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MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



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in this issue

FEBRUARY 2012 Vol 68/2

30 Equine esteem

Spielberg offers new take on cavalry

33 Afghanistan to anywhere

Paras prepare for contingency tasks

37 Nursing with nerve

Reservist mum rewarded for work at Bastion

40 Shooter stash

Colossal cache equips troops with weaponry

43 The art of war

Para-turned-painter records life on tour

47 Kings of Kilimanjaro

Rifles on trek to support wounded comrades

48 Intelligence insight

Battalion boost Herrick in brand new role

51 Rules of romance

Top tips for online dating

52 Ranked

Ten greatest Greek warriors

87 SoldierSport

Regulars

7 The Informer

55 Talkback

64 Bullet points

67 Home truths

76 Movies

78 Games

80 Music

82 Books

84 Top gear

98 Final word



Cover picture (left): Service personnel ready themselves for life after Op Herrick (pages 33-35)

Background image: LCpl Johnno Lee, who lost his right leg to a Taliban bomb, climbs to the top of the Glyder Range in Snowdonia as part of preparations for this month's ascent of Africa's highest mountain peak (page 47) Picture: Chris Fletcher



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*Department of sport & Exercise science, University of Chichester, 2010.



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SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by Wyndeham (Roche) Ltd. Print contract
managed by Corporate Document Services (CDS).

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Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily
those of the British Army or the Ministry of Defence.



Picture: Steve Dock

● Afghanistan to anywhere – pages 33-35

Helmand province and hereafter

THIS month's issue is one of the first in which we begin to get a real sense of life after Operation Herrick.

Despite being just two years away from transition to Afghan National Security Forces, financial challenges on home turf mean discussions about progress in the desert are now frequently overshadowed by debates on the future state of the British Army.

Preparations for this year's Olympics, continuing redundancies and base relocations are all talking points that beg serious discussion in order to make sense of what will be a year of mixed feelings.

The exciting prospect of assisting our country in hosting the greatest sporting event on earth will be a bitter-sweet experience in the immediate aftermath of hundreds of soldiers learning that their service is no longer required.

However, it seems as if this plethora of (completely justified) concerns and conversations sometimes consigns efforts in Afghanistan to nothing more than a brief mention or occasional sound bite.

Is this a positive sign that the Army is starting to look forward towards life after the conflict in Helmand province? That cumulative progress there is now a given?

Or is our unavoidable distraction from the job in hand doing a disservice to those who continue to risk their lives and make the ultimate sacrifice (page 23) to finish the job?

However personally focused you are on Op Herrick right now, I hope this issue brings an interesting flavour of what lies ahead.

From the paras setting their sights on contingency operations (pages 33-35) to the weaponry wonderland educating soldiers in

military history in an effort to boost future performance (pages 40-41), the British Army certainly seems to be paving the way for challenges it will face after 2014.

In his New Year address to troops last month, the Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Peter Wall, spoke of the need to approach the coming years with positivity despite the present being tough.

"Looking forward is not to deny the humbling, day-to-day, persistent commitment we are delivering on operations and elsewhere," he said.

"It is to recognise that the British Army is arguably at as interesting a moment as at any time in my career, and possibly some time before."

But in the spirit of not overlooking the

continuing successes being struck across the desert (pages 13 and 21), this issue is dedicated to those who continue to throw themselves into the task in Afghanistan – often uncertain as to whether the Service will reward this commitment with continued employment after further redundancy rounds.

Finally, I wonder how many of our *Talkback* contributors have spotted their letters in national newspapers recently?

I am not entirely sure what is going on in the newsrooms of the *Daily Mail* et al (presumably redundancies as well?) but it seems *Soldier* has become the newsgatherer's tool of choice when it comes to reporting on the British Army.

Although preferable to the less savoury journalistic methods being scrutinised by Lord Justice Leveson, I hope the occasional media mention does not put readers off getting in touch.

It only demonstrates the intense public interest in welfare of Service personnel – something we should probably take comfort from. – **Sarah Goldthorpe, Editor** ■

'I hope this issue brings an interesting flavour of what lies ahead'

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Picture: MoD/Crown Copyright

Essential equipment: The air-portable containers, made of protective plastic Kevlar, will be used to safeguard fuel from attacks in southern Afghanistan

Bulletproof balls aid front-line troops

GIANT sacks designed to transport fuel by air have been delivered to Armed Forces personnel operating in Helmand province.

The Air Portable Fuel Containers Mk 5, which hold up to two tonnes of liquid each, enable essential supplies to be dropped off in remote areas.

The enormous balloon-like rubber receptacles have a diameter of 1.37 metres and contain Kevlar – a flexible plastic commonly used in body armour which protects the contents from hard knocks and enemy fire.

This special coating means the balls can be parachuted into locations or dropped from heights of up to about eight metres.

Flt Lt John Harrison, tactical supply wing detachment commander at Camp Bastion, said the new equipment was providing British forces with greater flexibility on the battlefield.

He added: “The Mk 5s are extremely robust and have the capability to be airlifted full of fuel and deposited wherever they are needed, usually in extremely austere locations.

“This allows the battlefield helicopter to extend its reach from Bastion and spend longer at the front line to deliver valuable support to ground troops.

“They are relatively maintenance-free and easy to operate, making them an essential bit of equipment.”

The kit can be transported in a sling under a helicopter or in the back of a transport aircraft.

This capability means that personnel stationed at forward operating bases or checkpoints – who rely on fuel to power their generators for heat, light, medical facilities and communications – do not have to wait as long for vital supplies to be moved by road.

“These containers provide an

effective, safe and quick means of delivering fuel to the front line, ensuring essential support to operations,” explained Richard Holloway, battlefield utilities project team leader for the MoD’s Defence Equipment and Support branch, which oversaw procurement of the containers.

Designed and built in the UK, the balls were bought under a £2 million, five-year agreement with aviation supplier GKN Aerospace.

The global firm is based in Portsmouth, Hampshire.

Phil Swash, president and chief executive officer of the company’s Aerostructures Europe department, said: “The real contribution this apparatus makes to the effective functioning of our troops working in remote and forward bases is something this team and whole site is extremely proud of.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

HIKE CONCLUDES CAREER

■ A BRITISH Army colonel has marked the end of his career by walking from his final posting in Heidelberg, Germany, back to the UK.

Col Robert Jordan, the former British liaison officer with the US Army in Europe, completed the 500-mile trek in 32 days.

The challenge has seen him raise more than £19,000 for Service charities – Help for Heroes, ABF The Soldiers' Charity and The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation.

The former commanding officer of 1st Battalion, The Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment served for 36 years.

Speaking after the walk, he said: "I was very lucky with the weather and needed my Ray-Bans more than I needed my Gore-Tex."

NEW RADIO REGULAR

■ **COMBAT DJ W02 Si Reynolds (RE)** has taken to the airwaves as the new presenter of the *Ops Sunday Breakfast Show* on BFBS Radio.

The Serviceman first volunteered for a job with the station in 2005 while deployed on Op Telic 5.

He returned to the studio two years later as he combined his busy day job with weekend shows.

"Thanks to some great training by the team here, I am again helping to keep the troops in touch with home and providing entertainment

from someone who is one of their own," W02 Reynolds said.

BFBS listeners in Afghanistan can tune in to the show from 0730 every Sunday.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

THE Ministry of Defence has given £3 million to ensure Service children are not disadvantaged by moving schools.

A total of 139 educational establishments across the UK have shared the money, which has been allocated under the department's support for state schools fund.

The scheme was launched in 2011 as part of the key commitments outlined by the Armed Forces Covenant and will run for four years.

Projects include the introduction of extra support workers and use of web chat facility Skype to allow youngsters to contact parents.

Lydia Fisher of the MoD's children and young people directorate said: "It was pleasing to see the interesting and varied projects that local authorities, academies and schools are already putting in place."



Picture: Force Protection Europe

Desert defender: An increase in Foxhound numbers will further protect troops serving in Afghanistan

Multi-million pound kit boost

DEFENCE Secretary Philip Hammond has announced a £400 million package of protected vehicles and counter-IED technology to further boost UK troops in Afghanistan.

The investment marks an advance in the battle against the Taliban and will include about 100 more Foxhound patrol vehicles – taking the total number available to personnel to around 300.

More than half the amount pledged will fund cutting-edge kit to combat roadside explosives, details of which the Ministry of Defence cannot release for security reasons.

Mr Hammond said: "Success in Helmand is our number one priority and protecting our forces from bombs is our most urgent challenge."

"Foxhound is designed, developed

and built in Britain and this announcement demonstrates the Government's commitment to providing troops with world-class protective kit.

"The vehicle will provide our Armed Forces with a highly protected and agile vehicle, and its manufacture will create and sustain jobs across the UK."

"The counter-IED package is another major step forward in the battle against the bombers, using cutting-edge technology to defeat their evil campaign and safeguard our troops."

Some 200 Foxhounds ordered by the MoD back in 2010 will be available for deployment to Afghanistan this year.

Originally procured as an urgent operational requirement, the vehicle is designed specifically to counter the threats faced in Helmand.

Paras prepare for peacekeeping ops

TROOPS from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment have been showered with missiles and petrol bombs during public order training in Kent.

The serial was held in a mock village at Lydd Ranges and saw the airborne personnel learn to deal with hostile crowds in readiness for their role as the British Army's Rapid Reaction Force.

Maj Richard Todd, officer commanding A Company, said: "This is a new skill for lots of our soldiers, but they have really enjoyed it and performed well on a challenging and extremely realistic course."

"Many of the drills are no different to what the Roman Army used to do."

● Afghanistan to anywhere – pages 33-35





IN A NUTSHELL

Latest redundancies

What happens if I am one of those eligible to go?

First, you should make sure that details used to identify you are correct – your admin office can help you do this. The most important things to confirm are your length of service, whether you fit the operational exclusion criteria and if your medical status renders you ineligible. You will need to read **DIN 2012DIN01-017** to understand how the rules should be applied.

What should I do next?

Assuming you remain eligible for redundancy, consider whether or not you want to apply. If you do, you must get your application form to the Army redundancy cell by February 28. It is your personal responsibility to fill out and send. Be sure it is what you want to do and make sure you have talked to your family and considered the financial implications. Visit the Armed Forces redundancy calculator at www.mod-rc.co.uk to check what financial package to expect.

What if I want to apply?

The application form is at the back of the tranche two redundancy DIN alongside the form to withdraw your application if you change your mind. You cannot reverse your decision after February 28.

What if I don't want to apply?

Wait for the results of redundancy selection to be announced on June 12.

What is going on while I'm waiting?

The Army Personnel Centre will run boards to grade and score those eligible for redundancy and select the ones to go. They will use your annual appraisal reports to make their decision. In general, those who apply will be selected before those who do not and those who score lowest will be taken first. In some areas there may be too many applicants. If this happens then generally the lowest scoring ones will be chosen first.

How will I be informed of the results?

Personnel selected for redundancy will be informed by a notifying officer in person (probably your commanding officer) on June 12. Those who have had their applications refused will be told at the same time. If you are selected you will receive a letter formally informing you of that decision.

What happens after I'm made redundant?

If you applied you will have six months before you are discharged. If you didn't, you will have 12 months. In either case you can request to go earlier if you want. During these periods you must conduct all resettlement administration, take your leave and move your quarter for your final tour of duty if you wish to do so. Your admin office can help and full details are in the redundancy DIN.

How do I get more information?

Contact the Army redundancy cell on military 94561 3071, telephone 01412 243071 or email apc-redundancy-mailbox@mod.uk



Sun setting on Service careers: Those personnel eligible for redundancy under tranche two of the measures to reduce Army numbers by 7,000 by April 2015 have been informed. Soldiers and officers preparing for, or currently deployed on, operations remain exempt (page 55) Picture: Sgt Rupert Frere, RLC

Second round reductions revealed

THE second round of reductions to the British Army's workforce is under way.

Last month commanders alerted the Service personnel who are eligible for redundancy later this year.

The Ministry of Defence said that up to 2,900 soldiers would leave during this phase, the final outcome of which will be announced on June 12.

Some of those to go are expected to be volunteers but others will lose their jobs unwillingly.

It follows the loss of around 900 troops last September including hundreds who had applied to depart.

In an interview with *Soldier* in 2011,

head of Army manning Brig Richard Nugge said: "Redundancies are taking place right across the Service and there's no rank that isn't being looked at, apart from young officers."

He said that his team was doing its best to ensure personnel were informed face-to-face.

Those who wish to leave must apply to the Army redundancy cell by February 28.

The latest round follows an announcement in 2010 that Armed Forces numbers would be cut by 17,000 by April 2015 under terms set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review – including 7,000 from the Army.

Gender irrelevant to career in green

THE highest ranked female in the British Armed Forces has given her first ever media interview.

Brig Nicky Moffat told the *Guardian* about her 30-year career and how she is not a "whinger" or someone who plays "the gender card".

"Women do not need to be treated with kid gloves," she told journalist Nick Hopkins last month.

"It is very easy for people to attribute a lack of success or failure, or an occurrence, to hang it on to something like gender or colour.

"I have never really liked that approach."



The senior Army officer claimed to be quietly fighting for equality in the ranks, though her methods may not have been appreciated by everyone. She claimed that commanding officers have previously been too kind to women who broke the rules or lost equipment.

"I don't like distinctions based on gender," the brigadier said.

Although women only account for eight per cent of the British Army, she told the daily newspaper there is no better time for females to join the Service.



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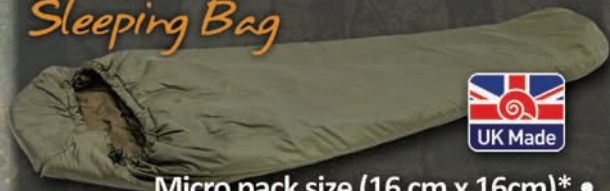
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NEWS IN BRIEF

COUNTER-IED CONVERSION

■ THE Army’s counter-IED branch has been disestablished, with its responsibilities being passed to staff within the Service’s new headquarters structure.

A full list of where tasks now lie can be found in Army Briefing Note 05-12.

MONEY ADVICE AVAILABLE

■ PRACTICAL guidance on money-related matters has been issued to British Army troops.

The tips have been produced by the MoD, along with several financial bodies including the Council of Mortgage Lenders, and can be found on the department’s intranet and internet sites.

The material includes advice on applying for unsecured credit and mortgages and is designed to put soldiers in touch with commercial services that can be difficult to access from overseas.

The MoD has said it will bring in a system to help troops maintain a credit rating while living at British Forces Post Office addresses.

A new financial education programme for Armed Forces personnel is also being developed by the Standard Life Charitable Trust and The Royal British Legion.

The initiative is due to be introduced this year.



Severn superhero: Paramedics have thanked Pte Andrew Simpson for his bold actions during leave

Serviceman saves drowning civvy

A BRITISH soldier has been praised for fishing a woman from a river during a dramatic rescue.

Pte Andrew Simpson, based at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick, was on leave in his home town of Bridgnorth, Shropshire, when he performed the daring feat.

After hearing that someone had got into trouble in the Severn, the recruit dashed to the scene and waded up to his neck to grab the semi-conscious casualty.

He dragged her to the river’s edge but thick undergrowth and a strong current meant the Serviceman had to remain in the water for several minutes, desperately trying to keep hold of the victim until emergency services arrived.

In an interview with *Soldier*, Pte

Simpson admitted he was not a strong swimmer but added: “It was just one of those things. I saw someone in trouble and wanted to help.

“There were a few times when I thought I might let go of her but I managed to keep my grip.”

Now the 22-year-old’s actions have been commended by West Midlands Ambulance Service.

“We will be writing to the soldier’s commanding officer in recognition of his efforts to help a member of the public in extremely difficult and dangerous conditions,” a spokesman said in a statement.

The victim was found to be suffering from hypothermia and was later taken to hospital by ambulance.



Helmand humour: Entertainers Ian Stone, Andy Askins, Barry Castagnola, Phil Butler and Tom Stade helped to put a smile on the faces of Service personnel at various locations across the British area of operations in Afghanistan

LIVE SHOWS LIFT MORALE

■ CSE Forces Entertainment returned to Afghanistan to deliver 14 morale-boosting shows to British personnel.

A tour featuring comedians Rich Wilson and Steve Harris, music duo Front Cover and three dancers gave five performances in nine days to troops in Kandahar, Kabul, Camp Bastion, Camp Letherneck and Kabul International Airport.

Meanwhile, comedians Barry Castagnola and Andy Askins, along with dancers Charlotte Chapman and Natasha Lusted, took to the stage at forward operating and patrol bases across Helmand province.

CSE is paid by the MoD to provide live entertainment to UK troops across the world.

Make your vote count, soldiers urged

THOUSANDS of British troops could lose the chance to vote in elections this year if they do not act soon, the Electoral Commission has warned.

It is urging all soldiers to make sure they have completed a voter registration form online or by visiting a unit registration day being held this month.

Samantha Mills, head of campaigns at the organisation, said: “The British Army is made up of a very mobile population: moving house, moving base and being deployed overseas are all factors that result in lower registration rates among Service personnel.

“The commission is encouraging all soldiers to enrol before the deadline on April 18 or, if you think you are already registered, to double check that you are on the electoral roll.”

Recent research by the independent body showed that 44 per cent of those not registered to vote falsely believed that they were.

Ms Mills added: “Elections are not far away and by doing this you can make sure you have your say on the issues that matter to you.”

Greater London Assembly, London mayoral and many local government elections will take place on May 3.

Servicemen and women who know they will be abroad on this date, or who can’t make it to a polling station in person, can apply to vote by post or by choosing a proxy – an individual they trust to vote on their behalf.

To fill in the necessary document or for more information visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces



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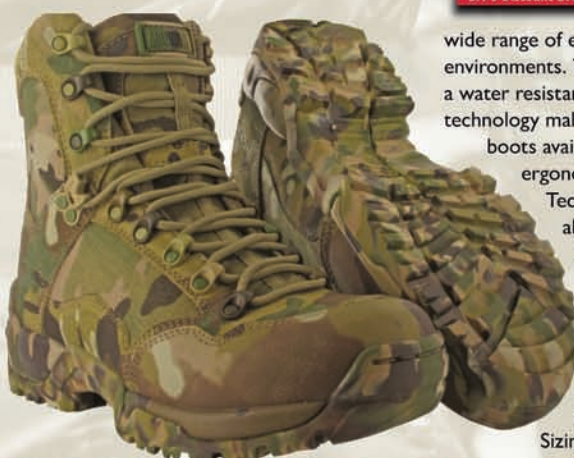
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“ THIS NEW ROLE IS ABOUT GOING BACK TO OLD-SCHOOL SOLDIERING, WHICH IS WHAT THE BRITISH ARMY DOES BEST ”

– PARATROOPERS PREPARE FOR FUTURE FIGHTS, PAGE 98

NEWS IN BRIEF

COVENANT COMMITTEE

■ A GROUP of ministers has been assembled to ensure that promises made under the Armed Forces Covenant are kept.

The cross-government committee, led by Conservative MP Oliver Letwin, will aim to keep the interests of Service personnel high in the nation's priorities.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond confirmed the arrangements as he delivered an interim report on the covenant to parliament.

“This will give a voice to, and act as champion of, Armed Forces and veterans' issues to ensure government is joined-up when providing vital services for military personnel,” the politician said in a statement.

EVEREST AMBITION

■ CHARITY Walking with the Wounded will attempt to get the first team of injured Servicemen to summit Mount Everest this year.

The adventurers, all of whom have been hurt in the line of duty, will make the journey to the world's highest peak in May.

The group will include Karl Hinett (pictured below), a former private with The Staffordshire Regiment who completed 52 marathons in 52 weeks during 2011 to raise money for injured personnel.

Hinett suffered severe burns during a firebomb attack on his Warrior in Iraq during 2005.

The challenge follows the charity's North Pole expedition last year, which Prince Harry joined for four days.



SITE SERVES SPOUSES

■ A NEW website has been launched by an Army wife to help Service partners find rewarding and paid employment.

Recruit for Spouses allows users to complete a profile and search for various jobs before bidding for vacancies in a similar way to online auctions.

Founder Heledd Kendrick said: “Life is changing and with government cuts we are moving into a society where spouses want and need to work in gainful employment.

“This website is not just for wives – we'd love to hear from men who have a partner in the Armed Forces too. The emphasis is on flexible working patterns to fit round both family commitments and the military lifestyle.”

Visit the site at www.recruitforspouses.co.uk



Picture: Graeme Main

Rapid reactor: The much-feared gunship left enemy fighters startled after launching a Hellfire missile

Apache strikes Taliban chief

A SENIOR insurgent commander has been killed by a British Army attack helicopter in a joint operation in Helmand province.

Op Kapcha Shkar Kawel saw more than 40 soldiers from D Company, 5th Battalion, The Rifles team up with Afghan National Security Forces to disrupt activity in the Taliban “safe haven” of Nahr-e Saraj.

During the task, enemy fighters were spotted firing at the patrol.

When an individual continued to target the group, a supporting Apache gunship launched a Hellfire missile to eliminate the threat. The man was later identified as a senior commander.

Bdr Joe Harris, a tactical air controller, said: “We had tracked this guy for some time before getting into position to strike.

“It was a relief to finally get him as he had been firing at our lads on the ground and could have caused significant casualties.”

Maj Matt Baker, officer commanding D Company, explained: “We clearly took them by surprise because after we hit them with the Apache they just didn't want to know any more and were in a state of shock for about 30 minutes.

“The Afghan police are now in a position to take lead responsibility for security here.”

He added: “I've been genuinely impressed by them and know they are ready to take over.”

Following the attack, the British and Afghan troops were able to finish their mission and gather crucial intelligence on insurgent activity.

The soldiers spent the following weeks pushing the Taliban out of Babaji and helping Afghan police to construct new checkpoints.

Maj Chris Bisset (AAC), officer commanding the UK Apache squadron on Op Herrick, said: “This is a good example of why this attack helicopter is deployed to support British troops in southern Afghanistan.

“By closely coordinating with the ground forces we were able to engage this man in a safe area, which then allowed the soldiers on the ground to return to their primary job of reassuring and protecting the local population.”

The combined force has now handed over responsibility for security in Babaji to Afghan personnel and is turning its attention to the Kopak region further north in the country.

Loggies put sea legs to the test

PERSONNEL from 165 Port Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps have been put through their paces on their annual deployment exercise.

The unit, which is the Territorial Army's only enabling port and maritime capability, was allocated the landing ship RFA *Mounts Bay* for the serial and performed a number of key training tasks.

Participants were given the chance to operate out of the vessel's rear dock,

reconfigure cargo on the main decks, utilise the boat's equipment and cranes and gain valuable experience of life on-board.

A wide array of vehicles were also transported between the ship and shore via Mexeflote landing raft.

The action-packed exercise concluded with a maritime combat power demonstration at Browdown Beach near Gosport in Hampshire.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

RESERVIST REWORKING

■ THE Territorial Army has outlined changes to its command and control structure in a bid to boost the integration between Reservist and Regular soldiers.

The realignment will enhance the organisation's recruiting and training capability and will be introduced in a number of stages.

Last month the commandant at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst assumed control of all University Officer Training Corps and the director general of the Army recruiting and training division took command of 4th Division's regional training centres. A further round of changes are planned for April.

GOING, GOING, GUN

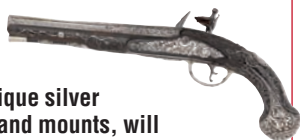
■ AN exceptionally rare pair of silver flintlock holster pistols are expected to sell for between £40,000 and £60,000 when they go under the hammer at

Bonhams in April.

The highly-decorated

firearms were made by Joseph Heylin, one of Great Britain's most renowned gunsmiths, in the 18th century and are part of the Norman Dixon collection.

Bids for the antique firearms, which have unique silver barrels, locks and mounts, will be made at the London auctioneers on April 18.



● Shooter stash – pages 40-41

ACADEMY ANNIVERSARY

■ THE Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has kicked off a programme of events to mark its 200th anniversary this year.

Beginning with a church service, the milestone will be acknowledged with a host of international visitors, games and ceremonial parades.

Commandant Maj Gen Patrick Marriott said: "This year is going to be a national celebration of what officers have delivered to the Army."

"At a moment when the country is going through a hard time, it's not a bad thing to take stock of what we have achieved."



Pictures: Mark Owens

Taking aim: British soldiers trained alongside their French Army counterparts during Ex Gaulish Hackle

Scots shine across Channel

THE Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders have shared military expertise during a serial with their counterparts in the French Army's 152nd Infantry Regiment.

Exercise Gaulish Hackle saw troops from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland descend on the Centre d'Entrainement aux Actions en Zone Urbaine – an urban warfare training centre in north east France – to explain their tactics.

Drills were aimed at further increasing military cooperation between the two countries and helped to initiate the formation of a joint Anglo-French expeditionary force.

Maj Neil Brown, officer commanding A Company, said that lessons learnt during the event would

make it easier for both formations to train and fight alongside each other in future encounters.

British participant Pte Jim Hall (Scots) added: "We exchanged tactics with the French soldiers and used the Giat Famas assault rifle, the standard weapon used by their army."

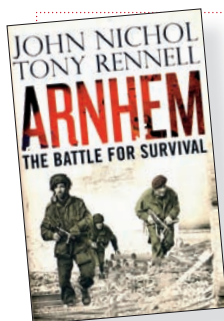
Pte Connor Bourke (Scots) said: "We ate French rations during the training exercise but they

were not a patch on what British Army chefs usually prepare for us."

The training centre is the largest facility of its kind in Europe.

To date it has cost £100 million to construct, with building continuing during 2012.

The battalion will return the favour by hosting a French Army unit in the UK later this year.



■ ADEPT music fans were tuned in to our attempts to flummox you with chart-topping trivia in last month's spine lines competition.

(Jane) Batchelor, (Mecelle) Cooney, (Sam) Stevenson and (Ade) Bowles are all members of the choir who proudly reached the

Christmas number one spot last year following the success of their BBC Two series *The Choir: Military Wives*.

This month we have some exciting Second World War literature up for grabs in the form of *Arnhem* by John Nichol and Tony Rennell.

We are giving away five copies of the gripping account, which details some of the astonishing acts of heroism behind the Battle of Arnhem.

To be in with a chance of winning, tell us what links the words adorning the side of this issue.

Answers should be sent to the usual address or emailed to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by February 29.

Winners will be drawn at random and the usual rules apply.

WIN



“I WANTED TO MAKE A VERY HONEST STORY BUT WAS CAREFUL TO PULL BACK IN WAYS I WOULDN'T HAVE ON *SAVING PRIVATE RYAN*”

– SPIELBERG SPILLS THE BEANS ON FILMING *WAR HORSE*, PAGES 30-31

GOOD DRILLS

AID FOR ORPHANS

TROOPS serving with the Royal Military Police's special investigation branch in Afghanistan have dedicated their free time to supporting Helmand orphans. Members of 62 Section have been appealing to friends back home to post them donations such as clothing, blankets and toys. The soldiers were inspired to carry out the work after meeting children whose parents had died during the conflict.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

A NEW service offering mental health support to ex-military personnel in the North West has been launched. Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust has introduced the initiative to help veterans and their families in Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria and Merseyside. Treatment for a range of conditions will be offered including depression, anxiety, stress, anger, substance misuse and post-traumatic stress disorder. For more information visit www.penninecare.nhs.uk/military-veterans.

SECURITY COMPANY SEIZURE

TWO British men have been arrested in Afghanistan for carrying 30 unlicensed guns, the BBC reported. The individuals were working for a private security company and carrying AK47s – one of the most commonly used weapons in the country.

AL-SHABAAB ARREST

A FORMER US soldier has been charged with supporting the terror group al-Shabaab. The man, trained in cryptology and intelligence, is accused of attempting to join and provide support to the Islamist terror organisation. The US Department of Justice said he had travelled to Kenya at the end of last year with the intention of joining Somalia-based insurgents. He was detained by police while trying to cross the border and then interviewed by FBI officials before being returned to Maryland, America, to stand trial.

BAD DRILLS



Picture: Crown Copyright/Mod 2012

Future focus: Members of the regiment are doing their bit to ensure successful transition in Helmand

Gibraltar troops advance Afghan task

PERSONNEL from The Royal Gibraltar Regiment are working closely with their international colleagues and Afghan partners to ensure Britain gets the job done in Helmand province.

Servicemen and women from the unit are carrying out a variety of roles in support of Op Herrick, from augmenting those on operations to training security officers.

Lt John Pitto (RG) is attached to 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and is leading a group that coaches members of the Afghan National Civil Order Police.

“This job is important in the lead-up to our extraction in 2014,” he explained. “Our main effort now is the mentoring of local troops in order to set the conditions to help Nato leave southern Afghanistan.”

“By then we expect the country's own security forces will be able to cope with future threats themselves.”

“The key to successful transition is for us to accept that it must be an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem.”

“This, at times, has proved to be difficult but we have done well to

persevere with the principle.”

CSgt Grant Smith (pictured above), who has just returned to Gibraltar after a six-month tour, was working two ranks above his normal role alongside more than 100 Nato instructors.

During his time in Helmand, more than 4,000 members of the Afghan National Army completed career courses under his control.

“The tour was a fantastic experience,” CSgt Smith said.

“I have never worked with so many different nations before and, of course, I've never worked at WO1 rank.

“In the past my experience has largely been within the regiment but, out in Helmand province, I was operating at brigade level.”

Meanwhile, more than 80 other members of the unit have been preparing for potential deployment at the Longmoor Training Area near Liphook in Hampshire.

Troops were given the opportunity to practise operating out of a realistic forward operating base in addition to patrols, searches and platoon attacks.

The training package culminated in a three-day exercise.

NEWS IN BRIEF

KOSOVO COMMEMORATED

■ A MEMORIAL to British personnel who lost their lives while serving in Kosovo has been unveiled in the region's Film City.

The Ambassador to Pristina, Ian Cliff, performed the ceremony and the tribute is dedicated to the memory of 14 Servicemen who died during the conflict.

The original UK memorial was removed from the British Army base in Pristina upon the withdrawal of the last remaining units in 2009.

AIRBORNE FORCE FIGURE

■ A STRIKING bronze statue is being created at the National Memorial Arboretum as a tribute to The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces.

The composition will feature a paratrooper and Bellerophon astride Pegasus – the symbol and badge worn to denote airborne units.

The sculptors chosen for the ambitious project are ex-para Mark Jackson and Charlie Langton.

For more information and to donate to the appeal, visit www.paracharity.org/memorial



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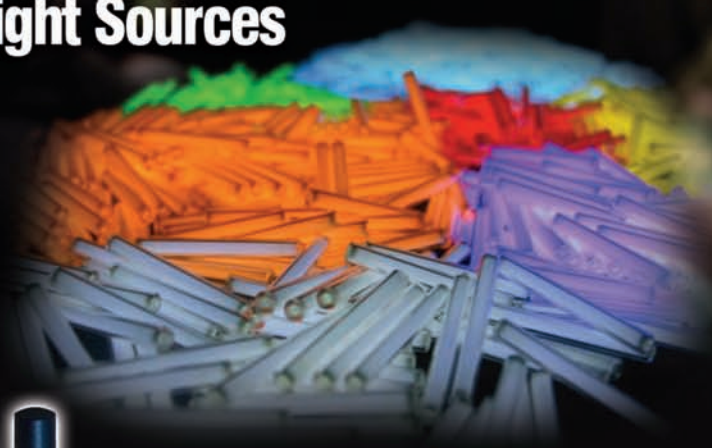
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NEWS IN BRIEF

CHARITY AIDS TRANSITION

■ A NEW charity has been launched to provide Service personnel and veterans with the help and support needed to make a successful transition to civilian life.

The Forces In Mind Trust has been backed by The Foundation of Prince William and Prince Harry and has also received a £35 million investment from the Big Lottery Fund.

Over the next two decades the organisation aims to address a number of difficulties that former soldiers may experience, such as poor mental health, family breakdown and alcohol-related problems.

LESSONS FOR LOCALS

■ AFGHAN National Army instructors have been improving their numeracy and literacy skills during a six-week training course at the Infantry Branch School.

The programme is aimed at enhancing standards among the home-grown mentors who are responsible for running heavy weapons and officer programmes at the facility, which is based on the outskirts of Kabul.

Further academic courses are scheduled for later in the year.

NEW SWIMMING SUBSIDIES

■ THE Swimming Trust is offering bursaries to ex-Servicemen and women who have an interest in becoming qualified teachers and coaches in the sport.

A budget of £5,000 has been allocated to the latest round of awards and a maximum of £1,000 will be available to individual applicants, with smaller sums also on offer.

The scheme is open to those who have a background in competitive swimming, water polo, diving or synchronised swimming and are currently volunteering at a club or youth group.

Consideration will also be given to personnel who are planning to leave the Armed Forces before July 2012.

For more information email the trust's secretary at swimmingtrust@swimming.org

AUDIO BOOST FOR TROOPS

■ A WEB page has been set up to allow friends and families of soldiers to send messages to their loved ones over the airwaves.

Visitors to the British Forces Broadcasting Service's "boost for the boys" section on the Audioboo website can upload audio clips for free.

Footage is then played out to Forces listeners on the organisation's radio station.

The initiative was launched on *The Sun's* website. Visit audioboo.fm/channel/boost-for-the-boys to leave a message.



Picture: Cpl Steve Bain

Cutting edge: A Reaper remotely-piloted air system ahead of a mission in the skies over Afghanistan

Contract advances air innovation

THE Ministry of Defence has signed a new £40 million agreement with BAE Systems to ensure the UK retains a leading edge in the next generation of unmanned aircraft.

The four-year deal aims to sustain and develop critical skills and technologies in this field and will inform the military's strategy over the coming decades to make sure new innovations are used to their full potential.

Currently, the majority of remotely-piloted air systems are engaged in surveillance and reconnaissance missions in support of front-line troops, providing them with vital intelligence and helping to save lives in Afghanistan.

As part of the contract, a significant

amount of funding is expected to go to small and medium-sized enterprises across the UK, widening the supplier base and providing the MoD with access to the best national and international airframe assets.

Dr Nick Joad, head of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory's air domain, said: "This is an important step in ensuring the MoD continues to develop its capabilities in this area and is able to exploit potentially game-changing technologies."

"We have worked very hard with BAE Systems to ensure that we have a high-impact programme and look forward to seeing the fruits of this investment of both money and intellectual capital."

Gunners grasp infantry skills



RESERVISTS from 103 Regiment, Royal Artillery have been honing their core battlefield skills during the unit's annual training event.

Exercise Northern Storm saw the part-time soldiers work on their close combat, driving, communication and live-firing drills at Warcop in Cumbria.

"This gave us the best possible foundation training we could hope for," said participant Maj Steve Sambosa.

"It was about turning Reservists into resilient soldiers who can stand living in conditions that they will find on future operations."

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Operation clears crucial Helmand corner

MORE than 800 British and Afghan troops have conducted a major operation to clear insurgent fighters from a key part of Helmand province.

Members of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the country's police force worked under the guidance of UK soldiers on Op Zamestani Peerozi – or “winter success” – where the boundaries of Nad-e Ali, Nahr-e Saraj and Lashkar Gah districts meet.

The mission saw the Taliban removed from an area which surrounds three major routes.

New checkpoints were built to increase security and among the finds was a cache of 27 bombs, 64 pressure plates, six bags of explosives, 14 controllers to remotely detonate devices and various other components.

Soldiers from 2nd and 5th Battalions, The Rifles, 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment and 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland were among those who took part alongside Estonian forces.

Lt Col Bill Wright, commanding officer of 2 Rifles, said: “While insurgents do not live in these areas, they do use them to transit through.

“The goal of this operation was to dominate the routes that they use and it went very well.

“The Afghan National Security Forces did exactly what they set out to do and the new checkpoints will mean they can dominate the area and stop insurgents coming here to influence local communities.”

Afghan engineers were mentored by sappers from 35 and 38 Engineer



Picture: Sgt Wes Calder, RLC

Winter success: Afghan National Army soldiers carry out patrols to clear the Taliban from Nad-e Ali

Regiments as they constructed the sentry posts.

The team was boosted by the capabilities of specialists including counter-improvised explosive device and intelligence personnel.

Capt Richie Griffiths (RE), who advises an Afghan engineering company, explained: “They [ANA engineers] are

pretty much self-sufficient. All the plant equipment and tools are their own – we are here with nothing but advice, where it is needed. We embedded really well with them.”

The operation was planned by Afghan soldiers and led by Brig Gen Sherin Shah, commander of the country's 3/215 Brigade.

Bomb disposal demonstration

THE Afghan National Army's counter-IED team showcased its skills and drills during a special demonstration for military leaders in Helmand.

The unit has been built from bare foundations in the space of just a few years and the highly-skilled operators now provide instruction and awareness for fellow soldiers during their initial training.

Task Force Helmand commander Brig Patrick Sanders and Brig Gen Sherin Shah, commander of the ANA's 3/215 Brigade, were guests at the display, which was also attended by



personnel from the UK's engineering group and explosive ordnance disposal and search team, who have been mentoring the Afghans.

Lt Col Jason Rhodes, commanding officer of the mentors, said: “Sadly, the insurgents' employment of IEDs is now commonplace, but we are developing a new breed of Afghan bomb disposal heroes to join the fight over the coming months and their progress is highly encouraging.

“We very much hope to accelerate the selection and deepen the development of these police officer and warrior volunteers who are keen to get on with the task and serve the community.

“Proud, determined and courageous, it is a privilege to serve alongside them.”

Religious relic rehoused

A REFURBISHED Torah scroll, believed to have belonged to the defunct Army Synagogue in Aldershot, has been re-dedicated in memory of a Jewish officer who was killed in action in 2009.

The ceremony was held at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre near Andover last month in memory of the late Lt Paul Mervis (Rifles, right).

The artefact was found at Guildford Synagogue but its poor condition meant it could not be used.

It was returned to the Armed Forces Jewish Community and Lt Mervis' parents Jonathan and Margaret sponsored the item's refurbishment.

A Torah scroll comprises the five books of Moses, which are handwritten on animal skin by a scribe and can take several years to complete.



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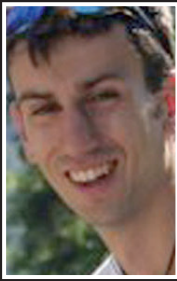
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IN MEMORIAM



CAPT TOM JENNINGS (29)
ROYAL MARINES
KIA DECEMBER 22 – AFGHANISTAN

THE UK's Armed Forces are mourning the loss of two courageous Servicemen who showed selfless commitment to the military campaign in Helmand province.

Royal Marine Capt Tom Jennings and Sqn Ldr Anthony Downing, of the Royal Air Force, were on an operation in the south of Kabul when the vehicle they were travelling in struck an improvised explosive device.

Capt Jennings was killed in the blast and his colleague was seriously wounded.

Sqn Ldr Downing was flown back to the UK for treatment at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham but later died from his injuries.

In a statement from the Ministry of Defence, Capt Jennings was described as a true leader throughout his military career, both dedicated and humble.

The department said he was an "archetypal Royal Marine" who displayed a keen sense of humour, even when faced with adversity.

While working with the Afghan forces he demonstrated a broad cultural understanding that ensured he was highly valued by home-grown personnel as well as British colleagues.

The 29-year-old was said to be devoted to his wife and two young sons.

An engineering officer by trade, Sqn Leader Downing ran the last Nimrod Line Squadron before its disbandment.

He also excelled at the Defence School of Languages, where he finished top of his course and travelled to Tajikistan in his own time to

further his studies.

The 34-year-old displayed a keen interest in Afghanistan and her people and this led to his intimate involvement in the planning and subsequent conduct of outreach patrols.

Gp Capt Robbie Noel said: "Totally committed to the Service, Sqn Ldr Downing was invariably seeking to improve himself and demonstrated huge strength of character, initiative and desire in his professional and personal life."

Lt Col Matt Sharp, officer commanding at the Defence School of Languages, added: "He immediately stood out as a popular and hard-working student who was one of the top performers on his course."

"He was a talented linguist who was keen to make a difference and remained extremely focused on making his own telling contribution in every situation."

The RAF officer was an ardent athlete and competed in a series of iron man triathlons and ultra marathons.

He helped to raise more than £6,000 for the Breast Cancer UK charity by completing a 24-hour endurance event.

He was also part of the RAF Kinloss mountain rescue team.

The airman leaves behind his parents, brother and girlfriend. A family statement described him as inspirational.

"We treasure the memories and achievements of his fantastic life and without him our lives have been diminished," it said.



SQN LDR ANTHONY DOWNING (34)
ROYAL AIR FORCE
DIED DECEMBER 23



PTE JOHN KING (19)
1ST BATTALION,
THE YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
KIA DECEMBER 30 – AFGHANISTAN

A YOUNG soldier who impressed colleagues with his hard work, grit and determination was killed while on patrol in Helmand province.

Pte John King, of 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment, was on a mission to increase security around the village of Llara Kalay in the Nahr-e Saraj district when he was caught in the blast of an improvised explosive device.

The 19-year-old had been involved in a partnered patrol tasked with clearing several compounds in the settlement.

Pte King joined the Army in 2009 and undertook a rigorous year of training ahead of deployment to Afghanistan.

In theatre he became a friend to the local community and home-grown security forces,

particularly the police, who considered him a brother-in-arms.

2nd Lt Tom Rylands said: "He was hard-working, determined and enthusiastic and would always tackle a problem with a grin on his face."

"His cheerful attitude and cheeky sense of humour made him extremely popular amongst his fellow soldiers, who both admired and respected him."

Pte Joshua Clay added: "He was a true Yorkshire warrior and morale raiser for all around him. He had a way of making everyone's day brighter, no matter how bad things were."

Pte King leaves behind his mother, father, brothers and girlfriend. A family statement described him as a "proud soldier".



RFN SACHIN LIMBU (23)
1ST BATTALION,
THE ROYAL GURKHA RIFLES
DIED JANUARY 2

A DEVOTED soldier has died with his parents at his bedside, 17 months after being injured in Helmand province.

Rfn Sachin Limbu deployed on Op Herrick 12 as a machine gunner with B Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

He was involved in several operations to stabilise Walizi village, many of which included intense combat, when he was seriously injured by an improvised explosive device.

The Serviceman was evacuated to the UK via Camp Bastion but died last month in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

Originally from the Morang district of Nepal, Rfn Limbu passed the tough selection for his brigade in 2007.

He conducted extensive jungle warfare training with his battalion before moving to the UK to prepare for deployment to Afghanistan.

Lt Col Gez Strickland, commanding officer of 1 RGR during the tour, said the soldier had "touched the lives of many".

He added: "On operations in Helmand he represented everything that is good about our Gurkha soldiers."

"He was diligent, supportive to his friends and committed to what he was doing."

"In hospital, he fought against incredible odds for a very long time with more courage than I have ever seen in another human being, helped at every step by his wonderful, loving parents."

"He was truly a special man."



“GUYS GET TO HANDLE ALL THE THINGS THEY HAVE
SEEN IN THE WORLD OF THE PLAYSTATION AND XBOX”

– FIREARMS EXPERTS WIDEN WEAPONRY KNOW-HOW, PAGES 40-41

Army to be kept at heart of nation

RESPONSIBILITY for supporting Armed Forces personnel should extend beyond the Ministry of Defence, the department has said.

Responding to concerns from Servicemen and women over accommodation, pay and pensions (page 67), a statement issued to *Soldier* added: “The prime minister has established a committee to ensure that the Government delivers the promises made under the covenant and to keep the interests of Forces personnel at the heart of the nation (page 13).”

To address a large funding gap, major improvements to accommodation have been placed on hold for three years from April 2013.

“Until that time, planned investment will continue,” the statement added.

“Some £100 million has been allocated to the Service families accommodation upgrade programme between now and 2013.

“Some 96 per cent of these properties are now in the top two standards for condition.

“The department will continue to fund routine and response maintenance on housing during the three-year upgrade pause.

“Since 2006 more than 4,300 Service properties have been extensively improved to the top standard for condition.”

On salaries, the MoD offered reassurance that annual increments for Servicemen and women would not be



Picture: Sgt Rupert Freire, RLC

Collective support: The MoD says assisting Forces personnel and their families is a job for everyone

adversely affected by a further period of pay restraint.

“Where personnel are eligible for progression up the incremental scale they will continue to receive it,” it explained. “From April 2013, the Armed Forces will receive a one per cent pay rise in addition to annual increments.”

Last year Lord Hutton’s independent Public Service Pensions Commission published a report on pension reform.

The department said it had set out recommendations that were “sustainable and affordable in the long

term, fair to both the Armed Forces and the taxpayer and consistent with the fiscal challenges ahead, while protecting our accrued pension rights”.

It added that work on a new scheme was now under way, with outline proposals due to be complete in the next few months.

“The Armed Forces will be fully consulted before a decision is made,” the statement said.

● **Home Truths:** Committee must do more than just talk the talk – page 67

NEWS IN BRIEF

HONOURS SALUTE TROOPS

■ **MILITARY** personnel shared the limelight with the likes of comedian Ronnie Corbett and golf champions Darren Clarke and Rory McIlroy on the New Year Honours list.

A total of 59 soldiers were named in the annual celebration including Capt Steve Harris, who will be presented with the MBE for his work as a unit welfare officer with 4th Battalion, The Rifles.

The 44-year-old assumed the role during Op Herrick 10 and 11, when the formation suffered the loss of eight soldiers and saw 45 others seriously injured.

“Nobody ever believes they deserve an award like this,” the officer said.

“I was just doing the best I could for the guys coming back and those families. I’m obviously extremely proud, but in my opinion I am receiving the award in recognition for everybody who served in the rear party.”

LEAGUE OF GENTLEMEN

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£86,000	AMERICAN ACCOMPLISHMENT Service and civilian friends of Maj James Joshua Bowman, who was killed in action in Afghanistan during July 2010, took part in the Race Across America – one of the world’s toughest cycle endurance races. The group travelled 3,000 miles from Oceanside, California, in the west to Annapolis, Maryland, in the east.	ABF The Soldiers’ Charity, Care for Casualties, The Gurkha Welfare Trust
2	£12,286	HYDE PARK PUSH More than 400 tri-Service personnel took part in Lunchtime 4 Troops – a five-kilometre charity run in London’s Hyde Park. Civilians also participated in the challenge to raise funds for soldiers recovering from injuries sustained on operations.	Help for Heroes
3	£1,576	BIG BREAKFAST Cooks LCpl Bhuwani Rai and Pte Raju Thapa (both QOGLR) served traditional English breakfasts to 200 people in Okehampton in a fund-raising event organised by Ray Rattenbury, chairman of the town’s Royal British Legion branch	The Poppy Appeal

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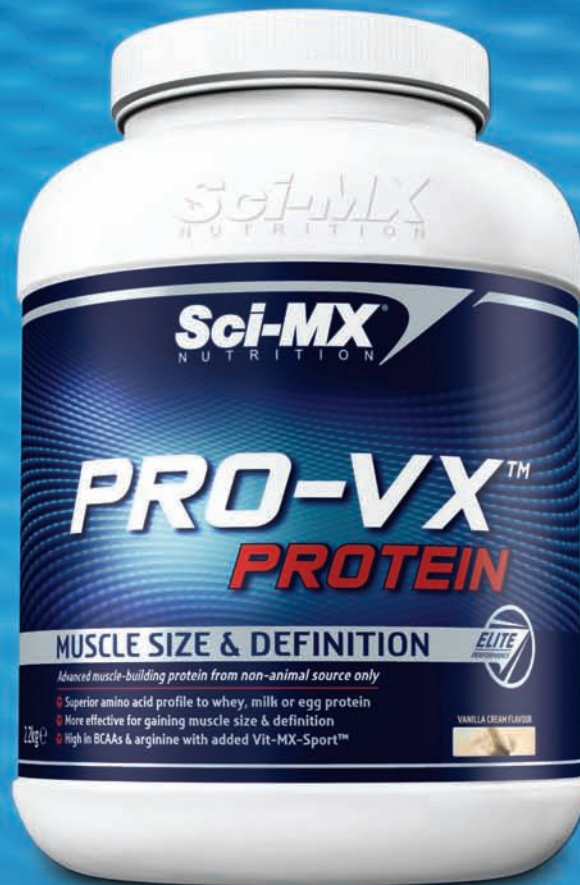


THE BIGGER PICTURE

A HUSKY protected support vehicle manoeuvres past soldiers from D Company, 5th Battalion, The Rifles in Helmand province. Affectionately known as the “delta dogs”, the unit’s troops recently carried out Operation Kapcha Shkar Kawel alongside the Afghan National Security Forces. With the help of Apaches, the mission saw them successfully disrupt Taliban activity in Nahr-e Saraj region (page 13).

Picture: Sgt Wes Calder, RLC

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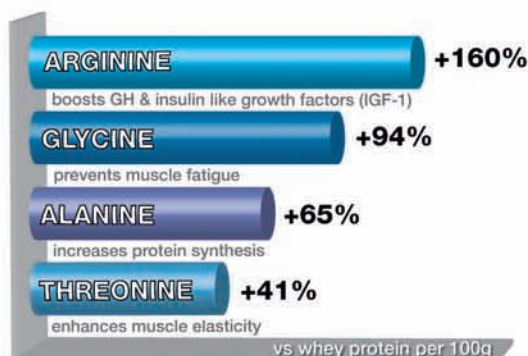
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Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

SACRIFICE is a word that is intensely familiar to most members of the British Army.

With it come connotations of time served, families separated and life-changing injuries sustained.

But the latest film offering from American movie director Steven Spielberg has taken the narrative of endurance that lies behind this emotive term and applied it to the sphere of the steed in a classic book's most graphic depiction to date.

After huge success as a children's story in the 1980s and more recently as a hit West End play, Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse* has been given the Hollywood treatment.

And with an A-list cast featuring Emily Watson, Peter Mullan and Benedict Cumberbatch, the adaptation is likely to bring the tale to its widest audience yet.

Speaking at the London premiere of the film – attended by celebrities, Service personnel, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and *Soldier* – Spielberg dedicated his project to the UK military heritage that inspired the original novel.

"It's a story that you own," he told British journalists on the star-studded red carpet outside Leicester Square's Odeon cinema.

"This belongs to you; the entire

heritage and the tradition of cavalry and steed and soldiers.

"Hundreds of years of the horse have been revered in this film.

"I feel like I have made it for everyone in Britain."

But according to the world's best-known director, it is Servicemen and women who have experienced the cost of conflict first-hand that the movie is most likely to resonate with.

"To me, *War Horse* is a timeless story about the sacrifices of love – about the sacrifices a boy makes in a time of war to find his steed and the sacrifices the horse makes just trying to survive this dark episode in history," he explained.

"Throughout it all, their destinies are entwined."

The novel, set during the First World War, charts the story of Albert, who tames and trains a horse called Joey.

But the boy's companion is commandeered to serve on the Western Front so he joins up to try and track down his beloved stallion.

The film follows the extraordinary journey of the animal as he moves through the conflict, changing the lives of everyone he encounters – British cavalry, German soldiers and a French farmer and his granddaughter.

When Spielberg took on the project, author Morpurgo could hardly believe it.

"There was an incredible meeting of minds with Steven," the accomplished writer said.

"We're both storytellers who are fascinated by how tales can expand and grow.

"Steven told the story in his own way, with more depth and breadth."

Around 600 current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families turned out to attend the movie premiere.

Personnel came from various units including the Duke of Cambridge's regiments,

the Irish Guards and of course the Household Cavalry.

Maj Gareth Light from the Irish Guards, of which Prince William is colonel, said it was an honour for soldiers and their animals to be acknowledged in the film.

"Anything that helps to translate what military life is like and explain to the public the difficulties but also the loyalties created by war will ultimately help people to understand those of us who have served on operations and support those who have returned," the officer commented.

"As modern-day soldiers we try to match the standards of those who have gone before us – those who gave their

lives in both world wars and other conflicts – to aim to be worthy of their sacrifice."

Spielberg has not been shy about his admiration for such troops.

"Whenever I am in the presence of members of the Armed Forces, I am always humbled and inspired by all that they do for their country," he said.

"What was on my mind was to make a very honest story. But I was careful to pull back in ways I would not have with *Saving Private Ryan*.

"The book spoke to me. It bypassed my intellect and went to my heart."

It is perhaps unsurprising the story struck such a chord with the director.

His father, Arnold, who fought in the Second World War and served in India and Burma, split with his mother after the global conflict.

This parallels the fragile parent-son relationship depicted in his film where the central character's father, a Boer War veteran, withdraws from life and refuses to speak of his front-line bravery.

By bringing such experiences to a wider audience in his unique sentimental style, Spielberg has helped to rally respect for past and present members of the British Army.

But primarily his latest work reminds us that sacrifice is made by animals as well as personnel – from the military working dogs of Helmand province to the impressive steeds of The Household Cavalry. ■

'TO ME, WAR HORSE IS A TIMELESS STORY ABOUT THE SACRIFICES OF LOVE'

Stable of talent: Steven Spielberg with horse Joey and lead Jeremy Irvine

Picture: Jon Furniss





Companion in conflict: Maj Stewart (Benedict Cumberbatch) leads the charge on a German encampment in a dramatic scene from the film *War Horse*

Picture: © DreamWorks II Distribution Co., LLC

Below: Members of the Household Cavalry Regiment walk the red carpet at the movie's premiere in Leicester Square, London

Picture: Sgt Steven Hughes, RLC

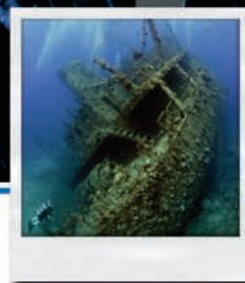
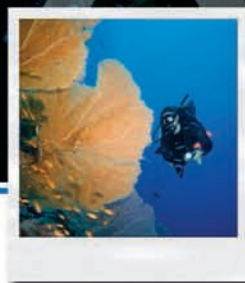
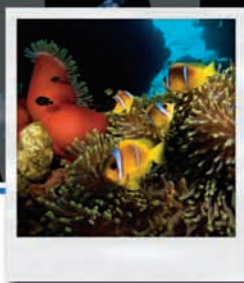
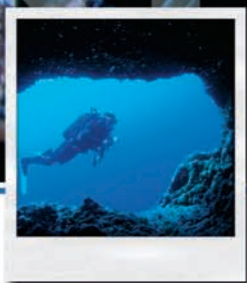
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A close-up, profile shot of a soldier wearing a helmet with a brown netting cover and a green chin strap. The soldier is wearing camouflage clothing and has a blue and white patch on their shoulder. The background is dark and out of focus.

AFGHANISTAN TO ANYWHERE

PARAS PREPARE FOR CONTINGENCY TASKS

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

HELMAND province remains the necessary focus for most British soldiers but one specialist unit has been assigned to look after contingency operations elsewhere in the world.

The 3 Para Battlegroup has been designated as the Airborne Task Force, meaning its troops now stand poised to deploy to a range of environments.

Soldier joined the formation on Salisbury Plain for Exercise Bayonet Thrust as personnel reverted back to conventional soldiering after years of preparing for Operation Herrick and the IED threat.

During the 11-day episode troops were put through numerous live-firing and navigation serials after dismounting from Chinook helicopters. Night assaults on the ranges tested them in the extreme, with the platform ensuring all soldiers were "air aware" and adapting to an air assault mindset.

Maj Geoff Hargreaves, officer commanding B



Company, said the programme deliberately threw participants into difficult situations to make sure they were braced for new missions.

"This is about getting all the air skills on the Para side of things," he explained. "It is a fairly complex and demanding exercise which will ensure tactical training procedures are in place. We are looking to tick

most of these boxes at company level."

In its new role, the unit will provide the Army's light, short-duration intervention function, ready to deploy at just five days' notice.

Soldiers must be prepared to jump into combat with a total weight of 350lbs including their own body mass – a definite departure from the way things are currently done in Afghanistan.

During the serial, personnel worked with snipers to secure regions and launched parachute air assaults from Hercules aircraft.

As the damp and misty conditions of the British countryside challenged visibility and movement, desert patrols could not have been further from these troops' minds.

"We are moving away from the forward operating base mentality where you have all the kit you





need, so it is pretty tough for those involved," Maj Hargreaves added. "The Herrick mindset is there and that is quite right, but now we are working to get back to an Airborne Task Force focus.

"We are nailing the aviation aspect too; this is an exercise and jump situation."

The battlegroup, which is based around the airborne infantry of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and a company from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, includes supporting elements from artillery, engineering, signals, logistics and medical units.

The officer explained that although his men will not return to the Afghan desert, they must use experience acquired there to enhance future soldiering abilities in alternative landscapes.

"It is important that Herrick is not forgotten," he said. "We must work out which aspects of that operation are relevant in the contingent environment and which are not.

"There has been some great kit and equipment produced for Afghanistan and we need to identify what can continue to be used."

Conscious of the influence the insurgency challenge has had on training, WO2 Gary Simpson said renewed emphasis on conventional warfare would bring further benefits to the Army.

"3 Para has completed three successful tours of Afghanistan but it's good for us to come away from that and revert to the other side of things," he said. "There are quite a few guys that have only known Operation Herrick and will have been absorbed by the Afghan cycle because of the steep training curve, so this is good for getting back to basics."

Prior to the campaigns in southern Iraq and Helmand province, successful missions in both Kosovo and Sierra Leone came as a result of units standing at this level of high readiness.

"Most UK training is still focused on Afghanistan and that is correct, but there are things happening elsewhere in the world and we need to be prepared to get out there," added WO2 Simpson.

"Because we don't know where we might be deployed, we must be ready for all aspects of expeditionary warfare.

"The mission might be an extraction of personnel, stabilisation or a conventional conflict and we could be asked at any time to move into action."

Establishment of this task force marks the British Army's first significant shift in attention from a ten-year war against the Taliban.

But rather than simply move on to the next job,



3 Para personnel will approach the fresh challenge with significantly enhanced skills and capabilities.

"It's vital we adapt to meet conventional requirements," WO2 Simpson concluded.

Return from Helmand province may still be a distant aspiration for some personnel, but when this day comes the British Army will be ready to face whatever task it is next presented with. ■

● Final word – page 98





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NURSING WITH NERVE

Reservist mum rewarded for
bold work at Bastion



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

WOMEN never have a half-hour in all their lives to call their own without fear of offending or hurting someone.

When nursing hero Florence Nightingale uttered these words in the 19th century she probably never imagined her battlefield

successors would be dealing with the same sort of social pressure more than 100 years on. But for women like Lt Col Sharon Stewart (QARANC), the pioneer's comment still rings true.

As well as balancing a full-time job and raising three children, the 207 Field Hospital volunteer deployed on Op Herrick 13.

Now she has been decorated with one of

the nursing profession's highest honours for her dedicated work during that time – a Royal Red Cross (Associate).

The award is given for exceptional service to military care, to individuals who display extreme courage and devotion to their duties.

But the accomplishment did not come easy, as Lt Col Stewart explained in an interview with *Soldier*.

Overseeing the wards and staff of Camp Bastion's R3 Hospital, the Servicewoman was faced daily with injured children and soldiers suffering pain and trauma.

"My team dealt with a lot of amputees and gunshot wounds," Lt Col Stewart recalled.

"Some of the injuries were awful and seeing things like that was quite shocking.

"Being apart from my children was hard too.

"My son would often be in tears down the phone."

The first person to ever receive the prestigious cross was Florence Nightingale herself back in 1883.

But the celebrated figure's parents thought nursing was an



Casualty: An injured soldier is airlifted to hospital to receive specialist treatment and nursing care





soldier has received nothing but praise for the brave decision to give up six months of her time to lead medics and tend to casualties, working around the clock to save them.

"When I joined the Territorial Army I don't think there was a true feeling that you would go on operations," the officer explained.

"But that has changed now. I don't think there's much point being in the TA if you are not prepared to deploy.

"I am not sure some people realise what those boys go through in Afghanistan.

"When you see, you just want to do your bit.

"The guys out there are made of something else. I really found it incredible that they wanted to stay out there even when they had been shot. They wanted to finish the job they had been sent to do.

"The hardest thing was seeing the suffering of those troops and children.

"Phone calls home were difficult too. Now I'm back my son asks me if I'm ever going to go away again.

"I tell him that I will if I am needed. I think it is important to be honest."

Back in the civilian world, 43-year-old Lt Col Stewart has returned to a demanding role as matron of a private hospital in Lancashire.

As well as impressing her colleagues, the recent decoration has caused a stir among members of the Army Medical Services.

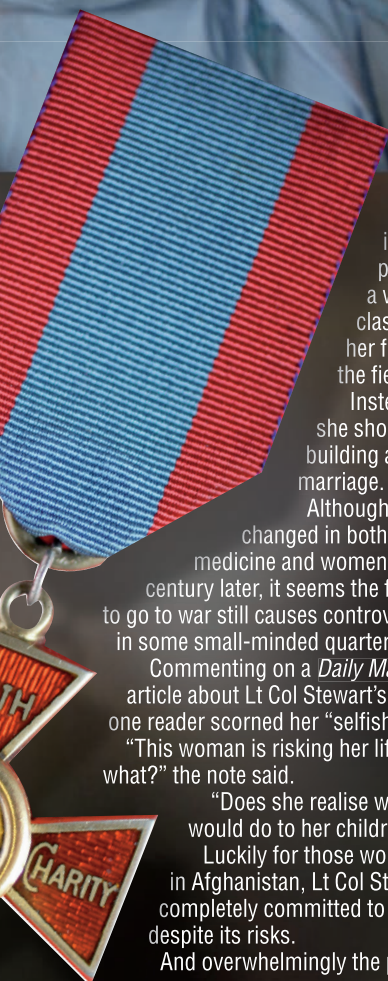
"It's really special and a fantastic honour for nursing and for my unit," she said.

"It's not just about me, it's about the good job we all did on tour."

Even in today's world, the morality of mothers committing themselves to a military lifestyle continues to be debated.

But one thing this bold Reservist can count on is the respect and thanks of Service personnel and their families whose lives have been irreversibly changed by injury. ■

● To find out more about joining 207 Field Hospital (Volunteers) email 207hosp-rhq-recruiting@mod.uk



inappropriate profession for a woman of her class and banned her from training in the field.

Instead, they said, she should focus on building a successful marriage.

Although much has changed in both military medicine and women's rights a century later, it seems the female decision to go to war still causes controversy and anger in some small-minded quarters.

Commenting on a *Daily Mail* website article about Lt Col Stewart's achievement, one reader scorned her "selfishness".

"This woman is risking her life, and for what?" the note said.

"Does she realise what her death would do to her children?"

Luckily for those wounded by IEDs in Afghanistan, Lt Col Stewart was completely committed to her mission despite its risks.

And overwhelmingly the part-time





Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Graeme Main

SHOOTER STASH

**COLOSSAL CACHE EQUIPS TROOPS
WITH WEAPONRY WISDOM**

ONE of the world's largest collections of guns is helping to ready British soldiers for front-line operations while opening their eyes to the value of military history.

The National Firearms Centre, based in central Leeds, stores more than 25,000 home-grown and foreign weapons, with some dating back as far as the 1800s.

Although a treasured resource in academic circles, the facility's experts are keen for Servicemen and women to make more practical use of the potentially lifesaving information that lurks behind its concealed doors.

"When I first came in here I was blown away," admitted the centre's firearms manager Trev Weston (pictured), a former warrant officer in the Small Arms School Corps.

After extensive entry searches that would leave airport security officers hanging their heads in shame, *Soldier* was given special access to the spectacular warehouse.

Inside lies some of the best preserved and most



unique battlefield weaponry in existence.

"Troops today are from the Playstation, Xbox and *Call of Duty* era but if they come here they get to handle all the things they have seen in this virtual world," Weston explained. "They are also in an atmosphere where they can ask questions and learn about the reality of fully-functioning weapons."

The centre runs an operational loans package, which allows British Army units to borrow from its vast selection for a range of training purposes – from talks and field manoeuvres to occasional live-firing exercises.

One of its most regular users is Catterick's Infantry Training Centre, which has brought troops to West Yorkshire's capital for briefings on the history of the rifle and to show them how its technical features have evolved.

"Coming here gives soldiers confidence that the weapons systems issued to them in the Field Army now are indeed the best in the world," Weston said. "When comparing the difference in weight between different models, for example with the Russian equivalent of their GPMGs, they realise theirs is a lot better."

With a seemingly endless arsenal ranging from grenade launchers, baton guns, revolvers and semi-automatic pistols to George IV's personal weapon and the Bin Laden-championed AKS74U, this resource's contents are more than enough to feed any enthusiast's imagination.

In pristine condition – with some fanciful models even encased in gold and mother of pearl – an hour spent here is a million miles away from a classroom lesson in battlefield history.

"Soldiers always enjoy holding the Uzi [sub-machine gun] when they come – it's like playing on the Xbox again. But they are quite shocked at how heavy it is," Weston said.

Despite boasting individual showpieces with a staggering market value – enough to make any firearms dealer's eyes water – the centre's senior curator Mark Murray-Flutter is most proud of the stockpile's potential to inform front-line missions.

"Soldiers going on operations at the moment cannot exist in isolation from the past," the expert explained.

"They need to understand that the weapons they have now developed from a long line.

"We tell them they are going to get Lee-Enfield rifles used against them in Helmand province, and that weapon will kill you as easily as the most modern AK.

"We can also be really useful to medics; people coming into Bastion's hospital often have



AK arsenal: The National Firearms Centre boasts one of the world's biggest weapons collections

guns on them and personnel need to know what they are.

"For every operational theatre the Army has gone into, we have built a package around it.

"We also try to anticipate where the military might go next so we can prepare."

With its experts regularly travelling abroad to hunt out new models to boost the collection, much that Servicemen and women uncover at this facility stays with them long after they return to barracks.

"It always strikes people that the weight of what they carry now has not changed in 200 years, and that soldiers of Marlborough's time were carrying a similar mass," the curator said.

"Learning things like this gives personnel a sense of belonging to history; they are the latest guys coming off a long production line that stretches back forever.

"This is also one of the few times Infantrymen will come across kit that allies and enemies use.

"They are all amazed to discover the lightness of the M16 rifle, for example, which is about three pounds lighter than their own personal weapons.

"They find that mind-blowing."

The National Firearms Centre is part of the Royal Armouries – the UK's national museum of arms and armour – and was formed in 2005. The facility incorporates the Ministry of Defence Pattern Room.



Secret history: Pistols sourced from east Germany help to educate British soldiers on past conflicts

Units to have already benefitted from the collection's supplies include the Scots Guards, 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and those on Exercise Cambrian Patrol who used various models to learn how to make weapons safe.

"We are expanding our pool to give the guys bigger loans and lend support to operational training," Weston continued.

"Currently we run about 40 rental packages a year but we have the capacity to do a lot more.

"Units can tell me their needs, what they want and how long for and we try to provide it."

Hands-on history at this centre is awakening soldiers to the importance of stepping back in time, in a way that could potentially save their lives during battle.

"Military education is what we are here to supply," Murray-Flutter emphasised.

"We live in a throwaway society but in the firearms world guns last an extremely long time.

"Guys need to know what weapons different forces have and what can be done with them.

"When you combine variety with numbers there's probably nowhere like this anywhere in the world. Units should get in touch." ■

● To find out more about the National Firearms Centre contact Trev Weston on 0113 220 1962 or via email at trev.weston@armouries.org.uk



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The art of war

Para-turned-painter creates unique
insight into life on tour

**Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main**

WHEN searching the comfortable confines of civilian life for volunteers to spend Christmas on the front line of southern Afghanistan, willing participants should be few and far between.

The challenge of operating in the remote region has been the domain of British Army personnel over the past ten years but for Graeme Lothian, a festive posting to join soldiers in Helmand province proved to be the opportunity of a lifetime.

The war artist was deployed to capture a snapshot of life on Op Herrick 15 through the eyes of the Servicemen and women of 101 Logistic Brigade and 20th Armoured Brigade and he has just returned home to start work on the 25 paintings that will create a unique portfolio from the tour.

In search of inspiration for his project, the 51-year-old was keen to flee the relative safety of Camp Bastion and immerse himself in life at the forward operating bases, where he would join the regular patrols that are conducted as part of the ongoing hearts and minds campaign.

"I went on as many patrols as possible and that was my favourite part of the trip," Lothian told *Soldier* from his studio in Sevenoaks, Kent.

"I reacted in the same way as most people from

the non-military world. For the first ten minutes you are more than apprehensive but at the end of the day you are in the middle of a field in Afghanistan, what can you do?

"I had full confidence in the soldiers I was with and they really looked after me."

The artist forged a close relationship with personnel from The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, 2nd and 5th Battalions, The Rifles and The Queen's Royal Hussars.

During his time with the units he captured hundreds of photographs and hour upon hour of video footage that will provide the reference material for his work.

"They were just great and I went everywhere with them," he recalled. "It was fantastic and the recordings I have are amazing."

"I could not do sketches. When you're on patrol you have to look where you are putting your feet. On my last one I took 200 photographs and I also had a helmet camera, that's all you can do."

"As an artist you soak it all up; you are looking at the colours on the ground and in the sky. When I come back I develop all the pictures and start work on my paintings."

For The Queen's Royal Hussars, Lothian will focus on images of troops out on patrol, while also reflecting the civilian pattern of life.

He explained: "Children would come and stand outside a compound. On other days I might have seen a tractor coming by or someone walking with

a donkey. I took pictures of all that and will use those references for my work."

"But the paintings are not only for the soldiers to look at, I want to show a wider audience exactly how it is and give them a flavour of life in Helmand province."

As part of his visit, Lothian was asked to produce three pieces for the regiment. To meet his goal he insisted on seeing as much as possible and this demand saw him secure his signature painting of the tour.

"They took me to a shura in a small sweet shop," he said. "There must have been 20 bearded men crowded in there with three British officers asking questions and communicating with them. For me, it was such a striking image."

Other works will capture life at the upper echelons of the British mission, with Brig Patrick Sanders, commander of 20th Armoured Brigade, making a particular request to the artist.

"He wanted me to paint the secret meetings he held with Brig Gen Sherin Shah, commander of the Afghan National Army's 3/215 Brigade, and I was helicoptered in for those big occasions," Lothian said.

Lothian said. "He

"The paintings are not only for soldiers. I want to show a wider audience exactly how it is"



also held gatherings every evening to discuss the day's events and I was there for those as well. That will produce another piece."

Lothian's time was split between Infantry units on the front line and the support chain that is vital

to the mission in Helmand province.

"I was also the 101 Logistic Brigade war artist, which covered every angle of logistics including the work of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Royal Engineers and the bomb disposal teams," he explained.

"I was given a ten-day programme of events and saw everything. I had a little art grotto in Lashkar Gah and spent four days painting. I was right near the helicopter pad so I was taking pictures there. It was fantastic footage."

Working closely with the Army was an especially rewarding experience for the artist, given his own personal connection with the UK's Armed Forces.

He served with The Parachute Regiment between 1981 and 1987 before a back injury ended his Service career.

"I come from a long line of military people stretching back to the Civil War," Lothian said. "I have an ancestor who fought at Waterloo and the military is my first love, so to be involved with the British Army and its soldiers is great for me."

"I was serving at the time of the Falklands War and I got to RAF Brize Norton, where I was waiting to fly out and replace the casualties but that's

as far as I got. It was all over so quickly.

"I loved my time in the Service, I always wanted to do a short term and it was never going to be a career option. I miss the blokes I served with and I have never laughed as much as I did when I was in the Army."

Lothian began working as an artist in the late 1970s but started his full-time career in 1991. His early paintings focused on the aerial conflicts of the Second World War and he developed a close bond with former RAF pilot Johnnie Johnson, who claimed an impressive 34 victories over enemy aircraft during the campaign.

He has also produced a coffee table book on the River Thames and will release a similar title on London later this year.

His recent trip to Afghanistan was not his first time in theatre; Lothian deployed on Op Herrick 11 at the request of the Joint Forces Medical Group.

That visit gave the ex-Serviceman a thirst for more and he is now in the process of transferring his experiences of the front line to canvas.

"20th Armoured Brigade had faith in me and chose me to accompany them on tour," he said. "If they want a painting they will get it, even if it takes me six to nine months."

"I have only just returned but if a regiment is going out and is willing to look after me for a couple of weeks I would love to go back."

"I would want to be with the Infantry and away from Bastion and I will never say no."

"Working with the British Army is such a privilege. The quality of the soldiers is better than ever before. They have got all the skills and I cannot fault them." ■





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Kings of Kilimanjaro

Rifles join mountain trek in support of wounded colleagues

Report: Richard Long

WHEN a team of adventurers from 7th Battalion, The Rifles embark on a mission to scale Mount Kilimanjaro this month, it will be a case of unfinished business for WO2 Stewart Le Couilliard.

The training officer was set to reach the summit of the Tanzanian peak as part of a Help for Heroes-organised expedition in 2009, but missed the opportunity after being struck down by illness during the ascent.

But personal ambition is far from being the primary motive for the return trip – the key goal is to help five amputees climb the world-famous mountain and at the same time raise valuable funds for regimental charity Care for Casualties.

The six-man Territorial Army team start their quest on February 15 and *Soldier* met the climbers at their barracks in Reading

to learn more about what lies ahead.

"The biggest worry is altitude sickness," WO2 Le Couilliard explained. "Unless you've done it before, you don't know if it will hit you."

"It can be completely random. A marathon runner may really struggle but others, who are less fit, manage fine."

"On the Help for Heroes trek I fell ill at 3,900 metres and that pretty much wiped me out. I got to the camp at 4,800 metres and that was me done, I stayed there while the rest of the group went up."

"I was not happy. To miss out because of illness, rather than altitude, was such a disappointing experience."

The 7 Rifles mission forms part of a wider expedition being staged by the charity Pilgrim Bandits.

Patron John Sanford-Hart is one of the five amputees taking part and the ex-Serviceman invited the unit to join them after he became close friends with WO2 Le Couilliard during the 2009 climb.

LCpl Danny Hyland was one of the first to volunteer and he can't wait to get started.

He said: "It is something I've always wanted to do, I know a few people who have climbed Kilimanjaro and we're all really looking forward to it."

"The interaction with the amputees has been great and being able to help them achieve something like this is fantastic."

"But we are not going to carry their kit – they wouldn't let us even if we wanted to. We will be there for morale."

As part of their preparations for the adventure the group made an ascent of Mount Snowdon before Christmas, where personnel worked with the amputees for the first time.

"They are a great bunch of lads," said LCpl Chris Naughton. "They are so motivated. We thought they may struggle with the climb but they were right up there with us."

"I did quite a bit of mountaineering during my time

with the Regulars and as soon as I heard they needed people to support these guys I put myself forward."

For Capt Matthew Muller the attraction is being able to do his bit for the wounded troops – two of which hail from 3 Rifles.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," the officer said. "And we could not be doing it for a better cause. To have two fellow riflemen there with us is fantastic."

"Our main aim is to get them up the mountain and I think

they are more determined than we are."

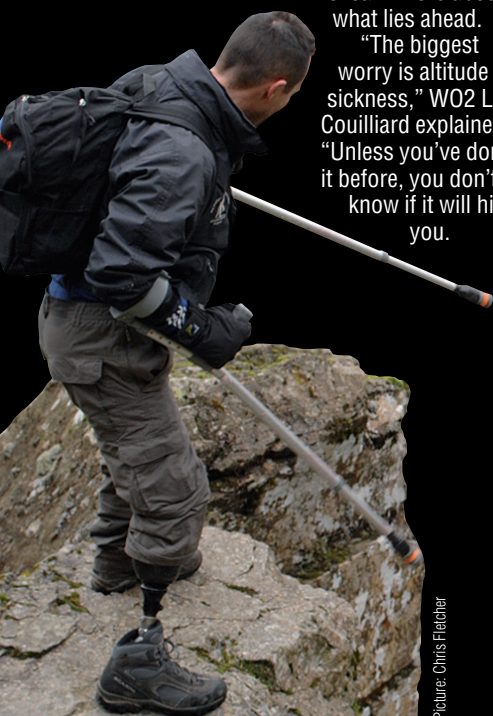
"They want to prove to themselves they can do it while showing guys in theatre that injuries are not necessarily the end of the road. They are so inspirational." ■

'To have two fellow riflemen there with us is fantastic'

Above and left, Stepping up: The summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, and former REME soldier John Sanford-Hart as he heads up Glyder Range in Snowdonia

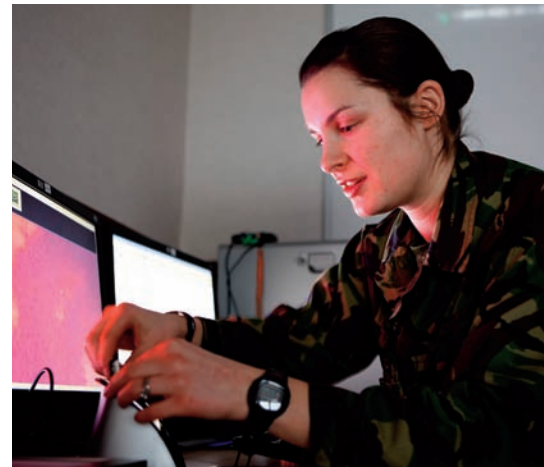
Below, Trainee trekkers: Climbers from 7 Rifles, pictured left to right, include LCpl Chris Naughton, Capt Mathew Muller, LCpl Danny Hyland and WO2 Stewart Le Couilliard

Picture: Graeme Main



Picture: Chris Fletcher





Intelligence INSIGHT

BATTALION BOOST HERRICK IN BRAND NEW ROLE

**Report: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Steve Dock**

BRAINS behind some of the British Army's most complex counter-intelligence work have taken up a new role that will see them inform the final stages of Operation Herrick.

2 Military Intelligence Battalion is now functioning as the Force's exploitation unit – a responsibility that puts the formation in charge of ensuring key enemy information is used to the military's best advantage.

The tri-Service collective will focus on materiel and personnel exploitation in Afghanistan, getting troops onto the ground to assist the fight against IEDs while providing legally sound evidence to the country's justice system.

Speaking ahead of a flag-raising ceremony at the battalion's new home in Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Capt Colin Joyce (Int Corps) explained the challenge.

"This unit has taken a number of our battalion's forensic technical capabilities such as biometrics, fingerprinting and examination of media devices and

weapons and put them under one roof.

"This will help to provide a complete evidential picture of captured or suspected insurgents."

The new role appears to resemble something from Channel Five's *CS* franchise and a short word with personnel indicates this analogy is not a million miles from the truth.

LCpl Gary Atkinson (Int Corps) works within level one of the exploitation process.

Once deployed, it is his job to work alongside bomb disposal teams to collect pressure plates, battery packs, mobile phones, rifles or any other object recovered during patrols or incidents.

"All devices come through us at some point," the Serviceman explained. "So everything done at this level has to be forensically sound; that means we wear gloves and face masks."

"We will never touch anything IED-wise unless it has been cleared by the bomb disposal guys first, but it's one of the few roles in the Intelligence Corps where you are out on the ground in the thick of the action and that's exciting."

"We go anywhere and everywhere in Helmand and never get bored."

Of the wide-ranging devices inspected by this team to garner war-winning information, something as inconspicuous as a battered Coke bottle can



Clockwise from left, CS/similarities: Mobile phone chargers used by the unit's counter-intelligence personnel; A technical operator searches various communications devices; Recovery of an RPG in Afghanistan; Personnel use software programmes to pull information from gadgets; The HazMat ID kit; An impressive selection of 2 Military Intelligence (Exploitation) Battalion's war-winning equipment.

at level two can bring DNA off whatever we find, we would want to know about that."

Personnel at the second and third levels of the exploitation process pull apart, download and dig into recovered articles to derive any information they can – be it DNA, geographical or technological intelligence.

Whether undertaken at the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory or further afield, their endeavours allow extensive data to be absorbed into the Army's knowledge base.

Outlining the crucial counter-intelligence function of the new unit and its clever computers, WO2 Jonathan Webster (Int Corps) said: "We can conduct exploitation of computers, networks and other aspects of the internet to get information, such as using social networks for example."

Opening up a compact case containing every mobile phone charger imaginable, he explained the unit's ability to take call logs and texts off any model – even the fakes.

"We process that information, for example who has called and when, and make links to key events to construct a picture of who is talking to who," he added.

Unsurprisingly, this group's efforts are not solely focused on the Herrick mission.

While mobiles are pulled apart in the desert, other team members are busy keeping on top of technological advances that could aid future intelligence gathering – fridges that connect to the internet, Kindles and the latest GPS equipment all hold possibilities.

But until 2014, the exploitation unit's focus will remain firmly on Helmand province.

Commanding officer Lt Col Mark Proctor (Int Corps) said: "We are concentrating on Afghanistan currently but looking to form training teams to teach other countries about exploitation as well.

"We lend such a small number of people but are providing them 365 days a year.

"Once we stop Op Herrick that allows us to move onto contingency but for now it's about making sure whatever we do is for the Afghans.

"We need to keep lessons from Helmand province so that wherever we go next, our unit is there from the beginning." ■

demand the CS/treatment.

Showing off one such drink receptacle complete with a deadly pull-switch, he said: "You will always find these types of devices out there because they are so easy to make.

"Insurgents come up with different ways of using them – from ones with high metal content to those that can defeat detector capabilities."

As well as aiding the country's legal system, consolidating the Army's forensic facilities will ensure that lifesaving detail on enemy weapons can be fed to both front-line troops and those back home developing protective kit.

"We write reports on what we have found and run threat briefings to let battlegroups and infantry commanders know the main dangers," LCpl Atkinson said. "We can also put out flash warnings if something new is discovered.

"We like to look at it all like the military CS/but I am not sure it is quite as glam here as it is on the television screen."

Among the various forensics equipment used by soldiers in this role, the HazMat ID kit impresses its users every time.

Worth around £45,000, this unexciting-looking box can identify every single chemical compound of a substance placed on its surface.

"Even with coffee, this thing will tell you if it is caffeinated or decaffeinated," LCpl Atkinson boasts. "We know, we have tried!"

In conflict, such substances could be the explosives or drugs that fuel the enemy.

"This job is not just about weapons, it's also the human element," said LCpl Peter Marsden (RLC).

"My role is getting out and collecting, but if guys



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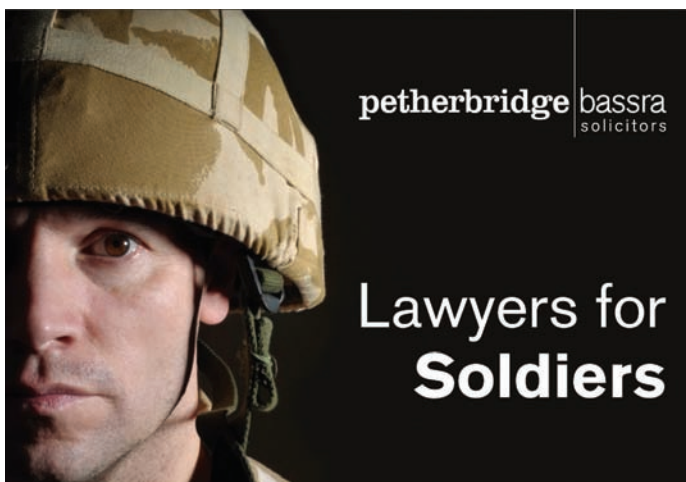
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Want to become soldiering's smoothest operator?



FINDING a partner while serving in the British Army can be a thankless task. A mobile lifestyle combined with the current high tempo of operations, means relationships can often take a back seat.

So when dating website match.com dropped the following amorous advice into our inbox ahead of Valentine's Day, the *Soldier* team felt it our duty to share with Servicemen and women. ♥

1. Be proud to serve

Mention your career to any prospective partners from an early stage. Be as specific as you can without compromising security and describe what you do. It's fascinating and the right person will be interested so avoid playing it down.



2. Don't fret distance

There is no need to over-emphasise what you think are unattractive parts of your working life. Some potential civvy suitors may find the fact that you are away for long periods difficult, but that doesn't mean it needs to be a reason for not giving things a go. Save that discussion for when you are arranging dates.

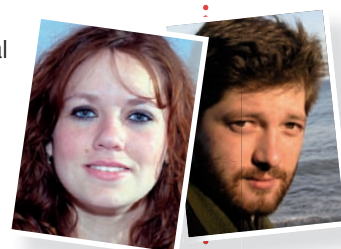


3. Ride out ribbing

If you are using a dating website don't worry about teasing from colleagues – it will mainly be fuelled by envy. Online dating is now the third most popular way to meet a partner in Britain and, according to research, one of the main barriers to finding a relationship is not meeting anyone suitable in everyday life.

4. Make pictures perfect

When exchanging photographs with a potential partner, use an attractive civvy photo of you smiling. Make sure you are easily recognisable when it comes to meeting for a date, though.



5. Take care with comms

Keep your early messages light, sweet and amusing. Make an effort with correspondence. A meaningless, "hi, how are you?" won't get you very far. It's important to show you have paid attention to someone by talking about things you know about them.



6. Time will tell

Build up a relationship over time. Email and instant messaging are wonderful ways to get to know someone. If you decide the moment is right for a first date, choose something short and informal like going for a coffee or drink at a bar.



7. Don't give up

If you are away a lot with work it could take longer to meet your perfect match. But many do, every day. Don't give up and stay positive.

Tips by Kate Taylor, resident relationship expert at match.com

1. HERACLES

THE ungovernable son of Zeus was the strongest and most admired of the warriors of Greek myth and the only one who was elevated to the ranks of the gods. Heracles (Hercules to the Romans) was hated by Hera, the wife of Zeus, and she frequently tried to encompass his destruction. Above all, she made sure that he undertook his famous "twelve labours", every one of which was supposed to bring about his death. Clothed in his lionskin cloak and brandishing his great club, the wildman is consistently portrayed in his many adventures overcoming monsters. But though untamed himself, he was a tamer: without his participation in the war of the gods against the giants, the regime of Zeus could never have become established and men would still be huddling in darkness and cold, lacking the gifts and blessings of the Olympian gods.

2. ACHILLES

ACHILLES was the greatest of the fighters to join the Greek cause against Troy. In fact, his participation in the Trojan War was essential for the Greek victory. Like all the legendary Greek heroes, he tried always to be the best and to be recognised as such by his peers. So when he felt himself to have been insulted by his commander-in-chief, he withdrew from the fighting and refused to return, however badly things went for the rest. It was only the death of his bosom comrade Patroclus that brought him, raging with grief and fury, back on to the battlefield. His bronze armour, made by the blacksmith god Hephaestus, gleamed as he slaughtered his enemies without mercy. But before long his fate caught up with him and he died in the dust in front of the walls of Troy.

3. DIOMEDES

NO legendary Greek warrior fulfilled his vow to lay low the Trojans more wholeheartedly than Diomedes "of the loud war-cry". In the heat of battle, when he got going, he was unstoppable. No man could stand before him and they fell by the dozen. But that was the least of his achievements. Aphrodite, goddess of charm, left her perfumed chambers and descended from high heaven to the fields of Troy to protect her son Aeneas, who had been sorely wounded by Diomedes. And Diomedes dared to challenge the chasm that divides mortal men from the gods. Just as the goddess was moving out of range, bearing her injured son, Diomedes bounded high in the air from his chariot and grazed her forearm with his spear. And in his frenzy, he attacked the war-god Ares, forcing him from the field of battle.

RANKED

GREEK MYTHOLOGY'S GREATEST WARRIORS

Robin Waterfield, author of *The Greek Myths* (published by Quercus, £20), charts his top ten legendary combatants



4. HECTOR

FIRST to draw blood against the Greeks besieging the city of his father, King Priam, Hector (pictured left) was the foremost commander of the forces allied in the defence of legendary Troy. His fate was closely matched with that of Achilles, the greatest fighter for the opposing Greeks. In Homer's thrilling war poem, the *Iliad*, when Achilles refuses to fight and his beloved companion Patroclus joins battle to boost the Greek's morale, it is Hector who kills him in close combat. This spurs Achilles to vengeance and Hector stands up to the berserker, despite knowing that the inevitable result will be his death and the destruction of Troy. Hector's courageous shouldering of duty and destiny distinguishes him as one of the greatest warriors in Greek myth.

5. ODYSSEUS

"I AM Odysseus, Laertes' son, known to the world for every kind of craft – my fame has reached the skies." Thus in Homer's *Odyssey* the warrior king of Ithaca reveals himself to his hosts on the mystical isle of Scheria. He was famous for coming up with the idea of the Trojan horse, with which the Greeks entered Troy and by ambush took the city. But Odysseus (pictured right) suffered a long return from the war, a journey fraught with troubles at sea – battling monsters, cannibals and seductive witches – until, finally, he made it home. Yet even then Odysseus was forced to deceive all about him because his palace was overrun by greedy suitors for the hand of his loyal queen, Penelope. Disguised as a filthy beggar he plotted his vengeance, revealing himself only at the end so that his victims knew before they died with whom they dealt.



6. THESEUS

FROM his youth, Theseus – the greatest of Athens' mythical kings – proved himself in combat against brigands, beasts and sorceresses. There was a time when Minos, king of Crete, conquered the city of Athens and imposed a terrible indemnity; that every year, seven young men and seven girls should be taken to Crete and fed to the Minotaur. This monster, half human and half bull, lived in the labyrinth of Cnossus and none could escape it – or so Minos believed. He would beat the boys and bed the girls before feeding them to the Minotaur. But Theseus, depicted below right in a Greek cup, was a true hero: he recognised no limits to his might. Emerging victorious from the labyrinth, he scuttled the tyrant's fleet, stole his daughter, sailed home with the youths and maidens and freed Athens from its servitude.

7. THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

WHEN the twin sons of Oedipus, Eteocles and Polynices failed to share the throne of Thebes equably, Polynices called on his father-in-law, King Adrastus of Argos, to summon an army of revenge. Seven great heroes led seven columns against the seven gates of Thebes. But the righteous cause does not always prevail: the city was not fated to fall to the Seven themselves, but to their sons. Eteocles and Polynices fought each other to the death in single combat. Only Capaneus managed to scale the city walls, but pride at his achievement caused his fall at the moment of triumph. Amphiaraus, who foreknew his fate, drove his chariot down into hell, while the rest of them – Parthenopeus, Hippomenes, and Tydeus –

met their deaths like men. They live on now only in the memory of their glorious deeds; they were only seven but they fought like seven hundred.

Magnificent seven: A Etruscan marble sculpture dated 6-5 BC, depicting Seven against Thebes. Pictures: Quercus Mythology



8. HIPPOLYTA, QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS

OUR fascination with fighting females – we have only to think of Lucy Lawless's successful run as *Xena, Warrior Princess* – has endured for centuries. To the Greeks, the mythical Amazons' world was one where women ruled and practised the arts of conflict on the borders of civilised, male-dominated Greek society. The war-belt of the Amazon queen, Hippolyta, daughter of the war god Ares, was the object of Heracles'

ninth labour. Heracles recruited Theseus for the campaign. Theseus abducted the queen's sister and took her to Athens, where later she bore him a son. Meanwhile, the Amazons fought as fiercely as ever, this time they were up against insuperable odds. Heracles killed Hippolyta and took the belt as a war-prize. This legendary item was, they say, displayed in Hera's temple at Argos.

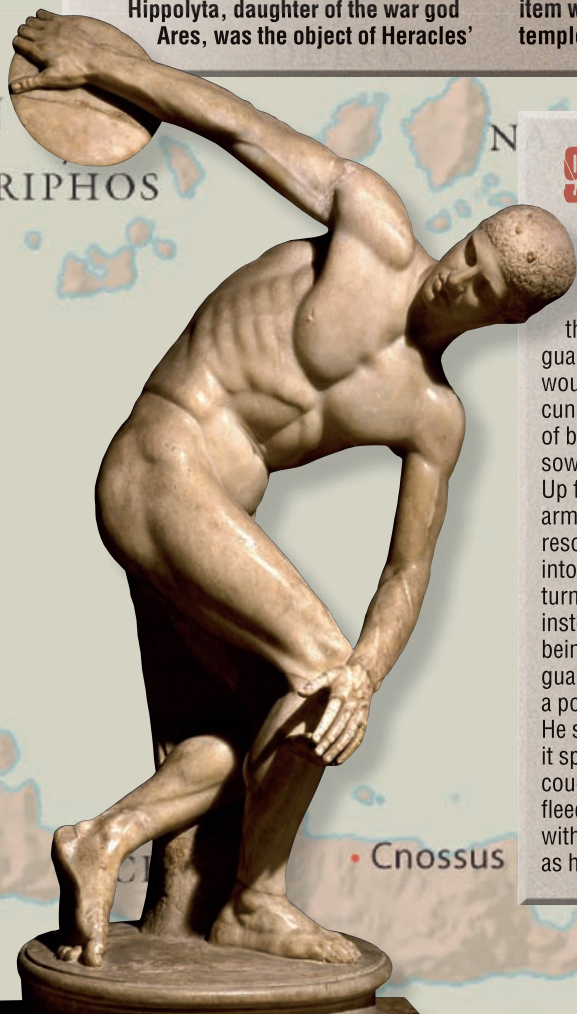


9. JASON

JASON and the crew of the *Argo* faced many adventures before reaching Colchis, where the golden fleece was so closely guarded by the king that the hero would require all his courage and cunning. First, he had to tame a bull of bronze, harness it to a plough and sow the field with dragon's teeth. Up from the ground sprang fully armed and ferocious warriors. But resourceful Jason lobbed a boulder into the hostile throng so that they turned and attacked one another instead. Finally, Jason had to endure being swallowed by the dragon-guardian of the fleece to administer a potion that would put it to sleep. He slid down the dragon's gullet and it spewed him back up again, with a cough and yawn. Jason grabbed the fleece and sprinted back to the ship with both it and the princess Medea as his prizes.

10. BELLEROPHON

THE Greek hero Perseus is often paired with Pegasus, the winged horse. But in actual fact the taming of the magnificent steed was achieved by Bellerophon. Tricked by the queen of Tiryns after rejecting her advances, he came to her father Lobates' kingdom where he was required to kill the Chimera (a monstrous hybrid of lion, snake and goat) that was terrorising the land and singlehandedly eliminate two warlike tribes. With the help of Pegasus, his secret weapon, he succeeded at these impossible tasks. But Pegasus turned on Bellerophon later when out of foolish pride he believed he should be allowed to consort with the gods. Rather than carry him to the high halls of the gods on Mount Olympus, Pegasus threw his rider, who fell to his death. The mighty can rise high but only a fool thinks himself equal to the divine.





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'Province preservation order is ill-conceived'

Is the "Afghan" exemption from redundancy either fair to all or in the best interests of the Service? If the Army is truly committed to transforming into a more agile (read smaller) pool of excellence, everyone accepts difficult decisions over manpower are unavoidable.

Exempting those who are below the quality line for this new organisation just because their post identification on June 12 happens to have an operational tick next to it has two very serious and unfair consequences.

Firstly, the leaner Army continues to carry an individual it would otherwise have selected to let go.

Secondly, and more importantly, it will have to dismiss someone it would have preferred to keep because the rank quotas imposed are absolute.

With the low-hanging fruit of the volunteer tranche completed, are we comfortable that the needs of the media and comms branch and the popular press appear to be dictating who will be left when the music stops? – Name and address supplied.

Col R Wardlaw, Directorate of Manning (Army), responds: Within the overall constraint of delivering reductions to Army strength while fighting on combat operations such as Op Herrick, the exemption was introduced to protect both the interests of the Service and those individuals committed to deployments.

It achieves this by delivering two key effects. First, it preserves operational capability by ensuring that those personnel training for or deployed on combat operations are not selected to the detriment of the preparation for, or conduct of, the mission.

Second, it ensures those deployed on operations, routinely in life-threatening



Picture: Sgt Wes Calder, RLC

Backs covered: Troops on or preparing for operations in Helmand province are exempt from redundancy

situations, are not distracted by the prospect of redundancy – something which self-evidently may be dangerous both to them individually and, as critically, to those around them.

Turning to the impact operational exclusion will have on the quality of those chosen, while it is fair to say that all exemptions will reduce the pool of eligible troops, rigorous grading and selection boards by the Army Personnel Centre will ensure that within a given field only the lowest scoring applicants and, where necessary, non-applicants

will be selected.

Furthermore, every selection is then subject to a separate process of reconciliation to ensure that it is consistent with the broader needs of the Army.

Finally, a soldier who might otherwise have been selected for redundancy if it were not for the operational exclusion, may very well be eligible for consideration in subsequent tranches. Indeed, this was one of the key considerations for having more than one stage.

● Next redundancy phase begins – page 9

Salute to Force's first-class compassion

I FELT that I should write this letter of thanks for the exceptional service provided by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) and to my own chain of command for their kindness and understanding during a difficult time.

I deployed on Exercise Pinestick in Cyprus last summer shortly after my mother began treatment for cancer.

On November 30 at 0930 local time I received a call from my wife to tell me that my mum had been taken seriously ill with a chest infection and that she was unlikely to pull through.

My partner called the JCCC and wheels were put in motion to get me home.

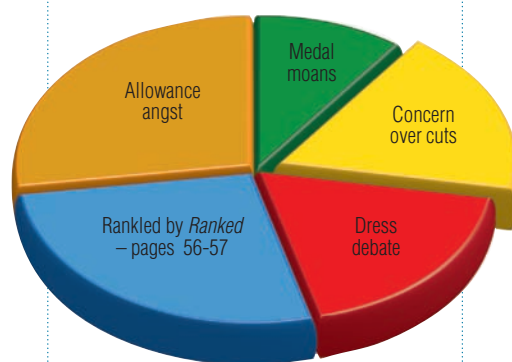
I was flown out of Cyprus on the next available flight to Bristol airport where there was a prepaid taxi waiting to take me to the hospital that was treating my mum. I was at her bedside with the rest of my family by 2200 the same day.

To our and the doctor's amazement she managed to fight off the chest infection but, left weakened by the illness, was unable to continue her cancer treatment and passed away on December 15.

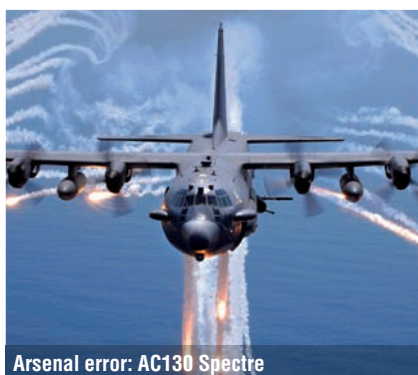
On behalf of my family and I, thank you to everyone at JCCC and my unit who was involved in my speedy passage home and for their subsequent support. – Sgt Duncan Heward, 6 HQ & Sp Sqn, 22 Engr Regt.

Slice of Service life

This month's ruminations from the ranks...



Fire Strike duo off target:



Arsenal error: AC130 Spectre



Fantastic flyer: AH64 Apache



Better suited to escort duties: Lynx



Persistent predator: B1B Lancer



Wrong load: Mirage 2000

I'll spare the usual comments other than to say *Soldier* is a great and informative read, favoured by our aircrew over their own *RAF News*.

Now to the case in point, I'd like to draw your attention to the article on close air support platforms which featured in December's issue, *Ranked: Top ten assets of the Joint Terminal Attack Controller*.

It was a good idea to introduce the uneducated masses to the available capabilities at the fingertips of the humble forward air controller (FAC) – "JTAC" is a Herrick theatre-ism due to American accreditations.

However, would it not have benefited the audience if an up-to-date list had been provided by the tri-Service staff at the Joint Forward Air Control Training and Standards Unit at RAF Leeming?

The magazine visited the school in the past and produced a very good article.

I say this because there were some errors in the details listed that could

WRITE in response to December's *Ranked*. As a Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) and supervisor forward air controller serving on Op Herrick 15 as the 2iC of a tactical air control party, I am quite experienced in this field.

It is clear that no research went into the production of this article as it contains lots of errors.

I'll list them in the order of ranking:

- **AC130 Spectre gunship.** Reserved for Special Forces, 95 per cent of JTACs will never use this asset so I don't know why it even features in the top ten.

- **AH64 Apache.** A fantastic aircraft, this should have been number one. I do disagree with the weapon of choice, though. The 30mm cannon is great for anti-armour operations and getting rounds down quickly but it is definitely not a sniper rifle. The Hellfire missile, which is extremely accurate and has a small blast radius, deserves top billing.

- **A10 Warthog.** Surpasses the AH64 in most aspects; its cannon is extremely accurate and delivers a much more powerful punch, and with air-to-air refuelling it can stay overhead a lot longer. The only downside to this asset is that it works at a much higher altitude than the Apache so it takes a bit longer to get the air below them cleared before any attack.

- **F15 Eagle.** This is no quicker to respond than any other jet in theatre because when you get in trouble the powers that be send the closest asset available. The GBU-12 is carried by the F15, along with a lot of other weapons, but it is not the only munition that can be set to airburst.

- **Harrier GR7.** As great as this aircraft is, it is not in service any more so therefore

mislead readers in to thinking certain things and doubting a FAC's capabilities.

The first inaccuracy concerns the AC130 Spectre gunship – this aircraft hasn't had a pair of 20mm Gatling guns since the 1980s. The weapon set-up on both models in service with the US Special Operations Command consists of a 105mm howitzer, a 40mm Bofors and a 25mm Bushmaster.

Moving on, the Apache doesn't have a targeting pod, it uses a modernised target acquisition and designation system, referred to by crews as the bucket.

The A10's performance is actually much better than that of an Apache and its over-target loiter time is not far off matching the helicopter despite carrying a much greater and varied weapons load.

And while the F15 Eagle may be capable of a little more than twice the speed of sound, this is only when the jet is in clean configuration. It is restricted to around mach one when carrying weapons, of which one is the GBU-12 mentioned.

should not appear in the list. It should be replaced by the Tornado GR4, which also carries the Paveway 4. A 500lb GPS and laser-guided munition, this weapon is not part of the guided bomb unit family – it is British designed and built and unique to our Armed Forces.

- **F16 Fighting Falcons.** In addition to American, Dutch, Norwegian and Danish forces, Belgian personnel operate this fighter jet in the skies over Afghanistan. The joint direct attack munition is part of the GBU series. The F16 carries GBU-38s and GBU-12s, both 500lb weapons.

- **B1B Lancer Supersonic Bomber.** This is not a specialist asset, we routinely get allocated B1B Lancers for operations. They have a great targeting pod and are able to provide persistent coverage due to their large fuel tanks.

- **MQ1 Predator.** The weapon of choice on this platform is the AGM-114 Hellfire but it is definitely not a "fire-and-forget" missile. The pilot guides the munition by semi-active laser all the way on to the target, which allows for a strike to be aborted should something move into the target area.

- **Mirage 2000.** This jet does not carry nine 500lb Mk-82 bombs, which are unguided and therefore have limited use in the current theatre of operations. The aircraft is armed with GBU-12, GBU-38 and GBU-49 bombs, all of which are 500lb and guided by laser or GPS.

- **Lynx.** A very good helicopter but it shouldn't appear on the list as it is not a close air support platform. The Lynx is better suited to convoy and support helicopter escort.

A true rundown of assets used by the JTAC should include the Harris 117/152 radios, without which we would struggle to operate.

Ranked rankles readers

However, this bomb cannot be set to airburst as the laser seeker on the nose of the munition replaces the radar-proximity fuse needed for such a function.

Correctly referenced, British FACs loved the Harrier dearly and we're hurting following its loss in the wake of the Strategic Defence and Security Review. It was a truly amazing close air support platform in the GR-9/9A guise.

That said, would it not have been better to feature the current theatre asset, the Tornado GR4, with its ultra-modern Paveway IV and dual-mode seeker-equipped Brimstone weapons complementing its 27mm cannon?

The B1 is capable of carrying more than the 15 GBU-38s cited and also brings the bomb's big brother – the GBU-31 – to the battlefield; both are GPS-guided weapons.

Its persistent loiter times can be a godsend especially with the advent of the fitment of the Sniper advanced targeting pod which can be viewed by the FAC.

They give us the ability to talk to incoming aircraft from more than 40 miles away and, with a change of antenna, we can communicate with headquarters in order to request assets and send up-to-date situation reports.

Another omission is the persistent ground surveillance system balloon.

This asset has had more affect on the battlefield than any other.

It is able to monitor areas for days on end and can identify weapons at a very long range enabling us to track and engage insurgents before they get within striking distance of friendly forces.

It's not very often that JTACs or forward air controllers get a mention – we are normally overlooked in favour of the Apaches or fast jets – so it was very

The Mirage 2000 is again restricted to around the speed of sound when carrying weapons, which usually consist of a GBU-12 and GPS-guided 250kg bomb known as AASM, not nine MK-82s.

The fighter jet normally operates as part of a mixed pair with either a Mirage F1 or Rafale – France's newest close air support asset.

Finally, while the Lynx is now much improved it does not perform close air support procedures.

It is used in a close combat attack role but these actions are carried out with the input of non-FAC-qualified troops.

This asset could have been superseded by other platforms such as the AH1 Cobra, F18 Hornet/Super Hornet or MQ9 Reaper which is operated by 39 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Sorry if this sounds like a rant but I am passionate about my job and feel people should be given the right information. – A FAC instructor.

disappointing to see it done so poorly. – Sgt Paul Dickinson, 16 Bty, 26 Regt RA.

The editor, scanning the skies over Aldershot for JTAC-tasked aircraft, types:
Apologies for any offence caused by the inaccuracies identified in your letter and the offering above.

The top ten in question was based on a submission by the authors of *Fire Strike 7/9*, Damien Lewis and Sgt Paul "Bommer" Grahame, who has served as a JTAC on Op Herrick.

Factual errors aside, *Ranked* is a subjective feature and the line-ups and any perceived omissions are there to be challenged. Thank you for doing so.

Fire-and-forget fallacy: MQ1 Predator



Belgian bomber: F16



Powerful punch: A10 Warthog



Airburst oversight: F15 Eagle



Dearly departed: Harrier GR7

Why didn't Kut make the cut?

THE last edition of *Soldier* provided an excellent summary of John Withington's provocative and fascinating book *Britain's 20 Worst Military Disasters: From the Roman Conquest to the Fall of Singapore*.

Battles or wars lost, failures and mistakes need to be exposed to us military folk so that we learn from the past and do not repeat similar errors in the future.

Producing a literary title like Withington's is a very subjective exercise. I was reminded of Norman Dixon's outstanding book *On The Psychology of Military Incompetence*, which should still be compulsory reading for us all.

In keeping with Withington, he identified events in the Crimea, Boer War and Singapore and lays the blame mainly on poor leadership, inept decision making, low quality intelligence and related underestimation of the enemy.

However, I would suggest that January's feature should have mentioned another catastrophe, which Dixon highlighted, and was led by the British – Kut 1916.

This disaster in Mesopotamia, which ran parallel with the more well-known Gallipoli debacle, led to 3,000 troops being killed in the besieged town of Kut, 2,500 wounded and 13,000 taken prisoner – of which 4,000 died in captivity.

The force that attempted, but failed, to relieve the Turkish siege suffered 23,000 casualties.

Strategically this defeat was a very damaging blow to British prestige in the region and spawned two major inquiries – there was no successful evacuation to promote.

Where will you find more on this topic? My book, *Kut 1916*, is available from The History Press! – Col Patrick Crowley, Media & Comm, Army HQ.

DON'T SUGARCOAT SAVINGS

■ I THINK everyone understands the current financial situation, moreover we are living it.

With that in mind, the responses to some of the allowance-related questions in recent issues of *Soldier* are disappointing.

Brig Tim Hyams [DPS(A)] and others are quick to point out that civilian packages cater for a very different set of circumstances and should not be used as a reference point.

Why then did the briefing on the Strategic Defence and Security Review allowance reductions refer to the average commute to work in the UK being nine miles?

Surely this is a civilian circumstance and, in Brig Hyams' own words [in reply to a letter bemoaning cuts to the Recruitment and Retention Allowance (London)], the comparison is "unhelpful".

Such payments have always faced a long, hard battle for funding.

The only reason allowances are now being dropped is because of the dire state of the nation's finances.

Why was it deemed necessary to try to justify their removal? Why not suspend payment of allowances x, y and z and reinstate them if and when they become affordable? To seek out reasons to remove them does a disservice to us all. – *Name and address supplied.*

SHOPS' HOLLOW OFFER

■ AS a serving (soon-to-be ex) soldier, I was encouraged to read articles in the press about how large employers such as Tesco, Morrisons and Asda are actively recruiting former Armed Forces personnel.

The news reports stated that Service leavers are given priority attention due to the skills and experience they can bring to an organisation.

The reality is somewhat different. None of the above permit speculative CV submissions.

My enquiries with the human resources departments of these retailers met with the same response – "sorry, you have to wait until a post becomes available and apply along with everyone else".

Special consideration? Far from it. – *SSgt Hendrick, RMP.*



Time to get tough on tattoos

TATTOOS that are offensive, obscene or excessive in size or number will be a bar to entry or re-entry. Tattoos should not be visible on the head and neck and may be a bar to entry when on the hand.

The above is taken directly from the Army's application guidance notes which are basically the rules and regulations that all members of the Armed Forces are expected to adhere to.

The section on tattoos must be there just to fill space as it seems that few people take heed of it.

Can someone please tell me why, when we are trying so hard to come across as a professional, proficient and trained modern Army, an increasing number of commanding officers are letting their soldiers get and, more importantly, get away with inappropriate and excessive tattoos?

I'm sorry if my reaction to this craze comes across as old-fashioned but I believe it is making soldiers look like common thugs or members of inner-city gangs.

There are a lot of employers out there who would not stand for this deliberate

knock to their hard-earned image and refuse to even interview individuals with tattoos clearly visible on their hands, neck or face.

So why is the Army still letting these people join up? Recruiting staff cannot argue to the contrary when it is plain for all to see when visiting phase one and two training establishments.

At a time when we are reducing our numbers, why is the Service not discharging offenders to discourage others?

Those caught taking drugs would be expelled from the Army in keeping with policy so the same should apply to personnel breaking the rules in respect of tattoos. Is this regulation not enforced because the Service would be left with no soldiers under the age of 25?

I do not have a problem with tattoos generally but take exception when they can be seen by members of the public.

The British Army needs to address this issue before it gets completely out of control and the organisation ends up becoming a laughing stock. – *Name and address supplied.*

Desist this dastardly debate, Muttley

I WRITE to point out that I and many others are getting a little fed up with the constant moaning about medals.

The griping seems to move from one decoration to the next with the latest focus being the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. I would like to echo SSgt Mark Smith's view (*Talkback*, November), if you're not serving on the date stated then you will not get one!

It seems as though everyone has gone gong crazy and a lot of ex-Servicemen sound like Muttley from the *Catch the*

Pigeon cartoons... "medal, medal, medal".

Awards are an emotive subject, whether they are for campaigns, courage or time served, and there will always be those who feel they should be recognised but are not.

However, if you do not fit the eligibility criteria – and they are clear for all to see – then you do not get a medal.

Can we all please behave like British soldiers – professional, proud but humble – and stop emulating Muttley? – *Capt Ossie Osborne, Paderborn.*



"A Diamond Jubilee Medal, ma'am? They'll all want one... think of the expense."

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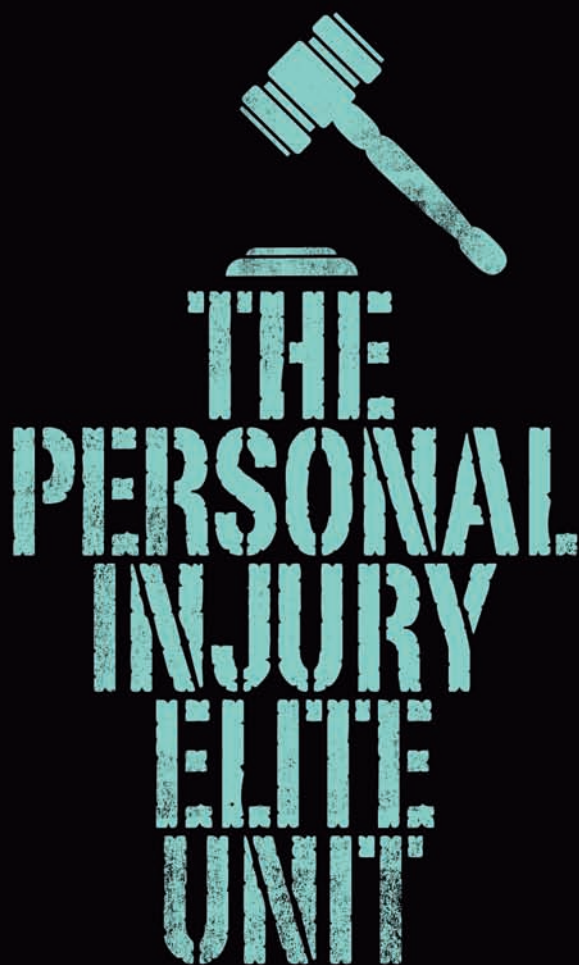
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Good tidings returned to sender



"We're now into our third week of brainstorming... shall we move on?"

DON'T TINKER WITH TITLE

THE Duke of Westminster was quoted in *Soldier* (December) stating that the Territorial Army should shed its title because the public still associates the organisation with *Dad's Army*.

Maj Gen Gerald Grosvenor said he had consulted many serving Reservists who were in broad agreement with a name change.

Territorials were much maligned by Regular officers during the Boer and First World War but attitudes altered during the Second World War and beyond, with Reserve personnel proving they were capable of doing what was required of them.

Why change the name of an organisation which has earned a well-deserved place among this country's volunteer services?

Everyone knows who they are and what they do, so much more so in this day and age.

I was very happy to volunteer as a Territorial soldier and served for 36 years in the Infantry.

It was great fun and I hope I and my peers helped a lot of people along the way. – T. Crowther, Kirkcudbrightshire.

I AM writing to let *Soldier* readers know about the plight of those British troops who spent the festive period on the front line in Afghanistan.

Having been in theatre since last October, Clinton Cards kindly sent boxes of Christmas cards to personnel to send to their families back in the UK.

I, along with others on base, spent a lot of time writing to my loved ones and friends at home.

However, all my efforts went to waste when the cards were returned on the basis that they needed stamps on them.

Strangely enough, I couldn't find a post office in the patrol base I live in and was unable to purchase a book of first-class stamps. This annoyed a lot of people – especially those stationed in extremely remote checkpoints with nothing but a tent and their kit to keep them warm.

The British Forces Post Office (BFPO) showed no compassion and essentially destroyed the morale of front-line troops this Christmas.

Blueys can be posted without any problems so why not greetings cards? – Capt Charlie King.



Lt Col Ian Stark, SO1 Policy and Plans HQ BFPO, responds: There are two issues raised here – one relating to the provision of and entitlement to postal services on operations and the other access to deployed facilities.

While BFPO retains end-to-end responsibility for the efficient provision of postal support to operations, we do not set individual entitlements.

Mail forms a component of the deployed welfare package and the MoD and PJHQ currently sanction free mail in the form of Forces air letters, "the bluey", and the computer based

"e-bluey" to and from Op Herrick. An outbound families service for parcels up to 2kg is also provided without charge. The associated costs of these are attributed to the operation.

There is no entitlement to any other free mail service, including in this case the sending of Christmas cards.

Details on availability of the welfare package and access to postal services should have been covered during pre-deployment training and feature in the Land Forces mounting instruction.

Where personnel have a requirement for a mail service over and above the free entitlement then this is available at normal UK inland postage rates.

To enable troops to access return postal and counter services, six Forces post offices are provided at various locations in Afghanistan.

Clearly this is of little help if deployed in a forward operating base (FOB) without embedded RLC postal and courier staff and to this end we would always advise personnel to

carry a book of stamps or pre-stamped envelopes with them when they deploy.

Within theatre, mail leaves the post office system and passes through the unit echelons which arrange distribution to and from FOBs and patrol bases.

The alternative would have been to channel the cards through a unit post orderly who could have applied the postage and reclaimed the cost in due course.

Given that we are supporting in the region of 10,000 deployed personnel in Afghanistan and considering that BFPO cleared over 180 tonnes of mail to Op Herrick in the four weeks leading up to Christmas, I suggest this is a better measure of our contribution to the morale of the blokes on the front line.

Whip system deters debate

I AM writing in support of the excellent *Home Truths* article by Julie McCarthy in December's issue of *Soldier* [which questioned why so few MPs were present in Parliament for a recent debate on Armed Forces personnel].

From 1980 until 1995 I was the staff superintendent in the House of Lords and lived on site.

During my time there I was friendly with several Members of Parliament and a number of peers.

Many of these individuals told me that following an election they soon became

disillusioned with the House of Commons as a consequence of the whip system, which often means they have to vote with their party's view rather than in line with what they and their constituents want.

Surely it is time for the Armed Forces to be taken out of party politics and overseen by a cross-party standing committee?

I agree with Julie about poor attendance in the Commons when the Services are being debated. – Maj (Retd) Peter Horsfall, Southgate, London.

● Home Truths – page 67



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For more than 100 years we have supported the Armed Forces and their families with affordable accommodation and welfare breaks. We are the Victory Services Club; the all ranks, tri-service, family friendly London-based club.

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Defence is digitally disadvantaged

PART of my job involves using the web to conduct open-source research but a lack of updates to the Defence Internet Infrastructure (DII) means that access can be a problem.

I am, for example, unable to watch videos on the BBC News pages and have even encountered problems visiting *Soldier* online. The system's inability to handle a certain airline's website means that I also have to make use of a local library if I need to print off a boarding pass ahead of a flight.

I've raised this issue with the relevant chain of command and have been told it is down to budgetary constraints; to upgrade the software would cost the MoD in the region of £30 a month per user account.

If this is the case, the department has tied itself into a ridiculous contract. As web pages continue to advance the MoD will be left behind.

Is there a solution to this problem? –
Name and address supplied.

Sarah Sheppard, DE&S Pol Sec, replies: I should first explain that DII is the largest programme of its type in Europe and supports 224,000 accounts.

In addition, deployed solutions are available for operational use and are live on 16 ships.

Clearly, provision of a secure and resilient network to meet the needs of defence is never going to be cheap. However, many audits have continued to demonstrate that DII is less expensive



"When exactly did you start having these nightmares about DII?"

than comparable public sector systems and will save several billion pounds over its ten-year life.

The range of services provided to each individual is dependent upon the needs of their unit; the two main account types are for occasional and standard users.

The former are provided with basic office automation facilities and have access to a range of information resources such as the defence intranet and applications like Joint Personnel Administration (JPA).

Standard users have additional services

including access to the internet and external email.

The difference in price for the two accounts is about £30 per month and this would equate to the figure you were quoted.

DII has continued to evolve since first going live in January 2006. I am aware of the limitations with the current browser (Internet Explorer 6) and there are plans to uplift it to Internet Explorer 8 and beyond as part of a much larger technical refresh programme, which will include moving to Windows 7 and the Office 2010 products.

Unfortunately many defence applications, such as JPA, are not yet compatible with IE8 and we are working with their owners to agree timescales for when the uplift will occur.

Realistically the upgrade will not be widely available until late 2012/early 2013, although we are exploring options to offer an earlier service.

Some of the problems you are experiencing are a result of the constraints placed on all users to limit the threat of cyber attack. This can take many forms, for example some applications such as Flash Player utilise "active code" which is therefore blocked.

In addition, video from sites such as BBC News are particularly bandwidth-hungry and if allowed on the network would lead to a denial of service. An alternative for the streaming of specific defence-related media will be available in 2013/2014.

Bemused by headlight beam imbalance

I, ALONG with no doubt hundreds of other Service personnel past and present, have spent a significant sum changing the headlights on my car to comply with British Forces Germany (BFG) driving regulations.

After being made to replace units with a flat beam function, I was surprised to learn that the MAN support vehicles currently operating over here are permitted to have such headlights.

I am therefore at a loss to understand why military vehicles are allowed to drive in Germany with flat beam headlights yet cars belonging to Service personnel are not.

If you pardon the pun, can anyone shed some light on what appears in this case to be double standards? – Maj Stuart Barte, HQ 102 Log Bde, Gutersloh.

Terry Wee, S02 G1 Veh Lic BFG, responds: The statement that military MAN support vehicles operating in Germany are permitted to do so with UK headlights which are flat beam is incorrect.

They are fitted with units that have been tested and issued with an EU-type approval indicating that they are suitable for permanent use in both right- and left-

hand traffic.

This is denoted by a double arrow mark on the casing and when adjusted for use will provide the necessary kick-up.

The majority of conventional European headlights used by private vehicles are given an EU-type approval for permanent use in left-hand traffic (UK) or right-hand traffic (continental) only.

The respective kick-ups are designed to provide extra illumination to the front, nearside pedestrian pavement and roadside signage thereby increasing road and passenger safety.

Few manufacturers provide headlights that are suitable for permanent use in both right- and left-hand traffic as there is little demand for this capability and they are expensive to produce.

However, the new military MAN vehicle is fitted with such lights.

The flattening of the projected beam on headlights is achieved by a mechanical version of placing a shaped sticker on the glass of older conventional systems.

Stickers and mechanical masks are not acceptable for BFG light

check or roadworthiness inspection.

These methods are classed as a "tourist solution" and are temporary measures only, which are designed for holidaymakers or personnel on short business trips.

Therefore, the answer to the reader's question is that there are not two different standards for military and private roadworthiness tests as the MAN support vehicles fully comply with all of the regulations in the same manner as if a private vehicle would if its headlights were suitable for permanent use in right- and left-hand traffic.





COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Pte Sutton, 1 PWRR, Paderborn; Jayne Hawkes, HQ Hereford Garrison, Hereford; Sgt K Chapman, GSUOTC, Glasgow; Janet Taylor, Beeston, Nottingham; Mr F Johnstone, Hallow, Worcester.

The Hangover Part II: Mr W King, Derby; Natalie Goatley, Falmouth, Cornwall; Lorraine Brook, Barnstable, Devon; Alison Sherwood, Penmaenmawr, Conwy; Helen Maddock, Hanham, Bristol.



DIARY

February 2: Talks by adventurers with a military link in aid of The Light Dragoons Colonel's Appeal at the Royal Geographic Society. For further information contact Paul Gummer on 0207 3995784 or email paul.gummer@eu.jil.com

February 11-26: Two weeks of events called **Frontline Australia** to mark the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. Visit www.frontlineaustralia.com.au for more information.

February 14-18: **Heroes** runs at The Phoenix Theatre, Bordon. Performances start at 1930 and tickets, priced £10, can be purchased at www.phoenix-arts.co.uk or by telephoning the box office on 01420 472664.

March 9: **Sandown Park** plays host to six races including the **Grand Military Gold Cup**. Entry is £13 per person and holders of the first 500 tickets sold will receive a free drink in The Grand Military Bar. To book visit www.sandown.co.uk/pages/grandmilitary and enter the code GM2012.

March 24: **4 Para Freedom Parade**, Liverpool.

April 7-8: **Convoy For Heroes** at Prestwold Hall in Leicestershire. Booking is now open and the organisers are aiming to assemble 1,000 vehicles for a new attempt at the Guinness World Record for longest Land Rover convoy. Contact Patricia Stoner on 07850 428821 or visit www.convoy4heroes.org.uk for more information.

April 21: **72 Engineer Regiment** Freedom Parade, Birkenhead.

April 25: **ANZAC Day**.

May 12: **British Military Train 1945-1990 – The 2012 Berliner Tribute**. In celebration of the calm professionalism of railway people, civilian and military, a steam locomotive will head a train of 1960s' carriages including a dining car from Berlin to Hanover and back. Fares start at £90 with proceeds going to The Royal British Legion in Berlin. There will also be a pre-train party in Berlin on May 11. For reservations and further details contact militarytrain2012@gmail.com or call Neil Howard on 07982 786529.

Until further notice: **The Lord Ashcroft Gallery: Extraordinary Heroes**. The world's largest collection of Victoria and George Crosses. The new gallery examines the concept of bravery and personal stories behind the

decorations. Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. Telephone 0207 416 5000 or visit www.iwm.org.uk

Until further notice: Exhibition of War Correspondents – reporting under fire since 1914. Featuring some of the people whose words, images, voices and faces bring the story from the front line to those at home, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves. Imperial War Museum North, Manchester M17 1TZ. www.iwm.org.uk



DIRECTORY

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

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

ABF The Soldiers' Charity: 0845 241 4820

Army Welfare Service: 01980 615975; www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Army Families Federation: 01264 382324; mil.94391.2324; www.aff.org.uk

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

Children's Education Advisory Service: 01980 618244; enquiries@ceas.detsa.co.uk

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

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

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Gardening Leave: 01292 521 444; www.gardeningleave.org

Help for Heroes: 0845 673 1760; www.helpforheroes.org.uk

helpforheroes.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

Remount: 01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725; www.britishlegion.org.uk

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

SSAFA Forces Help: 0845 1300 975; www.ssafo.org.uk

St Dunstan's: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency:

0800 169 2277 (from the UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas)

The Not Forgotten Association: 020 7730 2400; www.nfassociation.org



HONOURS

Appointments to the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of Bath as Knight Commander: Lt Gen Mark Francis Noel Mans (late RE)

As Companions: Maj Gen Nicholas John Caplin (late AAC), Maj Gen Clive Chapman (late Para), Maj Gen Patrick Claude Marriott (late QRL)

Appointments to the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire as Commanders: Col Andrew Dutton Mason (late Para), Brig Nicola Patricia Moffat (late AGC (SPS)), Brig Richard Edward Nugee (late RA), Brig Thomas Norman O'Brien (late RLC (V)), Col David Charles Richmond (late Scots), Maj Gen David Anthony Hirst Shaw (late RA)

As Officers: Col Anthony Gareth Bex (RLC), Lt Col Robaird James Boyd (Lancs), Lt Col Jonathan David Bryant (AAC), Col Mark Byers (RAMC), Col Jane Elizabeth Davis (QARANC (V)), Lt Col Adam Guy Dawson (Para), A/Col Anthony Ian Denison (ACF), Lt Col Simon David Etherington (R Anglian), Col Hugo Murray Fletcher (late Para), Lt Col Sebastian Giles Heath (RA), A/Col Andrew Grahame Maclean (RA), Lt Col Russell Alexander Miller (Int Corps), Col Ian Edward Prosser (late AGC (RMP))

As Members: WO2 Paul Richard Addenbrooke (Coldm Gds), Maj Toby Paul Barnes-Taylor (Gren Gds), Maj Richard Mark Coates (RRF), Capt Victoria Anne Greer (Int Corps), Capt John Barrie Elms (Mercian), Lt Col Andrew William Field (Mercian), WO2 Antony Edward Gaul (RAPTC), WO2 Barry John Grass (AGC (RMP)), Capt David Brian Hall (Lancs (V)), Maj John Anthony Harker (Lancs), Capt Steven John Harris (Rifles), Maj Andrew Hawkins (RLC), A/ Lt Col Andrew Francis Reaveley James (Gren

Gds), Lt Col Marc Stephen Lawson (AGC (SPS)), Lt Col Russell Lee (RA), Maj Mark Martin (RA), Maj Clive Ronald Alfred Miles (Scots), Cpl Lee Mullen (RE), Lt Col Richard John Sydney Reid (RAMC), A/Lt Col Peter John Rowell (RE), Maj Thomas James Salberg (RE), Maj Fiona Jane Scotter (RE), Capt Makand Singh (RLC (V)), Cpl Kevin Phillip Thompson (RE), Maj Edward James Trowbridge (AGC (ETS)), WO2 Neil Wilson Walton (RLC (V)), Maj Steven Gilbert Wemyss (Scots), WO2 Matthew Whitfield (R Signals), Lt Col Sheldon Wild (KRH), WO2 Andrew Gordon Wooton (RE)

Royal Red Cross, Second Class: Maj Helen Elizabeth Purvis (QARANC (V))

Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal: Capt David Paul Bolland (TA), WO2 John Edward Collins (R Signals (V)), Brig Joseph Gerard d'Inverno (RHF (V)), WO2 Richard John Holding (AGC (RMP) (V)), Lt Col Iain David Levack (RAMC (V))



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 76/11: Service complaints, level two determinations – changes to Army policy

ABN77/11: Optimising the regimental structure and creation of directorate of personnel operations

ABN 78/11: Release of *Pulheems Administrative Pamphlet 10*, version 3

DIN 2011DIN01-244: Changes to the risk management process for civilians on departmental business

DIN 2011DIN01-243: Pension tax relief – annual allowance scheme

DIN 2011DIN01-242: New tri-Service domestic assistance policy and official hospitality policy for the Armed Forces and civilians – JSP 915 (this supersedes DIN 2010DIN08-029)

DIN 2011DIN01-241: Early years foundation stages in overseas settings – policy

DIN 2011DIN03-042: JSP 471 – Defence nuclear emergency response

DIN 2011DIN03-041: 2011 Defence search policy

DIN 2011DIN03-040: Strategy in delivering fleet operational assurance for mine countermeasures elements undertaking Op Kipion

DIN 2011DIN03-039: Guidance on maritime force capability assurance to minor war vessels

DIN 2011DIN04-191: Fast-track disposals process for defence inventory (this supersedes DIN 2010DIN04-157)

DIN 2011DIN04-190: Rescind obsolete status DS&TE PT-controlled test and measurement equipment

DIN 2011DIN04-189: Obsolete/obsolescent DS&TE PT-controlled test and measurement equipment

DIN 2011DIN04-188: Update to Fleet area code list

DIN 2011DIN05-048: High grade messaging future service

DIN 2011DIN07-187: Relocation of military biomedical science training team

DIN 2011DIN07-185: Welbeck, The Defence Sixth Form College – 2012 intake

DIN 2011DIN08-017: Financial assistance on call out or recall

DIN 2011DIN08-016: Official hospitality (this supersedes DIN 2010DIN08-029)

DIN 2011DIN10-047: Army bouldering

championships 2012

DIN 2011DIN10-046: Services surf kayak and waveski championships, April 23-29



REUNIONS

RAMC Reunited 2012: Reunion will take place at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry on February 3. Contact Mick McCran on 01522 879307 or at michael.mccran@ntlworld.com for further details.

The 2012 Aliwal Dinner: All members of 16th/5th Lancers, 17th/21st Lancers, Queen's Royal Lancers and attached units are welcome. Event takes place on February 4 at the Telford Golf and Country Club. For more details phone 07890 207391 or email wjcfive@yahoo.co.uk

Joint Helicopter Support Unit: Old and new faces are invited to celebrate the JHSU's 30th anniversary at the Victory Services Club in London on March 31. The event costs £40 per head and will run from 1730 to 2330. Visit www.jhsu.webs.com for further details on how to book.

The Queen's Royal Lancers, North West Branch: Annual dinner on April 14 in Blackpool. All ex-6/5 QRL, 17/21 L and QRL welcome. Further details from Ned Kelly on 01772 324795 or via email at mike.kelly@talktalk.net

79 Port Enabling Sqn (formerly 79 Railway Sqn) are disbanding on April 26. Former members are invited to attend a parade. For further information contact Maj Chris Bowen on 023 8066 4314, mil 94273 8314 or at chris.bowen723@mod.uk

Continued on page 66

WIN
£100

NO. 843

JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

TEN details have been changed on this photograph of an equipment trial at the Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centre in Wiltshire.

Circle the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 843, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire

GU11 2DU by February 29.

A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers.

The results will be announced in the

April issue.

December's competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 was **Shelly Holness**, TA Centre, Canterbury. **Runners-up:** LCpl Jallow, 12 Mech Bde, Bulford and Mr L Sharrock, Eltham, London.



Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Engineers Cassino Troop 1989-1990 is looking for lost members for a reunion scheduled for late April. If you were a member of the troop and are interested in attending please contact Peter King at 4 Turner Close, Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire DL9 3SP or email peterliamking@live.co.uk

RMP Memorial Parade at the National Memorial Arboretum. This procession will be held on Saturday, June 16 at 1115. For 2013 the date will return to the first Saturday in June. Email rhqrm@btinternet.com for further information.

10 Trg Bn REME, Bordon: Reunion for all serving and former **recovery mechanic SNCOs** to be held in the sergeants' mess on June 29-30. For further details contact Sgt Simmo Sieminski at 7739siemi@armymail.mod.uk or on 01420 485557.

Crewman/door gunner reunion on September 27 at the Victory Services Club in London. £40 per person. For details contact Cpl James Price at 8 Flight AAC on 94475 2731 or at aviationcrewman@yahoo.co.uk

David Sykes is planning a reunion for all members of **4 Sqn, 22 Signal Regiment** who served between 1970 and 1975. Considers September/October as a suitable time as hotel prices should be favourable. Anybody interested can contact him by email at churchill422@sky.com

56th Signal Squadron (V) (Eastbourne): Reunion dinner will be held at the Cavendish

Hotel on October 20. Application forms can be obtained from the UHO either by email at 39sr-56-paySNCO@mod.uk or in writing from SHO, TA Centre, Seaside, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 7NL. Telephone 01323 728116.



ROADSHOWS

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com to request forthcoming dates and venues.



SEARCHLINE

Geoff George is researching his late uncle **James (Jimmy) George** who died several years ago in his 80s. Born and bred in Cardigan, West Wales, James served in the British Army during the Second World War and was also a boxer. Do you know any more? Email gefgeorge@hotmail.com

The Household Cavalry Association (northern branch) has been established in Greater Manchester. All personnel, wives/widows and attached other arms are sought to meet old friends from both mounted or armoured squadrons. Contact Alan Lister on 0161 7259851 for further details.

Dominic Mabbett is looking for his brother **Cpl Jon Mabbett** who is believed to be serving with **47 Air Dispatch Squadron**. Contact Dominic on 07528 576980 or email dmabb@hotmail.co.uk with any information.

Myra-Ann Simpson is looking for a **John Meyers** who was posted to Wick in 1943. If anyone knows of his whereabouts contact myra.ann.simpson@hotmail.com

PhD student Kim Webb is looking for British **Army personnel** who are willing to share their experiences of **higher education in the UK**. Contact her at k.v.webb@durham.ac.uk

Ann Hamlet is gathering memoirs from **veterans who served in Italy between 1943 and 1945** for a book she is writing. Contact her by phone on 01342 844082 or email at info@italystar43-45.co.uk

Tom Pierce is looking for fellow former Royal Engineer **LCpl Neil Sutcliffe**, who he served with in Plant Troop on the Pacific atoll of Christmas Island from 1956-1957. Contact Bob Aslett on 01395 264940 or by email at branstons@talktalk.net

Former Royal Engineer Sgt John Chamberlain is looking for **ex-sapper David Joseph Chapple**. They served together with 48 Field Sqn, Royal Engineers in Ripon, Yorkshire between 1963 and 1967 before Chapple left the Army and went to work for GCHQ in Cheltenham. Contact John on 01634 301281.

Mr A Bernard is trying to trace the family of **6979215 Robert Jackson** (born 1917 in County Antrim) who served with the Royal Inniskilling

Fusiliers before transferring to the Royal Fusiliers from 1940. Contact Mr Bernard by email at findingroots@yahoo.co.uk

A researcher is looking for relatives of soldiers who served in **7th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment** between 1939 and 1946, while the unit was billeted in Birchington, Deal and Bexhill (Cooden), as well as anyone in the battalion's pre-war recruiting patch of Bournemouth. Contact Ian Taylor on 02380 694771 or at ian.p.b.taylor@btinternet.com

Annika Hofmann is trying to locate her grandfather, soldier **George Matthews**, a Londoner who met her grandmother Christa Schwerm when he was stationed in Schleswig, Germany from 1945-1947. Contact Annika by email at Annika@kiga-english-kids.de or write to Gerhardstr.41, 24105 Kiel, Germany.

A photography student is documenting and comparing the effects of conflict on **Servicemen and the families of soldiers involved in the Second World War, Iraq and Afghanistan**. Any personnel and their families willing to undertake an **online questionnaire** about how war has affected them are asked to contact Rachel Hewitt on 01803 855580 or email Rach102@hotmail.co.uk. The Plymouth College of Art student is also looking for families and/or soldiers willing to be pictured for a photography project running beside the dissertation.

Robin Powell is looking for an old school friend who went on to serve in the British Army. In 1966, **24044749 G N R Akhurst** was training at Park Hall camp, Oswestry, Shropshire. He was a member of A Section, C Troop, 24 (Irish) Battery, 17th Training Regiment. Contact Robin by email at robinpowell@btinternet.com

Edna Diana Bey (nee Costa) is looking for her father **William Henry McBride**, who served with the mountain infantrymen in Germany during the Second World War. Edna was born in 1947 in Traunstein, Bavaria to Theresa Costa (born August 3, 1923). Contact Edna by telephone on 49 030 405 01 739 or via email at edna-bey@hotmail.de

Rhoda Kirkpatrick is seeking information about her cousin, **23917491 LBdr David Tilbury**, who was killed in action on October 27, 1971 at Rosemount RUC in Northern Ireland. Email kirkysgirl@yahoo.com

David Stewart is trying to trace fellow comrades of his late father **22722258 Cpl Robert Muirhead Wilson (RAOC)**. He served from 1952 until 1954 and was based in Tripoli from January 1953. Contact David at 9/12 Smithfield Street, Edinburgh EH11 2PG or phone 0131 477 6387.

Where are you chef **John Clark (aka Clarky)?** Last known whereabouts was 16 Regiment, Woolwich in 1999/2000. Wendy Hennell is trying to find you. If you wish to get in contact email wendy.hennell@hotmail.co.uk

Ex-Rhodesian Army engineer Patrick McCosh is trying to find former colleague **Michael Peters** who joined the British Army in 1980 when he left Zimbabwe. Michael was a sergeant in 1993. His parents were Ron and Margaret Peters. Contact Patrick by email at patrick@west.co.zw

Former MoD civilian Udham Dillon is trying to locate **Lt Col A Pratt (RA)** who was serving in Hong Kong in 1982/83 as Chief G4 Qtg. Udham retired in July 1983 and emigrated to Canada. Contact by email at jeobala@rogers.com or write to 311 Dixon Road, Apt 809, Etobicoke, Toronto M9R 1S3, Ontario, Canada.

WEB WATCH

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

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Picture: Mike Weston

Good intentions: A new group established by David Cameron, pictured during a Sovereign's Parade, aims to strengthen support afforded to Service personnel

Committee must do more than just talk the talk

AT the tail-end of last year, the prime minister pledged to set up and chair the Armed Forces and veterans committee, a body tasked with looking after the welfare of Service personnel.

Such a commitment is of course welcome but comes with the challenge of ensuring that practical rather than political solutions are delivered.

With that in mind, the real value of David Cameron's support of the military will become clear in the months and years ahead. Politicians are skilled in the art of the timely announcement and we will all want to see action over presentation.

On a positive note, if the committee does indeed look after all aspects of Forces welfare – including health, housing and jobs – then it will be in addition to an already busy defence-related timetable for the prime minister. Much has been made of this government's commitment to the covenant and this group could ensure it is upheld.

What does concern me, however, is that I have been a member of the covenant reference group (formerly the external reference group for the Service personnel command paper) for a couple of years now and it stands for everything the new committee will.

The collective is made up of a wide range of advocates from across government departments and has worked hard to mitigate disadvantages faced by Forces personnel and their families.

Armed with limited resources but lots of will, some changes have been introduced – the pupil premium for one.

I have been assured that this work is complementary to Mr Cameron's venture and will not be usurped or overtaken. Therefore, I remain sceptical that it will add anything new to the debate other than some helpful sound bites and reminders of past improvements.

The direction that the covenant has taken over the last six months has, I must admit, caused me some concern.

While I welcome the efforts of the other government departments and the devolved administrations to ensure no disadvantage for Forces personnel and their families, I sometimes wonder if this simply draws attention away from the responsibilities of the MoD itself.

Is the focus on what the departments of health, education and work and pensions should be doing actually what Armed Forces personnel and their families see as the covenant?

When I, in "wife of" rather than freedom fighter mode, ponder the commitment and how it relates to my family, I don't think about operational allowance, the pupil premium or even whether or not I can find a decent NHS dentist.

What is important to me is the house that we live in, its maintenance and the environment around it.

Accommodation is a fundamental pillar of the terms and conditions of service that soldiers expect.

It is not a "nice to have" or a perk – with our mobile lifestyle and lack of stability it is an essential provision.

Interestingly, the House of Commons defence select committee has decided to look at housing as part of their "covenant in action" inquiries.

As this is only the second study they have undertaken (the first being military casualties), it highlights the importance being placed on accommodation provision for both families and single soldiers.

My husband's pay and pension is also important – actually no, it's vital.

With my chequered CV, jobs aren't always easy to come by when we move (which we do every two years) and for months we may need to survive on one income.

After years of serving abroad and being self-employed, I have no personal pension and will rely heavily on my partner in retirement, no matter what provision I make in the future.

With the current, and recently extended, pay freeze and the looming review into the Armed Forces pension scheme, is it little wonder that I am not alone in questioning what direction the covenant is moving in?

It is vital for its success that everyone involved is talking about the same goals and we don't simply hear about what other departments and the great British public can and must be doing to support Service personnel and their families.

The MoD has myriad responsibilities and in these challenging times of budgetary black holes and belt tightening it cannot and must not sell our community short. ■

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Terrace talk: Cass Pennant's clothes-conscious *Casuals* is released by Urban Edge Films

Football fashionistas

Producer Cass Pennant reveals a cultural revolution that launched on the terraces

Review: Joe Clapson

WITH notorious football firms from Liverpool, Manchester and London paying as much attention to their sartorial standing as their terrace reputation, a cultural phenomenon swept the United Kingdom during the 1980s.

In *Casuals* we hear from key players in a fashion movement that still influences today's trends, with explanations of what it meant to own an exclusive pair of Adidas Trimm Trab trainers and stand out in a crowd.

Produced and researched by the former leader of West Ham's notorious Inter City Firm, Cass Pennant, the insightful documentary shows the remarkable attention football fans paid to their appearance and lays claim to a lasting legacy.

"There is an unrecorded social history of the casuals movement and this film has come from people at its forefront," explained the hooligan-turned-author.

"The revolution with clothing, with people now wearing casual clothes to clubs and to interviews all came from the casuals and the social

implications of what it created are massive."

With interviews and archive footage featuring key personalities from the era, we are shown the lengths football fans would go to beat their rivals to the latest kit, with many shopping abroad.

Refreshingly and perhaps surprisingly this title is focused on the obsessive nature of attaining the correct shoe or branded tracksuit, rather than any graphic account of violent pre-match "tear-ups" with "muggy" rivals.

"Everyone gets the crash, bang, wallop side of the football terraces but the fashion side of things has never been done before," said the Urban Edge Films producer.

"It's also not just the tough guys, it's about the geeks as well."

The larger-than-life publisher-turned-film producer added: "The collectors absolutely loved making it because it gave them a chance to show off stuff they've had locked up for years."

As well as opening the closet on 30 years' worth of mint condition terrace-clobber and unearthing stories behind it, the film stirs up a long-running debate about who was first to don casualwear in such a style – Liverpool's Scousers or London's cockneys.

Part of the fascinating story is also about where

people got the money from to buy the designer kit.

"A lot of the gear was swapped or flogged to classmates or handed down from older lads," said Pennant. "It was about things like raiding the gas meter box for ten pence pieces and also about a lot of it coming off the back of a lorry."

"And it was through the people that wanted the latest fashion that a few smart entrepreneurs were made into millionaires."

Pennant also highlighted the significance of Armed Forces personnel's involvement in the sports clothing craze, with their wearing of garments bought on foreign deployments.

"A lot of the Army guys were into football and it was always interesting to see what they were wearing and where they got it," he said.

"For people in the Forces who keep themselves fit, the casual style of clothing will suit them – trainers and tracksuits."

While the history of the mods and punks is well documented, this film pays attention to a more mysterious group and also unveils where the high street giants first got their ideas.

For a sense of where current trends originated, this is worth watching. ■

● *Casuals* is out now on DVD

From Nazis taking on the Welsh to remarkable sky views, *Soldier* checks out the latest DVD releases...

Resistance out now

IT'S 1944 and a group of women in an isolated Welsh village wake up to discover all of their husbands have mysteriously vanished. This is an interesting take on what might have happened if D-Day had failed and the Nazis had invaded Britain. Starring **Michael Sheen**, **Andrea Riseborough** and **Iwan Rheon**, *Resistance* looks to explore the divide between collaboration and cooperation and asks the question is it possible to develop a regard or even respect for the oppressor? The end to this alternative history is confusing so intense concentration is a requirement.



Capt Jim Berry, R Irish

Cash out now

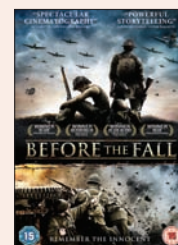
IN this beautifully filmed thriller set in Paris, nothing and no one is to be trusted. **Jean Reno** (*Ronin*, *Leon*) stars as Maxime, a slick veteran thief who specialises in grand scale heists and joins up with a master criminal (**Jean Dujardin**) and his gang, who are out for revenge following the death of their leader's brother. When an undercover cop is discovered the group is thrown into chaos but using smart minds they continue to plan and execute the perfect robbery. Similar to *Ocean's 11* and *12*, *Cash* is an exciting thriller which keeps you guessing who is and who is not on the right side of the law until the very end.



Dan Crowder, civvy

Before the Fall out now

THIS is a broody, dark drama set amid the worrying days of 1942 in Nazi Germany. Our 16-year-old hero is recruited into the Hitler Youth organisation against the express wishes of his parents. As soon as he arrives at the academy he is subjected to brutal military conditioning and propaganda but quickly finds his place and discovers he holds favour with the system. Morals and minor mutiny, fatal training accidents, the suicide of his mate and his ultimate rage against the machine are a sure-fire recipe that almost make you accept the reasons such young men flocked to the Nazi cause.



Maj Neil Johnson, AAC



Clothes horses: *Casuals* shines a light on a movement that saw sportswear become the necessary attire of the UK's most notorious football firms

Perfect Sense out now

A DEADLY virus is spreading throughout the world, stripping humans of their senses. We watch on as people are overcome with crippling grief, depression and rage. Communities break down and chaos ensues as the authorities fail to cope. Witnesses to these strange events are a head chef (**Ewan McGregor**) and doctor (**Eva Green**) who together embark on an emotional rollercoaster, while the world is falling apart around them. This brilliant sci-fi thriller examines the pure complexity and fragile nature of humanity in the face of impending doom and ultimate destruction.

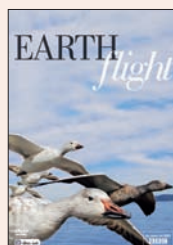
Dan Crowder, civvy



Earth Flight out March 5

NARRATED by **David Tennant**, this extraordinary six-part natural history series from the BBC captures some of the world's greatest wildlife phenomena on screen, through the eyes of birds. Using cutting-edge filming techniques to show everything in exquisite detail, viewers are given the perspective of snow geese, cranes, falcons, albatross, eagles and other winged species as they fly over the globe's great landmarks. The slow-motion techniques employed provide footage that is genuinely breathtaking and give a viewpoint of our planet that will leave your jaw on the floor.

Joe Clapson, Soldier



Win... Casuals

FROM Barcelona to Berlin and Milan to Moscow, the youth of today is copying fashions and a culture that developed on the streets and terraces of British cities in the 1980s. This documentary delves into how the football casual movement developed its trends and ideas to leave a lasting legacy on future generations. *Soldier* has teamed up with Urban Edge Films to offer a copy of the DVD to three lucky winners. To be in with a chance of scooping a copy, just tell us which football team Cass Pennant supports. Answers on a postcard to the usual address or send an email to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Closing date: February 29





Back of the net: *Kinect Sports Season 2* is a sure-fire hit thanks to its impressive use of motion-sensing technology

Let the games begin

Microsoft hit the bullseye in second instalment of sensor's sporting spectacle

Review: Richard Long

AS a long-time sceptic of motion-sensing technology in the gaming world I was somewhat underwhelmed to find an Xbox Kinect under my tree on Christmas morning.

The prospect of throwing shapes to the latest incarnation of *Just Dance* or enduring a zumba-inspired "workout" has never held the same appeal as sitting comfortably on the sofa to enjoy a game of *Fifa* with a traditional joypad.

With this in mind, Santa's latest gift offering sat neglected in its packaging until early into the New Year, when a minute level of curiosity got the better of me.

Armed with a copy of *Kinect Sports Season 2* I set about installing the technology and tackling the six activities on offer.

The title boasts an impressive mix of pursuits that are guaranteed to get pulses racing, although the inclusion of baseball and gridiron football suggest the action has a heavy leaning towards our cousins across the pond.

To counter such inclinations I started my sporting adventure with one of the great British

winter traditions – darts.

A trip to the oche is somewhat difficult to master at first, but once the transition to the virtual world is perfected the arrows fly with ease.

The atmosphere of the game's televised tournaments is expertly recreated with cheering aplenty and you even have the option of deploying some bad sportsmanship by provoking the rowdy crowd as your opponent lines up his next throw.

A helpful targeting system avoids the need for *Countdown*-esque maths equations on the checkouts but the game's impressive sensors mean deadly accuracy is required if you're to nail those all-important doubles.

While darts hits the mark, golf is the undoubted star of the show.

The Kinect technology is superb at reading the strength of different powered shots, meaning booming drives from the tee can soar for hundreds of yards while delicate chips can land accurately on the green.

Other touches, such as adopting the lookout pose for a detailed examination of the hole, add to the realism and voice commands allow you to change club without using tiresome menus.

While baseball may be aimed at the USA, it proves itself worthy of inclusion and the thrill of

slugging a home run will have you coming back for more.

However, the same cannot be said for American football. The biggest stumbling block here is the tackling, which is a hard skill to perfect making it somewhat difficult to prevent an avalanche of points falling against you.

The selection of offensive and defensive plays can be confusing for newcomers and, like its real-life variant, it lacks the fluidity of other sports.

Skiing captures the adrenalin charge of hurtling downhill at breakneck speeds, while the tennis option is solid, but far from spectacular.

With victory complete, players are allowed to relive their highlights via the Kinect camera which captures all the action from the pitches, courts and slopes.

The footage is presented alongside an array of contemporary pop tunes to replay the highs and lows from each event via video montage.

All in all this is a thoroughly enjoyable experience and has gone a long way to reversing some strong preconceptions about the system.

This title undoubtedly comes into its own when played with friends or family and with hours of fun on offer this reviewer is reluctant to admit an eager anticipation of its third instalment. ■

From Batman's brutal barrage to a management masterpiece, we check out the best and the rest of the new releases...

Batman: Arkham City for all formats

SET one year after *Arkham Asylum*, Batman faces off against a plethora of unsavoury characters such as Bane, Joker and the Penguin. The previous game was superb and the sequel is even better. The number of missions is enough to satisfy any fan and there is a plentiful cast of enemies to introduce to the caped crusader's unsympathetic version of justice. But it's not all combat. You have crimes to solve, mysteries and riddles to unravel and rivals to out-think. But if problem solving isn't your thing and you just like jumping around in the night beating criminals to a pulp then you are also very well catered for.



David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen

Star Wars: The Old Republic for PC

WITH such a wide fan base stemming from the immensely popular *Star Wars* films, the franchise's gaming spin-offs are always going to attract more than a passing interest. While *The Old Republic* is set as a prequel to *Episode One*, there is more than enough familiarity to keep the diehards entertained. The single-player storyline is vast and complex and anyone accepting the challenge should be prepared for the long haul. This boasts the usual mix of rescue and kill quests but there are also many distractions to enjoy. With superb graphics and immersive gameplay this is a worthy addition to the galaxy far, far away.



Richard Long, Soldier

Football Manager 2012 for PC and Mac

I HAD not touched a title in this genre since *Premier Manager 99* so I was quite intrigued to see how this field has developed. Boy was I left stunned by *Football Manager 2012*. My knowledge of the beautiful game is somewhat limited so I felt a little blown away at times – but that didn't stop my enjoyment. This will have master tacticians chomping at the bit and the level of detail invested here is simply amazing. Statements made in press conferences can have a direct impact on player performance so you're advised to tread carefully. I can't recommend this strongly enough and I have loved every minute of my fantasy career so far.



Cpl Mike O'Neill, RLC



Hole in one: The superb *Kinect Sports Season 2* accurately captures the trials and tribulations of life on the fairways among its array of athletic options

Mario and Sonic at the Olympics

WITH the London Olympics now firmly on the horizon the time has come for the inevitable merchandising spin-offs to flood the market. But Mario and Sonic's arrival at the world's greatest sporting spectacle is surprisingly decent and, while it does not present the most accurate simulation, it is thoroughly enjoyable. A vast array of sports offer welcome variation and an impressive cast of 20 characters line up alongside the central heroes as the action unfolds. The only downside to this Wii title is the need for relentless button bashing in some disciplines, but on the whole this is the perfect appetiser for the main event this summer.

Richard Long, Soldier



Halo Combat Evolved Anniversary

WHEN originally released in 2001, this title confidently stamped its authority on the first-person shooter scene. It was filled with stunning vistas and amazing gameplay and the remake – *Halo Combat Evolved Anniversary* – follows suit by polishing an already impressive range of features. The haunting soundtrack has been remastered and there are several new multiplayer maps for online action. For diehard fans, there is a collection of story elements that provide background detail to the canon, which supposedly includes clues to *Halo 4*. If you're still not convinced, it's also cheaper.

David McDougall, JHQ Rheindahlen



PowerUp Heroes for Xbox

HUNG on a plot instantly recognisable to those unfortunate enough to have children obsessed with *Ben 10* and sporting an aesthetic akin to a *Pokemon* cartoon, *PowerUp Heroes* is every six-year-old boy's dream game. And therein lies the reason why Ubisoft's latest offering for the Kinect is a dud. Brandished with a 12 rating, this "battle to destroy the forces of evil" alienates the only audience interested in pulling on a virtual super suit. Far from revelling in the novelty of using my body to control the action, this game only served as a reminder of the simple pleasures of the button-bashing fight titles of yesteryear.

Andrew Simms, Soldier





Hot to trot: The Ting Tings will be hoping to build on the success of their debut album with the release of *Sounds From Nowheresville*

Sounding different

Dynamic duo embark on mission to break the mould in long-awaited follow-up

Review: Richard Long

HAVING sold more than two million copies of their debut album and achieving worldwide success in the process, The Ting Tings have rightly enjoyed a musical hiatus.

The electric-pop duo are poised to make their long-awaited comeback this month with the release of *Sounds From Nowheresville*, a record that is sure to build on what has gone before.

For bandmates Katie White and Jules De Martino the concept behind the project was simple – to make tracks that sound different, to have creative freedom and not to be held back by any boundaries.

But the process has been far from simple. After crashing into the mainstream with *We Started Nothing* they spent a relentless two years touring before finally returning to the studio.

After a brief spell in Berlin – to record and later ditch a batch of tracks – they landed in southern Spain, where they set about making music that made them happy.

De Martino said: “Everything before then had been a struggle. Suddenly it wasn’t.

“Every time Katie went up to the booth she was nailing it. The lyrics were happening. The whole weight on our shoulders was lifted. This was enjoyable and it was being dictated by its own energy again.”

It was hoped the German adventure would spawn the album *Kunst*, but the project was shelved in 2010 after single *Hands* failed to set the charts alight.

The setback fired the platinum-selling pair back into the shadows but they resurfaced late last year with a string of intimate shows in support of arts and music courses across the country.

And now, armed with a collection of songs they are clearly happy with, the comeback is about to gather pace.

Admittedly, I wasn’t overly enamoured with previous offerings from The Ting Tings and it was somewhat surprising to see them hit such lofty heights back in 2008.

But tracks such as *That’s Not My Name* and *Shut Up And Let Me Go* clearly struck the right notes in the mainstream and *Sounds From Nowheresville* will only strengthen the group’s mass appeal.

While criticised by some for being a collection of individual tracks rather than a coherent album,

this offering has some notable high points.

Opener *Silence* gradually builds to a crescendo of booming drumbeats and, although sounding impressive enough, the noise only succeeds in drowning the accompanying lyrics.

Hit Me Down Sonny adopts a chilled and mellow hip-hop vibe but White’s rapping about living like a hoodie on *Hang It Up* lacks the credibility needed to make the subject matter sound convincing.

Guggenheim marks a surprising diversion into ballad territory and *Soul Killing* sees the duo going ska. Both moves are bold but ultimately fall a little short.

Such experimentation may hail from the fact that as a two-piece The Ting Tings are hampered by how much they can bring to a live show.

But drums and guitars have been the cornerstone of their success and you cannot help but wonder if tinkering with a winning formula was the right idea.

Sounds From Nowheresville is far from disappointing but it has failed to fully convert me to the cause.

However, the true test lies with the band’s army of fans as it is they who will decide if the four-year wait for new material was really worth it. ■

From snow-inspired songwriting to golden greatest hits, we check out the best of the rest...

Hello Sadness by Los Campesinos!

THE release of *Hello Sadness* marks a slight change in direction for indie kings **Los Campesinos!** Since the release of *Romance Is Boring* in 2010 the group has lost three members and is currently without a fixed home after moving from their base in Cardiff. However, the most notable difference stems from the album’s lyrics, which dwell heavily on notions of loss and longing following the breakdown of a relationship. Despite this sombre approach the key characteristics of what make this band great are still in place and the new-found maturity lends itself perfectly to the triumphant choruses. Their underground following will be far from disappointed.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



The Singles by Goldfrapp

FOR almost 13 years now, **Alison Goldfrapp** and **Will Gregory** have been providing us with their pioneering, electro-synth music. This celebration of their best and most popular hits is taken from a career spanning five albums. The collection kicks off with their biggest and probably most recognised track *Ooh La La*, which perfectly embodies the **Goldfrapp** style of slick, harmonic pop music coupled with almost dream-like vocals. This sets the pace for what follows in the remaining 14 songs. This record is billed as a collection of the best singles from the group’s illustrious career and in my opinion it firmly hits the nail on the head. It is a fantastic album worthy of a place in anyone’s collection.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



Good Ol’ Fashioned Love

AS a treat for their growing fan-base, **The Overtones** have released this platinum edition of their top-five album, with the added bonus of three new songs. This collection is not going to convert any haters but it will certainly tick boxes for lovers of their vintage-pop style, which is clearly evident on *Second Last Chance*. An effortless swagger comes through the flawless vocals of this superb five-piece and with an ability to put their own mark on work from artists as varied as **Rihanna** and **Adele**, their success will undoubtedly continue. As a word of warning, if you put this on in your car you may feel inclined to sing out loud while fellow drivers stare in bewilderment

Joe Clapson, *Soldier*





Back with a bang: Platinum-selling pop stars The Ting Tings return to the mainstream with *Sounds From Nowheresville*, which is released on February 27

Given To The Wild by The Maccabees

SINCE arriving on the music scene in 2007, **The Maccabees** have simmered gently in the second tier of indie rock without ever really threatening the big time.



So the release of third album *Given To The Wild* is something of a make-or-break moment for the band. With this in mind they have embraced a new direction that sees them plumping for safe, anthemic tracks instead of producing anything that could be considered as unique or truly cutting edge. On the whole, this is far from a defining offering and with fierce competition from a host of contemporaries, the group could well be staring at relegation instead of the promotion they crave.

Richard Long, *Soldier*

50 Words For Snow by Kate Bush

THIS is a hauntingly magical album that manages to encapsulate the essence of a cold white winter. The wonderfully spiritual piano harmonies form the backbone of a very surreal record that focuses on a world where snowflakes born from clouds can hear. **Stephen Fry's** romantic tongue is called upon to help with the narration and the most unusual tale is that of a woman who expresses her fantasy of sleeping with a snowman; strange but true. **Kate's** mature vocals are as strong as ever and it's no wonder she has influenced artists such as **Florence And The Machine**. This touching and surprisingly warm album may not be suited to today's chart but it is worthy of a listen – albeit in a quiet place.



Ray Kalaker, ex-RE

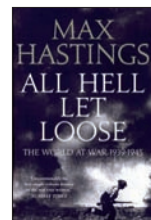
Hollywood by The Puppini Sisters

THE fourth album from master harmonisers **The Puppini Sisters** does not disappoint with an unashamed celebration of the glamour and glitz of Hollywood's golden age.



It is impossible not to tap your feet and click your fingers as the classically-trained voices of **Stephanie O'Brien**, **Marcella Puppini** and **Kate Mullins** pour out of the speakers. A particular favourite is *Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend* which, despite being immortalised by **Marilyn Monroe**, has been recast as an upbeat but perhaps more sinister number. The girls' gold-certified 2006 debut album *Betcha Bottom Dollar* got fans dancing and this release will keep them on their feet.

Joe Clapson, *Soldier*



Telling it like it was:
Published by Harper Press,
Sir Max Hastings' *All Hell
Let Loose: The World At
War 1939-1945* is out now

Unfinished business

Sir Max Hastings insists the Second World War remains a source of untold tales

Interview: Joe Clapson

FEW students of military history could have complained if, having received considerable praise for his previous works on the Second World War, Sir Max Hastings turned his literary attention elsewhere.

However, the renowned author and former newspaper editor insists there are elements of the campaign's wide-scaling story that remain untold.

"People used to write about wars and mostly concentrate on what armies did and the development of how things were done," said the ex-*Daily Telegraph* chief, explaining his decision to revisit the 1939-1945 conflict to *Soldier*.

"But what people want to read about most is the human experience. I ask 'what was war like?' and it was very different for many different people."

Told through the eyes of individuals from around the world, Hastings' *All Hell Let Loose* sets out to document the far-reaching effects of a global conflict.

While the title does highlight the varying fates of those in the military, it also chronicles the experiences of the housewives, farm workers and

children whose lives were put on hold and turned upside down in the name of war.

"Hundreds of millions of people may never have carried arms but had their lives transformed," Hastings said.

"Nothing has happened to our generations that can compare to what they went through."

No stranger to conflict, having reported from trouble spots around the world, the author focuses on the "normal" individuals rather than the gung-ho few who revelled in the battle with Hitler's Germany. Hastings, the first journalist to enter the liberated Port Stanley during the Falklands War, told *Soldier*: "I think it's an unbelievably silly thing to say that because some loved it, all must have."

"Most people had an absolutely terrible time," he added. "If it's an unbelievably gloomy story, then that is the truth."

All Hell Let Loose represents the culmination of 35 years of information gathering – a feat which often finds its way on to the page in the form of startling statistics.

This reviewer, for one, was unaware the city of Leningrad lost 632,253 people during the war, a higher death toll than the British and American armies combined.

"I have tried to concentrate on things that

people don't know," he said. "I hope there are nuggets that will surprise people on almost every page. Mike Jackson [former Chief of the General Staff] said 'what can you tell an audience that we don't already know?'. I asked him what percentage of war-time casualties were British – the answer is two – and he saw my point."

Hastings' close ties with the Army do not save the Service from criticism in his latest history, which suggests that it was the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force that won the day for Britain.

"I don't actually think the Army did that well in the war and I believe an awful lot of British officers were not up to the job. The current Army is infinitely more professional – it is superb," he said.

Comparing the role of a soldier in the Second World War with that of today, the author emphasised the devastating losses taken in the former period.

"In Normandy you could lose 40 per cent of a battalion in a morning," he said. "Six months in Helmand province is bad, but not as tough as in those times."

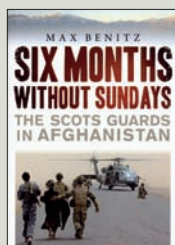
"This book is for a new generation, a 21st century audience. I am writing to try to explain the war to people who weren't there and live in a different time." ■

From no weekends to no man's land, a flick through this month's literary releases...

Six Months Without Sundays by M Benitz

MAX Benitz was given two direct orders during his attachment to the Scots Guards on Op Herrick 12 – do not get killed and "dinnae write a shite book". He succeeded in both cases. While not present at every single event featured in this title, it is clear the author has spent time speaking to those who were. Consequently, *Six Months Without Sundays* is very much the Scots Guards' tour in their own words. How accurate the account is I cannot say, I wasn't there, but it certainly rings true. Unlike many offerings, it covers both the kinetic and more routine, but key, aspects of a deployment such as the battle for hearts and minds.

Capt Douglas Searle, RLC



Horsemen in No Man's Land by D Kenyon

THE accepted history of the British cavalry's contribution during the protracted stalemate of trench warfare is uninspiring. This book by **David Kenyon** sets out to entirely reset perceptions of the subject. The resulting work is genuinely thought-provoking and mounts a serious challenge to the long-proffered negative view of the cavalryman on the Western Front. This is a well researched insight into the use of British and dominion cavalry formations throughout the Great War. It will certainly trigger discussion and perhaps some rebalancing of opinion – I enjoyed having my view changed.

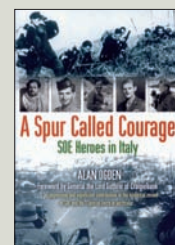
Maj Mike Peters, AAC



A Spur Called Courage by Alan Ogden

THIS entertaining book is essentially a collection of accounts of Special Operations Executive personnel organising the Italian partisans during the closing stages of the Second World War. The biographies of the officers, their upbringing, early military careers and entry to the SOE are arguably the most engaging parts of the title. That said, there is much description of the effect they had; one operative and his cohorts tied down 10,000 troops in the axis lines of communication. The gallantry citations undoubtedly understate their risks and bravery with routine crossings of the enemy lines simply an occupational hazard. Recommended.

Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE





Conflict uncovered: The popular author looks beyond the tales of heroism and derring-do to expose the realities of a global war in *All Hell Let Loose*

Cry Havoc by Simon Mann

IF ever there was a book by an ex-Special Forces officer not to read, it's this one. Regardless of the reason why **Simon Mann** decided to leave the SAS (assuming it was his choice of course), he certainly likes to remind the reader of his connection to the illustrious regiment at every opportunity. A tale of daring and amazement *Cry Havoc* isn't; the title is simply an attempt by the author to justify the failure of his rather poorly-executed coup. Mann endeavours to connect with his assumed audience, current and former members of the Armed Forces, with liberal use of military slang but fails dismally – much like his revolution.

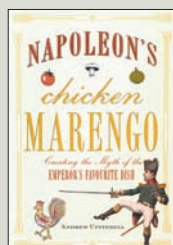
Capt Nick Mazzei, AGC (ETS)



Napoleon's Chicken Marengo

IN this imaginative book **Andrew Uffindell** gives you more than you bargain for. The author interweaves the story of the Battle of Marengo with that of the world-famous dish which took its name. On the battlefield Napoleon was beaten, but turned the tables on his Austrian enemy. Did he rewrite the account so many times because he owed his victory to Gen Desaix? Or to Kellermann's cavalry charge? And did he really return exhausted afterwards to his farmhouse billet and order his chef to rustle up the recipe which conquered the world? Read *Napoleon's Chicken Marengo: Creating the Myth of the Emperor's Favourite Dish* and find out.

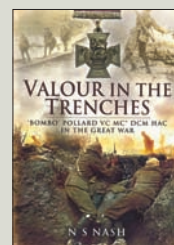
Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian



Valour in the Trenches by N S Nash

"TANK" Nash has expertly drawn on a number of sources to tell the story of Alf Pollard, recipient of a Victoria Cross and two Military Crosses in the Great War. His decorations were for courage and professionalism while within, and leading, an HAC Infantry unit in France in 1917. The three key actions are covered by gripping and insightful narrative. However, these few chapters and the thorough research needed to correct the errors in Pollard's 1932 autobiography, *Fire-Eater*, are let down by distracting explanations of his often eccentric behaviour and unnecessary detail on the HAC and his later life as an author.

Lt Col James Hoare, RLC





Clobber control: Throw inside what you will, the Ford *S-MAX* has plenty of storage space to offer its active passengers

Very versatile vision

Original car maker blends style with functionality to form flexible and fun family vehicle

Review: John Hogan

WHAT makes the ideal family car for Forces personnel? It is a question that many with children are likely to have asked at some stage.

Striking the balance between practicality, running cost, kerb appeal and performance is no easy job – especially when the unenviable task of transporting loved ones and kit over long distances is such a real proposition for troops.

As a “pads brat” living in Germany for the whole of the 1980s, I can remember the biannual trip home certainly being one to forget.

My older sister was so strict that I was instructed not to look out of her window. If I did, a slap was heading my way.

If I turned in the other direction, my older brother immediately assumed I was looking for trouble and instantly pummelled me.

I found it best to sit bolt upright and silent, staring out of the windscreen for hours at a time.

So when the chance came to take my own children back to Germany for a camping holiday, I decided to test out a vehicle that presents itself as

the ideal domestic car – the Ford *S-MAX*.

Taking the aforementioned criteria as the points to note, it's easy to see why this auto is such a popular choice.

On a practical level, one of the key advantages is space. And not just in the boot – it is the well thought out, handy, useable cubbyholes that really set this model apart.

Driving from south east London to Hameln, with five of us and a stack of camping clobber on-board, there was room for everyone to wriggle around while I ground out the miles.

On arrival at its destination, prying eyes would be hard pushed to see that this car was loaded up with kit. An impressive amount of luggage goes in without showing above the window line.

Many Service personnel appear to favour the healthier mileage return offered by the diesel version of this model.

Even at a steady cruising speed of 70mph, I was unable to achieve more than 37 miles per gallon in the two-litre petrol vehicle.

This sounds all right until you consider that the Duratorq diesel will hit closer to 50 miles per gallon.

Automatic versions will always drink a tiny bit more fuel than manuals, and in Germany I made

the most of being on the autobahns by driving faster than usual.

But unless you are someone who can't stand the idea of owning a diesel, it would seem sensible to test drive both before making a choice.

I personally prefer the torque response of a turbo-charged diesel.

The verdict on kerb appeal is clearly in the eye of the beholder when it comes to the *S-MAX*. Without a house full of screaming children, car enthusiasts are unlikely to be wooed by its general aesthetics.

But this is a big family car that simultaneously manages to appear fairly purposeful and sporting.

With the factory body kit and a set of 18-inch wheels fitted, the vehicle could even be said to look impressive.

Book yourself a test drive, chuck all of your admin in the back and head off for a spin around the block.

It is unlikely you will be disappointed and you may just find some relief from the memory of those hellish childhood journeys.

The Ford *S-MAX* starts from £22,295. For full details of the car's various features and specifications visit a local dealer or log on to www.ford.co.uk ■

A closer look at the family-friendly facets of Ford's *S-MAX*...

Comfortable cruising

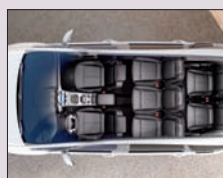
THE Titanium X Sport model of the Ford *S-MAX* has a particularly fantastic feeling interior. Its sleek seats prove to be as comfortable at the end of a long journey to Germany as they were when first jumping in. Buyers can choose from new trims and personalisation options and should not be alarmed by the somewhat unusual looking handbrake – it is easy enough to get used to and adds to the contemporary feel of the car. Adaptive cruise control also proves surprisingly easy to get to grips with. It automatically slows you down if the driver gets too close to the vehicle in front and resumes original speed when the road ahead is clear. Impressive.



Mark out of five: ★★★

Seating selection

A THIRD row of seating gives the *S-MAX* owner a choice of 32 possible arrangements (if that many are ever needed) and a maximum carrying capacity of seven. Ignore marketing images depicting surfboards and immaculate mountain bikes inside – fridge freezers or fully-loaded MFO boxes are a more realistic way of showing just how roomy these cars are. And this model would swallow either object easily. The seating itself is built to the dependable standard drivers have come to expect from Ford cars. It is comfortable, durable and looks premium – even when littered with crisps and toys of various sorts.



Mark out of five: ★★★★★

Enviably engine

ECOBOST, the new engine range from Ford, has something for everyone and combines higher power and a broader spread of torque with lower consumption. Its start-stop technology for traffic jams and lights means that drivers save on fuel while reducing emissions. The 1.6-litre variant is turbo-charged, producing 152bhp in addition to returning 41.5 miles per gallon on a combined cycle. Pick of the bunch is the 214bhp Duratorq turbo diesel, available in the reviewed Titanium X Sport model. Fuel economy in the petrol version poses something of a question, making the high performance diesel the one to go for.



Mark out of five: ★★★★★



Pictures: Ford Press

Squabble friendly: Whether filled with braying youngsters or bulky kit, the *S-MAX* can cover decent distances while keeping passengers comfortable

Advanced visibility

FOR drivers who have concerns about the size of this car and resulting impact on its manoeuvres, help is at hand. Despite having plenty of visibility, the *S-MAX* also features an ingenious blind spot information system. If a car, bike or pedestrian enters the area invisible to the driver, a discreet lamp illuminates the wing mirror to alert him or her. This makes longer and international journeys much more relaxing. An LED daytime running light system also offers increased visibility. Another pleasing exterior feature is the fact these mirrors retract, making it even harder for neighbours or careless drivers to knock them off or cause damage.



Mark out of five: ★★★★★

Decent drive

DRIVING dynamic is a key aspect of the *S-MAX*'s appeal. Electric hydraulic power steering comes as standard and this set-up offers finger-light control that really comes into its own when parking in tight spaces but gives a weightier, well balanced feel when hitting higher speeds. On open roads the model eventually runs out of talent, under-steering gently if pushed too far, but there are plenty of warning signs along the way. Heed these and the vehicle remains one of the best at maintaining impressive corner control while carrying a full load of up to seven. This car is well worth a test drive and highly unlikely to disappoint.



Mark out of five: ★★★★★

Firm favourite

FORD has been a popular choice with the Forces car buyer for many years – and the wider UK population for more than 100. Its extensive range has something for everyone. From first car buyers' favourite, the KA, to the rugged 4x4 Ranger, there are plenty of options to meet the varying style, power and budgetary requirements of customers. The company's website, www.ford.co.uk, has an easy-to-use model configurator, allowing visitors to choose the specification of the vehicle they desire. Potential buyers can keep up to date with any promotions and discounts the car maker is offering and also find details of their closest test drive centre.



Mark out of five: ★★★★★

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Picture: Graeme Main

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Strongmen take the strain

Service sport sees ranks swell as operational fitness grooms soldiers for success

Report: Richard Long

Picture: Steve Dock

WHEN it comes to choosing a sport that mirrors the attributes needed for a soldier's day job in the Army, it is hard to look beyond the discipline of powerlifting.

With operational deployments in Afghanistan requiring personnel to be fitter and stronger than ever, the dedication needed to succeed at competition level is in equal demand below the bar.

Powerlifting is enjoying a boom period within the Service's

ranks and *SoldierSport* was on hand to witness its emergence during last month's bench press championship.

"It has been on the up for the past four or five years and its appeal is getting wider and wider," explained Capt Julian Vowels (RE), chairman of the Army Powerlifting Union.

"The level of interest among the women has been particularly pleasing.

"We had six females at the last Army championships. At the start we had one brave lady on her own but now we have five or six at each contest and we want to see that increase further.

"Operational tours are no longer all about running, strength has become increasingly important.

"Physical training instructors are now doing more strength and conditioning work with soldiers and powerlifting is at the forefront of that.

"They need that muscular ability to carry kit and it is balanced with their aerobic and cardiovascular drills.

"That background allows them to compete at events like this.

"We have strong links with the British Drug Free Powerlifting Association and many of our guys go on to compete at divisional, national, European and world level.

"Capt Neil Thomas (AGC) has been a world champion and I was a European champion, so we have a good pedigree in this field."

Around 70 lifters were in action at the event, building on the impressive turnout at the full Army championships in November.

SSgt Micky Yule (RE) was crowned men's open champion in his first competition since losing both lower legs in a bomb blast in Afghanistan.

LCpl Matthew Sowards (RLC) took the junior title, while Thomas was



victorious in the masters' event.

LBdr Sarah Bell (RA) triumphed in a strong women's competition, with WO2 Kate Adey (AGC) winning the masters' contest.

Team honours were claimed by lifters from 22 Engineer Regiment and the Adjutant General's Corps were declared corps champions.

"It was a really good competition and a lot of the novice athletes were achieving notable success," a delighted Vowles said.

"On the whole we are very pleased and we hope the progress continues."

As well as boasting a flourishing scene within its own circles, the organisation has excelled against its Forces rivals.

"We have been at the top of the Services tree for some time," the chairman explained.

"The Royal Navy is still trying to gather the momentum we already have in place.

"We won the last two Combined Services championships and we are looking to make it three in a row later this year.

"The strength in depth is there but, like most sports, a lot of what we do is operationally dependant.

"We have got the ability to win if people are available.

"The youth coming through has great potential. Some of those young guys have emerged from nowhere and are completely unaware of their capabilities, so there are some exciting times ahead."

While triumphing over rivals within the military remains a top priority, the Army team also locks horns with other uniformed lifters – such as police officers and firemen – at the Inter-Services tournament, which will be held later this month in Portsmouth.

Powerlifting features three events – the bench press, squat and deadlift.

Competitors have regular opportunities to flex their muscles throughout the season and new athletes are welcome at every contest.

Vowles said: "Our sport is open to anyone, whatever their standard.

"It is an amateur set-up and what we do is quite low-level but it can lead to the world stage if you have the potential."

The next Army championships will be held in the Super Garrison Gymnasium at Lucknow Barracks, Tidworth on June 6. Novices and first-time competitors are welcome to take part.

For more information on all upcoming events and how to get involved in the Army Powerlifting Union contact Maj Vowles via email at julian.vowles981@mod.uk ■



Yule meets the benchmark

WHILE the Army bench press championship was a new experience for some, the muscle-flexing action at Worthy Down offered a welcome return to competition for SSgt Micky Yule (RE).

The lifter lost both lower legs when he was caught in a bomb blast during Op Herrick 12 and the devastating setback brought a promising career in the sport to a crashing halt.

But the success of his rehabilitation programme bore fruit last month as he was named men's open champion in a strong field of Service athletes.

"I had been competing for a few years in Army contests and at national level," Yule told *SoldierSport*.

"I was really getting into it. The injuries knocked me back and I wonder how good I could have been.

"I can only do the bench press now but it is good to be involved and see a few old faces. I am really happy to be here lifting again.

"I said I was going to be a bit conservative and my last effort was 165kg. Maybe I should have gone a bit heavier but just competing and being among friends is the main thing."

With his comeback in full swing, Yule is now looking to the future and possible success on the international stage.

"I have been working with the Paralympic bench press team and am now part of their development squad," he explained.

"I've started training with them and it is going really well. The level they lift at is pretty high.

"I am going to keep at it and hopefully, if I can secure some funding, I'll be able to make it onto one of those teams."

Yule conceded that a spot at this year's Paralympics is beyond him and has set his sights on a place at the 2014 Commonwealth Games instead.

"With the way I'm progressing it is a possibility," he said. "I'm back lifting at a level just short of what I was doing when I got injured.

"As an amputee it is completely different. When you take the weight your first movement has to stop your body swaying, but you do not have your legs as stabilisers so your core needs to be rock solid.

"Everything is going really well, I am going to continue with the bench press and see where it takes me." ■



Boarder heads down under

Army racer leaves Team GB behind and sets sights on Winter Olympic glory in 2014

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

AS a sporting nation Australia has traditionally triumphed on the cricket and rugby fields where world cup success and international glory has been the bare minimum.

But the country's winter sports programme has flourished in recent times and has now welcomed a British Army recruit to its fold as preparations for the 2014 Olympics continue at pace.

Snowboarder Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) joined the camp at the start of the season and believes the team's professional outlook could play a key role in achieving his ambition of competing at the Games.

"To achieve my aims and get the best coaching I have chosen to leave Team GB and train with the Australians," the boarder cross star told *SoldierSport*.

"The British set-up does not have the capacity to produce a programme at the level required to get athletes to the Olympics.

"I had to make a tough decision but I am very pleased with the

progress I have made and with the training schedule that has been set out," he added.

"If I have a chance of qualifying for 2014 that is where my hopes lie.

"British number one Zoe Gillings finished eighth in the boarder cross at the last Olympics in Vancouver.

"She is now training with the Dutch team and I hope to emulate her considerable progress in the sport.

"A programme should include everything from nutrition and strength and conditioning work to psychology and fitness testing.

"That level of support can take an athlete from being good to being very, very good."

Nicholson narrowly missed out on the top spot at the Army Snowboarding Championships but his hectic schedule means he will be unable to participate in this year's Inter-Services showdown.

He was due to compete in his first European Cup event before Christmas, with further contests continuing last month.

"You have to race in the

European Cup until spaces become available on the World Cup tour," the officer explained.

"I hope to be pushing for a top ten place. Given the hard work and preparation I have done, I would be disappointed not to come away with at least that.

"However, there will be 150 other competitors from different nations involved and I

will be up against some of the best riders in the world.

"I have an incredibly busy calendar and as well as racing in these meetings I will take part in an Olympic test event in Sochi.

"So far I have had tremendous backing from my private sponsors.

"Nissan Export has given me a 4x4 vehicle to use throughout the season and I am completely dependent on that to get from one competition to the next.

"But I would not be able to be here without the support of the REME, the Army Snowboarding Association and Army Winter Sports Association. I can't thank them enough." ■

"I had to make a tough decision but I am very pleased with the progress I have made"

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Reds look for future forces

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMV coach WO2 Dean Lewis (RDG) has been given a selection headache ahead of this year's Inter-Services campaign following a successful development camp for the women's Rugby Union team.

A host of new recruits were plucked from the Service's corps set-up for fixtures against Scotland and Newbury last month and their stunning form on the pitch hints at a prosperous future for the sport.

After losing 24-6 to their rivals from north of the border, the new-look Reds hit top gear on a blustery night in Berkshire as they ran in eight tries to record a stunning 44-0 victory.

Lewis will experiment further in the next match against Richmond before using clashes with Worcester, OA Saints and Holland to fine-tune his squad ahead of the Services showpiece.

"We have had a good run but we

realised at the end of last year just how many senior players were dropping out due to operational commitments and so on," the coach told *SoldierSport*.

"So we started a scouting mission at corps level to fill the slots vacated and to set up a pathway to the senior side.

"The one thing that has eluded the women's game is the progression from an academy to an under-23 and A team, like the men have.

"For us it is simply from corps level to the full Army squad."

Following their defeat to Scotland, the Reds emphatically dispatched a spirited Newbury team in a distinctly one-sided encounter.

Skipper Cpl Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) fuelled the rout with a hat-trick from fullback, while the strength and power of the Army pack produced a further three scores as the hosts struggled for a foothold in the game.

Capt Fi Cox (RLC) provided a superb attacking platform with some direct running from number eight,

while scrum half Cfn Laura Marsh (REME) was lively throughout.

Pte Mariette Claassens (RAMC) capped an impressive performance on the wing with a try late on and Capt Kelly Douglas (AGC (RMP)) stepped off the bench to score following good work by fellow replacement Sgt Maxine Bowley (RAMC).

"This was about them experiencing the level we want them to achieve," Lewis said.

"The front row was brand new and the second row was relatively inexperienced. The flankers were both newcomers and Fi Cox missed last year due to course commitments.

"We had five players who were unavailable but played against Scotland and over the course of the week I have seen 14 potential squad members.

"A few have areas to work on and others will come in with some minor improvements needed. Overall it has been a worthwhile exercise and we're looking forward to the next game." ■





Winning formula: The Army Under-23s survived an early onslaught from Aldershot Town before recording a 3-1 victory ahead of this month's Inter-Services

Shots downed as starlets march on

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

THE Army Under-23 squad hit top form ahead of this month's Inter-Services campaign as they easily overpowered a youthful but determined Aldershot Town side.

After falling behind in the opening stages, the Reds hit back to record a comfortable 3-1 win as preparations for the Forces showdown continue at pace.

The result leaves the young guns ideally placed to launch an assault on the title that narrowly eluded their grasp last term.

Head coach SSgt Sean Cochrane (RADC) praised his squad's latest performance and is now looking forward to the opening clash with the Royal Air Force on February 14.

"Having suffered the initial shock of going a goal down, I thought we played really well," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Aldershot were an organised outfit and had a couple of first-team players involved, so they were tough opponents.

"We are trying to get some stability in our side and played for 60 minutes with what has been our settled line-up.

"We want to play a certain system and the lads are responding well.

"They are always committed and they have the determination to turn a

result around.

"We have another fixture early this month and then our attention turns to the Inter-Services.

"I want to win that trophy. We need the rub of the green and the players have got to come into the tournament with the right attitude, but we have a great chance."

Aldershot dominated the early



exchanges against the Reds and looked odds-on for victory thanks to their organised approach and neat passing.

Their superiority was rewarded when they opened the scoring on 16 minutes from a simple tap in.

But the Army held firm and fought their way back into the contest courtesy of Spr Simba Green (RE, pictured left), who converted from close range following a long free kick into the area.

Substitute LCpl Adam Fisher (33 Engr Regt) put the Servicemen on the front foot just minutes after being introduced at half-time.

The winger tested keeper Jack Metcalfe from close range following good work from Pte Keeno Keenan (1 Scots) and was then on hand to bundle home from the resulting corner.

Central defender Pte Matthew Oxbrow (RLC) completed the scoring when he latched on to a flick from Keenan and calmly lobbed the ball over the onrushing Metcalfe.

Skipper Tpr Farkey Farkins (9/12 L) and Oxbrow were superb at the back, while Keenan worked tirelessly in attack without the reward of a goal.

Keeper Spr Luke Cairney (RE), and his replacement Spr Dean Love (RE), produced a string of fine saves in the second period as the visitors threatened a late comeback. ■



Fatigue forces cup stalemate

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

AN under-strength Army side squandered a two-goal lead against the Amateur Football Alliance to return with just a point from their latest fixture in the Southern Counties Cup.

The Reds looked set to overhaul the Royal Navy at the top of the league table after racing to a 2-0 interval lead, but a suicidal spell in the final 15 minutes saw them slip to a disappointing draw when victory was in sight.

However, the fate of the trophy is still in the soldiers' hands and a win against the Senior Service in their final match next month will see them crowned champions.

Clear-cut chances were at a premium in the early exchanges at Kingston-upon-Thames as both sides played some neat possession football without threatening the opposition.

Striker Cpl Andrew Cottam (RE, pictured) broke the deadlock in the 17th minute when he met a deep cross from SSgt Ken Haley (RAPTC) and looped a header over keeper Roman Pechhacker to open the scoring.

The goal brought the match to life

and the AFA should have equalised through Alex Ewin, but the attacker headed over from a free header.

And the hosts were punished on the stroke of half-time as Cottam broke the offside trap and raced clear of the defence before rounding Pechhacker and rolling the ball into an empty net.

The Army maintained their grip at the start of the second period and almost extended the lead through skipper SSgt Glenn Davidson (AGC), but his dipping volley drifted just wide.

Hayley rattled the crossbar with a superb drive from distance and Cottam was unlucky not to connect with well-delivered crosses from Cpl Danny Hayley (R Signals) and Cpl Paul Douglass (RLC).

But with the match under control the Army started to struggle late on and the AFA grabbed a lifeline in the 75th minute.

The visitors failed to deal with a cross from the right and after making a fine initial save, keeper Cpl Adam Collington (3 Yorks) was beaten by Ewin on the rebound.

The striker scored his second of

the game with a free header at the back post just minutes later and the Reds were indebted to Collington, who produced a string of fine stops in the closing stages to salvage a point.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* at full-time, head coach WO2 Joe Collins (R Signals) said a draw was a fair result and that his side struggled due to the lack of numbers available.

"I think we just ran out of steam," he explained. "We played a friendly with Camberley the night before and won 5-1."

"We took that fixture on with a view to getting the squad members involved, but we only had 14 players for both matches."

"When they got it back to 2-1 I thought we had enough in the tank but my lads were really tired."

"However, we are still unbeaten in competitive games and we have six or seven guys to come back in."

"We now know what we have to do against the Navy."

"Sometimes there is nothing worse than playing for a draw. It is a 'winner takes all' situation and we have a target to aim for." ■

'We are still unbeaten in competitive games and have six or seven guys to come back in'

From armour to Antigua

Report: Richard Long

THE Royal Armoured Corps offshore sailing team will test themselves against top crews from across the globe this month when they compete in the Caribbean 600 race.

Entry in the event comes on the back of a successful spell on the water

in 2011, when the soldiers manned the top scoring Service yacht in the Royal Ocean Racing Club points championship.

Their latest test gets under way

on February 20 and will see the Servicemen circumnavigating 11 islands along a challenging course that starts and finishes in English Harbour, Antigua.

"It will be a demanding race," skipper Lt Col Paul Macro (RTR) told *SoldierSport*.

"There will be a consistent 25-knot wind, which is rather stronger than what we find in the UK. The ocean swell is also a lot bigger.

"At least three

of our members have not sailed on a big boat like this before, so it offers a different element of adventurous training.

"At this stage we have focused on getting people together. We have done no team training as such but around half of the crew have raced with me before so we are in a good place.

"We want to build a healthy squad for 2012 with a view to competing in the Fastnet race the following year."

Macro said a strong emphasis has been placed on getting junior soldiers and novice sailors involved and the officer has been

delighted to welcome some exciting young talent to the team.

"The new guys are all up for the task, it is about building the group and giving people different challenges," he added.

"We have got some guys from 2nd Royal Tank Regiment who came back from Afghanistan in October. This gives them the chance to try something different.

"It is all about spreading the net and developing a team for the next couple of seasons."

The Army enjoyed notable success in last year's Caribbean 600 when the crew of *British Soldier* were victorious in their class, and the Royal Armoured Corps want to follow suit.

"We have chartered a boat which gives us every chance of doing exactly that," said Maj Matt Douglas (RY).

"If we sail as well as we can there is no reason why we won't be pushing for a win.

"This is a great opportunity for our junior soldiers. They can learn so much and it is a real hands-on sport.

"There is nothing more pleasing than seeing a young guy at the helm, guiding the boat through a seven- or eight-knot wind.

"It is such a confidence boost for them." ■

'If we sail as well as we can there is no reason why we won't be pushing for a win'

Picture: Beken of Cowes



Picture: Graeme Main

King of the hill: Service star Capt James Scott (KRH) flies high on his way to a winning run at the Army snowboarding championships in Stubai, Austria

Board members revel in winter wonderland

SNOWBOARDING sensation Capt James Scott (KRH) lifted the Army championship crown after the narrowest of wins on the Austrian slopes in Stubai.

The officer trailed rival Capt Simon Nicholson (REME) by 600 points going into the final slope-style discipline, but a score of 1,300 saw him leapfrog the Olympic hopeful and take the top spot.

Maj Simon Gough (1 AAC) finished in third place on 3,280 points, ahead of SSgt John Craig (3 AAC) and Cpl Mark Blackburn (QRH).

In the women's competition, Sgt Sarah Marriott (3 AAC) produced a

clean sweep from all three events to claim victory with a score of 4,500.

The Royal Signals secured the following three places courtesy of Cpl Vicky Fox, Cpl Denise Swift and Capt Catrin Jones, with LCpl Fiona Ross (225 Med Regt) taking fifth spot.

The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers won the corps title and 3rd Regiment, Army Air Corps were victorious in the inter-unit competition.

Lt Col John Connelly (RLC), secretary of the Army Snowboarding Association, was thrilled with the success of the event and told *SoldierSport* the standard of riders is

now at an all-time high.

"It has been one of the best championships we have ever staged and the quality we now have within the sport is on the rise," he explained.

"James Scott is a superb talent. He is breaking the mould and is one of a number of young soldiers to emerge from the ranks and push the old guard.

"We are now looking ahead to the Inter-Services competition and we have a strong team.

"It will be keenly fought. The Royal Air Force is strong in the boarder cross and the Royal Navy in the slope-style so we will have to be at our best." ■

SPORT SHORTS

■ **LIVERPOOL'S** Premier League stars helped raise more than £20,000 for The Royal British Legion by auctioning a selection of signed shirts.

The Merseyside outfit donated the home jerseys worn during the game against Swansea City on November 5, with each individual garment being sold to the highest bidder via eBay.

The shirt of Luis Suarez was the most in demand and sold for £1,603, while Jordan Henderson's was snapped up for £1,370 and Andy Carroll's for £1,270.

■ **THE** Army Angling Federation carp section is looking for new recruits to join its ranks.

The group is open to all serving, ex-Service and Reserve personnel and stages five qualifying events each season.

For more information on the team and all upcoming fixtures visit www.armycarpers.com or contact Sgt Barry Hope on 0118 9763226.

■ **SANDOWN** Park Racecourse will host its annual Grand Military Gold Cup Day on March 9.

The event dates back to 1841 and has featured a number of the country's top amateur riders. As well as boasting a strong card, the day will include a parade by the Royal Artillery Hunt.

To book tickets call 01372 470047 or visit www.sandown.co.uk

■ **SOLDIERS** serving in Afghanistan saw in the New Year by running a series of gruelling marathons at their bases.

The Camp Bastion half-marathon saw 800 athletes take to the start line in support of the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association.

At the UK headquarters in Lashkar Gah, personnel from the explosive ordnance disposal search team tackled a full course in aid of the same cause, as well as The Felix Fund and Wimbish Station Injured Soldiers Fund.

■ **SUPER-fit** soldiers are being urged to sign up for the third annual London Cardiff 24 race in the hope of securing a hat-trick of Army titles in the endurance event.

The overnight contest sees teams run a 160-mile relay from London's prestigious Twickenham Stadium to the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff.

Entrants need a minibus and a group of 12 athletes to take part and can raise money for the charity of their choice. For more information on the race visit www.LondonCardiff24.co.uk

■ **TENNIS** star Elena Baltacha presented Reservist soldiers from 202 Transport Squadron with campaign medals following their recent tour of Afghanistan.

The British number one performed the ceremony at the unit's base in Ipswich.

On handing over the accolades, she said: "I play to win matches and ranking points, but when you do your job you put your lives on the line for all of us."

SPORT SHORTS

■ A NEW wave of talent took to the Cornish coastline for the annual Army Surf Championships, which attracted a record number of attendees across five hard-fought categories.

The open event staged its closest final for a number of years, with only one point separating winner WO1 Martin Smith (AAC) and runner-up Sgt Dave Holden (RAPTC).

In the longboard, Sgt Paul O'Dwyer (RE) was too strong for SSgt Dean Jones (RA) and Spr Harvey Brennan (RE).

Sgt Pat Thompson (RAMC) triumphed in the bodyboard and an excellent novice competition was won by Capt Tom Harrison (R Signals).

Capt Charlotte Moat (REME) was victorious in the championship's inaugural women's contest.

Despite a strong showing in their own competition, the Army failed to build on their success at Inter-Services level as the Royal Navy dominated proceedings ahead of the Royal Air Force.

Thompson was the one shining light as he finished third in the longboard.

■ THE RAF Akrotiri International Festival of Rugby will be held from June 4 to 8.

Entry to the ten-a-side tournament in Cyprus is by invitation only and teams wanting to take part are being urged to register their interest.

The event is open to men's and women's squads and information is available from organiser Steve Williams on 07961 891449 or at theoldgoat@ntlworld.com

■ ENTRIES are now being sought for the 2012 Alpine Challenge in Bavaria.

The two-day adventure race features orienteering, mountain biking, open boating and other activities.

The event will be held in the Bavarian Alps on June 8 and 9 and will cover up to 70 kilometres, climbing to an altitude of 2,200 metres.

Teams of three (male, female, mixed of veteran) can apply. For further details email atgg-atc-trgclerk@mod.uk or read DIN 2012DIN07-006.



Pole position: The Army karting team in action during last year's tri-Service endurance championship

Racers target winning streak

THE Army karting team is returning to the track on a mission to improve on its impressive form from last season.

After finishing seventh in the tri-Service endurance championship, the outfit is appealing for new talent to come forward and experience life in the military fast lane.

At present there are only four karts that represent the Army, with dedicated personnel from 11 Training Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers taking the grid positions.

"During the latter half of the 2011 season we competed against some tough opposition, but we placed a credible seventh within the overall race championship," team manager SSgt Phil Newby (REME) told *SoldierSport*.

"A trophy was just within grasp and hopefully we will be more fortunate when we return to action this year.

"Our aim now is to improve on these

results and we will look to compete at the Le Mans 24-hour race, which I'm sure will be a fantastic opportunity for all our members."

The team is planning a trials event in early March and Newby is hoping the next generation of drivers will emerge to take the sport forward.

"This is a relatively new pursuit for the Army," he explained.

"We essentially provide everything so the only thing a newcomer needs to purchase is a helmet.

"Once you get involved there is a possibility of progressing to some of the other exciting disciplines within the motorsport union.

"There is a rally scene and race cars, everything is interconnected."

For more information on the sport and how to get involved with the Army team ahead of the new season contact SSgt Newby on 94879 3710 or email philip.newby908@mod.uk ■

Skiing sappers reign supreme

ARMY Alpine stars returned to the slopes of Mont Blanc last month for 1st (UK) Armoured Division's annual military skiing contest.

More than 300 soldiers took to the French resort for the competition, which saw 28 Engineer Regiment declared as champions.

Skiers from 1 Logistic Support Regiment continued their dominant form on the piste to retain the team crown in the Nordic disciplines, while 1st Regiment, Army Air Corps triumphed in the Alpine events.

However, Maj Nikki Jordan (RADC) was the star of the show and the Army captain celebrated a clean sweep in the slalom, giant slalom, super giant slalom and downhill.

Her efforts saw her named best individual female in the Alpine races and she was delighted to hit top form at the start of a busy season.

"It is great to have done so well and I am now looking forward to competing at the Combined Services," Jordan said.

"Events such as these are a great reward for soldiers who are doing a fantastic job, especially during this time of heavy operational commitments. It is a test of their courage and it's about overcoming fear."

The men's 1 LSR team also celebrated success in the military patrol race, which tests athletes on their marksmanship, map reading and physical endurance skills.



Picture: SSgt Ian Houlding, RLC

final word



We asked troops attached to 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment for their thoughts on the formation's shift to contingency operations as the Airborne Task Force (ABTF)

INTERVIEWS: JOE CLAPSON
PICTURES: STEVE DOCK



Lt John Bowen (3 Para)

With a switch of focus our job changes because with the ABTF you have to carry less and jump with everything that you need, knowing there won't be a resupply for three days. On Herrick people know what to expect to a certain extent, whereas with contingency operations you can't be sure exactly what capabilities you will have and it's not just a case of calling in support.



Cpl Robert Smith (1G)

This new role is about going back to old-school soldiering, which is what the British Army does best. It's more Brecon-style tactics rather than working against the threat of IEDs and for me that is a very positive thing. I was trained in the former and then had to apply that to Afghanistan, so this is going back to our bread and butter and what I enjoy.



Capt Craig Shepherd (Gren Gds)

I think it's a good thing to be working as the ABTF because we need to look forward to the future. The British Army will leave Afghanistan but we must not forget what we have learnt there. We need to take the knowledge and apply it to contingency operations. If you look at the political unrest in Africa, you can see that we need to be ready and 3 Para could not be more prepared.



LCpl Ryan Hanks (3 Para)

It's a good thing we are withdrawing from Helmand and getting out on exercise doing green stuff. The blokes joined to do things like fighting in woods and forests, not walking around with Vallons worrying about IEDs. Now we can move quicker and get on with our job. It really is a privilege to be the first ABTF. We want to go out as fast as we can – it's what we're trained for.



Spr Lame Kebo (RE)

I would rather be on deployment but on the other side this will give us something different. Preparing for contingency operations is not what I am used to as I only have Afghan training, so this is very interesting. It is disappointing that we haven't been called out yet but we are on five days' notice to leave, so within a week we could be anywhere, which would be a real adrenalin rush.



Pte Ben Simner (3 Para)

It's good that we've got something new to do and it is a real change. It's also a chance to go to different places in the world. The way we conduct attacks is more conventional, which comes naturally because it's what we did in initial training. Being on short notice to move is a positive thing because it means we might get out somewhere other than Colchester.



Pte Matt Patey (3 Para)

I thought the soldiering in Afghanistan was boring, but with contingency operations there are more moving parts and a greater chance of firefighting. This isn't focused on IEDs and now we can get on with our job, doing what we're supposed to do. The ABTF is a lot better for our blokes and everyone is raring to go, so the sooner we get off camp and out somewhere the better.



LBdr Chris Douglas (7 RHA)

It's completely different now with us going back to basics. It's about getting out of habits and returning to the idea of training for everything. In Afghanistan there are lots of assets, whereas this is a case of getting dropped in with not very much and making the most of it. It's what we all thrive on and it's good to have a chance to get out somewhere different.

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