13 legs alongside two other yachts – *Adventure* and *Discoverer* – crewed by Royal Navy and Royal Air Force colleagues.

The adventurous sail training exercise is being undertaken by men and women of all ranks, ages and abilities. For more information, visit www.exercisetransglobe.com



Picture: LA(PHOTO) Owen King

SPORT SHORTS

GOLDEN CENTURION

A RETIRED officer who won a gold medal at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin has celebrated his 100th birthday.

Lt Col Godfrey Rampling combined serving in the Royal Artillery with a glittering athletics career that saw him running the second leg of the 4x400m to

claim the top prize in Germany.

He also won a silver in the same event at the 1932 Games and narrowly missed out on adding individual medals in the 400m at both Olympics.

Blackheath-born Rampling, who is Britain's oldest Olympian, celebrated his birthday at a care home in Hampshire.

Sporting community pays its respects to 'truly great' Colin

Military mourns death of highly-respected boxing secretary Chapman

FINALISTS at the 2009 Army individual and inter-unit team boxing championships paid tribute to the sport's secretary Capt (Retd) Colin Chapman (inset), who died unexpectedly at the end of April.

Fifty four-year-old Chapman, who also administered canoeing and swimming during his four-and-a-half years at the Army Sport Control Board, was honoured with a minute's silence from competitors and spectators at the annual boxing finals held at Aldershot's Maida Gymnasium last month.

The event took place the day after hundreds of people had packed into Aldershot Garrison Church to pay their respects at Chapman's funeral.

In a eulogy written by Maj Jake Baker, the former RAMC recruiter was described as a "truly great, cheerful and amiable guy" who had risen through the ranks after joining the Army in 1975, eventually serving as regimental sergeant major of 22 Field Hospital before gaining a commission in 1996.

Already indelibly linked with Army boxing, the officer's name has now been given to the Chapman Memorial Cup, a new award which will be presented to the best boxer at each year's tournament. Cfn Wells (2 LSR) was the first recipient of the trophy after his 16-2 light welterweight victory over Cfn Tombs (SEAE REME) was judged to be the best of the evening.

A noisy contingent from north of the border provided additional motivation for 5 Scots' four finalists, two of who won their bouts to help the regiment claim the team title.

Defeat in the night's closing bout meant the boxing team from 1 RSME had to settle for a hard-fought second place. For more pictures, visit www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/sport ■



Picture: Graeme Main

CASH FOR CANOEING

SENIOR officer Gen Bill Moore has been honoured after he raised more than £172,000 for Service charities by completing a race in 2008 widely known as the Everest of canoeing.

Moore and race partner Judith Eastwood, of BAE Systems, collected the

cash for Help for Heroes, SSAFA Forces Help and the Army Benevolent Fund after entering the Devizes to Westminster marathon, a 125-mile non-stop race.

Now the efforts of Moore, who is currently on operations in Iraq, and his civilian counterpart have been recognised with the award of the Pfeiffer Trophy,

which is given to the team which raises the most money for charity and will be presented to the pair on June 23.

The race itself did not go without incident as Eastwood had to drop out half-way through due to injury, but Moore found a volunteer to pick up the paddle and help him complete the course.

GIRL TALK

We asked the spouses of soldiers serving with the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards about the ups and downs of life as a 'wife of'

**Allison Sharples,
married to Sgt Simon Sharples**

It's hard work because we have to deal with all the stuff behind the scenes, especially when the lads go away on operations. We can't let them know what is really going on at home, because if you do then they will worry. I don't think that wives always get the recognition that they deserve.



**Marie Mooney,
married to Sgt James Mooney**

My 15 years of Army marriage have been good, but you take the rough with the smooth. I think you need to get out and about and by having a job you have something that is yours. Of course it is very worrying when the soldiers deploy, but you have to put on a brave face for the children.



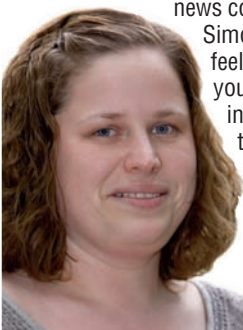
**Tina Donaldson,
married to Capt John Donaldson**

I think the sense of community is the best thing about being an Army wife. There is always someone there who is in the same boat as you. I have lived in my own house and married quarters and I definitely prefer to be on the patch as it stops you feeling isolated when they go away.



**Samantha Ryan,
married to Sgt Simon Ryan**

It is hard at times being married to a soldier but you do get by. I watch the news constantly when Simon is away as I feel that at times you get more information from the media. Every time there is a knock at the door you do get paranoid that it is going to be bad news.



**Debbie Heritage,
married to LCpl Aaron Heritage**

I like being an Army wife but it is hard when your husband goes away. The bits I like best are the moving around and seeing new places and also the fact that my husband has job security. I've been in Aldershot for three years and we'll probably be here for another three so I've got to know everyone well.



**Samantha Todd,
married to LSgt Daniel Todd**

I really enjoy it – it's a different life to civvy street because there's a really good community. You get so much support from your friends here, whereas in civilian life people come home, shut their doors and get on with it. Moving around is more difficult now as the children are at school.



**Suzanne Rodgers,
married to Pipe Maj David Rodgers**

I had no experience of the Army until I met my husband, but I do love the life. It's very difficult when he goes away. My husband is a pipe major and the last two boys who were killed were pipers – he found out while he was on leave and then had to go back so it was really difficult.



**Lindsey Perry,
married to WO2 Nick Perry**

I think it has been what I expected. I wasn't naive as to what being an Army wife was about, so for me it has been fine. Also, the current situation with the credit crunch brings home the financial stability of the Army. It's nice not to have to worry about a mortgage.



**Lynda Howell,
married to Capt Frankie Howell**

I quite enjoy my life as an Army wife – it really isn't that drastic. I have been lucky as my husband hasn't deployed that often. But when he did go away to Iraq I was watching the news constantly as it was a worry. I suppose it is hard work to begin with but I am older now and more mature.



Interviews: Samantha Chapman and Heidi Mines Pictures: Steve Dock

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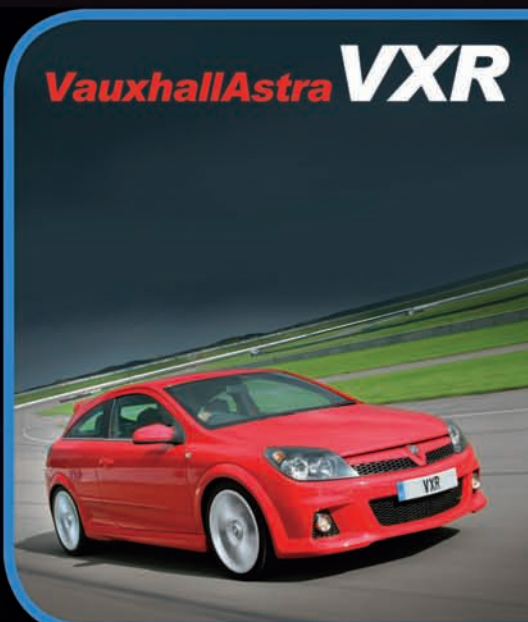
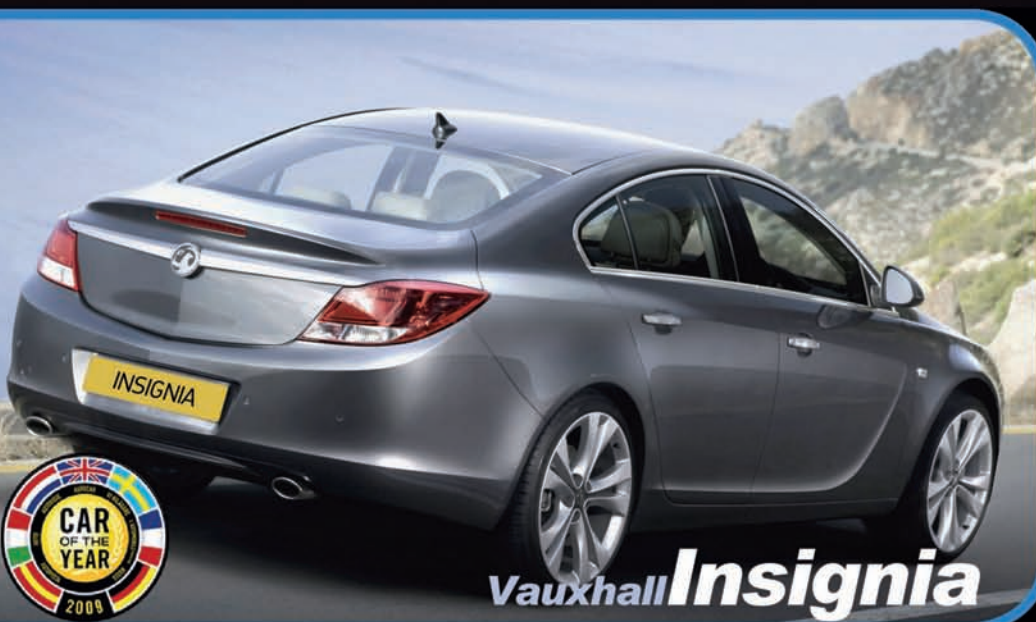
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