

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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SALUTES SAPPERS**

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ARMY

Showing a united front

AS a journalist, I have been professionally trained in the art of cynicism.

So when I visited the MoD last month to interview the Service's top brass about the latest redundancies, my view of the powers that be had already been formed.

Having spent several months on the receiving end of a steady flow of disillusioned emails about the unfairness and sadness of the reduction process, I was sure this would be yet another interview where those in charge refuse to admit how rotten it all is.

But on meeting Maj Gen James Everard and Brig Rob Nitsch (pages 8-9) I found myself genuinely empathising with the task they have been charged with.

As they began to explain the complicated process of selecting fields for redundancy, of exemptions and applications and resettlement support, I suddenly had a thought. Why do they bother?

The process of waving goodbye to loyal and talented soldiers can surely not be easy for anyone within the same organisation, especially those who have made their own sacrifices in order to serve Queen and country.

So why stick around to see it all through?

Why have they taken on this unenviable task when, let's face it, a stroll into civvy street with a less-than-shoddy pension would undoubtedly have been the easier option.

What became clear during the course of the interview was the fact that these officers have a genuine desire to get this thing right.

The openness with which they talked about the far-from-ideal but well-planned third tranche was refreshing compared to the more guarded interviews *Soldier* had experienced in earlier rounds.

These officers seem to want to execute this task in a way that honours the greatness of this organisation and, more significantly, the courage and value of the individuals within its ranks.

No matter how much we all dislike the idea of shrinking the Army, surely now is the time for those in uniform to stick together in order to see this through. ■



Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor



"This is probably the best pre-Herrick training I've received"

– Task force fine-tune their battlefield techniques (pages 36-37)

S. Goldthorpe.

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Glock stock...

Full features of the Army's newest pistol

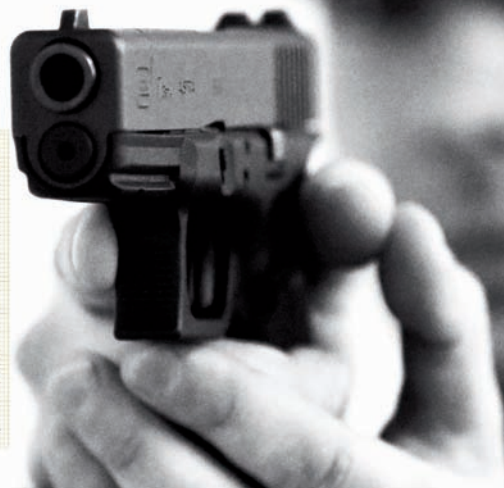
Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

Picture: Steve Dock

WITH defence contracts under ever-increasing scrutiny and a bulk order of 25,000 confirmed, the Glock 17 has much to prove to UK troops. So what difference will the weapon's technical features make to those at the sharp end?



28 FEBRUARY 2013 www.soldiermagazine.co.uk





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Report: Richard Long
Picture: Emma Miles

While some will embrace the prospect of leaving the Army, others will find it hard to let go. There are various options available. Those who apply to join the Reserves, another arm of the Army, or even a completely different part of the Armed Forces.

The Royal Marines is just one of the units recruiting at present and they are happy to consider any soldier wishing to transfer to become part of the UK Commando Force and the Royal Navy's strike response capability.

As well as joining the Reserves, there are a host of opportunities to offer - from signposts to planning operations and access to heavy weapon specialists.

We would like to see that personnel from other Services, who are thinking of transferring, know we are here and there are opportunities for them," explained Lt Col Rick Forster (pictured below), commander at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines.

There are 28 specialisations so it is not just infantry soldiers who are now looking at it. We have had individuals within combat units but, like the Army, will have to recruit. I would encourage people to look at the roles we have and what careers are on offer.

The training process is challenging but ultimately achievable and participants will spend part of the year at the facility, which is based in Lymington near Exeter.

Recruiters can get an insight into what is required in the potential Royal Marines course (PMRC), a four-day selection process that includes gun trials, endurance and assault course and a night in the field.

It is essential that the applicant has the necessary criteria, the process then involves a week of training, which runs for 25 weeks and is the longest basic training in the Army. Based on an infantry training, it involves a combination of learning a Royal Marine and then a Royal Marine Commando.

The graduate will be based on completing the course can make off that point and be straight on operations with a front line unit.

"The whole idea is based on meeting the green belt and giving the right to sell yourself as a Royal Marine Commando," Lt Col Forster told Soldier.

The process is long but it is essential for any good Commando with the right attitude and good levels of fitness. Nothing is guaranteed on our message to come and try it.



EXPLORING THE OPTIONS

SOLDIERS URGED TO CONSIDER OTHER AREAS OF THE MILITARY IF ARMY CAREERS ARE CUT SHORT

James Lambourne completed five months at the Infantry Training Centre in Colchester before working away from the British Army.

"Things didn't really work out for me and I was discharged," he explained.

There are notable differences in coming down here and I have been very impressed with the professionalism of the Royal Marines in general. They quickly dealt with my application and gave me a high level of support.

"I have really enjoyed the training and the way they have things set up. I could even be a night shift soldier before I could even be a day shift soldier. It is a thorough process."

There are training in the Army is very solid and we are learning basic military and soldiering skills. I'm now starting to understand what the role of a soldier is about and what they are doing to a high level.

Recruit Mike Barrett had previously served for two years with the British Army but moved to the Royal Marines as a job to challenge himself further.

"I joined up to get some decent training and go on operations but these opportunities are not there in the British Army," he said. Barrett said it was really good to see. They have been very impressed with the professionalism of the Royal Marines in general.

"We have been very impressed with the professionalism of the Royal Marines in general. They quickly dealt with my application and gave me a high level of support."

For further information contact: Queen's Regulations, 40 High Street, Exeter, Devon EX1 1AA. Visit www.armyrecruitment.co.uk or contact us on 01392 414388.

Read future issues for more information on military career opportunities.

"Bringing uncertainty to 27 per cent of British Army personnel is definitely challenging"

Senior officers respond as redundancy rears its head p9

"If it hadn't been for my art I wouldn't be here today"

Soldier-turned-artist puts Army experiences on canvas p30

"It's better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it"

Airborne debate heats up p63



Masters mount double defence

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Emma Miles

The Royal Marines have a reputation for being the most elite of the British Army. They are a highly trained and professional fighting force. They are a highly trained and professional fighting force.

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Reds escape prison term

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Picture: Emma Miles

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THE informer...

BRITISH TROOPS' GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE ASSET news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Picture: Steve Dock

Taking aim: A Serviceman tests out the cutting-edge Glock 17 personal protection pistol at the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich

New weapon revealed to the ranks

THE Browning pistol is to be replaced after more than 40 years in service, the Ministry of Defence has announced.

Troops in Afghanistan will be some of the first to take delivery of the Glock 17.

The weapon is around two-thirds of the weight of its one-kilogram predecessor when unloaded, easier to maintain and quicker to deploy due to the absence of an exterior safety catch.

Those using the new personal protection asset will also enjoy an increased magazine capacity, rising from 13 nine-millimetre rounds with the Browning to 17 with the Glock.

Col Peter Warden, head of the light weapons team at Defence Equipment and Support, said the announcement was great news for troops operating on the ground.

"As with cars, there is a point at which it becomes a lot more effective to replace an old weapon with a new one and the Browning is pretty much at the end of its service life," the officer explained. "It was becoming increasingly expensive to maintain so it was decided the time was right for us to replace it.

"With a lighter weight, we are doing our bit to reduce the burden on soldiers and from a combat perspective the

Glock is easier to bring into action.

"We are very pleased with the change and think it is a much more effective piece of kit."

More than 25,000 of the fourth-generation models are being supplied to the UK's Armed Forces under a £9 million contract with Yorkshire firm Viking Arms Ltd.

SSgt Matt Hodgkinson (REME), a weapons artificer at the Infantry Trials and Development Unit, told *Soldier* the testing stage soon revealed the Glock to be the better option.

During a three-day, 20,000-round trial the model required no fixing.

"It performed the best and had the least amount of issues," the Serviceman added. "We had two stoppages the whole time while the other pistols went into double figures.

"We want something that's going to be easy to repair and won't break.

"After all, the more time it's in my hands the less time it's in the user's."

Instead of having an external hammer as its safety catch, the Glock 17 Gen 4 works with a single action.

When the trigger is pulled, the internal striker is activated and this prevents any delay on first targets.

"Once troops get some time on the ranges with this they will see how easy it is to use, and how accurate," Sgt Hodgkinson continued.

Pte Jack Smith (PWRR), who tested the weapon for the first time at the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, said: "I think this is better than the Browning.

"It feels lighter and having the safety catch on the trigger means there is no fumbling around. There doesn't seem to be much recoil which allows you to get back on the target quicker."

● **Glock stock – pages 28-30**





“I HAVE WORKED WITH SOME OF THE GREATEST MUSICIANS IN THE FORCES AND THEY REALLY ARE THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE”

– HOLLAND HAILS MILITARY MAESTROS AND SUPER SAPPERS, PAGE 47



Best foot forward: Brig Rob Nitsch says the British Army will still welcome new talent

‘Recruitment must go on’

NEW talent must continue to be drawn into the ranks of the British Army, a top officer has told *Soldier*.

Assistant Chief of the General Staff Maj Gen James Everard explained that even trades highlighted for redundancies in the latest round of cuts would carry on attracting youngsters.

“Troops know this is not an organisation where you can ‘buy in’ talent,” the major general added. “Soldiers need to learn their trades.”

Head of Army Manning Brig Rob Nitsch explained: “Personnel will not see colleagues being replaced by a new recruit.

“However, that person may be fed in at the bottom of the ladder so that in a few years they are in the same

position as the individual who left.”

The brigadier said the Army had learnt lessons from the 1980s when a recruitment freeze during a time of redundancy caused lasting damage to the organisation’s balance.

“You can still see how that caused all sorts of problems,” the officer said. “It has led to us still being short of some warrant officers today as well as costing the Service around £250 million by having to extend the service of some troops as a result.”

Maj Gen Everard added: “If you are not careful, what you can end up with is frustrated, old soldiers.

“It is important that troops are not having their promotion prospects suppressed as a result of the ongoing redundancies.”

Families react to Force reduction

SOLDIERS and their loved ones have spoken out about the impact of a third tranche of redundancies on military life.

Following last month’s announcement, the Army Families Federation said troops would experience many months of “uncertainty and anxiety” before those selected to leave the Service are informed in June.

A statement from the organisation on the day of the announcement said: “The impact on Army families is so much greater than a redundancy from a civilian job, as they not only lose one wage earner (who is usually the main bread-winner), they will often have to move house, send their children to new schools and the partner’s employment is also at risk.”

The group also warned of the possibility of an increase in working

hours for soldiers who remain as additional duties are shared out.

Penny Prosser, manager of SSAFA’s Forcesline, said troops and their partners must be sure they take control in light of the announcement.

“Decisions made now may have lifelong consequences so it is vital for the whole family to be involved in talking through decisions before the transition is made to civilian life,” she said.

“There will be a lot of advice and support offered to those being made redundant. It is important that Servicemen and women understand it and start to get answers as soon as possible, particularly if they have any special circumstances.”

Full details of the redundancy process, including available support, can be found in [2013DIN01-004](#)

REDUNDANCY IN NUMBERS

18

DATE IN JUNE THAT THOSE HIGHLIGHTED IN TRANCHE THREE WILL LEARN THEIR FUTURE

91

PERCENTAGE OF APPLICANTS FROM TRANCHE ONE WHO HAVE GONE ON TO FIND EMPLOYMENT

108

NUMBER OF PAGES CONTAINED IN 2013DIN01-004, WHICH GIVES FULL DETAILS OF THE LATEST CUTS

5,300

TROOPS EXPECTED TO LEAVE THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE THIRD ROUND OF REDUCTIONS

26,000

APPROXIMATE NUMBER WHO HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED FOR POSSIBLE REDUNDANCY IN JUNE

PENSION ISSUE PERSISTS

■ **THE problem of some Servicemen and women being made redundant just before their immediate pension point will not be resolved in time for the third round of Army redundancies.**

The issue came to light following some high profile news stories last year.

Head of Army Manning Brig Rob Nitsch commented: “We continue to look at this and understand that it is hurtful to the individuals affected and the way it potentially paints the Armed Forces as a poor employer.

“However, within the limitations of the scheme we have got it has not proved possible to resolve this without impacting on other individuals.

“It’s not somewhere we would choose to be but it is where we find ourselves.”



‘We understand the uncertainty’

Top brass respond to angst over latest round of redundancies

SENIOR Army officers have responded to the concerns of Servicemen and women following news that 26,000 troops are eligible for the third round of redundancies.

Last month personnel across 250 career fields and from the rank of private to brigadier were delivered the unsettling revelation by the chain of command.

The move will result in up to 5,300 individuals departing in the coming year – the third and largest loss of soldiers to date under plans announced in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Unlike previous cuts to Armed Forces manning levels, the latest tranche does not involve any Royal Navy or Royal Air Force personnel.

Leaders say they are confident that a significant proportion of those to go will be voluntary.

“This is not a situation that we wish to find ourselves in,” admitted Assistant Chief of the General Staff, Maj Gen James Everard.

The senior officer said he “completely understood” how hard the coming months will be for those whose military careers hang in the balance until they are notified on June 18.

“I think the Army Families Federation put it very well that for many troops and their families this is indeed a sword of Damocles hanging over them,” the Serviceman (pictured near right) continued.

“There is an unbearable pressure when you discover you are liable

for redundancy; we are talking about the foundations on which soldiers’ family lives are based.”

However, the major general also added a note of reassurance.

“My gut feeling is that the number

“Bringing uncertainty to 27 per cent of British Army personnel is definitely challenging”

of applicants for redundancy will be similar if not more than what we saw in tranches one and two,” he said.

“There will be some who see this as an opportunity.”

Service chiefs identified those eligible to go by studying Army 2020 plans.

“We now know in pretty surgical detail what the future

organisation looks like and the skill sets needed within that structure,” explained Head of Army Manning Brig Rob Nitsch. “So we looked at where we have an excess of people in those areas.”

Factors such as rank, arm and length of service have all been taken into consideration by bosses.

Personnel excluded from the process this time around include those recovering from operational injuries and recent deployments.

Troops due to serve on Op Herrick 19 on the day of the announcement will also be ineligible.

However, due to the drawdown in Afghanistan (page 11) some units will not be confirmed in the Op Herrick order of battle until April this year.

That means any applicant selected for redundancy whose unit is later deployed will get a choice over whether they undertake the tour or not.

This time around soldiers serving for four years or more have been included in the cuts. Previously, all those with less than six years’ service were exempt.

Brig Nitsch (pictured left) called on all troops to show “support and understanding” for one another.

“Bringing uncertainty to 27 per cent of British Army personnel is definitely challenging,” the senior officer added. “However, we are committed to ensuring that this remains an effective process.”

Eligible soldiers who wish to leave have until March 12 to submit their applications.

● **Exploring the options**
– pages 44-45



Support to Service personnel stepped up

IMPROVEMENTS have been made to the support system for soldiers who are made redundant later this year, the Army’s head of manning has announced.

Speaking to *Soldier* following the news that 5,300 troops will leave the Service this June, Brig Rob Nitsch said lessons had been learnt from earlier rounds of cuts.

“Some personnel experienced difficulties with our online redundancy calculator and we have responded to that,” he explained.

“There was also a requirement for

further information for the chain of command which we have provided.”

Other issues identified in the first two tranches included a shortage of information targeted at families.

As a result, a brief has been produced especially for the loved ones of Servicemen and women.

The document is being made available to all units.

A simplified guide to redundancy has also been offered to serving troops in response to demand for clearer explanations of how the process works.

“We received feedback on the system which we have welcomed,” Brig Nitsch added.

“Resources to support transition have been increased and everyone who leaves the Service will be entitled to the same level of support they would have got if they had served to the end of their current military commitment.

“We have put an enormous amount of care into ensuring this process works well.”

For more information on resettlement visit www.ctp.org.uk

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Thumbs up: Good progress means 3,800 more troops will return from Helmand in 2013

Handover draws near

THE number of UK troops based in Afghanistan will reduce to around 5,200 by the end of 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron has said.

A total of 500 personnel were withdrawn in 2012 as home-grown forces took a lead role in delivering security in the country and a further 3,800 will follow suit over the next year.

Detailed work on how soldier levels will reduce is now under way.

Afghan units are already leading 80 per cent of conventional operations and more than 75 per cent of the population are protected by local forces. By mid-2013, these formations will be in control of security for the whole country.

Commenting on news of the withdrawal, Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: “This is a direct result of the success of the Afghan National Security Forces in assuming a lead role in delivering security for their people.”

“UK personnel will continue to operate alongside their counterparts, albeit in lower numbers, until combat operations cease next year.

“There remain huge challenges ahead for the Afghan people. Our combat mission is drawing to a close but our commitment to the local population is long-term.”

By the end of the year it is expected

that British troops will no longer need to routinely mentor their foreign colleagues below brigade level, meaning the numbers will drop from 9,000.

Further reductions could also follow depending on the rate of transition.

Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Sir David Richards, said: “The Afghan National Army and Police have greatly improved in the past years.

“Their capability has increased so that today they enjoy the trust of some 84 per cent of the population.

“As they develop, the efforts of our Armed Forces will continue to shift from a combat role to one that focuses on training, advice and assistance.

“That will allow us to make appropriate and measured reductions in our force levels.”

The senior officer added: “I am confident that the progress we have seen in Helmand province and across the rest of the country can be maintained and that we can complete the tasks we have been set.

“To be in the position where we are now able to commit to reducing UK force levels to around 5,200 is testament to the professionalism and courage of those personnel who have served, and continue to serve, in southern Afghanistan.”

GOOD DRILLS

FEMALE FEAT

A **SERVICEWOMAN** has been presented with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst's top accolade. OCdt Sarah Hunter-Choat is only the fourth woman in history to win the Sword of Honour, which she accepted from defence minister Philip Hammond during her commissioning ceremony at the Sovereign's Parade. The award is given to the best overall officer cadet out of 200 individuals in the institution's senior cohort.

THIEF CATCHER

PRAISE has been heaped on a physical training instructor who helped German police to catch a thief. WO2 Iain Bareham spotted a man tampering with parked vehicles outside his quarters in Herford, Germany, before challenging and restraining the criminal. His actions helped recover a bag of mobile phones, satnavs and DVD players.



CLEAN GETAWAY

A **BUCKET** of cleaning solution plunged through the roof of a garage in San Diego, America, after it came loose from a military platform. US Marine Corps spokesman Lt Tyler Balzer said the five-gallon pail had been strapped down inside an Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft but had somehow come free and slid out soon after take-off.

The shop was closed at the time and no one was injured.



THAILAND TRAFFICKING

ARMY officers in Thailand have been accused of helping to smuggle Rohingya migrants into the country. Last month the *Bangkok Post Sunday* reported that several of the country's troops from the rank of major to colonel were involved in the investigation.

BAD DRILLS



“THE GROUP WE HAVE AT THE MOMENT IS PROBABLY THE STRONGEST I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH AND WE ARE LOOKING IN DECENT SHAPE”

– WO2 NEIL GRIFFITHS PREVIEWS A TOUGH 2013 FOR ARMY MASTERS, PAGES 88-89

FRANCHISE FOCUS

■ **SOLDIERS** considering life outside the Army are being offered the opportunity to research and develop new careers at the National Franchise Exhibition.

The event on February 22 and 23 will feature displays from businesses covering a wide range of sectors including home improvement, computing, finance, retail and food and drink.

A programme of free conferences, seminars and expert advice and guidance will also be available.

Admission to the show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham costs £15 but visitors can gain free entry by using the promotional code DDB13 when pre-registering at www.franchiseinfo.co.uk

ARRC TAKES FLIGHT

■ **PERSONNEL** from Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) have held a ceremony to celebrate their role as NATO's Response Force for 2013.

Lt Gen Georgios Basiakoulis, of the Greek Rapid Deployable Corps, transferred command responsibility to Lt Gen Sir James Bucknall during the parade at Imjin Barracks, near Innsowth in Gloucestershire.

HQ ARRC qualified for duty after successfully completing a week-long evaluation at RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall last year.

TALKING TECHNOLOGY

■ **SERVICE** charity Heropreneurs has teamed up with Google to host a free technology workshop for the Armed Forces community.

Open to serving personnel, veterans and family members, the event will cover a range of topics from how to attract and understand online users to reaching and engaging with new audiences.

The industry is one of the few sectors to be recruiting at pace and charity spokesman Richard Morris said: "The mission is to fill some of the open jobs, develop business ideas and start building relationships.

"Service leavers, military spouses and veterans have leadership and problem solving skills and discipline but they also have a great understanding of social media, mobile technologies and more."

The workshop will take place from 1400 to 1600 on Tuesday, March 5 at Campus, in London's Shoreditch.

To book a space or for further information visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/event/5235698114/eorg



Scene of terror: The ruined dining facility at Al Kisik following the suicide bomber attack

Belated recognition for bravery

A FORMER Serviceman has received an award for bravery to honour his actions during a terror attack on an Australian-run Iraqi Army training camp.

Chris Harding (pictured below) was working as a contractor at the base in Al Kisik when suicide bombers penetrated the facility and detonated two trucks filled with explosives in 2004.

The devastating strike killed 50 people and the ex-soldier led a team of workers, including five Indian nationals, to rescue survivors from the wrecked buildings under a hail of mortar and rocket fire.

In the aftermath of the attack a number of coalition soldiers and an Australian civilian were honoured for their courage but Harding and his colleagues were overlooked.

The snub saw him mount a lengthy campaign for recognition and his efforts were finally rewarded when his Indian counterparts received bravery medals in 2011.

Harding was presented with his own award during a recent ceremony at Australia House in London.

"Those contractors were in the thick

of the rescue mission but received no formal acknowledgement for their actions," the former Royal Logistic Corps soldier said.

"They spent more than half an hour helping survivors and I thought people deserved to know the truth about what happened during the attack.

"So I wrote to the Australian

Government and gave them my account of events.

"While they were very helpful with my case, they said they required witness statements to confirm the events of the day.

"I made several trips to India and Europe and it took me 18 to 20 months to collect the

evidence needed.

"I was later notified that they were being honoured and from the statements gathered my role was also being recognised.

"I was pleased for those guys more than anything else.

"I went over to India when they received the medals and it was a big story over there.

"Recognition is an important part of their culture and they have now become local heroes."



A NEW satellite providing secure communications for the UK's Armed Forces has been launched into space.

Skynet 5D will benefit personnel deployed in Afghanistan and other parts of the world including the Falklands, Cyprus and on ships at sea.

The system was launched from French Guiana in South America and is the fourth satellite to be fired into orbit under a £4 billion private finance initiative with Astrium.

Skynet 5D will travel at speeds of about 6,200 miles per hour and is expected to cover around 765 million miles during its service life. Defence Secretary Philip Hammond said: "These satellites provide essential secure communication channels for our Armed Forces."





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Fully focused: Soldiers from 2 Para get to grips with the training serials at the Otterburn Ranges

Paras beat the big freeze

THE snow that brought much of the country to a grinding halt last month did not deter the soldiers of 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment from preparing for their upcoming role as the Army's rapid reaction force.

As Britain shivered some 600 personnel lived up to the Para motto "ready for anything" on Exercise Eagle's Nest at Otterburn Ranges in Northumbria.

The two-week-long serial involved live firing, manoeuvring across hostile countryside and working with fire support from artillery and helicopters.

From May the 2 Para battlegroup will become the lead unit in the Airborne Task Force (ABTF).

The formation has to be ready to deploy anywhere in the world at short notice to conduct a full range of military missions from

non-combat evacuation operations to war fighting.

Geared towards replicating the early phases of an ABTF deployment, the training began with a daylight attack that was supported by fire from Scimitar armoured reconnaissance vehicles, 105mm light guns and 81mm mortars.

A night attack, helicopter raids and a 50-mile loaded march completed the gruelling serial.

Commanding officer Lt Col Adam Dawson said: "The harsh environment of Otterburn in winter, combined with living in the field in an expeditionary style, offers a great opportunity to re-zero our basic fieldcraft.

"Working with helicopters is a key skill to develop as we build towards a credible and capable force held at very high readiness."

BOOSTED BY BECKS

■ FOOTBALLING legend David Beckham and tough-guy actor Ray Winstone have met with injured Service personnel and their families on a visit to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

During the tour, in support of the Tickets for Troops charity, the celebrity pair posed for photographs and signed autographs for patients, visitors and staff.

Speaking at the event, Beckham commented: "These brave young men and women deserve a special place in our thoughts for their courage and their dedication. They should make us all feel very proud."

Tickets For Troops chairman Lord Marland said he was "delighted" the former England star had shown his support for the UK's Armed Forces.

"We know it really makes a difference that someone like him shows so much interest in their well-being," the charity chief added.

Since it was set up three years ago, Tickets for Troops has provided more than 300,000 passes to serving military personnel and veterans.

Varied events enjoyed by the recipients include the Olympics and Paralympics, Premier League football matches, rugby, horse racing and even The Brit Awards.

The X Factor

and theatre performances have also been offered.

For further information or to register with the organisation for free passes visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk



Picture-perfect snaps sought for hacks

THE Army has launched a new-look photographic competition for 2013.

With the 2012 contest proving to be a huge success, this year's showcase features simplified categories and will be geared towards feeding the national print media's appetite to use entries in their publications.

It is hoped a well-known celebrity will present the prizes in London on October 9 and the winning images will be released to the press, displayed in the National Army Museum and made into a calendar and Christmas card.

The competition is open to Regulars, Reservists, cadets and civil servants and there are separate classes for amateurs

and professionals.

This year's categories are: professional video, multimedia, professional portrait, professional sport/adventure training, professional operational or training image, amateur portrait, amateur sport/adventure training, amateur operational or training image, amateur portfolio, professional portfolio and best overall Army PR image.

Submissions should be sent to WO1 Michael Harvey at Army Media and Communications, Army Headquarters, Monxton Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP11 8HT.

The closing date for entries is September 6.



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Scout on-track to deliver

THE Army's specialist vehicle programme is set to reach the next stage in its delivery, according to the project's developers.

General Dynamics UK said it was confident that the revolutionary Scout armoured reconnaissance platform (pictured) would meet its planned critical design review during 2013.

Col Nick Hunter, deputy programme manager at Defence Equipment and Support's combat tracks group, added: "This is the Army's highest new equipment priority for 2020 and I am delighted to see it progressing so well in its development phase."

Due to replace the Scimitar, the asset will carry three crew members and offer greater protection, firepower and situational awareness.

Last year a prototype of the platform went on display at Army Headquarters.



"In terms of lethality, it has a new 40mm automatic cannon, which is far better at defeating enemy targets than what we currently have," procurement team member Lt Col Charles Ball told *Soldier* back in November.

The recent announcement came during the official inauguration of the General Dynamics Centre for Future Army Systems by First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones.

Built at Oakdale in South Wales at a cost of £12 million, the facility houses other innovations such as open electronic architecture, which will provide power and data infrastructure to the family of specialist vehicles. The team

responsible for delivering the Bowman contract to the Armed Forces is also based there to allow the tactical communications system to be more easily integrated into the new fleet of vehicles.

MUSCLE MOVER

■ A NEW invention developed by a group of BAE Systems apprentices is set to revolutionise bed-based rehabilitation for injured troops.

BedFlex adapts kit already used during the recovery process and enables personnel to continue their exercise plans without a physiotherapist.



The resistance device works in a similar way to a rowing machine and has won the Make it in Great Britain Challenge, a competition run by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The gadget is expected to undergo further trials at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

SCHEME STALLS

■ A FUNDING initiative to help ex-Forces personnel set up their own businesses has been suspended due to high demand.

Be the Boss is run by The Royal British Legion to provide training, mentoring and financial support to Service leavers from all branches of the military.

"We have decided to suspend the scheme while we undertake a full review," a charity spokeswoman said. "No new applications will be accepted until further notice."

The project currently supports more than 1,500 beneficiaries.

Acclaim continues for Army athlete

OLYMPIC gold medallist Capt Heather Stanning (RA) has been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours for her achievements at the 2012 Games.

The officer won Britain's first gold at the sporting showcase as she and rowing partner Helen Glover dominated the field in the women's pair.

Speaking about her accolade, Capt Stanning said: "I am extremely proud and honoured to be awarded an MBE.

"This was the perfect end to an amazing year.

"I can't thank the public, the Army and my family enough for all the support they gave me in 2012."

The Servicewoman added: "I'm now looking forward to my planned deployment to Afghanistan this year, which I know will be as challenging and rewarding as everything I achieved during 2012."

A further 120 UK Armed Forces personnel were granted state honours by the Queen, 63 of whom came from the British Army.

PLEA TO FINISH FAGS

■ PERSONNEL are being encouraged to take part in No Smoking Day on March 13.

The military initiative is being staged alongside the national campaign and the slogan for this year is "swap fags for swag".

The Army health promotion team is offering sports kit to those units who show the greatest creativity in publicising the event.



...a VIP day at the races for four

ANYONE with enthusiasm for the tongue-in-cheek world of cartoons may have guessed the answers to last month's spine lines competition. Inspired by our feature on outgoing *Soldier* sketcher Dickie, (Jim) Davis, (Elzie Crisler) Segar, (Charles) Addams and (Matt) Groening are all responsible for a range of well-known cartoon characters from Popeye to The Simpsons.

This month we have teamed up with Sandown Park (www.sandown.co.uk) to offer a day at the races for four people.

The lucky winner will enjoy an afternoon of racing at the Grand Military Gold Cup Day along with three companions on March 8.

The prize includes a private table for four, with all guests enjoying a premier enclosure badge, three-course a la carte meal and traditional afternoon tea – worth a total value of around £500.

Aside from a competitive card of jumps racing, the day will feature military entertainment in aid of various Armed Forces causes. To win, tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers, plus postal address, to the usual place or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by February 20.



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Gunners gain new skills

RESERVISTS have braved the fierce Falklands weather to undertake a five-day test firing serial in the South Atlantic.

Exercise Sea Trout saw more than 100 members of 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery (Volunteers) deploy to the area around Teal Inlet to operate the 105mm light guns stationed on the islands.

With support from permanent staff, the troops honed their skills on the weapons and engaged targets across valleys, hilltops and rocks.

In addition to tough combat drills, the Reservists spent several nights on Mount Simon, a large peak in the Onion Range, and undertook a battlefield tour from San Carlos Bay to Stanley to learn more about the conditions of the 1982 conflict.

Maj Steve Samosa, commander of 208 Battery, said the package had been geared towards boosting the

gunners' skills in tough environments.

"They thoroughly enjoyed it, particularly the helicopter insertion," the officer explained. "It was a rare experience to take part in a serial which involved deployment by air, land and sea.

"The trip had the wow factor, which is great for recruitment and retention."

Exercise Sea Trout is conducted each year by a Regular or Reservist close support artillery unit.

Gnr Alan Dixon said the experience had offered troops far more than combat expertise.

"It was fascinating to see the harsh conditions that the soldiers fought in during 1982," the Serviceman said.

"The Army should put much more emphasis on these kind of battlefield tours because there is tremendous training value to be gained from looking at tactics and leadership styles from previous conflicts."



Picture: Maj Steve Samosa

Front-line friends reunited

A RESERVIST bomb disposal expert has adopted an ammunition and explosive search dog he met while on a tour of Afghanistan in 2010.

Cpl Andy Hawke from 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD) has given a loving home to Jake, a 12-year-old springer spaniel with 14 operational tours under his collar.

The pair first got to know each other on Herrick 12 and a strong bond developed between them after they witnessed a catastrophic IED incident.

When the NCO heard that his former canine comrade was about to begin his well-earned retirement he made enquiries with the Defence Animal Rehabilitation Centre.

"I wanted to replicate the sense of trust and loyalty that he had shown to me and my colleagues in Afghanistan," explained the Serviceman.

"We are honoured to have the

opportunity to give him a good home so he can see out his retirement."

Jake's rehabilitation from Army dog to pet has taken 12 months.



FITNESS FIRST

■ WOOLWICH Barracks has staged its first ever Territorial Army basic physical training instructor course.

A total of 27 students enrolled for the 11-day programme, which qualifies individuals to deliver physical training, implement health and safety policy and conduct job-related administrative tasks.

The Army Training Unit London has previously run courses at Longmoor Camp and Wellington Barracks.

GALLANT GUEST

■ **ASSOCIATE** Royal Red Cross Medal winner Lt Col Sharon Stewart (QARANC) has visited students on the latest aircrew survival training course.

The volunteer was invited to a presentation ceremony as a figure of inspiration for candidates who had successfully completed the package at RAF Cranwell.

She was awarded the medal in recognition of her efforts at the military hospital in Camp Bastion, where she strived to make Afghans feel less isolated at the facility.

During her visit the senior officer (pictured) was asked to sign the centre's wall of gallantry, which is reserved for those individuals who have done something notable in the field of survival, evasion, resistance and extraction.

Training officer Mark Fairhead said: "Lt Col Stewart was invited as the first and only TA winner of the Red Cross medal but more than that she was the first Army person to sign the wall and the first and only female to do so."



COMPANY CONSULTATION

■ THE MoD has hosted a workshop with some of the UK's largest employers to discuss proposed changes to the Reserves.

Organisations including Royal Mail, Lloyds Banking Group, Tesco and BAE Systems were asked to share their thoughts on various subjects affecting their businesses as part of the Future Reserves 2020 consultation.

The delegates discussed issues such as minimising the impact that mobilisation and deployment has on companies, rewards and incentives for employers and preventing disadvantage to Reservists in the workplace.

Seumas Kerr, integrated management systems and technical compliance director at Carillion, said the event had sent a "very positive message" about how the department intends to work with bosses.

He added: "I think the real question is can we attract enough young people who want to do it? We are all getting busier at work and our private lives are more demanding than they have been in the past and the MoD is going to be asking more of Reservists."

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Helping hand: Personnel meet members of the local community during Ex Civil Bridge

Training targets instability

PERSONNEL from the Military Stabilisation Support Group (MSSG) have completed a challenging two-week exercise in Kenya to learn more about the art of upstream conflict prevention.

Ex Civil Bridge 12 was designed to help the formation understand and respond to the underlying causes of unrest and instability before they escalate and result in violence.

The test was the first opportunity the Servicemen and women had to form part of a security assistance group, which featured a number of military components working together.

Having deployed to the British Army Training Unit Kenya, the team was tasked with gaining a greater understanding of the environment in which the camp operates and the impact it has on local communities.

Regular and Reservist specialists from the MSSG worked alongside the UK government's stabilisation unit,

staff from the Media Operations Group (Volunteers), personnel from the Royal Engineers and public health experts from the Army Medical Directorate.

“We had a broad range of capabilities and experimented with how we could work together and inform the whole development of the security assistance group,” said Col Alan Richmond, commander of the MSSG.

“It was about getting out and engaging in a different environment.

“It is something that cannot be replicated on Salisbury Plain as you don't have those cultural and linguistic issues to deal with.”

Maj Jem Blades, a Reservist with the MSSG, said the combination of different skill sets was a real advantage.

“We had a member of parliament with us and a civilian who specialised in that field so we sent them off towards the political side and other aspects of our work fell into place along similar lines,” the officer added.

SPECTRUM FOR SALE

THE Ministry of Defence is planning to auction some of its radio spectrum in the first direct sale of its kind by a government department in the UK.

The phrase refers to the waves over which all wireless communication takes place including radio, television, radar, satellite, mobile voice and data.

Under the plan, the department intends to sell around 200 megahertz of usage rights.

The sale will give private operators the chance to support the introduction of fourth-generation mobile services to people across the country.

Preparations were due to start at the beginning of this year with the auction set to be completed by the summer of 2014.

SILVER-SCREEN SOLDIERS

TWO former Army officers are looking for experienced Service leavers to provide the entertainment industry with military advisers and film extras.

Charlie Rotherham (ex-LD) and Xander Rawlins (ex-Gren Gds) founded their company, Soldier in Blue, after working as extras on the *Les Misérables* film.

Having spotted an opportunity to supply TV and film production companies with expert advice, while at the same time helping troops make the transition to a civilian career, the duo are recruiting a pool of reliable and skilled individuals from the military community.

Applications are welcome from anyone who is leaving or has recently left the Forces, as well as from the family members of serving and ex-personnel.

For further information on the scheme visit www.soldierinblue.com

CONFERENCE CALL

THE Army Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Forum is hosting a careers conference at St Hugh's College, Oxford on February 22.

Topics for the event include professional management of staff, mentoring and personality testing. For more information visit www.armylgbt.org.uk/conference

Rangers' role boosts serial security

A TEAM of elite anti-poaching rangers have been working with the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK) to provide additional security for soldiers deployed on Exercise Askari Thunder.

Archer's Post is located near the villages of two rival tribes who regularly launch deadly raids on each other's settlements to steal cattle and camels.

Kit and equipment is highly prized by both parties, along with wildlife poachers operating in the area, and small groups of men have been known to venture onto the military ranges to steal everything from webbing to ammunition.

In order to provide an extra ring of security BATUK has joined forces

with the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), who have offered men from an elite tracker squad and some of the best anti-poaching wardens in northern Kenya.

“In the event of a robbery, or an attempted robbery, they can quickly



and accurately locate people in the wilderness and hopefully speedily enough to get them to abandon whatever they are taking or to catch them,” said Maj John Cotterill, part of the BATUK staff.

“This is a capability we didn't have until the trust began working with us. It is a good deterrent.”

Jackson Lodikir (pictured), a commander of one of the ranger teams, added: “We are born in these areas so we know the people and all the water points.

“In the dry season we go to the water holes to keep checking and we see the tracks.”

In return, BATUK is making a donation to the NRT who invest the money in local community projects.

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IN MEMORIAM



SPR RICHARD WALKER (23)
28 ENGINEER REGIMENT,
ROYAL ENGINEERS
DIED JANUARY 7 – AFGHANISTAN

PERSONNEL in the Royal Engineers are mourning the loss of a promising comrade who was killed in an insider attack by a member of the Afghan National Army.

Spr Richard Walker, of 28 Engineer Regiment, was working on a construction project at Patrol Base Hazrat in Helmand province when the soldier turned his weapon on colleagues.

The incident resulted in a number of casualties, all of whom were extracted to the Camp Bastion medical facility where the UK Serviceman was pronounced dead.

The 23-year-old joined the Army in July 2008 and was posted to his unit a year later. Spr Walker deployed to Afghanistan with 73 Armoured Engineer Squadron and quickly became a popular

and well-respected member of his troop.

Lt Col Chas Story (RE), CO of 28 Engr Regt, said: "He made the most of every opportunity, both in the Army and back at home, and it was without doubt that he had a lot to offer and a bright future."

Spr Liam Ballantyne added: "Richie was an extremely caring and thoughtful individual to all around him and he immediately became a very loyal friend."

Spr Walker was a devoted father and often spoke of his love for young daughter Lilly-Faith.

His family said: "Richard held two things close to his heart – his daughter and his colleagues in the Army. A proud, patriotic man, he died doing a job he loved, supporting his friends."



KGN DAVID SHAW (23)
1ST BATTALION, THE DUKE
OF LANCASTER'S REGIMENT
DIED JANUARY 16

A SOLDIER who was utterly loyal to those he served with died in hospital two days after being shot in Helmand province.

Kgn David Shaw, of 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, was operating at a checkpoint in the Lashkar Gah district when he was wounded in an insurgent attack.

The 23-year-old was flown to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham for treatment but later passed away.

He joined the Army in February 2008 and was posted to his unit after completing the combat infantryman's course in Catterick.

Kgn Shaw deployed on Op Herrick 12 in 2010 and proved to be the voice of experience for the junior soldiers joining him on his second tour.

"Displaying nothing but professionalism and focus on the task, his ability to inspire those around him marked him out as a future leader," said Lt Col Nick Wood, CO of 1 Lancs.

"Everyone wanted to be next to David on patrol as they knew he would be there for them."

Capt Ken Neilson added: "He was always at the centre of any morale to be had and was at home chatting away to his mates as he was to the commanding officer, always polite and well-mannered but confident in expressing himself."

Kgn Shaw's family said: "David was a much-loved son and brother who was proud to have served his country with 1 Lancs.

"He loved his family and friends and would always make time for a hug for everybody."

Bradshaw's commanding role

THE Army has appointed Lt Gen Adrian Bradshaw as the new Commander Land Forces.

He succeeds Gen Sir Nick Parker in the post and as the Chief of the General Staff's deputy will be responsible for delivering the Service's principal outputs.

Lt Gen Bradshaw said: "I'm delighted to be taking command of Land Forces at this demanding and interesting time.

"Our top priority continues to be the preparation of troops for Afghanistan. We must also retain an appropriate command focus on the growing numbers of people from units and formations rostered for operations in Helmand province who will not now be required to deploy.

"For those falling off the plot for Afghanistan, we must provide demanding and stimulating preparation for the range of domestic and overseas contingencies to which the Army may be tasked to respond, always being fully prepared and ready for the unexpected.

"We must foster a culture

that encourages innovation and experimentation, allowing for mistakes to be made in training in order that things can be done right on operations."

The senior officer, who has served as a tank troop leader, intelligence officer and helicopter pilot, also stated the Force must oversee an efficient transition under Army 2020 and the smooth withdrawal of units still based in Germany.

He added: "In all of this we must protect our centre of gravity, which is the goodwill and commitment of our people, while maintaining the very highest of professional standards in all that we do.

"I know that commanders, staff and all ranks stand ready to address these multiple challenges and I relish the prospect of leading them in so doing."

Soldier will be interviewing Lt Gen Bradshaw later this month.

Anyone with questions for the new Commander Land Forces can contact the team via mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk or @soldiermagazine on Twitter.





THE BIGGER PICTURE

TROOPS from the Brigade Reconnaissance Force jump into firing positions while carrying out a joint search operation in Helmand province on Herrick 17. The mission involving soldiers from B Squadron, The Queen's Royal Lancers was to flank a Taliban firing point that had ambushed an Afghan National Army unit.

Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere (RLC)





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Mr & Mrs Allen (39 Regt RA) presenting the Winners Trophy at the Royal Artillery Gold Cup

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Glock stock...

Full features of the Army's newest pistol

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Steve Dock

WITH defence contracts under ever-increasing scrutiny and a bulk order of 25,000 confirmed, the Glock 17 has much to prove to UK troops. So what difference will the weapon's technical features make to those at the sharp end?

Glock 17 Gen 4 pistol, semi-automatic



Browning 9mm pistol, semi-automatic



Ammunition

9mm ammunition remains the same with the Glock 17 as with the Browning pistol



The robust slide is manufactured from a single piece of solid steel. A white dot at the front of the sights and a white U-shape at the rear allow quick target acquisition in varying light conditions



Full-length barrel for power and accuracy, which is guaranteed by the manufacturer for a minimum of 40,000 rounds



Long-lasting dual recoil spring has been improved from previous versions of the Austrian weapon to reduce recoil and extend its life



Three internal safety devices have removed the need for an external catch, allowing users to draw and shoot within two seconds.

Unlike its predecessor, the Glock 17 can accommodate different hand sizes thanks to interchangeable back straps. A grip with rough textured finish allows for more secure handling of the frame



Plastic polymer, steel-lined magazine has capacity for 17 rounds – four more than the Browning. Catch is reversible for left handers



New kid on the Glock

Ten things you might not know about the latest British Army pistol...

1 Although it was designed from the outset as a military weapon, the Glock 17 is now the most popular police pistol in the world.



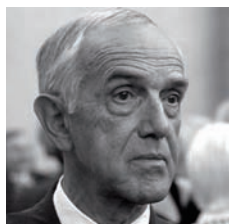
GLOCK X-RAY

2 Considered by some to be the 'grandson' of the Browning, the weapon retains many of its predecessor's best features such as the simplified short recoil system, which combines the tilting locking mechanism with the barrel.



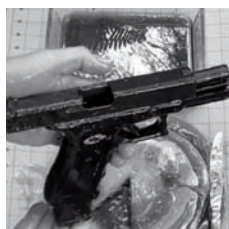
HECKLER AND KOCH VP70

3 When Glock, an Austrian tool company, first marketed the virtually unheard-of lightweight, plastic polymer frame in 1982 the media went wild with claims that the gun would be undetectable by X-ray machines. In fact, much of the pistol is made of steel and even the plastic components show clearly on modern-day airport scanners.



GASTON GLOCK

4 However, the model was certainly not the first plastic gun. Heckler and Koch produced the VP70 in 1970 (which appeared as a sci-fi pistol in *Aliens* in 1986) and Remington's Nylon 66 rifle was launched in 1959.



GLOCK TORTURE TEST

5 Gaston Glock, the founder of the weapon's manufacturer, has been quoted as saying: "In 1980, I didn't know the difference between a pistol and a revolver." Despite this inexperience, he applied engineering know-how to create one of the best side arms in history.

6 The finish on the Glock is so tough that Austrian soldiers are said to sharpen their bayonets on it. This is not recommended!

7 Users over the years have subjected the pistol to torture testing, from 150,000 rounds without cleaning or maintenance to burying it in the ground and dunking it in water, mud, honey and even maple syrup.



THE MOST POPULAR POLICE PISTOL IN THE WORLD



STAR OF ACTION MOVIES SINCE *DIE-HARD 2*, SUCH AS *THE BOURNE LEGACY*

8 The catch on the Glock's magazine, which has capacity for 17 rounds, can also be reversed to accommodate left-handed users.

9 Despite being able to meet the unit quota for the MoD contract, Glock only has 40 employees working on its pistols, thanks to the company's computer-controlled machinery. Unlike many manufacturers, all major parts are produced in-house. Only the springs are sub-contracted.

10 The Glock is well known across popular culture and can be spotted in the scenes of most action movies made since *Die Hard 2*.

Thanks to Jonathan Ferguson at the National Firearms Centre for helping to compile this fact file www.royalarmouries.org

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Pashtun makes perfect

Serials train troops in avoiding explosive desert dangers

Report: Becky Clark
Pictures: Steve Dock

THE 2014 deadline for the end of combat operations in Afghanistan may no longer seem distant but the threat to coalition and Afghan troops from improvised explosive devices remains ever-present.

Later this month the first bomb disposal personnel to deploy on Herrick 18 will travel to Helmand province.

Soldier caught up with some of those preparing to front British efforts against the hidden menace as they trained in Jordan on Exercises Pashtun Charge and Pashtun Links.



Main picture, On track: A Mastiff protected mobility vehicle is driven along the dusty desert towards a range area during Ex Pashtun Charge 5. **Left and above, Tough training:** Soldiers get to grips with the Jordan packages prior to their deployment to southern Afghanistan on Op Herrick 18

Crucial clearance



EXERCISE Pashtun Charge saw some 180 sappers from 5 Armoured Engineer Squadron, 22 Engineer Regiment making final preparations for their deployment as the Talisman route proving and clearance unit in Afghanistan.

Once in theatre, the formation will be crucial to maintaining freedom of manoeuvre for International Security Assistance Force personnel across Helmand, keeping tracks safe for civilians and military folk alike.

Squadron 2iC Capt Jess Drew explained that the troops were looking forward to the challenging role ahead.

"I got the sense that people in our unit were quite excited when

we were warned off for Talisman," said the officer.

"It's what we've been living and breathing for the last year and the guys are keen to get out of the gates and do it."

The six-week Jordanian serial tested teams both on their search procedures and the general skills they will call upon during the tour.

"This is good quality experience that they won't get anywhere else because the environment is representative of Afghanistan," added Capt Drew.

"In addition to Talisman-specific training it has given us the opportunity to go through a comprehensive package of range and team medic drills." ■

● CONSISTING of ten armoured vehicles and some 30 soldiers, a Talisman convoy will secure a passage up to two days in advance of a combat logistic patrol then maintain overwatch on the road to ensure it remains clear until the formation has passed safely.

The multiple's assets include:

- 1 The protected eyes variant of Mastiff, equipped with remote weapons systems, mast-mounted cameras and rollers.
- 2 Unmanned ground vehicles such as the Talon robot and Panama, a remotely operated Snatch Land Rover.
- 3 The T-Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle.
- 4 High mobility engineer excavator.
- 5 Buffalo protected clearance vehicles, fitted with a rummaging arm.
- 6 Searchers armed with handheld detection devices.

It's what we've been living and breathing for the last year and the guys are keen to get out of the gates and do it



Troops talk Talisman

Soldiers give their verdict on preparations for Op Herrick



LCpl Jeremy Mephram (RE)

● "During this serial you get trained how to interpret what's just background noise and what could be an IED in the ground. "Buffalo goes anywhere and is a really good piece of equipment, especially with its rummage capability.

"Once we've found and destroyed a device it's got an extendable arm that reaches out about ten metres in front of the vehicle, which allows the crew to dig remotely in the crater and make sure it's all been destroyed.

"It saves putting blokes out on the ground in the danger zone.

"And then we use the high mobility engineer excavators to reinstate the route so that the combat logistic patrol can push on with their job.

"It's is a one-man vehicle and gets a bit lonely at times, especially when engaged on a long mission."

"I'm looking forward to the tour and working with the fleet's assets"



LCpl Matthew Wellington (RE)

● "THESE Mastiffs have been fitted with mast-mounted cameras, as well as a remote weapons systems with a .50 cal to scare off any enemy forces.

"I've seen these things caught in IED strikes in Afghanistan and you do feel like they're safe as houses.

"I operate the camera - I can pop it up and spot ground signs a lot further ahead than the searchers can.

"You look down the road at the vulnerable points, as well as observing your arcs to see if there are any

insurgents around.

"With the prior knowledge I picked up when I deployed to Afghanistan as a Brimstone searcher I can distinguish what's ground sign and what's dirt.

"It comes with training and experience.

"I'm looking forward to the tour and working with the fleet's assets."

"You get trained how to interpret what's just background noise and what could be an IED in the ground"



Bdr John-Claude Fowler (RA)

● "AS a T-Hawk UAV commander, I get missions to do roof searches, patrol overwatch or route recce.

"It has both a day/night electro optic sensor and a zoom capability.

"We look for ground signs - anything that will set alarm bells ringing.

"It's fantastic and I think the whole team recognise what a brilliant piece of kit it is.

"I enjoy working with the Royal Engineers. They're a good bunch of fellas."



SSgt Colin Young (RE)

● "MY role as the troop staff sergeant means I authorise the flights for the T-Hawk and we look to use it wherever we can because it's a massive deterrent to the insurgents.

"They don't like it; They don't understand what it does and it's very loud - you can hear it from three kilometres away.

"But they've worked out how long it can fly for.

"As soon as it goes up they pop down as soon as it comes down they pop up.

"The pilots can bring it into a hover and get into ground interrogation, which they're very skilled at."

Brimstone brilliance

Hard work: Spr Garred Simpson (RE), a searcher with 50 Squadron (Search) 36 Engineer Regiment, uses a handheld detector

WHILE the sappers went through their Talisman drills, their colleagues from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Task Force were conducting their own in-depth training package elsewhere in the Jordanian desert.

Exercise Pashtun Links involved more than 600 personnel from 17 major units and was a chance for those who will soon answer to the call sign "Brimstone" to fine tune their techniques in near-perfect Afghan conditions.

Lt Col Simon Stockley, commanding officer of 101 Engineer Regiment and exercise director, described the realism that the training was offering his troops.

"Jordan gives us something very similar to what we experience in Afghanistan," he said.

"It doesn't have the green zone but it has everything else – the climate and the environment are very similar and speaking to the searchers they've been saying that the training in the UK doesn't quite provide the same preparation.

"Prepping for a summer tour under a foot of snow back on Salisbury Plain isn't ideal.

"So coming out here is very important to set those conditions because the next time they do this will be when they go out on the ground in Afghanistan itself."

Not only did the desert conditions accurately replicate Helmand province, but with many of the exercise's directing staff having just returned from Herrick 16, the troops were receiving the latest intelligence in the fight against IEDs.

Maj Tony Ballans, training major for 29 EOD and Search Group, explained: "We've been giving them currency through what we call ground truth and threat briefings that the guys have just brought back with them from theatre.

"The soldiers who are training here now know the likelihood is that they'll be doing the same when they get back."

Along with basic drills such as live firing and team medic procedures, each element of the formation conducted its specific counter-IED serials, before joining up for collective battle missions and a final test exercise.

"The tempo is fast but not unrealistic," added Maj Ballans.

"Every scenario replicates actual missions and tasks that have been conducted by soldiers on Herrick but on condensed timelines.

"They go out on a mixture of deliberate ops,

some of which can last four or five days and the final test is joining up with Exercise Pashtun Charge and the

Royal Air Force package Pashtun Vortex, which gives it a good dollop of realism."

The serial was also a rare opportunity for the whole task force to train together, before attaching separately to units across Helmand for

900

The number of personnel training in Jordan as part of Exercises Pashtun Charge, Pashtun Links and RAF serial Pashtun Vortex



the duration of their tour.

Among the troops taking part were soldiers from the Royal Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Intelligence Corps, Royal Military Police and Royal Army Veterinary Corps.

Dog handler Pte Dale Shepherd (RAVC) described how he was making the most of the opportunity to build up a relationship with his high assurance search dog, four year-old Belgian Malinois Teepee.

"This is our second exercise together and every day seems to be getting better and better," he explained.

"We've been going through our drills, including practising our 'grand nationaling' – climbing over obstacles – with the dogs.

"Some of the handlers haven't had much experience doing that and it also helps the other soldiers because they need to get hands-on with the dogs and bring them down as well.

"It's difficult for us to set up compounds like this at home so we can practise it. But what we can work on is lifting the dogs up, making them calm and giving them a treat when it's over to get them used to it and so that they associate it with being rewarded."

Sgt Daz Butler (AGC (RMP)), a member of the weapons intelligence specialists company, explained what role his unit plays in the task force.

"We carry out exploitation of any IED components retrieved," he said.

"We've been concentrating on our own training and where possible joining up with the search teams as we would do in theatre to discover how they operate.

"That has proved to be a really useful experience.

"This is probably the best pre-Herrick training I've received – it's about as realistic as it gets. The terrain is sandy, dirty and gritty."

While the focus of the package was to prepare those deploying on Herrick 18, Lt Col Stockley said the task force already has one eye on contingency missions.

"When you look at what's going on in the world, the future of conflict is likely to be in an urban environment, with a greater emphasis on deterrence and intervention-type operations," explained the officer.

"As part of this exercise we're teaching the Jordanian Army some of our tactics and skills so they can make use of that.

"There's every chance we'll have to do that elsewhere in the world so its brilliant training from that perspective, working with a foreign nation and different cultures.

"And while we don't get an urban environment here because it's desert, we do get to see what 'right' looks like in a more straightforward setting.

"Because the guys have got these skills welded into their minds and the muscle memory that goes with it, we can then start adding complexity into the training as operations in Afghanistan begin to draw down.

"We're keen that we don't lose any of the lessons we've learnt over the past five years in the counter-IED battle." ■

"This is our second exercise together and every day seems to be getting better and better"

Pte Dale Shepherd (RAVC)



Pashtun preparations: LCpl Paul Armbuster (RLC), a destroyer-operator with 11 EOD Regiment, shows colleagues from other British Army units how the remote-controlled Wheelbarrow 8B EOD robot functions



Dogged determination: A soldier releases canine Teepee during a compound perimeter search



Thinking through threat: Capt Alasdair Hein (RE) demonstrates the disruptor to Jordanian troops



Lifesaving lessons: WO2 Andrew Willoughby (REME, pictured right) explains how to control the Dragon Runner bomb disposal robot to Lt Paul Kennedy (RE), a Herrick search adviser, during Ex Pashtun Links



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HUSKY HEAVEN

**Troops traverse
Canada's frozen lakes
with canine companions**

**Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main**

GLIDING over glistening snow with a pack of huskies at your feet and the Rocky Mountains looming in the distance is surely an experience that features high on many people's bucket list.

Dog sledding is one of those pipe-dream scenarios from the pages of travel magazines that most will never get the chance to enjoy.

However, the mesmerising activity is undertaken by a significant number of military personnel who are posted to Canada during the winter and by the troops' own admission, the experience is helping to set the Army apart from other employers.

All soldiers who step onto the wooden sleighs this season will be on a break from the winter rehabilitation programme at the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS), where vehicles and equipment for Exercise Prairie Thunder are being repaired.

After 12-hour shifts fixing armoured vehicles and electronic systems, a trip to Trails End Camp, the Service's prized adventurous training centre, serves to break up the transatlantic deployment. >>



>> Joining troops on the frozen water of Alberta's Spray Lakes, *Soldier* nevertheless found the experience to be a significantly challenging one for those taking part.

"Dog sledding is not a bunch of lads having a rest while being pulled around the snow," emphasised Maj Rab Black (RAPTC), officer commanding Trails End Camp.

"It is one of the hardest activities going because you may be operating in deep snow, often dragging a sled, and the dogs will not work for you unless you build a rapport with them."

Those who sign up to the five-day adventure operated by Russell Donald's Mad Dogs and Englishmen company learn how to handle and care for the canines as well as operate alongside them.

Working in temperatures ranging from 4 to -30 degrees Celsius, military personnel need to be physically and mentally tough enough to endure expeditions of up to 40km.

"It's a steep learning curve for the guys," explained Donald, a British ex-pat who set up home in the outdoor haven more than 20 years ago.

"When you walk into a kennel with 100 dogs barking at you it can be a daunting experience but this is about building confidence and relationships.

"It's the job of the guides and the guys to keep the animals happy so working long days on steep terrain can take its toll on soldiers."

As soon as the howling dogs are unloaded from their trucks and tied to reins they pull powerfully on their leashes, showing they are ready to work.

Moving up icy hills and through snowstorms,

Servicemen and women must keep their wits about them at all times.

The drivers have brakes and commands such as "easy" at their disposal to slow down their four-legged companions or "whoa" to bring them to a complete halt.

"The huskies just want to run and run, so if a sled's brake is off it will keep moving straight ahead," added Donald.

"The lads need to keep an eye on the navigation and always be aware of the canines' welfare."

Following his stint on the sought-after mini-expedition, Cfn Ross Meats (REME) said: "To those troops who haven't done it dog sledding might look like a jolly with a few days away from BATUS but it's actually hard work because you have to look after the animals and all your kit.

"You get up early in the morning and the dogs are all buzzing, which is great to see, and then you get out on the lakes."

The engineer from 3 Close Support Battalion, who is far more used to working with AS90s than animals, added: "We spent a couple of nights out in the Rockies camping, seeing the wildlife and

undertaking activities I would never get a chance to do outside the Army.

"It's something you certainly wouldn't be experiencing in England – a proper once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

In addition to racing along on sleds, those who are proficient on the ice can try skijoring, an activity where troops are pulled along by one or two dogs while balancing on Nordic skis.

"This is something that is offered in very few places in the world," the company founder proudly commented.

"You need to be able to stand up otherwise the dogs will just shut down – it's great fun but hard work at the same time."

Given the uniqueness of this exciting activity, coupled with the spectacular backdrop its participants enjoy, the winter experience is understandably a very popular one among Armed Forces personnel.

But Maj Black admitted the package is under the same spotlight as other non-operational areas of the Services – not least because it is one of the most expensive pursuits that the British Army funds.

However, he is a firm advocate of the value of

‘The lads need to keep an eye on the navigation and always be aware of the canines' welfare’



the unique pursuit.

"This is something most people in the world will never do and soldiers get to experience the uncertainty of not knowing how they will interact with the animals," the officer said.

"Personnel wake up in -20 degree conditions to look after a rowdy pack and that in itself is a considerable challenge."

When it comes to finding an activity that pushes staff to their limits in an awe-inspiring environment, most employers would struggle to beat dog sledding.

Providing fun and promoting commitment to Queen and country, the British Army is also using this pastime to equip troops with the skill and stamina necessary to handle the most unforgiving of environments. ■



Mushers on the move: Teams of huskies pull sleds carrying troops and civilian instructors across the frozen Spray Lakes in Alberta, Canada

WITHOUT the top-of-the-range gear donned by troops during their adrenalin-fuelled outdoor escapades, it would be impossible to confront the challenges of the freezing Rocky Mountains.

It is therefore no accident that the stores at Trails End Camp, the home of adventurous training in Canada, have one of the most comprehensive kit lists of the Armed Forces.

After a quick rummage around the facility, *Soldier* piled all the clothing we could find onto unsuspecting Pte Arron Richardson (RLC) to discover exactly what is required to undertake the daring winter activities on offer across the pond.

● **OUTER-SHELL GORE-TEX JACKET**

— a completely waterproof layer to be worn over other coats.

● **SOFT-SHELL JACKET** — acts as a wind-stopper to provide warmth but is not waterproof.

● **FLEECE JACKET** — worn for warmth.

● **GENERAL CLIMBING HELMET**

— made from hard-shell plastic to protect from rocks, debris and falling ice.

● **KERNMANTLE ROPE** — used for ice climbing. This kit is dynamic instead of static, which enables it to absorb the energy of a fall.

● **ICE AXE** — a pair of these are essential for ice climbing. They are used to hit into and hook onto the ice, to enable users to pull themselves up.

● **SNOW SHOE** — allows users to walk in deep snow by spreading their weight over a large area.

● **FLEECE TROUSER** — with Gore-Tex waterproof salopettes to provide warmth while keeping the participant dry.

● **SKI TOURING BOOT** — another essential item. This type of boot can be used for any form of skiing.

● **SKI HELMET** — with padded lining for comfort and ear protection to guard against cold temperatures. A peaked front protects eyes from glaring sunshine.

● **SKI GOGGLES** — category three or four to block out harmful UV rays. The sun reflects off the snow and without decent eye protection, could result in headaches and/or snow blindness.

● **HARNES** — essential for climbing. Everything troops need hangs from this and it is used to connect the climber to a rope.

● **BELAY** — the standard safety feature for any climber. Rope threads through the device, which locks it off to prevent the user falling.

● **QUICK DRAW** — allows a climbing rope to run freely through belay devices while leading. It serves as protection for the lead climber if he or she falls.

● **CARABINER** — a metal loop with a sprung gate used to quickly and reversibly connect components. It can clip on to any rope and is used with all items of climbing kit.

● **SLING** — used to make runners for setting up belays.

● **GORE-TEX GLOVES** — an essential piece of kit for Canada. Without hand protection troops cannot take part in winter adventurous training.

● **ICE SCREW** — for setting up anchor points when climbing ice. If leading, you can put one of these in place in order to put a quick draw in and feed rope through.

● **NORDIC SKI** — long, thin skis, designed to distribute the user's weight to allow for quick movement. Used by cross-country adventurers but not Alpine.

● **TECHNICAL WINTER MOUNTAINEERING BOOT** — stiff-soled, waterproof footwear that can be used with crampons. These are essential for working in cold, icy conditions.

● **CRAMPONS** — vital for walking and climbing on ice. Sharp points made from strong metal are used to gain traction.

KITTED OUT

A SNEAKY PEAK INSIDE ONE OF THE ARMY'S MOST COMPREHENSIVE CLOTHING STORES

**The partners who grieve,
The injured who suffer,
The families who struggle,
The veterans who remember,
The aircrew who fly,
The children who wait,
The homeless who shiver,
The seamen who sail,
The unemployed who despair,
The soldiers who fight,
The disabled who strive,
The heroes who serve.
We help them all.**

Shoulder to shoulder with all who Serve

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Reg. Charity No. 219279



Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

WITH thousands of Service personnel facing the possibility of redundancy this June, focus will inevitably shift to future opportunities outside their current role.

While some will embrace the prospect of life on civvy street others will find turning their backs on a career in uniform a bitter pill to swallow.

For those suffering such thoughts all is not lost. There are various options available.

Troops can apply to join the Reserves, another area of the Army or even a completely different part of the Armed Forces.

The Royal Marines is just one of the units recruiting at pace and they are happy to consider any soldiers pondering a transfer to become part of the UK's Commando Force and the Royal Navy's crisis response capability.

As well as being a Royal Marine, there are a host of specialisations on offer – from signallers to physical training instructors and aircrew to heavy weapon specialists.

"We want to make sure that personnel from other Services who are thinking of transferring know we are here and there are opportunities for them," explained Lt Col Rob Forster (pictured below), corps colonel at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines.

"There are 28 specialisations so it is not just Infantry soldiers who we are looking at.

"We have had redundancies within certain ranks but, like the Army, still have to recruit. I would encourage people to look at the roles we have and what careers are on offer."

The training process is challenging but ultimately achievable and packages run all year round at the facility, which is based in Lympstone near Exeter.

Newcomers can gain an insight into what is required via the potential Royal Marines course (PRMC), a four-day selection process that includes gym tests, endurance and assault courses and a night in the field.

If successful and the applicant fulfils the necessary criteria, the process then switches to recruit training, which runs for 32 weeks and is the longest basic training in the world.

Based on an Infantry syllabus, it coaches a candidate to become a Royal Marine and then a Royal Marines Commando.

The grounding is so thorough that those completing the course can walk off the parade square and go straight on operations with a front-line unit.

"The whole ethos is based on earning the green beret and gaining the right to call yourself a Royal Marines Commando," Lt Col Forster told *Soldier*.

"The process is long but it is eminently doable for any good

Serviceman with the right attitude and good levels of fitness. Nothing is guaranteed so our message is 'come and try it'.

'THERE ARE 28 SPECIALISATIONS SO IT IS NOT JUST INFANTRY SOLDIERS WHO WE ARE LOOKING AT'

"There has perhaps been a belief that Royal Marines Commandos have an aura about them but we do not think that is the case.

"The basic training we offer is achievable and progressive. It is physically and mentally demanding but it is all possible."

Individuals thinking about transferring are considered on a case-by-case basis which takes into account previous Service experience and rank.

In broad outline, a soldier who has completed junior Brecon would be expected to pass the all arms commando course followed by specialisation packages, while others may be required to undertake some or all of the recruit training.

Opportunities also exist for those considering a move to the Royal Marines Reserve, where candidates undertake a similar course syllabus to their Regular counterparts, albeit over a greater time span.

With a career in the Forces proving to be a popular option there was no shortage of recruits in action during *Soldier's* visit to the Devon-based facility.

James Lainsbury completed five months at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick before walking away from the British Army.

"Things didn't really work out for me and I was discharged," he explained.

"There are notable differences in coming down here and I have been very impressed with the professionalism of the Royal

Navy in general. They quickly dealt with my application and gave me a fresh start.

"I have really enjoyed the soldiering side of things but I had to go away and do my key stage three maths before I could even be interviewed. It is a thorough process.

"Phase one training in the Army is very similar and we are learning basic infantry and soldiering skills. I'm now starting to understand what the 'state of mind' ethos is all about and things are done to a high level."

Recruit Mick Barrett had previously served for two years with the Irish Army but moved to the Royal Marines in a bid to challenge himself further.

"I joined up to get some decent training and go on operations but those opportunities are just not there in the Irish Army," he said.

"I saw an advertisement for the Royal Marines and it really appealed to me. They have a professional outlook and have a great reputation within the Forces.

"The training is tough but it is good. As each week passes it is a great achievement.

"It is challenging but very rewarding."

While redundancies will inevitably hit hard in some quarters it is reassuring to know that the rewards of military life can still be gained, albeit in new environments.

Any soldiers thinking of making the move to another area of the military should be reassured that the background and training provided by the British Army will help them considerably in the future. ■

● Read future issues for more information on military career opportunities



● For further information consult Queen's Regulations, chapter nine, part four and AGAI volume two, chapter 48, visit www.royalmarines.mod.uk/careers or call the Corps Colonel's Department on 01392 414389





EXPLORING THE OPTIONS

**SOLDIERS URGED TO CONSIDER
OTHER AREAS OF THE MILITARY
IF ARMY CAREERS ARE CUT SHORT**

Commando spirit: Candidates undertake the four-day potential Royal Marines course while recruits battle through their training in Lympstone, Devon



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Skills for Logistics and the Logistics Guild have launched a new Government backed initiative that sees companies offering a 2-week work placement and feedback to Service leavers.

Interview: Sarah Goldthorpe

FAMED the world over for his show-stopping performances, jazz pianist Jools Holland is undoubtedly a role model for many military musicians.

However, the *Hootenanny* presenter says it is British troops who have served to inspire him since he became honorary colonel of 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) last year.

"I was incredibly flattered to be asked," the star told *Soldier* in an exclusive interview.

"As patron of the Royal Engineers Museum I have attended various corps dinners and each time have been fortunate enough to sit next to some tremendously interesting people in a completely different sphere of work to me.

"During those discussions I learnt a great deal from them about their approach to getting things done."

On accepting what is his first military appointment, Holland met with members of 21 Field Squadron (EOD) ahead of their deployment on Op Herrick as part of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Task Force.

He watched an equipment demonstration, tried on body armour and paid tribute to the "incredible" level of concentration shown by troops operating the sophisticated kit.

"The Royal Engineers are the most fantastic corps on earth but not the most glamorous," Holland admitted.

"I have got a big band and in some ways that's like trying to organise an Army. But the sort of nerves and pressure that 101 are dealing with is like nothing I do – looking out for their friends and colleagues in truly difficult and challenging conditions."

So what role does music play in the Armed Forces? And does Holland think it should remain key to the Service of 2020?

"Military music is as important

as flags and cap badges," the 55-year-old celebrity explained.

"It defines regiments and goes back as long as there has been an Army.

"When you see the Trooping of the Colour and hear that music it is a magical experience; something you can't quite describe.

"For people who are ill or disabled it can help to liberate them from their condition as well as being used to galvanise feelings of courage and unity when troops go into battle.

"The standard of music in the Army is amazing. I have worked with some of the greatest musicians in the Forces and they really are the most extraordinary people – brilliant players and very versatile."

Asked what 2013 has in store for him while members of his regiment patrol Helmand province, the busy artist revealed: "I will continue touring with my orchestra and *Later with...* will start again in the spring.

"I shall also look forward to meeting with 101 Regiment as much as I can." ■

Mastering another instrument: Jools Holland, honorary colonel of 101 Engr Regt (EOD), was taught how to operate a handheld detector by Cpl Ian McCarthy (RE) during a visit to Carver Barracks, Wimbish

"The standard of music in the Army is amazing"



Musical marvel

Star salutes military maestros

Army Adopters

Personnel reveal strenuous but satisfying path to parenthood

Report: Becky Clark
Picture: Steve Dock

CHOOSING to adopt a child is a major decision for anyone, but for military couples the journey to parenthood can be even more of an uphill struggle.

Perceiving soldiers as unsuitable candidates, and Armed Forces life too unpredictable and disciplinarian, adoption agencies often decide it best to place youngsters elsewhere.

However, since the 1960s SSAFA Forces Help's adoption team has worked tirelessly to assist Service families in overcoming these obstacles and to challenge the all-too-frequent misconceptions about their suitability as parents.

Originally set up to rehome relinquished babies from the military community, the organisation expanded its work in 2000 to include general adoption.

Since then staff have found "forever families" for more than 125 youngsters.

Corienne Strange, who manages SSAFA's 12-strong team of social workers, told *Soldier* that far from being a drawback, military careers give adopters attributes which make them great potential guardians.

"Some false impressions are understandable because Army families often move around and of course local authorities are concerned about the impact on a child who has already experienced instability," the civvy explained.

"But people are now understanding that it's not just about the postings, it's about what else is gained through Service life – teamwork, resilience and the capacity to problem-solve and ask for support when it is needed.

"This is all stuff we've been saying for years and years."

Armed Forces personnel can choose to adopt through SSAFA or their local authority. Those considering very young children or babies are advised to do the

latter because agencies prefer to place infants within their region first.

However, opting for that route can bring mixed results.

"It varies from area to area," explained Mrs Strange. "There are some fantastic local authorities and others that aren't so good.

"We do find that some military personnel are turned down point blank.

"Other bodies come back to us time and time again because they recognise the commitment our adopters show."

The assessment period for all prospective parents is undeniably demanding and the added complexities of Service life mean the SSAFA approach has to be flexible and versatile.

Postings, pre-deployment training and operational tours all impact on the process.

"As an agency, we work with troops during their most unstable times to ensure maximum security once a child is placed in their care," added the charity worker.

"All adopters are brilliant by the nature of what they're doing but military personnel have additional demands on their time.

"There are periods when it's difficult for them to focus. We've even had people attending the four-day preparation course during rest and recuperation."

Troops may have more upheaval to contend with than their civilian counterparts but in the past have proved willing to take on older, difficult-to-place youngsters.

And with half of children in the UK care system aged ten years old or over, there is an urgent need for individuals prepared to care for them.

Such dedication on the part of soldiers has already given many a second chance in life.

"I think a lot of us take growing up in a loving family environment for granted," continued Mrs Strange.

"But without the outstanding commitment of our adopters and the SSAFA service, that is something that could remain beyond the reach of many youngsters." ■

'I think a lot of us take growing up in a loving family for granted'



Who can adopt?

- SSAFA Forces Help's adoption service does not exclude anyone based on gender, religion, ethnicity, marital status or sexual orientation.
- Successful adopters include married couples, single carers and couples in civil partnerships.
- The time between approval and placing a child can be as short as six months with the organisation.
- In addition, the government has announced plans to speed up the adoption process.

● For further information visit www.ssafa.org.uk/how-we-help/adoption or call 020 7463 9326

Lessons in love

MARK and Karen (pictured left) completed the legal adoption of their three-year old son Tom* at the end of last month.

A ceremony in court and a quiet gathering for friends and family marked the final step in a journey that began in 2009.

Mark – an Army nurse whose cap badge, surname and rank we have omitted to protect his new son's identity – described the process as challenging.

"We'd looked into it years ago but for a number of reasons such as postings we didn't pursue it properly until July 2009," he said. "Tom came to us two years later in October 2011.

"The final review took place in September last year and then it was just a case of waiting for the legal aspects to be finalised."

Prospective adopters undergo a thorough series of assessments and courses, both individually and as a couple.

While the approval period can be notoriously daunting, the Serviceman understands why it is necessary.

"We are caring for a traumatised child so the training looks not just

at your basic parenting skills but how you would cope with difficult behaviours," he added.

"The system is very personal but everything's done for a reason and it's explained at every stage of the process.

"You'll be the advocate for the child for its whole life so you need to be tested to the limit.

"I work as an accident and emergency nurse and thought I'd seen it all but some of the stories you hear about youngsters who are put into care are horrific," continued the 42-year-old.

"You just can't understand how someone could treat a child that way.

"The training and understanding you need to cope with that really counts."

In addition to an extensive reading list, parents-to-be must be prepared to talk about their own upbringing.

"SSAFA probably know us more thoroughly than our friends and family now," Mark admitted.

"And as a couple we've talked about stuff we probably wouldn't have thought to discuss so it's brought us closer together."

Throughout the process, the pair were given guidance and support by one of the charity's dedicated caseworkers.

Karen, a former MoD civil servant, described how SSAFA caters for everything that Service life can throw at potential military adopters.

"They recognise how much flexibility we need," said the 43-year-old.

"We had two operational deployments and one move during two years so the continuity you get with them is an absolute plus factor.

"We met our social worker on the first training course and

she's been with us all the way through. It's a big advantage.

"Talking to non-military families going through the same thing, we realise the support we've had has been much better.

"You need help afterwards too because you don't know what will happen in the future.

"For example, if the child has had foetal alcohol syndrome you are unsure about what the long-term effects might be.

"The social workers will check in with us every so often to make sure everything is going well.

"Maybe one day Tom will want to know his biological family too. We just don't know but we've been open and honest with him from the very start and we'll continue to answer any questions he has as best we can."

Despite the challenges of becoming parents to an adopted child, the rewards of finally being a family unit far outweigh any difficulties encountered by this couple along the way.

"The bond we have is strong," Mark said.

"When Tom greets us at the top of the stairs in the morning, wearing his little toy glasses and saying 'morning mummy and daddy' it's absolutely fantastic."

(*not his real name)





ART Attack

The former soldier whose Army encounters are helping him take the creative world by storm

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Graeme Main

FROM serving in Iraq to venting his feelings on canvas, Adjani Okpu-Egbe may have left the Service less than six months ago but already his life has taken a refreshing new direction.

The former member of the Adjutant General's Corps (Staff and Personnel Support) departed in September due to health problems caused by an eye condition but despite the medical setback he is determined to become a professional artist – and one with an alternative outlook.

Soldier found the ex-private inside a small convenience store on a vibrant street in Brixton, London, where in cramped conditions he was delicately adding the finishing touches to his latest work on canvas.

"A big studio is nice if you can afford it but all I need is space to create my art," the talented Okpu-Egbe explained.

The 33-year-old was injured in 2007 while serving on Op Brookdale in Iraq and from that moment on he struggled with his vision, which led to declining fitness levels.

"Because of my eyes I became depressed," the veteran conceded.

"I thought I could manage but it got worse and if it hadn't been for my art and my baby daughter I wouldn't be here today."

While attached to 4 Logistic



Support Regiment, the wounded soldier found that he enjoyed painting and sketching and that he had an untapped gift.

"One day I was lying on my bed at 0200 and realised I had produced a sketch but couldn't remember doing it," he recalled. "But I was feeling so fresh and much better about myself. >>





<< "From that moment I thought I should start drawing more so just took it from there."

Beginning with landscapes and moving on to a technique known as observation expressionism, the softly-spoken Cameroonian found solace in producing bold images.

"Afro-surrealist expressionism is what I've focused on and it's the best therapy I have experienced," the artist added.

"Nobody told me it would help – I discovered it myself."

Following a debut exhibition at his Abingdon barracks while still serving, Okpu-Egbe is gradually being acknowledged as an emerging talent on the world stage.

With a solo display at the Mok Space Gallery on London's Museum Street under his belt as well as a number of successful group

exhibitions in New York and Los Angeles, this individual is drawing mass attention.

"My work seems to be going down well in the US and I've got 34,000 followers on my Facebook page," the former Serviceman enthused.

Working in a space just about big enough for a sketching table, Okpu-Egbe now produces art that buyers are happy to spend thousands of

pounds on.

"I just do things automatically; sometimes I sketch and sometimes I go straight in with paint," he added.

"Occasionally I know exactly what I want and it's conceptual; other times it just happens."

The stark images that result often contain complex

messages but Okpu-Egbe says onlookers should cast their own opinions on his pieces.

"I prefer not to explain every part of what my work means because that leaves the audience to decide on their own meanings," he said.

"Art can and should mean different things to different people."

The ex-soldier's inspiration comes mainly from his own experiences – particularly his upbringing in Africa and encounters while serving in the British Army.

"There's a lot of screaming in my work," Okpu-Egbe admitted.

"Most of my creations are autobiographical. I didn't witness horrific scenes but I know people that did and sometimes think 'that could have been me'."

The influence of Service life and military personnel remains a strong theme in the images.

"I was at London Waterloo

recently and saw someone I hadn't seen since basic training," the veteran added, recalling a moving exchange with a former Army comrade.

"He was only 16 when he joined but he wasn't that young person anymore and wasn't excited to see me, which seemed strange.

"When I looked back at him after walking away I noticed he was on prosthetic limbs.

"It killed me inside to see that and I just went home and started painting straight away.

"I was so disturbed about what had happened to that boy that I needed immediate therapy."

Okpu-Egbe's striking methods with acrylic paint were showcased by the BBC during the 2012 Diamond Jubilee celebrations; he was one of 20 artists chosen to depict the Thames Pageant.

An exhibition of the pieces will be staged by the broadcasting

institution later this year.

"The Queen has played an amazing role in the empowerment and emancipation of women; she opened the door for the next generation of female leaders and I tried to portray that in my own way," said the artist, whose paintings are pictured left.

However, despite having a growing number of followers Okpu-Egbe is by no means basking in untold riches.

He is currently residing in Jackson House, a shelter provided by The Royal British Legion, due to his inability to cover the costs of accommodation and storage for his impressive artwork.

"All I need is support to have a proper place to paint from," said the optimistic former soldier.

"I am hoping something will happen on the back of the successful exhibition – I don't want my work to be kept under wraps, it's been created to put on show.

"I now need to find my way in the civilian world." ■

● To see more of Adjani Okpu-Egbe's artwork log on to www.adjaniokpuegbe.com or visit his self-titled Facebook page.

'Art can and should mean many different things to different people'





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SUBSCRIBER SADNESS

■ AS a *Soldier* subscriber of long standing, since 1971 in fact, may I wish you and your staff a prosperous 2013.

I read the magazine with great pleasure every month and as I have almost a complete collection of the publication since 1947, I have seen how it has evolved over the years.

So far I have never been disappointed with the alterations made to the magazine but I do feel sad to see so many old regiments fading away from the British Army one after the other as a result of political decisions.

In my work I have been very close to military matters and visited many Service establishments across the world so of course I understand that changes have to come.

I am still quite young so hope to enjoy the magazine for years to come. – Bjorn Martensson, Sweden.

Pension waiting game

WRITE to complain about the way my pension has been dealt with.

I left the Army after 36 years' service on November 16, 2012 and assumed that after filling in the correct paperwork, my pension would come through automatically in due course.

Not the case. Having heard nothing from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) by December 7, 2012, I decided to make contact with them.

On calling I was told that my pension was on hold because there was an old application on divorce sitting on it which had not been actioned.

After explaining that there was no divorce action taken I was informed that my case would have to be referred and could take ten days to accomplish.

At this stage I was understandably becoming annoyed but decided to give them a chance to sort it out as they were still within the 30 days (not working) stated on their forms.

About 30 minutes later I got a call from SPVA saying that the problem had been resolved in a single telephone call.

Question one: why did it take a call from me to prompt someone into action?

Question two: if this could have been sorted so quickly how come it hadn't been done before?

To date I am still not in possession of the pension I worked hard for and Xfinity Paymaster are not in receipt of my details so this is now placing yet another delay on the payment.

They put me in contact with SPVA again who say they processed my pension and sent it in the post to Xfinity.

Come on people, we're in the age of the

electronic system – one which the Army has been shoving down my throat for the past few years

I am absolutely amazed at the lack of clarity in all this.

If I had been a young inexperienced soldier with no money or any means of support I could have been relying on this cash as my lifeline and may now be looking at living on the streets.

We keep saying that we should do more for our troops, well here's a chance to get simple things correct and stop messing with people's lives. Thanks, SPVA. – Name and address supplied.

David Johnson, Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, responds: We are very sorry that your reader feels he has been let down by SPVA.

After making enquiries, it appears that the delay in awarding his Armed Forces pension scheme benefits was due to a mistake by the pensions team in October.

This meant no action was taken at the relevant time to confirm that payment of pension benefits could be made at the point of termination.

This error was only realised on receipt of a phone call from the individual and we apologise for the inconvenience caused.

Once we were aware of the problem, immediate action was taken to process the correct award.

At the time of writing your reader will now be in receipt of all payments to which he is entitled.

Anyone wanting information or help with claiming an Armed Forces pension can call SPVA's free Veterans UK helpline on 0800 169 2277.

Responses require personal touch

I READ *Talkback* each month with great personal and professional interest and have become disheartened in recent times with the quality of responses from those charged with the responsibility for each area of policy, who reply to some really good, topical and knotty issues.

I have been in my role for the best part of four years and have seen much better replies than the January crop, which tended to hide behind policy rather than offer any real answers.

I quite recognise that sometimes there genuinely is no solution to an issue but please, let's hear from the real person rather than the automaton.

If we are to be worthy of our reputation

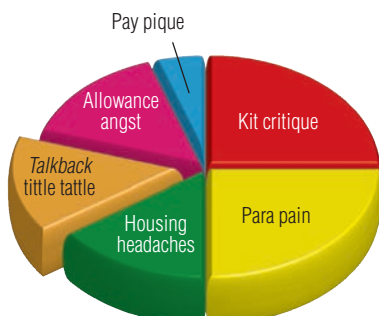
as a people-centred organisation who truly put our most valuable asset first, then let's treat our well-meaning young men and women with the balls to raise an issue as real people rather than an inconvenience or unpalatable troublemaker.

Senior respondents, please write like human beings; our soldiers will appreciate your honest and personal touch. – Lt Col Richard Burnet, SO1, G1 3(UK) Div.

The editor replies: Thank you for your feedback. As you point out, there is often no easy solution to our readers' problems but we nevertheless continue to seek explanations from the chain of command where appropriate.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



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Frosty reception: Letter writers have responded strongly to a reader's suggestion that The Parachute Regiment is outdated and should be done away with

Para proposal perplexes personnel

REGARDING Pte Corfield's letter in the January issue ("Drop The Parachute Regiment"), how many times have people from other units raised this issue?

The Parachute Regiment provides a very special soldier.

P Company selection and subsequent training makes for very confident and aggressive troops.

I have had the good fortune to jump six times with the Russian paras, three of those from heights of 300 feet and lower.

The parachute used was the D1-5U, a large cotton canopy which is steerable. This equipment can be rigged for several types of deployment.

Jumping from this height reduces time in the air to about 12-14 seconds.

If our friends the Russians can do it I am quite sure we can also.

Helicopters do a good job but are very vulnerable to ground fire.

When unloading or picking up troops they are required to remain stationary and it is difficult to be covert with this platform as it is extremely noisy.

During the Vietnam War the Americans lost countless numbers of these craft to small arms fire.

The argument will doubtless continue. – **Mike Brownridge, ex-10 Para.**

■ IT is not necessarily the utility of the parachute capability that is key in this debate. Perhaps because nobody expects it anymore this may actually be the best form of surprise.

The same threat exists for aviation as it does for transport aircraft, if not more so.

Parachuting does offer a significant

quick entry option for a battlegroup-sized formation which, as Pte Corfield correctly recognises, could not be done by "heli" due to airframe availability.

It would also require so many waves to achieve the same force levels as an entry made by parachute that it would take far too much time, losing the element of surprise and increasing the risk to aircrews and soldiers alike.

The crux of this discussion is what pre-parachute and parachute training delivers by way of a soldier's ethos.

Yes, the airborne forces have a short history due to the

technology involved in employing such an asset but they have seen

action in almost every conflict that the UK has been involved with since its creation, which highlights their importance.

Since June 5, 1944 – the night before D Day – The Parachute Regiment and airborne forces have been the initial entry presence in almost every UK deployment overseas.

You just need to look back at the Suez Crisis, the Falklands, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan to realise this.

It could be observed that parachute entry was not the selected method in most of these examples but the airborne forces have proven their worth in other ways – mainly by being the rapidly deployable formation required by a forward-leaning nation like Great Britain in such a volatile and rapidly changing world.

Furthermore, paratroopers have proven their courage, aggression, physical robustness and determination to be the

first into battle more than any other Regular soldier in the Army.

Your reader's comment about the lack of necessity for a vehicle mechanic to be parachute trained and the impracticality of jumping with a toolbox is inaccurate.

REME soldiers can and do jump with these items in their Bergens, as signallers do with radio equipment and the mortar platoon with mortar tubes and base plates.

Vehicles are also deployed by parachute along with artillery and logistics kit on medium stressed platforms, which all may need first-line equipment support.

Heavy gear like ammunition can also be dropped in bundles from the para door before the troops descend.

Due to its unique training and ethos, The Parachute Regiment is the most significant contributor to the UK's elite forces and it would be very concerning for British security and foreign policy should this feed suddenly dry up. – **Maj Jamie Linsdell.**

■ **WHILE** there may be some valid points about whether a parachute operation will ever happen again, all I can say is never say never.

Reading between the lines, it appears that Pte Corfield is hiding some kind of grudge towards the Paras.

Perhaps he has either had a go and failed P Company or been called a "hat" by Paras. If the cap fits!

I think this individual should just concentrate on his day job. – **Name and address supplied.**

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Rent rants rage on across ranks

LAST month ("Service housing highs and lows") the Defence Infrastructure Organisation explained the process in the event that Service families accommodation (SFA) does not meet the required standard on handover.

However, I have a great deal of sympathy for the soldier concerned.

I am sure that in the majority of cases the condition on return is far superior to that at the point of takeover.

I recently moved into housing in Arborfield and it failed the move-in assessment. The SFA had been empty for two years and was in a disgusting state.

To date, I have had to take time off work to oversee 18 separate appointments to repair damage and make good the faults that were in place at the time I moved in.

I had to pay for external support to clean the house not once but twice.

This was due to the fact that most carpets needed to be replaced four weeks after we took up residence in our new home.

The disruption and upheaval that this caused my family was inexcusable.

What was equally frustrating was the contractor's inability to turn up and complete the job efficiently.

Some 33 per cent of planned visits never took place and when they did, they were missing equipment or had to reschedule a further visit.

Luckily for the contractors in this part of the United Kingdom they are likely to get

lots of practice as there must be a further six areas of SFA that have been lying empty for at least 12 months.

How much more money is the MoD happy to see flushed down the drain?

Not in the housing my family moved in to – the loo was not working and the drains were blocked.

What is the Defence Infrastructure Organisation doing to provide compensation to tenants when they themselves fail to meet the standard?

We do not have the option of simply removing the funds from an MoD pay packet. – [Name and address supplied.](#)

■ THE reply in November's issue regarding the difference in rent between an officer and a soldier's house in the same residential area ("Nark over neighbour") was a poor attempt at justifying an outdated and prejudicial charging system.

I live in Service families accommodation. The precise location is not important as the regulations are Armed Forces-wide.

Initially there were empty officer houses and a shortage of homes for soldiers.

Lower ranks moved into the officers' abodes, a sensible solution, and they were retitled "soldier houses".

However, the fact remains that I pay £368 a year more than a soldier who lives on the same road as me – both grade three properties, identical in design and with

three bedrooms.

I actually pay £230 more than a soldier with a four bedroom house on my road.

These are straightforward facts, not interpretations of policy.

Paradoxically, officers have traditionally paid more rent to justify a higher standard of housing.

So why am I living in substandard housing but still paying higher rent than a soldier who has been given SFA above their normal allowance?

When will the system change to reflect reality or will a Service complaint have to be made before someone actually takes notice and acts, instead of purely manipulating the rules to suit a weak answer published within the pages of *Soldier*? – [Name and address supplied.](#)



Cadet Force decoration dilemma

I READ with interest "Camouflage medal muddle" in the January issue.

I spent just over 12 years as a Regular in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers followed by slightly less time as a volunteer within the same formation.

I am now a commissioned officer in the Army Cadet Force, having served for more than 18 years.

During this time I have qualified for the General Service Medal Northern Ireland, Volunteer Reserves Service Medal, Cadet Service Medal and the Golden and Diamond Jubilee Medals.

We are not issued with Service dress so could someone explain how we are to wear the medals of which we are proud to have been given in recognition of service to Queen and country? – [Lt Peter Hooper, Devon ACF.](#)



Brig Matthew Lowe, D Pers Ops, responds: Army Dress Regulations, part eight, paragraph 08.327, Dress Regulations for Combined Cadet Force (Army sections) and the Army Cadet Force, authorises adult volunteers to wear their orders, decorations and medals swing-mounted on combat uniform for Remembrance Day parades without asking for permission.

If you wish to wear medals on your combat uniform during any other occasion, you can apply to do so through HQ Support Command to PS12.

These rules are summarised in Army briefing note 100/12 which can be found on the defence intranet.

So wear your medals with pride and inspire your cadets to achieve.

DIGITAL DOSSIER

THIS MONTH'S ELITE TWEETS

#GLOCK (P 7)

@LCiz

@BritishArmy yes so glad, the #Glock is the best pistol in the world, very solid & reliable – good work guys :-)

@SoldierUK

Loving the idea of getting the #Glock 17 pistol instead of the Browning :) The Browning has always been awkward.

#REDUNDANCY (P 8-9)

@exSASChrisRyan

I hope that when these politicians make cuts to the Armed Forces, they're prepared to take responsibility for it down the line #Armymcuts

@Buckaroo_11

Love how the media are making out the Army redundancy plan is a bad thing. Everyone I know who has got it is extremely happy!

@soldiermagazine

Lag in laundry decision kicks up stink

WHEN are Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) finally going to reach a decision regarding tax relief for the laundering of Service uniforms?

I refer to DIN 2012DIN01-92 from last year, which informed us that a review of the original position was to take place and to 2008DIN01-110, which detailed relief on laundry costs.

I was one of a large number of Service personnel who consulted my tax office on this issue some years ago and was denied a rebate on the grounds that the Ministry of Defence provides laundry facilities.

However, I'm sure if I was to hand in three sets of working dress, two sets of physical training kit, one set of exercise kit, the occasional Future Army Dress shirt and mess kit items each week (a fair assumption of my weekly needs) the QM's department would not be able to oblige.

Indeed, I am not sure if there is even a contract for this. Absolutely no slur on the QM's department intended.

It is bewildering to think that other public bodies such as police, fire services and the NHS can all receive yearly tax allowances

for laundry costs and are able to backdate those claims several years, yet MoD employees do not qualify.

Is this because of the cost involved if all serving personnel and those who have left in recent years were to put in a claim?

My partner qualifies for a rebate by occasionally having to wear a polo shirt sporting a company logo.

It would certainly be interesting to know if HMRC would allow a rebate for the use of my home as storage for the mountain of surplus issued kit that has been occupying my garage and loft space for the last 22 years. – Name and address supplied.

Brig John Donnelly, DSPS(A), replies: As you rightly state, 2012DIN01-92 announced that the Ministry of Defence and HMRC are currently working towards an understanding on the provision of tax relief for laundry for Service personnel.

In order to make an informed decision on the matter, HMRC requested detailed information from all three Services on their current provisions and this has recently been compiled.

Once HMRC have analysed the information they will consider whether to issue the Armed Forces with a set of "flat rate expense" allowances.

This could be as an averaged career-long tax relief.

I must reiterate that no decision has yet been made and that any entitlement will be given after the conclusion of this work.



'Clothing issue requires clarification'

I NEED clarification on something that has been bothering me.

I have tried asking my chain of command but don't seem to get concrete answers.

The issue is about personal kit.

Yes, I understand that over the last ten years the equipment issued has changed and been upgraded dramatically.

However, I still feel that there is massive room for improvement.

On the public market there is gear that reaches the demands of robustness, comfort, protection and safety.

I am probably one of many who don't mind purchasing items as I see it as an investment in my job. But what are the rulings for personal purchase of kit?

As an example, issued multi-terrain pattern trousers and knee pads are uncomfortable when combined and damage easily. My solution: a trouser knee pad that is built in – also known as the Crye Precision trousers.

With Osprey body armour, manoeuvrability is restricted when conducting basic tasks. My solution: a plate carrier that still incorporates the issued plates but with freedom of movement.

If the answer to all this is cost, then that shouldn't be a problem as it is the individual who can cover this.

If it is exchange of items, then issued clothing could be used as fallback and the cost of replacements covered by insurance.

I know it isn't just me who feels like this. – Name and address supplied.

Lt Col Matthew Tressider, Defence

Clothing, responds: As you point out, the design and quality of on-the-man clothing and equipment has improved markedly in recent years.

However, there will always be the perception that there is something better available – albeit at greater cost.

There are no rules restricting the purchase of non-issued clothing and on-the-man kit by individuals.

However, issued items are designed to meet the requirements and specifications of the MoD and the chain of command will expect individuals to wear and use these.

This is particularly important for personal protective equipment and the range of items that provide ballistic protection in all its forms. This ensures personnel are similarly equipped with kit of a common design, which provides common protection and utility.

The performance properties of privately purchased items can be questionable.

You quote the Crye Precision trousers (which at circa £180 are more than six times the price of separate trousers and knee pads).

While these are very high performing they do not meet all of our requirements for such areas as insecticide protection and infrared reflection for use at night.

Experience has also shown that while they are extremely good for short-duration and high-energy operations, over longer periods of time they become less

attractive, particularly with regards to rubbing, weight and heat retention.

There is also the problem that if individuals start buying large amounts of personal kit, some will do so cheaply.

Therefore there is a risk that quality will not be controlled with robustness, comfort or performance and troops will find their kit failing at the wrong time without being able to get it replaced.

The MoD is committed to providing the best ballistic protection equipment for UK Armed Forces.

Osprey has been developed – and is routinely reviewed – to ensure that it continues to meet the exacting standards required to defeat the small arms and ballistic fragment threats specific to operations firstly in Iraq and subsequently in Afghanistan.

It consists of both a hard plate and, integral to the plate carriage system, soft ballistic filler.

These two elements combined afford the best level of protection available to British military personnel at the present moment in time.

Plate-only carriers predominantly safeguard against small arms fire and do not offer sufficient coverage against fragmentation.

In-service ballistic protection equipment will continue to be rigorously tested to ensure that it meets the minimum requirement and therefore only issued items should be used.

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Let down by airborne analysis

I PROUDLY display a copy of *Soldier* on my desk and have always enjoyed the publication. However, I was disappointed at your decision to publish "Drop the Parachute Regiment" (*Talkback*, January).

Your editorial talked of the reducing optimism in the Army; most soldiers agree that morale is presently difficult to maintain.

Soldier usually provides great advice and a welcome boost to its entire readership.

But last month for any individual proud to wear The Parachute Regiment cap badge or military parachute wings your publication got it wrong.

Pte Corfield is most certainly entitled to have his say.

However, the method of promulgating such a divisive opinion belongs not in the magazine but online in one of the many forums where poorly-informed opinions such as his are debated regularly.

Paratroopers in units including 16 Air Assault Brigade, held at readiness as part of the UK's responsive force, will be reading your edition whilst deployed on operations or on standby and will rightly be frustrated that their usual source of morale has included such a piece.

Not just The Parachute Regiment will feel let down.

Many Service personnel have volunteered for and successfully completed pre-parachute selection – one of the most physically demanding courses in the Army and one described very well in one of your recent editions.

These men are extremely proud of their role in the British airborne fraternity and they too must feel disappointed.

These troops include mechanics, doctors, gunners, engineers, Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Defence Staff.

All have a role in UK airborne forces and share an identity and ethos which

strengthens the bonds of combined arms grouping in a way that cannot be replicated in any other Army formation.

That bond is also shared with our key partners such as the US and France who both retain large airborne units.

Regardless of the colour of their beret or stereotyped perceptions of them, they are soldiers; surely this is a magazine for them.

As for a response to the article itself, The Parachute Regiment Charter sums up the capability which the regiment brings to UK defence far better than I could. – **Maj Mark Swann, Joint Force Headquarters.**

The editor replies: I am afraid I cannot apologise for letting a Serviceman air his views on our pages.

Part of what makes this title popular is our ability to give readers a reliable forum for communication – between each other and with those at the top as well.

Indeed, I have yet to meet a reader who doesn't tell me that *Talkback* is their favourite section of the magazine – presumably because their moans are tackled head-on by their own organisation rather than being left to simmer on obscure forum pages where the record cannot be set straight and where senior officers do not get the chance to learn about the impact of their decisions.

Surely it would be more damaging to morale as a whole for the Army's magazine to enter a world of denial where redundancies are not happening, structures are not changing and questions are not being asked. They are.

As long as our top officers are listening and responding to the opinions of Servicemen and women so too will *Soldier*.

I am sure this month's responses to the letter in question will put right any ill feeling resulting from the last issue.

Paratroopers needn't have worried, their loyal colleagues had their backs.

■ COULD I please remind Pte Corfield that his job is to check the number plates of vehicles against the car pass, check the car pass is in date and then check the car pass corresponds to the identification of the vehicle's occupants.

From my experience these rudimentary checks are not always done properly which suggests this individual does not spend enough time at his post thinking about the job he is paid to do.

Perhaps we would get a more thorough approach by tendering the Military Provost Guard Service out to civilian contract.

That said, I have been armoured for the majority of my career and have always wondered about airborne forces.

Having only recently converted to the air assault capability I can say, as an outsider now experiencing it first-hand, I have been nothing but impressed by the can-do, no-nonsense attitude of all those in or attached to 16 Air Assault Brigade.

Pte Corfield cannot discuss the parachute asset specifically without affecting the overall air assault capability.

This largely consists of four methods of insertion and the powers that be will rightly use the "least cost, maximum effect" option in terms of manpower and equipment.

Nothing can get a foothold in a country from zero as quickly as the air assault capability, thus giving breathing space for follow-on activity.

As an insurance salesman once told me, "it is better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it".

I would remind Pte Corfield that the military is the UK's insurance policy. I hope we have sufficient cover. – **Maj Neil Henderson, Royal Artillery.**

Catalogue kit causes stir with corporal

WITH surprise I discovered in your magazine that survivalaids.com (advert pictured right) is selling a full set of Future Army No 2 Dress.

How have they got hold of this? I have been waiting for over a year.

To make matters worse I am away from my parent unit which has been kitted out with it yet here at the Land Warfare Centre I can only get one set of multi-terrain pattern uniform in a size that fits me, let alone Future Army Dress.

Yes, I have had my shirts, ties and socks. But that was six months ago now.

How is it that a catalogue company can get their hands on things like this when soldiers cannot? – **Cpl Appleby.**

Maj (Ret'd) Allan Law, S02 Materiel Support, replies: The availability of No 2

Dress has been limited due to a shortage of cloth and a change of contract.

As a result it was necessary to earmark all available uniforms for issue to phase one recruits.

Availability has now improved and unit demands which were placed into "dues-out" are being met. The priority, however, is to issue to the recruits.

It will always be the case that uniforms withdrawn from personnel leaving the Services will be sent through official disposal channels.

These items are surplus to requirements, often in extremely small, large or mixed sizes, and are no longer required by units.

They are sent to the Disposal Services Authority and bought by military surplus stores and other retail outlets for re-sale.

Also, there are no restrictions on commercial retail outlets offering copies of military clothing and equipment – sometimes at inflated prices.

The correspondent should approach his parent clothing store as they have confirmed the status of his original No 2 Dress demand. This is extant and should be met shortly.

On the availability of combat uniform, there are no overall supply shortages of these items and all Regular troops should have received their full scale of issue.

Get clarification from the clothing store.





COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Miss A Francois, 100 Regt RA, Luton; Angela Southwood, Andover, Hampshire; Lt O Kay, TA Centre, Swindon; P Rendall, 39 Sig Regt, Bristol; Mr I McCallum, Augusta Westland, Yeovil.

Brave DVD: Ms S Fordham, Mildenhall, Suffolk; Penny Oderberg, Reading, Berkshire; Mr I Yates, Clitheroe, Lancashire; Beverley Davis, Solihull, West Midlands; Natasha Corder, Rochester, Kent.



DIARY

February 14: The Band of the Coldstream Guards will perform a gala concert in aid of **ABF The Soldiers' Charity**. The performance at Cadogan Hall, Chelsea, will cover a wide programme from *Phantom of the Opera* to regimental marches. Call 020 7730 4500 for tickets.

February 19-23: The Glorious Georgians. A free drop-in family craft event at Surrey History Centre. For more information visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreyhistorycentre

Until July: The Imperial War Museum, London, will be closed for redevelopment in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War in 2014. Visit www.iwm.org.uk for more.



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ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

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

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

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

Army Ornithological Society: www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

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

Blind Veterans UK: (formerly St Dunstan's) www.blindveterans.org.uk; 0207 7235021

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.detsa.co.uk

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forcesline: UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres

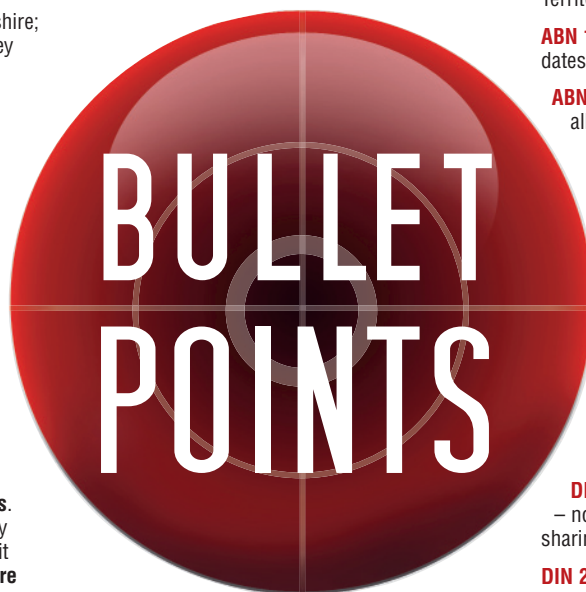
– Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854.

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Heroes Welcome: www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

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

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575



Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

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

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

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

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

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

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

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafo.org.uk

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

uk4u Thanks: 01798 812081; www.uk4u.org



INTELLIGENCE

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

ABN 107/12: Accrued pension rights for specific circumstances additional voluntary

contributions, inverse commutation (AFPS 05 & AFPS 05), new joiners 2013-2015, officer PVR (AFPS 75), senior officers (AFPS 75) and special forces (shadow rank)

ABN 108/12: TA selection

ABN 109/12: Compendium of Army key messages and stratcom bulletin

ABN 110/12: Bounty entitlement to serving and ex-Regular soldiers on enlistment in the Territorial Army

ABN 112/12: Revised list of flag stations and dates when specific flags are to be flown

ABN113/12: Continuity of education allowance – withdrawal without penalty

ABN 114/12: Changes to pension tax relief

ABN 115/12: Armed Forces Covenant report 2012

DIN 2012DIN01-266: Implementation of the media and communications competence framework

DIN 2012DIN01-265: Changes to the Service complaints process

DIN 2012DIN01-264: Promotion to band B

DIN 2012DIN01-263: Annual allowance – notification for members with pension sharing orders

DIN 2012DIN01-261: Changes to Criminal Records Bureau and safeguarding arrangements

DIN 2012DIN01-260: Service family accommodation – retention

DIN 2012DIN01-258: Financial support for bereaved families

DIN 2012DIN01-257: Regulations governing the payment of ISODET nursery allowance

DIN 2012DIN01-256: Termination of internet access to shared services

DIN 2012DIN01-255: Implementation of changes to Army appraisal reporting

DIN 2012DIN01-253: Pensions tax relief – autumn statement

DIN 2012DIN01-252: Maritime Reserve recruit bounty scheme

DIN 2012DIN01-251: Overcharging of paradigm operations WelComE phone accounts – April 2009 to August 2011

DIN 2012DIN01-250: Extension of restriction on class of travel

DIN 2012DIN02-019: *The Defence Manual of Security* (JSP 440): publication of issue 4.3.0

DIN 2012DIN02-018: Volunteers for specialist HUMINT duties – Op Samson

DIN 2012DIN03-042: JSP 753 – Tri-Service regulations for the mobilisation of Reserves

DIN 2012DIN03-041: Publication of JSP 999 (clinical guidelines for operations)

DIN 2012DIN04-163: Declaration of BID/2250 (also known as Ipress) as being obsolete by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2012DIN04-162: Declaration of BID/980 (also known as Lakin) as being obsolete by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2012DIN04-161: Declaration of obsolescence of various legacy cryptographic equipments by Crypto Services for Defence

DIN 2012DIN04-160: Field electrical power distribution system cable and 13 amp distribution box repair policy

DIN 2012DIN04-159: In-Service support arrangements for RT1046 (long-range radar) on T45 destroyers and the Maritime Integration Support Centre

DIN 2012DIN04-158: New contract notice for the disposal of office equipment and associated materials and equipment

DIN 2012DIN04-157: Declaration of obsolete – bulk fuel pumps

DIN 2012DIN04-156: Declaration of obsolescence – bulk fuel pumping and filtration equipment

DIN 2012DIN04-155: New print/print management arrangements

DIN 2012DIN04-154: Publication of sea survival equipment log foreword issue 10

DIN 2012DIN05-049: Fleet Information Management Unit and the provision of reference information to situational awareness

DIN 2012DIN05-048: Fleet Information Management Unit reference information libraries

DIN 2012DIN05-047: The Air Warfare Centre tasking process

DIN 2012DIN05-045: Formation of the Air Warfare School

DIN 2012DIN05-044: Revised communication working practice for aeromedical evacuation

DIN 2012DIN05-043: Contact details for the defence medical systems team

DIN 2012DIN06-044: Change of policy regarding the licensing of fuel installations holding IP flashpoint class II and III fuels

DIN 2012DIN06-043: Provision of first aid at

work training – transfer of St John Ambulance contract to Civil Service Learning

DIN 2012DIN06-042: Guidance to MoD diving organisations and divers on new contact procedures for the Royal Navy duty diving medical officer

DIN 2012DIN06-041: Return of equipment that contains radioactive material to Donnington

DIN 2012DIN07-186: Defence media training 2013-14

DIN 2012DIN07-184: Temporary landing zone safety officer course dates 2013

DIN 2012DIN07-179: The provision of City and Guilds qualifications for personnel who completed Op Olympic venue security force training

DIN 2012DIN07-177: The defence survival, evasion, resistance and extraction training organisation course index and details

DIN 2012DIN07-176: Exchange au pair scheme

DIN 2012DIN07-175: Army attachments to overseas armies

DIN 2012DIN07-174: Army language scheme

DIN 2012DIN07-173: Degree programme for all military engineering and technical branches and trades personnel

DIN 2012DIN07-172: Degree programme for all military administration branches and trades personnel

DIN 2012DIN07-171: Degree programme for all military logistics trade personnel

DIN 2012DIN07-170: Defence Medical Services training group organisation changes

DIN 2012DIN07-169: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst assistant instructors' cadre: 2013

DIN 2012DIN07-168: Exercise Clarion Call (Jurassic Shark 4), Revillagigedo Islands

(including Clarion Island), Mexico

DIN 2012DIN09-027: The Professional Engineering Institution Churchill Medal Award 2012-13

DIN 2012DIN09-026: First World War centenary commemorations

DIN 2012DIN10-046: Army Squash Rackets Association sponsored championships 2013

DIN 2012DIN10-045: Army kitesurfing courses and events 2013

DIN 2012DIN10-044: Army Indoor Tennis Championships 2013

DIB 68/12: Publication of the Armed Forces Covenant annual report

DIB 69/12: New Defence Discount Service privilege card now available

DIB 72/12: UK Force levels in Afghanistan to reduce in 2013



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TEN details have been changed on this photograph of Sgt (Goat Maj) David Joseph (3 R Welsh) and Shenkin the goat with The Goat Major pub landlord Chris Rowlands in Cardiff before last autumn's rugby internationals.

Circle the differences in the left image

and send the panel to **HOAY 855**, Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by February 28. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second

and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the April issue. Usual rules apply. **December's winners:** First correct entry drawn at random was Mr C Green, Eltham, London. Runners Up: Mr R Newport, Oxford and K Newby-Driscoll, ASDL, Aldershot.



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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information



Future Force needs firm foundations

THESE are confusing financial times for everyone associated with either the Armed Forces or the public sector.

In areas where we've been hoping for answers we seem to only get further questions and the future basing announcement has been delayed while the MoD digests the fact that it must impose further budget cuts.

Given that Army 2020 is funded on the basis of resource increases from 2015, this is worrying news across all of the reform initiatives that are being pushed through at the moment and not just for the Army – the other Services' equipment and basing projects are also dependant on anticipated upcoming rises.

The 20 per cent manning reductions for example, the latest tranche of which have been announced (pages 8-9), are costing a lot of money over the next two years but the rates are fixed so any further savings will have to come from other areas.

The fear must be that the vision of our Army in 2020 will not come to fruition and instead of the modern, professional reactive and adaptive Force we have been promised it will instead be a smaller version of the cash-strapped Service we see today.

If we don't put the foundations in place over the next two to five years in terms of manpower (both Regular and Reserve), bases, roles and equipment, our personnel are going to find it very difficult to buy into the promise of a better future.

The same is true for families, who need to understand what the soldier is going to bring home, including where he is going to work, to fully appreciate the worth the

government places in us. Concerns over housing and how everyone will be squeezed into the UK remain.

However, there are financial positives to be seen and the government has made money available for covenant support programmes.

This significant sum will see real improvements in our military communities and families will begin to hear more of them as projects are put in place across the country. Local authorities are making serious attempts to understand Army families and ensure that they are able to access services.

So where are we with the Military Covenant? This is the year we need to establish what the document means to us all. In some of the meetings I attend I still get the feeling we are looking at the same picture but seeing different things.

For some it is a commitment to serving soldiers through the provision of local authority support and we have made

real progress in this area through the publishing of regional agreements in many of our garrison locations in the form of community covenants.

But I still think there is more to include; it is not enough to try to assist with the provision of school places and dentists' waiting lists while our standard of living falls year-on-year and our pension benefits are worth less and less.

Lurking in the shadows is also the fear that these covenants will be difficult for local authorities to implement as they face stringent budget cuts of their own.

As they see money moving towards the third sector initiatives mentioned above, we must all understand there is a responsibility to look after our Servicemen and women and the ever-growing number of veterans, especially young ones with families recently made redundant, and that task lies with the government.

If you have any comments we are happy to hear them at www.aff.org.uk ■

'I still get the feeling we are looking at the same picture but seeing different things'

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reviews



TACTICAL TREATS

FEBRUARY'S PHENOMENA

P76 MOVIES **HARD TARGET**

P78 MUSIC **CURTAINS UP**

P80 BOOKS **RECALLING KOREA**

P82 TOP GEAR **MAKING A SPLASH**

reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

VIVACIOUS VIEWING



PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER

THIS is a high school coming-of-age movie that is actually worth seeing and doesn't trigger a gag reflex. The film's main man, geeky 15-year-old Charlie (**Logan Lerman**), meets kindred spirits Sam (**Emma Watson**) and her stepbrother Patrick (**Ezra Miller**) before joining their kooky social scene to take on life. **Stephen Chobsky's** script coupled with an excellent young cast perfectly captures the pre-adult period of awkwardness, unrequited passion and obsession with music. The film also witnesses the excellent Watson breaking free from the shackles of *Harry Potter*.

Joe Clapson, *Soldier*



V/H/S out now

HALF a dozen videotapes connected only by their brutality and an unlimited capacity to rip their hapless casts to shreds are uncovered by a group of burglars. Every tale ends horribly, in the strictest sense. A road trip results in gruesome murder. A night out turns into a meeting with a vampire. One story even succeeded in chilling me to the bone via a series of Skype chats as unknown horrors occurred in the background. As a concept this shouldn't work but my crawling skin said otherwise. A classic case of *Blair Witch* meets **Tarantino** on a downer.

Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



RISE OF THE FOOTSOLDIER out now

THIS re-cut version of the cult gangster flick follows the rise of Carlton Leach (**Ricci Hartnett**) from his role as a hooligan boss on the terraces to becoming a member of a criminal gang that rampaged through London and Essex in the 1980s and 1990s. We watch Leach as a football yob, nightclub bouncer and drugs scene operator. It's a solid addition to the British thug genre, with a good home-grown cast, but that unfortunately is now old news. Added footage of sex and violence doesn't hide the fact that this story has been told before.

Cpl Adam Jackson, 3 Para



SOUTHERN COMFORT out now

THE filming, location and soundtrack of this digitally remastered re-release of the 1981 movie are superb. It's a pity the same can't be said for the plot which portrays the US National Guard in a poor light. I am sure these soldiers were more professional than those depicted. The squad shows itself to be totally dysfunctional and discipline deteriorates until it becomes unrecognisable as a unit. Things then become like **Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None***, with members being killed one by one when a joke goes wrong. I would not recommend this film.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



COMEDOWN out now

A BAND of six friends break into an abandoned tower block to set up a pirate radio station and get stoned. However, they soon realise they are not alone and one by one are picked off in an evermore gruesome manner. The effective setting and modern British urban tone mark this slasher movie out as a little different to the normal fare in this genre. While not quite as scary as it could have been, the tension does ramp up towards a refreshingly downbeat ending. Not a classic but lovers of this type of film will lap it up.

Jools Finch, civvy



WIN... SINISTER

THIS terrifying film from the producer of *Paranormal Activity* sees crime writer Ellison (**Ethan Hawke**) move his wife and kids to the scene of his latest story; the grisly murder of a happy family. There he finds home movies to prove the incident he is researching before losing his own mind. *Soldier* has teamed up with Momentum Pictures to offer a copy of *Sinister* to five lucky readers. To have a chance of winning, tell us who plays Ellison. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 28

Interview: Joe Clapson

A STUNNING work of cinema has gone behind the scenes of the ten-year hunt for terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden with an unwavering depiction of unembellished facts.

Zero Dark 30 is a stripped-back account of intelligence experts' struggle to find the world's most wanted man from director Kathryn Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal. The title is likely to be showered with awards as the pair's 2010 offering *The Hurt Locker* was, and rightly so.

Viewers are transported from the shocking events of 9/11 to the terrorist haven of Pakistan to watch CIA agent Maya (Jessica Chastain) obsessively gather information to trace her target.

The realism of what unfolds, including harrowing torture scenes, is vividly captured by Boal, an investigative journalist, whose dialogue gives the movie genuine authenticity.

"What I think is so intriguing about Mark's script is the way it tracks all the minute steps in a way that's dramatic yet totally unsentimental, unsparing, and unsettling," said Bigelow.

"This is a very raw account."

Armed with Boal's words, the director gives intense attention to the actual events of history. "It is the story of finding a very sharp needle in a very large haystack," said the acclaimed film-maker.

Zero Dark 30 – the military code for the time when the Navy Seals stepped into the terrorist chief's hiding place – serves to highlight the unglamorous role of those working behind the scenes to uncover intelligence for the military to act on.

Chastain's portrayal of the ice-cold protagonist with no time for emotional monologues, love interests or tears should single her out for an Oscar.

Through her character we learn about the operatives who stood firm when the trail to bin Laden went cold and gain insight into what it takes to thwart a terrorist bent on mass destruction.

For Boal, a native of New York, the film was a personal mission to get to the bottom of the story about al-Qaeda's former boss.

"The guy attacked my home town and the long aftermath of that day has defined my professional life as a writer," he said. "Writers, like children, don't always get to pick their influences. They pick you."

With a cast that includes Jason Clarke, Joel Edgerton and Kyle Chandler, the film pulls no punches in documenting unsavoury interrogation methods that will no doubt cause outrage.

"Putting it mildly, this is an extremely controversial subject," said Boal.

"It was part of the story and we needed to include that in the film."

With a mix of action, investigation and drama this important picture gives credit to the clandestine work behind the fight against murderous extremists. ■

OWLES

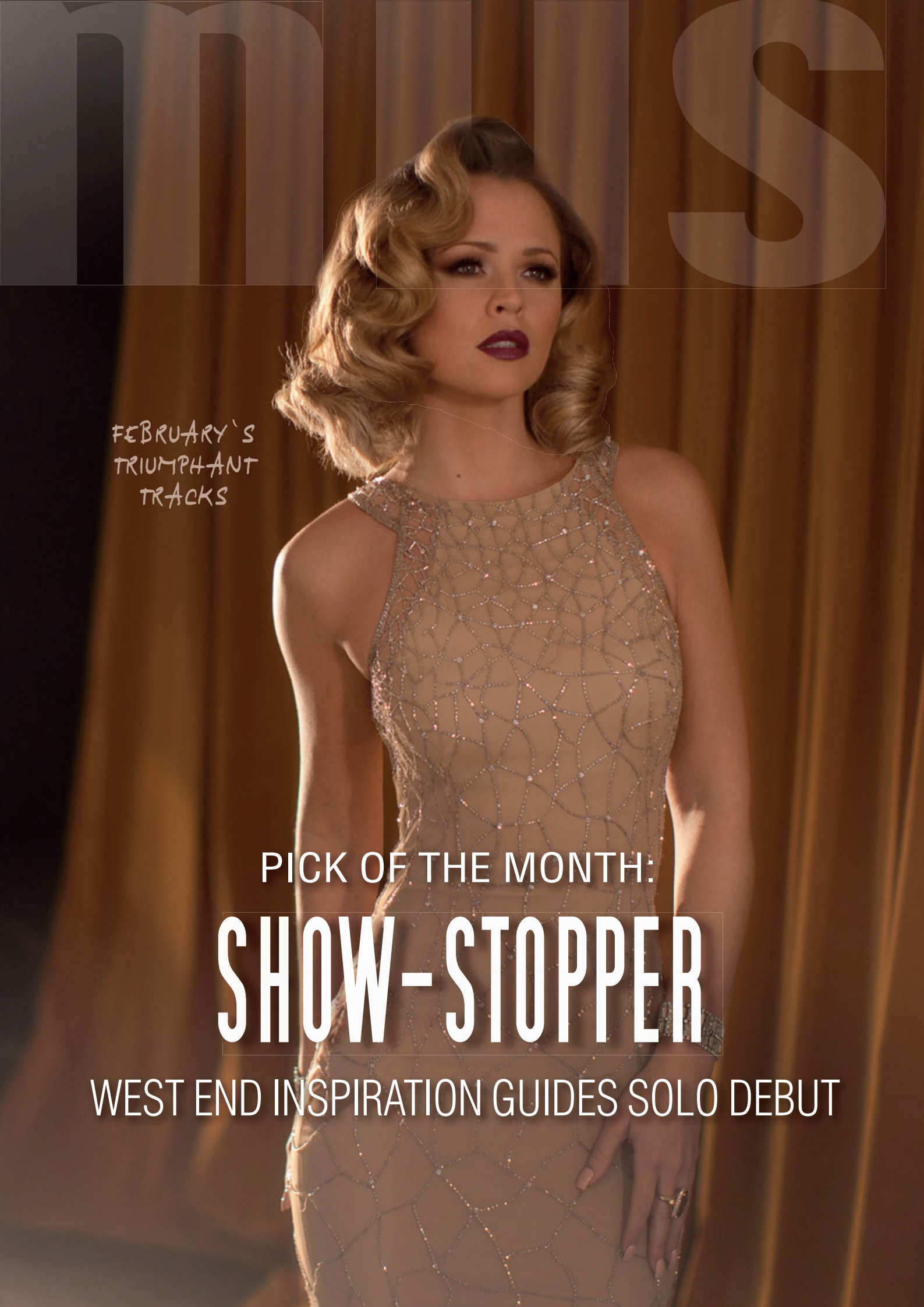


OUT NOW
IN CINEMAS

PICK OF THE MONTH: ZERO DARK 30

TERRORIST TRAIL

HURT LOCKER DUO SHOWCASE AN
AGENT'S HUNT FOR BIN LADEN



FEBRUARY'S
TRIUMPHANT
TRACKS

PICK OF THE MONTH:

SHOW-STOPPER

WEST END INSPIRATION GUIDES SOLO DEBUT

TUNES FOR THE TROOPS

Review: Becky Clark

UP until making the final of last year's *Strictly Come Dancing*, Kimberley Walsh was simply the lesser-known member of Girls Aloud.

While her bandmates grabbed the headlines, the singer kept her head down and her name out of the tabloids.

Now, hot on the heels of reality-TV success and the group's tenth anniversary compilation, the dancing queen is hoping to make her own mark on the musical market with the release of her first solo album.

Centre Stage is a collection of songs from the star's favourite musicals, including hits from classic West End shows such as *Cats*, *Les Miserables* and *Wicked*.

Walsh described how a stint as Princess Fiona in the stage version of *Shrek* had reignited her passion for musical theatre.

"That production gave me confidence in myself vocally and when the album was suggested it felt right to me," she said.

"I was in my absolute element recording it and felt like I was discovering new tones to my voice and pushing myself. I really felt like I was going back to my roots."

With such familiar melodies on the album, the first challenge was to make them sound different and unique.

"We have reworked a lot of the songs. Hopefully we have given them a new lease of life with a new production," the pop princess explained. "They are all so brilliant. If you take the best parts and work around them they are going to be really emotive."

Sharing a record label with big names like Andrea Bocelli and Imelda Staunton would be enough to faze most people but Walsh's willingness to leave her comfort zone is evident in vocally-challenging tracks such as *Memories* and *Somewhere*.

"I had to believe this was going to work for me," she said.

"I like to be singing what I feel is real, not just singing for the sake of it."

While not exactly groundbreaking, *Centre Stage* will appeal to anyone who likes an emotional ballad and a good singalong in the car when there's nothing on the radio.

And those tiring of the consistently forgettable offerings by other members of Girls Aloud can be thankful Walsh has moved away from the standard formula.

Overall, however, the album is best described as an audio version of vanilla ice cream: sweet, comforting and inoffensive but lacking any real flavour. ■

Save the Nation by Royal Republic

DELIVERING punk in all its forms, **Royal Republic** hit us with their second batch of defiant anthems. Hailing from Denmark the quartet bring a quirky, tongue-in-cheek approach with a little touch of anarchy, lashings of attitude and an essential energy to get your mosh on. *Punch Drunk Love* has a real old school feel while the title track is a comparatively new wave dig at the world. Overall, this is a cool album and cleverly pitched to appeal to a broad spectrum of music fans. However, this group treads a fine line between punk, pop punk and boy band and it would be tragic if they fell into the latter.



Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

Unorthodox Jukebox by Bruno Mars

WITH a stream of hits stemming from his 2010 album *Doo-Wops and Hooligans*, it is no surprise to see **Bruno Mars** releasing a follow-up effort in double-quick time. Unfortunately, *Unorthodox Jukebox* has the feel of a rushed record and with an absence of catchy tunes and potential global smashes it lacks the punch of its predecessor. Reggae offering *Locked Out Of Heaven* and disco track *Treasure* are brief highlights among more average offerings, but on the whole this is a middle-of-the-road affair that does little to enhance Mars' reputation as a modern-day pop pioneer.



Joe Clapson, Soldier

Let It All In by I Am Kloot

HAVING simmered in the musical shadows for more than a decade, **I Am Kloot** eye a move to the centre stage with their sixth studio album *Let It All In*. Produced by **Elbow's Guy Garvey** it builds on 2010's Mercury-nominated *Sky At Night* to offer a collection of enduring songs that will add to an already impressive back catalogue. The trio succeed in offering great variety with the string-laden excellence of *Hold Back The Night* following hot on the heels of the guitar-driven *Bullets*. Garvey's influence is evident throughout the ten tracks and the end result forms an early contender for the record of the year.



Stephen Tyler, ex-Soldier

The Lumineers by The Lumineers

FRESH out of Denver, acoustic trio **The Lumineers** release their self-titled debut album on the back of hit single *Ho Hey*, which achieved 650,000 downloads in less than seven months. The track forms the standout offering on a decent, rather than spectacular, record that gets bogged down in repetition instead of embracing variety. The raw, rustic sound is enjoyable at first but the monotone approach makes this effort hard to digest in one sitting. Inevitable comparisons will be made to **Mumford and Sons** and the chart toppers serve as a better bet for those seeking an injection of indie-folk rock.



Richard Long, Soldier

Shine by Jim Morton

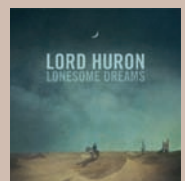
THIS is the debut album by Wiltshire artist and musical all-rounder **Jim Morton**. *Shine* blends a range of influences to create an honest window into the life and heart of the man behind it. Rhythms reminiscent of indie outfits like the **Happy Mondays** underpin rock, funk and even country leads, forming unique yet reassuringly familiar compositions. The lyrics on the title track lay out Morton's life goal and the songs that follow express the emotions that have led him to that vision. There are some minor imperfections but this record is all the more endearing for them.



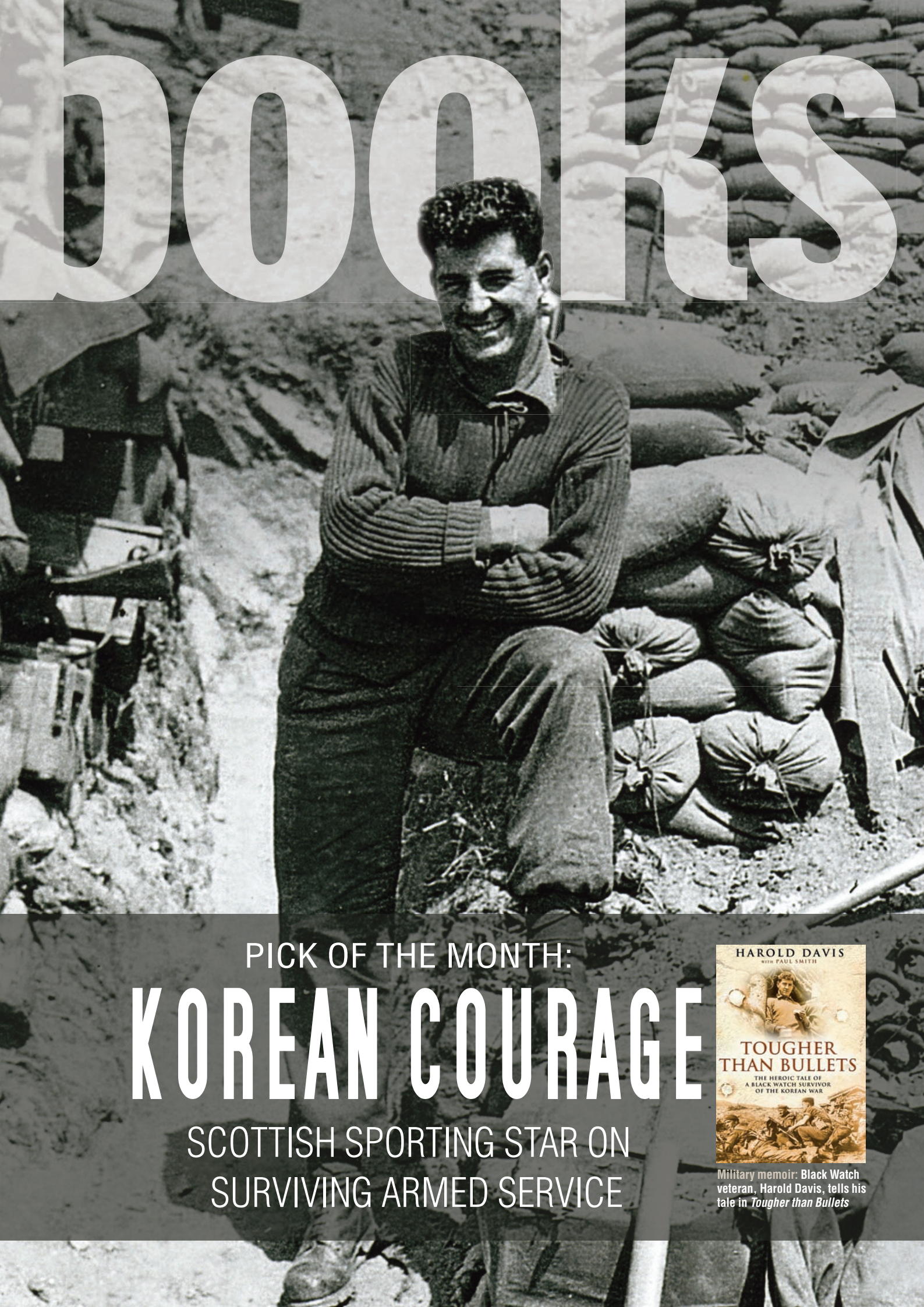
Capt Matt Walpole, PWRR

Lonesome Dreams by Lord Huron

THE debut album from **Lord Huron** is a multimedia affair that comes with additional short films and imagined novels by fictional wordsmith **George Ranger Johnson**. However, the music proves to be the major attraction here and the folk-rock sound ticks all the right boxes. Comparisons with **Fleet Foxes** have been made and the similarities are not without foundation, but the band deserves credit for producing highly original material that shines in its own right. *She Lit A Fire*, *The Ghost On The Shore* and *Ends Of The Earth* are among the many highlights in a superb and innovative first offering that hints at greater things to come.



Richard Long, Soldier

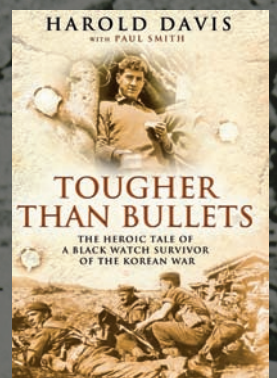


books

PICK OF THE MONTH:

KOREAN COURAGE

SCOTTISH SPORTING STAR ON
SURVIVING ARMED SERVICE



Military memoir: Black Watch veteran, Harold Davis, tells his tale in *Tougher than Bullets*

Interview: Richard Long

In the money-driven world of modern day professional football it is hard to imagine the game's rising stars taking a hiatus from playing under a draft for national service.

While the military and sporting circles now seem poles apart it was a different story in the 1950s when the Armed Forces' ranks needed boosting in the aftermath of the Second World War.

For Harold Davis, a young defender on the books of East Fife, the move was openly embraced and joining the famed Black Watch proved to be one of the turning points in his life.

The proud Scotsman saw active service in the Korean War and his efforts on the front line have been vividly recalled in his thoroughly enjoyable biography *Tougher than Bullets*.

Davis suffered severe injuries to his abdomen, stomach, bladder and bowels after being shot while fighting in the Asian country – an ordeal that left him with a two-year recovery path.

"I was not angry about the war and I was quite proud to do my service out there," the 78-year-old told *Soldier* from his home in Gairloch.

"If I had not suffered those injuries I would have said it was fantastic. It did not work out that way but I do not hold a grudge.

"In some ways it made me the man I am. A lot of the things I have done in my life have been well thought out and I see my time in the Army as one of the reasons why I am so positive.

"I started in the football business at a junior level. I was not at the top grade so I didn't have any strong feelings about having to join up.

"I looked forward to it and put my back into it."

Davis' willingness to immerse himself in Service life is evident in the book and he speaks with great passion and pride about his years in uniform.

He expresses no resentment to the injuries sustained in the line of duty and it comes as somewhat of a surprise to learn that he went on to make 261 appearances for the mighty Glasgow Rangers once his recovery was complete.

"When I was hit I knew it was bad," he recalled. "I decided to get to the first aid post as quickly as possible rather than waiting for assistance.

"The doctors and surgeons did their best to get me back on my feet. It was an uphill battle and a long hike.

"In terms of football I thought I was finished but my Army spirit came through. I kept saying 'I'm better than I was yesterday, let's keep this going'.

"It was about two years from being hit before I stepped out on a pitch again."

Davis' injuries eventually caught up with him and he retired at the age of 31 before pursuing a career in coaching and management.

He is now a proud patron of the veterans' charity Erskine and proceeds from his book will be donated to the cause.

Tougher than Bullets offers a fascinating insight into the life of an unsung sporting hero who was more than happy to serve Queen and country.

His efforts on the pitch mirrored the grit and determination he showed during his short Army career and there is no hint of the arrogance and self importance that is often attributed to many of today's top stars.

Davis comes across as a humble individual who has relished the challenges his life has presented. While he may be overshadowed by other players from the era, his story is well worth reading and comes highly recommended. ■

RECONNOITRING READING

Wellington's Worst Scrape

by Carole Divall

IT is about time that such a well researched, modern book on the Burgos campaign was published – especially as most of the 200th anniversaries in 2012 concentrated on allied victories. Wellington may have been over-confident following his successes at Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca and Madrid.

Carole Divall brings the subsequent story to life brilliantly with a very wide range of personal accounts and a logical analysis of events. Highly recommended, though a few more maps and clearer orders of battle would have been beneficial.

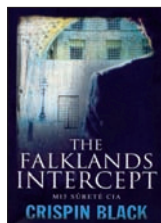


Col Patrick Crowley, PWRR

The Falklands Intercept

by Crispin Black

ALTHOUGH this novel takes you back to the Falklands conflict, it is very much set in the modern-day MI5 and CIA. The action follows Col Jacot as he investigates the sudden death of Britain's chief of military intelligence. Author **Crispin Black** uses his own background from Cambridge and the military to mix reality and fiction, creating a plausible plot that takes you into the murky world of the intelligence services, with all the twists and turns you would expect from this genre. Recommended to anyone who likes a good detective or crime thriller.

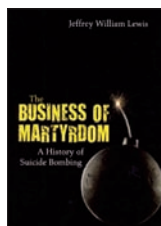


Cpl Simon Haggerty, QDG

The Business of Martyrdom

by JW Lewis

THIS excellent read is underpinned by **Jeffrey William Lewis'** immense knowledge of conflict from Tsarist Russia to the present day and considers the conundrum; how to generate lethal precision using the suicide bomber as the guidance mechanism. The Kamikaze, Tamil Tigers and various Jihadi movements provide evidence aplenty. An unexpected gem is an examination of the IRA hunger strikes. No immediate counters to suicide attacks are offered but this book greatly assists with understanding the issues.

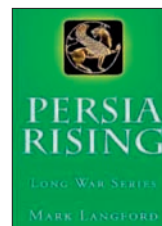


Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE

Persia Rising

by Mark Langford

AN incredibly fast-paced cautionary tale, this title takes the reader on a wild and terrifying ride into a future in which the next 9/11-style terrorist attack provokes a full-blown apocalypse. The first couple of chapters are brutal to say the least but if you like your literature with a bit of an edge this is probably your cup of tea. The pace of the story alone keeps you turning the pages to find out what's happening around the next corner. I'm a fan of the whole doomsday genre and this is well worth a look if you're into this kind of thing.

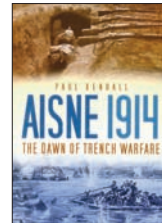


LCpl Adam Jackson, Para

Aisne 1914

by Paul Kendall

AT first glance, this title appears to offer little new to the vast literature on the First World War. The familiar narrative of the British Expeditionary Force being unprepared for the challenges of modern continental warfare shrouds what is actually a well written and meticulously researched account of one of the conflict's pivotal battles. **Paul Kendall** has consulted a wide variety of primary sources and the book itself is lavishly furnished with pictures, maps and photographs. A number of detailed appendices provide an excellent reference for professional and amateur historians alike.



Simon Moody, civvy

Red Notice

by Andy McNab

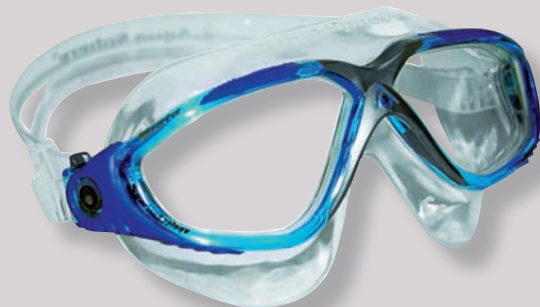
BEST described as *Die Hard* meets *Under Siege 2*, this thriller sees a bunch of South Ossetians hijack a Channel Tunnel train with Sgt Tom Buckingham of the SAS on-board. Despite taking a while to get going, the story eventually rattles along quite nicely. However, the characters are predictable: all officers are rubbish, while politicians are shifty and ineffectual. The narrative tries hard to sound authentic, throwing in military phrases that feel a bit out of context but at least the constant tea drinking conveys the soldier ethos in a more realistic way.



Capt Alex Janaway, RAMC

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TOP @

Review: James Morton

THERE are only two things that you really ask of a pair of goggles. The first is not to let water in. The second is not to leave you ripping them off in discomfort after one length.

For a company as confident in its products – and in particular its eye protection (that'll be goggles then) – as aquatic expert Aqua Sphere it is remarkable that they struggle with such apparent basics.

I guess I should declare my disclaimer at the start – I'm no athlete.

Indeed, I'm not even a competitive sportsman.

I can hold my own in the fast lane as a fitness swimmer but I cannot claim to have put the K180 small socket goggles through an ironman-style trial.

But that's what makes me question the "elite" status of this kit.

If I'm storming out of my local pool in frustration, I'd hate to think what a high-performance triathlete's view would be if these things nullified months of training and preparation.

The main issue is the fit and comfort.

There just doesn't seem to be a reasonable compromise or maybe I've just got a funny-shaped head.

Tighten the straps too much and the cups cut into your eye socket like cheese wire.

You can't argue with the suction and wraparound vision on them but the rubber seal barely has any impact and it feels like the plastic cup is just carving directly into your eyeball – not pleasant and not the "comfort" marketed by the firm in its publicity.

Loosen them too much and the lenses just seem to be the wrong shape and leak water far too easily.

Perhaps it's the strap that's the issue – the two thinner strands of rubber cause annoyance by becoming tangled and there is only one central lock on the top section, making it tricky to alter.

To someone, I am sure the K180s, priced around £19.99, are the perfect piece of kit.

But on my experience I would certainly question Aqua Sphere's claims of an ultra-soft comfort seal and easy-adjust head strap.

The likes of seven-time US Olympic gold medalist Amanda Beard, who has endorsed this company's various innovative products, can't be that wrong.

But towards the top end of the market, where Aqua Sphere's kit sits in terms of price, there are other options available which are far more soothing on the eyes and easier to grapple with.

After all, who wants to make their fitness regime any more uncomfortable than it needs to be? ■

ear

SWIMMER'S
WORLD



PICK OF THE MONTH:

SINKING FEELING

EXPERT GOGGLES FAIL TO PLEASE
IN THE POOL

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SOLDIER SPORT

PERSONNEL HIT THE SLOPES AS SKI SEASON REACHES TOP GEAR

PICTURE: SGT RUSS NOLAN, RLC





Picture: Steve Bond/Primadale

Main man: Army prop LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh) puts the Exeter Chiefs on the front foot in their Premiership clash with Northampton Saints

Rugby's peak performers

Interviews: Richard Long

THE winter weather may have claimed the Army's opening game of the season but fans can be reassured that no stone will be left unturned when it comes to preparing for this year's Inter-Services campaign.

With fixtures against Oxford and Cambridge Universities to come this month, the rugby union stars will slowly be edging towards top gear ahead of the Forces showdown in April.

Twickenham glory has been a mainstay of the Reds' success in recent times and with more and more supporters filling the famous stadium each year the determination to win is greater than ever.

To help its cause, the squad is able to call upon a growing pool of players from the game's professional ranks and *SoldierSport* spoke to some of those Servicemen during a recent training camp in Aldershot to learn more about life as an elite athlete.

Veteran forward LCpl Chris Budgen (2 R Welsh) is the oldest player in the Premiership but age is proving to be no barrier for the Exeter Chiefs star.

Having helped the Devon-based outfit achieve promotion from the Championship in 2010 the 40-year-old remains in full-time training with the club.

"I've been in and out of the side recently," he said. "The team is doing pretty well, although we've just been knocked out of the Heineken Cup, and we're sitting comfortably in mid-table."

"The club is trying to expand and grow and it is nice to be involved in that."

Budgen has seen the sport develop significantly in recent seasons and has had to alter his game accordingly.

"Every year there is something new

in terms of strength and conditioning training and everything we do is analysed by video, it's almost like Big Brother is watching you," he explained.

"There is so much preparation that goes into each game and we are always planning ahead."

"Fans see us as players who take to the field on match day but there is so much that goes on behind the scenes."

"We even have video analysis on the referee to look at how he calls the scrum. It is the same for the Heineken Cup so we can see how the European officials interpret the game."

"It is a proper job."

Despite having considerable commitments at club level, the prop was happy to return to the Army set-up last month and is looking forward to another season of Forces rugby.

He said: "My aim is to get in the team and win another Inter-Services title."

"It is getting harder and harder each year; we have beaten our rivals but they are tough matches. You come off the field knowing you have been in a contest."

"There now seems to be a lot of hype around the Inter-Services and the Army-Navy game has a lot more meaning to it."

"The mission now is to fill Twickenham and hopefully I'll be around long enough to see that happen."



PROP LBdr Ken Dowding (7 Para RHA) is hoping to get a further taste of Premiership rugby having spent a loan spell with Bath earlier this season.

The 28-year-old featured in five games for the club and is now lining up for Bridgend Ravens in the Welsh Principality Premiership.

"Bath was much more professional than anywhere else I have been," Dowding told *SoldierSport*.

"The facilities are amazing, they have built a new training ground and it is a great place to be.

"From a scrummaging perspective it was totally different to what I had done in the past. I got to see things from a new angle.

"It was far more technical and I've been able to look at my game from another perspective.

"It also gave me an opportunity to get some games under my belt. I played a full 80 minutes in an A League match. I was up against another prop who was competing for the same spot and did really well, so I was asked to stay on for 12 weeks."

Dowding has also been on the books at Ospreys and despite being a full-time sportsman he maintains his commitment to the Army. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 and returns to his unit during the off-season.

He is now waiting for this month's Six Nations squads to be finalised to see if other opportunities become available on the playing side.

"I'm aiming for the Premiership but I'd be happy to go to the Championship to get regular games," he explained.

"Army rugby is so professional and it is a good way for clubs to look at you. Our set-up is held in high regard within Premiership circles.

"I want to force my way into the side for the Inter-Services, help the team win the title and be named as the best prop in the competition."



HOOKER LSgt Matt Dwyer (WG) earned a new two-year deal with Ospreys this season following some encouraging displays on the pitch.

The 28-year-old gained valuable experience in the Heineken Cup and has also been part of the club's league and LV Cup campaigns.

"I've been in and around the squad for the past year-and-a-half," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I'm through the development stage and am now integrated in the first team. I'm currently the third choice hooker but the only way is up.

"I am a full-time professional and every day I'm working on my skills as well as the little things that separate us from amateurs.

"I'm learning a lot and my line-out throw is getting better.

"I'm concentrating on working my way up the pecking order at Ospreys but I am a soldier first and foremost and I want to win another Inter-Services title."

Dwyer has been quick to praise the support of his unit and returns to his day job whenever time allows.

He said: "The Welsh Guards have been absolutely fantastic. I'm putting the regiment's name out there and I've found a good balance between rugby and my Service career.

"When I join up with the Army team I try not to be arrogant. It is nice that people respect the fact I am a professional and hopefully my input is valuable."



FRONT row forward LCpl Ricky Reeves (33 Engr Regt EOD) was given a taste of top-flight rugby with Saracens this season when he came off the bench in an LV Cup match with Sale.

The Army star is a regular at Championship high-flyers Bedford and with the club acting as a feeder side to the Premiership outfit, he has been given an opportunity to step up.

"This is my second season with Bedford," the 30-year-old said. "I was at Cambridge prior to that but I wanted to up my game.

"I had just played in the Army-Navy match, I showed them some footage and I got a trial. I had been training really hard and was lifting a lot of weights in the gym and that effort paid off.

"The Championship is really

competitive and the games are very fast. Playing week in, week out has definitely helped my game.

"The LV Cup match was rapid. At Saracens you are obviously learning from top players and the facilities are great, but it was not that different."

Reeves plans to continue with Bedford but revealed other clubs have shown an interest in him.

He combines work commitments with training and has praised the support given to him by his chain of command.

Despite being a Bedford man he is happy to return to the Service fold.

"Coming back is great as you are with your closest mates," he said. "I want to get selected for the training camp in Portugal and then take to the field for the Army-Navy game."



Try time: Forward Maj Andy Davie (29 Regt RLC) fights his way to the line in the Army masters' opening game of 2013 against the Prison Service

Masters mount double defence

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE Army masters rugby union team are targeting double success in 2013 as they seek to defend their Inter-Services and world titles.

Having assembled one of their strongest squads in recent seasons the Reds are approaching the challenge in confident mood and started the year with a commanding 36-12 win over the Prison Service in Aldershot.

Assistant director Maj Spike Quant (REME) told *SoldierSport* the key aim is to triumph over their Forces rivals but with the World Masters looming on the horizon plans are being put in place for a sustained run of success.

"Our main focus is on the Inter-Services and the goal for this season is to defend our title," the officer added.

"Between the seniors, women and veterans, the competition is probably closest at our level.

"The Royal Air Force have turned us over a few times, which makes the tournament interesting. It is not a one-sided affair and that keeps things alive for the other Services.

"The Navy always play the RAF in the first match and the winner comes out with the determination to take us on. It is a tough contest."

To qualify for the team players must be aged 35 or above and have previously competed at corps level.

An emphasis is also placed on supporting community rugby, with a number of squad members acting as coaches within the Service and in civilian circles.

"We look to guys who have experience in the corps competition but some filter through from the Reds' senior set-up as well," Quant said.

"It is an opportunity for those who have not represented the full side to get a cap at Army level.

"The early part of the season is based around selection. We have two fixtures so new faces can come in and challenge for a place in the side.

"Every shirt is up for grabs."

The Reds were victorious at the last World Masters in Sydney in 2009 and

were beaten finalists four years earlier in Canada. They travel to Turin for the tournament's latest staging in August.

"The Inter-Services is always our priority but this is another target to aim for," Quant explained.

"The competition will be new to us and we will not know too much about our opponents but based on our previous outings in Sydney and Canada we

anticipate doing well. Hopefully we can defend our crown.

"Another one of our aims is to be the best masters team in the UK and there are not many sides

that can beat us at this level. We have got the edge over our rivals."

Skipper WO2 Neil Griffiths (R Welsh) is confident the squad can achieve its aims and believes recent form will hold them in good stead.

He said: "The group we have at the moment is probably the strongest I have been involved with and we are looking in decent shape.

"I have played in three Inter-Services campaigns and have won all three.

"IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT REPRESENTED THE FULL SIDE TO GET A CAP"



From top, Wing wonder: The Army masters show their attacking threat **Line breaker:** WO2 Mark Kane runs at the Prison Service defence **On the charge:** Flanker SSgt Dave Goddard fires the Reds players forward

"I have also been injured in every one of those games but I am back now with the honour of being captain.

"We are looking to do well in both tournaments but we have never gone a whole season unbeaten.

"We set our standards high and the only game we lost last year was against the Prison Service. It is a tough ask but we can do it."

Griffiths believes the masters is the perfect environment for those who have been overlooked for other representative teams but want to continue their battles on the pitch.

"I played for the Army under-21 side earlier in my career, I've also been part of my regimental and corps sides," the skipper added.

"I will continue playing until I physically cannot walk, I enjoy it that much. You are a long time retired.

"One of my other great ambitions is to line-up against my kids.

"Once you get to a certain age in rugby circles you are seen as not being good enough for regimental first teams. But a lot of those set-ups do not have a second XV to play for. So this is an ideal squad to be part of." ■



Reds escape prison term

A SUPERB spell of second-half attacking play saw the Army masters rugby union side cruise to a 36-12 victory over the Prison Service on a freezing night in Aldershot.

The sub-zero temperatures seemed to be of little concern to the Reds, who ran in six tries to break the spirited defence of their opponents and record a deserved win.

LCpl Epi Qolikibua [1 Scots] gave the hosts the perfect start as he opened the scoring in the fifth minute.

The winger rounded off a flowing cross-field move to touch down in the corner after evading some desperate last-ditch tackles.

Instead of capitalising on their lead the Army soon found themselves on the back foot as prop Adam Ledner charged to the line to square the contest in the 11th minute.

With both teams engaged in a midfield battle further scoring opportunities were in short supply.

However, Maj Andy Davie [29 Regt RLC] restored the masters' advantage when he crashed home on the half-hour mark following a sustained spell

of forward pressure.

The attacking momentum was maintained after the break as hooker Maj Ben Birkbeck (JOTAC) found time and space out wide to cross for a simple five points.

Qolikibua found his range with the boot to kick the extras and open a 17-5 lead before Mitch Mitchelson reduced the arrears when he ghosted through the home defence for the visitors' second try.

However, the Army fired an immediate response and three scores in the final ten minutes killed any hopes of a Prison Service comeback.

The searing pace of WO2 Mark Kane (RRU Edinburgh) left the opposition rearguard in tatters as he sprinted to the line with ease and fellow replacement CSgt Brad Sutherland (Coldm Gds, pictured) repeated the feat with a solo effort of his own just moments later.

The outstanding SSgt Dave Goddard [24 Cdo Engr Regt] added the final score in the dying embers of the match as the Army's superior fitness levels reaped further rewards. ■



Taking aim: Hot shots from the 29 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps women's team make their mark during the military patrol race on Ex Spartan Hike

Ski season gathers momentum

Report: Richard Long

Pictures: Sgt Russ Nolan, RLC

THE spectacular backdrop of the French Alps was the setting for the annual UK Regional and Territorial Army Ski Championships.

Around 370 competitors descended on the villages of Villeneuve and Le Monetier for the ten-day competition, which featured individual and team events across a number of disciplines.

Alpine skiers tackled the slalom, giant slalom, Super G and downhill but the weather took its toll on the athletes after a mid-week snowfall delayed some races.

However, the conditions failed to hamper the all-conquering 1 Logistic Support Regiment squad, who completed a clean-sweep of team titles to claim the overall combination prize.

The contest is also aimed at welcoming newcomers to the slopes and novice competitor LBdr Kieran Allport (32 Regt RA), who only learnt to ski in December, said: "It is definitely a sport that gets the blood pumping and one that is not to be missed. I will certainly be recommending it to my friends."

The weather was near perfect for those taking part in the Nordic categories, although athletes involved in the military patrol race suffered some disruptions.

As well as pushing themselves in the patrol event, Service personnel were in action in a variety of cross-country disciplines and biathlon.

LCpl Lydia Hilson (16 Med Regt) said: "The races have been hard but it has been a really good experience and friendly environment to compete in."

In the biathlon, Hilson's unit celebrated

success in the women's team contest, with Oxford University Officer Training Corps taking the relay title.

A strong display from 1st Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment saw them win the men's team and relay competitions.

January's Exercise Spartan Hike marked the start of a busy period of winter sports fixtures for UK personnel.

The Army Ski Championships were being staged in Serre Chevalier as this issue went to press, with the biathlon and Nordic equivalents held in the German resort of Ruhpolding. February also plays host to the Inter-Services Alpine, snowboard, Telemark, bobsleigh, luge and skeleton showdowns.


The season finishes with the Army Snowboard Championships in Stubai, Austria. For results and more information on all events visit www.awasa.org.uk ■



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SAPPERS SET SAIL



A TEAM of soldiers from 26 Engineer Regiment celebrated the end of their tour in Afghanistan by sailing around the coastline of Great Britain.

The nautical adventure was staged in difficult winter conditions and saw the crew depart from Gosport in a westward direction at the start of their challenge.

Having arrived in Weymouth, the sappers headed to Falmouth and Milford Haven before arriving in Port Douglas on the Isle of Man.

The journey's third leg proved to be the highlight as the Nicholson 55 craft headed towards the Scottish Isles and Caledonian Canal.

"We moved inwards to Fort William and the sight of the snow-capped Ben Nevis was a stark contrast to the desert views of the previous seven months," said SSgt Jason West.

"This was the jewel in the crown when it came to scenery."

The final leg saw the personnel travel down the east coast with stops in Ramsgate and Great Yarmouth before plotting a course for Cowes.

"We sailed 1,866 nautical miles including 136 night hours but, more importantly, we all had the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the voyage as well as our tour," West (pictured) said.



Striking out: Army MMA star Sgt Jay Lloyd (1 AAC, yellow shorts) is expecting a tough fight in Minden

Lloyd braced for German battle

Interview: Richard Long

ARMY fighter Sgt Jay Lloyd (1 AAC) returns to action this month for his fourth bout in the German Mixed Martial Arts Championship.

The 31-year-old has made a successful start to his career with two wins to date but faces a stern test of his credentials when he squares off against hometown favourite Nicko Hulsemann in Minden on February 16.

Lloyd trains in Bielefeld and when his rival announced his search for an opponent the soldier was delighted to accept the challenge.

"He is very popular and there is talk that there will be a crowd of around 4,000 people to cheer him on," the competitor told *SoldierSport*.

"It will be a negative atmosphere for me and I'm expecting a lot of boos.

"I don't know much about him. He has trained in the MMA for a few years now and will be the favourite, but we'll see what happens.

"In my first fight I took a bit of a beating but the squaddie mentality is to never give up. That stood me in good stead and I

managed to take him in the second round.

"I will need that approach to get through this contest.

"My boxing skills and groundwork are improving all the time and I'm better mentally. However, he has the advantage of a home crowd."

Lloyd comes from a boxing background and began training in Mixed Martial Arts once the Ultimate Fighting Championship hit the mainstream.

"I started to learn jujitsu and I fell in love with it," he said.

"I was posted to Germany from ATR Bassingbourn. I found an MMA club and after six to 12 months training I had my first professional fight, beating an American opponent with a choke hold.

"I then took on a German athlete and won in the first round but last time out I got beat up by a guy from Chechnya. It is a tough sport but I enjoy it.

"The standard of fighters in this country is very good. Russians, Americans and Chechens all travel to compete here.

"I've fought against three different nationalities so far, which is great experience for me and I've made some good contacts." ■



Karters given trial date

THE Army karting set-up is looking for new talent to join its ranks and help the team mount a successful defence of its Inter-Services title.

Having triumphed over their Forces rivals in their debut season the squad is looking to build on its achievements and will be holding a trials day at Tilbury Go Karts in Essex on Saturday, March 16.

The soldiers took to the track for the first time in 2011 but completed a full campaign last year, when they beat the Royal Air Force and an emerging Royal Navy team in a challenging five-race series.

Opportunities are also available for those not suited to a driving role, with positions ranging from catering staff to vehicle mechanics.

For more information email team 2iC Sgt Craig Czornyj (REME) at craig.czornyj246@mod.uk



Driving force: Striker Pte Luke Young (R Signals) runs clear of the Aldershot Town defence during the Army under-23s' 5-2 home defeat last month

Shots deliver wake-up call

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Steve Dock

THE Army under-23s warmed up for the defence of their Inter-Services crown with a 5-2 defeat at the hands of Aldershot Town.

A mix of first-team players and academy stars took to the field for the League Two outfit, cruising to a 4-0 lead in the first half as the Reds struggled for a foothold in the game.

But a spirited showing after the interval saw the hosts stem the tide and they deservedly fought their way back into the contest before a stunning late strike sealed their fate.

The Army's focus now turns to a trip to Cosford on February 19 when they face the challenge of the Royal Air Force before locking horns with the Royal Navy on home turf a week later.

If they are to retain their title the young guns will have to show greater defensive resolve than was on display against a ruthless Aldershot team.

Centre forward Michael Rankine put his side in front in the opening five minutes with a simple back post header from a left-wing cross.

A second strike swiftly followed as the Reds' rearguard presented the opposition with a one-on-one chance that was clinically converted.

A sliced clearance from goalkeeper Spr Luke Cairney (RE) gifted the Shots a third before Rankine added to his tally with a neat turn and finish in the box.

However, the goal rush was stemmed after the break as the Reds returned to the field with greater determination.

Cairney prevented Rankine from completing his hat-trick with a smart save shortly after the re-start and with the soldiers showing more composure in the final third they enjoyed some decent attacking spells.

Pte Mike McDonald (RLC) reduced the arrears with a superb 20-yard volley that found the bottom corner and the impressive Pte Luke Young (R Signals) added a second from the penalty spot.

With the team chasing further goals, Aldershot were able to extend their lead in the closing stages as Jordan Roberts drilled the ball home after a clearance

from Cairney failed to find touch.

Speaking at full-time, Army coach Cpl Kevin Hanbury (RLC) told *SoldierSport* his players failed to perform in the early stages but he was pleased with the way they responded to the challenge.

"In the first 45 minutes it looked as though we were still on our Christmas holidays," he added.

"Having said that, Aldershot fielded a strong side and the

pitch did not help. In the second period we made a couple of changes, were more physical and won the half 2-1.

"This has been a good wake-up call for us. We were up against a tough team and managed to fight our way back into the contest, which was good to see.

"A few players were missing but the guys who came in proved they can perform at this level.

"It is good to have a kick up the backside ahead of the Inter-Services. The lads know it will be a hard tournament and it is going to be tough for us as champions.

"Nobody is going to give us that cup, we have to go out there and earn it." ■

"A FEW PLAYERS WERE MISSING BUT THE GUYS WHO CAME IN PROVED THEY CAN PERFORM"

Boxers set ring record

THE Army's female boxers capped a superb season in the ring by securing four titles at the sport's national competition.

LCpl Alanna Murphy (12 LSR, pictured), Cpl Nikita Silvera (21 Sig Regt), Pte Nicki Hunt (30 Sig Regt) and Pte Tracy Ling (RLC) all emerged victorious from the Amateur Boxing Association championships – giving the Service its best ever return from the event.

Speaking after his team's winning run, coach SSgt Martin Anthony (RLC) told *SoldierSport*: "We only had six girls to start with, so to get four champions out of six is a fantastic achievement.

"We had five finalists, which is a record for the Army, and we set a further record with four champions. It has been a great season."

A superb showing from Murphy saw her stop opponent Ruth Raper while Silvera and Hunt both won by unanimous decisions. Ling completed the streak with victory via majority decision.

The only sour point for the squad was a defeat for Bdr Siobhan Haynes (14 Regt, RA).

"She lost on a majority decision," Anthony said.

"She could have done a bit better but it was a bout that could have gone either way; that's boxing.

"Most of them have returned to work now but they will be back with us next season."

Pte Ashley Williams (2 R Welsh) was another fighter to suffer

disappointment in the ring as he lost in the quarter-finals of the European under-22 championships.

The Welsh boxer returns to action at international level later this month and will hopefully compete at the senior European championships in May and the world championships in October. ■



SPORT SHORTS

■ **PREMIERSHIP** giants Bath Rugby are offering Servicemen and women discounted tickets for this month's clash with Worcester Warriors.

The offer features a 50 per cent reduction on seats for the match on Saturday, February 9 and follows a similar initiative at last month's games against SU Agen and Bucharest Wolves.

To book tickets call 0844 4481865 and quote "MoD Jan/Feb offer" or visit www.bathrugby.com and enter the promotional code MOD1213.

■ **BODYBUILDER** Cpl Gemma Moore (AGC (SPS)) achieved a top three finish in her debut showing at the British novice finals.

The soldier finished just two points behind the overall winner and her progress was praised by judges, who complemented the separation and development shown in her back, abdominals and legs.

"I'm now back in training and preparing for the year ahead while building up the weaker areas of my shoulders and bringing more lateral development out," Moore said.



■ **A TEAM** of Reservists from the Royal Engineers' Mountaineering and Exploration Club have completed a challenging expedition in Nepal.

The 12-man party climbed to a height of 6,189 metres as they summited Island Peak, which is located in the Khumbu region of the Nepal Himalayas.

Leader Capt Jon Evans said: "This has been an extremely successful expedition in many ways, both for the individual and for the whole of the Royal Engineers Territorial Army."

■ **SERVICE** personnel are being invited to sign up for the Missing People cycle challenge which runs from Edinburgh to Richmond.

The five-day adventure starts on June 29 and covers a 500-mile route through some of the UK's most beautiful countryside.

The charity is hoping to include a minimum of 18 participants in this year's event and more information is available at www.missingpeople.org.uk/missing-people/fundraising/missing-people-cycle-challenge

■ **FITNESS** fanatic Capt Ian Flannery (R Signals) completed a punishing 4,267 sit-ups in the space of two-and-a-half hours to support the work of the Capt James Philippon Trust Fund.

The officer took part in the challenge during a lunch period at the Camp Bastion dining facility and raised more than £4,600 for the cause.

Tully braced for toughest test

ENDURANCE athlete Maj Julia Tully was included among a field of top international talent at last month's Wanaka Iron Man race in New Zealand.

The Territorial Army dentist was in action as this issue went

to press and faced the daunting prospect of a 3.8km swim followed by a 180km bike ride and full 42.2km marathon.

"This is going to be the biggest challenge of my life," the 40-year-old sportswoman said.

"I can swim well and run fast but the bike is really putting me to the test."

Tully has been a competitive runner for many years but it was not until she moved to Cyprus

that she took up triathlon.

The officer won the ladies half iron man event in RAF Akrotiri in 2012 and was raising money for oral health charity Dentaaid by racing in New Zealand.

She added: "I want to represent the Army in this competition to boost the profile of Service sport and show the world that the military can compete at every level.

"I am also keen that my efforts raise funds for a fantastic organisation that offers thousands of people instant pain relieving care in regions where there are no dentists."

Donations can be made at www.justgiving.com/Ironmanjulia





Picture: Graeme Main

ON-ice rivalries have been resumed in Canada after the 2013 BATUS Hockey League got under way last month. Players in the six-team competition are drawn from across British Army Training Unit Suffield, with 95 per cent of athletes having never skated before their deployment. Maj Jez Johnson (REME) said: "In Canada ice hockey is an all-consuming activity with soldiers, wives, husbands and children becoming involved." Johnson's team, the Orange Oilers, were 5-1 victors over the Icemen in the first game of the new campaign. The officer, who is currently recovering from a broken ankle, added: "Despite personnel working 12-hour days on the BATUS winter rehabilitation programme they are happy to train at 0600 and then compete in the evening. Playing out here breeds the ice hockey bug, which means people return to the UK wanting to join local clubs."

Comeback king hits the road

ENDURANCE cyclist LCpl Chris Hopkinson (R Signals) returns to the saddle this year on a mission to complete the Race Across America.

The Reservist, who is a member of the Royal Signals Northern Band, enjoyed a successful comeback last season when he became the Ultra Marathon Cycling Association 24-hour champion and will be targeting a new national record when he jets across the pond in June.

In 2005 Hopkinson became the first British entrant to finish the gruelling event as he covered 3,051 miles in 11 days, 23 hours and five minutes.

He hopes to complete the demanding course in less than ten days during his second attempt.

"Last time there were 26 solo riders in the field, 11 of those were hospitalised and one died," the super-fit 45-year-old told *SoldierSport*.

"It is brutal. I had a lot of physical problems and I was there just to finish. This time I'm trying to win it and to do that I have to go round in about nine days.

"Six previous winners have entered and 12 riders have finished in the top three before so it will be a tough ask."

Hopkinson returned to cycling in early 2012 after a five-year absence and competed at the national 24-hour championships, where he finished 13th.

In September he travelled to America for the Texas time trial – an event he

won in 2004, setting a course record of 400.2 miles in the process.

The contest has since been given a new route and the Army ace went on to make a winning return.

"The first part of the race was in glorious sunshine but then it rained

and it never stopped. It was absolutely torrential," he explained.

"The roads were four to six inches under water and it was hard work but I won the event with a distance of 397.5 miles in 24 hours. The previous course record was 371 miles.

"I was extremely pleased with that and I now hold the record for both circuits."

Hopkinson then moved on to the Royal Championships in California, where he finished joint fourth.

"I had massive mechanical problems and even had to change bikes at one stage," he recalled.

"I needed 418 miles to win the series and I got 432. It was nice to be a world champion in my first season back and I have big plans for this year."

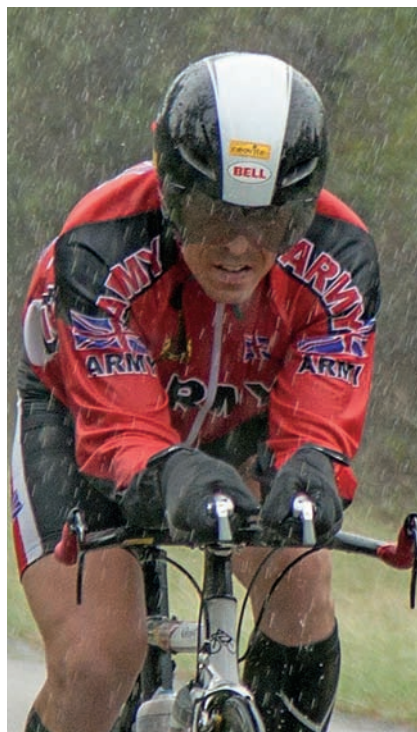
The soldier hopes to defend his UMCA title but needs to generate £25,000 in sponsorship to compete in the Race Across America.

He will also be raising awareness for the charity Cycling 4 Comrades.

"When I decided to come back my aim was to do a 24-hour race to see if I've still got it," he said. "I feel as though I'm stronger than ever."

"Speed is for youngsters but endurance seems to be better suited to those aged between 40 and 50."

For more information on the challenges follow @Hoppo347 on Twitter or Chris. Hoppo.Hopkinson on Facebook. ■





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As Kevin recently left the Army he is equally qualified to show those due to leave the Armed Forces and those who have already left how to successfully invest in property.

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Kevin became financially free by creating his own property portfolio. You may not want to create an extensive portfolio you may just want one or two properties as a pension pot or to safeguard against redundancy.

Whatever your thoughts about property investing, Kevin will pass on to you some of his experience as a property investor in the Armed Forces so you can decide if property investing is right for you...

Throughout his property investing career, property prices in the UK have gone up and they have gone down. But because Kevin knows the right types of properties to buy he has thrived no matter what the market conditions. This is just one of the ideas Kevin will share with you at his **FREE 2½ hour seminar**.

You'll learn...

- The property investing strategies Kevin uses every day... and why now is a great time to be investing in property.
- How to buy one rental property or ten... the choice is yours and Kevin will show you how.
- Why it is that Armed Forces personnel are ideally positioned to become successful property investors.
- At the very least how to get the best deal possible on purchasing your first family home.

It may be that you want to buy a rental property now to earn an extra income and then move into it yourself at a later date when you want to settle down. Or it maybe that, like Kevin, you want to create a large property portfolio and at a future date turn it into your main income or even a business. Whatever your thoughts about

property investing, please come along to Kevin's free 2½ hour seminar and why not bring along your partner as they would also be more than welcome!

Book your FREE ticket right away... Admittance by ticket only.

A big demand for the events is anticipated and as places are limited – please register for your FREE ticket right away.

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Heathrow - 26th February – Holiday Inn, Heathrow **7pm - 9:30pm**

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When you arrive at Kevin's free 2½ hour seminar you will receive - once again **ABSOLUTELY FREE** – an audio book called **RICHES - The 7 Secrets of Wealth you were never told** with contributions from Gill Fielding, Duncan Bannatyne, James Caan, T Harv Eker, Brian Tracy, Michael Gerber, and many, many more.

final word



We asked Brimstone and Talisman troops on exercise in Jordan about their preparations for Op Herrick 18

INTERVIEWS: BECKY CLARK
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



LCpl Katy Ord (RAVC)

I'm a high assurance search dog handler and Herrick 18 will be my third time in Afghanistan. In this environment we're able to get the correct preparation for ourselves and the animals. We're getting them used to Afghan-like conditions and doing battle inoculation; familiarising them with the sites and sounds in theatre, such as the helicopters, weapons and explosions.



Spr Matt Hutchins (RE)

I've never been on tour before and this is my very first time abroad. I was happy when I found out I'd be doing Talisman because although you're searching for improvised explosive devices, this is the safest way to do it. The Mastiff is like an armoured bank vault. We can help people get to where they're going safely so it's certainly a worthwhile job.



SSgt Colin Young (RE)

It's been an arduous six weeks but the lads have performed well. We've got a lot of young guys in the troop who haven't been away before. My hardest task is getting the realities of the job over to them. When we go out the door they need to be pin sharp so we'll train to gold standard here and go that step further. We have to make it count because next time it will be for real.



Rgr Samuel Bird (R Irish)

It's something different to come out here – usually my battalion goes to Kenya. I'm an infantry escort with the operators, providing them with cover. We've been practising all the search stuff that we don't usually do, going through different drills using their procedures instead of ours so I can take this back to my unit, which very few people have done.



PO Gerry Mulholland (RN)

All Royal Navy divers have explosive ordnance disposal as their main trade and as such I'll be part of the British Forces' counter-IED effort on Herrick 18. This exercise is certainly good preparation. The ground is hard, densely packed sand, and completely different to what you get on Salisbury Plain and it's good to get that realism into the training.



Spr Ollie Goode (RE)

I'm a Mastiff gunner and driver. In this variant you fire from a screen inside the vehicle instead of from the turret. It is very accurate because it has a system that takes weather and elevation into account. It's awesome to fire. The drills to extract a casualty from the vehicle were good too. With the right training you get better and better and in the end it becomes second nature.



LCpl Leigh Higgins (RLC)

As a number two I operate the remote control vehicle and prep the kit. We've been doing a lot of practice tasks, learning about search and all the assets that are available to us. We're also showing the infantry our capabilities, familiarising them with our equipment for when they go back to their units. I expect the tour to be difficult but it will be an experience.



Sgt Sanjay Thapa (RE)

Our squadron has been providing real life support to the task force on this serial. We're preparing the compounds and FOBs to make them as realistic as possible, putting in windows and doors and even a place for real livestock to provide the detail. My guys can see how the search teams work and what to expect when they come here on exercise themselves in the future.

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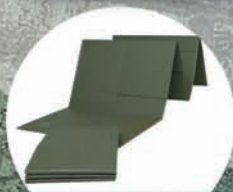
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