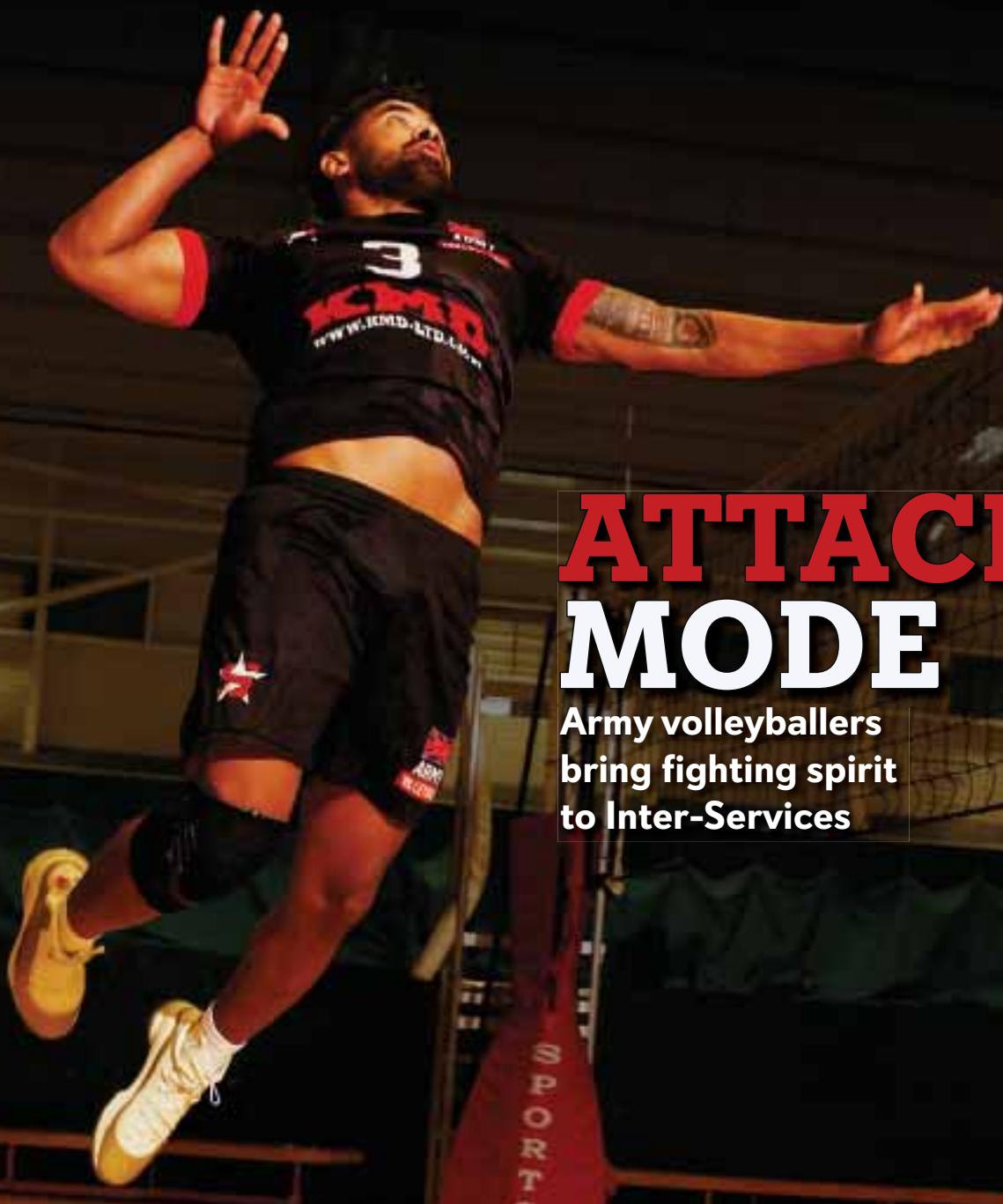


# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



## ATTACK MODE

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bring fighting spirit  
to Inter-Services



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OUR CONTRIBUTORS  
THIS MONTH...**CPL GEORGE MORRIS,  
REME**

AFTER taking time to star on this month's cover, army men's volleyball captain Cpl Morris turned his attention to matters on court as he led the team into Inter-Services action a day later. The NCO admitted his personal performance was "a bit scrappy" in the opening clash with the RAF (page 70) but the soldiers got the job done. Victory over the navy then saw them crowned champions for a second successive year. They face their military rivals again this month at the Crown Services tournament, which also features the police, fire and prison services.

**RICHARD STYAN**

A FORMER Royal Artillery officer, Styant – now 101 – landed in Normandy soon after D-Day and saw service in some of the fiercest fighting of the Second World War's European theatre, including Operation Epsom at Caen. He had been en route to the Far East when the Japanese surrendered in August 1945. Leaving as a captain and returning to civvy life the next year, he settled in Skipton, Yorkshire, where he raised three children with wife Barbara.

# Lest we forget the warnings of history

AS THE country pauses to commemorate **80 years since VE Day**, it's impossible not to reflect on how much has changed in the short time since we marked the 75th anniversary.

A brutal conflict is once again raging in Europe, while the voices of those who experienced the Second World War firsthand have inevitably almost all faded.

What would those who died eight decades ago make of the global events that have led us to where we are and the autocrats seemingly intent on tearing up the rules-based order that their sacrifice helped establish?

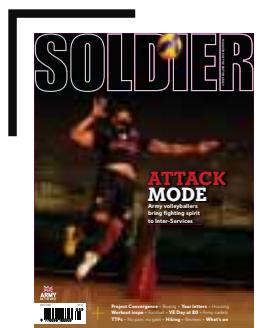
As Cpl Paul Robinson (RE) points out on page 51, they would likely wonder what it was all for – something for the politicians to ponder during this month's official commemorations.

If our dip into the *Soldier* archives piques your interest in army history, don't forget our entire back catalogue is now available online. It's a fascinating record of how British troops have kept calm and carried on since 1945 – whatever the demands of the era in which they served.

We're proud to uphold this legacy month on month, and as this edition shows, the pace of military life rarely slows. Whether it's the **men's and women's volleyball teams** smashing it on court (and our front cover) or units **tralling cutting-edge kit** stateside (page 30), personnel continue to give their all to the job in 2025. The nation is lucky to have them.

Becky Clark • **Assistant Editor**

'Personnel  
continue to  
give their all'





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Applications close 27 Jun 25. For more information scan the QR code to visit the Ranger Regiment Defence Connect page.

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**ARMY**  
BE THE BEST

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# Exciting news! Applications open 1st April 2025



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# DON'T MISS THE WINDOW TO GRAB £8,000



Picture: Cpl Paul Watson, RLC

**PRIVATE soldiers and lance corporals can earn themselves an extra £8,000 if they sign up for another three years of service on top of their first four.**

But troops have to apply for the cash – it isn't awarded automatically. And they must do so in a specific three-month window – the financial quarter in which they enter their third year of service.

The scheme applies to regular personnel only – not reservists.

Eligibility has recently been widened to include those who joined up between September 1, 2021 (previously January 1, 2022) and September 30, 2024.

Maj Josh Harding (RTR) from the Renumeration Policy team commented: "With almost 3,000 payments available each year we didn't want a situation where people who joined at the end of the financial year could miss out due to us maxing out our budget."

"That is why there is a strict three-month window – it gives everyone equal chance regardless of when they joined up."

"The first tranche was really popular, with nearly 800 individuals applying through the *Digital Transfers* app, and we widened the eligibility to include those who just missed out when we launched in January."

"Troops should apply quickly when their time comes to avoid disappointment."

Retrospective or advance applications are not permitted so being aware of the timeframe you need to apply in (listed in our **Directory on page 59**) is vital.

A Modnet or Armmail email account is required and applications must be made via *Digital Transfers* on the Career Management Portal. Personnel are advised to speak with their regimental career management officer for guidance before starting the process, however.

One implication of taking the cash –

especially for those thinking of quitting – is that you cannot give notice to terminate your service until you have completed the return-of-service period – unless an exceptional case is granted by the Army Employment Board.

Those permitted to leave, or who are compulsorily discharged, during this time will also be liable to repay the money in full, and may be retained by the army until repayment is complete or the period of outstanding return-of-service is done.

**'Troops should apply quickly when their time comes to avoid disappointment'**

## WHERE TO FIND SOLDIER



### Printed copies

Sent to army sites at the start of the month. Pick up a copy at the cookhouse and if you aren't seeing it tell us at [subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk)



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### Online

Digital versions of current and past editions – going right back to 1945 – are now available to view on [soldiermagazine.co.uk](https://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)



### Purchase

If you're not serving you can buy the mag from your high street retailer or directly from us at [subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk) (£23 for 12 issues in the UK)



## 1 FALKLAND ISLANDS

### Air-drop milestone

SOLDIERS from Brize-based 47 Air Despatch Squadron have been on a high after ticking off two notable firsts on the RAF A400 Atlas.

The loggers parachuted in a maximum haul from the workhorse in support of a Falklands exercise – the first time the feat had been achieved since the platform's initial trials and its first full delivery overseas.

From 3,000ft crews dropped two-dozen, 900kg pallets near Goose Green in support of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, who were working through a routine exercise on their tour as the Roulement Infantry Company.

As reported in this magazine, 47 Squadron helped in a multinational effort to bring aid to war-torn Gaza last spring.

And squadron boss Maj Aaron Thompson (RLC) said troops continued to perform well on the latest outing.

The OC told *Soldier* that the drop had helped prove a capability for future humanitarian actions, adding: "The load despatched was double the amount we were dropping over Gaza during the operation there in 2024."

"But it was also important in terms of fighting power, given that Gen Sir Roly Walker, Chief of the General Staff, has ordered an increase in the army's lethality."

Maj Thompson said his personnel were looking forward to hosting Omani colleagues in the UK on an instructional programme as they build their own nation's air despatch capability.



## 2 UK

### Holocaust remembered

DESCENDENTS of the troops who liberated the Bergen Belsen concentration camp held a ceremony to mark 80 years since British forces arrived at its gates in April 1945.

The Light Dragoons, whose predecessors – 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars – were among the first units to uncover the horrors of the Nazis' crimes, hosted a remembrance event in Catterick.

The service was attended by two survivors, Mala Tribich and Dr Alfred Garwood, who shared their experiences of the Holocaust.

Recalling how she and her fellow prisoners had been humiliated, stripped and shaved upon their arrival at Bergen Belsen, Tribich told reporters: "When we looked at one another we couldn't recognise ourselves – we were like objects, you stopped feeling human. Because of this people started dying."

"I'll never forget the kindness of the British Army on April 15 when they liberated us. You should be very proud of them."

As well as planting an oak tree in tribute, Tribich and Garwood wrote personal reflections on the lessons of history, which were sealed into a time capsule to be opened on the 100th anniversary in 2045, preserving their voices for future generations.



## 3 ARKANSAS

### Eyes on the prize

THE British Army Reserve Operational Shooting Team put their accuracy to the test at the 34th Armed Forces Skill at Arms Meeting.

Hosted by the National Guard Marksmanship Training Centre in Little Rock, the event saw the ten-strong contingent claim a host of individual and team prizes as they locked horns with counterparts from Holland, Italy and Ireland, as well as outfits from across the United States.

Team captain WO1 Jim Douglas (REME) was among the standout performers, finishing first as the high individual rifle shooter.

"This was not just about competing but building bonds and enhancing military proficiency," said Maj Ady Kyle (SASC).



4

**GERMANY****Fighting spirit**

SOME 200 British troops joined 3,000 Nato colleagues for major drills at the Joint Multinational Readiness Centre in Hohenfels.

Hosted by US forces, Exercise Allied Spirit also involved 11 partner nations, with the UK personnel working under the Lithuanian Army's Motorised Infantry Brigade Griffin.

Members of 88 Battery, 4 Regiment, Royal Artillery and 23 Squadron, 1 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps tested their interoperability with allies while facing off against a well equipped and free-thinking enemy.

"The opposition force here presents all the threats you can think of," said gunner boss Maj Ross Tewes. "It's great tactical training of the type we don't often do at home."



## 'The results are bound to influence how the army fights'

Tech trials in California – page 30

5

**POLAND****Cavalry pass the reins**

TROOPS from 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards are back on home soil after handing over Nato deterrence duties to 1st Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment.

The return of C Squadron from Operation Cabrit marks the last of three rotations for the Welsh Cavalry as part of the US-led battlegroup in Poland.

Capt Felix Holland said the 18-month commitment had given those deployed useful insights into working alongside host nation and American colleagues, as well as troops from Romania and Croatia.

"It was a great opportunity for junior leaders to get away and do valuable training in a realistic operational environment," he added.

Other highlights included learning horseback patrolling skills from Polish allies, visiting Auschwitz and conducting battlefield studies.



6

**NEPAL****Aiming high**

SOLDIERS from the Honourable Artillery Company have their sights set on becoming the first mixed-gender British Army regular and reserve team to scale Mount Everest.

As this issue hit desks the eight-strong outfit were tackling a series of acclimatisation climbs ahead of their summit attempt at the end of the month. A gruelling training regime also saw them conquer Nepal's 7,126m Himalung Himal last November – the first service outfit to do so.

In addition, the venture has seen the soldiers collecting samples of microplastics as part of a world-wide study into how the substances travel and impact fragile ecosystems.

Expedition leader, Maj Simon Du Boulay, said the experience so far had been "extremely enjoyable, but undeniably arduous".

"We're proud to contribute to the global understanding of environmental challenges and are looking forward to the most demanding leg of our journey – Everest," he added.

# SOCIAL CLIMBERS

**With many of its youngsters ending up in the military, new findings on the benefits of the cadet forces will be hard for politicians to ignore...**

**ARMY cadets have a strong moral compass, make friends with those outside their usual social circle and are less likely to have their collar felt by the law, an academic behind a series of reports into the youth groups has claimed.**

Dr Simon Denny (pictured below) said those joining up had an overwhelmingly good experience and emerged better placed to take their lives forward in work or education.

The rewards were even greater for those aspiring to a military career – youngsters were attuned to the required standards and more likely to stay in uniform for the long haul, he added.

Denny was speaking after the publication of his latest study, focused on school-based Combined Cadet Forces.

The document, commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and produced by the University of Northampton, says the CCF programme makes sound financial sense while offering a raft of benefits to the young people involved.

Researchers calculated a £120 million annual return if just one per cent of joiners had better life outcomes. They also found the CCF generates £10,000 per year in savings by reducing the need for interventions to address behaviour and attendance in school.

But Denny said the positives went well beyond cash returns, with social benefits too.

The academic, who served as an officer in The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, told *Soldier*: “Cadet organisations provide opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to meet in an environment that is

separate from the classroom.

“They are less likely to get into trouble with the police and they are well placed for the future. Whether someone wants to study at Oxford or go into a job, the fact they have been a cadet gives them something different to others in their peer group.

“And if they choose to join the armed forces, they are more likely to understand the requirements, pass their initial training and stay in their chosen service for longer.”

Senior government decision-makers have said they will be looking closely at Denny’s report, called *The Impact and Value of School-based Cadet Forces in the UK*.

After presenting more than a dozen teenagers from the youth groups with the King’s Coronation Medal at their Frimley Park training centre, defence minister Alastair Carns said the government would examine how they could build on the success of the organisations.

Op Herrick veteran Carns, who served with the Royal Marines and is now a reservist, said the cadet forces provided members



Picture: Graeme Main



with life skills and opportunity.

With many of them also going on to serve, the Selly Oak MP said the MoD would mull over the research and consider how it could bolster these organisations.

Meanwhile, parents and close relatives of teenagers at the presentation praised the cadet forces for engendering youngsters with a strong moral compass and solid life skills.

Nicole Hoydan, whose 17-year-

old son Ollie was among those parading at Frimley, said: “Army cadets is like a family – and it helps those joining to form friendships.

Grandmother Mary Havie agreed.

“The cadets learn to respect each other – that’s important,” she added.

**‘How becoming a cadet changed my life’ – page 74**

**‘If they choose to join the forces they are more likely to pass their initial training and stay in their service for longer’**



Picture: Musee des Blindés

## KING TIGER TO MAKE ITS MARK

**A ONCE feared German titan is breaking cover for the upcoming Tankfest in Dorset.**

The only fully-working King Tiger – a formidable armoured beast first used by Axis crews at Normandy in 1944 – is making tracks from its usual home at the Musee des Blindés in West France, to appear at the Bovington show from June 27 to 29.

Enthusiasts predict the huge vehicle, which was assembled from parts of captured kit at the end of the conflict, will be a showstopper.

Nik Wyness, from event organiser the Tank Museum, said: “We try to ensure there is always something that people will not have seen before.”

Visit [tankmuseum.org](http://tankmuseum.org) for further information on the annual event.



## NO DELAY, DOC

WAITING times for troops needing a doctor have been cut by 26 per cent, thanks to a new admin system by Defence Medical Services.

Total Triage sees patients submit a request online or by phone, before getting a call-back within 24 hours. They are then given medical advice or referred for a consultation in person or remotely.

As well as cutting down on unnecessary face-to-face slots, the initiative avoids a morning rush of calls – lessening pressure on staff and helping patients get seen faster.

Project lead Flt Sgt Chris Workman (RAF) said: “Some four-week waiting lists have been reduced to zero.”

## PM SUPPORT FOR TRAINING EFFORT

**PRIME Minister Keir Starmer has told Op Interflex soldiers their work is “incredibly humbling”.**

Speaking on a visit to one of the UK bases where Ukrainian soldiers are being trained, which cannot be identified for security reasons, the leader said the work happening there was “incredibly professional”.

He told the Ukrainians their resilience had meant all predictions of Russia succeeding very quickly in the war had been wrong, and that in fighting for their country the soldiers were fighting “for all of us”.



## KICKED OUT

**THE following personnel were dismissed from His Majesty's Armed Forces following conviction at court martial between January and March 2025:**

■ **Pte Luke Bush (Defence EOD, Munitions and Search Training Regiment)** pleaded guilty to nine charges of **making indecent images of children**, one charge of **making or possessing 6,490 prohibited images of children** and one charge of **possessing 48 extreme pornographic images** at the Military Court Centre, Catterick. Sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, suspended for two years, with a requirement to undertake an offender behaviour programme, 25 days' rehabilitation and 140 hours of unpaid work in the community.

■ **Pte Kele Kida (13 Air Assault Support Regiment, RLC)** pleaded guilty to **sexual assault** at the Military Court Centre, Catterick. Sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

■ **Gdsm Meli Cama (1st Battalion, Scots Guards)** was convicted of **voyeurism** at the Military Court Centre, Catterick. Sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

To read the full transcripts of the sentencing remarks in the above cases log on to [gov.uk/government/publications/military-court-service-sentencing-remarks-2025](http://gov.uk/government/publications/military-court-service-sentencing-remarks-2025)





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# A NEW DAWN

Pictures: Graeme Main and Amanda Smith



## All-female banner party make history at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst as the next generation of officers pass out of training



THREE servicewomen marched into history at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst Sovereign's Parade – becoming the first all-female banner party to participate in the event.

WO2 Cally Brunton and SSgt Louise Bradley (both RAMS) plus SSgt Jodie Lewis (RAVC) carried out the prestigious role as 239 officer cadets marked the end of 44 weeks' intensive training.

As company sergeant major of the intake's best-performing platoon, WO2 Brunton had the honour of carrying the sovereign's banner, which was presented to the academy by King Charles in 2023.

And in an exception to the usual rule excluding medical personnel from carrying bayonets, SSgt Bradley was given special permission to do so in symbolic protection of the banner.

WO2 Brunton told *Soldier* the



task had been "a great privilege".

"Having been with 18 Platoon, Ypres Company from day one of junior term, it was rewarding all round to watch the commissioning course march up the steps of Old College for the final time after months of hard work", she added.

Inspecting the proceedings on behalf of the King was the Duchess of Edinburgh.

The new officers will now go on to complete trade training and join their designated regiments. OCdt Maya Sheryn, who is headed for The Royal Dragoon Guards, said the parade was "awesome and emotional".

**'It was rewarding all round'**

WO2 Cally Brunton, RAMS



## WARMING UP FOR THE MANE EVENT

**SOLDIERS** and horses of The King's Troop were preparing for a busy ceremonial season as this issue hit the shelves.

Members of the battery are shown here at Woolwich Barracks rehearsing for the VE Day 80th anniversary celebrations this month (page 50).

With a history dating back to the 18th century, the mounted unit's role includes the firing of royal salutes to mark grand occasions of state including the King's Birthday Parade, royal anniversaries and births.



## CREATIVE STREAK?

**RESERVIST** artist Capt Matt Emery (RE) is looking for soldiers and veterans to contribute to a remembrance art exhibition in November.

The 46-year-old serviceman, who serves with 101 Engineer Regiment and whose work featured in our March 2023 issue (see below), has a solo display running at St George's Arts Centre in Gravesend until May 11.

He sells his artwork on online store Etsy and has been commissioned by several military units to create bespoke pieces.

"To anyone thinking about art, just give it a go," he told *Soldier*. "It's so liberating and enjoyable - a way of expressing ourselves that few other means can match."

To be involved in the exhibition contact Capt Emery on [memeryarts42@gmail.com](mailto:memeryarts42@gmail.com). Follow his work on Instagram via [@memeryart802](https://www.instagram.com/memeryart802).



*Minutes that senior NCOs get to complete a new escape room in the Midlands.*

The facility – at Gamecock Barracks in Bramcote – was created in an old storeroom by staff at 20 Army Education Centre Group as part of army leadership and development programme (ALDP) training for newly promoted sergeants. And the first participants were due through the door as *Soldier* went to press.

The problem-solving game features 14 different tasks and culminates in a planning exercise.

"This is backed up by research as an effective way of getting people to learn more quickly than just seven days on a course," said Capt Luke Heppenstall (AGC (ETS)). "We might have a serious and important job, but ultimately we're all big children in the army."

# LEVEL PEAKS



ORQA MRM2-10 carrying OVERWATCH HEF-15



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Pictures: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



# EVOLVING WARRIOR

## Combined arms training steps up a level in Sennybridge

**THE changes keep on coming for Exercise Combined Warrior, which has staged its latest iteration in Sennybridge with more than 700 personnel immersed in a warfighting-focused test of soldiering skills.**

The two-week package, run by the Combat Manoeuvre Centre, provided a demanding backdrop for troops as they conducted trade training and boosted levels of combined arms integration in the programme.

It formed a final exercise for several courses and saw soldiers achieve their own specific objectives while working alongside other specialities.

The collaborative approach was best shown in the break-in, clearance and defence serials at Celini village.

The light close reconnaissance course set the conditions for an attack, aided by small UAS, which was followed by assistance from the fire support team, mortar, machine gun and sniper commanders' courses.

This enabled the Infantry Battle School rifle company to conduct clearance operations with some help from military working dogs, the Royal Military Police and medical personnel.

Once the attack ended, the focus switched to live firing involving mortars and light guns which enabled the transition to a defensive footing.

"This is a realistic combined arms battlegroup environment," said Lt Col Andrew Ryan (Mercian), commanding officer at the Combined Arms Manoeuvre

School (CAMS).

"It enables trainees to master the basic skills required for their role, ensures they are exposed to lessons from ongoing operations to help them survive, and enhances their collective lethality by introducing them to a wide range of capabilities."

Industry partners enhanced the realism with visually modified vehicles, simulation systems and augmented reality, while the deployment of a battlegroup HQ helped personnel understand their role in the big picture.

CAMS Ops Officer Capt Tom Dreaming (RDG) assumed the role

of battle captain in the HQ but spent the duration with regimental signaller advanced systems students – further highlighting the level of integration.

"Using multiple nets, I coordinated a battlegroup bubble for them to operate in, making reporting much more meaningful and forcing them to think about what nearby friendly forces might be doing," he said.

"I'm from an armoured cavalry background, so it was insightful seeing the effort that goes into setting up a light-role dismounted close combat battlegroup HQ – the students grafted hard."



# fitness



Q&A

## MY WORKOUT

The phys-mad reservist planning a burpee bonanza

**DEALING with the dual demands of military life and a civvy career is a test for any reservist – throw in a world record attempt and life gets really hectic.**

But Northamptonshire-based Cpl Mark Bailey (AGC (RMP)) – who has served for the past six years – is determined to deliver the goods when it comes to smashing a phys treble.

Over the coming three months he's looking to deliver the most burpees and the highest number of chest-to-floor push-up versions of the exercise in a minute plus the quickest-ever mile of burpee broad jumps.

The 45-year-old PTI, who serves with 1 Regiment, Royal Military Police and is a cadet instructor, also hopes his efforts will raise £10,000 for the CCF Association...

### How often are you training for this?

Five times a week – with two rest days built into the routine. One is usually an active recovery session – mobility work, stretching or a light walk. But I do listen to my body and will move sessions around if that's needed.

### Are you mainly in the gym?

Yes. These sessions are a combination of strength training and conditioning with a focus on working the anaerobic energy system – short, intense efforts. I also enjoy taking part in events including the Fan Dance and Paras'10, which test



Pictures: Graeme Main and Adobe Stock

## FUEL FOR THOUGHT

Cpl Mark Bailey's vital stats and daily nutrition targets

**Cap badge:** AGC (RMP)

**Current unit:** 116 Provost Coy, 1 Regt RMP

**Civvy role:** Sports and remedial massage therapist

**Age:** 45

**Years in:** 6

**Height:** 175cm

**Weight:** 76kg

**Calories:** 2,260 kcal

**Protein:** 160g

**Carbohydrates:** 225g

**Fats:** 80g

**'I break challenges down into smaller chunks'**

both your mental and physical resilience. I'm representing my unit in the AGC Triple Crown Challenge this month.

### Have you had any setbacks?

I pulled my hamstring at my daughter's sports day, of all places. I did everything I tell others not to – I didn't warm up, wasn't hydrated and it was a hot day. A classic case of getting caught up in the moment and forgetting the basics!

### Ouch. How did you deal with it?

By focusing on proper rehabilitation with targeted mobility work, stretching and progressive strengthening while staying active with upper body and low-impact training. Since then I have built in mobility, active recovery and prehab work, especially around running and explosive movements. I like turning setbacks into fuel. It's not always easy, but some of my biggest progress, whether in training or life, has come just after things didn't go to plan.

### Is mental preparation important?

Yes – I break challenges down into smaller chunks – a minute or round at a time. Focusing on just the next step helps me stay in the game without being overwhelmed.

### Routine is key then?

It helps – having a set structure means I just

get started, even if I'm not fully in the mood. I also begin my day with an ice bath and have another after training. It's a mental switch to sharpen me up and remind me I'm in control.

### What about nutrition?

At the moment I'm focused on reducing body fat while maintaining strength and performance, so I space my intake across four balanced meals a day. Each includes a source of lean protein, like chicken, eggs, or Greek yoghurt along with complex carbohydrates such as oats, rice, or sweet potato. I also include plenty of veg for nutrients and fibre, and make sure I'm getting in healthy fats through foods including avocado, olive oil and nuts.

### Any guilty pleasures?

Anything baked by my wife. She makes some amazing brownies and cookies, so it's hard to say no when the kitchen smells that good. If I've trained hard I'm not going to feel bad about enjoying something now and then.

### Finally, you must be sleeping well?

I aim for around seven to eight hours a night. Sleep is when your body recovers, repairs muscle tissue and processes everything mentally. I treat sleep like part of my training and it is just as important as the sessions themselves.



# tech

## BREATH OF FRESH AIR

This oxygen device could save more lives on the front line



Picture: DSTL

### A PORTABLE oxygen delivery system has been designed to improve casualty survival rates on operations.

Weighing just five kilograms, the ground-breaking device offers sustainable O<sub>2</sub> on the battlefield, overcoming limitations of the traditional pressurised cylinders, which pose logistical challenges due to their weight, risk of explosion and refill needs.

The innovative concentrator device has been developed by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) in collaboration with the Defence Medical Services.

It works by drawing air from the environment around the patient and pushing it into a series of chambers that remove the nitrogen, allowing breathable oxygen-rich gas to be supplied to them.

Additionally, a 'rebreather' element conserves exhaled breath, scrubs the carbon dioxide out of it and enables it to be breathed back in.

This ensures any oxygen consumed by the

patient is replaced, maintaining a consistently high concentration.

The system can also be used for casualties who are unable to breathe themselves – all within the same weight class as a standard oxygen cylinder.

"In operational terms, this will reduce the logistical strain on supply chains while improving battlefield care," commented DSTL Chief Executive, Paul Hollinshead.

"The ability to reuse the system with external power or replaceable batteries means it offers unparalleled flexibility."

Developed using a combination of off-the-shelf components, the medical kit is currently undergoing design work to create a mass-producible version that is tailored to rigorous military use.

The first deployment is yet to be determined, but once prototypes have been completed they will be trialled on operations.

Watch this space.

## Step aside

Meet the robot set to take on one of soldiering's deadliest jobs

### THE Army is helping to develop a new robotic platform that will shield personnel from the dangers of clearing minefields.

Named Weevil, the prototype currently uses a Warrior chassis fitted with a mine plough, a remote-control system and various cameras.

This allows the device to be operated by a single person from several miles away. And in future it may be engineered for use on other platforms too.

Weevil uses sheer force to plough a path through minefields, pushing them aside and opening a safe route for troops and vehicles



**'By enhancing existing vehicles, we're able to give troops a much-needed advantage'**

to move faster and more securely, outpacing current kit such as Trojan (shown left), which is crewed by three people.

The war in Ukraine is showing that landmines are making a comeback, with both Russia and Ukraine relying on anti-tank and anti-personnel devices for defensive and area-denial purposes.

With many tactics now reliant on formations being highly mobile, clearing minefields efficiently has become a major priority.

explained Maj Andrew Maggs (RTR), a military advisor to the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory.

"By enhancing existing vehicles with new capabilities, we're able to maximise their potential and give our troops a much-needed advantage, particularly in missions where time and safety are critical," he said.

"The concept is now being passed for further development to the British Army."



# MAKING WAVES

Personnel trial new ways to counter the drone threat that has dominated so much of the war in Ukraine

**DURING** recent trials at the Manorbier range in Wales, Royal Artillery troops experimented with a radio frequency directed energy weapon (RFDEW) to take down swarms of UAS for the first time.

The test bed, developed by a Thales UK-led consortium, was given a run-out by 106 Regiment, who used it to detect, track and engage targets up to one kilometre away.

“It’s an exciting concept and we found the demonstrator quick to learn and easy to use,” said Sgt Darren Mayers (RA), a senior remotely-piloted air systems operator, who is now credited as being the first UK soldier to bring down drones with a radio frequency weapon.

“With improvements on range and power – which could come with more development – this would be a great asset to layered air defence.”

The RFDEW’s high-frequency waves

disable critical electronic components, causing enemy platforms to drop out of the air.

The technology requires less power to run than laser weapons, which have also been successfully trialled in counter-drone roles, but the technology itself is still expensive to procure, with the MoD investing more than £40 million so far.

“This was very much a test to evaluate this type of device,” Wg Cdr James Hemingfield (RAF), counter-UAS lead in the Army Futures directorate, told *Soldier*.

“Finding ways to negate the UAS threat has become one of the MoD’s priorities.

“It is estimated that currently 70 to 80 per cent of all casualties in the Ukraine war are caused by drones.

“There isn’t one solution on offer, but this sort of weapon could form part of a layered defence in the future.

“The trial allowed us to look at the feasibility of employing this in a military role, including its cost and the benefits it offers.

“Now we move into the next phase, where we look at the lessons we have learnt and develop the technology further to extend its range, for example.”



Picture: LPhot Barry Wheeler, RN

# tactics



Picture: Cpl Becky Brown, RLC

## CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

The drive to increase the army's lethality means that alterations to tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) and training are on their way. We quizzed **Maj Adam Szczerbiuk (RA)** from the Experimentation and Trials Group...

### Q & A

#### Why does the army need to alter its training?

Because current conflicts look and feel very different to most exercises we stage.

Part of the challenge is a physical one. We need to provide a more immersive experience with realistic sights, sounds and smells, but this is currently too hard to achieve. The process of making sites like Imber Village into an authentic battlefield is very challenging and when it is achieved, it all has to be undone at the end of the exercise. We must be far more proactive in providing things like rubble, hulks, debris, fire, smoke and carcasses. There needs to be more realistic urban facilities and freedom to dig and not have to fill in again.

The other part of the challenge is about modifying the training itself so the Army can change the way it fights.

#### Why is this required?

Today's battlefields are showing us that, while conventional manoeuvres need to be practised, there should also be a focus on the electromagnetic spectrum and the near-surface flank. To survive and outmanoeuvre the enemy, we must dominate this zone.

That means when fighting by recce strike, commanders need to take into account their forward line of sensors and robotics, not just their forward line of troops.

All soldiers – not just a few specialists – need a detailed picture of the enemy and what the high value targets are, which is where the digital network is essential.

The latest situational awareness tools allow personnel to operate in a dispersed but synchronised way.

**'All soldiers  
need a  
detailed  
picture of  
the enemy'**

Also, with our focus on combined arms, we need to increase skill sets rapidly. Counter-UAS, for example, should not be a niche trade. At the lowest level, a soldier with a shotgun can defeat an enemy drone.

Anti-tank capability should exist within every section and all troops must be able to construct obstacles and improvised protection. Specialist anti-tank or assault pioneer platoons should no longer be standalone capabilities.

#### How are drones influencing change?

Commanders need to be experts in countering enemy drones.

They must also know how to use their own remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, as well as attacking enemy forces with first-person view assets, loitering munitions and droppers.

They need a mindset of air offence as well as air defence. Knowing how to use resupply drones and uncrewed ground vehicles is also becoming a factor.

There is intent to make every drone operator in the army capable of beyond visual line of sight operations, which isn't the case at the moment.

On the defensive side, our approach to camouflage and concealment must adapt. Individuals should consider their infrared and thermal signatures as well as the visual.

Also, every door, window and small opening should now have some form of protection against intrusion by first-person view drones.

Occupying a building is no use if the threat can fly right in.

#### What other aspects of training could change?

Ad hoc formations should be encouraged so that armoured, mechanised and light forces become much more interchangeable and adept at working together at a low level.

This will take a major investment in training hours but it will make junior commanders more confident, enabling them to truly understand and exploit combined arms capability.

And it is almost certainly more realistic in a first-battle scenario.

In addition, having one forming-up point is becoming an outdated tactic. If you concentrate, you attract immediate indirect fire. Therefore, smaller dispersed points and infiltration are the way forward.

#### How important is all this?

Critical. The chief of the general staff has given the service some challenging timelines for doubling and tripling our fighting power.

When our findings are woven together with developments, and lessons from current conflicts, we can achieve powerful advances in capability.

Ultimately, these changes will help save British and allied lives and give us a winning edge if the balloon ever goes up.

**For more information on how the British Army will respond to future threats, search for the Land Operating Concept strategy.**



**'It presented them with a golden opportunity to put into practice new battlegroup warfighting tactics that have been developed over 18 months'**

**Project Convergence paves the way – page 30**



# housing



Pictures: Shutterstock, FreePik

## REPAIRING DECADES OF DECAY

A drive to improve service family accommodation is under way now that thousands of homes have returned to defence

### **THE MoD has initiated a major redevelopment of service family accommodation (SFA) after its £6 billion repurchase of stock from a private owner.**

Some 36,400 properties are involved and a huge rental obligation has been terminated as a result of the deal, saving around £230 million a year for the state's coffers.

The dwellings were originally sold off in 1996 in what turned out to be a disastrous contract for defence, with official estimates putting the total cost to the taxpayer at £8bn.

Annington Homes purchased around 55,000 military houses for £1.7bn and was able to sell 18,000 of them on the open market for a huge profit. The MoD rented the remainder on a 200-year lease but also had to stump up for maintenance and repairs rather than the landlord.

As serving personnel are all too aware, many of the homes were decades old and required constant fixing. A defence committee report published last year confirmed that

two-thirds of the estate "needs major refurbishment or rebuilding" to bring it up to an acceptable standard.

While this unwanted legacy is decades old, it is relevant now because the poor outcomes for the armed forces motivated the government to buy back the properties and set about making improvements.

"Looking back, it was a bonkers deal," Phil Riley, Director of Accommodation at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), tells *Soldier*. "But at least we now own and control these properties again."

Riley's team oversee the private contractors Amey and Vivo, responsible for carrying out repairs and maintenance on SFA in the UK, as well as Pinnacle Group, which provides the National Service Centre and housing officers.

"Improving this housing has become our top priority and we're developing a strong customer-focused ethos throughout our organisations to improve standards," he says.

"I know some of your readers will be sceptical because they've heard all this before, but I believe in a few months' time personnel will feel a real difference, especially those who've moved house or had repairs done to their homes."

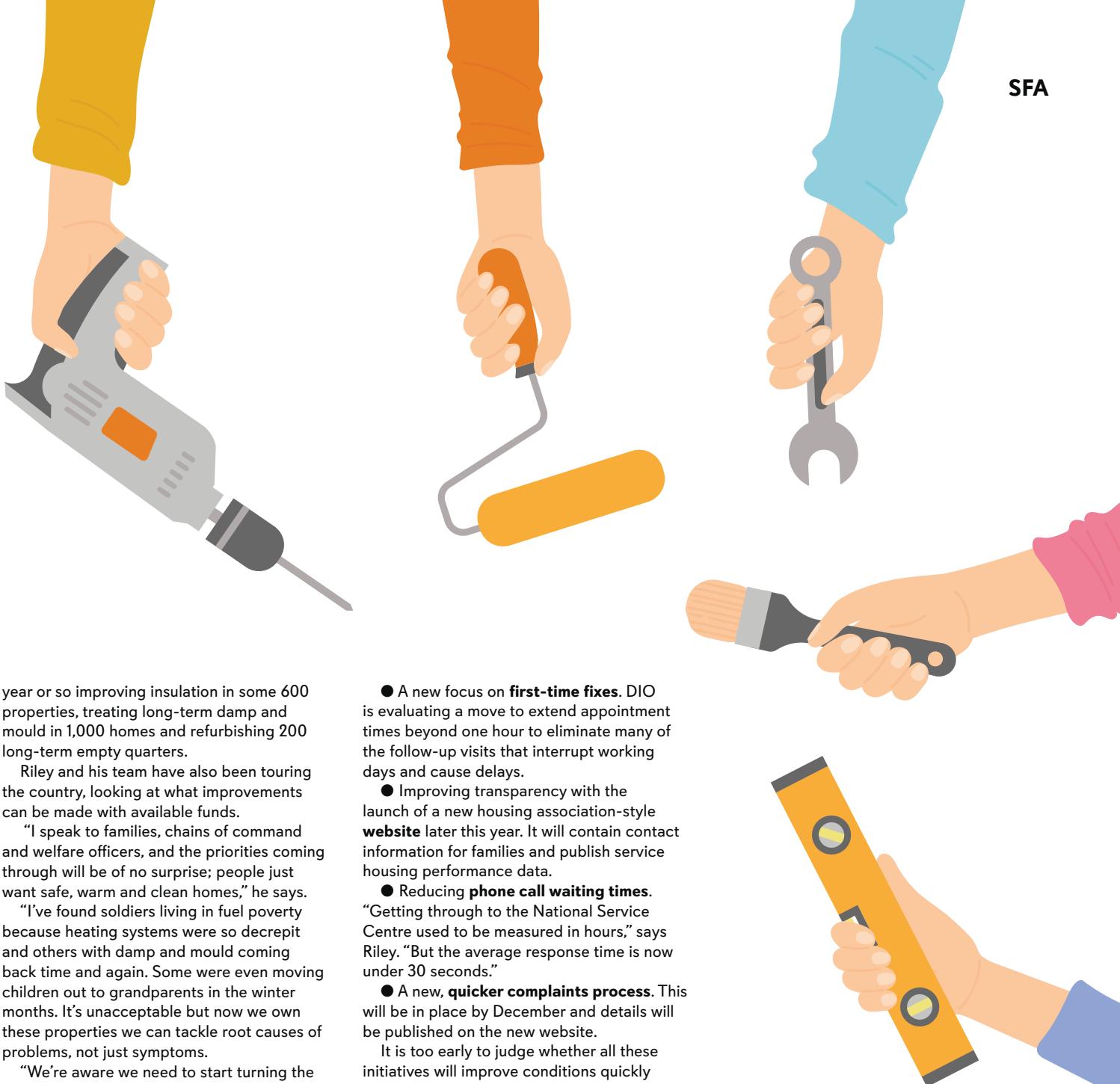
A document setting out the way forward for service housing, detailing how properties will be refurbished and rebuilt and the financing of that scheme, will be published in the summer.

"The new strategy will include how we can make better use of MoD land for affordable homes," explains Riley. "Many old and tired properties are in relatively low-density areas so we could pull them down and build more units in the same space."

"We'll also create better houses to live in and sell others to bring income in or to create opportunities for personnel and veterans to buy as well – that's one of the key deliverables."

Projects of this scale often take years to materialise, however, and with surveys consistently indicating poor accommodation is driving people out of the military, Riley is aware that action is needed now.

The DIO has spent £180m over the last



year or so improving insulation in some 600 properties, treating long-term damp and mould in 1,000 homes and refurbishing 200 long-term empty quarters.

Riley and his team have also been touring the country, looking at what improvements can be made with available funds.

"I speak to families, chains of command and welfare officers, and the priorities coming through will be of no surprise; people just want safe, warm and clean homes," he says.

"I've found soldiers living in fuel poverty because heating systems were so decrepit and others with damp and mould coming back time and again. Some were even moving children out to grandparents in the winter months. It's unacceptable but now we own these properties we can tackle root causes of problems, not just symptoms.

"We're aware we need to start turning the dial to improve military housing really quickly and we have money to invest in improving SFA and the quality of their support services," he adds.

Some of the initiatives already approved or being evaluated include:

- **Housing offices** opened in base areas so problems can be dealt with more quickly. Personnel moving in are also assigned a **named housing officer** with contact details.

- A new online portal called **Home Hub** is being trialled with 300 families and should be launched in 2025. It can be used to book a repair and check a job's progress.

- A new focus on **first-time fixes**. DIO is evaluating a move to extend appointment times beyond one hour to eliminate many of the follow-up visits that interrupt working days and cause delays.

- Improving transparency with the launch of a new housing association-style **website** later this year. It will contain contact information for families and publish service housing performance data.

- Reducing **phone call waiting times**. "Getting through to the National Service Centre used to be measured in hours," says Riley. "But the average response time is now under 30 seconds."

- A new, **quicker complaints process**. This will be in place by December and details will be published on the new website.

It is too early to judge whether all these initiatives will improve conditions quickly enough for most personnel – and how many of them will still be serving by the time the new military housing strategy makes itself felt. But Riley is undoubtedly committed about making as many significant improvements as quickly as possible.

"I'm confident the offer will start to feel better soon because we can make a real difference now we own these houses and have funding," he concludes.

"We have a clear plan and while families can't see the huge effort going on behind the scenes, I can assure them we are working our hardest to get this absolutely right."



**'It's unacceptable but now we own these properties we can tackle the root causes'**

Phil Riley, DIO Director of Accommodation



# diary dates

## 5



### VE Day 80

FOUR days of commemorations will bring the nation together to mark an important moment in our history this month – the 80th anniversary of victory in Europe following the Second World War. These include a military procession and flypast in London, which will be covered by the BBC as part of a series of special programmes. At 0900 on May 8, town criers will undertake the VE Day proclamation as flags are raised across the UK, and at noon pipers will play a specially written tune entitled *Celebratum* from the top of the country's four highest peaks. At 1830 cathedrals and churches will sound their bells, then at 2130 more than one thousand beacons and hundreds of lights of peace will be lit. The government has allowed pubs to open until 0100 so that festivities can continue into the evening. Visit [ve80.com](http://ve80.com) for further details. And read more about how people came together to celebrate peace on page 50.



Pictures: Pippa Fowles and Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC



## 10

### Cup flashback

THE Royal Engineers will celebrate the most famous day in their footballing history as they lock horns with Old Etonians. The clash marks the 150th anniversary of the Sappers – whose current squad boasts the likes of army star Spr Ryan Fagan (pictured) – lifting the FA Cup, when they beat the same opponents to win the world-famous trophy. Staged at Kings Bastion, Gillingham, the match forms part of a family fun day with a display from the Red Devils parachute display team and music from the army engagement band. Doors open at 1200, with kick-off at 1600.

# 13

## Pool prizes

THE Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre hosts three days of pool action from today at the Inter-Corps Water Polo, Diving and Swimming Championships. Defending champions the Infantry and Royal Army Medical Service retained the men's and women's swimming titles respectively last time out, while the Royal Logistic Corps claimed both water polo prizes. Can their success continue in 2025? Personnel will also hope to impress army team managers with the Inter-Services looming in July.



# 14

## Gen up

THREATS and opportunities posed by UAS will be the topic of discussion at the NCO Academy's next Tea and Toast Talk session. SSgt Andy White (KRH) and Cpl Fergus Williams-Tanton (RL) from the UAS Centre in Lulworth will brief listeners on the fast-evolving capability and what junior leaders must do to operate with drones effectively, including courses. Sign up to the talks via the NCO Academy Defence Connect page.



Pictures: Graeme Main

# 22

## Revenge in sight

CRICKET'S short format showdown returns to Lord's with the army looking to regain the Inter-Services Twenty20 crown. A shock loss to the Royal Navy – who went on to claim their first title since 2010 – saw the soldiers miss out last season. They will be hoping for a perfect start when they face the Royal Air Force at Hampshire County Cricket Club's Utilita Bowl on May 20. The action switches to the home of cricket two days later, when the senior service will be in their sights. The day also features a UK armed forces women's fixture, as well as the RAF taking on the navy. Visit [interservicest20.co.uk](http://interservicest20.co.uk) for tickets.



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[www.alanbick.co.uk](http://www.alanbick.co.uk)

# BIG PIC



The Army karting team travelled to South Wales for the opening round of the UK Armed Forces Karting Championships last month. Staged at Llandow Circuit, the event featured two practice days before the main race day – with endurance and rotax races. A further six legs will be held at tracks across the country throughout the year. Read more in our June issue.

Picture: Graeme Main

# Rise of the

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Cpl Vincent Price and Cpl Paul Squires, both RLC



# machines

British troops employ lethal new tactics in California



TRYING to see into the future can be a fool's game. Even some of history's finest minds have been made a laughing stock attempting it.

Albert Einstein once declared nuclear power would never be obtainable, while back in 1977 Ken Olsen, founder of the Digital Equipment Corporation, claimed there was "no reason for anyone to want a computer in their home".

The armed forces and the defence boffins who support them have to look into their crystal balls on a regular basis, however. And billions are spent in research, trials and test beds to try and ensure their predictions don't come back to haunt them.

That's why the army now puts so much stock in exercises such as Project Convergence, held annually at Fort Irwin in California.

It's a living lab of more than 1,000 square miles where sweat and >>





**'It became  
obvious that we  
must train and  
fight in three  
dimensions'**

Maj Adam Szczerbiuk, RA

» calories are expended along with gigabytes and bandwidth.

Far from prying eyes, man and machine are free to experiment and exploit an uncluttered electromagnetic spectrum, restricted airspace, mock villages and a dedicated opposition force.

This package's latest iteration, Capstone 5, presented British troops, who were operating alongside Australian, French and US forces, with a golden opportunity to hone new battlegroup warfighting tactics that have been developed over 18 months in a collaboration between the Army's Experimentation and Trials Group (ETG) and, among others, the Futures directorate.

"It's become obvious that we must train and fight in three dimensions," explains the ETG's Maj Adam Szczerbiuk (RA). "Land manoeuvre now covers the electromagnetic spectrum, the near-surface and the ground."

"Much of the underlying foundational doctrine for how we fight

as an army has not changed, but this piece of work shifts our focus to synchronise our efforts in those three areas."

The UK battlegroup was armed with robotic autonomous systems (RAS) and led by troops from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment - the ETG's 'in-house' experimentation unit - supplemented by personnel from 5th Battalion, The Rifles and an Australian RAS company that was integrated into the same network.

Together, they trialled the new doctrine by engaging a peer enemy - in this case the 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment, the US National Training Centre's world-class opfor, who were configured to represent a realistic Russian threat.

It called for a layered approach using forward lines of sensors, robotics systems and troops to detect and respond to enemy advances in turn.

"Our basic goal was in line with the US Army's Futures Command »



Below, right: The deployment of small unmanned aerial and ground systems is changing tactical approaches to the battlespace in ways unthinkable even a decade ago

## 'We were trying to prioritise machines rather than humans to do the fighting'

Maj Andy Wright, RA



» mantra of 'no blood in first contact,'" says Maj Andy Wright (RA), an RAS specialist with the ETG.

"We were trying to prioritise machines rather than humans to do the fighting where possible.

"Our forward line of sensors were both ground and air based - things like static cameras, seismic sensors and unmanned aerial systems (UAS) equipped with Istar assets.

"These sensors triggered layered lethal effectors, such as loitering munitions, armed UAS, Brimstone ground-launched missiles and mortars before the enemy reached our forward line of troops."

Completing three missions three times in a range of scenarios across this huge training area meant the battlegroup was able to fully test and validate the new procedures.

"We found that our RAS battlegroup proved far more lethal than a standard formation would have been in the same situation," continues Maj Wright. "One of the US Army observer-mentors commented that he'd witnessed 11 US brigade rotations through this exercise and we were the first battlegroup to hold Razish, one of the main urban centres, even though we were up against a larger opposing force.

"I think the results are bound to have an influence on the way the British Army fights in the future."

One of the major lessons learned, among many, was the importance of managing the network that links the various sensors and weapons systems together.

"We found the S-band frequency range, which most unmanned systems operate in, became very congested," notes Maj Wright.

"We had US and French brigades in the area and we were all trying to use the same frequencies to control our systems.

"The interference meant lots of UAS couldn't operate at their

»



Below: **Using unmanned systems to reduce combat risk to personnel while creating an operational advantage has been a key feature of the mock battles in California**

## Project Convergence



» maximum range at times and would flick into 'come home' mode and return to the ground station.

"So one conclusion we've reached is that having greater knowledge and resilience around control of the electromagnetic spectrum will be vital to operational success in future."

The ETG has identified that this is an area where developments in AI machine learning could make a huge difference in years to come to help reduce dependency on uninterrupted access to this crucial frequency band.

"Once equipped with AI, a robotic platform can be given a mission and it will be able to work out its own way of achieving it rather than have a human controlling it all the time," explains Maj Wright. "It will only have to communicate in short bursts at certain points to check in and then continue with the task, interacting with a controller only when it has found something of interest or needs a decision to be made."

Another vital lesson learnt was around survivability.

"One thing we'll be reporting back during our debrief to Army HQ is that we must hunt first and defend last in terms of dealing with opposing UAS," says Maj Szczerbiuk.

"In other words, we must go after their ground stations as a priority rather than focus our resources on shooting down enemy drones because they are almost infinite in number."

Through various sensors, including UAS, the UK battlegroup could identify locations of ground control stations and destroy them.

"We knocked them out multiple times using first-person view drones, which we found to be particularly effective for this," adds Maj Wright. "This cat-and-mouse pursuit has added another dimension to modern conflict, and both sides are now finding this in Ukraine, where they are going after UAS pilots and other skilled people in ground stations who

are a lot harder to replace than cheap drones."

How much of the ETG's new doctrine will be officially adopted by the Field Army remains to be seen.

The overall picture is hugely complex and there are numerous elements at play in this highly automated battlespace that haven't even been touched upon here.

For now, it remains a series of recommendations based upon some seriously high-quality experimentation.

Regardless of the outcome, the modernisation effort will continue in support of the chief of the general staff's increased lethality goals for 2027 and 2030.

The ETG is set to deploy RAS-enabled recce strike sub-units with 11 Brigade on Exercise Bull Storm in Kenya next month and later in the year with Australia's 1st Armoured Regiment on Exercise Talisman Sabre.

Additionally, the formation is already planning participation in Project Convergence Capstone 6 in 2026, when it will be trialling a new light recce strike battlegroup concept with RAS-equipped companies operating independent missions within their own battlespaces.

Will that prove to be more suited for tomorrow's challenges than the current recce strike set-ups? It depends on how accurate defence's crystal ball-gazing has been.

Ukraine is still demonstrating that making predictions about how warfare will develop is extremely difficult. Who would have thought even a decade ago that miniature helicopters would come to dominate the battlefield? One thing we do know, though, is that insights from the ETG's experiments emerging on exercises like Project Convergence will continue to ensure the UK armed forces are as prepared as they can be for the conflicts that potentially lie ahead. <<



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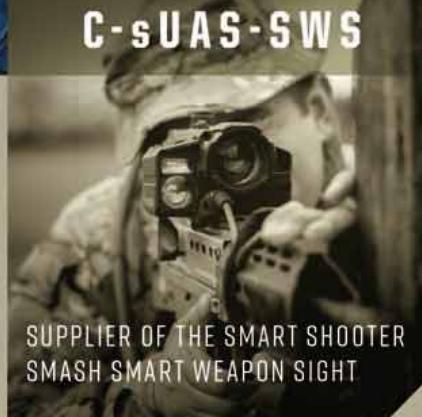


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# NO PAIN, NO GAIN

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## *PAIN IS TEMPORARY*

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## **PAIN IS WEAKNESS LEAVING YOUR BODY**



**T**HERE'S no shortage of quips that speak to the military attitude of pushing on through physical discomfort in the name of training.

But while it's true that soldiers need a certain amount of grit to cope with the rigours of the job, there are times when the mind over matter approach may do more harm than good.

After all, the human body's pain response mechanism has been finely tuned over millennia to prevent injury.

That twinge you feel while running? It could be a warning signal that something serious is amiss. Or it could just be your brain trying to tell you to conserve energy for more important stuff - like running away from predators.

So how do you know when it's okay to grit it out and when you need to ease off?

According to exercise rehabilitation instructor Sgt Ross Read (RAPTC, pictured right), there's no

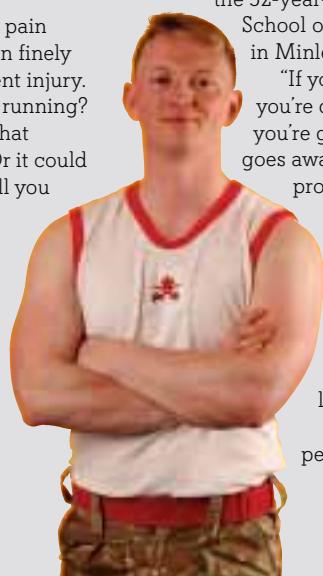
straightforward answer because discomfort and fatigue are a normal part of phys.

"If you're training right and working hard then you'll be in some degree of pain," says the 32-year-old, who is based at 3 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment in Minley.

"If you can continue doing what you're doing and all that's happening is you're getting more tired, and the pain goes away when you stop, then you're probably okay."

"But if the fatigue causes you to change form, that's a sign you should modify your load. And if the change in form gives rise to a new, sharper sensation of pain, that's less likely to be your muscles getting weary and more likely a biomechanical issue."

"Part of a PTI's role is teaching people how to safely push their



limits so that over time the sensation of discomfort is reduced."

In his role working with phase two trainees and permanent staff, Sgt Read says he commonly sees the likes of shin splints, lateral knee pain, ankle sprains and pulled hamstrings, as well as shoulder injuries.

But helping someone through the rehab process is made more complicated by the fact that perceptions of pain vary hugely between individuals.

"If you ask people to rate their pain, one person's three out of ten might be someone else's nine out of ten," he continues.

"I've seen a soldier with a full achilles rupture, who retained complete composure and reported a moderate amount of pain, but I've also seen the same injury have someone screaming in agony and being unable to get a sentence out."

"Personality, experience, pain history and psychology all come into it."

What's more, the senior NCO explains, an individual's experience of pain is heavily influenced by factors like sleep, stress and anything else going on in their lives.

"I might cut my finger and think nothing of it but if I was a guitar player who had a concert tomorrow I would probably perceive it as much more painful," he continues.

"I find the speaker metaphor useful. »

» If you think of the pain as the source of the sound – like the stereo or your MP3 player – and the brain as the speaker, along the way there are various amplifiers.

"These could be problems at home or at work, or what impact you think the injury could have on you and your future.

"Let's say a soldier is deployed on a foreign exercise. They might be apprehensive about the upcoming serials, they are away from family, they'll be working harder and likely aren't getting as much sleep as usual.

"All of this could mean their cup is already pretty full. Now imagine they go for a run to blow off steam but then they remember that ankle injury from a couple of years ago.

"They begin to think 'this doesn't feel quite right' and by the end of the run have talked themselves into believing they've reinjured it when they might not have actually done so.

"The brain is incredibly complicated."

Psychologically, Sgt Read also points out, the impact of injury on military personnel

can be heightened because their careers – and potentially a large part of their personal identity – hinge on physical performance.

And with the majority of medical discharges occurring due to musculoskeletal injuries, worry around their professional futures is not unfounded.

Maj Johannes Kuhn (RLC) knows first-hand just how devastating long-term injury can be. Having been involved in a car accident in 2013, the officer suffered persistent back problems, ultimately undergoing major surgery to fuse two vertebrae in 2021.

Reflecting on the years spent in pain he says: "You wouldn't wish it on anyone. It's physically crippling but also emotionally – it really affected my mental health.

"I couldn't move, couldn't drive, couldn't pick up my kids. It touches everything that is important – your longevity, your mental health, how you feel about yourself, how you physically look.

"I always enjoyed running and competing in athletics – my fitness was a really big part of my identity.

"You're fearful of hurting yourself again and you worry about your career.

"For me it was the most genuinely enormous challenge of my life to get back from this injury."

As part of his return to full fitness following the operation, Maj Kuhn set himself a series of challenges, including the London Marathon, an ultramarathon and swimming the English Channel. And this year he will tick off another bucket list goal when he leads a team from Army Training Regiment Pirbright to Everest base camp.

"These activities were getting back to something I haven't been able to do for many, many years," he adds.

"I needed to test my steel and return to that aspirational fitness we all aim for as soldiers.

"I had some really low points, but I knew I had to keep on keeping on."

## ARE YOU HURT – OR JUST HURTING?

Questions to ask yourself to tell the difference

★ **Are there any clear signs of injury?** These can include swelling, bruising, joint instability or a deformed body part

★ **Is the pain altering how I'm moving?** An injury can affect our biomechanics because we try to avoid the discomfort by using undamaged tissue

★ **Did I feel a sudden change?** For example, was there a sharp stabbing pain, a popping sensation or did a joint make a loud sound?

★ **Is the pain spreading to other parts of my body?**

★ **Is the pain unbearable when increasing intensity or duration?**



It's clear that having goals and pushing physical limits can be an important part of the recovery process.

But that same tenacity can also see troops risking serious harm in the name of a personal or fundraising quest.

Just ask former Coldstream Guardsman, Farren Morgan, who recently took it upon himself to tab from Land's End to John O'Groats in just 25 days, while carrying a 35lb pack.

Despite having completed various arduous courses during his nine years in the army, the ex-NCO said the 1,000-mile slog quickly became a battle between mind and body.

He recalls: "I've always been one of those guys who pushes through the pain but until now I'd never felt the kind of agony where my brain was like 'you need to stop or you're going to injure yourself badly'.

"My ankles were swollen, I was feeling sharp pain in my shins, my hips and back were hurting – that's when I knew things were

going south.

"At night I couldn't sleep because everything was throbbing – I've never known anything like it.

"I could easily have quit, but I decided the only way I was going to stop was if I was hospitalised.

"The human body is a phenomenal machine if you know how to manage it. I worked out early on that I needed to break each day into stints, stopping to ice, compress and massage my limbs when needed.

"Eventually I reached a point where I was in perfect unison with my body and mind. Adapt and overcome."

Morgan, an ex-all-arms PTI who now runs his own physical training business, says that despite six months of arduous prep ahead of the event, he could easily have done lasting damage to his joints, ligaments or bones.

"I don't know if I'll have any permanent issues," he admits. "I was back in the gym after three days, however stress fractures

or long-term hip and back problems are absolutely a risk when doing something like this, especially if you don't have a very good standard of fitness to begin with."

So, don't try this at home, as the saying goes. One thing is certain though – knowing when to dig deep and when to draw the line is vital.

Learning to distinguish healthy discomfort from harmful strain can mean the difference between personal growth and long-term injury. And with Help for Heroes estimating that some 78 per cent of veterans struggle with chronic pain, the repercussions of not listening to your body could potentially last a lifetime.

Soldiering is tough, however true strength doesn't just lie in grit and endurance, but in staying in tune with yourself and ensuring you remain fit to fight another day. <<

**Want some workout inspo?**

**Fitness – page 18**

## 'I needed to test my steel and return to that aspirational fitness we all aim for'

Maj Johannes Kuhn, RLC



**BIG  
PIC**



A recce platoon leads troops into position at dawn on Sennybridge Training Area during the final stages of Exercise Combined Warrior. Read more about the package on page 17 of this issue.

Picture: Sgt Donald Todd. RLC



# GREAT OUTDOORS

How a love of hiking gave one junior NCO's military career – and life – a new direction ➤



»

**A**S THE UK summer gets tantalisingly close, many of us break out of the indoor gym and opt to exercise outside instead.

Inspired by the talent on display in last month's Army Photographic Competition, *Soldier* quizzed Service snapper and self-confessed hiking fanatic Cpl Vincent Price (RLC, shown right) about the hobby that fires him up.

The serviceman's Instagram account **@victor\_papa\_photography** showcases spectacular imagery from his routes across Scotland and beyond, and some of this can be seen here.

We caught up with the Lancashire lad to find out how his passion helps him be the best soldier he can...

#### **What's the deal with all this hiking, then?**

I just love it! My wild spirit came from growing up in Shropshire where there was a lot of open space and from going camping with my family. When I joined the army as an infantryman I gained new skills like fieldcraft, navigation and fitness, but I lost my adventurous spark. I found it again when I got posted to Cyprus in 2018, though, and me and my wife explored pretty much every area of the island. Since then I've been obsessed.

#### **Do you go alone or in a group?**

When I served with the Mercians I would go out on the mountains with a lot of the recce platoon lads. But I also do a lot of solo hiking. Whenever I'm in mountains alone, that's my therapy. It's a way of forgetting everything. When you go out, you're only

focused on what's there, what you're doing, the weather conditions and whether you have the right gear.

#### **Did the walking get you into photography?**

I guess that's why I got a camera in the end. I was always taking pictures on my phone and was happy doing that for a long time, but it wasn't doing the views justice and a photographer I served with in the Mercians suggested I get a camera. Eventually I did and it was absolutely worth it.

#### **So how did you go from enthusiastic amateur to changing trade?**

I met someone who was serving in the army photographic trade and realised that it was a thing. I then went on to work as a unit photographer in the Scots Guards but had



Interview: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Cpl Vincent Price, RLC and Sgt Lee Matthews, RAF



‘It’s a way of forgetting everything. When you go out, you’re only focused on what’s there’

to wait two years before I could transfer over to the Royal Logistic Corps because the role hadn’t gone live on *Digital Transfer*. However, that gave me two-and-a-half years to build up my experience and create a portfolio.

**The images on these pages are UK hikes you have done in your downtime.**

**What's your favourite route?**

Scotland – all day long. I love anywhere in the Highlands and have also done some fantastic hikes in Wales. But mostly I am in the Lake District (pictured above). Helvellyn is a favourite.

**What is it about Scotland that you love so much?**

It's one of those places where the weather

forecast never seems to be accurate. It's changeable – but I like that and it makes for good photos. I am more of a fan of the moody pictures.

**What's been your most memorable hike in the north?**

The Ring of Steall across four Munros (Scottish mountains over 3,000ft). We got caught in a snowstorm on an eight-hour hike in May-June time and it was really coming down. Bad weather is a different kettle of fish up there.

**Any other good expeds?**

I did the National Three Peaks Challenge with the Scots Guards carrying a 50kg casualty training dummy between us to raise money for charity. Adventurous training trips are

always good too. I did three months in Oman, and at the end I got to capture the most memorable AT package as unit photographer. We did mountain biking, sailing, hiked the Jebel Shams balcony trail and summited Jebel Shams itself (the tallest mountain in Oman, 3,009m). We wild camped before reaching the summit, where I witnessed the most stunning sunset I have ever seen in my life (see overleaf).

**What benefits does hiking have? Has it impacted on the day job?**

Yes. When I was an infantry, fitness and being able to operate in different terrains was vital. Hiking helped with being robust in hilly environments. Being a photographer still requires being physically fit as we are right in there capturing the action with all





## FACT FILE

NAME:  
**Cpl Vincent Price**

CAP BADGE: Transferred to the Royal Logistic Corps in July 2024. Before that served in the Scots Guards and The Mercian Regiment

AGE:  
**30**

OP TOURS:  
**Estonia and the Falklands**

» our kit. Hiking has also taken me out of my comfort zone, and this can help with resilience, not just physically but mentally too. It has helped me improve my navigation, too – being able to read a map and use a compass to recognise reference points and contours on the ground is a big part of being a soldier.

### Have you passed your passion on?

Yes, I've taken friends to mountains in the Lakes to learn how to hike (shown).

### What's the most photogenic Army training location, do you think?

It's got to have been Canada – getting

that cable car up the ski slope in Banff. The landscapes there were amazing. Kenya is always a great one for scenery, too – desert but with rocky areas. In the Infantry I went to a lot of the same locations, but now I'm an army photographer I'm looking forward to seeing some different places.

### Is it always scenery that you focus on in your images?

Not at all, army photographers have to capture people at work. And in my spare time I have been experimenting with street photography too. I'm starting to really enjoy the close-ups. People make pictures more interesting.

### What are your top tips for anyone who wants to get into hiking?

Start by going with people who are experienced and then once you gain the confidence, go solo. Research your route, whether it's via a map or an online GPS route. Make sure you check the weather as packing the right kit for the conditions is vital. It doesn't need to be the most expensive, but it certainly makes a difference. Choose quality over quantity. The basic kit that's always needed, as any soldier knows, is a daysack, wet and warm kit, enough food and water, appropriate footwear, map and compass/GPS (both for the long hard hikes), small first aid kit, headtorch and sun cream.

Left and below Cpl Price (this page) and his colleagues summited Jebel Shams, the tallest mountain in Oman, back in 2023 while on exercise







# *'You can see the relief on people's faces... but history repeats itself'*

Eight decades on from VE Day, the shadow cast by the 1940s continues to grow

**A**S CORPORAL Paul Robinson stood in modern Berlin recently – 80 years after the Second World War ended – he had a profound sense of the past resonating into the present.

During a tour of the government district – not far from the bunker where Nazi Fuehrer Adolf Hitler finally put a pistol to his head as the fighting raged around – the Royal Engineer could not help but think of today's generation.

"You can still see the graffiti written on the rubble by Russian soldiers in the Reichstag building," the NCO, who was on a battlefield study, told *Soldier*.

"They had no idea it would still be here 80 years later."

"Everyone does it and I've written my name in Saddam Hussein's palace in Basra as well as leaving a few scribbles in Afghanistan – you stand and think that the people who liberated Berlin were on the exact spot as I am now."

For better and worse, the unconditional surrender of the Nazi regime certainly casts an ever-lengthening shadow over the world at large.

The 1940s generation could never have predicted that simmering tensions of the Second World War would reignite in the Balkans 50 years later. Nor could they have foreseen that the Kremlin might one day seek to massage the facts of the "great patriotic conflict" to justify an unprovoked attack on Ukraine.

"Eight decades on we are partners with Germany, Russia are on the other side and there is the potential for another world war," Cpl Robinson (pictured below) continued.

"History repeats itself and I think if some of the people that died could see where we are now, they would question what their sacrifice was for."

"When you see the pictures of VE Day you can see the relief and joy on people's faces."

"Some are slumped down smoking a cigarette, exhausted, others are partying with their friends."

"And they will have been reflecting on the mates they lost, too."

"They were brothers in arms."

"We owe them what we have today – the world could have been very different if it wasn't for their courage."

From the *Soldier* archive, here are the VE Day memories of some of those veterans...»

Left: VE Day street celebrations and a graphic from the cover of *Soldier*, May 1995

Report: Cliff Caswell and Becky Clark



# Voices from a fading generation....

»



## **Richard Styan (RA)**

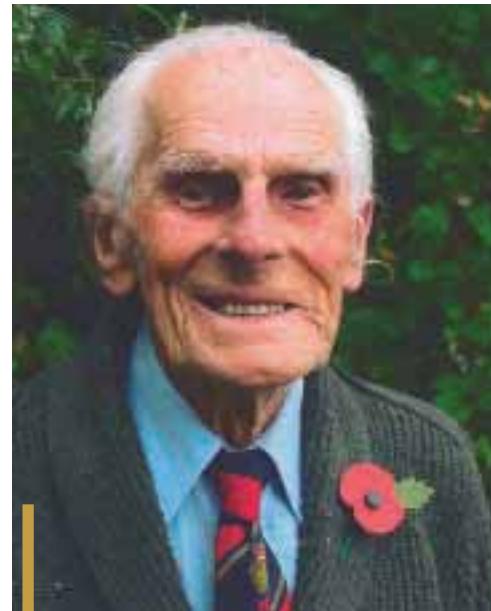
Speaking in 2025, aged 101

Styan, who lives in Yorkshire, experienced some of the fiercest fighting in Europe after landing in Normandy shortly after D-Day. But having served in the 91st Anti-Tank Regiment (Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) he found himself re-tasked to face the Japanese.

*"I do remember VE Day well – back then I was at Hoddom Castle in Scotland, where different units were being prepared to go to fight in Burma.*

*When we were told that the war with Germany was over, everybody just started cheering and clapping. And a few weeks later, when we were docked in India on a troop ship actually bound for the Far East, we heard that the Japanese had given up after the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We were thankful, as fighting them would have meant real trouble.*

*Honestly, the respect for the men alongside whom I served never diminishes, even today. I fought with some extremely skilled and courageous people; they came from all walks of life, taught me a great deal and I shall never forget them."*



## **Richard Carter (RA)**

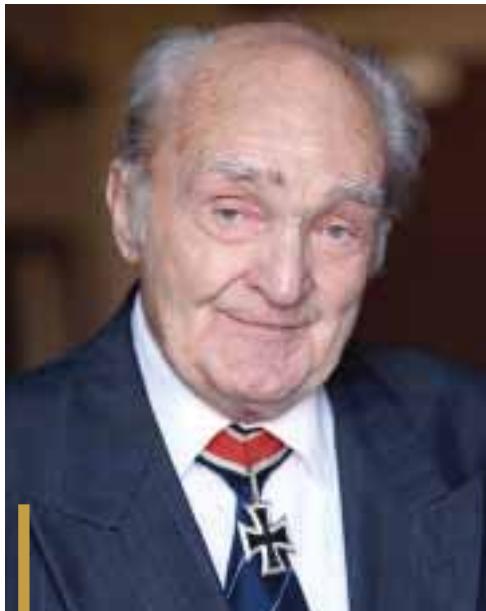
Speaking in 2015, aged 100

Serving with the Searchlight Regiment, Carter spent most of his war on home soil – targeting attacking German aircraft and V1 flying bombs. It wasn't until the final 24 hours of the conflict that he actually found himself in Germany.

*"I remember VE Day like it was yesterday – I went to Europe on the last day before the war finished. We were out on patrol and word came through that it was all over. I asked, 'when are we going home?' but the sergeant said we were off to Japan.*

*We could hear music coming from somewhere and we came across a bandstand. A band was playing beautiful Viennese waltzes, the girls came out and the next minute we were dancing with them. We had been fighting these people for years – yet we'd had so much in common with them really.*

*I was in the Army for five years and nine months and enjoyed it very much – I was in no hurry to join up, but I would not have missed those days for the world."*



## Guenter Halm (German Wehrmacht)

Speaking in 2015, aged 92

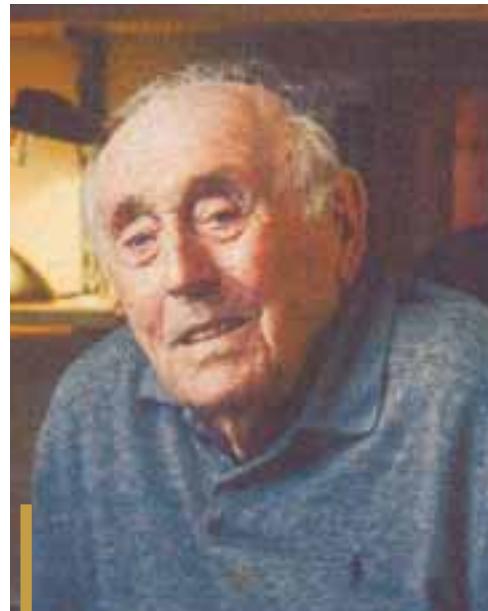
Halm had already achieved fame during the war. Serving at El-Alamein as a 19-year-old anti-tank gunner, he became the youngest recipient of the Knight's Cross – his country's highest bravery decoration. Presented with the medal by Fd Marshal Erwin Rommel, he was later captured by the Allies during fighting in Normandy and spent two years as a PoW in the United States.

*"I was in a prisoner of war camp in Dermott, Arkansas when the conflict ended. There was no official announcement, but word spread around.*

*We were deeply disappointed; we had hoped until the end that the tide would turn or at least that it could have ended in an agreement between the two sides to cease fire.*

*I was among the first to be transported back to Germany. We found it in ruins. The cities were bombed into the ground and Hildesheim, where I grew up, was just ashes.*

*Today, German troops can march again with their heads held high but to us they say, 'you old soldiers were criminals'. But we only did our duty for the country. We were called up; those who ran away were stood up against a wall. For us it wasn't about Hitler's ideas, it was about comradeship and friendship."*



## Victor Gregg (Para)

Speaking in 2020, aged 100

Having already fought in North Africa and Italy, Gregg was captured by the Germans at Arnhem in 1944. He was taken to Dresden where he witnessed the horrific Allied air raid on the city in February 1945, in which 25,000 people died, before escaping captivity. He was picked up by advancing Soviet troops and was with them in Leipzig when news of the surrender broke.

*"I had gone on a short walkabout in the city that evening and came in contact with some American PoWs who had this radio that was able to pick up the British World Service. I listened to Churchill's victory speech, which was a one-in-a-million event. What were my feelings? That's difficult to answer. It didn't happen suddenly – everyone knew it was coming.*

*Germany looked like a pile of rubbish that had been tipped out of a bin – thousands of people on the move, all desperately trying to get home, wherever in Europe that might be. By the end of the first week of peace there were feeding centres where civilians were attended to.*

*I have never tried to describe the scenes, simply because I cannot. The overwhelming sense of loss and futility, people struggling against the tide or just hanging on to the nearest queue. It was complete desolation in mind and matter."*

»

# Find your rhythm

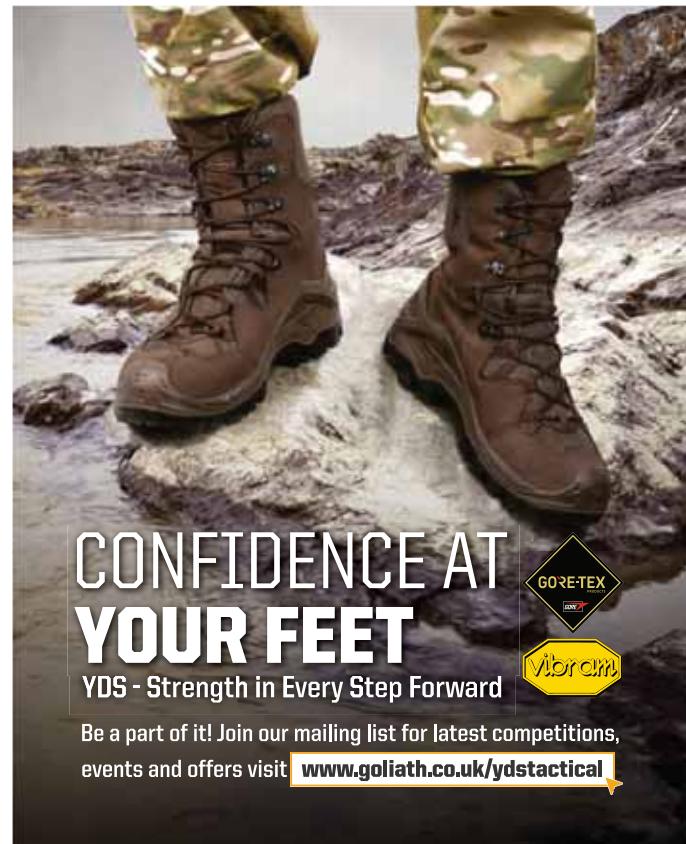
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# Headline moment

How this magazine was a first-hand witness to war ending in 1945

**W**HILE Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was receiving the German surrender at Lueneburg Heath (pictured), *Soldier* was at the scene to bear witness to history.

Back in May 1945 Ken Pemberton-Wood was OC of No 1 British Army News Unit – of which this magazine was a part.

Working in the tent next door as Admiral Karl Doenitz discussed capitulation with his British counterpart, the issue to which he contributed (shown above) was a landmark piece of journalism.

Despite being at the epicentre of history, however, he did not recall any huge drama at the time.

"It was all very low key as we did not expect the surrender to stick," the Royal Artillery veteran, who went on to serve the mag for 33 years, becoming its advertisement boss, said in an interview in 1995.

"We were in the news business and weren't surprised at anything that came our way," he later added. "I remember the roads filled with thousands of German prisoners, all very depressed and flinging their rifles onto dumps."

His team's achievement was extraordinary.

The May 1945, VE Day issue of *Soldier* remains an important historical document to this day. As well as background features on the conflict, it includes a round-up of reflections from troops fighting through Europe to Berlin.

Among those included is George Smith, a tobacco cutter-turned-Royal Army Service Corps driver.

He was in a Dukw amphibious vehicle during the D-Day landings and was later wounded in battle. "I remember thinking as the day went on and boats kept swarming ashore – they'll never push our lads out now," he said.

Then there is LCpl Charlie Baker of the Corps of Military Police, who fought at Arnhem. "Jerry plastered us with shells and mortars," the NCO recalls. "But though I was there nearly ten days, all I got was shrapnel in my legs."



Ken Pemberton-Wood

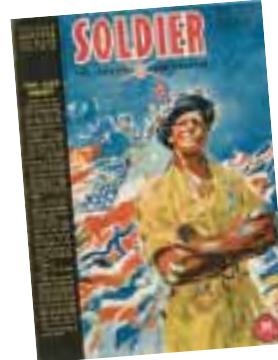


And Sjt Andrew Imrie was in the first Buffalo amphibious armoured vehicle to touch down on the east bank of the Rhine as the war entered the final phase.

"I remember how quiet it was – uncanny – and I know I wasn't the only one to mumble a little prayer," the junior NCO, who was serving with The Black Watch, told the magazine.

"The boys got their first objective, a communications trench, and within ten minutes there was a stream of prisoners."

Among other stories in the issue are



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# TALKBACK

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

## 'We seem to have learned nothing'



Picture: Sgt Si Longworth, RLC

I WAS most disappointed to read in the April edition, in an article entitled *Role Models*, that it took a senior research fellow at the Sandhurst-based Centre for Army Leadership to realise that "mentoring of recruits could help stamp out inappropriate behaviours".

After the shameful deaths of four trainees at the Royal Logistics Training Centre in Deepcut between 1995 and 2002 – and the subsequent review which found that the quality and motivation of some of those responsible for supervising the trainees was not of the required standard – we seem to have learned nothing.

In 1967 I was selected to be a trooper in the Royal Horse Guards and became what was known as a 'barrack room-trained soldier' at the Guards Depot in Pirbright.

I moved into the barrack room of a 32-man squad for their 20-week phase one

training course.

I was in that space seven days a week throughout the course to supervise the trainees and instruct them in personal hygiene, kit cleaning, locker layouts, basic discipline and behaviour.

The incentive for me was that I was to be promoted to the rank of lance corporal if I completed the full 20-weeks with the trainees.

Quite why the army discontinued the application of such essential, albeit low-level, supervisory staff is beyond me.

Human nature, left to its own devices, will usually degenerate unless a positive example is there to counter such behaviour.

Mentoring undoubtedly benefited me too. My career as a private soldier developed to the point where I was later selected for commission and went on to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. – **Lt Col (Retd) Stuart McLean, ex-AGC (RMP)**

**'HUMAN NATURE WILL USUALLY DEGENERATE'**

## Dental policy pain

I AM a reservist about to deploy on overseas adventurous training and the medical plan and admin instruction state I must have a dental check-up before departure.

The current policy in **2023DIN01-124 DMS Dental Care for Deploying and High Readiness Reserve Personnel** states that I am not entitled to a military appointment.

I'd like to know if I can claim back the costs of a civilian dental check-up via JPA?

Also, if I am unable to access

my hugely oversubscribed dental practice would I be permitted to use the military system in order to comply with the exercise order and ensure medical risk is mitigated for this deployment? – **Name and address supplied**

**Lt Col Christoph Harper, Dental Regulation and Training, Army Headquarters, replies:** You are correct to reference the DIN, noting that an updated version (**2025DIN01-040**) is now available.

You have also correctly

identified that your current status does not provide access to defence's dental provision and for this reason you would be unable to claim any costs or access Defence Primary Health Care (Dental) for an assessment prior to attending adventurous training overseas.

Dental care for reservists is currently being considered as part of an improved offer, although it is unlikely that anything new will be offered in the short term.

In the meantime, I would urge you to do all you can to remain dentally fit through NHS facilities in order to take advantage of opportunities such as AT expeditions when they arise.



Picture: Steve Dock

# DIRECTORY

SOLDIER

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know

## WELFARE

If you have a problem, your chain of command and unit welfare teams are a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. Padres can provide individuals with pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

### Army HIVE

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

[army.mod.uk/hives](http://army.mod.uk/hives)

### Forcesline

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

**0800 731 4880**

[ssafa.org.uk/get-help/](http://ssafa.org.uk/get-help/)  
[forcesline](http://forcesline)

### Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via  
[rc-aws-iat-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:rc-aws-iat-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk) or  
01904 882051/2053

### ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

#### Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline  
**0300 123 1110**

#### NHS support

[nhs.uk/livewell](http://nhs.uk/livewell)

### BULLYING/HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

#### Army Mediation Service

**0306 770 7691** or  
**mil 96770 7691**

[army-mediation-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-mediation-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

#### Army Speak Out Helpline

**0306 770 4656** or **mil 96770 4656**

[army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk)

#### Defence BHD Helpline

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

### CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

#### Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support

**01264 554004** [aff.org.uk](http://aff.org.uk)

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

### DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

#### Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service  
**020 7820 9988**  
[forcessensionsociety.org](http://forcessensionsociety.org)

#### Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives  
[joiningforcescu.co.uk](http://joiningforcescu.co.uk)

#### Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators  
[moneyhelper.org.uk](http://moneyhelper.org.uk)

#### National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control  
**0808 808 4000**  
[nationaldebtline.org](http://nationaldebtline.org)

#### StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice  
**0800 138 1111**  
[stepchange.org.uk](http://stepchange.org.uk)

### GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK  
**0808 8020 133**

### GRIEF

**Cruse Bereavement Support**  
**0808 808 1677**

## RESETTLEMENT

Career Transition Partnership employment fairs help support the transition to civilian life by providing resources, networking opportunities and direct access to Forces friendly employers.

To book your place at an event visit [modctp.co.uk](http://modctp.co.uk)

#### Plymouth – May 20

#### Lincoln – May 21

#### Newbury – June 18

#### York – July 2

#### Elgin – July 9

#### Bournemouth – September 10

#### Newmarket – October 8

#### Belfast – October 15

#### Cardiff – November 5

#### Telford – November 19

[0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

### LONELINESS

#### Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation  
[afvbc.world](http://afvbc.world)

### HOUSING

#### Pinnacle Home Services Team

The primary point of contact for families for housing and the allocation of SFA  
**UK 0800 031 8628**  
**Overseas +44(0) 161 605 3517**  
[pinnaclehomeservicesfamilies.co.uk](http://pinnaclehomeservicesfamilies.co.uk)

#### Vivo

Helpdesk contactable 24/7, 365 days a year  
**0800 0466010 (freephone)**

#### Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

**01748 833797**

[spaces.org.uk](http://spaces.org.uk)

#### Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support  
[veteransgateway.org.uk](http://veteransgateway.org.uk)

### MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. A number of charities and other organisations can also provide support and they include...

#### Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

**0800 138 1619**

### Headspace

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

## COMPETITIONS

### MARCH 2025 HOAY WINNER

Majority Teton Plus soundbar and wireless subwoofer

**WO2 Dipendra Rana, Catterick Garrison**

**RULES:** Winners chosen at random from valid entries. Unless stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by our terms and conditions. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass your details to a third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified.

Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.

**Mind – The Mental Health Charity**  
0300 123 3393 [mind.org](http://mind.org)

**NHS**  
General mental health support  
[nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

**Op Courage**  
A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk) to find your local team

**Samaritans**  
116 123 [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**The Ripple Pond**  
A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans  
**0333 900 1028**  
[theripplepond.org](http://theripplepond.org)

**Togetherall**  
A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously  
[togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

**RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE**  
**Aurora New Dawn**  
Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking  
**02394 216 816**  
[aurorand.org.uk](http://aurorand.org.uk)

**ManKind**  
Support for male domestic abuse victims  
**01823 334244**  
[mankind.org.uk](http://mankind.org.uk)  
**Relate**  
Relationship support  
[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk)

**SEXUAL OFFENCES**  
Anyone wishing to report an incident can do so in multiple ways. It does not matter if your allegation is not recent, or if you don't feel you have any evidence. There is no need for anyone to speak directly to their chain of command.

The **Defence Serious Crime Command** is responsible for investigating crimes such as sexual assault and harassment within defence and operates independently of the three Services. Contact them 24/7 via the Service Police Crime Bureau on **02392 285 170**

**Crimestoppers** can be reached at **0800 555 111**

Alternatively, complaints can be reported directly to the **civilian police**. To discuss victim support contact the **Victim Witness Care Unit**, which operates independently from the chain

of command, on **07974 074259** or via [people-dscc-vwcu@mod.gov.uk](mailto:people-dscc-vwcu@mod.gov.uk).

**uk**. Your information will be treated in confidence and you can discuss your options for reporting any allegations.

Further support can be found on the **Defence Connect Call it Out Hub** or via the **Speak Out Helpline** on **0306 770 4656** or [army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk)

## REUNIONS

Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies, The Wessex Regiment 78th post-war reunion lunch on Saturday, September 20 at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Contact Jim Cooper on 023 9281 6165 or email [rhwstxstar@yahoo.com](mailto:rhwstxstar@yahoo.com)

## RETENTION PAYMENTS

A **£8,000 cash boost** is available to troops who joined the Army between September 1, 2021 and September 30, 2024 if they sign up for a three-year commitment on top of their initial four years. However, they must apply in a specific three-month window. These dates are shown below – mark them in your diary! Gurkha, FTRS and Reserve troops not eligible. Apply on the *Digital Transfers* app and speak to your RCMO for further guidance.

Attestation date	Apply
2021	<b>1/4-30/6/25</b>

2022	<b>1/1-31/3/25</b>
1/4-30/6	<b>1/4-30/6/25</b>
1/7-30/9	<b>1/7-30/9/25</b>
1/10-31/12	<b>1/10-31/12/25</b>

2023	<b>1/1-31/3/26</b>
1/4-30/6	<b>1/4-30/6/26</b>
1/7-30/9	<b>1/7-30/9/26</b>
1/10-31/12	<b>1/10-31/12/26</b>

2024	<b>1/1-31/3/27</b>
1/4-30/6	<b>1/4-30/6/27</b>
1/7-30/9	<b>1/7-30/9/27</b>

## AFF BRIEFS

### Immigration (virtual)

**May 27, 1900-2000**

An adviser from the **Army Families Federation** will give a short brief followed by a Q&A. All topics covered.

[aff.org.uk/aff-events/](http://aff.org.uk/aff-events/)

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

## WIN... A Majority Folio turntable

**TEN details have been changed in the image below of last month's Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.**

Circle all the differences on image

**B** and send the panel to HOAY 996.

Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government

Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU, along with

contact details, including email address, by May 30.

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

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win this Majority Folio Bluetooth turntable, worth **£170**.

Unfold a world of rich, authentic sound with this elegant piece of kit that isn't just about playing vinyl, but a complete audio experience wrapped in a stylish and portable design.

Perfect for both vinyl enthusiasts and those who are new to the format, the Folio combines classic sound with modern features.

Crafted for quality audio, it will ensure your records sound their absolute best. Its sleek, book-like design makes it a sophisticated addition to any room, while the portable format allows you to take your music with you on your next posting.



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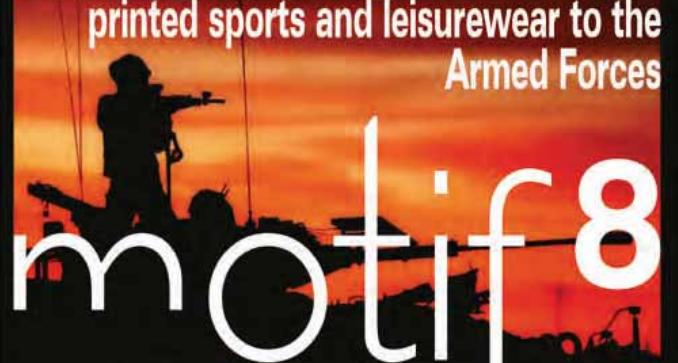
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## PREGNANCY EXPERIENCES IN THE BRITISH ARMY (PEBA)

### VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS REQUIRED FOR THE PEBA STUDY

#### We are looking to sign up service women who:

- Are currently 12 - 18 weeks into their pregnancy (expressions of interest welcome from 10 weeks).
- Have not previously given birth.
- Are in Regular Service in the British Army.

#### What?

The PEBA study is recruiting service women in the British Army to share their experiences and perspectives of pregnancy during military service.

#### Why?

This research is part of the Army's commitment to understand the lived experiences of service women and is part of a PhD study at Anglia Ruskin University.

#### How?

Participants will be asked to make diary entries during their pregnancy and then participate in an interview after giving birth. Participation in the study is voluntary and information is kept anonymous.

#### Interested in taking part?

Please email  
[kalm102@pgr.aru.ac.uk](mailto:kalm102@pgr.aru.ac.uk)  
for more information



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Defence Animal Training Regiment, Afordby Road, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, LE13 0HX

**Sat 28<sup>th</sup> June 2025**  
Free Entry & Parking

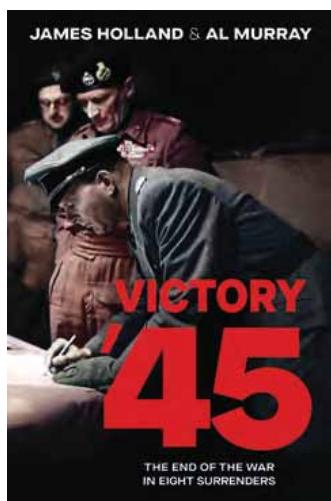
**Opens:**  
**10.30 am**  
**Closes:**  
**4.30 pm**

**DETAILS:**

- No pets (assistance only).
- Parking & disabled access.
- Military Working Animal Demonstrations (all day).
- Meet our animals & learn about our Military roles.
- Explore our interest stalls & commercial vendors.
- Food & Drinks retail units will be available all day.
- Planned Battle of Britain flypast & Military band.

# REVIEWS

★ BOOKS ★ GAMES ★ PODCASTS ★ MOVIES ★



## Victory '45

*The end of the Second World War, step by step*

### BOOKS

From Penguin is out now priced at £22

UPCOMING commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War will focus on May 8 and August 15, but as a new title by Al Murray and James Holland highlights, the Axis forces' capitulation was more drawn-out than many realise.

Focusing on eight key moments in Europe and Japan, *Victory '45*, charts the final weeks of the conflict, from the fall of Berlin to the formal surrender by the Japanese aboard the USS Missouri.

The project came out of the duo's history podcast – *We Have Ways of Making You Talk* – and Murray told *Soldier* that having covered various anniversaries of major campaigns over the past couple of years, they decided the book would approach the war's end as a series of snapshots.

"What's interesting is that there isn't one moment when Germany throws in the towel," he explained.

"What actually happens is you get different moments of surrender, so you can look at eight different

perspectives; what are the Allies after, what are the Germans going to offer and why are the Japanese fighting like they are?

"It's like a series of dominos falling."

Both authors (pictured) wrote about the elements they were most interested in, with Murray's chapters including Montgomery and Eisenhower's negotiations with the defeated Nazi commanders at Lueneburg Heath and Reims respectively.

"I love Monty – I think he's due a reappraisal," Murray continued.

"Yes, he upset a lot of people by writing a silly memoir where he said 'I was right about everything', but who cares?

"I'm keen on forgetting the historiography and trying to get into the moment. You get a glimpse of a man carrying all this responsibility and destiny with him – what was it like being in that tent, with the canvas flapping in the wind and your great captain finally pulling off his victory, and the Germans weeping at the fact that they'd lost?

"And Eisenhower – he's in command of such a vast army. How do you carry that?

"The crushing pressure turns him into a diamond – he's such a remarkable man.

"People like to talk about the tectonic plates of history, however what's really striking is that there are individuals making individual decisions. Even in these epic events, personality is right in the centre of this – that's really important to remember."

With certain personas upending geopolitical norms, that point seems as relevant today as it was back in 1945 – and Murray, who is also known for his comedic alter-ego *The Pub Landlord*, admitted he is concerned at the current state of play.

"The main thing to know about history is that we have no idea what's around the corner, ever," he mused. "I did a routine about how we're living in a history book and I don't really like it, because after all, what bit are we in – what if this is just the prelude?"

The prospect of another world war aside, Murray recently became an honorary colonel of 299 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers – an appointment his ex-Sapper father is particularly proud of – and hopes to see them in action on exercise soon.

He and Holland are also continuing their podcast and YouTube collaborations, the latter of which, *Walking the Ground*, sees them visiting battlefields.

The pair's informal, mates-chatting-about-history MO has built them a dedicated fanbase and in this sense, *Victory '45* hits the mark too.

It's an accessible retelling of events – light on strategic stodge but heavy on personal stories – which will have readers pondering how people and their choices shape humanity's big moments.



Interview: **Becky Clark, Soldier**

# WIN ATOMFALL



AFTER *Soldier*'s review team unanimously endorsed this latest digital disaster outing, we thought it was high time we gave readers the chance to join us by bagging their own copy.

Set in the north-west of England in the wake of a nuclear accident at the Windscale facility, *Atomfall* sees players given the task of dealing with a very British disaster in a quarantine zone shared with some deeply unsavoury neighbours.

And thanks to the good folks at developer Rebellion, we have two copies of the hit title, worth £54.99 each, to give away. The game continues to receive rave reviews across the press, not least from our writer, LSgt Ashley Ryan (IG), who was still accumulating rads from the virtual Cumbrian countryside as this issue hit desks.

Winners can specify either PS5, Xbox or PC versions as their prize. To stand a chance of winning, just answer the question on the right.

**Send your answer to [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by May 30. All the usual rules apply.**



#### TELL US

*What's the name of the clicking scientific instrument, named after the German physicist who pioneered it, which is used to measure radioactivity?*

## GAMES

### PlayStation Portal

From Sony is out now, priced at £199

THIS recently released gadget has proved a literal game changer for a *Soldier* reviewer locked in an escalating battle with the wife for rights to the living room TV. Essentially a PS5 controller with a screen sandwiched in-between, it provides remote access to the console and entire games library with convenient slots for headphones and power source. It

works well, although connection has occasionally proved suspect, seemingly disrupted by outside influences such as low-flying helicopters or bikers cruising down the nearby lane. While not cheap, it has become the go-to downtime option for a die-hard gamer now cranked up to maximum volume and blasting Tie Fighters by the bucketload as a recent, belated convert to *Star Wars Squadrons*.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



## MOVIES

### Dick Dynamite: 1944

Out May 5 on DVD, Blu-ray and Digital

IF YOU imagine something like retro computer game *Wolfenstein 3D*, but starring McBain from *The Simpsons* and produced by the same team that brought us the hilariously bad *Birdemic*, then you'll have a close enough idea of the 90-minute crowdfunded fever dream that is *Dick Dynamite: 1944*. Not quite hitting the sweet spot of being so awful as to be funny, the film clearly blew most of its budget on a bizarre Irvine Welsh cameo and used the rest on trying to break *The Wolf of Wall Street*'s obscenity counter. Borderline unwatchable thanks to its near-schizophrenic writing, this offering at least serves some good in that it provides objective proof that there is something worse than the 0300 stag.



Review: Tpr Luke Maxwell-Libby, HAC



## PODCASTS

### Sergei and the Westminster Spy Ring

By Project Citizen and The Citizens



ONE for anybody with an interest in grey zone tactics, this highly bingeable series digs into

Russia's long-running, multi-level information war against the West. It reveals how through early exploitation of social media, coupled with a complex network of spies, sympathisers and useful idiots, Putin set the conditions for his operation in Ukraine. As the contributors recall how they tried for years to blow the whistle, it's hard not to despair at the missed opportunities to counteract the threat - and ponder how history will come to judge the key actors in the saga. A warning though: this podcast may induce rage.



Review: Becky Clark, *Soldier*

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TEAM**

If you fancy giving any new releases the *Soldier* treatment, send your verdict to [reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk)

# SOLDIERSPORT



LCpl Marc Thompson came out of retirement to help the cause



## BOXING (MEN)

HEAD coach Sgt Chez Nihell (RAPTC) was frustrated at seeing three of his fighters handed walkover victories at the UK Armed Forces Boxing Championships – despite the army securing a fifth successive team title.

Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC), LCpl Leon Moulds (REME) and Sig Tobi Lawal (R Signals) all claimed wins without setting foot in the ring at RAF Honington, meaning the defending champions only needed to triumph in one of the night's six bouts to retain the trophy, and two to claim it outright.

Fus Matty Calderwood (RRF, pictured right) had the first opportunity to do just that as he locked horns with AR Jaydon Johnson (RAF) – an opponent he defeated in last year's showdown. But after a strong opening round the soldier was pegged back, and it was his rival

who eventually took the contest on a split decision.

The result saw the baton passed to Pte Dylan Swales (RLC) and the 67kg star duly delivered as he defeated AS1 Blaine Lambert (RAF), also on a split decision.

The outcome was even more impressive given the fact Swales came into the competition on the back of a lengthy injury layoff, and it was his first action at welterweight. He also faced an experienced fighter with more than 100 bouts to his name.

LCpl Marc Thompson (RRF) then lost to Cpl Aaron Devine (RAF) via a unanimous verdict – an outcome matched by Spr Marley Devitt (RE) as he squared off against Team GB's Cpl Kyle Shaw-Tullin (RM).

The Royal Air Force saw Sgt Cameron Lewis triumph over Mne Connor Fanning (RM) at 80kg in the penultimate fight, which meant the hosts – who were also handed a walkover win – moved level with the army on four bouts each.

But Pte Kieran Cooper (RLC) ended the night on a high as he sealed a unanimous victory over Mne Dominik Zieba (RM).

"There is a lot of pressure going into this competition, so we are relieved," Nihell told *SoldierSport* afterwards. "But there is no time to celebrate or relax – we are straight back in preparing for the English National Amateur Championships."

"The walkovers are frustrating. They did their jobs, made the weight and were ready to go. We want all our boxers to compete – not win by walkover – but we cannot control who the RAF and Royal Navy enter."

## INTER-SERVICES BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

### MEN

- 1 ARMY 5**
- 2 ROYAL AIR FORCE 4**
- 3 ROYAL NAVY 1**

"We got over the line and I was pleased with our performances.

Dylan Swales moved up to 67kg just three weeks before and has not boxed all season due to injury, but he delivered.

Marley Devitt had a barnstormer. He fought the national champion from last season and battled throughout, while Marc Thompson came out of retirement to help us.

He has been coaching The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers but has come down for the odd spar and has followed our programme while training his own team.

"I thought he was unlucky; we had him winning the first round hands down. But Aaron Devine is a Scottish champion, and Marc did well considering he only had three months to prepare.

There were no doubts with Kieran Cooper. He boxed brilliantly, fighting at range and picking his shots. He stuck to the gameplan and got the job done.

"We had already retained the trophy but wanted to be up on the scorecard. We've only lost once in 40 years and everyone is looking at us – I'm delighted for the team and the coaches."

Elsewhere on the card, Capt Rachel Rose (AGC (SPS)) lost to the navy's LPT Billie Matthews in a qualifying bout for the national amateur championships.

## BOXING BY NUMBERS

**39** Inter-Services titles in 40 years for the soldiers

**6** Army boxers involved in the seven bouts staged on the night

**7** Squad members qualified for the England National Amateur Championships

**2** Fighters competing at the Welsh national championships in Cardiff



## REDS SUFFER IN SERVICES DECIDER

### FOOTBALL (WOMEN)

**SKIPPER** Bdr Anna Birtwhistle (RA) has reflected on a season of progress for the army women's football team after they fell agonisingly short in their quest to dethrone the Royal Air Force as Inter-Services champions.

Having defeated the Royal Navy 2-0 in their opening game, the Reds only needed to draw with the RAF in the tournament's concluding fixture to lift the trophy but found themselves on the wrong side of a seven-goal thriller in Lincoln.

A soft penalty decision saw the soldiers slip 1-0 down in the 12th minute and worse was to follow as keeper Cpl Nicole Gair (RAMS) was caught in possession to gift their rivals a second. The stopper was also at fault for the third goal early in the second half as her attempted pass deflected off

**'GOOD THINGS ARE COMING'**



forward Fg Off Jeorgia Carr and into the empty net.

LCpl Ashleigh Mills (RLC) gave the challengers something to cheer as she converted with an expertly judged shot over the stranded opposition keeper from 40 yards, but the joy was short lived as RAF skipper Sgt Cat Beaver slotted her second goal of the afternoon after the army failed to clear from a free kick.

Birtwhistle reduced the arrears from the spot and when veteran Capt Krissy Wright (AGC (RMP)) drilled home from the edge of the area the comeback was on. However, the equaliser failed to materialise, leaving the RAF to celebrate a fifth successive title.

"It is disappointing," Birtwhistle (pictured below) told *SoldierSport*. "We had the opportunity to go all the way but it didn't quite happen.

"We made some team and individual mistakes that resulted in goals, but I couldn't fault our determination. To get to 4-3 in the second half is testament to the girls' spirit.

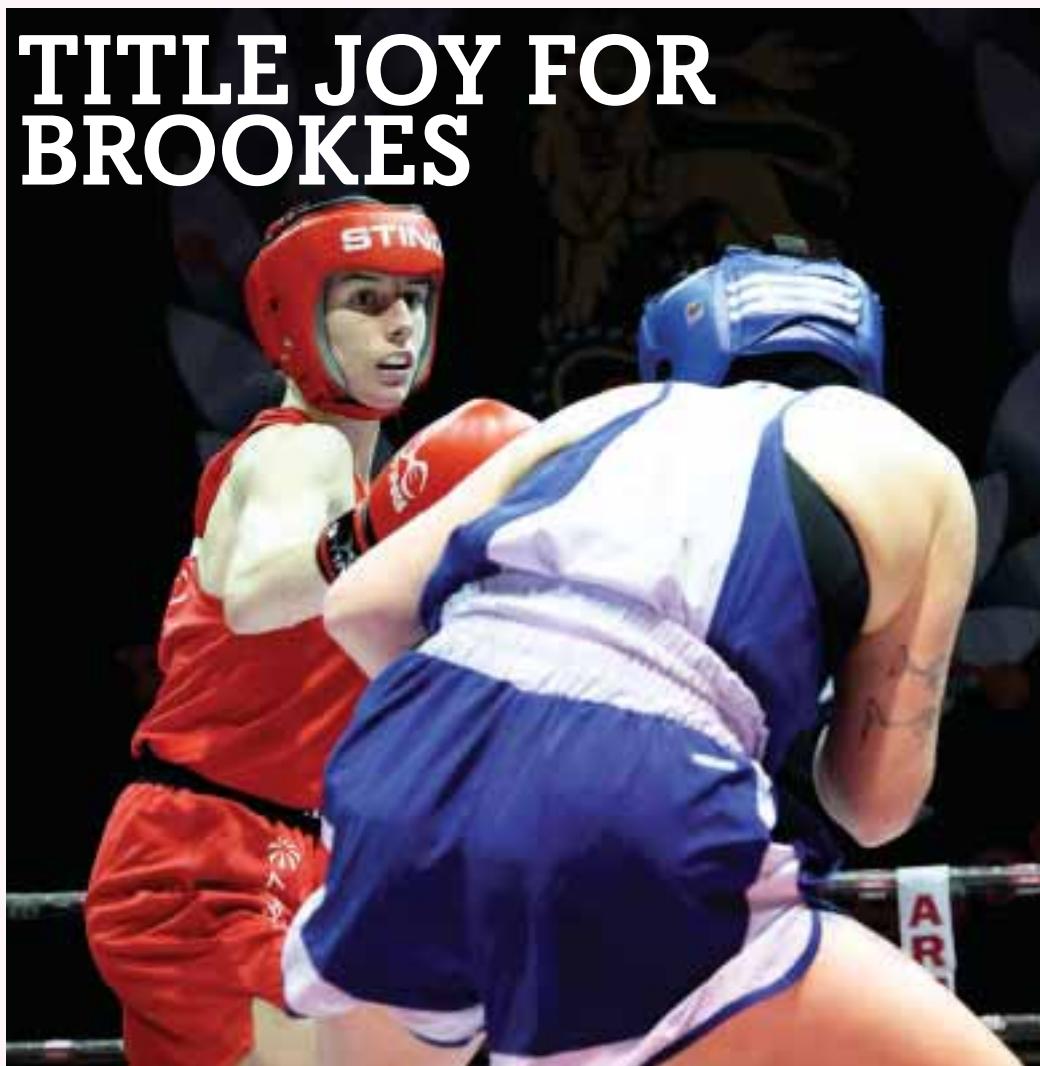
"Despite this, we've had a really good season and finished second in the Southern Counties Cup.

"We've had a new coaching team who brought a new structure to our play and I feel that good things are coming."

Capt Krissy Wright played in her 26th and final Inter-Services

# TITLE JOY FOR BROOKES

Pictures: Graeme Main



## BOXING

**NEW** Welsh amateur boxing champion LCpl Niamh Brookes (REME) has set her sights on the Commonwealth Games after rising to the top of her country's ranks.

The soldier outclassed rival Josie Lewis with a controlled display to top the podium in the 52kg division – a result that saw her avenge the loss suffered at the same stage last season.

Former Wales and Three Nations champion Helen Jones was also dispatched in the semi-finals, meaning the tournament represented a major stepping stone for a fighter who was competing at development level in 2022.

“It feels amazing,” Brookes, pictured above at last season’s Inter-Services, told *SoldierSport*.

“I’m the only army boxer to win a national title this season – it is a great achievement for the team.

“The bout with Helen was

tough, both physically and mentally, so to get through that was brilliant.

“I was then sensible in the final. I kept it long and felt in control throughout.

“Hopefully, Wales will now bring me onto the national team and next year’s Commonwealth Games is the goal.”

Teammate Gdsm Joe Louis Wright (WG) was defeated at the quarter-final stage but the army had strong representation in the England Boxing National Amateur Championships.

2023 champion Cpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) progressed the furthest but unfortunately lost to Team GB star Ella Thompstone in the final of the female 60-63kg competition.

Pte Kieran Cooper (RLC) claimed bronze in the male 86-92kg ranks after a semi-final loss to Sheffield City’s Kenneth Anigboro, while there were narrow quarter-final defeats for LCpl Leon Moulds (REME) and Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC).

Despite missing out on top honours team coach Sgt Chez Nihell (RAPTC) was delighted with his squad’s performance in what is becoming an increasingly tough competition.

“Leon and Lewis were unlucky to lose on split decisions, but they were among the last eight in the country, so they faced top opponents,” he said.

“Kieran boxed brilliantly, it could not have been any closer, and Terri was up against last year’s champion who trains full-time with GB.

“This is still a relatively young squad and last year we didn’t have anyone progress past the quarter-finals, so I’m pleased we have done better than that.

“This competition is getting harder every year, especially for the females.

“We are now seeing more fighters across the weight categories and GB boxers are also representing, where as previously they did not enter at all.”



## STRONGMAN

**ARMY** athletes claimed a clean sweep of the titles at the first annual Armed Forces Strongest Man and Woman contest.

Having progressed from five qualifying rounds in 2023/24, the event saw 16 personnel from all three services do battle across five gruelling events that tested strength, endurance and functional fitness.

These included a log lift for repetitions, a one-rep maximum deadlift, farmers carries, the super yoke and atlas stones.

Pte Josh Greenfield (R Yorks) won the men’s first-timers category, a feat matched by Cfn Josh McKay (REME) in the under-80kg ranks and Capt David Pennington (RL) in the under-105kg division.

LCpl Rhys Calland (REME) and Cpl Paige Atwell (RLC) were crowned strongest man and woman respectively.

A host of UK armed forces records were also broken on the day, with McKay and Sgt Nathan Brookes-Ashton (RE) setting a new best of 240kg in the under-80kg deadlift.

Atwell also smashed the women’s atlas stones record by completing a five-stone run in 25.47sec.

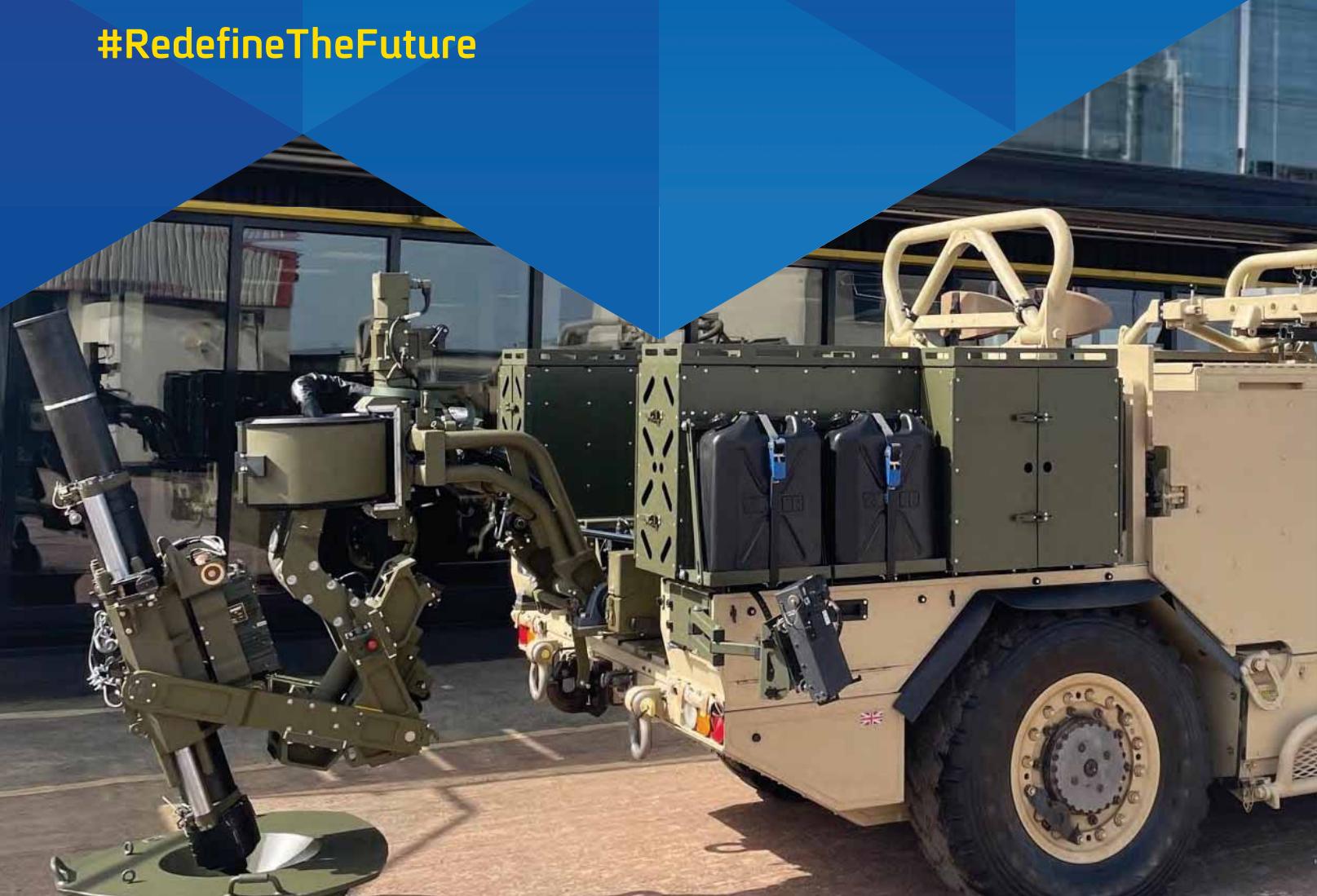


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## SKILLS SHARPENED AT NOVICE CAMP



More than 50 personnel took part in the inaugural skills course

Pictures: Graeme Main

### BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU

**THE mission to grow Brazilian jiu-jitsu stepped up a level with the staging of the first-ever army skills course.**

Aimed primarily at novice athletes, the week-long programme welcomed more than 50 personnel to the mat at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot, where they learnt the discipline's key components under the watchful eye of expert instructors.

The event was the brainchild of Capt Trevor Tuhey (RAPTC), a ten-year veteran in the sport who first came up with the idea in 2023 and ran a successful pilot last September.

"We were at maximum capacity," he told *SoldierSport*. "We had more than 70 people apply so had to turn some away.

"I think that reflects the growth of combat sports on civvy street. You see the popularity of the UFC and mixed martial arts - Brazilian jiu-jitsu is

the ground element of that.

"It is a thinking person's sport with a lot of intricate positions, and we are seeing a new generation that wants to try something different.

"We started with the foundations and then progressed to stand-up work, the ground game, submissions and full-contact sparring. The feedback was really positive."

Tuhey said the support of fellow black belts Capt John Woodman (REME), Cpl Gareth Byrne (RE) and SSgt Andy Capper (Int Corps), as well as the wider army team, was crucial to the week's success.

He added: "We are now at the stage where we have our own instructors and can deliver courses. We have a lot of people coming through and are at the point where jiu-jitsu is self-sufficient, which is great to see."

The next course runs at the ASPT from October 20 to 24.

To register an interest email [trevor.tuhey208@mod.gov.uk](mailto:trevor.tuhey208@mod.gov.uk)

## MEDICS CROWN TOP UNITS



### BASKETBALL

**THERE was no shortage of on-court action as the Royal Army Medical Service staged their annual inter-unit basketball competition in Aldershot.**

A total of 45 games were played over two-and-a-half days, with the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine claiming the men's honours and a Joint Hospital Group South East team including tournament MVP SSgt

Rebecca Wallace taking the women's prize.

The competition featured novice through to army-level players and was designed to capitalise on the sport's popularity in the formation.

"It was a fantastic event," RAMS basketball secretary Capt Asif Aqil told *SoldierSport*. "We refereed and did all the admin for the games; the full committee was behind it.

"We have identified five or six

players for trials for our corps set-up. We want to build the squad ahead of an overseas visit later this year and then roll into the Inter-Corps competition with fully practised and up to strength teams.

"The women have won that for three years in a row and we hope the men can give the likes of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Royal Signals and Royal Logistic Corps a run for their money."

## OLDING ON TOP



<b>Sportsman of the year</b>	CPO Danny Kerr (RN)	<b>Football</b>
<b>Sportswoman of the year</b>	Lt Kate Olding (Army)	<b>Athletics</b>
<b>Official of the year</b>	Gp Capt Ray Morley (RAF)	<b>Boxing</b>
<b>UKAF Achievement Award</b>	Sqn Ldr Geoff Ellis (RAF)	<b>Orienteering</b>
<b>Team of the year</b>	Army men's rugby union team	

### UKAF SPORTS AWARDS

**DISTANCE runner Lt Kate Olding (Int Corps) added another individual accolade to her haul as she was named UK armed forces sportswoman of the year.**

The officer collected the army equivalent prize in November in recognition of a stellar season on track and road. She became Inter-Services champion in the marathon, as well as the 10,000, 5,000 and 1,500 metres, and won the English Championships over 5,000 metres.

"I feel really honoured to be here in the first place, and the award is a huge bonus," said Olding during the UKAF Sports Awards ceremony.

Elsewhere, the army men's rugby union squad were named team of the year following a nail-biting clash with the Royal Navy at Twickenham last season. They overcame a 29-5 half-time deficit to win 43-42 at the death and went on to become Inter-Services champions.

### TRIATHLON

**TRIATHLON star Capt Kat Matthews (RAMS) set a new course record as she won Ironman Texas for a third consecutive year.**

The officer completed the route in a time of 8hr 10min 34sec – an effort that also represented a record in an Ironman-branded full distance race and saw her finish almost ten minutes clear of her nearest rival.

"I'm really proud to pull together that performance against this field," she said.



Picture: Jamie Squire/Getty

### WATERSPORTS

**THE Army Sailing Association is bracing itself for a busy 2025 season with more than 1,400 personnel expected to participate in watersports courses and events.**

Based at the Army Inshore Sail Training Centre on Thorney Island, the programme includes power boating, dinghy and keelboat sailing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, wind foiling and stand-up paddleboarding.

The site has been boosted by the official opening of a new logistics hangar offering expanded storage, workshop and classroom facilities that will see 630 places available on train the trainer courses this year – up from 506 in 2024.

For more information visit [sailing.britisharmysport/aistc](http://sailing.britisharmysport/aistc)



# COURT CROWNS CLAIMED



Pictures: Graeme Main

## VOLLEYBALL

**OPENING** day victories over the Royal Air Force paved the way to successful title charges for the army men's and women's teams at the Inter-Services Volleyball Championships.

While the women made routine work of their win, the men were pushed all the way in two tight sets before eventually

prevailing 3-1.

After showing their class in a relatively straightforward opener, the soldiers found themselves up against it in the second as the RAF fought back to triumph 28-26. The third set was secured with relative ease, but the army had to rally from an 18-12 deficit to take the fourth 25-23 and with it the match.

"There were a few mistakes on our end," skipper Cpl George

Morris (REME) told *SoldierSport*. "But we managed to apply what we did in our final few days of training to get the result. Our defence was also a lot better than in previous games.

"The RAF are strong, and it is good that we have been able to beat them this way. My personal performance was a bit scrappy, but I was glad for the rest of the team. They showed real fighting spirit over the last two sets and



wanted the win."

The Reds followed the result with a straight-sets victory over the Royal Navy to secure a second successive forces title.

Coach WO1 Kwabena Appiah-Bosompem (RLC) was delighted with the attitude shown by his players – particularly in their battle with RAF – and said the experience will hold them in good stead as they head to this month's Crown Services tournament in Scotland.

They will again face their military rivals as well as the police, fire and prison services.

"They will all be coming after us as we have won that competition for the past three years," he added.

"We know it is going to be difficult and will not take anything for granted.

"It will be our final test of the season. We started with the



Volleyball England Shield and lost in the quarter-finals for a third year in a row. That was a bitter pill to swallow but we go to the Crowns with confidence.

"It is a competition that brings out the best in us and we will go there fully prepared."

The army women were in fine form as they beat the RAF 3-0 without looking in any danger

## INTER-SERVICES VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

### MEN

ARMY V RAF  
3 1

### WOMEN

ARMY V RAF  
3 0

until they found themselves trailing in the final set.

While the victory appeared comprehensive skipper Maj Karen Tait (RAMS) insisted it felt anything but.

"We never take them for granted, even though they were missing key players," she said.

"We've got quite a new set-up in our starting six. In the past we would have lost that third set when we fell behind, but we found the energy to get ourselves back into it.

"Some fresh blood has come in. We've had injuries and players missing due to deployments, but the girls stepped up as if they've been part of the team for years.

"You can only have six people on court so the challenge is to make the others feel as though they're part of the squad. The energy they gave from the bench helped us to that 3-0 win.

"Our hits through the middle were key and we had a star in Pte Sue Todua (RLC, pictured below); her serve was consistent, and she was so powerful."

The senior service were also defeated 3-0 as the silverware was secured and, like the men, attention now turns to the Crown Services – where the team are also defending champions.

"If we play like we did today, that tournament will be fantastic," Tait added. "Our aim is to retain the trophy and we have high expectations."

## VOLLEYBALL BY NUMBERS



**2** Wins for the army mixed team – completing an Inter-Services hat-trick

**1** Set dropped by the soldiers in the entirety of the forces tournament

**3** Days of action at the Crown Services – which runs from May 23 to 25

## GUARDS TAKE GLORY FROM FINAL DEBUT

### RUGBY LEAGUE (MEN)

**A NEW** name was added to rugby league's Inter-Unit Naivalurua Nines trophy as the Irish Guards triumphed in a tight final in Aldershot.

Gdsm Elijah Tagituimua was the hero for the champions-elect as he scrambled to the line to score his side's only try before slotting the extras to defeat 1st Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment 6-4.

His effort helped his side overcome a 4-0 deficit at the break and followed a long pause in play when a fellow guardsman suffered a head injury in contact.

"I'm buzzing," victorious coach CSgt Shaun Nicholas told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"We do not get released a lot due to how busy we are, but we managed to for this. We were teaching them how to play ball in the days prior to the tournament and here we are winning the cup today.

"That just highlights the natural ability these players have. When one of their teammates got knocked out their fighting spirit came to the fore to get the job done."

The showpiece marked the conclusion of a tournament that featured 14 teams and 36 games – the first of which saw

1 and 2 R Yorks doing battle.

The Scots Guards Tartans defeated 8 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers 19-13 in the shield final, while 1 Royal School of Military Engineering Regiment downed 2nd Battalion, The Rifles 18-6 in the bowl final.

1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment lifted the plate trophy after beating 12/16 Regiments, Royal Artillery 11-8.

Attention now switches to the Inter-Corps Lawson Cup competition, with the opening round of fixtures scheduled for Hull on May 8.

Elsewhere, the army will be competing in the Rugby Football League's Women's Southern Championship over the summer months.

The Reds start with a home clash against Bedford Tigers on June 1 and will also face Anglian Vipers, Bristol Golden Ferns, North Herts Crusaders and Brentwood Eels over the course of the campaign.

For more information follow **@ArmyRugbyLeague** on X.

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\*Telegraph Independent Exam Results, 2024

INTER-SERVICES  
MEN'S TABLE TENNISARMY V RAF  
13 V 7

## DEPTH OF TALENT PROVES VITAL

### TABLE TENNIS

**STRENGTH in depth was key for the army at the Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships as they successfully defended their team crowns in the men's and women's draws.**

Traditional powerhouses the Royal Air Force posed the biggest threat to the soldiers, particularly in a men's contest that was decided in the final round of four matches.

The Reds headed into those clashes with a 9-7 advantage and thankfully won all four ties to seal a 13-7 victory, and with it a third consecutive forces title.

The women's tournament also went down to the wire, but the experience of Rev Nicola Frail (RAChD) helped get the team over the line.

"Both competitions were so close," Capt Matt Hutson (REME), chair of the Army Table Tennis Association, told *SoldierSport*.

"Those final four matches were really tight, and we were

watching on thinking it could go either way. It is great when it's like that – it makes everything more interesting.

"We tried a new format this year with teams of eight, rather than having A and B teams, and it is the depth of our squad that won it for us.

"We had the likes of Lt Ben Avery (RLC), LCpl Dom Weston (RE, pictured above) and SSgt Pete Owusu (RLC) among the top four, but because of the continuing development in army table tennis we have players at six to eight who are very solid.

"LCpl Sandeep Rai (R Signals) was playing at this level for the first time having only started in the sport three years ago. He was our number eight but almost beat the RAF third seed."

Despite claiming both team titles, individual honours were in short supply as the RAF won the men's and women's singles, along with the men's and mixed doubles crowns.

Frail and SSgt Hilary Greig (RAMS), as a pair, were women's doubles champions.



Picture: Graeme Main

# Generation next

We asked teenagers if joining the Army Cadets had changed their lives

Interviews: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Graeme Main

Yes – the community the cadets provide is the most important thing for me. You get to know people and form new friendships. I'm now looking at

joining a University Officers' Training Corps when I move on to higher education.

**Isabel Murphy, age 16**

**St Benedict's CCF, London**

 **READ MORE** on page 10



Your mindset is certainly changed as a cadet because you are pushed out of your comfort zone as you experience new things. For example, you go off to annual camps and get hands-on with weapons. I have a Sandhurst scholarship and I hope to join the army.

**William Murphy, age 17**

**Duke of York's Royal Military School CCF**

Yes – for starters I'm not addicted to my phone like some people. You hand your mobile in when you're doing cadet activities and, honestly, it's so much better that way.

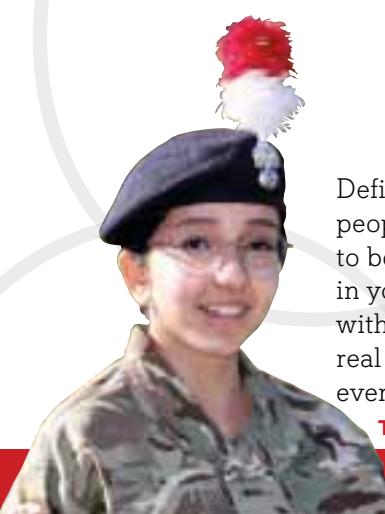
**Bethany Fagan, age 17**

**Lincolnshire ACF**



Definitely – getting out, physically meeting new people and experiencing different activities has to be good for anyone. You always have more in your life with the cadets – getting presented with the King's Coronation Medal has been a real highlight for me. Being involved with that event was amazing.

**Tia Niala, age 16, Warwickshire and West Midlands ACF**



Values and standards are important, especially in today's world. The Army Cadet Force is about courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity and loyalty. Since joining, my life has been about applying these to everything I do.

**Ollie Hoydon, age 17**

**Bristol and the Channel Islands ACF**



**Being in the cadets definitely gets you away from the online world. I have met people from different walks of life and gained more confidence as a result.**

**Abi Couchman, age 17**

**Warwickshire and West Midlands ACF**



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Our own history as a charity is deeply connected to VE Day, as we were forged during the preceding months to ensure that soldiers returning from the Second World War could be taken care of. Now, as then, we continue to be inspired by the community that we proudly support, and the fortitude shown by so many in the face of life's challenges.

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