

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

MAY 2019

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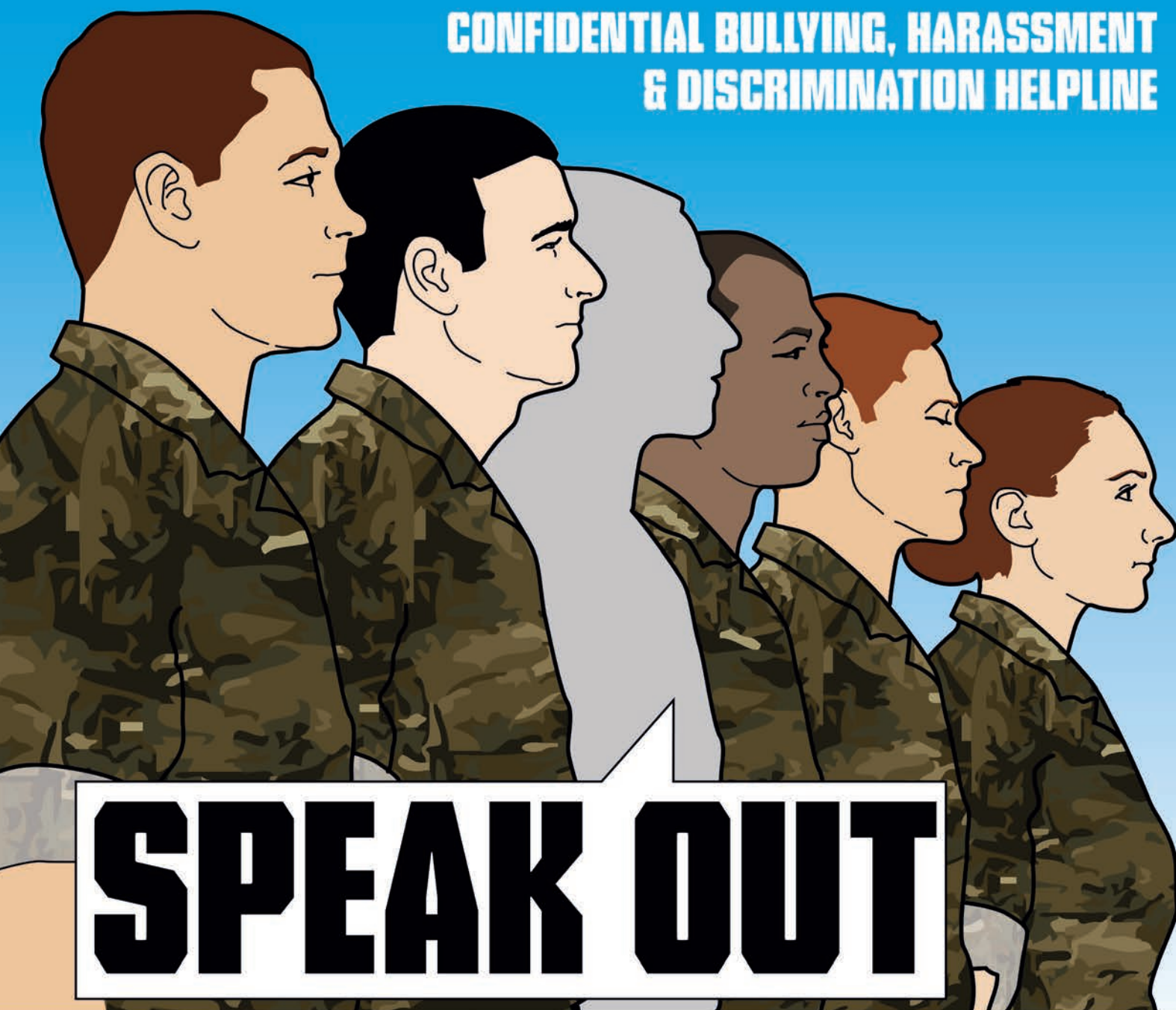
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One of the
lads had a
sheep walk
over him

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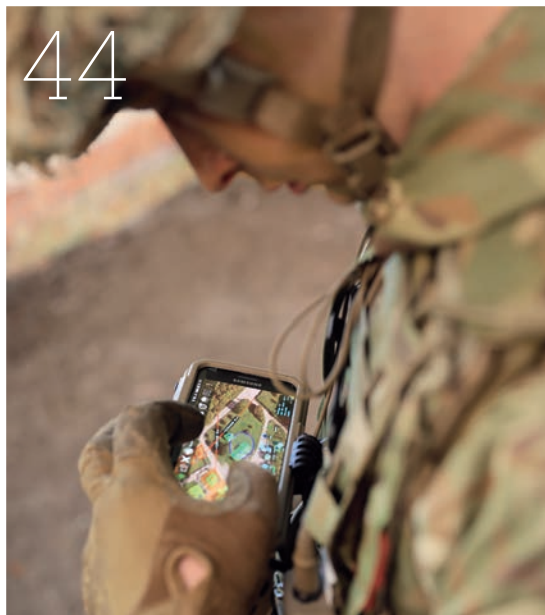
Commando capers – p34



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On-screen action



BARELY a month goes by now where there isn't some impossibly sophisticated piece of kit being tipped

or tested by Army bods. Much of it promises to revolutionise soldiering. And no doubt, a fair bit of it will at some point.

Then there is the stuff that is already in use, having an impact today.

So this month it was fascinating to speak to members of The Yorkshire Regiment who have already benefitted from a completely new way of preparing for battle.

Virtual Reality in Land Training, as the initiative is known, isn't some vague concept or test – this system will almost certainly be finding its way to a unit near you.

It sees troops don headsets to fight through the sort of scenarios that could never be recreated on Salisbury Plain or in Batus. And the result is a level of experience that personnel just weren't getting before.

Read all about it on page 42, and we look forward to hearing your views on the shape of things to come.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

> Printed copies

THESE are distributed to every Army site at the start of each month.

> Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

> Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk. Just click on the "read it now" tab.

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Picture: Martin Stitt



New sight to conquer the night

Latest tech will make Challenger a lethal predator after dark

THE Challenger 2 main battle tank is about to receive the biggest step change there's ever been to its capability, thanks to the arrival of a new thermal imaging system.

That's the belief of WO1 Tony Holland (KRH), a 20-year veteran of the platform who has been leading trials of the night sights at the Armoured Trials and Development Unit (ATDU) in Bovington.

The warrant officer says the new kit, which will be fitted to the vehicles in a rolling programme beginning next month, removes a major maintenance burden for crews as well as providing more detailed images of targets in the field of view.

"The old thermal sight had to be cooled by air from a compressor to function properly and often needed its filters changed and oil replacing," he told *Soldier*.

"Then relatively soon after the service the sight's image would start to degrade.

"That doesn't happen with the new version. It's a state-of-the-art system similar to the one being put on Ajax, which has its own compact internal cooling system and the picture quality doesn't reduce at all.

"We've had one running for 19

hours a day and clocked up 112 hours in total so far – and it hasn't yet needed any maintenance.

"The images haven't deteriorated in any way either.

"On deployments the advantages of this will be immense.

"On silent watch, for example, where we run on battery power alone so we can observe enemy movement undetected, that means longer operating times with no picture degradation at all."

The crew's view of potential targets has also been enhanced by new displays inside the turret which give more detailed images of the heat source detected by the new camera.

"The performance is a lot better because we're getting a really good picture all the time and are able to identify different targets much more easily," added Cpl Matthew Duncan (QRH), another member of the ATDU trials team.

"We can now engage targets much more accurately at greater distances."

The first unit to receive the new sights will be the Royal Tank Regiment, in June, with the remaining Challengers – including those based in Germany and Canada – scheduled to receive the kit shortly after.

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SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP

1. BELIZE

JUNGLE OFFERS TROPICAL TEST

PARATROOPERS have been developing their ability to survive and look after their kit in arduous jungle conditions during Exercise Mayan Warrior.

Personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment also focused on going back to basics by navigating with only maps, bearings and pacing distances as well as testing their ability to operate with minimal logistic and medical support.

The exercise helped ensure the regiment is ready to deploy at a moment's notice and work in a range of climates.

Maj Mike Thwaite, officer commanding A Company, said: "This is an incredibly demanding environment and it's important that we're familiar with it."

"By the nature of our role with 16 Air Assault Brigade, we could find ourselves deployed on operations in the jungle at a moment's notice."



Picture: Cpl Jamie Hart, RLC

2. SOUTH GEORGIA

POLAR PILGRIMAGE

A DISTANT relative of Ernest Shackleton used downtime before his Falklands tour to find out more about the polar explorer – taking troops to one of the farthest-flung corners of the globe.

Maj Adam Szczerbiuk (RA) embarked on a sea trip to South Georgia with two colleagues to see where his

ancestor had landed after his 800-mile voyage from Elephant Island in 1916.

Shackleton was buried at South Georgia after his death on a later expedition in 1922.

Maj Szczerbiuk, who commands Rapier crews of 30 Battery, 16 Regiment, Royal Artillery, said seeing his ancestor's grave and the lifeboat he skipped to safety had been particular highlights.

"It was a humbling opportunity," he added.



3. MALAWI

TIME'S UP FOR POACHERS

THE Coldstream Guards are helping to tackle the illegal wildlife trade in Liwonde National Park.

Working in teams of three alongside Malawian park rangers, the soldiers have been providing expert tactical, first aid and communications advice while conducting anti-poaching patrols, with their counterparts sharing bushcraft and tracking skills.

Early in the deployment they freed an impala trapped in a deadly wire snare (pictured).

Finding and removing such traps is a key element of the Army's partnership, which was set up thanks

to £900,000 of funding from the British government.

In 2018 Liwonde enjoyed its first year without a rhino or elephant being lost to poaching.



IN NUMBERS

40

TEAMS that participated, and miles each one covered, during the Lanyard Trophy – a navigation and endurance race across Dartmoor for the Royal Signals.

It was also the 40th anniversary of the event



1. BELIZE

“
I felt like I
was going to
a new world
”

From Nepal to Catterick
– page 50

2. SOUTH
GEORGIA



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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4. AFGHANISTAN EXERCISE EQUALITY

A PHYSICAL training instructor has returned from a nine-month stint at the Afghan National Army Officers' Academy in Kabul during which she helped broaden the PT syllabus for female cadets.

Sgt Yvette Kemp (RAPTC) was instrumental in pushing them to take on the same PT challenges as male troops.

She also mentored an Afghan Servicewoman to lead fitness sessions and educated instructors on the biology of exercise.

The soldier capped off her tour with a visit to the British Embassy to deliver kit donated by the England and Army Football Associations.

"Fifteen women from around Kabul attended a coaching session, where we did skills and drills followed by a match," Sgt Kemp explained. "It was well received."



5. OMAN ROVERS RETURN

TROOPS rehearsed expeditionary capabilities in a second outing to the desert. Following hot on the heels of Exercise Saif Sareea last year, the latest manoeuvres involved members of 1st Armoured Infantry Brigade working with the Royal Army of Oman.

Serials saw the Royal Tank Regiment operating Challenger 2s over the long distances of the Ras Madrakah training area while Wildcat helicopters from 1 Regiment, Army Air Corps flew overhead.

Medics from 22 Field Hospital also worked on casualty drills.

Exercise Khanjar Oman has been hailed as an important milestone in the Army's collective transformation training programme – testing troops and kit in challenging environments.



6. INDIA SACRIFICE REMEMBERED

BRITISH troops joined military heavyweights and other VIPs to remember those who fought in the Battle of Kohima.

Representatives of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, The Yorkshire Regiment, The Rifles and The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment laid wreaths to mark the 75th anniversary of the campaign.

Nearly 4,000

Commonwealth and British troops lost their lives in the brutal 1944 clash.

Brig Gavin Thompson, defence adviser at the British High Commission, said it was an honour to commemorate the so-called "forgotten Army" alongside Indian and Japanese delegates.

He added: "What made it more poignant for me was the presence of the representatives from the modern day regiments who fought at what is regarded as one of the fiercest battles of the Second World War."





COOKING UP A STORM

■ A COLLECTION of nutritious recipes for troops is proving increasingly popular, according to Army health chiefs.

The Healthy Soldier Cookbook, which was released last year, contains dozens of breakfast, lunch and evening meal ideas plus a range of smoothies.

Issi Humphreys, who compiled the free title for the Army health promotion team, said: "There is something here for everybody – including some tasty vegan options – and all of them have been checked by nutritionists at the Institute of Naval Medicine."

Find the book on the Army health promotion page of the defence intranet.

KNOW YOUR VALUES

■ THE Army has launched a new online game to get troops talking about its values and standards.

Teams score points by responding to different dilemmas they could encounter with colleagues.

Information entered is anonymous. To try it out visit <https://army.games-science.com>



HEALTH FIRST FOR VETS

■ A FUNDRAISING drive to help military veterans with bone and muscle problems is under way.

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital has launched an appeal to raise £1.5 million for a new custom-built facility for ex-troops – which will have a military look and feel.

The NHS trust at Oswestry in Shropshire said the unit, which is set to be the first of its kind in the UK, will boast state-of-the-art kit and outstanding standards of care.

Currently the hospital provides an orthopaedic service for veterans led by Lt Col Carl Meyer (RAMC), who is an expert in the field as well as a serving Army officer.

Visit www.rjah.nhs.uk and click on the charity section for more information.

First troops through revamped course

■ ARMY training bosses have spoken of their satisfaction after the first batch of soldiers finished the new-look combat infantry course.

More weapons, updated physical standards and better use of digital media have been included in the overhauled 26-week package, which sets recruits up for life at the forefront of ground close combat.

The personnel of 2 Platoon, Rifles Company proudly marched in front of family and friends at Catterick and are now en route to their battalions.

Maj Richard Jeffrey (Rifles), who led the creation

of the latest syllabus, said: "We have rolled out the course across Infantry Training Centre Catterick.

"We've had 37 troops from a variety of cap badges passing off in the parade and they really seemed to like what we've done – it has definitely delivered what we intended."

Fus Bradley Wort (RRF), who won the best recruit award, added: "Everything was compacted into modules and you got a report for each one of them, which showed you how you'd been doing and how you could improve."



Picture: Cpl Sam Jenkins, RLC

Good housing news for unmarried personnel

“ Society has changed ”

COUPLES in long-term relationships can now live together in Army digs.

A change in policy means troops and their partners have been given the green light to apply for surplus Service family accommodation.

It was introduced alongside new flexible working options in April, and means cohabiting soldiers can set up home alongside married ones and those in civil partnerships.

Single personnel who are legally responsible for children can already apply for housing but they can now share that home if they meet the criteria.

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, assistant head of Army personal services, told *Soldier* more flexibility was important to reflect modern times.

"It's important we recognise that society has changed and that people are living differently to 30 or 40 years ago," he added.

Troops must have served four years from enlistment and be able to prove

their status through documentation such as a joint bank statement, utility bill in both names or proof that both partners are on the electoral roll at the same address.

● Meanwhile, the eagerly-anticipated pilot for the future accommodation model has been announced.

It will arrive at HM Naval Base Clyde in September, Aldershot in January 2020 and RAF Wittering in May 2020.

The system will allow troops to use a housing payment to rent privately near base, as well as the usual Service accommodation options.

COHABITING IN NUMBERS

12

months a couple must have been together to qualify for surplus SFA





Cooking in block gets thumbs-up

TROOPS in single living accommodation (SLA) are being given more freedom to cook their own meals.

The move comes after growing calls from soldiers for more flexibility, and Service chiefs are now discussing plans to improve facilities.

An ongoing trial in Aldershot Garrison is allowing troops to use appliances such as electric grills and steamers, as well as the usual microwave ovens, fridges, toasters and kettles.

As a result, the number of personnel cooking evening meals in SLA has increased from 11 to 44 per cent and overall satisfaction with feeding choices has almost doubled.

Currently, around 30 per cent of all Army SLA has kitchenettes and 61

per cent has utility rooms-cum-snack preparation areas.

Nine per cent has nothing.

Upgrades will begin with basic safety equipment such as fire blankets and heat alarms in units not restricted by local contracts.

Longer term solutions are still being examined, with more details to be published in the coming months.

Lt Col Neil Fitzsimons (RE), who is running the Aldershot trial, said: "This gives troops more choice on whether to eat in the block, at the cookhouse, or get a takeaway – basically, it's treating them like adults and will have an immediate impact on many lives."

"But there are safety considerations and we are preparing direction as to how and where it can be introduced."



Picture: Mrs Grapahol/Freepik

Parsons Green heroics

Serviceman awarded for actions during Tube attack

A BRAVE officer whose actions helped bring a terrorist to justice after the bombing of a London Underground train has received royal recognition.

Lt Col Craig Palmer (RA, shown right) was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery for his actions at Parsons Green in 2017.

His photo (shown) of the device, which had partially exploded leaving 50 passengers injured, gave the police a heads-up on the unfolding drama. And they later helped secure a life sentence for 18-year-old Ahmed Hassan at an Old Bailey trial.

Speaking after his award was announced in the operational honours list, the 50-year-old recalled that he had been commuting to MoD Main Building when he saw there was a commotion down the train.

He said: "At first I didn't know whether it was a terrorist attack or not but I had to do something – when I smelt burning explosives I knew it was serious."

"I saw horrified schoolchildren running past me and knew from



previous operational experience that the first moments after any incidents are crucial to gathering evidence.

"I could see there was a bomb in a Lidl bag on the floor, so I took three pictures on my phone."

Lt Col Palmer said he was delighted to get the award.

"It was witnessing the horror that gave me the courage to act," he added.

Among the other recipients was a soldier from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers who is to be appointed an MBE for his work while deployed in Somalia.

LCpl Lewis Staton, of 3 Armoured Close Support Battalion, received the recognition for his efforts to bring three damaged Ethiopian National Defence Force main battle tanks back online.



COOKING IN NUMBERS

20

percentage drop in troops who ate in the cookhouse during the trial



iPads for good ideas

■ THE HEAD of the British Army is on the hunt for ideas on what the Army can do to be more inventive.

Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, has set up an innovation contest and he wants feedback from troops of all ranks.

The competition question is, "what can the British Army do today to become more competitive in the grey [non-warfighting] zone tomorrow?"

The top soldier (shown above) said the Service was on a mission to become an "incubator" for new ideas, which can be submitted in any format to Force Development, Army HQ via armycap-fdd-nexus@mod.gov.uk

The deadline is May 17 and iPad prizes will be awarded to two of the best entries at the Rusi Land Warfare Conference next month.

Meanwhile, the Army ideas scheme is being overhauled to make it easier for troops to put forward their time- and money-saving concepts.

Gems Think-Tank, as the initiative is now known, will launch this summer on an improved website.



Q&A

Col Alex Porter from the Directorate of Capability explains the competition...

Is this just for officers?

Absolutely not. We're hoping to attract entries from all ranks, roles and responsibilities, from the youngest soldiers to senior officers.

Any guidance on ideas?

There are no restrictions!

Why should soldiers take time out to do this?

Innovation and conceptual development should not be limited to senior staff officers. We know that "tank-park chatter" is full of innovative ways to operate and we want to hear these. We're not fussed about the format. Entries (500 words max) are encouraged via email, Word, PowerPoint, Instagram, video or blog.

“The horror gave me courage”



Graphic: Dasha83/Freepik



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

■ ENTHUSIASTIC personnel are being sought to help soldiers learn.

The Centre for Army Leadership wants troops of all ranks to become its activists – working to spread the latest thinking across the Service.

Those putting themselves forward will be helped to deliver workshops and presentations on issues they want to share with personnel.

There are also opportunities for international travel to top-level conferences and events.

Maj Paul McFarland (R Irish), ops officer at the Sandhurst-based centre, said there were more than 200 in the network already.

He added: "We would be particularly keen to hear from junior NCOs and young officers."

CHARITY DECLINE

■ MILITARY charities in the UK have declined in number over the past seven years, research by the Directory of Social Change has found.

The reduction has been put down to better joint working between organisations, which have dropped by around 65 since 2012 – with Scottish charities most affected.



TOP OF THE SHOTS

■ SOLDIERS from 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles set their sights on success at the 16 Air Assault Brigade operational shooting competition – and were rewarded with a sweep of the board.

They outclassed the opposition from the formation's eight other units to win the main knockout competition at Fingringhoe Ranges in Colchester, while Cpl Dhan Gale topped the individual rankings.

Cpl Ghale said: "I'm very happy to win best shot, but prouder the team won."

LIFE ON THE OCEAN CALLING?



A chance to shine:
HMS Queen Elizabeth



Army chefs reveal what it's like aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth

“The ship has a shop, gym, Wi-Fi and film screenings, plus we have barbecues. Being at sea is hard work but it's just like being on tour – you have the same sense of focus. I'm a Reservist originally from Portsmouth so the homecoming was a proud moment. I was on the top deck and my family were on the jetty as we came into port”

LCpl John Edwards



A SHORTFALL in Royal Navy chefs has opened up opportunities for deployments with a difference for Army personnel.

Twenty-six Royal Logistic Corps troops have served across the fleet over the past year, including on the Senior Service's future flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth, and the chain of command is now looking for more to volunteer.

The next rotation starts in June, with up to 32 slots available for privates to sergeants.

Secondments are either six or 12 months in length.

Explaining what troops would get out of a stint at sea, WO1 Simon Griffiths (RLC), Command Food Services warrant officer at Army HQ, said: "It's good for their trade skills because travelling all over the world means the chefs have access to a vast amount of different ingredients and can really use their culinary flair."

"Secondments are proving popular among Reservists especially – some have extended for up to three years."

"And for Regulars pushing for promotion it is beneficial to have someone from another Service reporting on them for their appraisal."

Personnel also pay no food or accommodation charges while on-board and receive extra pay for days at sea.

Anyone interested in putting themselves forward for the scheme should contact their regimental careers management officer.



Pictures: Peter Davies

“I spent four days in bed with seasickness to start with but soon felt better. Don't let that put you off, it's massively exciting. You go to places you never would with the Army such as New York. During sea trials they live-streamed the flight deck so you could see the jets landing and taking off. That was a new experience.”

LCpl Alfie Barnett



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FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Aerial adventures

PERSONNEL with a head for heights are being invited to take part in two charity events.

Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings, troops are being given the opportunity to skydive from 10,000 feet and embark on a wing walk on a vintage biplane. Participants in the adventures, which respectively take place at Old Sarum airfield in Salisbury on June 16 and Rendcomb airfield, Gloucestershire, on July 30 must raise cash to help homeless veterans. Visit www.alabare.co.uk for details.

Target funds:
£60,000
For: Alabare

Marathon mayhem

A FORMER gunner will push himself to his physical limits this month by completing five marathons in as many days. Paul Ahmed will run the route of the Great North Run ten times. He will finish the endeavour with a high-intensity phys session. The ex-NCO said: "I served as a PTI during my 18 years with the Royal Artillery although

I have never done anything like this before – but I'm feeling pretty good with my preparation." Log on to

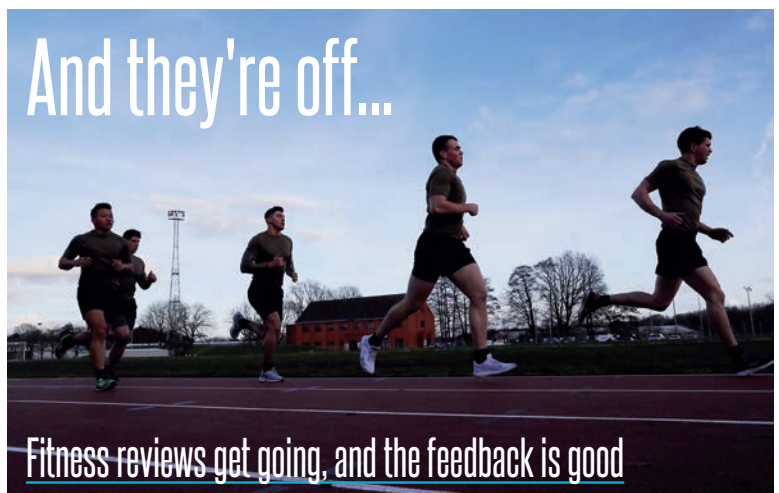
uk.virginmoneygiving.com and search for Paul Ahmed to pledge a donation.



Fundraising target:
£2,000
For: Charlie and Carter Foundation



■ DARING troops completed an impressive run of 1,000 skydives at the Joint Services Parachute spent two weeks honing their skills on their annual training package. Unlike the Red Devils and group. Team member Lt Andrew Swaffield (REME) said the camp had been a huge success. "We



Picture: Graeme Main

“
It's the
way
forward
”

THE first wave of personnel have been put through their paces in the new soldier conditioning review (SCR) – and instructors say they have so far been impressed with how the roll-out has worked.

Permanent staff at Army Training Regiment Winchester were among those to kick off the new regime, which features exercises to check overall fitness levels and flag up areas for improvement.

The six activities – deadlifts, pull-ups, jumps, weighted throws, sprints and a two-kilometre run – replaced the personal fitness assessment across the Army from April 1.

Servicemen and women receive a score of between one and 15 for each movement, enabling areas of weakness to be flagged up and gym plans tailored accordingly.

Speaking during a health fair in Aldershot – where troops had the opportunity to sample some exercises – Royal Army Physical Training Corps instructors said the first SCR session

had worked well.

"We had around 20 section commanders taking part at Winchester and there were no real weak areas identified," said Sgt Lisa Bowen (RAPTC), who works on the base.

"I think the SCR is definitely the way forward – once we had set up everything we needed the session took us about an hour to complete, so running it was not too long at all."

Colleague SSgt Rich Moody, who works in the training and development team at the corps HQ, added that the review offered an opportunity to change a programme if improvement was needed.

"It's important to stress this is not about testing," he said.

FIRST SCR: THE VERDICT

"It's definitely an upgrade on the old system – it took about 30 minutes to get through and it was good to work the whole body."





Pictures: Capt Tom Owen, REME

Wing in Cyprus. Making use of the centre's new Cessna aircraft, the REME Lightning Bolts Army Parachute Display Team Tigers teams, these troops are part-time thrillseekers, with Regular and Reserve personnel from all trades represented in the averaged around 56 jumps each and qualified two new display jumpers while there," he said.

Virtus from day one

THE next generation of infantrymen is being issued with Virtus body armour from their first day in the British Army.

Senior staff at the Service's Equipment Directorate said the kit is being custom-fitted to troops undergoing phase one training.

It is also being made available to junior officers enrolling on the platoon commanders' course at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon, replacing the old Osprey vest.

Maj Michael Green (REME), who is working on the roll-out of the armour, said fitting the equipment when soldiers arrived meant they could get used to it from day one.

A modular system, Virtus is formed around a tactical vest and includes a Bergan, webbing and pouches.

A special spine-like device (pictured below) allows weight to be distributed around the body for comfort and agility.

Personnel in ground close combat roles already have the system, with those in other jobs set to get a scaled down version – Virtus Core – from the end of this year.

Maj Green said: "Although Virtus



Picture: Graeme Main

has the same ballistic plates as Osprey, we are now moving away from the old system – troops are getting the latest kit on the day they join.

"The new equipment is lighter while offering the same protection as before.

"It is also more flexible and allows soldiers to upscale according to the threat level or the particular job they are doing."

The vest comes in different sizes for comfort

Troops can select different pouch line-ups according to role

Its spine enables soldiers to adjust weight from shoulders to hips



INFLATABLE FUN

■ A CALL to arms has been issued for troops to bounce their way across the world's longest inflatable assault course and raise money for military good causes in the process.

Security firm Mitmark is organising the 1,200ft challenge as part of its Big Ten weekend of events at Pippingford Park, East Sussex, on June 8-9.

A £5,000 prize is on offer to the top performer. Visit mitmarkfoundation.com

FORCES CONNECT

■ AN easy-to-use app has been launched to put military families and veterans in touch with vital services.

Forces Connect can be downloaded for free on the iTunes app store and Google Play.

It covers Hampshire, Kent and Medway, Surrey and Sussex, but it is hoped the initiative will be extended to others parts of the UK as more local authorities sign up.

"We are so used to living in a military bubble where many of our problems are solved by the system so this app brings a lot of information into really digestible form," said Col Simon Browne, deputy commander of 11 Infantry Brigade and the senior military representative on the South East project.

"We want veterans, serving soldiers and particularly their families to download it."

The project is also seeing thousands of council, NHS and police workers being trained in supporting veterans.



■ JUNIOR troops and young officers got to quiz the Army's top brass ahead of the annual Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch in London.

The 20-strong cohort were invited to the fundraising event for ABF The Soldiers' Charity by Army Sergeant Major WO1 Gav Paton.

They were told to challenge the two- and three-star generals on the Army executive committee, which is responsible for directing how the Service carries out its plans.

They also discussed the future of Army accommodation with them before sitting down to a meal at the Guildhall with some 1,000 captains of industry.



WIN
a family skydiving experience

THE clues on the spine of last month's magazine would have been recognised by anyone who read about the exploits of Army gunners on Salisbury Plain.

(Pte George) Mason, (Pte Craig) May, (Lt Sophie) Nicholls and (Gnr Beth) Wood were all interviewed in our article, *Eye of the Storm*.

This month we have teamed up with iFly (www.iflyworld.co.uk) to offer one lucky reader an indoor skydiving experience for a family of five (ten flights in total).

Suspended in a column of air that simulates the exhilarating feeling of freefall, this adrenalin-fuelled prize can be redeemed at any of the iFly facilities in Manchester, Milton Keynes or Basingstoke.

To be in with a chance of winning tell us what links the words on the side of this magazine. Answers – including a daytime telephone number – to the usual postal address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by May 31.



VICTORIA CROSS DISPLAY

■ A PRIZED collection of 16 Victoria Crosses have gone on display at the Highlanders Museum, Fort George as part of the organisation's 250th anniversary.

Replicas are normally shown but the real medals, which date back to 1857, were rolled out along with a special exhibition telling the stories of their recipients.



Signals of success on global ops

■ HIGH-READINESS troops have been getting back to basics with a training package focused on bread-and-butter soldiering skills. Members of Colchester-based 216 (Parachute) Signal Squadron were put through a refresher of their core business during the week-long Exercise Mercury Dagger on the Stanford Training Area in Norfolk. The serials they faced included treating mock casualties at the scene of a helicopter crash (shown above). The package was designed to rehearse troops for their role with the Air Assault Task Force, which can mobilise quickly for worldwide ops.



Picture: Cpl Jamie Hart, RLC

Army reclaims air defence role

RESPONSIBILITY for protecting UK-controlled skies from hostile forces has fallen under Army command from the Royal Air Force.

The move, which saw Joint Ground Based Air Defence renamed as 7th Air Defence Group, was marked at a ceremony in Upavon attended by military top brass and VIPs.

The transfer comes amid kit changes that will boost Service capability.

The new Sky Sabre missile system (shown) is due to replace its Rapier predecessor this year, while a decade-long programme to modernise weapons and radar systems is also under way.



The renamed outfit is relocating from the RAF HQ at High Wycombe to Thorney Island, where Royal Artillery air defence batteries are based.

Commander of 7 Group, Col Giles Malec, said: "We are still working with air force colleagues in the same way as before, but we very much want to grow future capability – this is what our programme is about."

The change of command is also historically significant for the Army as it was the Service's batteries that originally protected British airspace from German attack in the Second World War.

Units are forcing soldiers to use issued kit

Rumble in the ranks

TALKBACK
PAGE 55

CHECK out the Resilience Sessions – a new series by charity Blesma which sees ex-Service personnel chat to celebrities about battling adversity.

The shows focus on troops who have overcome devastating injuries while well-known personalities, including actor Ray Winstone and athlete Tanni-Grey Thompson, share their own experiences of difficult times.

The series was co-founded by Si Harmer – who lost both legs during an IED strike while serving with the Army in Afghanistan – and is available on all major platforms now.

Need a new podcast?

Picture: Shutterstock



Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...

Tweet Gav @ArmySgtMajor

THIS month I have mostly spent my time stuffed into the cheapest economy seats to Jordan and the Netherlands.

I had opportunities to discuss NCO training and development at large seminars in both countries, which proved useful.

The professional network is growing. I have now met with army sergeant majors from a number of countries, including New Zealand, Saudi Arabia and Sweden.

I've taken plenty away and have some food for thought.

It is important not to underestimate the reputation of the British Army non-commissioned officer – we are truly the envy of the world.

We are known as professional, trusted and resourceful – in short, we know how to bodge stuff.

Our soldiers deserve outstanding leadership; if you are an NCO or a warrant officer like me, we all have a part to play.

Enjoy the challenge, because rank is an opportunity to do more for our people.

And if you have ideas on how we can develop, join the hordes chatting to me on email, phone and Twitter. I welcome this

and now understand why I have one mouth and two ears.

On the subject of reputation, you will have seen recent stories in the press that paint us, as soldiers, in a bad light.

These allegations are harmful, degrade the opinion people have of us in the civilian world and cause unwanted stress to all involved.

Our standing has not all been forged through courage and tactical excellence – it has also been achieved through humility and integrity.

The public look up to us and see us as a force for good.

So we must fight hard to retain and uphold this hard-earned reputation.

We must trust each other to do the right thing on a difficult day. And commanders need to lead – it's what our soldiers want and deserve.

Please don't take this as a moan, it's not. But while there are so many good things happening each day, very little of this makes the news.

We now need to listen to CGS and understand why we must have a higher standard of behaviour than civilians.

Every day you put on your uniform, be proud and remember those who fought before us.



Picture: Freepik

“
We are truly the envy of the world
”

Beef over breakfast

I HELD my first soldiers' breakfast in Army HQ last month.

The aim was to demonstrate what a healthy start to the day looks like, have an informal discussion, generate ideas and generally allow anyone to ask me questions and hold me to account.

Some 50 soldiers from 3rd (UK) Division joined me, all corporals and below, and they were very engaging.

We spoke for hours with great ideas aired and some points for me

to work on.

I also received many questions from the group via Twitter and email, which is great.

There were rumours of some of the soldiers being seen in a well-known burger chain later that morning but I don't believe it!

The next breakfast will be in **Catterick** on **May 17**.

I look forward to seeing a new group for top food and good discussion. Bring your best questions and ideas and don't be shy.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What are your **favourite** and **most hated** TV shows?

A I'm quite partial to the *Great British Bake Off* but really can't stand *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Something's cooking...

■ TALKING of scoff, we've had some progress with cooking in the block this month (page 11). The planned rule change demonstrates that the senior officers do listen and genuinely want the very best for us. This is great news and I applaud you all for complaining properly and not just wasting time by whinging.





THE BIG PICTURE

Tower of London, UK

Winter is here

TOURISTS expecting the changing of the guard ceremony at the Tower of London were treated to a surprise *Game of Thrones*-themed display by characters from the programme's "Night's Watch" and the Band of the Coldstream Guards. Cast members marched alongside the musicians to the show's signature tune before putting on a dramatic sword performance. The spectacle was arranged by the Army and Sky Atlantic to mark the series' much-anticipated return for an eighth season.

Picture: Jack Eckersley, MoD

RIFT

Forces Friendly

"No hassle involved. Forces friendly. Good with keeping you updated."



by Stephen, MOD

January 2019

Absolutely brilliant!

"Absolutely brilliant team. Made a process that HMRC make difficult very simple. Will be using them in the future."



by Mary, MOD

March 2019

'ATTENTION'

Claimed before?

Reduced fee of
25% when you
claim again.*

**Our promise to
those we serve.**

ABF

THE SOLDIERS'

CHARITY

The Army's National Charity

TRUSTPILOT



March 2019

RIFTrefunds.co.uk/soldier

Call us on **01233 653004**

Busting **Refund** **Myths** with RIFT



There's a lot of bad information floating around the MOD tax world. RIFT's teams of refund specialists are setting the record straight.

Here are some of the most common myths we encounter:

✗ You're better off going DIY.

Without an expert's eye, you're missing out. 89% of customers report getting back more with RIFT. We also protect against HMRC enquires, keeping you and your money safe.

✗ HMRC will change my tax code. I'll end up paying more.

Your Personal Tax Specialist checks your tax code is correct with HMRC once your refund is complete. We send you confirmation of your tax code by email that you can keep and check against your payslip. If your take-home pay changes unexpectedly let us know and we'll contact HMRC to see if they have made any change to your code, get it corrected if needed, and send you an update.

✗ Tax refunds are about cheating HMRC.

Unethical advisers sometimes over-inflate claims, which is dangerous. Stick to the real experts. RIFT will never claim for anything you're not owed.

Other top myths include:

✗ You can't claim if you get GYH or HTD: FALSE!

✗ You can only claim once: FALSE!

64% of people say not understanding the tax rules is why they miss out. Talk to RIFT today to get back what's yours.

With a 5-star Trust Pilot rating, we're the UK's leading tax experts. Have a look at what our MOD customers are saying, or visit the Trust Pilot website to see more reviews.

Get Started Now

Claiming with RIFT means:

✓ **No charge to find out what you're owed.**

✓ **No up-front charges.**

✓ **No refund, no fee.**



RIFTrefunds.co.uk/soldier

Call us on **01233 653004**

NEED TO

SKILLS & DRILLS / 7 QUESTIONS / CASH / HEALTH / NUTRITION / KITBAG / FITNESS

Stepping up

Perfect preparation can give you
a head start towards gaining
your first stripe



► IT is a tough experience for even the most hardened soldier – but passing through the junior NCO cadre is an essential rite of passage for those aspiring to Army leadership roles.

Anyone vying for promotion can expect to be tested physically and mentally as their potential is assessed over several weeks – many fail to make the grade along the way.

But there are steps you can take before and during the demanding assessment process to maximise your chance of success.

We asked experienced leader and extreme sports athlete WO2 Mark Holloway (Rifles) – who helped run a recent cadre for infanteers – for some top tips:



3 Accept hardship

Get comfortable with being uncomfortable. There are times when you will be cold, wet, hungry and sleep deprived. It is not glamorous but these experiences are part and parcel of our job. If you are well prepared you are going to be more resilient.



4 Look after yourself

Accept that injury can happen to anyone. My advice is that you do not suffer in silence – you might get through the cadre but you could do yourself long-term damage. This could ultimately end up having a catastrophic effect on your career.



5 Keep your chin up

Don't be too disheartened if you fail to get through. There is a saying that you learn more from a loss than a win. Apply those lessons to your soldiering. Look at what you have done on the cadre from a positive perspective.



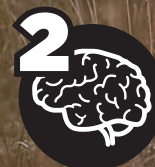
6 Play the long game

Remember that the experience is not just about creating lance corporals – it's about a new generation of leaders. There is almost certainly a future company sergeant major or regimental sergeant major in each cohort. It could be you.



1 Prior planning

Make sure you understand the demands you face well in advance so that you arrive in the best physical shape. If you start your preparations too late then you are not going to meet the standards. Fitness must be a constant part of your life – aside from the cadre it is going to make your day job easier.



2 Focus your mind

Adopt a patient, positive and persistent mindset. You cannot be half-hearted in this challenge – passing is something you must really want to achieve. On our latest course we had 32 failures, many of them because people were not mentally robust enough. You have to hate losing more than you love winning.



FACT FILE: WO2 MARK HOLLOWAY

Unit: 5th Battalion,
The Rifles

Age: 34

Profile: A soldier for

19 years, the senior NCO completed tours of Northern Ireland, Iraq and three of Afghanistan. During Op Herrick 15 in

2011 he sustained a serious injury to his right arm and, as part of his rehab, started competing in extreme Tough Mudder events.

“Always listen to your NCOs”

We grill the Army’s director of leadership on what the top brass are getting right – and wrong

► Maj Gen Paul Nanson heads up the Centre for Army Leadership and is Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

Soldier asked him about where the Service is headed and the dos and don’ts of command.



FACT FILE:
MAJ GEN PAUL
NANSON

Age: 53

Cap badge: Late Royal
Regiment of Fusiliers

Years of service:
1984–present

Operational experience:
Includes Northern
Ireland, the Gulf, Bosnia,
Iraq, Afghanistan

1. What are the biggest challenges facing Army leaders today?

Leading through change. Change is a constant, absolutely, but its rate and pace now is putting additional pressure on our leadership – at every level – and that’s something we need to adapt to.

2. What kind of leadership culture do you want to foster?

The foundations of how we inspire our people will endure but I think that will evolve into a more agile style of leadership. Traditionally it’s been quite hierarchical in the Army but in the future I believe we’ll have a better understanding of how we create networks of leaders to deal with the complex problems we’re facing. Keeping track of what’s going on at the coalface is also key.

3. Do those at the top know what’s going on at the bottom?

Not always but we try very hard. In an organisation of this size it’s quite difficult to reach down to the front end. We rely on the chain of command and we run surveys, but we also have online forums where people can discuss issues and their feedback is collated. Sometimes we haven’t translated what’s going on at the top down to the bottom properly either, and we’re working hard on that as well.

4. What does the Army do well then?

People criticise the Army in many ways but I think sometimes we beat ourselves up a little bit too much – we’re better than we think. One of the things we do really well is develop junior commanders – especially on operations. They do exceptional things

that most organisations could only dream of. Hierarchy actually has its strengths. The regimental system is a recognised structure that people understand and that brings a cohesion of its own. Our young soldiers buy into a powerful team and understand the need to react to the man or woman next to them; to rely on them totally.

5. What makes a bad leader?

Someone who doesn't listen to his people. As a young officer I was taught that you pay attention to your platoon sergeant and section commanders because they've been in longer and have more wisdom than you. I've always stuck by that mantra.

6. What is the toughest leadership challenge you've faced?

One of the hardest things I've done was in Batus, when I was commanding the battlegroup and we had a really bad mission – we failed. We'd been out on the ground for four weeks, we were tired, the weather was poor, everyone was on a bit of a low and I remember standing in front of them and thinking 'this is tough', but it wasn't all about me. Sometimes you have to pull something out of somewhere to motivate people and get their morale back.

7. Who are your own leadership role models?

I'm lucky – I've had lots of inspiring role models in my time. I joined the Territorial Army initially and if it wasn't for my first company commander I probably wouldn't be where I am today. I'm a massive fan of Fd Marshal Slim too. His book, *Defeat to Victory*, is one that I hold very close. I refer to it a lot.

● Got something to say?

Visit the following forums on Twitter to give your views:

@WavellRoom
@BrAIN_Army

Marriage allowance

Are you missing out?

▶ **FANCY** getting your hands on hundreds more pounds?

If you've tied the knot, but never heard of marriage allowance, then perhaps you could.

According to HMRC, 700,000 UK couples still aren't claiming this free tax break even though they are entitled to it.

Introduced four years ago, it is designed to save them up to £250 a year by allowing the lower earner to transfer some of their personal allowance (the amount you can earn before getting clobbered for tax) to their better (paid) half.

So if you bring home less than £12,500 a year, you can transfer up to £1,250 of this over and reduce the overall tax you both pay.

And if you backdate your claim, you could be in line for a lump sum of several hundred pounds – a pretty sweet start to the summer, by anyone's reckoning.

The final piece of good news is that you only have to apply once.

Unless your circumstances change, the same arrangement is carried over year after year.

Service personnel can also relax about being abroad and receiving a pension – neither will usually affect a claim.

CHECKLIST

To be eligible you must:

- ✦ be married or in a civil partnership
- ✦ have one of you earning **below £12,500**, and the other **between £12,501 and £50,000** (£43,430 in Scotland)

Need advice?

If you have a National Insurance number you can apply for marriage allowance on the **gov.uk** website. The person with the lowest income should make the claim.

Otherwise call HMRC for advice on

0300 200 3300

Expert view



"Even when couples learn about the marriage allowance and make a claim, they often don't realise **they are allowed to backdate it for up to four years**. And while the tax saving for **this year is only up to £250**, the total when combining it with **every year back to 2015 is up to £1,150!**

But you will need to assess your eligibility separately for each year. And remember, this tax break is only available to married spouses and civil partners."

Nadia Hossen Mamode, military wife and founder of Bee Accountancy, which specialises in supporting Armed Forces personnel
<https://beeaccountancy.co.uk>

Don't become a dental casualty

How to avoid going man-down with tooth problems

► POOR oral health is no laughing matter. At best it could leave you with bad breath (yuck).

At worst it can cause toothache, gum disease, abscesses and infections, which in turn could lead to difficulty eating as well as sleepless nights.

If that happens while you're

deployed it can impact the operational effectiveness of your whole unit and may require medical evacuation in tricky situations, risking lives in the process.

So looking after your pearly whites is vital. Army dentist Maj Sarah Armstrong (RADC) has these top tips for tooth care...

Brush twice a day

+ Clean your teeth last thing at night and on at least one other occasion with a fluoride toothpaste

Spit, don't rinse

+ After brushing your teeth, spit out the toothpaste but don't rinse your mouth with water. This ensures the fluoride in the toothpaste remains on the teeth and continues to be effective later on

Cut down on sugar

+ Reduce the amount of sugary food and drink you consume, and how often you have them. Quick wins include swapping sugar in brews for sugar-free sweetener, switching fizzy drinks for water or milk and avoiding snacking between meals

Get regular dental check-ups

+ Visit your dentist as often as they recommend. The time between appointments can vary from three months to two years, depending on how healthy your teeth and gums are and your risk of future problems

Sort any problems before you deploy

+ Ensure you complete all required treatment before you deploy to minimise your risk of a dental emergency. Personnel who fail to do so are 50 per cent more likely to experience issues than those who get the all clear beforehand

Did you know?

The most common dental problems experienced on operations are caused by fractured teeth or fillings, followed by dental abscesses and wisdom teeth infections.

Ouch!

26,000

– the number of dental emergencies among Service personnel every year

PIZZA PITFALLS

Domino's medium
Texas BBQ pizza
(classic crust)

- **1,560**
+ 500ml Coke
- **210**

= 1,770 cal

CHEEKY BURGER

Big King XL - **1,010**

+ super fries - **470**

+ strawberry milkshake - **430**

= 1,910 cal



READY MEAL MUNCHIES

Tesco beef lasagne 800g

- **1,236**

+ raspberry cheesecake

- **328** per slice

+ Tropicana orange
juice - **126**

= 1,690 cal

CALORIE *culprits*

It's depressingly easy to
blow your daily allowance
almost in one go...

► TWO-AND-A-HALF thousand calories a day. It sounds like a lot, right? Not necessarily.

The food industry might be starting to act on nutritional content with improved labelling and reduced sugar, but it can still be easy to exceed your daily intake without thinking.

And those post-pub snacks seem to be the ones to look out for. The above meals might be easy to gobble down when willpower is low, but make a habit of it and your waistline will soon suffer.

Cold comfort

How the Army gunship stacks up in punishing climates

► WHEN Army Air Corps crews showed Apache's mettle in temperatures of nearly -30 degrees Celsius this year, it placed huge demands on the aircraft.

But commanders say vital lessons were learnt on Exercise Clockwork in Norway – the platform's first Arctic outing.

"It was designed to operate in the western European environment but, having used it in extremes of temperatures, it proved to have capability across the board," said Brig Mike Keating, deputy commander and head of ops at Joint Helicopter Command.

He lists a few of the pressures on icy helicopter missions...

Aerodynamic dramas

The hot climate in Afghanistan presented challenges in this area but the cold also makes Apache behave differently. You can have issues with both the rotors and engines when the temperatures are below freezing.

Icing

This can be a serious hazard, particularly if there is significant moisture in the air. If you have ice across the aircraft, its performance and sensors can be affected. In an operational situation Apache would be de-iced before taking off – systems on the platform then help crews to manage the situation in flight.

Human performance

Mother nature is far more powerful than mankind, and very low temperatures have a major impact on the way we operate. Life in Norway was particularly testing for our ground crew and engineers – the chill of a downdraft can see temperatures drop very seriously. Troops were essentially living in snow holes, getting out to refuel the aircraft when needed. But this training has proven hugely valuable.

General ops

We had to get our heads around a cocktail of other challenges too. The underlying issue is that everything takes longer in the extreme cold – from the crews getting ready for work and preparing the helicopter for flight to getting airborne. The fact is that no part of this platform works in isolation – it's a team effort.

Weaponry

Apache has a range of ordnance on-board, including sophisticated Hellfire missiles. We've had to be creative with how we manage these in extreme conditions because they are designed to operate in a certain temperature range. In the heat of Afghanistan, we had to keep them refrigerated, while in the Arctic we had to keep them warm.

Superhuman strength

Is it a myth, or can anyone summon up their inner-Hercules in times of extreme stress?

► WE'VE all read the online stories – staring certain death in the face, someone lifts a vehicle off a trapped cyclist or fights off a bear using only their hands.

And tales from combat zones are proof that soldiers need no introduction to the physical boost a big fat shot of adrenalin can provide.

But do these acts of hysterical strength – as the phenomenon is known – exist? Is it really possible to achieve the seemingly impossible when faced with a horrifying situation?

Jonathan Folland, a professor at Loughborough University's National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, is sceptical.

"I think there's a lot of anecdote and myth," he tells *Soldier*. "And reports are based on extreme situations, which makes it difficult to study because obviously you can't put someone in a life-threatening situation to experiment."

Folland goes on to explain that although a number of factors influence human strength, one thing stands above all others.

"The idea that bigger muscles make you stronger is broadly true," he continues.

"The suggestion [with hysterical strength] is that extreme pressures lead people to activate their muscles beyond the level they normally can.

"But what we know about the science of strength would suggest most young, healthy people can activate their muscles pretty well anyway, maybe at a capacity of 80 or 90 per cent.


"So whether it's a huge shot of adrenalin or something else, the evidence shows that reserve capacity is relatively small. Not non-existent, but small."

For now, it seems such events are confined to the world of internet legend. So if you're relying on an act of hysterical strength to improve your standing in your next PT session, it might be time to think again.

“Most healthy people can activate their muscles pretty well anyway”



A STATE OF MIND



Mental resilience helps soldiers conquer physical extremes to earn the green beret

THE spring sunshine offers welcome warmth to the ramblers plotting their course through the wilds of Dartmoor. But the

unpredictable seasonal weather soon comes to the fore as driving hail, interspersed with snow, replaces the clear and tranquil skies to lash at those out on the ground.

While the casual walkers have the option of heading for the comforts of home, such respite is not being considered by the determined personnel striding across the national park's unforgiving terrain.

These soldiers are in the midst of the punishing "30 miler" – their final test on the all-arms commando course – and with the coveted green beret forming the prize for completion, they press on regardless.

As well as their rifles, the troops are carrying kit weighing a minimum of 9.6kg and having been set a time limit of eight hours, the pace is relentless.

Reaching the finish line will mark the culmination of a 13-week programme that will prepare them for service alongside the Royal Marines in 3 Commando Brigade.

The bar is set high, but it has to be.

The Army contingent are in the early stages of their careers with either 29 Commando Royal Artillery, 24 Commando Royal Engineers or the Commando Logistic Regiment.

These units offer specialist skills that will be required in climates ranging from the heat and humidity of the Belizean jungle to the sub-zero temperatures of northern Norway – where they will operate alongside marines at the sharp end.

The course has an emphasis on fitness and stamina but also hones the soldiers' fieldcraft, navigation and marksmanship skills, while offering amphibious and vertical assault training. ➔

“
It's about
taking them
to a place
they've
never been
”

Words: Richard Long Pictures: Peter Davies

→ “These guys are not necessarily from the Infantry so we need to build a level of understanding,” Lt Col Oli Coryton (RM), CO of the Commando Training Wing, tells *Soldier* as the personnel take on much-needed fuel at one of several checkpoints scattered across Dartmoor.

“They have to be physically robust as well as mentally resilient and we really nurture that.

“With a course this challenging we need them to drive each other on and keep going. It is about taking them, in a measured and deliberate way, to a place they’ve never been.

“Ninety per cent of this is in the mind and we want to show them they can go far beyond anything they have done before. That’s when they will have that supreme confidence that will ultimately win the fight.

“Whether they are a gunner, engineer or logistician, after completing the course they will understand the demands of front-line commando operations and will be far better equipped to take their rightful place in the team – regardless of cap badge or branch of Service.

“They are critical to what we do; we are a joint force and rely on the skill sets that everyone brings.”

Participants arrive on day one on the back of a month-long preparation course at their respective units, and the training is then delivered in three phases before concluding with four commando tests in four days (see panel).

“It is physically and mentally demanding but they come prepared,” Lt Col Coryton adds.

“We will coach them through the process and are not here to break anyone – it is about building them to meet the standard and we have the very best instructors here to do that.

“It is absolutely achievable.

“Injuries take their toll, but as long as they don’t give up we will teach them the skills they require and mentor them to be the best they can be.”

As an organisation, 3 Commando Brigade is reliant on soldiers signing up for the course and ultimately passing, so the push for volunteers is as high as ever.

The latest intake offered a welcome boost to the ranks as 40 personnel collected their green berets before learning



where their future postings lie.

Gnr Owen Ziolkowski (RA, pictured below) is set to join the fire support teams of 7 Battery in Arbroath, where the Gunners work alongside their counterparts from 45 Commando.

Completing the course represented a memorable moment for the 20-year-old, who withdrew from Royal Marines training three years earlier.

“I just felt I was way too young,” he explains. “But as soon as I started phase one training I knew I wanted to do this.

“Reaching the end was an immense feeling. It’s just everything the green beret represents and I’m part of that fraternity now.

“Every day is a test and you’re



COMMANDO COURSE IN NUMBERS:

13
weeks in length

17
years since
the course
was opened to
Servicewomen,
many of
who have
completed it

THREE
courses staged
each year

80
places available
in each intake

70
per cent pass rate

16
minimum combined
weight, in kilograms,
of fighting order
and weaponry that
must be carried for
all tests



always doubting yourself.

"The 30 miler was absolute rats. The first two checkpoints were the worst as we started at such a fast pace. It is so tough because you know you still have another 25 miles left.

"But you eventually get into a rhythm. Over the last three miles I kept checking my watch to see how far we had to go but I knew what was waiting for me at the end and that spurred me on."

After being selected as OC of the Logistic Support Squadron, Maj Clive Allford (RLC, pictured below) was an obvious candidate for the course and at 40 years of age he was the oldest member of the intake.

"It's been hard," he says. "There are moments when you really start to question yourself.

"That might be the night before a big test or when you have not quite made it to the top of a 30-foot rope.

"You wonder if you have the drive to get it done but

I have achieved what I set out to do.

"It is an opportunity to get back to the soldiering element we all join up for and it's great to be part of such a good bunch of lads. We've all had our moments during the course but the team has rallied round and that really helps.

"In the Army there's always a new challenge waiting and I have a squadron of 80 guys to go away and command."

With the course complete the successful candidates are now starting a new chapter in their military careers, where their high readiness role will see them specialise in commando operations as well as mountain, desert, jungle and arctic warfare.

The journey may have been long and arduous but the honour of wearing the green beret, and the opportunities it presents, has made it worthwhile. ■



TESTING TIMES

After being immersed in the world of the Royal Marines for more than 12 weeks, Army personnel must complete four commando tests to earn the green beret:

1

THE ENDURANCE COURSE

– an individually timed best effort through a cross-country course featuring tunnels and the infamous sheep dip, while carrying kit and a weapon. Personnel then run back to camp and must achieve six out of ten shots on a target at 100m on the ranges, covering seven miles in less than 73min.

2

A NINE-MILE SPEED MARCH

hauling 9.6kg in kit and a weapon in 90min.

3

TARZAN OBSTACLE COURSE

– a combined high-obstacle and assault course, which must be completed within 13min while carrying fighting order and weapon.

4

A FINAL 30-MILE CROSS-COUNTRY ROUTE MARCH


over Dartmoor with equipment weighing 9.6kg and a weapon, within eight hours.

YOUR FACE

So you've passed the all-arms commando course.
What now? For gunners it could mean a stint with
the Army's naval gunfire specialists...



HERE



“I was sick of hearing about what was going on, rather than doing it”

UP ON Cape Wrath, the North Atlantic thunders against the headland.

It is an elemental show of force that provides the backdrop for a different kind of onslaught – the largest live-firing manoeuvre in Western Europe.

Every spring, this remote corner of Scotland rings to the sounds of heavy ordnance unleashed on its craggy shores by a multinational fleet during Exercise Joint Warrior.

The scale of the undertaking is impressive to say the least.

Some 40 ships and submarines – as well as nearly 60 aircraft from 13 nations – were involved in this year's training, which is staged along the entire west coast of Scotland and as far south as the Isle of Man.

A small but vital cog in this vast machine is 148 Commando Forward Observation Battery – part of 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery and the Army's only naval gunfire support specialists. They are called upon to coordinate the complex range package at Cape Wrath.

With the warships alone letting off more than 500 salvos during the two-week serial, their expertise is crucial to the safety of the airspace, as well as to certify the skills of helicopter and fighter jet pilots, and naval crews alike.

But the process also gives the unit's personnel the opportunity to practise some of their own core disciplines.

“This is the only place we can do artillery, mortars, close air and naval gunfire support in the same place, which makes it unique and valuable for us,” explained Cpl Justin Hunt.

The 25-year-old is one of four Royal Marines in the battery, which – unusually – also includes six Royal Navy ratings in its number.

Describing some of the challenges of coordinating fire in a maritime setting, he added: “When you're dealing with regular artillery you have a fixed location for the guns and a set target line, which makes it easier to deconflict your airspace.”

Pictures: Graeme Main
Words: Becky Clark

➔ But when you've got a moving ship in the sea, and multiple assets, everything is more kinetic and you have to keep on top of it.

"It's also difficult finding a reference point when there's just cliffs and sea.

"We were encountering this when we were trying to do talk-ons – that's the process you go through with the pilot of an aircraft to ensure you're both looking at the same target before you tell him he can engage it.

"Because you have so little to go off, you have to revert to other methods like bearings and distance."

But while the chance to hone such an important skill was welcome, for these troops fire support is just one part of the day job within 3 Commando Brigade.

The battery's remit to provide surveillance and target acquisition requires soldiers to master a variety of high-adrenalin insertion methods, from fast-roping to parachuting and boating. And Joint Warrior presented an opportunity to practise the latter.

Seizing on an interlude of relatively calm weather in between storm force gales, they took to the choppy seas in their inflatable crafts.

LBdr Daniel Cribb (RA) explained how a tactical beach landing could play out for real.

"You'll have aerial photos and have done a serious map recce beforehand, or possibly sent a pre-force out," said the 24-year-old.

"Then you'll come in by boat and secure the beach, moving off team by team to carry out a recce and make sure it's safe.

"And then you set up an observation post that gives you the best view of the target but where you can't be seen.

"Normally, you put it in the most hideous place you can find because if you don't want to go there, you know the enemy won't want to approach from there either."

Despite the obvious discomfort of lying concealed in a wet ditch for days on end, LBdr Cribb said it was exactly the kind of task that had attracted him to transfer to the battery from elsewhere in 29 Commando.



"I'd be on exercise, sat in a Pinzgauer on the comms, and I was sick of just hearing about what was going on rather than seeing it or doing it," he added.

"It's really varied here – you're always going to new places and working with different kit and well qualified people."

According to Capt Danny Cousland (RA, pictured below), adaptability and determination are crucial to carving out a successful career in a fast-paced unit like this one.

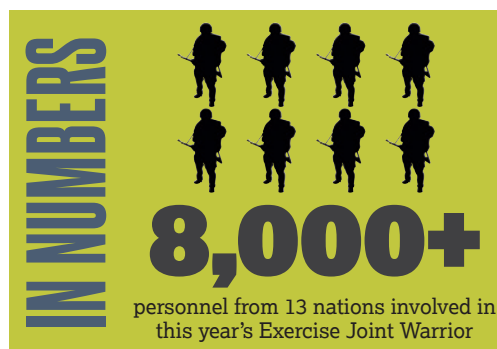
A former NCO, the 27-year-old left the battery to attend the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst – where he was awarded the Sword of Honour

upon passing out – before returning last month as a fire support team commander.

He said the responsibility placed on relatively junior ranks can be huge.

"So much is required of a 148 Battery soldier," he explained.

"Even as lance bombardier, the first level of official command,





On board: Guided-missile destroyer USS *Carney* transits the North Sea during exercise Joint Warrior
Picture: MC Fred Gray, US Navy

you're expected to be a competent coxswain, a competent practitioner of naval gunfire and all manner of artillery joint fires. You must also understand recce at a deep level and manage a team effectively in the field.

"So tactics, technical ability and initiative are all important and that means you work with very self-motivated individuals."

In a reflection of the calibre among the battery's ranks, it is not unusual for members to leave to seek a commission – like Capt Cousland – or join elite units.

Those who stay put can expect multiple foreign exercises every year, and what little time remains is often spent keeping up to date with the required qualifications.

Battery commander Maj Baz Barrett (RA) conceded that the cost of such a varied job is time away from home.

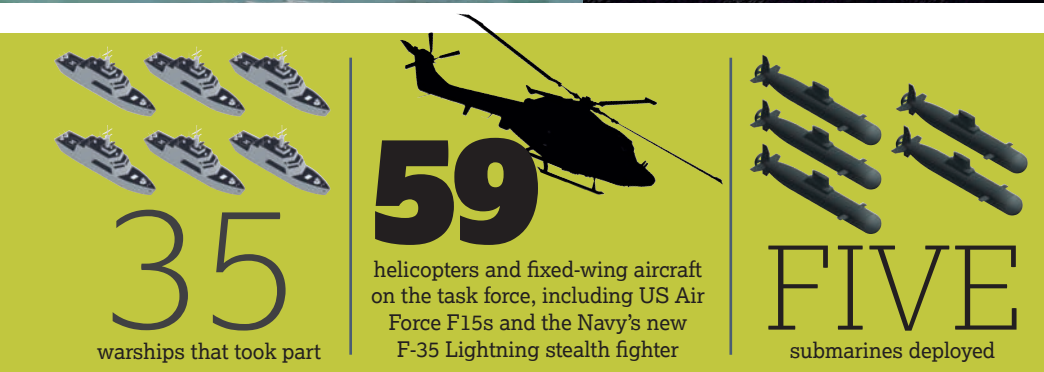
But in a positive step, he reported that a recent salary review had seen those qualified as recce operators and naval gunfire assistants moved from pay supplement two to three.

"Money doesn't drive everything but it aids recruitment and retention," he said.

"It depends on the courses individuals have done but there is a decent financial bonus, especially if you combine it with the extra para pay that the fire support teams get.

"Ultimately we want to recruit thinking, intelligent people who can bring something to the organisation and wish to stay on and go through a career path here."

Read on to find out what troops make of life with 148 Battery... ➔



Joined up: Working closely with 148 Battery were members of the US Marine Corps Forces Reserve 4th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company and the Netherlands Marine Corps



A PARTICULAR SET OF SKILLS

PARACHUTING into water; fast-roping from helicopters; inserting via Ski-Doo to deep inside the Arctic Circle – all in a day's work for 148 Battery.

But it doesn't stop there. Imagine skimming over the sea in a tiny inflatable craft as a submarine surfaces directly underneath you.



This niche skill is something the unit rehearses to allow them to rendezvous with, and board, them mid-voyage, before potentially hitching a ride to a secret location and deploying on a mission.

One of the formation's newer roles is also to bolster the Submarine Parachute Assistance Group, a team of specialists who would come to the aid of a damaged or sunken sub.

It's fair to say life is rarely dull for these soldiers.

Here, four of them reveal what gives them the biggest kick...



I enjoy the recce side of the job because I'm into photography and I like getting the cameras out. **It's definitely one of the more interesting units to be in**, also because it's not just Army lads – we have Royal Navy and Marines as well, so you get a wider understanding of the military. **There's good banter**. Everyone hates everyone else, but it's playful.

LBdr Mac McCulloch



For me it's parachuting.

A few years back in Norway we jumped onto a frozen lake. When I joined the military I never expected to be jumping out of a plane with a load of recce guys and inserting into an observation post. It's a massive rush.

Sgt Andy Smith

Some of the trips we do are amazing. We were doing man-overboard drills on a river in North Carolina and later discovered that in the same place a six-foot 'gater had munched someone's husky.

Bdr Craig Fernando

Pushing a boat out of a plane at 2,000 feet and following it out is one of the scariest but best things I've ever done.

I enjoy the various job roles – like now we're doing naval gunfire but on the last job I was in Sennybridge in an observation post. There was a public rally going on and a kid was stood watching with no idea that seven blokes were lying right next to him. One of the lads had a sheep walk over him.

LBdr Daniel Cribb



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MEGABYTE MISSIONS



Technology is revolutionising the business of being a soldier

Report: Steven Muncney

THE British Army may not be involved in combat operations at the moment, but it is investing more time, expertise and resources into innovation and cutting-edge technology than at just about any time since the Second World War.

Why? Because the digital world has become a virtual front line where, down the line, there is huge potential for wars to be won or lost before a trigger is even pulled.

The leading players, including the UK, know they cannot afford to be left behind by their rivals.

And as we reported on page 11 of the April issue, the MoD is pouring £66 million into the development of mini-drones and robotic fighting and resupply vehicles.

Around 70 of these systems were tested during Autonomous Warrior last year, the largest military robot exercise in British history.

The Army's top brass now expect some of these platforms to be in the hands of British soldiers soon – potentially in a matter of months.

Meanwhile, the MoD has announced a £30 million pot to fund digital apps for the battlefield.

The ambition is that troops on the ground will have access to software that can process mission information and provide tools to support quicker decision making and improve command and control.

One piece of kit that does this job is being evaluated by the Infantry Trials and Development Unit (ITDU) this year.

We caught up with team as they put the dismounted situational awareness (DSA) tool through its paces on Salisbury Plain (**page 44**).

Infantry troops who used the smartphone app said

the advantages on offer were astounding.

"We have reached a defining moment," Lt Col Toby Lyle (RL), head of the DSA development team at ITDU told *Soldier*.

"As civilians we never thought we needed all the things our smartphones now provide us with, whether it's looking at railway timetables or navigating our way to meet a friend in a pub.

"But the fact is they have radically changed our lives, and something similar is now happening for dismounted soldiers.

"Our next phase will be looking at what other things this technology can do for us.

"Delivering any equipment to the Field Army is really complicated, so we have to be very deliberate about how we develop it."

The same can be said of another piece of kit being put through its paces by the Training Capability Directorate, which could end up shaking established procedures to the core.

A virtual reality system designed to supplement – not replace – live exercises is being assessed by armoured infantry troops (**page 42**).

And feedback from personnel reveals it could be a great way to quickly and cheaply get an appreciation for numerous combat scenarios, including some that would be almost impossible to recreate in the real world.

With the chances of a physical accident reduced to almost zero, and the potential to practise over and over again, the benefits – for new and inexperienced soldiers in particular – could be huge.

Both systems are a long way from being issued to troops, but the promising results from early tests suggest the Army's ambition to embrace state-of-the-art technology is more than justified.



FUTU

Virtual reality training exercises are a step closer, thanks to a new Army project

ROW upon row of soldiers sit at computer terminals, their heads and faces encased in wired-up black goggles.

They twitch, jerk and shout out random expletives and commands.

It looks like a gruesome scene from an episode of *Doctor Who*, but these man-machine mutants are actually carrying out one of the British Army's most important new initiatives, the Virtual Reality in Land Training (VRLT) pilot.

We are in a hangar in Warminster, where personnel are exploring how this type of technology can complement existing training programmes.

Armoured infantry troops from 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment are pursuing an enemy on the run using their Warrior fighting vehicles, with staff from the Armour Centre sitting at another set of tables operating simulated Challenger tanks.

The view inside the headsets replicates the platforms' interiors down to the finest detail, as well as their precise position on the virtual battlefield.

Foot pedals and steering wheels

are in place at each station to enable the personnel to "drive" their vehicles, while keyboards are used to execute a range of other basic commands.

"Everything is exactly where it is in a real Warrior," says Pte Ben Cornforth (Yorks, pictured right). "Even the periscopes are in the proper position and you can look through them; that's impressive."

The troops are being presented with multiple threats, such as near-peer enemies in armoured vehicles, sudden crossfires and buildings occupied by hostile forces – challenges that are difficult to create on traditional training grounds.

"We have just advanced to contact and the commanders running the simulation decided to make the enemy larger with more vehicles," explains Pte Cornforth.

"They also introduced a UAV to make it more difficult for us – we had to hide in the trees – so it tested our training really well."

The benefits of this technology for new recruits and inexperienced soldiers, in particular, could be immense, according to those using it.

"They can safely practise the

RE FIGHTS

basic tactics so when we do go somewhere like Batus everyone knows what they're doing, what's going on and what their individual role is," comments Pte James Oates (Yorks).

The cost benefit of using this technology, as opposed to taking vehicles and personnel out to a training area and expending fuel and ammunition, are obvious. But officers managing this pilot emphasise that virtual reality sessions will never replace live exercise serials.

"You can't fully recreate environmental factors and climatic conditions, however it's a lot more straightforward to create complex scenarios – we can easily re-spin this setting and do it at night, with a large civilian population in place or with a different type of enemy – make it more peer-on-peer, for instance," says Maj Andy Chambers (AGC (ETS)) from the Training Capability Branch at Army Headquarters.

"Using this kit is about harnessing the benefits that you can't obtain very easily from doing it outside.

"You also get certain feedback out of this system that you won't get from live training – we've been running two scenarios a day to gather our data, and conducting after-action reviews following each session," he continues.

"You can look at what arcs of view the soldiers could see, the distances between their vehicles, ammunition expenditure and its



relation to hit rate, as well as lots more besides."

For now, the VRLT pilot is exploring what technologies industry can offer to support collective combined arms training in the future and not trialling a particular piece of equipment.

Features like haptic gloves, which allow the user to grip and move certain objects in the virtual world, as well as 360-degree treadmills where dismounted troops are able to actually "run" around the battlefield are under consideration for future trials.

"We are looking to produce a report next month and it might suggest that certain innovative technologies are very good and we could bring them into

“
EVERYTHING
IS EXACTLY
WHERE IT IS
IN A REAL
WARRIOR
”

our training routines quickly," explains Maj Chambers.

"We might also suggest that industry needs to take them away and develop them further because they're not providing the sorts of benefits we need.

"Depending on the conclusions, we will probably need to run more detailed pilots and, ultimately, they will determine exactly how we employ this technology in the future." ■



SOLDIERS

Smartphone apps could soon be vital for winning battles

IF YOU had told most soldiers even two or three years ago that a smartphone could become a core piece of battlefield equipment, they'd have laughed in your face.

But the day that becomes a reality is getting closer.

A series of tests, including a short trial by 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards on Exercise Sabre Strike in Poland last year, has provided a stream of evidence that's hard to ignore.

Troops have been using phones loaded with a command and battlespace app called the Android Tactical Assault Kit (Atak) and they've reported that decision-making was more informed, tactics more flexible, battles fought more efficiently and, theoretically, lives saved where previously they might have been lost.

The so-called dismounted situational awareness tool is still being refined and improved by the Infantry Trials and Development Unit (ITDU) but, essentially, it allow users in a secure network to send and share vital information such as personal location, orders, images, text messages, positions of wounded personnel, enemy forces, minefields, IEDs or targets.

"This is about digitising the dismounted soldier on the battlefield and aiding situational awareness," says project leader

Lt Col Toby Lyle (RL).

Crucially, the Atak app is now being tested

using a new type of tactical radio. Together they are proving a potent combination, driving the way the tactical networks may be developed in the future.

One significant advantage is that soldiers link up to form a small network.

Unlike VHF radio, which has a line-of-sight range, this equipment can bounce a message from one person's radio to the next until it reaches its intended destination.

Depending on where the troops are located, it has the potential to carry this information over hills and through complex urban terrain using each soldier as a relay.

It's still too early to predict when, or even if, these devices will become standard issue.

But the next stage of the experiment will see a full battlegroup issued with DSA to test the technology in different roles and climates. And later this year, ITDU will look at how data from sensors on drones and range finders can be integrated so even more information is available.

Soldier joined the most recent outing of the kit on Salisbury Plain, where 3rd Battalion, The Rifles were employing it to assault a mock enemy hidden in a village.

All personnel were equipped with the radio, which has an integrated GPS transmitter, while the chest-mounted smartphones loaded with the Atak app were given to soldiers down to section commander level.

Here's what they had to say about using phones to fight... ■

Words: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main, Freepik



ON SPEED DIAL



COMPANY COMMANDER MAJ BEN MOORHOUSE

This is fantastic for an officer in my position, **an absolute game-changer on the ground.**

I've been in the Army for around 15 years and completed Telic and Herrick tours as well as Northern Ireland, and this could have made a massive difference.

The read-out we get of the guys' positions would have been absolutely fantastic in Afghanistan when operating safe lanes and counter-IEDs missions. **It would have saved lives I'm sure.**

Knowing where all my soldiers are at any one time

means **I can assess risk better and it opens up so many new tactics,** giving me more options for getting them closer together.

The new radio, the way it works and what it provides you with, is fantastic too. It's a networked comms system rather than a point-to-point tool so my message goes through everyone in between as opposed to only going as far as the signal range. The soldiers don't all necessarily hear the message but their radio passes it on, so **it can work well in complex or undulating terrain.**



PLATOON COMMANDER 2ND LT NAT NEWMAN

For me, **the best thing is being able to see where your sections are in real time** on the map. Basically, it is very much like a live Tes review.

The screen display means if we're moving through a wood, for example, my sections can maintain their balance themselves and it reduces or even eliminates chat on the net – I don't have to spend my time saying, 'one section hold, two section you need to catch up' and so on.

That means I'm able to look up more and think about what I'm doing myself.

And because you can see each individual rifleman if you want to, as their radios emit their GPS location, you can be sure you have all round defence in position. That's invaluable and **saves time in checking where everyone is.**



COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR WO2 PHILLIP CREE

“It’s a dream to be able to see the place I need to get to first and I can set points on the map for everyone to know about without having to get hold of personnel on the net.

The backup system of having chat groups, where soldiers can send me all sorts of info like their ammo states, is great too and allows the main comms channels to stay clear for the attack, other operational needs or logistics.

If we didn’t have this we’d still get the job done, obviously, but **with it we can fit more stuff in because it speeds things up.**

On my phone display I normally filter out the riflemen’s tags so I only see the team commanders. That stops the screen becoming overloaded with info and I can see the area better.

It’s superb for overlays of data too, so the OC might send me one with numbers on houses to prioritise targets and you can filter out positions that other people have highlighted, or if a building is taken and cleared you can turn it from red to green so everyone knows.

We do all this now by shouting at each other directly or over the comms, but with this we simply glance down at the display.

It’s a huge advantage and **potentially makes us a lot stealthier on the battlefield.**

There are still question marks over how robust this kit will be when it comes to real operations but its potential is huge. ”

ACTING PLATOON SERGEANT CPL SEAN ENRIGHT

“I spend the same amount of time looking at this as I would my battle cards and normal map – but it’s better to use overall because instead of worrying about the distance I’ve got between myself and the platoon commander I can see it all there on the screen – I don’t need to bounce around to get a sitrep off everybody.

It also has **huge advantages for knowing ammunition states** as

well. I don’t have to wait for the sergeant major to tell me where he wants it by having a face-to-face with him, I can get the 2iCs to send me the details via the chat function and they get replenished quicker.

For urban and fighting in woods and forests, where line of sight is challenging, this system is particularly valuable because you can see where everyone is – the lead section, the support section and the reserve behind – so you can call them straight in to where you need them. **That fear of getting overstretched is reduced** because the live information is right there in front of you. ”





SECTION COMMANDER LCPL MICHAEL MCCULLOCH

I do have issues using the screen with gloves, you can still use it but it feels a bit clunky so that's something they need to work on. We haven't tried it in boggy ground, in the dark or when we're covered with mud either, so that's to come.

This tech was also quite overwhelming when we were first shown the device, but after a few days and some varied serials it became easy to understand and use.

We tried allowing riflemen to step up as 2iCs and take on this system and they adapted to it really quickly.

As a section commander **the situational awareness it gives me is so much better**. It allows me to spread the section out to provide flank or rear protection and I can see they have all the arcs covered.

I feel I can better understand where the other sections are too, especially in urban and forest environments.

When we get contacted my position is already visible on the device so I don't need to fire up location stats, the platoon commander knows where I am and I can send the enemy position so he gets that situational awareness from me.

It gives you a great battle picture and **cuts out a lot of delay and confusion in the heat of the conflict**.

It's also really useful for casevacs. If we have a man down we can plot exactly where he is, send a Mist card detailing his injuries and what treatment he's had, and the sergeant clicks on the icon to receive the info and he knows the exact distance the casualty is away from the medics.

Q & A

Soldier grills 3 Rifles on the Atak app



What are the main downsides to the system at present?

Cpl Enright: The voice comms earpiece is uncomfortable for some and the connections and the cabling are an issue. They need packaging up. We're also still working out whether everyone needs a smartphone or not. Everyone down to section 2iC has one at the moment.

What's the best balance of screen data to use?

Maj Moorhouse: Riflemen all have radio equipment that sends out a GPS location so some of us turn off where all the blokes are on the system and just have section commanders showing so there's not a great mass of troops all over the screen. But you can turn it back on if you need to know where a certain person or group is.

Can you become fixated on the screens and lose awareness of what's around you?

LCpl McCulloch: It's tempting to sit back and look at the screens – during training there were a lot of people with their heads down but as we've got

used to it we've learnt to know when to use it and when not to. We are now looking down at the screen a lot less, particularly when fighting around buildings as you have to keep your eye on what's going on a lot more to get an accurate picture. You know what the symbols mean and it only takes a quick glance down to appreciate where everyone is.

Are you doing things differently as a result of this tech?

2nd Lt Newman: Yes, we are far more confident about dividing the company up and operating in a more dispersed way. This gives us more confidence to split up down to section level and cover a larger amount of ground but still retain control. We've been using different arcs of fire and angles of attack because we know where the other platoons are exactly. For example, we've had a situation where we've assaulted with one platoon located close to another because we had that assurance they were in dead ground and, therefore, safely in cover. That's something I would never do on ops currently because I wouldn't know exactly where the guys were unless I had eyes on.



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24 HOURS IN ITC

Setting foot on UK soil to start a new life – it's a huge moment for hundreds of Nepalese teenagers each year. *Soldier* charted the first few hours of the 2019 intake of Gurkha recruits to see how their time at Infantry Training Centre Catterick begins...

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main



A CHILLY morning welcomes 100 wannabe soldiers to Manchester Airport. The weary teenagers are the last of three waves to arrive from Kathmandu, and they have been travelling all night from Abu Dhabi. But the real journey begins today.

Pacing through the arrivals hall in flawless suits with bright eyes, their cool demeanour is deceptive. "These guys feel like headless chickens," says Capt Dirgha KC (QGE), one of the senior instructors waiting to welcome them to the Gurkha Company fold back at ITC Catterick.

"If you read their faces, they are confused."

"Before the flight they would have been quite excited. But they have lots of responsibility on

their shoulders now. Many have big families back home."

Permanent staff from Catterick who have escorted the recruits back to the UK lead them through the airport, skirting around a throng of gawping taxi drivers and security workers.

From their very first moments here, these men must uphold the flawless reputation of the Brigade of Gurkhas.

But they are not warriors just yet, and today brings trepidation.

These guys will not get their first day off for three months, with no chance to see their families for at least nine.

"I feel tired and excited," 20-year-old Sonam Gurung, pictured above, tells *Soldier*.

"That was my first flight, and when I entered the air it felt like I was going to a new world."

"It was hard saying goodbye, though, because I am the only son in my family."



06:40

12 FEB 2019
T1/2 MANCHESTER AIRPORT
(53.358783, -2.272709)



Pictures: Shutterstock

AFTER filing swiftly onto coaches with just one modest daysack to their names, the recruits begin their journey to North Yorkshire.

The drive across the Pennines will give many of them their first glimpse of Britain's rolling countryside – a far cry from the mountains of Kathmandu they left behind just 20 hours ago.

With almost half of the recruits hailing from the hottest part of Nepal, this environment and its cold, driving rain will be a considerable challenge for them over their 39-week course.

"It's green and beautiful,"

says 20-year-old Dharma Magar, pictured below, cheerily.

"I was expecting it to be cold but it's not too bad."

Instructor WO2 Hemraj Gurung (QGE, pictured bottom) remembers his first moments in the UK well.

"You don't know where you are," he recalls. "It's like an alien world."

"Some of these boys might have travelled to other countries but it's their first time in the UK."

"They imagine that there will be big skyscrapers everywhere."

"Then they come to Catterick and think, is that really where I'm going?"



09:07

M62,
EASTBOUND

(53.606999, -2.098134)

“
You don't
know where
you are
”



HELLES BARRACKS, CATTERICK GARRISON

(54.367927, -1.713508)

11:15



BREAKING once for refreshment at a motorway service station, the two-and-a-half hour road journey has ended and the recruits arrive at Helles Barracks.

They step off the bus and after forming up on a windy parade square, are led slowly round to Gurkha Company's building, where a piper delivers a brief yet moving introduction.

Each recruit lines up to be blessed by the Hindu priest – or pandit. And the rest of Gurkha Company, along with representatives from 2nd Infantry Training Battalion HQ, shake their hands and wish them luck.

Warm mutterings of “namaste” dance about in the breeze past an assembled group of families who have turned out to welcome these newcomers to Catterick's Nepalese community.



Capt Milan Rai (RGR, pictured left), the 2iC, explains how everything is focused on making the newbies feel as welcome as possible.

“My responsibility is to give them a feeling of home,” he says. “So I have asked families and a religious teacher to come here.”

“Back when I joined it wasn't like this.

“But in Nepal these guys probably don't go far away and and for many this is their first time living away from family.

“I hope this all makes them feel homely.

“Everything starts today.”

12:10

THE COOKHOUSE, GURKHA COMPANY

THE Army has doubled its intake of Nepalese recruits, which means many individuals are getting an opportunity that just 12 months ago would have been unattainable.

For the ex-Gurkhas who staff the Sodexo-run cookhouse, this means more mouths to feed than ever.

So today they have pulled out all the stops to provide a delicious, welcoming curry. Food, it seems, will be one of the few things from home



that these youngsters will not be left yearning for over the coming months.

Chef Gurung Ajaya (ex-QOGLR, pictured below) left the Army five years ago and is happy to be one of those giving these men a taste of

Nepal in their first few hours on British soil. And he knows himself how valuable this can be.

“Being here I feel I am still in Nepal,” he tells *Soldier*. “It's a piece of home.

“Food is important for the Gurkhas – it's good for morale.

“We tried to introduce British food to the menu one Friday, but no one wanted it. Here it's curry for lunch and dinner every day.”



“
I hope this all
makes them
feel homely
”



20:00



15:00

GURKHA COMPANY

WITH lunchtime over, reception week is now in full swing. And there is much prep to do before training itself can begin.

If these guys struggled to sleep on the plane or coach, it is tough luck.

There is no downtime available now, as rooms are allocated, bank accounts opened, National Insurance numbers issued, briefings given and measurements taken ready for kit issue in the morning.

“At the start we

focus on the medical side such as vaccinations and dental inspections,” says Capt KC, pictured below. “We also give a series of briefings on things like discipline and values and standards of the British Army.”

Later on, recruits are issued with welfare cards that allow them to call home and inform relatives of their safe arrival

“It’s nice so far,” says Hemant Rai.

“When I first arrived I felt dreadful – it’s very cold here.

“But the curry was delicious and obviously my family are happy that I am here.”



ACCOMMODATION WING

AS WELL as more staff, this year’s upturn in recruits has required an extra accommodation block.

These plain, clean dorms will provide particularly important respite over the first seven weeks because the troops are forbidden to leave camp.

After that, they will get their first taste of freedom and something resembling a normal Service lifestyle.

In the meantime, chatting together gives these guys the chance to eat, sleep and breathe all-things Army.

“It’s difficult to understand the terminology we use in the

military,” says Capt KC.

“We have lots of jargon. But within a couple of months these guys will understand it too.”

Capt Rai thinks the larger number of recruits is great news for the wider brigade and the Service as a whole.

“It’s good for the families of these boys as well,” he adds.

“There are so many youngsters in Nepal who want to join.

“The uplift was announced in a very short timeframe but every level in the chain of command has prepared well in order to make this happen.

“By the Christmas break they will know which unit they are going to, and get the chance to go back to Nepal before heading off to regiment.” ■





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Talkback

‘Do we have to use load carriers?’

WHEN my unit received its brief on Virtus we were told it was up to the individual to decide whether to use any of the load carrying equipment or not.

However, other units are forcing the issued items on soldiers and threatening disciplinary action if gear purchased privately is used.

Along with many of my professional colleagues, I have invested a lot of money in my kit to make life in the field easier.

I can understand why the body armour, helmet and other personal protective equipment (PPE) are required to be worn, but the load-carrying system just doesn't work for everyone.

What is the official direction on this?
– Name and address supplied

Maj William Melia, Ground Manoeuvres Capability, Army Headquarters, responds: It sounds as though this may be an issue of crossed wires regarding your brief.

It was meant to emphasise the modular and scalable nature of Virtus, which allows individuals to have more control over how they set up their load carriage system (within the constraints of techniques, tactics and procedures) and commanders to adapt protection levels to counter different threats.

It should not have been implied that personnel are free to opt out of the Virtus system.

Units are legally permitted to mandate the use of issued equipment if such an order is made for valid Service reasons.

These may include the inability for

non-issued kit to be replaced through the system for it to be assured as fit for purpose, or to adhere to existing camouflage policy.

If such an order is not followed then an individual may be liable for prosecution under Service law.

Furthermore, if a soldier suffers an injury due to their non-issued kit, they may have difficulty in claiming compensation since only in-service equipment procured by Defence Equipment and Support will have a supporting safety case.

Virtus has been developed and designed to meet the needs of the British soldier and ensure that life in the field is easier and safe when used on its own and in conjunction with other supplied hardware.

The kit employs technological solutions to reduce the likelihood of musculoskeletal injuries and, furthermore, the belt has anchor points for the tier two pelvic protector as well as housing a soft armour filler which provides lower back protection.

This makes the Virtus load carriage system an integral part of your PPE.

There is an ongoing fielding plan to replace earlier iterations of Virtus and work continues to improve the system further, incorporating feedback from users to better meet their operational needs.

Anyone who has a requirement outside Virtus for load carriage equipment should staff it through their chain of command so defence can provide users with the necessary equipment to carry out their role.

“ I have invested a lot in my kit ”

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

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No extra time for dyslexics

PERSONNEL with dyslexia have recently been advised that they are no longer entitled to extra time in functional skills exams.

Why is this the case?

According to the Equality Act 2010, anyone with dyslexia, whether mild or not, is entitled to a reasonable adjustment for their tests. – **Name and address supplied**

Sue Thain, Education Branch, Army Personnel Services Group, responds: The Army is exempt from the Equalities Act 2010 but has policies in place to ensure everyone is treated fairly.

It offers training programmes so personnel can perform their jobs successfully and safely.

Unlike many employers, the Service provides plenty of development throughout a career because soldiers are required to change their role quickly and operate in hostile environments.

The strengths of individuals with dyslexic tendencies often make them excellent troops but to make sure they are safe the policy about training and dyslexia (ACSO 3226) states that standards set by the Army must be met, without any changes being made to the assessment method. This ensures that the soldier can carry out the task in difficult conditions.

It also, however, directs that personnel should be offered and allowed to participate in learning support to enable them to reach the standard required.

English and maths skills (tested by functional assessments) underpin most of the training and are required to show the individual is competent for promotion.

The policy protects those who may need more learning time and ensures they are provided with the appropriate strategies to cope with areas they may find challenging.

Further advice is available from your local Army Education Centre.

“I want to dedicate my life to helping people”



Looking for a hair-raising reply

I AM a 26-year-old male and want to dedicate my life to helping people by joining the Armed Forces, but I recently came across the Service’s policy regarding acceptable hairstyle.

I happen to have long hair which can be tied up.

I’m not looking to have it cut but I still want to join the Army.

Do you know how long it will be until the Service relaxes its rules on hair?

This is probably the only thing which would stop me from entering a lifelong career with the military. – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col (retd) Kestrel Simson, Ceremonial and Operational and Service Awards, Ceremonial Policy and Plans, replies: Queen’s Regulations state that male hair is to be cut short such that its length does not reach to the collar or onto the ears, with exceptions only to be

granted on religious grounds.

The rationale for this policy is twofold. Firstly, to fit the image of professional soldiers, the Army requires hair to be worn under parade headdress without appearing over the ears or below the collar. Secondly, and equally importantly, hair cannot be allowed to jeopardise operational effectiveness or safety.

It must not catch in equipment or compromise protective kit such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear masks.

Those with hair that is an important element of their faith or religion may keep it long and worn under a turban but they must be prepared to modify it to maintain operational effectiveness and personal safety.

These are fundamental aspects of a professional Army so there are no plans to change this policy.

‘WE SHOULDN’T CONFUSE SEX AND GENDER’

● I AM becoming aware of more and more publications such as JSPs which, when referring to protected characteristics, use “gender” instead of “sex”.

The Equality Act 2010 is clear in naming nine protected characteristics, one of which is sex and one of which is gender reassignment.

It is critical for the maintenance of equality and of sex-based exemptions to the equality act that these two protected characteristics are not conflated. – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Rachel Emmerson, Diversity and Inclusion, Army Headquarters, responds: You voice a concern that the words “sex” and “gender” are used synonymously in policy. While it is true that “gender” is commonly used, relevant joint and Army policies (JSP 889 – *Policy for the Recruitment and Management of Transgender Personnel in the Armed Forces*, and AGAI 75 – *Respect for others*) use it to define the characteristics of men and women more broadly than biological differences.

Where biological characteristics are being referenced “sex” is used. When those documents list the protected characteristics (in terms of the Equality Act 2010), they use “sex” and “gender reassignment”.

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APPOINTMENTS

Lt Gen Tim Radford, currently Commander Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, to be appointed **Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe** – taking over from Gen Sir James Everard in spring next year.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: WO2 MJ Donne, RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset.



DIARY

May 11: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo in support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity, at The King's Hall, Kingsway, Stoke-on-Trent.

May 22: British Army Leadership 2019: Director Leadership Maj Gen Paul Nanson gives his annual address at 1030 in the Churchill Hall, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. For tickets and details visit www.sandhursttrust.org

May 25-26: Duxford Air Festival at IWM Duxford. The action-packed event returns with dazzling air displays, thrilling technology and inspiring inventions. Tickets from £30 and under 16s go free. Visit www.iwm.org.uk/events/duxford-air-festival-2019

June 2: Armed Forces community information day organised by Sheffield Mind at U-Mix Centre, 17 Asline Road, Sheffield from 1200-1500. A family fun-day with free lunch to explain the local support available.

June 11: Vintage motor yacht Dorset Queen to tour Poole Harbour in one-off D-Day commemoration event aid of homeless veterans. Cost £25 per person. Call 01202 844199 for further details and to book.

June 23: Bradford Bulls' annual Armed Forces Day match against Halifax RLFC at Odsal Stadium, Bradford. Featuring Bradford Bulls Women v UK Armed Forces Women as the curtain-raiser, and the Royal Logistic Corps Skydiving Display Team.

June 26: Scotland – an evening of Scottish military band music – at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. Gates open 1800, performance starts 2000. Tickets £10, concessions £5. Buy advance tickets at www.skiddle.com

June 29: Armed Forces Day. For more details on events across the country visit www.armedforcesday.org.uk

July 5-7: Vet Fest 2019, a summer festival for veterans and the public in Lanescot, Cornwall, featuring 15 Cornish bands, local food stalls, dancing and a fun "Olympics" competition. Tickets start from £10 or £30 for the whole weekend, with camping, and can be ordered from www.vetsfest.uk

July 6: Stars and Stripes – featuring the Army Big Band and rock/pop group – at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. Performance starts 1930 with gates open 1730. Tickets £10, concessions £5. Buy advance tickets at www.skiddle.com

July 20: Camus 25 Gala Concert – celebrating the anniversary of the Corps of Army Music – at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. Gates open 1800 with performance at 2000. Tickets £10, concessions £5. Buy advance tickets at www.skiddle.com

July 27: The North East Military Ball from 1845 at The Hilton, Bottle Bank, Gateshead. An evening of glamour, live entertainment and food in aid of The Royal British Legion, Veterans in Crisis and Grace House NE. Open to all tri-Service personnel, veterans, families and supporters. Visit www.nemb.co.uk



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
www.soldierscharity.org

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

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
www.afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
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www.afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
www.adviceasap.org.uk

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

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

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

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

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

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

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

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

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

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

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

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

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

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

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

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

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

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Ex-Services Association:
www.nesa.org.uk

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

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

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

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

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

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

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

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

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

SSAFA:
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www.ssafo.org.uk

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www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
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www.nfassociation.org

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

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

Continued on page 60

Directory continued

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info@veteranscharity.org.uk

Troop Aid:

0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260

uk4u Thanks!:

01798 812081;
www.uk4u.org

Veterans Welfare Service:

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



REUNIONS

Army Dog Unit Northern Ireland (RAVC) Association AGM and reunion, Holiday Inn Express, Burton-on-Trent at 1500 on May 4 then afterwards at the RBL Alrewas annual memorial service the next day, with all to meet at the Millennium Shelter at the Ulster Grove NMA from 1000. Contact John Tucker on 07734 113077 for details.

85th Artillery Clerks' Association

reunion and dinner in the Royal Artillery sergeants' mess, Larkhill from June 7 to 9. Open to all members with strong attendance expected. For details visit www.artyclerkassn.org

Royal Pioneer Corps Association

reunion, June 14-16 at The Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Norman Brown on 07868 757642 or alternatively email royalpioneer corps@gmail.com

23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades Association remembrance and reunion dinner

, June 21-23 at the National Memorial Arboretum and Bosworth Hall, Market Bosworth. All ranks past and present welcome. For further details contact Roy Hatch on 01926 812363.

8 Regiment, RASC/RCT/RLC 18th anniversary reunion weekend

, October 18-19. A pre-reunion event will be held on Friday evening at a venue TBC with the main event at The Village on the Green Club, Aspull, Wigan. All past members, irrespective of cap badge, are invited along with a partner or guest. The cost is £30

per head or £10 for the pre-reunion event. For more information contact jimmyasp@hotmail.com



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Group

welcomes members of the public to its roadshows. For more info call 01276 412880 or visit www.army.mod.uk/engagement

May: 1, Glasgow; 2, Ayr; 14, Leicester; 15, Nottingham; 22, Chichester.



SEARCHLINE

An aspiring Scotland-based musical combo is appealing for donations to buy kit. **The Paisley Comrades Pipes and Drums**, which is starting from scratch, is hoping to deliver top-notch performances at ceremonial occasions. Contact Ronald Scobie at flightless.scotsman@hotmail.com

Frank Tilburn Hodson (ex-REME) is looking for information on

craftsmen Pete Boots and Jim Gascoigne, who served with him in Hong Kong from 1959-61. Contact carolmorgan2412@icloud.com

Author Mike Donovan wants to hear from anyone who served alongside former footballer

Alan Gilzean during his national service in Aldershot/Farnborough around 1959. He is writing an official biography of the ex-Scotland, Dundee and Tottenham Hotspur player, who died in July 2018. Email mikedonovan333@gmail.com

4 Regiment, Royal Military Police

will disband on November 1, 2019. If you have donated or gifted any property please contact SSgt Gary McCallum (AGC (RMP)) via gary.mccallum324@mod.gov.uk to arrange its return. Anything unclaimed will be donated to the RMP Museum.

Lawrence Lustig is seeking details on a **Military Medal won by his late grandfather Joseph Bloom** in the First World War. Anyone with details is asked to contact lawrence@lblmedia.co.uk

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of a paratrooper on Exercise Mayan Warrior in the Belize jungle.

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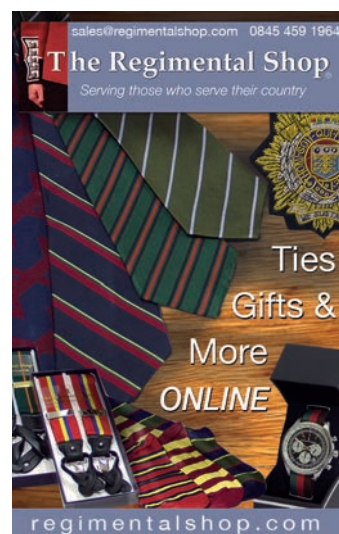
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ARMY SPORTS LOTTERY

REVIEWS



MOVIES

CROWD PLEASER

Charlize Theron and Seth Rogen deliver palatable – and funny – romcom

I SAT down determined to loathe *Long Shot*. Well, maybe not determined – more resigned. But then Hollywood romcoms aren't exactly my staple, and with a cringemaking plot that revolves around a gritty newspaper hack reuniting with his now all-powerful childhood crush, it seemed like a done deal. »

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GAMES

MOVIES



How wrong I was.

Directed by **Jonathan Levine** and out on May 3, this film's chief asset is funnyman **Seth Rogen** – whose previous life as a stand-up comedian shines through brilliantly over these two hours.

The script is peppered with his trademark sarcastic mutterings, which create bucketloads of laugh-out-loud moments as he tries to reconcile his liberal ideals with a journey into the murky world of American politics and repulsive media tycoons.

Charlize Theron also puts in an excellent – albeit not quite as side-splitting – performance, depicting Secretary of State Charlotte Field, who spends as much of her time battling off tedious sexism as she does working up world-changing policy.

And herein lies another reason why this film delivers.

Although obviously a romcom from start to clichéd ending, it goes beyond that, offering up parody after parody of figures like **Donald Trump**, **Rupert Murdoch** and *Fox News* anchors.

It also tells a perceptive and powerful tale about the unrealistic and unfair expectations placed on female politicians compared with men.

Theron's character is seen taking open-eyed micro-naps, conducting phone interviews during figure-enhancing workouts and fielding tiresome questions that revolve around appearance more than politics.

It feels both clever and timely for an audience that cannot help but be tied up in the hopelessness of today's current affairs.

And it does all that while staying true to its obvious genre, and serving up the vomit-inducing ending that American romcom audiences have presumably come to demand.

"It's a good combination of something that feels modern but also a nice throwback to the nostalgia of those old great romantic comedies," Theron said in a media interview ahead of *Long Shot*'s release.

"There's real romance about this film."



● *Long Shot* is out in cinemas on May 3

I cannot help but agree, and the film's masterful soundtrack only serves to enhance this.

In one brilliantly odd moment, 1990s RnB ballad kings **Boyz II Men** even put in an on-screen performance. If that doesn't have you celebrating everything that was great about 20 years ago, nothing will.

This is definitely a movie to kick back with, preferably on a Friday and with a beer or two next to you.

It won't disappoint, and may even have you identifying as a romcom fan by the time the credits hit. ■

REVIEW: SARAH GOLDTHORPE, *SOLDIER*

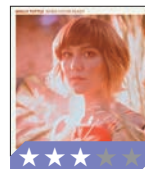
VERDICT:

Very funny, if you can get over the sickly ending

★★★★★



MUSIC RELEASES



When You're Ready

by Molly Tuttle

WITH echoes of **Taylor Swift**, what you have

here is some pretty average middle-of-the-road soft rock that even your mum can enjoy. Laced with obvious country steel guitar and lonely lyrics straight out of Nashville, there are some cheeky smidgens of bluegrass fresh from Texas, which can only be a good thing. The standout track is *Take the Journey* which, along with *Make Up My Mind*, has more than just a hint of **The Eagles**. While no two songs are the same or even slightly similar they all come together into a nice neat package of tunes that you'll find yourself humming along to from start to finish. Certainly worth spending an hour of your time on.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles



No Geography

by The Chemical Brothers

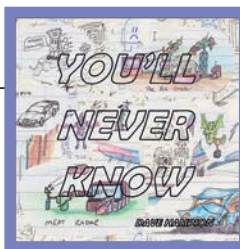
THIS ninth album from **The Chemical**

Brothers sees the dance pioneers revisit the kit and equipment that underpinned breakthrough offerings *Exit Planet Dust* and *Dig Your Own Hole* in the mid-to-late 90s. The end result bears more than a passing resemblance to the standout music produced in their heyday, with tracks such as *We've Got to Try* and *Free Yourself* proving particularly effective. In a break from tradition, the list of collaborators is lacking in big names but the likes of Japanese rapper **Nene** and Norwegian vocalist **Aurora** make key contributions and add welcome variety to the mix. While this release falls slightly short of its mighty predecessors, there is enough to suggest **The Chemical Brothers** are still relevant 20 years down the line.

Richard Long, Soldier

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PICK OF THE MONTH:

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW

Dave Hampson challenges

► THERE have been several releases by serving soldiers over the past few years, all of which seem to have focused on their life in the Armed Forces.

So people who listen to this album will probably have no idea that Hampson is actually a staff sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, given there is no reference to the military.

Featuring a selection of only seven songs, the bulk of *You'll Never Know* is taken up by the 18-minute track *Muscovy*, which ostensibly seems to be about the founding of the Russian state. Easy listening this is not.

The next effort, *Chasing Down Your Street*, is a much more straightforward fast-paced rock song, before *JM vs HG* pulls us back with a groove-laden vibe that tells the tale of two characters fighting it out over something unclear.

The final two tracks, *A Lesson* and *A Lesson Learned*, seem to be a suite of sorts. The former builds to an orchestral menagerie of vocals, keyboards and guitars before dying away to the latter, which is very reminiscent of **Oasis'** *Half the World Away* with a sweary chorus.

Despite the eclectic nature of the influences and the subject matter, this is a surprisingly cohesive album. It's like 70s prog rock performed by a 90s indie band but it works, and well.

It bears repeated listening and is a must-have for fans of **Muse**, **Radiohead** and **The Smashing Pumpkins**. ■

REVIEW: SSGT SCOTT PATERSON, REME

VERDICT:

Simply put – this is great music

★★★★★



DIGITAL/DVD RELEASES



303 Squadron

Out now

THIS Polish version of the recent *Hurricane* is well made and with some excellent air combat sequences. It features authentic aircraft, equipment and locations without being obviously CGI. The acting was also very good and the storyline, although predictably a cross between *Battle of Britain* and *Hurricane*, was enjoyable. I actually preferred it to the latter.

CSgt Colin Tester, PWRR



The Accountant of Auschwitz

Out now

SEVENTY years after the end of the Second World War, 94-year-old Oskar Gröning was charged as an accessory to the murder of 300,000 Jews. He did not directly participate in mass killings at Auschwitz; his role was to oversee the confiscation of personal effects. But his admission in a 2005 BBC interview led to the decision for a war-crimes prosecution and he was found guilty. Against the backdrop of his trial, this film explores the mechanics and ethical questions around holding those involved in the atrocities to account so many years later. A thought-provoking, if sobering, watch.

Maj Alex Janaway, RAMC



The Old Man and the Gun

Out now

FOLLOWING the exploits of three senile bank robbers, this almost-true-to-life story is well worth some time and effort. With a somewhat aged **Robert Redford** leading the group from bank to bank, and **Casey Affleck** as the bemused detective hot on their heels, this is more than just a crime caper. You'll find yourself warming to Redford's anti-hero character and his quest for love and money, hoping he chooses the former rather than the latter. With a touch of **Tarantino**-esque retro styling and cinematography, this is certainly a film for a weekend with your other half on the sofa.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

BOOKS



PICK OF THE MONTH:

MARINE A

Serviceman jailed for murder speaks out

➤ ALEXANDER Blackman's fall from grace following his court martial for shooting a wounded insurgent is well known, but the real story behind the pseudonym "Marine A" has not been told – until now.

From growing up in a small seaside town to a late enlistment in the Royal Marines, in this account he first paints a picture of life leading up to that now infamous day in Helmand Province.

Although he doesn't address the event directly in the narrative, the court martial and subsequent incarceration at Her Majesty's pleasure is vividly described for the reader.

Blackman attempts to explain the background to events, claiming a lack of support from superiors while on operations and often points out that as the senior Marine there – a veteran of multiple Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan tours – he bore a heavy responsibility to all the men under his command.

While his actions were certainly

VERDICT:
One man's
fateful
decision
offers
salutary tale
★★★★★

not lawful, he does try to offer some perspective, something that was later found to have been lacking in the original court martial.

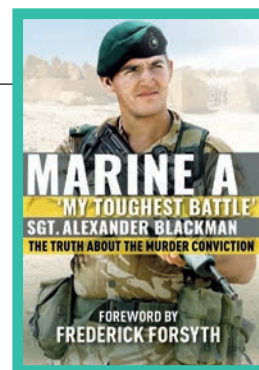
What Blackman does not really address is why he found it necessary to shoot a mortally injured Taliban fighter, who in his own words, was already close to death – or why he would quote Shakespeare while doing so.

Following much public outcry and an appeal, his murder conviction was reduced to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and he was released after serving three and a half years in prison.

But ultimately, Blackman went beyond what was acceptable for British Service personnel.

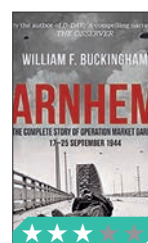
If there is a lesson for soldiers to draw from his story it must be to keep in the forefront of their minds what the long lasting consequences of a momentary lapse of judgement could be. ■

REVIEW: CPL SCOTT ROBERTS, RIFLES



● *Marine A* by Alexander Blackman, is published by Mirror Books, priced £20

BOOK RELEASES



Arnheim by William F Buckingham

THIS is a revision of the author's 2001 book on Operation Market Garden. Buckingham,

a historian with no military experience, uses the title as a vehicle to castigate Generals Browning and Urquhart. That they made many mistakes is not disputed, but the sole aim of this account seems to be to highlight them – frequently – rather than allow readers to make up their own minds. Otherwise this is an informative read, taking the campaign from the highest levels of command down to the trenches, detailing everything, almost to the point of pedantry. **Andy Kay, ex-RS**



South by Ernest Shackleton

REPRINTED to mark the 100th anniversary of its original publication, this is Shackleton's own account of his ill-fated

1914 expedition to Antarctica, supplemented with photography from the voyage – including newly discovered pictures taken by the Ross Sea party. It vividly brings to life polar exploration's golden age – if that is the right term to describe a pursuit that often ended in a slow and painful death. I admit I find the sheer determination of those early pioneers, and the privations they endured, morbidly fascinating. This updated classic is a must for anyone interested in the genre.

Becky Clark, Soldier



● *Metro Exodus* is out now for PS4, Xbox One and PC



PICK OF THE MONTH:

METRO EXODUS

Rangers tested in post-apocalyptic Russia

► IT'S been a while since I played anything in a first-person perspective and it seems I chose a good time to come back.

Simply put, *Metro Exodus* is an impressive and highly atmospheric post-apocalyptic shooter.

The visuals are sublime, haunting and emotive. From the grubby nuts-and-bolts feel of the survivors in their surroundings to the open areas of devastated, wreckage-strewn countryside, this release never fails to amaze.

Even its more claustrophobic environments deliver.

The story and characters are well formed, with just as much taking place in the background as what you see and deal with directly.

There's also a lot of depth, which helps make the situations you find yourself in more realistic and lifelike.

The main premise of the game is survival. You and your fellow Rangers are heading away from Moscow in the hopes of a better life in a Russia devastated by nuclear war.

Without revealing too much it's safe to say that there are plenty of obstacles in your way. Coupled with the amazing environments and backdrops, 4A Games have certainly delivered both a challenging and visually accomplished title.

The gameplay is pretty much straightforward first-person stuff, coupled with scavenging and crafting. But there are elements of horror and stealth as well.

It also features a mix of open world and linear environments that allow you to freely move around in certain areas, while still progressing through the missions.

Other features include a full choice of weather to experience and a day/night cycle, which can result in some areas looking amazing in the sunshine and downright creepy in the darkness.

Of course, the elements aren't your primary concern here. That comes with the assortment of creatures and other factions involved, none of which are particularly pleasant due to the daunting number of teeth they have or the fact that they are armed.

Metro Exodus is the fourth iteration in this franchise and it's definitely in good hands. So, what are you waiting for? ■

VERDICT:

A shooter never looked so good
★★★★★

REVIEW: DAVID MCDUGALL, CIVVY

GAMES

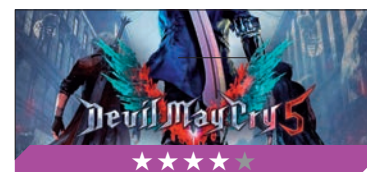
GAMES RELEASES



Battlefleet Gothic Armada 2 For PC

BASED upon the old tabletop offerings from Games Workshop, *Battlefleet Gothic Armada 2* allows you to command a flotilla of vast warships against an assortment of deadly adversaries in a compelling and entertaining adventure. For the uninitiated, the story covers the infamous 13th black crusade as the Forces of Chaos take on the might of the Imperium, all set around 38,000 years in the future. It's a real-time strategy title but without any dice or turn-based gameplay. This is tactics, plain and simple. But the campaign isn't the only battle space. You can also play against or alongside friends and random opponents online. Progressing in the game means more tools at your disposal, and those can make the difference between victory and defeat. A worthy sequel to the original.

David McDougall, civvy



Devil May Cry 5 For PS4, Xbox One and PC

IT'S easy to talk about an offering that looks good, even if it doesn't play well. But that's not the case here. *Devil May Cry 5* is both sumptuously stylish and a joy to play. It also grabs nostalgia by the horns and, while it is not a carbon copy of previous games, this iteration looks to the past for inspiration. And that's a good thing. In a nutshell, it's demon hunting at its best, with lead characters Dante and Nero providing interesting vessels for you to exercise your skills with. But most of all it's a fun, fast-paced action game with some stunning visuals to boot. If you're planning to buy the other two releases in these reviews, add this to the list.

David McDougall, civvy



Arms and Armour of the English Civil Wars by Keith Downen

THIS is a period of military history that many of us know surprisingly little about. Every now and again I do have to plunge into it and find myself scrabbling around for reliable, accurate and above all, when pressed for time, concise source material. Well, this new book will now be at the top of my English Civil War library. It really is very good, extremely well illustrated throughout and the narrative is readable and informative. The chapters cover the organisation, equipment and weaponry of the period in a logical and accessible style.

Mike Peters, ex-AAC



Pilgrim Days by Lt Col Alastair Mackenzie

THE author of this memoir fought around the world in the employ of four countries; New

Zealand in the jungles of Vietnam; the UK in Northern Ireland with the Parachute Regiment; South Africa in the bush and Oman in the desert. Alastair Mackenzie detested peacetime operations so whenever his feet got itchy he would look for hotspots to ply his trade. This enjoyable book centres on his military life and leaves his family firmly to one side, but does explain how they had to follow the drum with him. It is a great tale of a soldier's soldier and well worth a read.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

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SOLDIER SPORT



◀ PADDLE POWER

THE River Thames played host to the UK Armed Forces freestyle kayak team at the Hurley Classic. The sport is part of a flourishing white water scene, with an increasing number of soldiers taking part in the various disciplines. Read more on pages 72-73...





STEPPING OUT IN STYLE

PADDLERS EMBRACE WHITE WATER TEST AS ARMY KAYAK SCENE GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

WITH freestyle kayaking enjoying an upward curve and a push for possible Olympic inclusion, it comes as no surprise to learn the sport is flourishing in the Army's ranks.

The discipline sees paddlers use white-water waves to perform surf and gymnastic-like manoeuvres and tricks, with points awarded for the successful execution of moves including horizontal spins and barrel rolls.

The surge in popularity at military level was witnessed at the recent Hurley Classic event, where a healthy contingent of soldiers formed part of a 14-strong UK Armed Forces squad that was in action on the River Thames.

Maj Tony Hellier (RGR), secretary of the Army Canoe and Kayak Union, spoke to *SoldierSport* on the eve of the opening run and said the inclusive nature of the competition, and the pursuit as a whole, makes it the ideal platform for personnel to quickly progress.

"Slalom is a strict race against time and it is all about an individual's performance," the officer explained.

"In freestyle you are still paddling as an individual but if someone pulls off an amazing trick everyone will cheer.

"You will have a European or British champion giving advice to our athletes and that is fantastic.

"Facing 40 tons of water per second can be intimidating but technique is what you need.

"It's possible to get the whole boat in the air and do a full 360 before landing. It is such an adrenalin rush."

With canoeing and kayaking forming a key component in the Army's adventurous training offer the sports have a captive audience when it comes to attracting newcomers.

While freestyle requires an expensive initial outlay – with wetsuits and boats costing in the region of £1,000 each, and paddles a further £500 – there are cheaper options for those looking to develop their skills on the water.

"Kayak polo is our fastest growing sport and we are looking to get more kit into garrison pools so that can continue," Hellier added.

"We held the Army Championships in Colchester last October and there were more regiments involved than ever before.

"Being in a pool you can see the bottom and the boats are designed to roll, so it is a great introduction to the sport.

"People can then go to other disciplines, such as sprint, slalom, freestyle and marathon.

"The skills are very similar and we have the expertise to help them progress."

One soldier following this paddling pathway is LCpl Liam McCaw (Rifles).

The 23-year-old was introduced to kayak polo at his unit and has since competed for the Army at two Inter-Services Championships but Hurley represented his first experience of freestyle.

"I had never heard of kayak polo but once I played my first match I was instantly hooked," he explained.

"I'd seen some freestyle videos on YouTube and had heard stories about it so I thought I'd come and have a go.



**"IT'S
POSSIBLE
TO GET
THE
WHOLE
BOAT IN
THE AIR
AND DO
A 360"**

"I got thrown about a bit on my first run and, before I knew it, the front of my boat was pointing up towards the sky.

"I managed to roll in white water for the first time and that gave me confidence.

"It is quite daunting to start with but I can now see myself moving forward with this.

"I've just bought a boat and want to start doing it more in my own time."

Cpl Adam Biggs (Int Corps) is at the opposite end of the freestyle spectrum and narrowly missed out on selection for Team GB in 2018.

He is hoping to earn a place at this year's World Championships and is part of the Army's BAE sports scholarship programme, which provides essential funding for athletes who are striving to reach elite level.

"I've used that money to pay for coaching," the 26-year-old said. "I've got enough kit and thought this was a good area to focus on.

"I'm self taught so having that tuition will help me iron out any bad habits.

"My aim for this year is to make the GB squad. I also want to win the Army Championships again and push for the Inter-Services title having finished second last season.

"The biggest issue we face is getting time off to train. To improve you need that extra practice and I was fortunate enough to have some leave booked last year, which helped.

"The Army set-up is great. Maj Hellier makes the effort to get us to as many events as we can. We did the European Open and big civvy competitions like that are a real test." ■



DRAW SECURES TITLE NUMBER FOUR

THE Army's footballers underlined their status as the military's premier outfit as they secured a fourth successive Inter-Services title.

After recording a convincing 3-0 victory over the Royal Air Force in their opening fixture the Reds travelled to Yeovil as firm favourites ahead of their clash with the Royal Navy.

But the hosts provided a far sterner test compared to 12 months ago – when the soldiers ran out 7-3 winners – and thoroughly deserved a share of the spoils as the tie ended 1-1.

Winger Spr Dan Stoneman (RE, pictured above) gave the visitors a dream start as he raced onto a lofted pass from Cpl Adam Wakely (Rifles) and slotted the ball past goalkeeper Mne Steve Cross in the first minute.

However, the early momentum soon dissipated as their rivals found a foothold in the game and their efforts were rewarded midway through the half.

Stoneman picked up a yellow card for a needless foul out wide and striker SLT Andy Todd powered home a header from the resulting free kick.

Army keeper LCpl Luke Cairney (RE) then produced an excellent save to thwart Mne Ryan McKechnie before LCpl Ryan Paddock (R Signals) fired a half-volley that was palmed away by Cross as the Senior Service failed to clear their lines.

Further chances failed to materialise as the sides headed into the break level and the pattern was repeated for long spells in the second half.

With the game in the balance the Navy's hopes of victory were dealt a blow in the 63rd minute as McKechnie was shown a red card following a late tackle on Cairney.

Knowing a draw was good enough to retain the title, the Army controlled the remainder of the game and as the final whistle sounded the players were able to celebrate a job well done. ■

GAME BRIEF

DATE: April 3, 2019

COMPETITION: Royal Navy v Army – Inter-Services Football Championships

VENUE: Huish Park, Yeovil

ARMY

	Glass 9	Wakely 10
Woolley 11		Stoneman 7
	Atkinson 8	Thompson 6
Emmerson 3		Williams 2
	Paddock 4	Farkins (c) 5
	Cairney 1	

SUBS: McCombie, Gorman, Thompson, Beange, Matthews, Hubbard, Sabo

THE draw in Yeovil handed head coach Capt Sean Birchall (RLC) an Inter-Services title in his first season at the helm.

"We knew the Navy would be physically strong and they had nothing to lose," he told *SoldierSport* at full-time.

"Our start may have hindered us and we perhaps thought the game was in the bag.

"To then concede was a real setback and I was glad to get in at 1-1 at the break.

"We started the second half really well but the red card had a definite impact on the game.

"It has been a massive learning curve this season. We have a completely new management team and players have stepped up from the under-23s."

INTER-SERVICES FOOTBALL NAVY

1

ARMY

1



SPORT SHORTS



Picture: Alligin Photography

Nayalo on the move

CHAMPIONSHIP side Coventry have signed Army rugby union forward Gnr Senitiki Nayalo (RHA) on a two-year contract.

The player – part of the Reds' Inter-Services squad – will join the club ahead of the 2019/20 season.

He has previously played for Pro 14 outfit Edinburgh and London Irish, helping the exiles earn promotion to the Premiership in 2016/17.



Services crown slips away

A SHOCK 2-0 defeat at the hands of the Royal Navy saw the Army women relinquish their grip on football's Inter-Services trophy.

The result was the first time the Reds had lost to the Senior Service in the competition's 18-year history and meant the Royal Air Force secured the silverware thanks to their efforts earlier in the campaign.

Goals from Rosie McDonnell and Kate Bowden did the damage in Portsmouth as the soldiers finished bottom of the standings in 2019.



SAINTS CALL FOR POWERHOUSE BEAN



Picture: RedHatPhoto.com

"YOU HAVE TO OPERATE AT YOUR BEST ALL THE TIME"

SECOND row forward Cpl Lewis Bean (Rifles) has become the latest member of the Army rugby union fraternity to progress to the sport's top flight after he signed an 18-month deal with Northampton Saints.

The 27-year-old has been a mainstay of the Reds' squad in recent seasons and earned a contract with the Premiership giants after impressing during a trial earlier this year.

Bean previously spent time on loan at Worcester Warriors having starred at National League level with Moseley and has now started full-time training at his new club with a view to pushing for a place in the senior squad in 2019/20.

"It's a huge step up," the Serviceman, who completed two tours of Afghanistan earlier in his Army career, told *SoldierSport*. "When you work with really good players day in, day out you pick things up quite easily. However, I still have a lot to learn."

"After signing the contract I was over the moon but I've

got to keep working hard. This is professional sport and you have to operate at your best all the time."

Northampton's ranks include England forwards Courtney Lawes and Dylan Hartley and Bean is relishing the opportunity to test himself in such exalted company.

"It is great experience for me to be training with them every day," he added. "They are level-headed and willing to help."

"The Army has a lot of players in the Premiership and Championship, as well as the National League, which shows that if you put the graft in the opportunities are out there."

"My goal is to stay with Northampton for the foreseeable future, earn another contract and push for a place in the starting 15."

"You have to live and breathe it. Things don't finish on the training pitch, there's lots of homework to be done and fitness-wise you have to be right up there but I'm really enjoying it." ■



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Pictures: Trevor Hyde



TOP OF THE LEAGUE

A SUPERB 12-5 victory over Leeds in their final fixture of the season saw the Army men secure promotion to division four of the British Water Polo League.

Having entered the competition for the first time in their history, the soldiers headed into the match needing to win by six clear goals and they duly delivered as their debut campaign ended in style.

The result came on the back of a 7-7 draw with Hucknall in their opening play-off match.

The Army faced the prospect of a heavy defeat with just five minutes remaining but goals from LCpl Michael Chadwick (R Signals), Capt Nick Covington (RLC) and Capt Christopher Bermingham (Mercian) helped the team to a share of the spoils.

"The quality and strength of the squad has grown over the last decade but success at Inter-Services level has been elusive," said manager Maj Scott Robinson (RE) as he explained one of the reasons for entering the league.

"We will now head into that competition with a fair amount of optimism of challenging for the title after a strong season."

Any players interested in joining the Service set-up should email luke.illingworth192@mod.gov.uk



SLIDERS LOOK AHEAD TO NEW SEASON

THE curtain may have fallen on another season of Army bobsleigh but plans are already in place for the 2019/20 campaign.

Boasting three training camps and competitions, the set-up is looking to attract fresh talent to the ranks ahead of an assault on the Army and Inter-Services Championships.

Results in 2019 went against the soldiers as the Royal Navy won team gold in the men's and women's events at the Forces showdown but the squad were able to celebrate a host of personal achievements on the track.

Army champions Capt Sarah Smith (AGC (ETS)) and SSgt Zoe Beckett (RADC) claimed a bronze medal in the two-man discipline, an achievement

matched by LCpl Jonathan Brown and Pte Olly Butterworth (both Para) in the men's competition.

The new season gets under way in late November at Exercise Raging Ice I, a two-week novice camp for those looking to learn the fundamentals of the sport, and the action rolls on from there.

"Bobsleigh requires huge amounts of courage, discipline and selfless commitment so it epitomises the Army's values," Smith said.

"Sliders can expect to reach speeds of up to 130kph as they navigate the icy track. It is a great opportunity to access this adrenalin-fueled sport."

Search [@britisharmybobsleigh](https://www.britisharmybobsleigh.com) on social media for more details or visit www.awsa.org.uk/bobsleigh

**"THEY
CAN
EXPECT
TO
REACH
SPEEDS
OF
UP TO
130KPH"**



● THE 2019 British Army motorcycle track day will be held at Cadwell Park on Thursday, August 8.

Staged for riders of all levels, the event is aimed at improving road skills and confidence on the bike and the various Army race teams will be on hand to provide expert tips and guidance.

Interest in this year's session is expected to be high and personnel are advised to book early to avoid disappointment.

A reduced cost of £105 is available by quoting the code "BATD19" when booking through No Limits Track Days on 01525 877087.

For details email armytrackday@outlook.com



Pictures: Graeme Main and Andy Chubb

DYNAMIC DUO IN DOMINANT FORM ON FINALS DAY

HEAVYWEIGHT ace LCpl Natty Ngwenya (Gren Gds) finally tasted glory at the England Boxing National Amateur Championships as a stunning second-round stoppage of Thomas Pogson saw him claim an elite title.

Having suffered narrow defeats in three previous finals, the soldier left nothing to chance in his latest quest for honours as he rocked his opponent with a punishing barrage of blows that forced the referee to intervene.

Success in Manchester came at the end of a shortened season for the 29-year-old, whose first bout was at the Combined Services in late March after he spent four months away from the ring on the junior Brecon course.

Ngwenya was victorious at HMS *Nelson* and went on to defeat Jacob Brown at the quarter-final stage, before beating Ben Vickers in the semi-finals.

"The pressure was on," he told *SoldierSport*. "I was the number one seed and people were saying

this is my year.

"We were feeling each other out in the first round of the final and as I went back to my corner I was told it was close.

"That riled me up. I said to myself 'this is nine minutes of hard work, you've fallen short in three finals and if you let it slip now you'll have to wait another year before you can do it again'.

"I felt more relaxed and hit him with a shot I had worked hard on in training. I switched to the south paw style, feigned with a jab and then came over the top and caught him clean.

"He was given a standing count and after that I landed two left hooks and a right before the referee stepped in."

And with the title secure Ngwenya was overcome with unexpected emotion.

"I always thought I'd play it cool but I started screaming," he explained. "It was a natural reaction and I was absolutely buzzing with the result."

The Army team had further



**"I WAS
NERVOUS
GOING
IN AS I
HADN'T
REALLY
FOUGHT"**

cause to celebrate as Gnr Tori-Ellis Willets (RA) marked her return from injury by retaining her featherweight crown.

The fighter was sidelined for ten months with tendonitis in her wrist and made her comeback at the quarter-final stage.

Back-to-back wins saw her face Team GB counterpart Chloe Watson in the final, where she sealed a unanimous verdict.

"I was a bit nervous going in as I hadn't really fought beforehand," Willets (pictured left) explained.

"But once I got the quarter-finals out of the way it felt like the ring rust had gone.

"The pressure was on me to defend the title and facing Chloe in the final helped. I know her style and I've sparred with her in the past but you can't take anything for granted.

"When the verdict was announced I dropped to the floor. My dream was to win a national title and after retaining it I was full of joy." ■



PLAYERS WANTED: FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN ARMY TABLE TENNIS VISIT WWW.ARMYTABLETENNIS.ORG

» TABLE TENNIS

TABLE TOPPERS

A SPECTACULAR 10-0 victory over the Royal Air Force saw the Army women claim top honours in the final of this season's Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships.

The whitewash coincided with the 50th anniversary of the women's tournament and completed a dismal title defence by the defending champions in Aldershot.

Musn Rosemarie Coetzer (CAMUS, pictured) helped the Reds secure the silverware in style and she told *SoldierSport* a two-day training camp in the build-up ensured the players took to the tables in top form.

"That really helped," she added. "It allowed us to sharpen our skills in attack and defence and make sure our serves were spot on."

"The first few games were quite tense and we didn't know how it would go, but after that everything went in our favour. We did really well."

While the women triumphed there was disappointment for the men's A team, who lost 6-4 to the RAF in their final.

Top seeds Pte Bibek Kakri and Pte Ben Avery (both RLC) suffered narrow defeats in their opening singles matches and the Reds were trailing 5-3 going into the doubles ties – where their rivals secured the point they needed to seal a third successive title.

"We gave them a close match that could have easily gone the other way," coach WO2 John McFaul (R Irish) said afterwards. "There are a lot of positives we can take." ■



INFANTRY END SEASON IN STYLE

THE Infantry rugby union team enjoyed a storming end to the season as they recorded a convincing win over the Royal Air Force Regiment in Aldershot.

A four-try burst in the first-half saw the soldiers seize control in the inaugural match between the two sides and the hosts went on to complete a 50-13 victory.

OCdt Mike Milward opened the scoring in the 14th minute before 2nd Lt Harry Isaac (RRF) administered further punishment when he touched down under the posts following an incisive break from Fus Aaron James (R Welsh).

Ill discipline offered the RAF a route back into the game as

the Infantry saw two players sin binned but with their full complement restored the onslaught continued.

Isaac and James added further tries before the break and when LCpl Filimoni Moceka (SG) crossed shortly after the restart the contest was effectively over.

The centre struck again moments later before late efforts from 2nd Lt Ieuan Jones and Fus Corey McIntyre (both R Welsh) extended the lead further.

"It is nice to finish the season with some silverware," skipper Sgt Matthew Frere (Yorks) said. "This will hopefully set us up for the challenges to come next year."



HONOURS SHARED

THERE was a familiar feel to this year's Inter-Services Basketball Championships as the major honours were shared among the three competing Forces.

In a repeat of the 2018 tournament, the Army claimed the women's title as a 51-30 defeat of the Royal Navy saw them seal a third successive title.

Player of the tournament Lt Holly Kirkham (RLC) led the Reds' charge but she insisted it was the squad's performance as a whole that formed the platform for their latest success.

"Our goal was to come here and win," she said. "We've got really good depth on the bench and the five players who come on are just as good as the starting five."

"Every single one of those girls plays really good basketball and is very experienced."

"That's something the other teams could not match."

Competition hosts the Army downed the Army 104-62 to lift the men's trophy, while the Royal Air Force proved too strong in the under-23 draw.



BOYNTON BRACED FOR LORD'S BATTLE



"THIS IS THE MOST EXCITED I'VE BEEN"

ARMY cricket captain Cpl Jay Boynton (REME) is relishing the prospect of leading a revenge mission at Lord's as his team looks to reclaim the Inter-Services Twenty20 trophy this month.

The Reds' suffered a 41-run defeat to the Royal Air Force in last year's final, a result that ended hopes of a sixth successive title and handed their rivals a famous win.

With pre-season training complete, the squad is facing a challenging run of fixtures in the build-up to the big day and Boynton (pictured left) insisted places are up for grabs.

"There will be opportunities and we have an intense month leading up to Lord's," he said.

"The Army is so busy with people away on different exercises but hopefully we can switch the team around and see some new faces in action."

"I've thought a lot about what happened last season and sometimes you just have to hold your hands up. The RAF outthought us but we came back strong in the 50-over competition."

"Lord's is still the pinnacle. This is the most excited I've been while playing Army cricket and as captain I want to win that trophy back – hopefully that rubs off on the team."

The Inter-Services Twenty20 will be played on Thursday, May 30 and tickets will be available on the gate. For more details visit www.interservicest20.co.uk

● THE Army women were due to return from a two-week cricket tour of Japan as this issue went to press.

A 15-man squad was selected for the trip, which included a series of twenty20 matches against the Japanese national team as part of their preparations for the upcoming Asia Cup.

"Army cricket is going from strength to strength," said team manager Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS)). "We have got a lot of new players coming through and this is a chance to see what they can do."

The domestic season gathers pace later this month, with the Inter-Services 40-over and Twenty20 competitions scheduled for late June and July respectively.



MONTH IN SPORT

May's key fixtures...



WHAT: Army v Royal Navy rugby union
WHEN: May 4
WHERE: Twickenham
NEED TO KNOW: The Army were in

Inter-Services action against the Royal Air Force as this issue went to press. A win would give the Reds the ideal platform ahead of this sell-out clash



WHAT: Inter-Corps Twenty20 Cricket Championships
WHEN: May 7 to 9
WHERE: Aldershot, Larkhill and Tidworth
NEED TO KNOW: Ten corps teams will compete for the first major silverware of the season. The Royal Logistic Corps triumphed in last year's final but who will claim the honours in 2019?



WHAT: 21 Engr Regt v 3 AAC, Army FA Cup final
WHEN: May 8
WHERE: Army Football Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: This historic competition is

now in its 119th year and with defending champions 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment missing out this season it's all to play for

BOXING IN NUMBERS

WINNING RUN, IN YEARS, THAT CAME TO A HALT AS THE ARMY LOST IN 2018

34

WALKOVERS FOR SERVICE FIGHTERS ON THE NIGHT

3

VICTORIES CLAIMED BY THE REDS IN THE RING

3

DAYS OF TRAINING UNDERTAKEN BY THE SQUAD WITH THE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL TEAM IN THE BUILD-UP

10

SOLDIERS WHO WENT ON TO COMPETE FOR ENGLISH AMATEUR BOXING TITLES

8



BOXERS GAIN RING REVENGE

HAVING seen their impressive 34-year winning run come crashing to a halt last season, the Army's boxers returned to form to regain the Inter-Services title at the home of their rivals.

Walkovers helped the Reds' cause in Portsmouth but the champions-elect impressed in the ring, winning three of the six bouts on the evening to lift the trophy in style.

But it was the Royal Air Force who excelled early on as SAC Ricki Lyon defeated LCpl Shamim Khan (RLC) in the bantamweight ranks, before SAC Kieran Bailey triumphed over LCpl Jordan Bracken (RL) at lightweight.

Welterweight LCpl Pete Love (R Anglian) was involved in the fight of the night as he locked horns with Dvr Brad Chapman but after three brutal rounds the soldier fell on the wrong side of a split decision.

The Army celebrated their first win when Gdsm Josh Plummer (Coldm Gds)

outscored SAC Brad Axe to secure his first Inter-Services success in three attempts.

LCpl Carnell Brown (AGC (SPS), pictured) maintained the momentum as he claimed the honours in the light heavyweight division, where he beat Mne Toby Osmond.

And LCpl Natty Ngwenya (Gren Gds) ensured proceedings ended on a high as he outclassed Mne Macormack Farrelly to reign supreme at heavyweight.

"After losing for the first time in 34 years, this is a great comeback story," Ngwenya told *SoldierSport*.

"To regain the title in the way we did was fantastic.

"It is the first time we have gone into the tournament with no pressure. The Royal Navy were the defending champions and the focus was on them in their back garden.

"We had a few lads who lost on split decisions and it could have easily gone the other way for the likes of Shamim Khan and Pete Love." ■



I've only got eight years left in the Army and wanted to do something different. It's given me a new challenge and while it might not open many doors at this stage in my career, I think the younger guys will progress a lot faster than those in other regiments.

Sgt Craig Froggett, RA



I'm from South Africa and one of the reasons I came to England was to do the commando course. It opens quite a few doors because people know you've done something extra over and above normal training.

Bdr Thobani Mbanjwa, RA



When I talk to potential recruits I always explain to them the places I've been. I've travelled to France, Germany, Albania, Djibouti, Oman, the Suez Canal, Norway and Finland. I've also crossed the Atlantic on a ship in a hurricane. It's so worth it.

Bdr Craig Fernando, RA



The course is hellish but because of the rewards you get in terms of going on better exercises and becoming a more capable soldier, you've got to look past that. From an officer perspective it's a massive test of basic leadership and the commando flash gives you a bit of credibility when you arrive at your unit.

Capt Ed Dorey, RA



It's a real eye-opener – you don't get much exposure to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines outside of this. There are so many exciting opportunities within 3 Commando Brigade. In the Army you tend to do the same exercises and rotations but here there is more variety.

Lt Quinn Sorabjee, RE



The roles within 3 Commando Brigade are so diverse. You go to various places and work with different kit and equipment. You can't get bored of your job because things are always changing.

LBdr Daniel Cribb, RA

Opportunity knocks

We asked troops who have completed the all-arms commando course what doors it can open...

Being a commando-trained sapper looks good and your chances of picking up promotions are far greater. Deployments are more interesting.

Spr Conor Davies, RE



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