

SOLDIER

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INSIDE: GARY LINEKER • STEREOPHONICS • JOHN NICHOL •

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Cover picture (left): CSjt Mick Flood (3 Rifles) takes a break from offloading a helicopter

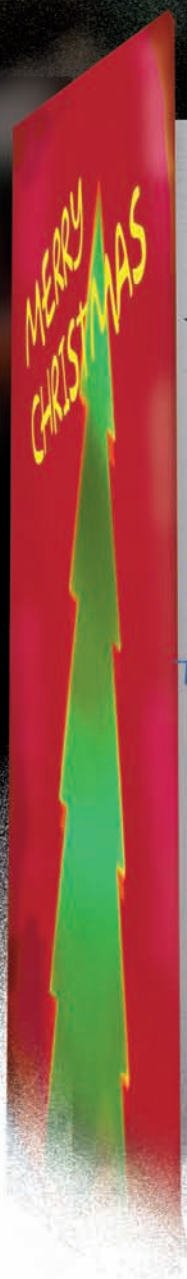
Picture: Steve Dock

Background image: Cpl Russell Ellis and LCpl Ryan Lemasiuer (3 Rifles) confirm their route prior to going out on a patrol

Picture: Steve Dock



Happy New Year ?



Merry Christmas

In the very first week
after last Christmas Leave
28 Soldiers tested positive.

They **ALL** lost their careers

Its just not worth it.

Best wishes.

CDT



CDT Positive

- A moment of madness, a lifetime of regret

SOLDIER

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ARMY



SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence
and printed by St. Ives Roche Limited. Print
contract managed by CDS.

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



"About time I got my Accumulated Campaign Service Medal... I thought I was going to have to write a letter to *Soldier*."

Soldier's salute

B RITAIN'S Armed Forces have continued their meteoric rise in popularity throughout a particularly tough 2009.

The past 12 months have seen a flurry of stories of bravery and selflessness flood back from an operational theatre which has also had to cope with a substantial number of killed and seriously wounded soldiers.

The sacrifices have not gone unnoticed and members of the public have been quick to show their support by deluging Service charities like Help for Heroes, SSAFA Forces Help and the Army Benevolent Fund with hefty donations.

Now it is our turn. We at *Soldier* HQ know more than most just how good today's Servicemen and women are, but aside from creating this magazine we do not always get the chance to show our gratitude. That is where Operation Reindeer's Hoof comes in.

The less-than-top-secret mission – which you may have seen plugged on our new-look front cover – is a collaboration between *Soldier* and some exceedingly generous companies to offer a sackful of prizes throughout the Advent period.

Starting on December 1, we will be running competitions each and every day through our page on Facebook (www.tinyurl.com/reindeershoof). From CDs, clothing and luxury hampers to sporting tickets, electronics and holidays, we have secured thousands of pounds worth of Gucci gear to help spread a little Christmas cheer among our readers.

The idea for Op Reindeer's Hoof came about after our latest reporting visit to Helmand province to see how 11 Light Brigade are settling into life in southern Afghanistan.

Although most of the troops our team

encountered had only been in theatre for a matter of weeks, they were going about a difficult and dangerous job with the seasoned professionalism you only find with the British Army.

These were young men and women who knew that they would be spending Christmas away from their families, but their commitment to establishing security in Afghanistan was nothing short of awe-inspiring.

From the soldiers patrolling the streets in and around Sangin (Pages 26-27) to those in the fire support groups keeping a watchful eye on the enemy (Pages 28-29), the dedication on show convinced us to launch our own operation.

We have, however, had to do battle with a host of celebrities who are intent on stealing our limelight.

Crisp-eating football pundit Gary Lineker (Pages 96-97) is joined by the likes of Spurs gaffer Harry Redknapp, singer Katherine Jenkins (Pages 44-45) and cricketer Alec Stewart (42-43) in using our pages to praise British personnel.

Elsewhere, feeling slightly big-headed that *Soldier* had taken the lead in our *Media Ops* series, I volunteered to make my debut by tackling the Army Officer Selection Board.

Turn to pages 53-55 to find out how I got on, but suffice to say I won't be darkening Sandhurst's doors any time soon.

There is no denying that 2009 has been a challenging year for everyone in the Army, but the Service continues to do a job unrivalled anywhere else in the world.

The public's goodwill is plain to see, but on behalf of everyone at *Soldier* I would like to extend a sincere thank you and wish you a happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous 2010. ■



Gobi Desert 44 00 N, 105 00 E

14:20 - Audited site
15:00 - Faxed report
15:10 - Received approval from headquarters
17:00 - Sent birthday wishes to dad

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Picture: Sgt Keith Cotton, RLC

Face of the future: Britain's commitment to driving the Taliban from Afghanistan is as strong as ever according to the Prime Minister

Brown stands firm on Herrick op

THE Prime Minister has reaffirmed his commitment to ongoing operations in Afghanistan, stating that Britain "cannot, must not and will not walk away".

Speaking at the Royal College of Defence Studies in London, Gordon Brown said the biggest threat to home security still stems from the Taliban heartland, meaning efforts to suppress insurgent forces will carry on.

"We know Al Qaeda continue to train and plot attacks on Britain from the region so our mission must not fail," said Mr Brown.

"It is not easy; the choices are not simple. There is no strategy that is without danger and risk. But that is the responsibility of leadership, of government, and of our Armed Forces:

to do what is necessary to keep the British people safe."

Mr Brown pinpointed the mountains between Pakistan and Afghanistan as posing the biggest domestic threat and said efforts must be made to support the Pakistani government in taking the fight to terrorists and extremists.

And in terms of Afghanistan, the training and development of the nation's civilian army and police will remain a key focus of Service personnel working in the region.

"We will not give up this strategy of mentoring," the Prime Minister said.

"It is what distinguishes us as a liberating army from an army of occupation; not an army in opposition to local Afghan people, but an army supporting local Afghan people.

"And this approach for Afghanistan is now the strategy of the whole coalition. It is essential for the whole coalition to implement it across Afghanistan."

Mr Brown also insisted that every effort is being made to ensure soldiers on the ground receive the best kit.

As well as discussing increases in helicopter numbers, the Prime Minister revealed that another 20 Ridgback mine-protected patrol vehicles have been deployed to join the fleet of Mastiffs already on operations.

"It is simply wrong to question our commitment as we adapt to the new tactics of the Taliban or to doubt the willingness to pay for it," he said.

"That is why we are speeding up the deployment of vital equipment but also making its delivery a condition for further troop increases.

"And I am determined that while it is inevitable that conditions change and our strategy must respond, the fundamental principle must remain, that every soldier and unit deployed to Afghanistan is fully equipped."

4 THE NUMBER OF DISTRICTS IN AFGHANISTAN TO HAVE ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY COUNCILS. THE GROUPS ARE DESIGNED TO ALLOW LOCAL PEOPLE TO GOVERN THEMSELVES AND TWO MORE ARE DUE TO BE FORMED BEFORE 2010

NEWS IN BRIEF

PLANS to save £20 million by cutting Territorial Army activity have been axed.

The move means TA training will not be hit, although cuts to the Army Cadet Force, Combined Cadet Force and University Officer Training Corps will still go ahead.

The reversal of the decision means TA personnel serving with regional units will be able to revert to the levels of training that applied before the proposed changes were initially brought into effect on October 12.

SUCCESS in Afghanistan and a commitment to fulfilling standing tasks are among the key goals of the new Strategy for Defence.

The document, which focuses on the period up to 2014, maps out the path to the Defence Review that will take place after the General Election.

Key Afghan post for general

A BRITISH officer has spoken of his pride after taking up a key Nato posting in southern Afghanistan.

Maj Gen Nick Carter said it was a "great privilege" to lead the International Security Assistance Force Regional Command South, a post which holds responsibility for nearly 35,000 multinational personnel.

The officer, who began work shortly after the arrival of 11 Light Brigade in Helmand, took the reins from Dutch counterpart Maj Gen Mart de Kruif.

During a ceremony to mark the handover at Kandahar airfield, Maj Gen Carter said: "It is a great honour to return to Afghanistan for a second tour and again be given the opportunity to help the people rebuild their country."

"Maj Gen de Kruif and his team have managed a significant uplift in forces

— my team now has an established platform from which further progress can be made."

In response, the outgoing Dutch commander said his soldiers had shown great commitment in leaving Afghanistan a better place.

He added: "I have learned that operating within a coalition is a source of strength, not weakness."

"The great intellectual diversity that was brought to the fight allowed us to establish a holistic approach, making good use of different cultural backgrounds."

Addressing his troops, he concluded: "While operating in some of the most volatile regions you fought shoulder to shoulder, you kept your respectful attitude, showed enduring commitment and endless sacrifice."

300

THE NUMBER OF HEALTH POSTS INTRODUCED ACROSS HELMAND PROVINCE TO PROVIDE BASIC CARE AT A LOCAL LEVEL. IN ADDITION, ONE DISTRICT HOSPITAL, SIX COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CLINICS, 10 BASIC HEALTH CLINICS AND NINE SUB-CENTRES HAVE OPENED THEIR DOORS TO THE AFGHAN POPULATION SINCE 2006

Extra Javelins for front-line troops

ADDITIONAL bunker-busting Javelin missiles are being sent to Afghanistan to help soldiers in Helmand province.

An extra 1,300 of the lightweight, shoulder-mounted guided weapons are being deployed to theatre.

The Javelin is capable of blowing up fortified enemy positions and mortar compounds and also provides excellent 24-hour surveillance, target and acquisition capabilities.

Speaking from Afghanistan, Capt Warren Marginson, second-in-command of B Company, 3 Rifles, said: "We now have the ability to strike day or night, but more importantly Javelin gives us the ability to identify insurgent activity in all conditions."



Hot stuff: Army cook Sgt Barrington Barnes (RLC, right) and Gary Stockton appearing in *The Restaurant*

Army duo enlist in culinary contest

A MILITARY chef is hoping to make big waves in the culinary world as he takes centre stage in the new series of BBC show *The Restaurant*.

Sgt Barrington Barnes (RLC), who is attached to 29 Commando Regiment RA, is starring in the programme with former soldier Gary Stockton as they chase the dream of opening a restaurant alongside famed chef Raymond Blanc.

The show sees them going head-to-head with eight other duos in a series of challenges aimed at testing their practical and creative skills.

Each week Michelin-starred Blanc eliminates the worst-performing pair before eventually selecting the team he wants as a business partner.

With the series still in its early stages Sgt Barnes was tight-lipped about his progress, but was happy to talk about the show's pressured environment.

"It was a different type of pressure [from work]," he said. "Sometimes you need a break from being filmed every day and being mic-ed up takes its toll."

"I thought it would be easy but it was not. My Army career educated me about the need for action plans and that has certainly held me in good stead."

Stockton, a former WO1 in the RLC, and Sgt Barnes had only been working together for a matter of weeks before filming started.

The Restaurant is aired on BBC Two every Thursday at 2000.



THE first Royal Air Force Merlin helicopter has arrived in Afghanistan as part of a move to boost air support on the front line. A full deployment will be completed by the end of the year to provide a significant increase in flying hours available to commanders on the ground. The first Merlin was stripped down and transported on a C-17 from RAF Brize Norton and has arrived at Camp Bastion where it is being re-assembled and extensively tested. The helicopters returned from operations in Iraq in August and crews have undertaken intensive pre-deployment training, including an exercise in California pictured above, while the aircraft have received important upgrades to meet the challenges of Op Herrick. Armed Forces Minister Bill Rammell said: "This deployment is evidence of our commitment to increase capacity and further improvements to helicopter capability in Afghanistan will follow."

Forces get tough on fraudsters

SOLDIERS who abuse the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system could find themselves with some hard questions to answer amid a clampdown on fraud.

Officials are tightening up auditing procedures and have warned that anyone caught out could face stiff action including fines, prison sentences and even dismissal from the Armed Forces.

Peter Kinross, who is responsible for writing Army discipline policy, said there had been a noticeable rise in numbers of troops having their collar felt.

He told *Soldier*: "We are getting much better at finding these people now – we are doing a lot more auditing and dealing with those we catch."

"The Royal Military Police will investigate cases and, where we can prove there has been a dishonest intent, we will use the court martial system."

Kinross highlighted that one soldier

in phase two training had recently been dismissed after fraudulently claiming more than £2,000.

He was charged with 14 counts of fraud and would have faced a stiffer sentence had he not swiftly admitted that he was guilty of the offences.

Kinross said: "Under JPA, soldiers are able to self-certify their personal claims but we are catching people who are abusing the system."

"As well as using the court martial process, we are also dealing with these matters administratively and, where appropriate, we will take money back."

Targeting JPA fraudsters is just one of a number of discipline clampdowns.

Elsewhere, those who abuse alcohol and commit crimes such as violent behaviour and drink driving will find themselves dealt with more severely.

"People who behave in this way can find careers ruined," Kinross added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MILITARY chiefs have appealed for members of the public not to send unsolicited mail to personnel serving on overseas operations this Christmas.

Amid fears that packages sent out to Afghanistan could clog up the system, anyone wanting to send a gift is being asked to use an established charity initiative such as SSAFA's Operational Welfare Fund or UK4U Thanks.

An Army spokesman said: "The MoD recognises that there is a significant wish to support our personnel and wants to express its gratitude for this support."

SOLDIERS serving on the front line of Op Herrick have been digging into the latest rations to ensure the scoff does the job in the harsh Helmand winter.

Troops, who will be fighting in temperatures ranging between -5 and 15C during the winter, have taken delivery of 450,000 trial packs.

Defence Food Services team leader Capt Jeremy Rigby (Royal Navy) confirmed the latest series of tests would run until April next year.

He added: "Feedback from the summer trials has been positive and we look forward to responses on any improvements we can make."

75 THE PERCENTAGE INCREASE IN POWER OUTPUT FROM THE KAJAKI HYDROELECTRIC DAM SINCE JUNE THIS YEAR. A THIRD TURBINE DELIVERED IN 2009 WILL BRING THE OUTPUT OF THE DAM TO 51 MEGAWATTS

GOOD DRILLS

EQUALITY PAYS

THE Army has made great strides towards equality in the last ten years following the decriminalisation of homosexuality, according to senior figures involved in a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender forum. Nick Johnston-Davis, of Proud2Serve.net, said both gay and straight communities had expressed their support for the site. He added: "We see this as extremely positive."

ETERNALLY GRATEFUL

LONDON mum Clare Crean felt so strongly that soldiers need to know they are valued that she was moved to do something about it. Now the public can post a message directly to personnel via her virtual noticeboard at www.wearegrateful.org.uk and make a donation to a Forces charity if they wish. Clare said: "I wanted to express my gratitude."



MOTORING MADNESS

A WELL-RESPECTED NCO with a clean disciplinary record harmed his chances of future promotion by driving while drunk. The lance corporal received a Letter of Censure for the incident, meaning that his lack of judgement and self-discipline will be considered by every promotion board for the next five years.



CHEATS NEVER PROSPER

AN air trooper who falsely claimed more than £2,000 in Get You Home (Early Years) travel allowance through JPA has been dismissed from the Army. The junior soldier was also sentenced to five months detention after admitting 14 counts of fraud, including claiming higher mileage rates than he was entitled to and making up – and claiming for – entire journeys.

BAD DRILLS

Project builds a bright future

A HUGE scheme to modernise the Army infrastructure in southern England is progressing ahead of schedule, according to the firm behind the project.

In an interview with *Soldier*, Peter Smart, chief executive of Aspire Defence, said the construction phase of the Allenby-Connaught initiative could be completed during 2013 – two years ahead of the due date.

The scheme is replacing out-of-date buildings with structures at the cutting edge of design, with new accommodation, improved restaurant areas and sports centres giving a modern look to military garrisons.

The initiative, one of the largest construction projects in the region, has already radically improved life for troops based in the Hampshire and Salisbury Plain areas.

Work is continuing apace with the former catering school tower at St Omer Barracks in Aldershot the latest structure to have been demolished to make way for new buildings.

Smart, a retired lieutenant colonel who served with the Royal Electrical

and Mechanical Engineers, admitted the project was presenting the team with "huge challenges".

He said: "We are working in areas where units are facing terrific pressures preparing for operations and we have to work with that dynamic and emotion."

"But soldiers now expect high accommodation and living standards from their employers and the rationale is the Army will not be able to recruit and retain unless it meets them."

The team behind Aspire has been working hard to progress the project and the company – a joint venture between firms Carillion and KBR – has been handing over new buildings at the rate of two each week.

Aspire's work will not end once construction is complete. The company's staff will be responsible for maintaining and managing the initiative for the next 35 years, making sure 18,500 troops continue to have the creature comforts they expect.

Smart said: "As we have responsibility for maintaining the project, this makes a difference to what we build – we're committed to the long-term."

110 THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN NAD E-ALI DISTRICT. PUPIL ENROLMENT IS ALSO ON THE RISE WITH LATEST FIGURES SHOWING 67,335 CHILDREN ATTENDING HELMAND SCHOOLS

Heroes captured in charity title

AN INSPIRATIONAL book chronicling the emotions and experiences of serving soldiers has been published.

The Hero Inside was conceived and photographed by celebrity snapper Gill Shaw and will serve as an authorised fund-raising title for Help for Heroes.

Bryn Parry, co-founder of the Services charity, said the moving photographs in the book highlighted the efforts of the Armed Forces.

"*The Hero Inside* contains a series of portraits of people linked by a common theme – heroism," he added.

Shaw travelled 21,500 miles up and down the UK to capture the shots of Britain's military personnel as well as high-profile celebrities, with Joanna Lumley, Boris Johnson, Sir Chris Hoy and Stephen Fry among the faces featured in the book.

"Not one person said they could not do it and it worked out that everyone was available at the right time," said Shaw.

"For me the celebs in the book are

secondary to the soldiers. The soldiers are the real celebrities."

She added: "It's a really fun, positive and uplifting book – there's no negativity in it at all."

"It is the soldiers' words, straight from their mouths so we get the real stories."

There is absolutely no journalistic slant."

There is no fund-raising target in place for the book, but Shaw is confident the public will want to buy copies to support the troops.

"I just want to get as much money as I possibly can for our wounded heroes," she said.

"If soldiers go out to serve in a war zone and come back injured, it is the

country's duty to help them.

"If these soldiers had the chance to get back out there, they would be on the plane tomorrow, so let's get behind them."

● *The Hero Inside* is published by Quiller and is on sale now priced at £9.99.





AN aid scheme designed to tackle the opium trade in Afghanistan by encouraging farmers to grow wheat rather than poppies is entering its second year. The Helmand Food Zone Programme supplies wheat seed and fertiliser to land owners across eight districts in southern Afghanistan. Since its launch in 2008, the scheme has contributed to a 33 per cent reduction in poppy cultivation in Helmand by working alongside more than 39,000 farmers. Helmand Governor Gulab Mangal launched the latest programme during a public meeting in Sangin attended by more than 400 people, including UK Ambassador Mark Sedwill, who said: "I ask every farmer and every father to ensure that your sons make the right choice – that they don't fight for the Taliban, but they enrol in the Afghan Police and Army; that they don't grow poppies, but they grow wheat to provide food to the people of Afghanistan."

New IED training for recruits

THE Army is taking decisive action to combat the menace of the roadside bomb – by equipping soldiers with lifesaving skills at the very beginning of their careers.

The latest *Counter IED Awareness* DVD, which is being distributed through the British Defence Film Library (BDFL), is essential viewing for all soldiers and officers and will soon become a key part of recruits' training.

The video features four serials that focus on tasks a soldier would need to carry out when entering an area in which IEDs could be hidden.

Maj Jill Pease AGC (ETS), who helped devise the DVD, said the film would be produced on several formats to allow it to be used in e-learning packages in the future.

She explained: "We are currently attuning everything to the threat currently faced by personnel on operations and we must be creative about how we deliver the information."

"We wanted the video to be available for the PSP and Nintendo because they are systems that junior soldiers and officers are using and so could be used to host e-learning in the future."

Maj Pease, who works at the Land Warfare Centre, added: "The aim is to press home that the most important piece of kit is the soldier themselves, making them alive to their environment

and raising awareness so they can notice things they might have missed.

"We're hoping that it will also counter some of the negative suggestions that we can't do anything about the IED threat – we can, especially if we address troops early on."

"Everybody has a role in countering the roadside bomb, not just the specialists, and it is important that the issue is raised in phase one training," Maj Pease concluded.

For further information about the DVD, log on to the BDFL website at <http://www.bdfl.dii.r.mil.uk>



NEWS IN BRIEF

THE MoD has secured 15,000 doses of the H1N1 swine flu vaccine to immunise key personnel on Op Herrick.

Initial recipients will include staff already deployed to or arriving in theatre and those on pre-deployment training. In addition, unit medical centres will be expected to identify individuals in at-risk groups.

The vaccine is voluntary but the Department of Health has said an outbreak of flu "may well have adverse effects on operational capability".

A TEAM of soldiers who train deploying personnel to spot the early signs of mental health problems have been recognised for their excellence.

The Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) staff came out on top in the mental health category of the 2009 Military and Civilian Health Partnership Awards.

Officer commanding, Maj "Skid" Dorney (Gren Gds), said: "TRiM is a peer delivered support system designed to identify risk factors in Service personnel after traumatic incidents. Soldiers are usually reluctant to talk to strangers when they are in difficulty."

Marathon men

TWO British soldiers beat hundreds of competitors to claim victories in the first ever Helmand marathon.

Capt Alex Lockett (pictured below), of 652 Squadron, 1st Regiment Army Air Corps, won the main race in 3hr 8min, finishing just one minute ahead of LCpl Jon Rogers, from 7 Signal Regiment, who finished second overall and won the 18-22 category.

The race, which was organised by the United States Marine Corps, was held on the desert roads of Camps Leatherneck and Bastion.

Over 300 competitors took part, including International Security Assistance Force personnel from the United States of America, Denmark and Estonia and soldiers from the Afghan National Army.

Capt Lockett (30) had never attempted a marathon before and only began his training one month prior to the event.

The helicopter pilot said: "Five of us from the Lynx squadron wanted a challenge. We trained together by running around Camp Bastion on days when we could fit it around our flying programme. I did not expect to win."

LCpl Rogers (22) had completed a marathon before but only prepared for his second with standard PT sessions.

"The marathon was hard work, especially the second lap around the airfield," said the junior NCO.

Both soldiers added that they were pleased with their tour's progress.

Capt Lockett, who arrived in Helmand in September, said: "The deployment has been extremely busy but the Lynx is proving itself very capable."



Picture: Cpl Steve Bain, RAF

Fair deal for AWOL troops

A GROUP of experienced soldiers have been helping troops who have gone absent without official leave from their units get back into Army life.

The Service's absence recovery warrant officers are tasked with finding personnel who have left illegally and helping them talk through the reasons why they are on the run.

Their aim is to identify whether offenders have any problems so they can be passed on to the grievance system or given the help they need.

The move is already proving a success in bringing soldiers back to the fold and has been praised by Service Complaints Commissioner Dr Susan Atkins.

Peter Kinross, who is responsible for writing discipline policy at UK Land Forces, said the experience of the new warrant officers was paying off.

He told *Soldier*: "We now have 11 WO1 and WO2s working in the role – one of them in each of the regional

brigades – who will try to make contact with the absent soldier.

"Their aim is to find out why the absentee has taken this course of action – it may be, for example, that he is being bullied and feels there is no help.

"Sometimes this may only be a perceived problem, but he would be shown how to make a complaint and would then be immediately plugged into the system."

Kinross added: "In addition, soldiers very often run away to try to fix a problem at home, and it is a case of assisting them with the welfare system."

While the absentee would still be disciplined, the intervention of the warrant officers means that helping offenders is a priority.

Kinross concluded: "Running away is not an answer and unauthorised absence is always treated as a crime, but this initiative shows there are ways of getting people back."

NEWS IN BRIEF

A NEW edition of a classic card game has been launched to raise money for the people of Afghanistan.

Top Trumps has collaborated with the Afghan Appeal Fund (AAF) to produce US Army Top Trumps, a version of the game featuring stats about the American Forces.

AAF receives a portion of proceeds from every deck sold to support its work, which includes helping to build Afghan schools and training teachers.

For more information, visit www.afghanappealfund.org.uk

ARMED Forces personnel preparing for deployment to Afghanistan have been benefiting from joint Service training that utilises pioneering technology.

Exercise Mountain Dragon, which was held at the Air Battlespace Training Centre, RAF Waddington, enabled troops – including an Army Air Corps contingent – to experience simulated missions that cannot otherwise be practised.

Lt Col Stuart Gray said: "This is truly joint training at its best and is definitely improving operational effectiveness."

Minister attends block party

DEFENCE under secretary Kevan Jones visited modernised military homes in London for a closer look at the improved accommodation on offer for soldiers and their families.

The minister enjoyed a full tour of William Gardens, a development of 48 flats with new kitchens, bathrooms, roofing, insulation, wiring and plastering as well as a refurbished children's play park, community area and landscaped grounds.

Two years ago the derelict site was a target for squatters but since September 2008, £4.8 million has been invested in modernising the four blocks on land the MoD has used since 1957.

The flats are available for Service families who are based at barracks in London including members of the Household Cavalry Regiment, Grenadier Guards and those who work at MoD Main Building in Whitehall.

After speaking to residents of the new housing, Mr Jones said: "It is good to see the investment going in. This is £4 million in high quality refurbishment and it is creating happy families.

"It is nice to see that money making a difference and if we have got families that are happy back home then it has an operational effect as well."

Carol Wyard, wife of Cpl Steve Wyard (HCR), said the new accommodation has vast differences to the family's former home at Peninsula Tower, in Hyde Park Barracks.

"It's an immense improvement," she added. "When you come home the kids can go out and play. In Hyde Park they could not go out on their own.

"The standard of finish is fantastic. You cannot even compare it to Peninsular Tower."



BRITISH Armed Forces personnel joined together to honour the fallen at poignant Remembrance Sunday ceremonies around the world. Troops currently serving on operations in Afghanistan, including 2,000 British Servicemen and women and their International Security Assistance Force colleagues at Camp Bastion, put down their weapons to remember comrades killed in action during recent conflicts. Similar services were held at Task Force Helmand's headquarters in Lashkar Gah and forward operating bases throughout southern Afghanistan. Pde Mark Christian said: "Remembrance for me is picking up the gauntlet, it is steeling ourselves for the fight that lies ahead of us, for if we do not do that their lives have been in vain." Back in Britain, more than 7,000 veterans gathered at the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall for a march organised by The Royal British Legion. Victoria Cross holders LCpl Johnson Beharry and Tpr Mark Donaldson laid a wreath during a separate service in the capital to mark the passing of the First World War generation.

100 THE NUMBER OF CALLS BEING MADE EVERY DAY TO A NEW **CRIMESTOPPERS** **PHONELINE** ESTABLISHED WITHIN LASHKAR GAH'S POLICE HEADQUARTERS. THE LINE WAS SET UP TO ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH OFFICERS AND PLANS HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP TO **EXTEND THE SCHEME ACROSS HELMAND**

NEWS IN BRIEF

	SWAG	FORCE FOR GOOD	QUIDS IN
1	£4,294	CORPS OF ARMY MUSIC Piano maestro Jools Holland and a host of military musicians headlined the recent fund-raising Rhythm Force concert at Kneller Hall	Army Benevolent Fund and Help for Heroes
2	£2,180	DUNCAN BARBER The former soldier ran 159 miles in temperatures approaching 50 degrees to complete six marathons in the Sahara Desert. Make a donation by logging on to www.justgiving.com/SaharaDuncan	Salah Rahman Sports Foundation, Kurdistan
3	£1,000	CAPT CHRIS HOWARD Not content with taking on a marathon, the officer will be running 26 miles wearing body armour. Sponsor him at www.justgiving.com/Chris-Howard1	Help for Heroes
4	£1,000	CPL PAUL "SHADS" JONES Larkhill-based Cpl Jones will be leading a team into this year's Dorset Giant, an event requiring entrants to walk and run 62 miles in just 20 hours. Log on to www.justgiving.com/BeatiPacifi	Help for Heroes

The single will be available for download from major sites from December 14.



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IN MEMORIAM



WO1 DARREN CHANT (40)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADIER GUARDS
KIA AFGHANISTAN – NOV 3



SGT MATTHEW TELFORD (37)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADIER GUARDS
KIA AFGHANISTAN – NOV 3



GDSM JAMES MAJOR (18)
1ST BATTALION,
GRENADIER GUARDS
KIA AFGHANISTAN – NOV 3



CPL STEVE BOOTE (22)
ROYAL MILITARY POLICE
KIA AFGHANISTAN – NOV 3



CPL NICHOLAS WEBSTER-SMITH (24)
ROYAL MILITARY POLICE
KIA AFGHANISTAN – NOV 3

TROOPS on Op Herrick were left shocked and stunned after a rogue Afghan police officer opened fire and killed five British mentors.

WO1 (RSM) Darren Chant, Sgt Matthew Telford and Gdsm James Major, all of the 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, were shot dead alongside Royal Military Police colleagues Cpl Steve Boote and Cpl Nicholas Webster-Smith during the attack on November 3.

The Afghan gunman fled after the shooting, which happened at a police checkpoint in the Nad-e Ali district of Helmand province. The MoD has confirmed that an investigation into the incident has been launched.

A senior and highly-experienced soldier, WO1 Chant had been commanding the mixed team of British troops responsible for mentoring police in the area. The 40-year-old joined the Army in 1986 and had served on operations around the world, including in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Afghanistan.

He had also commanded the respect of aspiring British Army officers as a colour sergeant instructor at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, where he was praised for his approach to training. The senior soldier leaves a pregnant wife and three children from a previous marriage.

Sgt Telford, who was the regimental police sergeant, joined the Grenadier Guards in 1991 and was hugely popular with his colleagues.

The married father-of-two, who was originally from Grimsby, had served as a regimental recruiter. The 37-year-old was

remembered as being a professional and gifted soldier who was meticulous in his work.

Gdsm Major, who was 18 and also from Grimsby, was serving as a top cover gunner in the commanding officer's tactical group. He signed up for the Army in April last year and served on public duties before deploying to southern Afghanistan.

Lt Col Roly Walker, CO of 1 Gren Gds, said all three men would be sorely missed and pledged that they would never be forgotten by the battalion.

He said of WO1 Chant: "He was a tremendously brave soldier and personal friend – he was a big character, he knew the answer to all our problems, could make anyone laugh and worked tirelessly."

Of Sgt Telford, Lt Col Walker added: "He was an unwavering and reliable presence in the battalion – his easy-going style and happy humour made him everyone's friend. He was thriving in his role as a police mentor."

The CO praised Gdsm Major for making a huge difference so early in his career. "He died young, as soldiers tend to in war – he leaves an immensely strong impression for one who was with us such a short time," he said.

There was also huge shock in the military police community at the deaths of two highly-respected soldiers.

Cpl Webster-Smith, who was 24 and from Glangwili, joined the RMP in 2005 and was posted to 160 Provost Company in Aldershot. He had completed tours of Afghanistan,

Kosovo and the Falkland Islands.

Colleagues remembered the NCO as being a highly-professional and unfailingly courageous soldier who was deeply proud of his cap badge.

He died alongside Territorial Army comrade Cpl Boote, who was a member of the Manchester Detachment of 116 Provost Company (Volunteers). The 22-year-old soldier, who came from Birkenhead in Liverpool, joined the TA in 2006 and had volunteered to serve on Op Herrick.

Lt Col Debbie Poneskis, commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, Royal Military Police, said both men had served their country with courage and honour.

She said of Cpl Boote: "He worked tirelessly to ensure he was at the top of his game and showed steadfast resilience and determination in gaining a much sought after place on Operation Herrick 11 alongside his Regular counterparts."

"It was a pleasure to promote him to full corporal at the end of an exercise earlier this year – the smile on his face will be my enduring image of him."

Of Cpl Webster-Smith, Lt Col Poneskis added: "A professional and determined soldier, he was always the first to volunteer and the last to give up."

"A spirited NCO, he was at his most comfortable in the midst of fellow soldiers, either guiding or mentoring them or having a laugh and a joke."

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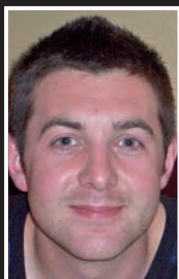
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IN MEMORIAM



CPL JAMES OAKLAND (26)
ROYAL MILITARY POLICE
KIA OCTOBER 22 – AFGHANISTAN

FRIENDS and colleagues have been reflecting on the life of an "outstanding soldier" who died while on patrol in Helmand province.

Cpl James Oakland had been clearing a route in the Gereshk region when he was killed by a roadside bomb. The soldier had deployed on Op Herrick 11 two months before the rest of his company and was serving as a weapons intelligence detachment commander.

Having joined the Army in 2002, Cpl Oakland had previously completed a tour of Afghanistan and deployed on peacekeeping operations in the Balkans.

He leaves behind his parents, a brother who is in his final term at the Royal Military

Academy, Sandhurst and his girlfriend.

His family said in a statement: "We are immensely proud of James, the person he was and the job that he did. He was a true friend, loving son, grandson, brother and boyfriend, who will be dearly missed and never forgotten."

Cpl Oakland's company commander, Maj Andy Lewis (RLC), paid tribute to the soldier, who he described as "one of the brightest stars".

"It was an honour to serve alongside him. A giant in both mind and body he had a natural flair for his job," he added.

"He was the man you wanted on your side in a difficult situation. He was in his element in the field."



CPL THOMAS "TAM" MASON (27)
3RD BATTALION, THE ROYAL
REGIMENT OF SCOTLAND
OCTOBER 25 – SELLY OAK

THE wife of a soldier who died in hospital after being wounded in Afghanistan has paid tribute to her "best friend".

Cpl Thomas "Tam" Mason, of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, was injured by an IED during an operation in Kandahar on September 15 and later succumbed to his injuries in Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham.

Describing her wedding day as "the best day of my life", Kylie Mason added: "He was the most genuine and kindest man I have ever known. I knew I had struck gold with him."

"I am also aware what a great soldier Tam was and how passionate he was about his job."

Cpl Mason joined the Army in 2005 and qualified as a mortar fire controller in 2007.

Described as "a man with direction", he impressed colleagues with his commitment.

His commanding officer, Lt Col Stephen Cartwright, said: "A late joiner to Service life, his experience and maturity allowed him to be promoted twice in quick succession, evidence of the talent of the man and the dedication he gave to his vocation."

As well as remembering his professionalism, colleagues of Cpl Mason recalled the junior NCO's "wicked sense of humour".

His friend Cpl Jamie Rock said: "He was always playing pranks on other guys but was first to laugh when they were played on him."

He added: "He was always there to help you with anything. Tam touched many people's hearts and will be missed deeply."



SSGT OLAF SCHMID (30)
ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS
KIA OCTOBER 31 – AFGHANISTAN

SOLDIERS in Helmand province are mourning the loss of their "legendary" colleague.

SSgt Olaf "Oz" Schmid was commanding an IED disposal team in the Sangin region when a device he was defusing exploded.

An ammunition technician by trade, the 30-year-old showed a natural aptitude for bomb disposal. He qualified for his high threat operator role in Afghanistan after passing a trade course earlier this year.

SSgt Schmid's bravery and skill on operations – including one occasion when he uncovered 31 IEDs in one location – won him the respect of his comrades.

Lt Col Robert Thomson, commanding officer of 2 Rifles, said: "SSgt Schmid was simply the

most courageous man I have ever met. Under relentless IED and small arms attacks he stood taller than the tallest.

"No matter how difficult or lethal the task, he was the man who only saw solutions. He saved lives in 2 Rifles time after time."

As well as impressing colleagues with his "valiant" actions, the senior NCO provided a source of morale for his peers. CO of the Counter IED Task Force, Lt Col Gareth Bex (RLC), said: "Once met, never forgotten. The Army has been robbed of a superb talent."

The soldier's wife, Christina Schmid, said in a statement: "Oz was a phenomenal husband and loving father. I take comfort knowing he saved countless lives with his hard work."



SJT PHILLIP SCOTT (30)
3RD BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA NOVEMBER 5 – AFGHANISTAN

A NATURAL soldier who "excelled at everything in his career" died protecting the welfare of the Afghan people.

Sjt Phillip Scott, of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles, was killed when an IED detonated during a patrol in Helmand province.

The senior NCO had been taking part in a clearance operation designed to enhance security and lay the groundwork for future actions near the town of Sangin.

Sjt Scott, who was originally from Malton in Yorkshire, joined the Army in 2001. He had deployed on operations in Northern Ireland and Iraq as well as instructing cadets at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

Having been promoted to serjeant in July, he

had been serving alongside his brother Robin on Op Herrick 11.

Sjt Scott leaves a wife, Ellen, and two young children. Mrs Scott said in a statement: "My husband was a very brave man and loved by all his family."

Lt Col Nick Kitson, commanding officer of the 3 Rifles Battlegroup, praised the fallen NCO, hailing him as "the toughest of men and the gentlest of friends".

He added: "Sjt Scott was the most professional of soldiers – considerate and compassionate to the core. He was an inspiration to all."

"We shall miss him, both as part of our team for the current fight and for the long term."



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IN MEMORIAM



RFN PHILIP ALLEN (20)
2ND BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA NOV 7 – AFGHANISTAN

A YOUNG soldier described as “invaluable” early on in his career was killed by an IED in Sangin, Helmand province.

Rfn Philip Allen joined the Army in spring 2009 and deployed to Afghanistan for the last weeks of 2 Rifles’ tour shortly after passing out from the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick.

He stayed behind to gain further operational experience within a fire support group serving with 4th Battalion, The Rifles.

Although in his first year of Army life, Rfn Allen’s performance on tour had already made “a lasting impression” on his colleagues.

Lt Col Rob Thomson, commanding officer of 2 Rifles Battlegroup, said: “He was a dynamic, full-on, tough rifleman who made an immediate

impact on all ranks in his company.

“He had a huge appetite for soldiering and was desperate to stay on and get the medal and a day-sack of operational experience.”

WO2 Freddie Fryer, platoon commander for the fire support group, said: “His experience and positive attitude was a massive bonus to my platoon.

“Everything he did was to an amazing standard for a soldier so young. We have lost an outstanding rifleman.”

The soldier’s mother, Karen Charman-Allen, said: “I would like to thank all of the soldiers who have served with and knew Phil.

“He was proud to have been a soldier in 2 Rifles and to have served on tour with them.”



RFN SAMUEL BASSETT (20)
4TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA NOV 8 – AFGHANISTAN

A PROMISING soldier who had been “in his element” in Afghanistan died in hospital in Afghanistan following an IED explosion.

Rfn Samuel John Bassett, 4th Battalion, The Rifles, had been serving as part of the 3 Rifles Battlegroup when he was mortally wounded on patrol in Sangin, Helmand province.

The 20-year-old, who deployed to southern Afghanistan in October after successfully completing basic training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick, leaves behind a mother, father and brother.

His mother, Coline Bassett, said: “Samuel was a real character, always the joker, he will be so, so missed and loved forever – our proud little soldier.”

Maj Richard Streatfeild, officer commanding A Company, 4 Rifles, said the young soldier matured greatly during deployment.

He said: “Over the course of pre-deployment training he became a professional soldier. He discovered a strength of character that he had not realised he possessed. In Afghanistan he transformed into a man before our very eyes.”

Lt Col Rupert Jones, CO of 4 Rifles, said Rfn Bassett had undergone a “remarkable” change during his tour.

He added: “His zest for life and for fun saw him in more than his share of scrapes but the challenges of Afghanistan allowed him to grow in stature and mature. He leaves us with a large hole in the platoon.”



RFN ANDREW FENTIMAN (23)
7TH BATTALION, THE RIFLES
KIA NOV 15 – AFGHANISTAN

A TERRITORIAL Army soldier who had ambitions of becoming a commissioned officer was killed by enemy fire while on foot patrol in Helmand province.

Rfn Andrew Fentiman, 7th Battalion, The Rifles, was part of a patrol tasked with impeding insurgent activity and reassuring local nationals when he was attacked near Sangin.

The 23-year-old volunteered to serve with 3 Rifles Battlegroup and was using his tour in Helmand to gain experience ahead of a career in the Regular Army.

Lt Col Paul Uden, commanding officer of 7 Rifles, said: “I spoke to him before pre-deployment training about his hopes for the future and his desire to eventually commission.

“He went to Afghanistan to gain experience as a first step to achieving his goal of commissioning and I have no doubt that he would have made a very good officer.”

Rfn Fentiman put his civilian career on hold to volunteer for service and quickly formed a close bond with his fellow soldiers.

Sjt Steven Smith, of 1 Platoon, said: “Even though Fen’s background was different from most, he was always eager to fit in, took all the banter a Rifle platoon dishes out and it did not take long for him to become one of us. I have the utmost admiration for him.”

Rfn Fentiman joined 7 Rifles as a potential officer in 2007 following two years at the East Midlands Officer Training Corps.



CPL LOREN MARLTON-THOMAS (28)
33 ENGINEER REGIMENT (EOD),
ROYAL ENGINEERS
KIA NOV 15 – AFGHANISTAN

A BOMB disposal expert who showed “great courage and commitment” to his work was killed in an IED blast while conducting a route search in Helmand province.

Cpl Loren “Loz” Marlton-Thomas, of 33 Engineer Regiment (Explosive Ordnance Disposal), Royal Engineers, was working in the vicinity of Patrol Base Sandford, in the Gereshk area, when he was mortally wounded.

The 28-year-old joined the Army in 1998 and initially considered a career in The Parachute Regiment before turning to the Royal Engineers.

He completed operational tours of Iraq and Northern Ireland before deploying to Afghanistan and was extremely proud of the life-saving role his team was performing.

Cpl Marlton-Thomas’s wife Nicola paid tribute to her husband by saying: “Loren was Army barmy right back to being a cadet.

“He did the job he loved and paid the ultimate price for his friends, comrades and country. We are proud to say we knew and loved him.

“A true hero in our eyes – you may be gone but you will never be forgotten.”

Lt Col David Southall, commanding officer of 33 Engr Regt, added: “His role, in leading teams to find IEDs, was undeniably amongst the toughest in Helmand.

“Despite this, Loz was one of the most positive junior commanders I have met. His natural charm, confidence and soldiering skill meant men followed him instinctively.”

IN MEMORIAM



SGT ROBERT LOUGHRAN-DICKSON
4TH REGIMENT,
ROYAL MILITARY POLICE
KIA NOV 18 – AFGHANISTAN

AN exceptional soldier who was completely committed to his career in the Army was killed on a routine patrol in Helmand province.

Sgt Robert Loughran-Dickson died from gunshot wounds after he was attacked near Patrol Base Wahid, in the Nad-e-Ali District.

The 33-year-old, of 4th Regiment, Royal Military Police, joined the Army in 1997 and had previously served with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

In tribute to the father-of-one, a family statement read: "Robert is a true hero of whom the whole family are extremely proud."

"He gave the ultimate sacrifice doing what he loved and was devoted to. A beloved father, son, brother and uncle, you lit up our lives and that

light will stay bright forever. You will be greatly missed but always loved by all."

Lt Col Debbie Poneskis, CO of 4 Regt, RMP, added: "He was totally professional, easy company and the first to volunteer for anything – whether it was helping colleagues, attending community events or taking on additional tasks."

"I had absolute faith in Sgt Loughran-Dickson; he was utterly reliable, wise beyond his years and he simply got on with the job without fuss. He was an extremely proud father, and his son Robert is a credit to him."

The NCO deployed regularly throughout his career and served in Kosovo, Iraq and Northern Ireland as well as Afghanistan. He was also a keen runner, hill walker and swimmer.

134 THE **AMOUNT OF SOLDIERS, IN THOUSANDS, THAT MILITARY LEADERS ULTIMATELY HOPE TO ENLIST INTO THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY. THE FORCE, WHICH IS BEING TRAINED BY SPECIALLY-TASKED BRITISH OPERATIONAL MENTORING AND LIAISON TEAMS, CURRENTLY HAS A STRENGTH OF APPROXIMATELY 94,000 PERSONNEL**

NEWS IN BRIEF

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AN Army officer took time out from his leave to condemn some of the media's negative reporting of Op Herrick.

Capt Andrew Tiernan (Gren Gds) appeared on BBC Radio Four's *Today* programme just days after a rogue Afghan policeman killed five soldiers at a checkpoint in Helmand province.

While accepting such tragic events have to be covered, the officer said calls for a mass withdrawal could potentially have a detrimental impact on morale.

Capt Tiernan told presenter John Humphrys: "Talk about a wholesale pull-out does not support the soldiers who are out there risking their lives."

"We hear people saying 'we support the troops but we don't support the cause'. Well the soldiers support the cause, so if you really want to support the soldiers then we as a public should support the cause in Afghanistan."



A **HIGHLY** successful "War of the Roses" boxing clash helped raise more than £140,000 for a selection of Service charities. The bouts saw fighters from The Yorkshire Regiment trading blows with their counterparts from The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment in front of a 500-strong crowd at Saviles Hall in Leeds. The Lancaster-based boxers celebrated a 7-2 victory after a night which also included a black tie dinner and music from the Band of the King's Division and the 3 Yorks Corp of Drums. Pte Brad Wales (2 Yorks) was named most courageous boxer while Sgt Barry Quinn (2 Lancs) took the best boxer title. Event organiser Lt Col Nigel Smith (Lancs) said: "The evening was about raising regimental profiles and money. We have been overwhelmed by the public's generosity and thanks to the boxers, who gave such terrific support, we exceeded all expectations." Proceeds will be divided between the Army Benevolent Fund, Help for Heroes and regimental benevolent funds. Donations can still be made online at www.waroftheroses.org.uk

Picture: Sgt W S Fletcher, Lancs

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Eat well

The traditional post-session fry-up will help soak up any alcohol that's still in your stomach and give a much-needed energy boost. It's especially important to eat the next morning if you skipped a meal the night before.

Indulge your sweet tooth

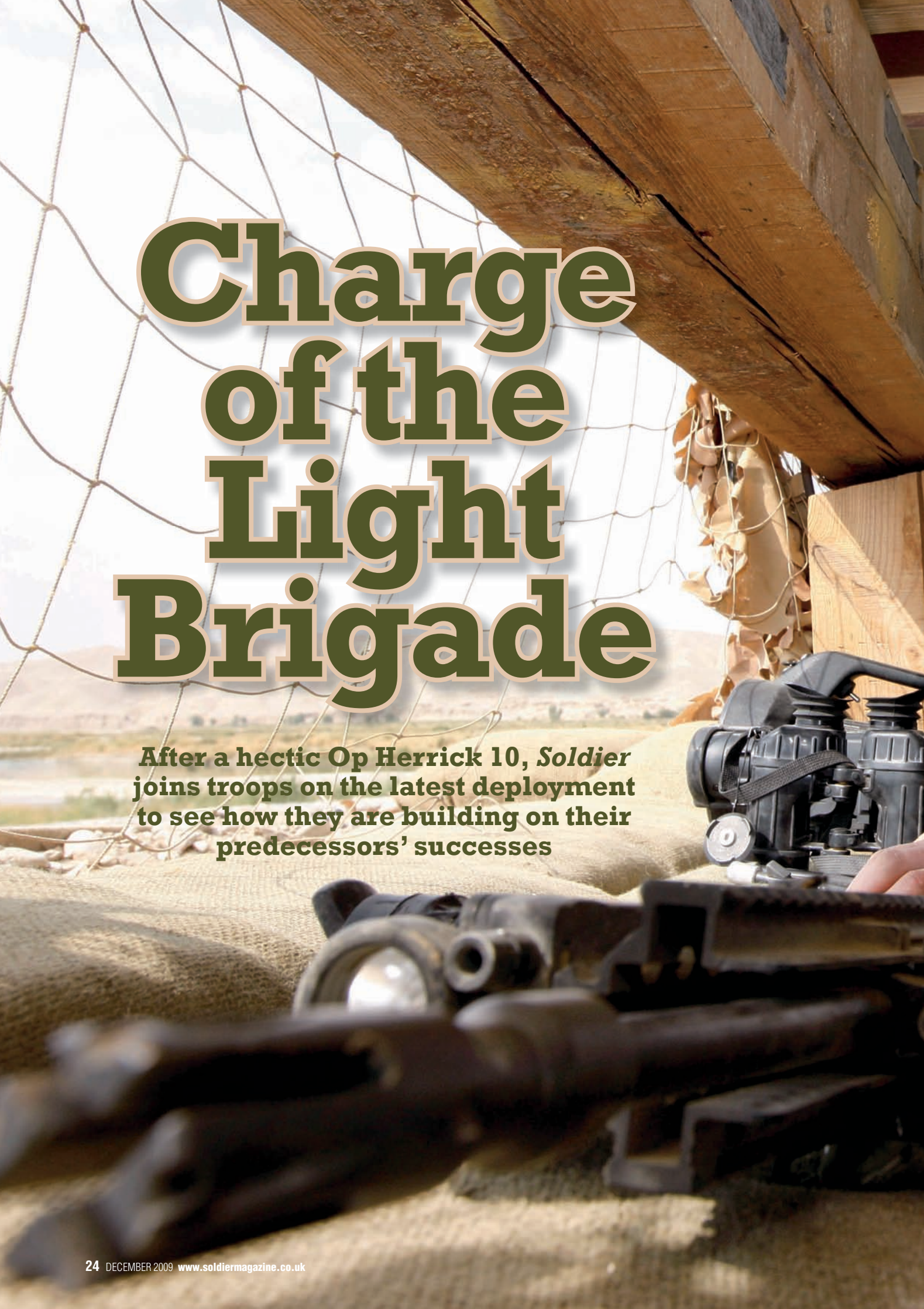
Beer floods your body with sugar, the body produces chemicals to neutralise it, and so by morning your blood sugar will be low. Drinking a sugary soft drink or putting an extra spoonful in your morning cuppa will help bring sugar levels back to normal and make you feel more alert.

CARVE MEAT

- When the meat is cooked, take it out of the oven, cover it with foil and let it stand for about 20 minutes (or longer for a large joint). The meat finishes cooking and relaxes, and you will lose succulent juices if you carve it too soon.
- Ensure you have a good sharp knife, a steady surface and a carving fork to steady the meat.
- Ask your guests if they would like thin or thick slices of meat.
- Your knife should saw through the meat, not changing angle once it has made the first cut.
- Always cut across the grain. Find the grain by looking closely for tiny thin lines running along the flesh.
- The rarer the meat the easier it is to carve. The tenderest meat – and the tastiest – is often closest to the bone.



• Extracted from 'BE THE BEST ... at just about everything' by The British Army. Published by Century at £12.99. Crown copyright 2008. Readers can buy the book for the special price of £10.99 incl free UK p&p. To order please call 01206 255 800 and quote the ref 'Soldier'.



Charge of the Light Brigade

After a hectic Op Herrick 10, *Soldier* joins troops on the latest deployment to see how they are building on their predecessors' successes



Stagging on: Rfn Stephen Johnston (6 Pln, B Coy, 3 Rifles) watches out for any trouble at FOB Jackson, near Sangin in Helmand province

Picture: Steve Dock



GROUND CONTROL

3 RIFLES DOMINATE THE ROADS TO REASSURE AFGHAN NATIONALS

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

FOR riflemen treading the increasingly dangerous ground of Afghanistan thoughts are of how to best improve the lives of the local population.

Troops of Battlegroup North show little sign of worry for their own safety and exude an air of supreme confidence in their abilities and the means they have in which to be successful.

Soldier spent the day with the soldiers of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles as they prepared their kit, donned their body armour and deployed on a foot patrol from FOB Jackson in Sangin.

The area is essentially a minefield, with IEDs littered under the surface of the dusty roads, but the cool-headed troops were undeterred by the risks – their sole focus was on providing security for the town's community and gathering information to defeat the Taliban.

For LCpl George Milner, patrolling the streets laden with 60kg of kit and armour while watching for signs of the insurgency was nothing out of the ordinary.

"It's just a regular thing for us now. It depends where you're going whether you get nervous as you know certain places are going to be bad – but you deal with it.

"It's quite a bit different from a nine-to-five job behind a desk. I suppose it's a bit more exciting."

On this particular day personnel from 4 Platoon were tasked to patrol south of the base towards Pilya.

In the morning briefing, platoon commander Lt Dan Brown outlined the purpose of his team's operation.

"We are aiming to provide reassurance to the local nationals and to check the pattern of life," he said.

He also emphasised that the role of the International Security Assistance Force is to engage the Afghan people and to persuade them that British soldiers are trying to help their country.

"Respect the customs and traditions and be as courteous as possible. It's all about the people – respect the local nationals," he said.

It was also spelled out to all involved that as the patrol moved south the Afghan nationals would be more "Taliban-friendly" due to links with the narcotics trade.

But despite the serious nature of the

information, the dark humour often associated with British forces was as strong as ever, with talk of deadly bombs diluted by off-the-cuff quips.

"Taliban insurgents have laid an increasing number of IEDs in the southern Green Zone", was the brief.

"That's good of them," was the nonchalant response from one rifleman.

But the crucial job at hand was the only focus for the Servicemen and women. The fact that a harmful device could lie just yards from the base's gate was clear in each soldier's mind.

"Patrol is not over until we are back at FOB Jackson. Even when we are on the wadi, metres away from the gate, there is an IED threat," said Lt Brown.

The Servicemen and women were given 45 minutes to get their kit and equipment in order before departing for the unpredictable Sangin roads.

Bergens were diligently packed, ammunition and radio batteries were checked, and guns were expertly oiled to prevent jamming.

RESPECT THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS AND BE AS COURTEOUS AS POSSIBLE. IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE – RESPECT THE LOCAL NATIONALS



This was not an inspection, nor was there a superior officer watching for “bad drills”. It was simply soldiers preparing for battle in the most professional manner.

LCpl Russ Ellis, holding his SA80, said: “It’s in your own interest to get everything in order. You can’t afford to make mistakes.

“Patrolling is part of an everyday process and I’m not too worried about it really. We’ve been here just over a month now and you just get used to it.”

With Ultrabeat’s *Pretty Green Eyes* blaring from a set of portable speakers, the soldiers were ready for action. Some checked the patrol route on a map, some chatted about relationships at home. Others relaxed with a game of Connect 4.

LCpl Milner made sure he read any post that had been sent to him.

“It’s from my dad – there’s a picture of my little sister and brother at Halloween,” he said.

“It’s a right morale boost. I always try to read my mail before going out. My wall’s full of pictures, so I have a quick look before setting off.”

Minutes before stepping outside the wire, a vivid reminder of why troops are working to release the Taliban’s grip was literally wheeled through the gates.

Three tiny children, injured in insurgent crossfire in August, were carried in a

wheelbarrow to the 3 Rifles medical centre. Each week they come to the base to have their wounds treated.

The gate closed behind the soldiers and they moved out on their ground domination manoeuvre.

The platoon returned after a successful four hours, without being contacted.

“It was fairly straightforward and we covered ground that we’ve been over before,” said Lt Brown.

“The bazaar was vibrant with people moving in and out of stalls.”

Just over a year ago a Taliban suicide attack devastated the bazaar and left locals fearing for their lives. Now, following the efforts of 2 Rifles on Herrick 10 and the early work of 3 Rifles on Herrick 11, real change has come to the hub of Sangin life.

“Our guys are now more confident to move amongst the people and there’s a lot more interaction when we move north of the bazaar,” added Lt Brown.

“Compared to just seven weeks ago there is a lot more interaction, especially with the youngsters – sometimes we’ve got 20 kids

running alongside us.”

The bazaar is bustling once again because the people of Sangin view it as safe. The impact of the endeavours of Battlegroup North is evident.

In this part of Helmand province, progress is being made. ■

Alert and focused: Cpl Craig Patterson, Rfn Luke Slater, Rfn Scott Monkley and other members of Bravo Coy, 3 Rifles prepare for a patrol at FOB Jackson, southern Afghanistan

Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Steve Dock

ARMED with “the big boys’ toys”, the fire support group (FSG) at Forward Observation Base Jackson keep a watch for enemy activity in Sangin from the highest vantage point in town.

Based in the “crow’s nest”, CSjt Gavin Paton’s team observes the Taliban hotbed below – home to around 75,000 Afghans – providing vital long-range cover for their Battlegroup North colleagues.

Day and night the sharpshooters lock on to potential threats with their Javelins, ready to unleash

lethal missiles from distance. Snipers and machine gunners add further bite to the group’s formidable arsenal.

“The FSG observers have a complete view of Sangin. We’ve got quite a long arm from here,” said section commander CSjt Paton of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles.

“From a typical sentry position, fire can be launched straight over the camp with a heavy machine gun – it’s very effective.”

With B Company, 3 Rifles out on patrol on a daily basis and FOB Jackson an obvious target for insurgents’ fire, the FSG is on constant alert to the significant threat.

“We’ve had mortars coming in from the tree lines and landing ten metres outside the camp perimeter and that’s when we fire back,” said CSjt Paton.

“They were firing the same 81mm mortars that we use and they were quite accurate – they are getting quite good.

“But it’s also good to know that as soon as we start firing our heavy stuff they start to extract.”

Peering out across the flat Sangin wadi, which stretches out to the horizon, it is clear to see how compact the battlefield actually is. The distances between camps and patrol destinations are not large, but here terrain acts as an extra enemy.

“One thing that has shocked me is just how close everything is but how long it takes to get from place to place,” added the section commander.

“It’s the time it takes to get from A to B which is immense. Big company operations are happening in the Green Zone just 2km away – but it can take a full day to operate and get back.”

A 40km journey from B Company in Sangin to C Company in Kajaki is impossible to drive – soldiers have to fly.

But on a landscape where insurgents can disappear into underground tunnels and scurry onto concealed tracks, Battlegroup North, working alongside the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police (ANP), is gaining considerable successes.

“We are trying to break the area down so that each patrol

Sharpshooters

3 Rifles provide long-range threat

base looks on each other," said CSjt Paton.

"The key factor here is that the footprint of the bazaar is looked after by ANA and ANP personnel and we provide support for them – the face of an Afghan security force is on everything."

With a realisation that the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) is aiding the national groups rather than attempting to take over, locals are returning to the town in droves.

Plain evidence of this is the Sangin bazaar, which is now in daily operation with 600 to 800 bustling stalls. In previous months it was totally deserted.

"People are starting to come back because they feel more secure," said CSjt Paton.

Building on these notable achievements, 3 Rifles also have plans to demolish Taliban hideouts and move into areas known to be enemy strongholds.

"In the mid-distance is what we call J-Down Village, which is in the process of being flattened so that we can get complete lines of sight into Pilyay," said CSjt Paton.

"At the moment the insurgents can nip in and out without us seeing them. But the engineers will go up there and blow it up, razing it to the ground."

Excited at the prospect of crushing a Taliban power base, he added: "There is also the area known as "The Fishtank" which is quite busy and was largely unpatrolled until recently.

"We have started going in there a lot to stir up the hornet's nest and we've had some tasty times."

The overarching Isaf doctrine, which ultimately aims to gain the consent of the Afghan civilians, is followed to the letter by the Servicemen and women behind the Army's big guns.

Their weapons are lethal at long range but the initial aim of these 3 Rifles soldiers is to show locals they are working for a safer Sangin.

"Recently we caught people digging in the dark using a night sight," said the senior NCO.

"There's no need to be digging the ground at that time of night and I doubt they were gardening, so we fired a flare and lit them up. They ran away immediately and the threat was destroyed."

Summing up his group's desire to provide security in the most peaceful way, CSgt Paton added: "It's not all about shooting people, it's about letting insurgents know we know they are out there and sending them on their way.

"It's good for locals to see that we don't just shoot. It's their country and not everyone is the enemy.

"If you just went around shooting all the time and beating compounds down you would lose their consent." ■

In their sights: Sniper team LCpl Nathan Prince (below left) and LCpl Darren Hope from 3 Rifles' fire support group look over FOB Jackson, near Sangin, Helmand province

‘The key factor here is that the footprint of the bazaar is looked after by the ANA’





Afghan power

Joint forces work for a secure future

Report: Joe Clapson
Pictures: Steve Dock

SUCCESS for the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) in Afghanistan cannot be gained without the country's own forces leading the way.

That was the blunt assessment from all ranks of personnel questioned by *Soldier* on a visit to Sangin.

The feeling from the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan Nation Army (ANA) is mutual – they openly admit that they want and need help to make their country a safer place.

High-ranking officials from both organisations, in rare interviews with *Soldier*, emphasised that only a joint force of international soldiers and Afghan nationals would defeat the insurgency.

Just days before five British soldiers working as police mentors were shot dead by one of their subjects, Sgt Rohullah Abdullah, second in command of the ANP in Sangin, spoke of the vital relationship that has been forged.

"I have worked for three years in Sangin and in my opinion we are here to serve the people along with Isaf to make the environment safer," he said.

"When I first came here there was trouble in the bazaar – there was lots of fighting. Now there are no problems and people go shopping."

Sgt Abdullah, surrounded by proud members of his force, insisted mentors from the Coldstream Guards at FOB Jackson were doing a lot to improve security.

"Our forces are working together and the police are getting better every day," he said.

"If we have any problems we talk with our mentors to gain advice and help.

"The locals are now aware that the ANP and Isaf want to serve the people and provide security."

The town of Sangin has become notorious for its sympathy towards the Taliban and civilians have struggled to escape the lure of money fuelled by corruption.

However, the police mentors are optimistic about the future because with Afghan faces on patrol, locals are more inclined to consent to the operation and impart helpful information.

ANP mentor Sgt Simon Thompson (Coldm Gds) said: "We are trying to build trust and work with them.

"Locals are starting to trust the ANP because they realise they are doing a good job.

"They are now approaching the ANP instead of us if they have problems, which is a step forward."

Sgt Abdullah agreed that the people of Sangin were turning their backs on the Taliban insurgency.

"Now the people are very happy with the Government and they are not happy with the insurgents or the drug dealers – they want our help."

The need to strengthen the Afghan

presence on the ground was reiterated by soldiers mentoring the ANA.

Personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment working in the Operational Mentoring Liaison Team were in no doubt that lives are being saved by the joint patrols.

WO2 Chalky White (A Coy, 2 Yorks) said: "When we have ANA with us the locals are more likely to tell us if there are IEDs present in the area.

"Without the ANA, the nationals are reluctant to come forward, even if we ask them if there has been Taliban activity."

In simple terms, in the minds of British soldiers, progress can only be gained by continuing to work alongside the Afghan forces as their link

to the wider population.

"Sangin is an evil place and a lot of the area here is unknown territory," admitted WO2 White.

"The ANA are local sets of eyes and they get more information than us. They speak the language and, like our lads, they are not going in blind."

In further support of the strengthening bond between the British and Afghan forces, Lt Said Akbar, one of 15 ANA commanders throughout Afghanistan, explained the essential relationship.

"If Isaf wants to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban it can do it, but the ANA alone does not have the capability," he said.

‘The ANA are local sets of eyes and they get more information than us. They speak the language and, like our lads, they are not going in blind’



Upbeat in Helmand: An Afghan police officer, mentored by the Coldstream Guards, leads a team out on patrol from FOB Jackson near Sangin

But Lt Akbar, ANA commander in Naby, ruled out any suggestion of a quick fix.

"For the moment it is impossible to handover power to the Afghans and we cannot even talk about handing over in the foreseeable future – we just don't have the power," he explained.

"About 65 per cent of the Afghan population is uneducated so we just don't have the capability."

Following the killings of WO1 Darren Chant, Sgt Matthew Telford and Gdsm James Major (all Gren Gds) and Cpls Steven Boote and Nicholas Webster-Smith (RMP) in the Nad-e'Ali district, there have been public demands for British troops to cease working

alongside the Afghans and to pull out of the country altogether.

But in the eyes of Isaf and Afghan soldiers alike, such measures would undo the hard-fought efforts of themselves and those who have served and died before them.

The British mentors trust the men they work with and do not draw any comparison between their Afghan colleagues and the enemy.

As Lt Akbar resolutely stated: "It is a big difference between us, the ANA, and the Taliban – we respect all cultures and all religions.

"They are very cruel people, they do not

respect any culture or anyone else.

"They are jealous people who just want to murder and have power in their hands." ■



Former Tornado navigator John Nichol was held as a prisoner of war during the first Gulf War in 1991 after being shot down over Iraq. Since leaving the Royal Air Force in 1996 he has written a number of books on the Second World War. His latest work, *Medic – Saving Lives from Dunkirk to Afghanistan*, is in stores now.

SAVING LIVES

Gulf War veteran is left humbled by those who selflessly risk all to preserve our soldiers

DURING my 16 years in uniform, both in the ranks and as an officer, I knew little about the work of front-line medical personnel.

Like most, I only ever came across them during routine visits to the med centre or when passing through a mock field hospital while on exercise.

I write now with my eyes well and truly open to their efforts.

Medic started life as a Second World

War history, but quickly took a new direction when I began to realise the level and scope of operations tackled by those who sign up to save lives.

While researching the title I heard of incredible acts of professionalism and bravery at Dunkirk, on D-Day and behind the wire of prisoner of war camps.

I spoke to doctors, medics and stretcher-bearers involved in the Falklands War of 1982, interviewed personnel who served in the Gulf War, Bosnia and Kosovo during the '90s and

those on Op Telic in 2003.

I tracked the incredible changes and developments in the medical profession right up to the modern day, and spoke with serving medics, doctors and surgeons – both Regular and Reservists – who had recently returned from southern Afghanistan.

I was moved and humbled by the stories I heard. Ninety-year-old medics talked of their desperate experiences trying to save lives in truly appalling conditions in the Japanese PoW camps.



Picture: Cpl John Bevan, RLC

A later generation told me about operating with the most basic equipment while under fire at Goose Green or on the slopes of Mount Longdon during the Falklands War.

And today's medics, both men and women, spoke of their experiences attending mass casualties after IED blasts in Basra and of treating troops in the heat of battle in Afghanistan.

We often hear of "the lost generation" of today's youth; they are regularly portrayed

as feckless, lazy and inept hoodies – the "PlayStation generation". Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The young men and women I met

were dedicated, courageous and incredibly skilful – individuals our nation, and the Army, can be truly proud of.

Before putting pen to paper, I also interviewed casualties and it was they who spoke most highly of the medics to whom they owed their lives.

Sgt Maj Andy Stockton (RA) was hit by an RPG in Afghanistan and lost his left arm in the attack. He would have lost a lot more had it not been for Cpl Gary Lawrence (RAMC), who broke cover and braved intense fire to get to the gravely wounded gunner and administer life-saving first aid.

"I have nothing but praise for the medics who treated me on the ground, in the helicopter, in the field hospital and afterwards," Sgt Maj Stockton told me.

"They were all phenomenal. Medics see so much and do so much. I take my hat off to them."

Such feats of selfless courage are not unique. Cpl Paul "Tug" Hartley (RAMC) was decorated with the George Medal after sprinting into the danger zone to treat six casualties stranded in a Kajaki minefield.

Cpl Stu Hale (3 Para) was among the injured and is even prepared to suspend the Paras' traditional contempt for "crap hats" when it comes to medics. Cpl Hale, who lost a leg in the incident, described those who saved him as "outstanding".

He added: "Before that episode I was quite disdainful about them, but now I really admire and respect them."

Throughout history, whenever the agonised cry of "medic" has been heard, it has been answered with selfless devotion and courage, and it will continue to bring out the best in humanity. As long as wars are fought, lives need saving and wounds need binding.

As the motto of the Royal Army Medical Corps so rightly puts it "arduis fidelis" – faithful in adversity. ■



● *Medic – Saving Lives from Dunkirk to Afghanistan*, is published by Viking (£20)



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COURAGEOUS CREATIONS

ENGINEERS WORK TIRELESSLY TO KEEP BASES RUNNING

Report: Joe Clapson

BARREN land in the middle of a desert, cut off from guaranteed supply chains and devoid of basic bricks and mortar would cause a building developer to run away and beg for the nightmares to stop.

But for the Royal Engineers on operations in Afghanistan such a scenario is real and just the tip of the iceberg – and they thrive on the challenge.

Soldier stepped onto the building site at FOB Jackson to watch personnel from 42 Field Squadron, 28 Royal Engineers construct a Hardened Accommodation Bunker (HAB).

Under the command of Capt Gail Fisher, the sappers used a seemingly indestructible medium-wheel tractor to manoeuvre heavy wire mesh into position before filling it up with ballast.

The HABs, which have been designed by Hesco, arrive flat-packed and ready to use as soon as they are delivered.

"It's just like one big Meccano kit. It takes about six men to build and it provides accommodation for about 30 personnel," said Capt Fisher.

LCpl Michael Westaway (RE) explained:

"We use a plywood screen which adds protection and there is sand and small gravel used as fill. If the HAB is hit, the fill absorbs the impact."

The robustness of the tractor was also praised by LCpl Westaway: "It was driven all the way from Bastion to get here because it was too heavy to lift," he said.

"It was worth the effort though because we can take it outside the wire as it's armoured – it actually saved the life of one of the lads who was contacted by an IED while he was in it."

As well as building the accommodation in rapid time for Servicemen and woman, the engineers have also installed two large generators and rewired the whole of the FOB, providing the much-needed power for lighting, heating and computer terminals – essential for the operation.

"Power like this is easy to come by on a big base like Bastion, but out here it's a God-send," said Capt Fisher.

"The engineers just work endlessly to make all of our lives more comfortable."

"Without them, morale would not be as high. Hot water, lighting, accommodation – it's all down to them."

Another string to the engineers' bow has been the ability to devise a hydration-supply, eradicating the need to fly in masses of bottled water from Camp Bastion.

The soldiers have exploited the Sangin Canal, a tributary of the Helmand River which runs through camp, by pumping the water through filters into "pillow" storage tanks.

"It's a good system and it's amazing to know

it comes straight from the river and is perfect to drink – it's actually cleaner than UK water," said Capt Fisher.

The headlines in Afghanistan are rightly grabbed by those, including the engineers, who step outside the wire on to the roads, which double as minefields.

But just keeping the camps running – with comfortable accommodation and utilities – is an impressive feat and something worth taking note of. ■

‘Without them, morale would not be as high. Hot water, lighting, accommodation – it’s all down to them’



Flat-pack attack: Sappers build HABs from Hesco kit at FOB Jackson, Sangin

Picture: Steve Dack

Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Mike Weston

WHEN soldiers from the Lancashire Fusiliers squared up to their Turkish adversaries in the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, they quickly found themselves locked into a relentless and bloody battle for survival.

In a series of ferocious encounters, the enemies rapidly developed a healthy respect for each other. As well as engaging in close-quarter combat, the two sides had to endure the grim combination of disease and the extremes of temperature that were the grinding reality of life in the Dardanelles.

Despite suffering heavy casualties, the Turkish troops proved to be a resolute force against attempts to wrestle ground from them. It was ultimately the British and their allies who were forced into a humiliating retreat and left to reflect on a great military miscalculation.

The sense of history is not lost on the modern day equivalents of those who fought in the First World War. And the strong bonds between the one-time enemies were clearly shown when troops from Istanbul-based 66 Mechanised Infantry Brigade arrived in the UK to join counterparts from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

In a demanding two weeks of manoeuvres

on Salisbury Plain, the 70-strong Turkish contingent were put through their paces in British skills and drills by their fusilier instructors. They then joined Exercise Wessex Warrior, fighting alongside 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, who were entering the final stages of preparation for Op Herrick.

"Our aim has been to bring the troops up to speed with our weapons and tactics before they put it all into practice," Maj Toby Bunney (1 RRF), who helped prepare the guests for the manoeuvres, told *Soldier*.

"But as Turkey is one of our Nato allies and the soldiers here are already very capable – about a third of them have experience of



TURKISH DELIGHT

NATO PARTNERS FORM TANTALISING TEAM DURING JOINT MANOEUVRES

operating against insurgents – there are also a lot of lessons we can learn from them.”

The value of working alongside troops from another country in training is highly prized. In Afghanistan, British soldiers routinely operate with allies from other Nato partners and overcoming obstacles such as language barriers and different skill sets are key to success.

Being able to rehearse these techniques in the controlled environment of an exercise is a welcome opportunity – particularly with an alliance partner that has seen action on operations including the Balkans.

“We’re currently going through our mission-specific training for the next Op Herrick tour and the Turkish soldiers are joining us for a battlegroup-sized exercise,” said Capt John Jeffcoat (1 RGR).

“We have around 1,000 personnel taking part, including 100 Afghan civilians.

“When you think that there are troops from 43 countries currently deployed in Afghanistan, and we never operate by ourselves, it is good for us to rehearse our techniques with multinational soldiers and the Afghan people.”

Exercising in the UK also proved to be a valuable training opportunity for the Turkish troops. The soldiers, many of them undergoing their compulsory national service, said they had formed strong bonds with their British allies and were learning a new way of working.

Having traded their HK33 assault rifles for the Army’s SA80, the visitors admitted they had benefited from the intensive training package, which encompassed everything from live firing to house clearance drills.

“Our British colleagues have really taken care of us, although the climate here is much less friendly than at home,” said Capt Hakan Ozkubat, officer commanding of the visiting Turkish company. “Even though there is a language barrier, we get by because we have a common bond as soldiers.

“The training back in Turkey is similar to what is available here in the UK, although there are obviously some cultural differences between our two countries. This is my first time working with the British, but my troops are all getting on very well with them – we’ve even managed to play some football.”

Liaison officer Maj Abdullah Bayram shared the sentiments. He was confident the two armies would benefit from each others’ experience.

“This is the first time I have been out of my home country on an exercise and I have been enjoying it,” he said. “It was particularly moving to celebrate our national day over here – we all sung our national anthem and had a minute’s silence to remember fallen soldiers.

“Some of our troops have been on active service and on duty as part of Nato. My job as a liaison officer is to assist our soldiers should they have any issues, but the exercise has been going really well.”

British and Turkish troops may have originally developed a healthy respect as adversaries at Gallipoli, but Exercise Wessex Warrior proved that they are a true force to be reckoned with when working together.

Sharing a work ethic underlined by a firm commitment to the highest professional standards, the two Nato allies continue to learn valuable lessons. ■

Plain game: Turkish troops learn British skills and drills during tough training serials held at Copehill Down village in Wiltshire

Interview: Stephen Tyler

WHEN German soldiers captured Army officer Richard Carver in Italy in November 1942, they had no inkling of the significance of their find.

The young Brit played his cards close to his chest as his Nazi captors, smarting from their first serious defeat of the Second World War at El Alamein just two days previously, interrogated him and deliberated over what to do with their newly-acquired prisoner.

Their ultimate decision to send him to an internment camp near the northern Italian city of Parma denied the Germans a major PR coup, for the man in their captivity was no ordinary British officer.

Carver was in fact the stepson of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, the commander responsible for the victory in North Africa, and he was captured while on a recce mission to find a new Allied HQ site for Monty in Italy.

With more reason than most to escape from the Germans, Carver soon broke out of the prisoner of war camp and spent a year living rough and evading the enemy as he travelled hundreds of miles back to his illustrious stepfather's side.

The modest officer kept his inspirational story to himself after the war and it was not until his dying days that Carver told his son Tom – a former BBC

defence correspondent – about his amazing wartime experiences.

Tom (pictured below), who has a strong Army background himself having held a commission and served for three years in the 9th/12th Royal Lancers, started writing the history down and the resulting book – titled *Where the hell have you been?* after Monty's response to his stepson arriving back at Allied HQ one year after first setting out – has just been released.

"When I was growing up my father hardly talked about the war so I had no idea about any of this," Tom told *Soldier* after the book's launch at London's Victory Services Club. "When he got older I began to realise what he had been through and I started to ask him about it.

"It wasn't until he was dying that I came back from America to look after him and he opened up. I found a tiny notebook – it was no bigger than a few inches – with minute pencil writing in it detailing what had happened.

"I also found a compass which he had made from an old button and magnetised with a safety pin."

Charting his father's capture, escape and time on the run, Tom's book serves as a testament to the hardiness of a generation embroiled in an horrific and bloody war.

Tasked with making it from the internment camp in the north of Italy back to Monty's HQ in the south, Richard managed to survive using a combination of his own wits and the help of the local population.

On one occasion, the officer – who was on the run with a second man – was hiding in some bushes to avoid a German patrol when two Italians armed with



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**MONTY'S GREETING TO LOST SON
RECALLED IN BBC MAN'S BOOK**



guns burst through the undergrowth and tripped over his feet.

Richard, who was just 11 when his mother married Monty, feared he was about to be shot, but it turned out that the native duo were

in fact waiting to ambush the German soldiers who had earlier stolen one of their pigs.

"My father thought he was going to die for the sake of a pig because these men would draw the attention of the Germans," said Tom. "He put his head in his hands, but they never fired a shot.

"Instead, they found a cave for them to live in. The whole village was involved in protecting them – one woman would hang a sheet out of her window when she saw the Germans coming to warn everyone.

"When he died there was one thing that hadn't been done and that was to make contact with the Italian family who had helped him to survive."

In his research for the book, Tom set off for Italy and tracked down a man in his 70s called Alfonso – the very same man who had tripped over his father's feet more than 60 years previously.

The pair went back to the cave where Richard and his accomplice had hidden and the author said the visit gave him an insight into the hardships endured by Second World War soldiers.

"I think one of the real driving forces behind the book was to make the readers aware of just what these men went through," he added.

"It has a modern resonance because it is still difficult for the guys today coming back from Afghanistan to talk about what they have experienced."

Tom, whose book was fittingly launched in the El Alamein room

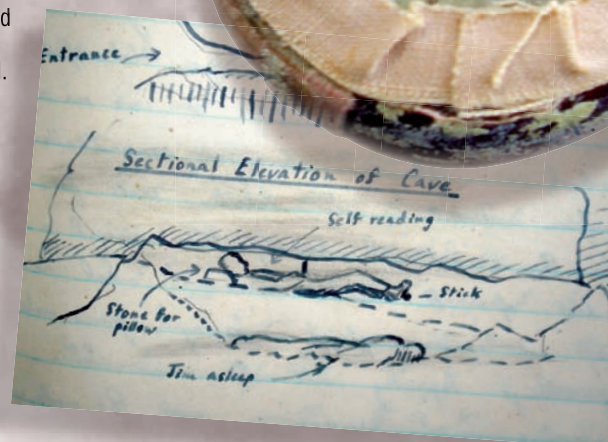
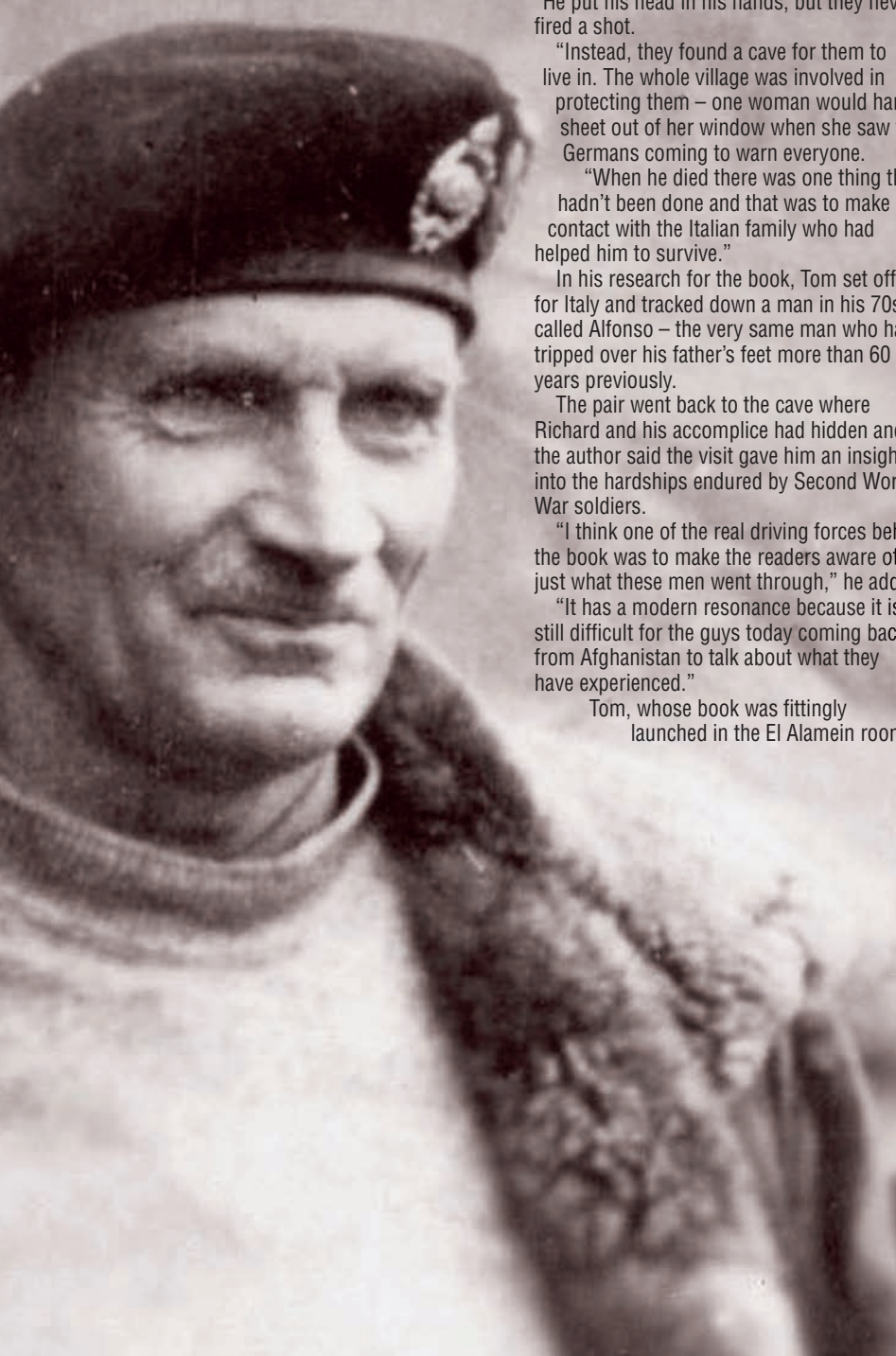
of the Victory Services Club, is no stranger to extreme environments himself.

After three years in the Army, his career with the BBC saw him witness the start of the Rwandan genocide, live with the mujihadeen in Afghanistan and be imprisoned in Bosnia.

And while he has the utmost respect for the bravery of the soldiers of his father's generation, Tom is also in awe of the modern British Army.

"The military was different back then because it had people who were conscripted and were going to fight a war that they didn't volunteer for," he said.

"But the calibre of soldier today is fantastic and I hold them in the highest regard." ■



Clockwise from left, Family ties: Richard Carver and Field Marshal Montgomery on the day they were reunited in December 1943

Captured: PG49, the prisoner of war camp near Parma where Richard Carver was held

Mementoes: The compass made by Richard Carver and a drawing of the cave in which he and a comrade hid from the Nazis

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Interview: Joe Clapson
Picture: Steve Dock

Inspired: Television presenter Ben Fogle was impressed with SSAFA Forces Help's Norton House

THE thrill-seeking duo of Ben Fogle and James Cracknell pedalled a rickshaw non-stop from Edinburgh to London in a bid to boost support for SSAFA Forces Help.

Not satisfied with their face-numbing 474-mile race to the South Pole earlier this year, the TV presenter and Olympic rowing legend completed the Ride of Britain just in time for the Pride of Britain awards ceremony.

The pair set off from Edinburgh Castle at 0800 on October 3 and arrived in front of ITV's cameras at Hyde Park Barracks at 1300 on October 5.

With a helpful gale-force Scottish tailwind pushing the pair to speeds of nearly 40mph, they were ahead of schedule on the first day before lactic acid slowed them down.

Along the way the three-wheeled bike was joined by supportive troops from across the country, including members of 4th Mechanized Brigade; The Household Cavalry; 1st Battalion, Scots Guards; The Royal Dragoon Guards; 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment; 21 Engineer Regiment and 2nd Signal Regiment.

For 423 miles, 24 hours a day, members of the public lined the streets to applaud the cyclists' efforts and throw coins into their charity buckets.

"The support was not for us, it was for SSAFA Forces Help," said Fogle.

"We were overwhelmed with the support for our Service personnel – it was a real wake up call for both of us."

Days after the epic 60-hour ride, Fogle was given a tour of SSAFA Forces Help's Norton House in Surrey.

The facility provides an essential base for injured soldiers and their families in need of accommodation or a place to relax while they undergo treatment at Headley Court.

Speaking exclusively to *Soldier*, Fogle said: "We often read about how unpopular the wars are, but we didn't see anything of that on our journey. We saw the complete and utter opposite and it made me proud to be British."

The eccentric road trip has netted thousands of pounds for SSAFA Forces Help as well as raising the charity's public profile.

"I have a lot of friends in the Armed Forces so I had heard of SSAFA Forces Help. When we were

asked to do something for Pride of Britain we decided it was a great opportunity."

The inspiration for the peculiar event came while Fogle was walking the streets of England's capital.

"We wanted to do something different, which hadn't been done before – I was in London and saw a rickshaw and decided to do that," he explained.

"I only wish James wasn't a 95kg Olympic weight to pull across Britain."

Looking ahead to future challenges, Fogle hinted that a trip to visit the troops was not out of the question.

"I'm sure we'll do another big adventure," he said. "But we're still rookies in terms of the outdoors and compared to what soldiers do we're not in the same league."

"Going out to Afghanistan to see the troops is something I would love to do – we could share our different experiences with soldiers and talk about the fantastic work they have done and are doing." ■

“The support was not for us, it was for SSAFA Forces Help”

Pedal power

Adventurous pair raise awareness for Service charity

A night for heroes

Football legends unite with stars of stage and screen in support of Service charity

Man marker: Lothar Matthaus (right) gets to grips with goal ace Andrew Cole at the Heroes Cup clash

Picture: Graeme Main

**Report: Richard Long
and Mathew Simms**

FOOTBALLING legends took to the pitch alongside stars of stage and screen in a keenly contested Heroes Cup match at Reading's Madejski Stadium.

The clash, which was staged as a fundraiser for Help For Heroes, saw Italia '90 sensation Paul Gascoigne lead an England side against a Rest of the World team boasting the talents of Lothar Matthaus, Gus Poyet and Turkish playmaker Tugay.

Despite linking with predatory striker Andrew Cole and defensive stalwart Des Walker, the Newcastle United great saw his team crash to a 4-1 defeat during a rain-swept evening in Berkshire.

Goals from German legend Matthaus, former Southampton striker Iain Dowie and newly appointed Brighton manager Poyet gave the Rest of the World a 3-0 lead.

Military man-turned-Premiership poacher Guy Whittingham, who served with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, pulled a goal back for England before Olympic athlete Iwan Thomas completed the rout.

Players from all three Services were also given the chance to shine, with Army ace Sgt James Lavelle (APTC) looking particularly impressive alongside his illustrious home nation teammates.

Soldier was given the privileged position of being pitch-side as the action unfolded and spoke to some of the star players about why they got involved.

Former England cricket captain Alec Stewart, who lined-up in the heart of the defence, said: "If we can help by being here and raising some money then I'm happy to be first in the queue.

"It is fantastic to be able to play with and against some of the greats of the game.

"I have enormous respect for what the

Services do, they are putting their lives on the line and they are just lovely people."

FA Cup winner Lawrie Sanchez was appointed manager of the Rest of the World team and was pleased to support such a worthy cause.

"I didn't even have to think twice about it," he said. "It has been a good game, but when you have a midfield four like Tugay, Steffan Freund, Matthaus and Poyet I think a few league clubs would be hard pushed to keep track of them."

Soldier man of the match Dowie said he found it an honour to appear alongside Service personnel in the game. "Our soldiers are the best in the world bar none and we should do our little bit," he added.

"The adulation for the modern footballer is huge, but the real heroes are the lads and lasses in camouflage.

"It is very humbling to be here and talk about people who have lost their fathers,



husbands, sons and even daughters in some cases. I am delighted to do whatever I can to help their cause."

Thomas, whose father served in the Royal Air Force, spoke to *Soldier* just minutes before scoring his team's fourth goal.

"I have massive respect for the guys," he explained.

"I watched that BBC documentary *Wounded* and it drove me to tears to be honest. The courage of our soldiers – great guys. They're the heroes, not us.

"I just ran round a track for a living, they're the people who deserve the praise.

"Gazza was a hero when I was growing up. I took the ball past him in the first half and he gave me a little clip and it was quite an honour to be kicked by Paul Gascoigne."

Boxing world champion Joe Calzaghe spearheaded the Rest of the World attack in the first half and was delighted to take part.

"At the end of the day it is just a brilliant

cause," said the proud Welshman.

"It has been a while since I played football and it was great to be on the same team as legends such as Matthaus.

"I think the soldiers are doing a great job. What I do as a boxer pales in comparison, they are the real heroes."

The fixture had added significance for former *Hollyoaks* star Chris Fountain.

"My friend Ian Byrne is currently serving in Afghanistan with 11 Light Brigade. He went out five or six weeks ago and has quite a stint ahead of him," the actor explained.

"I'm disappointed I didn't score as I had a special celebration lined up for him.

"I would just like to tell the troops we are all thinking of you, nobody has forgotten the work you are doing."

For a star-struck Lavelle the match was a truly unbelievable experience.

"It was just a fantastic dream," the Army footballer said.

"Players like Gascoigne and Andrew Cole are both absolute legends and the guys

playing for the Rest of the World are star-studded internationals. It was just a dream come true.

"Of course it was nice getting the chance to play alongside the legends, but the aim is to raise awareness and build support for our wounded Servicemen and women."

West Ham legend Frank Lampard Senior, who was given the honour of being England assistant manager, told *Soldier* he was delighted to back the Services charity.

"This is our country that we are talking about and I'm very proud to be asked to come and do a job tonight.

"I have to say, the Forces lads that came on were brilliant. They've got so much passion and enthusiasm.

"I can't say enough about them today, they are a credit to themselves and it makes me very proud of my country." ■

Christmas Cheers

CGS leads festive greetings for Britain's Servicemen and women

*A*T THE end of a very busy year, most of us are looking forward to a well-earned break with our families and friends. It will be particularly welcome for the soldiers of 19 Light Brigade after their hard and successful tour in Afghanistan, and for their loved ones after months of separation and uncertainty.

We ask a lot of our families and it isn't easy for them to cope with the demands of Service life, so this Christmas I ask every soldier to raise a glass to our families for their love and unstinting support.

As you rightly enjoy yourselves, I would also ask you to take a few moments to reflect on three things: what the Army has achieved this year, the sacrifice this has entailed and the challenges that face us in 2010.

This summer, after six years, we left southern Iraq a better place with the Iraqi people in a position to grasp the opportunities in their new democracy. Critics are eager to judge us and suggest that we were unsuccessful; those of you who served in the latter stages of the campaign will know this is simply not true. I am proud of what the Army achieved in Iraq, as you can all be.

Turning to Afghanistan, I am more convinced than ever that this mission will define our generation. We must succeed if we are to ensure the security of the United Kingdom by helping to stabilise

Afghanistan and its surrounding region. The consequences of failure are unthinkable. It is sometimes difficult to explain the nature of the operation to a public that is conditioned to expect instant results, but I know that we are making progress.

Unfortunately this will not be such a happy Christmas for some. I will be thinking of the families of those who have died on operations and elsewhere this year; my wife Caroline joins me in offering them our deepest sympathy. The personnel who have suffered life-changing wounds and injuries will also be at the forefront of our minds. I am humbled and inspired by their courage and resolve and will do everything I can to ensure they have what they need.

Looking forward to 2010 our main effort remains the support of operations in Afghanistan. There will also be a Strategic Defence Review which will set the Army's course for the future.

I would like to wish all of you and your families a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. I reserve a special thought for those of you who will be away from home over this period. It is a great privilege to be the head of an Army comprised of such outstanding people. Thank you for all you have done this year and I know you will join me in embracing the opportunities that lie ahead in 2010.

General Sir David Richards
Chief of the General Staff

Andrew Strauss

Just to say that we think you're doing a brilliant job out there and we hope you enjoy your Christmas as much as you possibly can.



It can't be an easy time being away from family but we are hugely indebted to you for the work you're putting in and the sacrifices you're making.

Hopefully we can win some cricket matches that will help to keep spirits high over the festive period.

Harry Redknapp

Merry Christmas to everyone serving in the British Forces.



The work you carry out and the immense sacrifices you make every day are never forgotten by those of us at home and you have our full support.

I wish you a safe return and please pass on my best wishes to your friends and families.

Joe Calzaghe

All the best to the soldiers.



I would just like to say to the troops Happy Christmas, stay safe and come home in one piece. You are doing a great job.

As a boxer what I do pales in comparison - you are this country's real heroes.

Katherine Jenkins

I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - I will be thinking of all of you.



Hoping very much that I can see you soon. Until then, please stay safe. Lots of hugs and kisses, Katherine.

James DeGale

A special thought goes out to the brave Servicemen and women of the British Army stationed around the world at this special time of the year.



I won gold for my country at the Beijing Olympics and I'm proud of that, but I'm prouder of the Armed Forces who put their lives on the line everyday serving our country overseas.

I just want to say that you are all doing a fantastic job and I wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Kelly Brook

To the men and women of the British Army, I just wanted to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Hopefully those of you on operations can take some small comfort knowing that we are thinking of you back home. It must be very difficult being away from your families, especially at this time of year, but I'm sure they are so proud of you.

Keep up the great work you are all doing for our country and I hope those of you in Afghanistan stay safe and that you get home to be with your families again soon.

Lots of love, Kelly.

Aaron Lennon

I would like to send all of our Armed Forces my best wishes for the festive period.

Our thoughts are with you and your families during these testing times and the bravery of you all on behalf of the country is greatly appreciated. Season's greetings to you all.

Michelle Marsh

Hello to all of Britain's Servicemen and women. I have no idea how hard it must be for you and your family



not to be together on this special day. All I can say is how proud your family must be - I'm proud of you all.

I hope you realise what an amazing job you're doing. When you're feeling a bit low just remember you have a whole country praying for you every day. I wish you all the happiest of Christmases.

Look after each other and yourselves.

With all my love and kisses, Michelle.



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UK MILITARY SALES



HOME BASE

Ambitious scheme gives Army houses a modern makeover

Report: Joe Clapson
Picture: Mike Weston

THE housing arm of the MoD is making successful headway in moving out of a 1960s' time warp into an energy-efficient, cosy future.

Defence Estates (DE) is currently overseeing a £3 billion refurbishment project which will see hundreds of antiquated abodes transformed into bright, modern living spaces.

To gain an exclusive insight into the programme, *Soldier* took a trip to Colchester Garrison's St Michael's estate, home to The Parachute Regiment, where 136 houses are being given dramatic makeovers as part of a ten-year Government plan.

With extensive building work ongoing around the otherwise quiet streets, we dropped in on three identical properties at different stages of the transformation cycle.

The stark difference between the gloomy, unloved house yet to be given a facelift and the commodious home handed over to SSgt Bryn Davis (13 Air Assault Support Regiment RLC) was astonishing.

DE has placed the building tools in the hands of Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) with the requirement that soldiers are given homes to be proud of. But it has been more than a case of adding a lick of paint.

With some empty houses last decorated when Bobby Moore lifted the World Cup, MHS has breathed new life into the semi-detached and terraced properties by means of opened-up spaces, fitted showers and brand-new double glazing.

"Every effort has been made to make the houses

more spacious and more modern," said DE housing planner Karen Bennett.

The design process and eventual work on the houses followed detailed discussions with troops and their families at an open meeting.

As a result, every house on the DE hit-list will be rewired with additional plug sockets and new carpets fitted throughout.

Despite the wide-ranging changes to the houses – which even stretched to shinier door handles – the environment was not forgotten by DE. In fact it was at the forefront of its agenda.

Head of DE Operations Housing, Air Cdre Elaine West, explained the all-embracing efforts.

"We have installed a new high-efficiency gas condensing boiler with new radiators incorporating thermal valves," she said.

"That is combined with new double-glazed doors and windows as well as improved loft insulation."

SSgt Davis, who joined the Army 16 years ago, moved into his sparkling house soon after the renovators had completed their remove and refurbish operation.

Now settled in the three-bedroom home with his wife Becky (29) and daughters Courtney (11) and Morgan (7), he was full of praise for the project.

"Compared with the last house this is a massive improvement," he said.

"The house is 100 per cent better than what we have had before and we've made it homely with our own furniture."

Air Cdre West added: "By March 2013 very few families should be living in houses that don't meet the top two condition standards." ■



Changing rooms: SSgt Bryn Davis (RLC) and wife Becky relax in the recently renovated kitchen of their married quarter on Colchester Garrison's St Michael's estate

A home from home

Project SLAM delivers 21st century accommodation and leisure facilities to soldiers at super garrison

Centre of excellence: The Richmond Centre junior ranks catering, retail and leisure facility at Catterick Garrison

Picture: CRGP Ltd

Report: Richard Long

SIGNIFICANT investment has been made on improving accommodation and facilities at the imposing Catterick Garrison in recent years.

With around half-a-billion pounds spent on giving soldiers a home from home experience, living conditions at the super garrison clearly demonstrate the high value the MoD places on its Service personnel.

The vast sum has provided spacious, modern rooms and furnishings for junior rank trainees through to senior officers as part of the Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (SLAM) project being delivered by Defence Estates.

It has also covered the cost of a range of new facilities including a state-of-the-art leisure centre along with bars and retail and mess facilities.

Soldier was invited on a behind-the-scenes tour of the ever-expanding garrison to get a closer look at the 21st century accommodation troops now enjoy.

"We are comparing multi-occupancy, poorly maintained old fashioned rooms with single occupancy, brand new accommodation. It is like chalk and cheese," explained Col Nick Millen (late RDG), the garrison commander.

"The SLAM accommodation here is

fabulous and the guys and girls love it.

"There is now a feeling among some of the younger soldiers that when they return to their barracks they are going home.

"They do not have to go to the cookhouse at a set time, they have their own private space and they live more independently than ever before.

"Our soldiers can come off the tank park and relax in the public rooms or the privacy of their own room.

"There is no pressure for facilities, they can meet friends, have a pint and get a good meal up to 2100 every night. They can also have their friends up to stay.

"We are delivering a much more normal environment to live in and they like it.

"None of this can undermine what we do with regards to the cohesion of the operational unit but we aim to give value for money and betterment at the same time."

Soldier was certainly impressed with the accommodation it saw.

A single room for a fully-trained soldier includes a four-foot wide bed that provides ample space for themselves and visiting partners while an en-suite bathroom means queues for showers are a thing of the past.

Each room is fitted with furniture that can be easily moved around so the occupant can design their own layout and there is an impressive amount of storage space for the ever-increasing kit list a soldier is expected to house.

There is also a common room along each corridor and a utility area that includes a washing machine, drying space and basic cooking facilities.

New accommodation for trainees is equally impressive.

The prospect of sharing with 11 colleagues may conjure thoughts of a lack of privacy for the new recruit, but with each room divided into three distinct sections there is

no lack of personal space.

And with mess facilities that include a cookhouse, snooker tables, computer game consoles and internet access there is every opportunity to unwind after a long day.

The new high-tech leisure centre, which opened earlier this year, is another welcome distraction and offers Service personnel, as well as members of the public, a plethora

"We are delivering a much more normal environment to live in and they like it"

Catterick Garrison fact file:

- Project SLAM has undertaken more than £200 million of modernisation works at Catterick Garrison, including Marne Barracks.

- Works range from accommodation for junior rank trainees, fully-trained soldiers, senior non-commissioned officers and officer's accommodation.

- Work commenced on the first building project in March 2004 and was completed for occupation in January 2005.

Since then some 3,500 modernised bed spaces have been delivered in 12 projects together with three separate junior ranks messes and a combined senior ranks and officers' mess.

- There are currently seven projects delivering 1,500 bed spaces in the design and construction phase, together with two separate SNCO messes and a junior ranks mess. This equates to a further spend of £101 million.

- Construction is undertaken using a combination of traditional site-based building works and off-site modular construction with completed modules delivered to the site by lorry and craned into position.

- The Catterick campus mess (The Richmond Centre) is the central catering, retail and leisure facility for Munster Barracks and is designed for use by up to 2,000 personnel.

- Vimy Barracks junior ranks mess has 1,000 seats for diners and is one of the largest catering assets in the Army, capable of delivering 2,000 meals for trainees per session.



Grand slam winners: The Cheesman Centre, Marne Barracks; a soldier enjoys his leisure time in the new single living accommodation; Catterick Garrison's leisure centre

Pictures: CRGP Ltd and Chris Barker

of sporting opportunities.

There are three swimming pools – two of which are used for training purposes by the Infantry Training Centre – and there is a specially designed fitness suite to help soldiers with injury rehabilitation.

And for civilians there is a fully-fitted gym with cardiovascular machines and weights along with a multi-use sports hall and a library, which is run in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council.

Defence Estates has also provided technical accommodation for 1 REME and both 3 and 5 Medical Regiments.

While Catterick is clearly serving the needs of personnel, there has also been a clear focus on integrating with the surrounding community.

The garrison has become one of the main employers in the region and has had to

work closely with local authorities during the planning process to ensure its new buildings sit happily on the landscape.

Col Millen told *Soldier*: "Since April 2007 we have had to conform to planning permission regulations in the same way as everyone else.

"That has presented considerable challenges but I am in no doubt that we are in a better position having gone through the process.

"It means we are being made to fit in and that is quite right.

"If we want to be part of the wider community we cannot be an organisation that puts some carbuncle on the skyline. No-one else is allowed to do that so why should we?" ■

- **Final word: Read what soldiers think about the new accommodation on offer at Catterick Garrison – Page 106**

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MOOR TRAIL

Army welcomes visitors to the natural wonder of Catterick

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Chris Barker

It is safe to assume that a large and ever-expanding super garrison is the last place that nature lovers would target for an escape to the country.

But the Army is offering exactly that thanks to the 96 acres of wetland, meadows and woodlands it has at Foxglove Covert, a unique nature reserve that sits alongside the vast site at Catterick Garrison.

The tranquil setting is home to 1,900 species of flora and fauna from water voles, great crested newts and otters to bats, rare dragonflies and orchids.

It also boasts a £350,000 state-of-the-art study centre and a variety of walking trails, making it a fantastic attraction for both Service families and members of the public.

"This place is very much a community project," said Maj (Retd) Tony Crease of the reserve's management group.

"The aspirations in the early days were very modest but we have had such great support over the years that we are now catering for increasing numbers of people.

"It is valued significantly by the community and local organisations and it is well used by the Army Welfare Service.

"We have an eco club for the children to come and enjoy and we are trying to educate military families as well as those in the local community. It is something we take great pride in."

A trip to Foxglove Covert may seem a daunting prospect for members of the public given the fact they have to negotiate armed guards and a sprawling Army base to access the site. But the military presence has been far from off-putting as around 20,000 people visit the reserve each year, of which 3,500 are school children.

With a variety of activities based around the National Curriculum the centre provides the perfect place for learning.

It also offers opportunities for team building events and works with conservation groups as well as the Youth Justice Service, which provides manpower for different projects.

Having just two full-time wardens the reserve relies on the support of volunteers and around 15,000 hours of community work are completed each year.

The MoD owns the site and it is run by a trust comprising Army personnel and representatives from the local authority.

Its origins can be traced back to the 1970s

when security measures at the garrison were significantly improved to counter the mounting IRA threat.

By creating a tight perimeter around the base, part of the training area was effectively cut-off and the land was left at the mercy of Mother Nature.

"It was lying dormant for 20 years," explained Crease.

"It was just a wilderness. In the early days Defence Estates gave us 28 acres and we are now up to 96.

"It was originally part of the training estate but is now completely closed off and is used as a nature reserve.

"We get a huge amount of local involvement. Different regiments send work groups down to help and the garrison is very supportive.

"There is a never-ending list of things to do but we are really pleased with the way it has turned out."

The investment looks set to continue thanks to a new partnership with Natural England that will help fund a raft of improvements and offer greater access for the disabled. ■

● For more information on Foxglove Covert and to read daily blogs from the reserve visit www.foxglovecovert.org.uk

It is valued significantly by the community and local organisations and it is well used by the Army Welfare Service

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Brief encounter

***Soldier* scrubs up to take on Army Officer Selection Board**



Board walk: *Soldier* editor Stephen Tyler is sent packing by Sandhurst's superiors

Report: Stephen Tyler
Pictures: Graeme Main

STANDING with my hands in my pockets like a naughty schoolboy while desperately trying to remember the finer details of my plan to save a wounded comrade, the harsh nature of officer recruitment truly struck home.

What I'm being asked to recall should be as simple as reciting the amount of pages in this very magazine, but the ferocious questioning of Lt Col Mark Pomroy has me flustered and the irony that I earn my living from communication is not lost.

The task – a planning exercise, or “planex” – is the final part of a one-day briefing course held at Army Officer Selection Board (AOSB) headquarters in Westbury, which all potential officers have to pass to stand a chance of entering the hallowed halls of Sandhurst's Royal Military Academy.

“The briefing is very much part of the recruiting process and we encourage applicants to think about what they want to do in the Army,” said Lt Col Pomroy (AGC(SPS)).

“It tends to take some of the trepidation away so they are more

comfortable when they return for the Main Board.

“We are conscious that this is possibly the first exposure people have to the Army and we try to tell them not to worry about making mistakes because you don't live or die on one mistake – it's how you react.”

My grilling during the planex came at the end of a day designed to test applicants' physical and mental prowess in equal measure.

After being issued with coveralls, helmets and coloured and numbered bibs – I became orange 61 for the duration of the board – my group were marched to Westbury's Sandhurst Hall where we were briefed on the mental aptitude profile (MAP) test we were about to sit.

Split into three parts and completed on a computer, the exam tests candidates' verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning skills via a series of questions. I found the first two stages relatively straightforward and launched into the abstract reasoning test with confidence.

Requiring applicants to say whether a coloured shape fits in with one of two sets of similarly-coloured shapes or is in fact an unrelated red herring, I hoped my momentum from the previous sections would see me through.

Turns out I was wrong. Faced with an increasingly bizarre series of black triangles, concentric circles and arrows I struggled to spot any connections and was glad when the time ran out.

Feeling slightly less cocky than I had ten

minutes previously, I joined the group as we headed over to an old-fashioned gym building containing a series of obstacles. Our challenge, and we had no choice but to accept it, was to make it round the circuit as quickly as possible.

From leaping over hurdles to clambering up a seven-foot wall, the test was enough to leave most of us out of breath and while it was passable for anyone with a decent level of fitness, it was by no means a walk in the park.

Physical exertion over for the time being, we headed outside onto a rain-soaked field containing the different sets of platforms, ropes and structures that make up some of Westbury's command tasks.

Candidates have to show they are capable of working in a group, demonstrating solid leadership when necessary, to get from one side of the exercise area to the other, often carrying a burden such as an ammo box or a barrel.

During the two tasks we took on, the group dynamics quickly became apparent as those with the best lateral thinking, the loudest voices and the strongest arms came into their own.

We completed one task and narrowly missed the deadline on the other, and when the dust had settled it was amazing to realise how beneficial a cool head and a simple, logical plan are to success – whether they are being used in



rainy Wiltshire or the front lines of Afghanistan. With the command tasks over and done with, we took a quick breather before facing our final challenge for the day – the dreaded planex.

"The role of an officer involves being able to take in information and to use an estimate ability to sort through the options and pick the best one to give to your subordinates," Lt Col Pomroy told us. "If you let the process do the work for you, you arrive at the plan."

It sounded so simple that my pre-planex nerves were already drifting away. The exercise itself – and without going into too much detail that it would spoil the fun for everyone else – involved getting a critically ill colleague from a remote station in Indonesia to a hospital in a town scores of miles away.

Lt Col Pomroy's advice – to establish a set of aims, work out the factors affecting their achievement and come up with a workable course of action – proved to be extremely helpful as I figured out the logistics of getting my

poorly friend medical attention.

When asked to stand up and explain how I managed it, however, I crumbled. I knew my plan worked and had even written down the various stages to cement the details in my mind, but under Lt Col Pomroy's interrogation – he later told me he had "gone easy" – I was lost.

With the day's activities completed, the officer sat me down to run through my results. I had done well in the MAP test and given an adequate showing in the gym, but was told I needed to project my personality better during the group work.

Although he said I would have been invited back to attend the Main Board, the memory of how badly I cracked under pressure left me in no doubt that I'm better-suited to reporting on rather than commanding in the Army and I graciously accepted my resultant fail.

My poor showing aside, AOSB president Brig Philip Mostyn explained that he and his staff want everyone who comes through the gates at Westbury to do themselves justice.

FACTS AND FIGURES

2,000 PEOPLE ATTEND THE BRIEFING BOARD EACH YEAR;

1,250 ATTEND MAIN BOARD; 69.7 PER CENT OF CANDIDATES ARE FROM STATE SCHOOLS;

ONLY FIVE PER CENT OF CADETS WHO MAKE IT TO SANDHURST DROP OUT FOR REASONS AOSB COULD HAVE HOPED TO IDENTIFY.

Visit <http://www.army.mod.uk/join/selection/officer.aspx> for more information

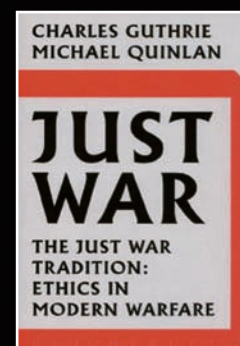
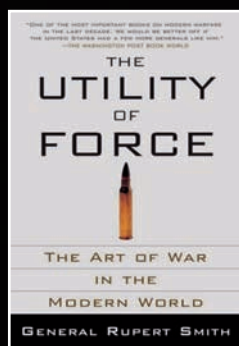
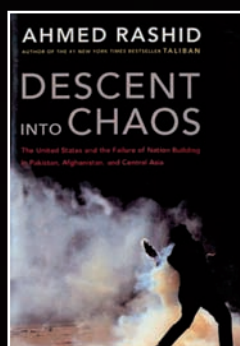
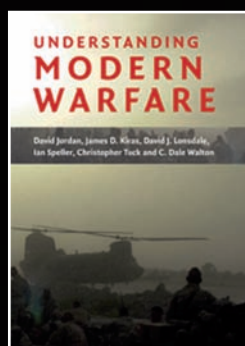
"Main Board is there to select candidates who have the potential after training to command at platoon and troop level," he said.

"We are not looking for future generals because at the back of all our minds are the 30 soldiers whose lives are in the hands of the officer soon after they commission." ■

FAILED
ARMY 6 SOLDIER 6

Leap of faith: Soldier's Stephen Tyler takes on the Army Officer Selection Board at Westbury in Wiltshire





1 Understanding Modern Warfare
FROM the gritty trench battles of the Great War to the counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the past 100 years have seen more than their fair share of conflict. The authors' seminal study of the theory and practice of warfare in the 20th and 21st centuries has become an invaluable guide to current battle strategy as well as the likely nature of future conflicts.

2 Descent into Chaos
by Ahmed Rashid
AHMED Rashid has been referred to as "Pakistan's best and bravest reporter" and his insight into central Asia is unrivalled in the west. Examining the United States' and European attempts at nation building in the region, *Descent into Chaos* examines the instability plaguing Pakistan, the opium trade in Afghanistan and the resurgence of the Taliban. A deserved critical success.

3 The Utility of Force
by Rupert Smith
RETIRED British Army general Rupert Smith, who once commanded the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia, leaves no stone unturned in this in-depth examination of the structure of war in the modern age. Taking stock of historic battles fought by Napoleon and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Smith points out how the aims of war have changed in recent years.

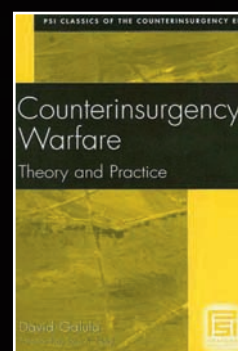
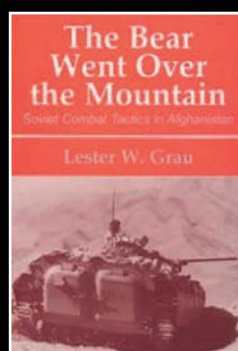
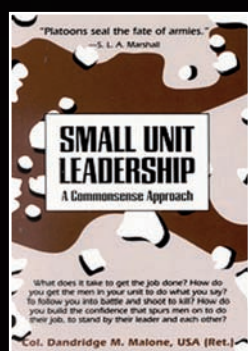
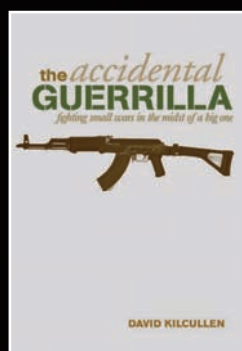
7 Small Unit Leadership
by Dandridge Malone
A COMPARATIVELY veteran title given the fact it was first published more than 20 years ago, *Small Unit Leadership* adopts a real-world approach to provide readers with practical tips on how to develop themselves as leaders. Unlike other titles in this list which focus on intellectual arguments, this is a much more hands-on guide to specific techniques required to lead soldiers.

8 Bunch of Five
by Frank Kitson
ILLUSTRIOUS former officer Frank Kitson, who retired as a general in 1985 after holding the post of Commander-in-Chief Land Forces, provides a gripping account of his experiences with the Army. The Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya and service in the Malayan Emergency are included in this book, which focuses on Kitson's personal experiences rather than his analysis of them.

9 The Bear Went Over the Mountain
by Lester Grau
AS modern militaries are discovering, Afghanistan's terrain and determined combatants make fighting in the country exceedingly difficult. This collection was written by junior Soviet officers detailing their conflict with the Mujihadeen. It is not a history of the Soviet-Afghan war, but does provide snapshots of combat as seen by young military men.

RANKED

TOP TEN LOANS FROM ALDRESHOT'S PRINCE CONSORT'S LIBRARY



4 A Million Bullets
by James Fergusson

WITH a title alluding to the huge amounts of ammunition expended on Operation Herrick, this book examines how the situation in Afghanistan has escalated since 16 Air Assault Brigade deployed as a peace-keeping force in 2006 only to be met with fierce fighting from a determined and well-armed enemy. Striking a nice balance between page-turning narrative and strategic analysis, this is an important title.

5 Just War by Charles Guthrie & Michael Quinlan

THE notion of what constitutes a "just war" has evolved over the centuries, largely due to the changing nature of conflicts. Charles Guthrie and Michael Quinlan trace the origin of the term from its roots in Christianity and look at the practical interpretations it has had during fighting in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. A quick read at just 64 pages, but it provokes an interesting moral debate.

6 Accidental Guerrilla
by David Kilcullen

USING colourful battlefield experiences ranging from South East Asia to the Middle East, David Kilcullen highlights the fact that the war on terror has changed the very nature of modern conflict into one more closely associated with guerrilla tactics. The Australian author's assertion that military might alone is not enough to win today's battles holds particular current resonance.

10 Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice by David Galula

BASED on his experiences as a French military officer and attache, the author realised the "need for a compass" in the suppression of insurgency. He set out to "define the laws of counter-insurgency warfare, to deduce from them its principles and to outline the corresponding strategy and tactics", and the resultant study holds true in the face of current conflicts.

About the author

This list of the most popular books to be borrowed from Aldershot's Prince Consort's Library over the past year was compiled by Tim Ward, the facility's head of library and information services. The Knolly's Road library, which was designed by Capt Francis Fowke (RE) and first opened its doors in 1860, contains books covering everything from personal accounts of fighting and analyses of strategy and tactics to regimental and campaign histories and in-depth studies of the art of war. Ward said: "All these books help give an understanding of the lessons of war and arm soldiers with knowledge and experience to help them understand, fight and survive future conflicts." Contact the library on 01252 349381 or email pcl@dera.gov.uk for more information.



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'Cut us some slack'

Spot the soldier: Army Rugby Union stalwart LCpl Chris Budgen (R Welsh) sports the tell-tale "trim" of a man in uniform
Picture: Graeme Main



I HAVE a small point to raise about hairstyles. Every two weeks my company sergeant major briefs everyone about how ultra-short our hair and sideburns need to be and many of us are so fed up of being told that we now just skin our heads.

Having needlessly short hair is frustrating and, as a result, when we go out in town we are immediately identified as soldiers.

Many nightclubs won't allow us in, women automatically label us as "typical squaddies" and won't engage with us, and the local police keep a very close eye on us. Why do we need to be groomed in a 1950s' style?

After all, a hairstyle doesn't dictate the combat effectiveness of a soldier. I know that hair over the collar is unacceptable, but a slightly longer cut than "grade two back and sides" wouldn't look scruffy.

The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have slightly more relaxed rules and, when it comes to sideburns, so do airborne elements of the Army.

Why can that flexibility not be extended to the rest of us?

I know there will be platoon sergeants and above reading this thinking that if a soldier wants longer

hair then he should become a civilian, but what harm would it do? If longer hair makes soldiers feel better about themselves they will soldier better.

Surely an idea that would improve morale and effectiveness without cost to HQ Land Forces or the MoD is one worth considering. All we are asking for is 15mm more hair by our ears and slightly longer hair. — A frustrated soldier.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: **Your CSM is absolutely right in enforcing standards of appearance and dress. What the RN and RAF do is irrelevant (though incidentally the RAF standards are the same as ours).**

CGS recently wrote on this subject to the Army and he was very clear about what he expected. I quote a small part of that letter: "...sideburns are not to descend below the mid-point of the ear and are to be trimmed horizontally. There seems to be some misunderstanding regarding the length of sideburns amongst members of Land Forces. Let there be none."

So there you have it from the head of the Army. Well done to your CSM; his lead ought to be seen as an example to those in authority who are failing to enforce the correct standards.

Attire taunts are tiresome

ONE of the more disturbing trends regarding current operations is the constant carping about slipping standards.

Having recently read a letter from a senior officer in *Talkback* which criticised the appearance of soldiers in theatre, rather than commenting on the tough job they are doing and the stamina they are showing, I would like to remind all similar writers that Afghanistan is not Vietnam.

The British Army is not a conscript organisation in which lapses of standards lead to operational laziness.

We volunteer to serve Queen and country and can expect to deploy on tour after tour in Afghanistan (soon after completing tour after tour in southern Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia and Northern Ireland).

Troops are worked to the bone in challenging environments and the one shining light for them is public support.

I hear there are plans afoot to introduce US-style PT kit to the ranks, and that this is all that troops will be allowed to wear when "off duty" in theatre.

It's time people realised that scruffy or smart, in football shirts or body armour, long hair or short, the British Infantry is effective and does not need long-range snipes from those who live their operational lives on safe base areas, if in theatre at all! — Sgt Martin Berry.

PS...

I HAVE just returned from a visit to the quartermaster's store, where I saw a row of the new universal No 2 Dress uniforms hanging on a rail.

Whoever approved the purchase of an issue of this hideous attire deserves to be taken out and shot.

I have served in Nato appointments for the last seven years, during which time the quality of our tailored uniforms has been the envy of my foreign colleagues.

The British uniform may not be as flash or gaudy as some worn by our allies, but because it is tailored to the individual it looks smart and elegant. The regimental variations add interest and reflect our proud and often hard-won traditions.

I will be leaving the British Army next year, reluctantly, after 36 years of service. It is a small consolation that at least I will not have to wear that bloody awful suit that the MoD are foisting upon us. — Lt Col Iain Cassidy, SACT SEE, Mons.

MY Territorial Army battery is located more than 70 miles from its regiment and, due to the distances involved, has had a separate sergeants' mess for which all senior NCOs pay an appropriate subscription fee.

This arrangement has been in existence for more than 40 years, with mess members from the battery's location attending occasional functions at the regimental mess.

However, we were recently told that this was no longer acceptable and that the "remote" mess members (19 in total) would have to pay for and attend functions centrally. As we are predominantly recruited locally, this decision will deny us the benefits of reaching senior NCO status (unless we travel vast distances) and mean that we will have to pay for something we will very rarely use.

Although Queen's Regulations

stipulate that all SNCOs should pay mess subscriptions, nowhere does it specify that it has to be to a regimental mess.

Despite our protestations over the past three months, we have now been ordered to pay our mess bills or take a voluntary reduction in rank – is this a veiled threat?

– Name and address supplied.

Reply from AG's chain of command:

Mess bills are covered in Queen's Regulations. Although it seems unfair to expect senior NCOs to attend a mess 70 miles away, this is a unit issue and the correspondent should approach his commanding officer.

The view from Land Forces (TA) is that the "veiled threat" of reduction in rank is an RSM "firing for effect" and he would be on very shaky ground trying to bring action for inefficiency on a complete SNCO cohort of a sub unit.



"Dammit sir, we've got to reconsider the messing arrangements. My last sergeant has just reverted to bombardier... apparently he believes he'll be better off financially!"

PS...

I HAVE just had a claim for mess dress returned and been told that I am not entitled to the allowance. I understood the qualifying criteria for eligibility was anyone promoted after April 1, 2009. I was in acting rank before this date and was previously told that I was entitled to claim. Could you please clear up this issue to avoid any further confusion. – Sgt I Robertson, Black Watch, Fort George.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies: This is a new initiative implemented for the financial year 2009/2010 and eligibility for the grant is therefore fixed at the start of the financial year.

Hence, I am sorry to inform you that as you were promoted to acting (paid) sergeant before April 1, 2009 you are not entitled to this provision.



Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth, RLC

I'VE been prompted to write after reading "Officers need a dressing down" in last month's *Talkback*.

As an ex-soldier (Royal Sussex Regiment and Queen's Regiment) it really gets my blood boiling to see members of my successor regiment (PWRR) wearing their berets like a flat cap. We had to have the band two inches above the eyebrow, the badge over the left eye and the beret pulled down to the left and rear.

The soldiers in the foreground of the photograph which accompanied the letter seem to have been on a night exercise in a field full of cows and, having lost their berets, found something else to wear on their heads.

– R C Bumstead, Hawkhurst, Kent.

An insult to injuries

MY SON is serving in the Welsh Guards and deployed to Afghanistan earlier this year. Unfortunately, while on operations he was blown out of his Jackal and evacuated to Selly Oak Hospital's critical care unit.

His injuries were quite severe and included: a fractured skull; fractured back; fractured pelvis (in three places); ruptured spleen; damaged pancreas; damaged liver; broken (pulverised) feet and ankles; multiple shrapnel injuries to his body (including eyes); and broken teeth.

I have been a serving member of the Armed Forces for 22 years and have always been told, and firmly believed, that PAX insurance was an absolute necessity for any personnel deploying on operations and have seen first-hand some of the policies "come good".

However, I was absolutely stunned when PAX informed my son that he would be getting a total of £2,200 – £700 of which is for his hospital stay. The insurers informed him that the majority of his injuries were irrelevant. Anything to do with below the ankle – irrelevant. Any bone broken but not displaced – irrelevant. Internal injuries – irrelevant.

This "valuation" has changed several times over the last two months as my son has begun his recovery, which strikes me as an extremely cynical act.

I find this behaviour disgusting and it contradicts the assurances given to the lads during the mandatory pre-deployment briefs, which actively encourage troops to take out PAX.

The shortfalls of the scheme should be stated clearly – it is only of use if you have lost a limb, have a broken and displaced bone or, God forbid, you lose your life.

Without this clarity those who come home with lower limb injuries will have

expectations of their PAX policies giving them a windfall. – WO1 J McKenzie.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: I have spoken to PAX and they have assured me that your son's case remains open and that further payments may be made when there is medical evidence to support them. This, understandably, may take some time as the insurers must wait for the medical staff to complete their treatment and provide a full diagnosis of your son's injuries.

PAX provided the following statement:

"For reasons of data protection, the PAX insurers cannot comment on individual cases. However, where a number of injuries are sustained, those that are immediately apparent, such as the loss of limbs or eyes, specified fractures of leg/arm, flesh wounds, plus payment for time in hospital, are settled as quickly as possible, sometimes within days.

Other injuries suffered, including internal injuries, may not be individually itemised in the PAX table of benefits. If these injuries are likely to have long-term effects, claimants are invited to contact the insurance company again towards the end of their recovery period.

At this stage, all the medical evidence is sympathetically reviewed to confirm the severity of any permanent disability and, where appropriate, additional benefits are calculated.

Representatives from the insurance company visit Selly Oak and Headley Court regularly and provide information and assistance with claims to personnel and their attending family members."

Finally let me assure you that I see no injury sustained by one of our people as irrelevant and I wish your son, and all others in a similar situation, a full and speedy recovery. I appreciate and sympathise with your frustration over this issue during what must be an incredibly difficult time for you and your family.

PS...

I AM a Non Regular Permanent Staff (NRPS) soldier who has recently been given my redundancy notice following the imminent disbandment of my unit.

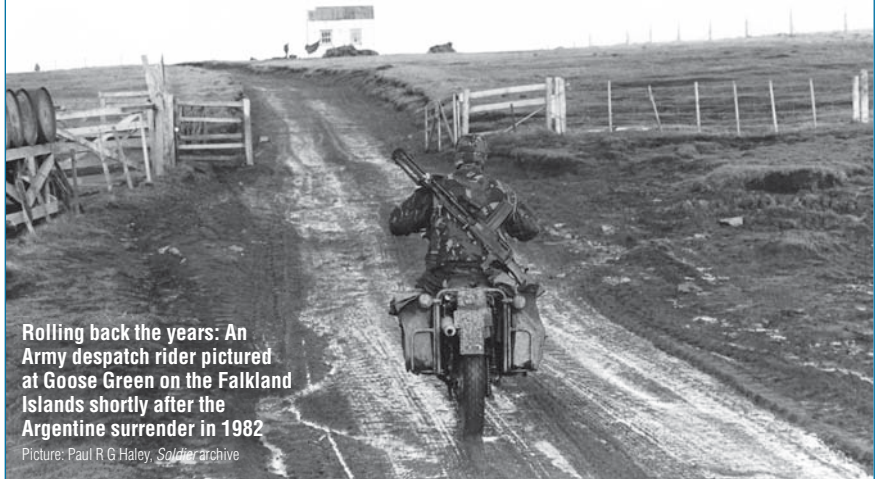
This did not come as a shock as I had been kept informed that redundancies would be made. However, what has taken me aback is the discovery that NRPS on redundancy are not entitled to any kind of resettlement, unlike their Regular, Full Time Reserve Service and Military Provost Guard Service counterparts. Why is this? – **WO2 (RQMS) G Ward, HQ 12 Signal Group.**

Brig David Wilson, Director of Education and Training Services, writes: NRPS personnel are employed under TA terms and conditions of service and consequently are not entitled to resettlement. However, you should be eligible for a redundancy payment and will be given priority when applying for another NRPS post.

I AM a Territorial Army soldier and like many others have been made aware of the need for the MoD to make financial cutbacks.

Civil servants regularly use couriers to collect items for delivery to other MoD sites. It's just a thought, but why not use soldiers instead?

The Army has plenty of Land Rovers and POL [petrols, oils, lubricants] points dotted across the country, and soldiers are paid 24 hours a day. Why not use them to our advantage? Bring back the Army despatch riders. – **Mr E Emery.**



Rolling back the years: An Army despatch rider pictured at Goose Green on the Falkland Islands shortly after the Argentine surrender in 1982

Picture: Paul R G Haley, Soldier archive

Remove the rigours of removals

HAVING just been posted from the UK to mainland Europe, I was shocked and disappointed with a couple of aspects of my move.

As a divorcee I was dismayed to discover that the Military Freight Organisation (MFO) does not collect effects from single soldiers' mess accommodation.

Consequently I had to transport ten boxes of my belongings from one side of the camp to the other and arrange to borrow a van to do so.

On arrival at my new unit I had to repeat the process. However, this time I was accommodated off camp, a few miles from the quartermaster's department, and was told to approach the military transport section for the loan of a van. Being overseas, this required familiarisation training on the vehicle and subsequently time off work.

Another factor that came as a surprise is that the MFO estimates delivery time to Europe to be up to four weeks. Although my possessions arrived in three, this wait means that single soldiers have to pick up the cost of transporting enough kit (personal and military) to sustain themselves for that first month in a new job.

To add insult to injury, my television and stereo system were damaged in transit with the MFO.

How can it be fair that a married soldier has their quarter packed, collected and unpacked in the time that it takes to travel between their old and new accommodation, whereas a single soldier is expected to shift equipment between QM departments and use an unreliable and slow MFO system?

As an SNCO I was able to call in favours,



"It's all here Susie and in a record time of only four months... we're truly blessed."

but how is a young Serviceman expected to cope with such a move? – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

I am sorry to hear that you feel that the recent movement of your personal effects through the MoD's removal system did not go to your satisfaction.

In response to your first point, on moves carried out under the self-pack scheme, it was a Service decision that contractors should not be permitted to collect from, or deliver to, any public accommodation such as barrack blocks or mess accommodation. This was based on

a number of factors; cost, logistics and, most importantly, security.

The contractors can, however, collect from and deliver to residential addresses, so there was no reason why your effects should not have been delivered to your home address at your new unit.

With regards to your second point, the average transit time for movement between the UK and North West Europe should be two weeks.

If your consignment took longer you should seek an explanation for the delay from the removal contractor, though you should bear in mind that the transit times are approximate and can be affected by public holidays, location of collection/delivery points and any unforeseen circumstances that may arise such as strikes or bad weather to name but two.

Individuals using the service should not incur additional costs unless they exceed their permitted authorised entitlement, therefore incurring an excess baggage charge, or they incur a wasted journey, duty or VAT-related charge.

As individuals moving under the self-pack service have the ability to move their effects in two separate consignments, a staggered dispatch of the loads should minimise the inconvenience of being without personal belongings.

In relation to your damaged possessions, I understand how frustrating this will have been but unfortunately this occasionally happens and as such all individuals using the MoD's removal services are encouraged to take out adequate insurance for their effects while in transit.

TELEPHONE: 0845 680 9375

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'No valid reason for Balkans veto'

APPRECIATE that the issue of whether time served with Nato in the Balkans should qualify towards the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal (ACSM) was recently featured in *Soldier*, but feel the answer given as to why it does not lacked credibility and sound reasoning.

Lack of risk and vigour and poor Nato bookkeeping were quoted. Many would argue against the first statement, especially when compared to periods of the operation in Northern Ireland, during which bars were awarded to the ACSM for those on long static postings.

I, like others, have kept records of my tours in the Balkans and am sure that units have done so as well. With this in mind, why can't applications be considered on a case-by-case basis with personnel submitting their own records?

Who actually makes the decisions when it comes to broadening the qualifying criteria for existing medals such as the ACSM? It strikes me that those in the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency's medal office are rather work-shy in this area and appear to put more effort into resisting changes. New decorations, such as the proposed National Defence Medal, seem to be frowned on by the organisation, even though the Queen has sanctioned a

Picture: Mike Weston



Forgotten fight?: A soldier from 1st Battalion, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment's support company deploys on Nato duty in Bosnia in 1996

similar award for Australia's Armed Forces.

Her Majesty approved the wearing of Nato medals a long time ago so I just cannot understand the reluctance of some within the MoD to allow the same service to count towards the ACSM. – **A former Regular soldier.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: Medal policy is approved at the very highest level.

The MoD's medal office merely enacts the policy of the three Services and has nothing to do with the final decision.

Balkan tours were considered by the Chiefs of Staff in 2000 and again in 2004 and on both occasions the decision was that this service would not count towards the ACSM.

As has been stated on many occasions in *Soldier*, there were six medals issued for service in the Balkans with several also accumulating numerals to reflect repeat service.

Service in the region has been recognised, just not with the ACSM.

Finally, rather than looking backwards, spare a thought for those who have joined the British Army more recently.

Many of today's soldiers can look forward to repeat tours in southern Afghanistan with the prospect of earning a single Operational Service Medal until they have accumulated 1,080 days towards their ACSM.

I would suggest that it is here where we should look (and the chain of command is doing so) to ensure repeat service is appropriately recognised.

Campaign confusion

I RECENTLY phoned the Joint Personnel Administration Centre to enquire whether or not service on Operation Granby (Gulf War) counts towards the ACSM [pictured right].

Having already been issued with the medal, I believed that I would soon be entitled to the decoration's clasp, but was



informed that my time in the Gulf would not be taken into account. I was told that only Operational and General Service Medals contribute to the award of the ACSM. I then sought confirmation on the status of the Gulf War gong and was told that it was defined as a campaign medal.

Confused? If the Gulf War medal is a campaign medal, then why does it not qualify for the ACSM?

No doubt there will be a wonderful brigadier who can offer some words of explanation without actually confirming my point. – **A soldier serving in Lashkar Gah.**

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), replies:

You are right, the names do not stack up. However, the decision on what counts towards the ACSM was made at the highest levels within the MoD and Operation Granby was not included.

This was because the "war" medal was for a specified period of a short duration. The current Defence Council Instruction clearly states what is in and what is out regarding service that counts towards the ACSM. Joint Services Personnel 761, Honours and Awards in the Armed Forces, is currently under review in order to make matters clearer.



I AM extremely disgusted that the Veteran's Badge is being sold by traders in various markets in the north west.

I was awarded the badge for 37 years of service and was, up until recently, proud to wear it in public, at reunions and on parades. Not so now that it has been made a mockery of by those selling the badge for £8-£15 to any Tom, Dick or Harry.

Those responsible for issuing the Veteran's Badge [pictured above] should stand up and be counted and prevent this from happening. – **Benny Ball, Shotton and Deeside Branch, Royal Welch Fusiliers Comrades Association.**

PS...

I AM writing with considerable disappointment having received my warrant from the Secretary of State for Defence. As a private soldier I had often looked at my sergeant major's warrant with envy and admiration and pondered the thought of one day receiving my parchment complete with wax seal and signature from the man at the top. After all, to reach warrant officer is a feat achieved by only a small percentage of the Army.

So imagine the anti-climax of unrolling my scroll to discover a photocopied stamp and signature on a cheap sheet of A3 paper. I was expecting something more than a computer-generated certificate. Is this just another case of Defence cutbacks? – **WO2 J Moreman, DRCS, Bicester.**

Shower of criticism continues

I AM writing in response to a series of *Talkback* letters regarding mould in Service Families Accommodation, "Quarter dampens spirits" (March) and Sgt Oliver St John's response (May).

While it is very clear that the original correspondent was the maker of his own misfortune, namely by having his water temperature set to 90C and not ensuring adequate ventilation, he does highlight a very real problem.

I regard myself as a sensible individual and when showering I always ensure that the window is open, the extractor fan is switched on, the water temperature is set below the recommended temperature and I even physically dry the walls and ceiling afterwards. Despite doing all of the above, every one of my Service quarters over the past nine years has had mould in the bathroom.

Can Nicki Sly of Defence Estates (DE) or Sgt St John offer a sensible explanation as to why?

Could it be, perchance, anything to do with the fact that DE/Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) skimp on the paint used on ceilings; using standard emulsion instead of water-resistant paint?

One workman I came into contact with mixed PVA glue with emulsion to "make it waterproof" and told me that this was a standard MHS procedure.



"I know you must be busy over there in Helmand province, honey, but the condensation in the bathroom is getting worse."

Could it also be, dare I suggest, anything to do with the fact that the extractor fans fitted in our bathrooms are woefully inadequate to accommodate the typically above-average use of showers by soldiers?

Does DE really sit back and believe that we are all dim-witted and incapable of ventilating a bathroom?

Has the organisation done any statistical analysis of the number of mould-related complaints and work service requests? One would hope so, but I suspect not. — Name and address supplied.

Nicki Sly, communications officer, DE operations housing, RAF Brampton, responds: Occupants should be assured that mixing PVA glue with paint is not a standard procedure.

Standard bathroom paint is used in accommodation as there is no other method available on the market at present that is proactive in managing condensation and mould.

MHS helpdesk agents are trained to ask specific questions when dealing with mould-related issues from occupants. This enables them to determine the best course of action, be that advice to the occupant over the telephone or further investigation of the property by an MHS operative.

The majority of complaints received by MHS are occupant-related (not finding the right balance between heating and ventilation) and for this reason it has published guidelines for dealing with condensation and mould that can be found at www.modern housingsolutions.com/news/news_headlines.asp

Living on shaky ground

MY husband and I moved into a quarter in May which had been refurbished to the tune of £75,000 – not that you could tell from the number of defects with the property.

Having highlighted a list of problems including unfinished paintwork and uneven flooring to Modern Housing Solutions (MHS), operatives eventually turned up to complete the works (without any notice) during regimental leave.

After lifting the carpet in the bedroom of our six-year-old daughter, it was discovered that strips of wood had been placed haphazardly in an effort to level the floor; there was a one-and-a-half inch gap between the floorboard and skirting; and a joist had shifted.

The chief of works was due to arrive a week later to authorise the fixing of the joist but he never showed and we were later informed that he had instructed his team to pack the floor with wood instead – an offer we refused. Following advice from our welfare officer a surveyor was booked through MHS and, after two aborted appointments, we await the findings.

The compensation offered by MHS for missed calls is beyond a joke and so is its

service. Our men keep their country safe but who is keeping their houses safe? — S Kellner, *Invicta Barracks, Maidstone.*

David Lye, DE operations housing secretariat, replies: The upgrade programme at *Invicta Park* represents a major investment in Service Families Accommodation to bring some 165 properties up to the highest standard for condition. The upgrade work did not include the replacement of ceilings and floors, so the problem with the unlevel floor was a pre-existing fault that would not have been noticed by the housing officer during a move-in inspection.

It is understood that this work has now been scheduled to be carried out, however if you remain unhappy with the level of service provided you may raise a complaint (www.defence-estates.mod.uk/sfa/complaints.php).

In recognition of the frustration and inconvenience that missed appointments can cause, MHS offers compensation to occupants in the form of a £20 high street voucher. Further details can be found at www.modern housingsolutions.com

PS...

ARE single soldiers living in Substitute Service Families Accommodation (SSFA) entitled to Get You Home (Travel) (GYH(T)) when on temporary duty for a period longer than ten days and at a location more than 50 miles away from their quarter?

I've been told that they are not because SSFA is not classed as a qualifying residence. If this is the case, surely this is unfair as a married soldier in the same situation can claim the allowance. — Name and address supplied.

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), writes: You have become the victim of a known error in the way that the allowance's regulations are written.

The aim of GYH(T) is to support the mobile nature of military service and improve retention by reducing the financial impact of separation.

Whether you are in SSFA, Service Families Accommodation or Single Living Accommodation is immaterial; if you are separated from your normal home, in the circumstances that you describe, you are entitled to GYH(T). The regulations (JSP 752, chapter 5, section 2) are open to misinterpretation and my staff are working to correct this.

Time to tune in

I RECENTLY moved into Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and, while waiting for my satellite television system to be installed, I decided to try and tune my set into the terrestrial and digital free-view stations.

After my TV failed to pick up a single channel, I phoned Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) to inform them of the difficulties I was experiencing in receiving a signal.

To my surprise I was told that resolving any problems with my aerial was not part of the organisation's remit and that it would only assist

- through Defence Estates (DE) - if it was physically hanging off the roof. They also informed me that occupants of SFA quarters are only entitled to analogue aerials and not digital receivers.

What will happen when the digital switch over happens? Will we be told to buy our own aerials or will DE eventually get round to providing them, just like it is eventually going to sort out the insulation and upgrading of our quarters? Are those responsible for housing aware that we are now living in the 21st century? - Cpl J Hart, Wimbish.

Ken McMinn, communications officer, DE operations housing, RAF Brampton, replies: DE is currently responsible for equipping SFA with aerials, down-leads and sockets so that analogue television broadcasts can be received.

As the nationwide digital switch over progresses, DE will, if necessary, replace aerials and/or down-leads in SFA so that everyone with suitable receiving equipment (integrated digital televisions or by using digital decoders) will be able to receive a range of free-to-air digital terrestrial broadcasts.

RAF given more room to breathe

AFTER 18 years in the Army, my husband has been promoted to warrant officer class one and posted to a Royal Air Force base.

As a result of the move we have had to downsize to a type C quarter, due in part to the fact that our eldest son is now 21 and not entitled to a room (even though the average age of a child leaving a family home in the UK is 25).

Consequently we have had to dispose of a lot of possessions and items of furniture simply because we no longer have the living space to accommodate them.

Having done so it was disappointing to read the following in a Joint Services Personnel (JSP) policy document: "RAF warrant officers are entitled by rank to occupy a type D quarter (regardless of their family size)."

We have three children - aged 12, 17 and 21 - yet were told that the only available type D quarter could not have been allocated to us just in case a bigger family (or RAF warrant officer) required it.

This is blatant discrimination. What is the difference between an Army WO1 and an RAF WO?

What point is there in trying to reach the top of your career path when there is absolutely no incentive to do so in regards to housing? - Mrs Maxine Goodall.



"A yard sale... I'm guessing WO1 Goodall and his family are off to an RAF quarter."

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds: I understand and sympathise with your frustration. The anomaly over RAF warrant officers is historical.

Originally married quarters were "owned" by each individual Service, who wrote their own accommodation regulations accordingly. The RAF allowed all their warrant officers a blanket entitlement to type D quarters.

On the formation of Defence Estates (DE) and the amalgamation of all Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and

housing regulations under JSP 464, the RAF - despite pressure from the Royal Navy and the Army - refused to give up this entitlement, taking the understandable view that to do so would be an erosion of terms and conditions of service.

The alternative - to extend the entitlement to all warrant officers in the other two Services - was not deliverable: there are not enough type D quarters as it is. However, you will have noted that the regulations state that a type D should be allocated to an Army WO1, irrespective of family size, "if available".

Without knowing the situation where you live, it does appear that DE could be in contravention of JSP 464 by refusing to allocate a type D to you if it has one. Keeping it empty in case it is needed is not, in my view, sufficient reason to deny it to you. Your husband should therefore ask his chain of command to engage with DE to investigate this. If the chain is RAF, get him to contact my staff on 94344 8220.

Regards your eldest son, if he is in full-time education he should still be included in the SFA allocation. However, if he is not you should appreciate that a line between child and adulthood has to be drawn somewhere. The law defines this as the age of 18 and it is for this reason that the same principle is applied to SFA.

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'Can't we all just get along?'

HAVE followed the reaction to Tpr Wharton's cover story in the July issue with interest and some concern.

I joined the Women's Royal Army Corps in 1988 and made no secret of my support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues.

Although conscious that "homosexual acts" were prohibited and grounds for dismissal [prior to the change in policy in 1999], I never shied away from any opportunity to challenge what I have always regarded as sexual fascism.

I wear my uniform with pride and my co-workers who happen to be LGBT should be allowed to do the same.

Freedom is not something which anyone should take for granted. Those people in our society who have the most to lose from the erosion of personal liberty should be permitted to defend these hard-won freedoms without being made to feel their rights are in any way inferior.

I am appalled at the ill-disguised contempt of some contributions on this subject, but the criticism on the grounds of the "operational dimension" (Maj Owen, *Talkback*, October) was particularly feeble.

Maj Owen has obviously never heard of "man-love Thursday" or its regional

variations. Perhaps, if we are to make our Western ideals more acceptable to those whose hearts and minds we seek to win, we should douse rape victims in paraffin and burn them to death for having sex outside marriage and encourage our soldiers to sell their under age daughters to their creditors as sex slaves.

Or maybe, and I'm just spit-balling here, we should by our own example show that it is possible to live peacefully alongside those with very different views, without feeling the need to apologise for those differences or reach for an AK47 at every turn.

Pandering to the unacceptable, whether in the military or civilian context, should never be tolerated.

Those responsible for monitoring the late Victoria Climbié [an eight-year-old girl who was abused and murdered by her guardians in London in 2000 and whose death led to major changes in child protection policies] cited "cultural differences" as the excuse for their failure to intervene and this was, quite rightly, condemned both as a failure to protect the interests of the child and inherently racist. — [Name and address supplied](#).



The editor, calling time on a *Talkback* topic, types: It has now been a full six months since the team at *Soldier* HQ took the decision to make Tpr James Wharton (pictured right) our cover star and to tackle the issue of gay Service personnel in a series of features, and still the letters keep coming.

In addition to the offerings on this page, countless *Talkback* column inches have been consumed by those wishing to voice their personal views. And so, content that a wide spectrum of opinions have now been aired and with 2010 just around the corner, that's your lot. New year, new topic of conversation please.

PS...



BRAVO! I feel fully enfranchised in the military community at long last. A steam enthusiasts' threesome on the front cover of *Soldier* [right, mocked up in response to the letter writer's tongue-in-cheek criticism of the coverage of gay Service personnel]. Truly a watershed. We've moved on so far. — [Maj Ian Ballantyne, R Signals](#).

AS someone who is preparing to deploy to Afghanistan on operations next year, I read with great enthusiasm Maj Pat Owen's letter (*Talkback*, October), which pointed out that "by bringing the sexuality of Service personnel into the public domain we risk giving the enemy an advantage".

Unfortunately, I still find myself wondering what these advantages are and what exactly I should be looking out for in theatre... roadside bombs hidden in H&M bags perhaps?

With the same logic in mind, I also wonder if the British Army has missed a trick. After all, surely we could employ the same tactics as those locals described in the aforementioned letter and capitalise on that well-known bastion of Afghan culture — sexual relations with young boys.

Or, alternatively, perhaps we could view it all as common ground from which to begin negotiating.

The floor is yours, sir. — [Capt George Vlachonikolis, Beaconsfield](#).

No equality in Service pad puzzle

MY husband and I are both serving soldiers and live in Service Families Accommodation (SFA). However, I have been left totally confused and angered as to how a gay couple have been able to secure a quarter without being in a civil partnership or having any children.

Let me make it perfectly clear that I don't have a problem with same sex relationships. I do, however, have a problem with people who lie and cheat the system, while the rest of us dutifully follow orders.

Earlier this year a gay couple moved onto our street. When I first met them I congratulated them on their partnership and commitment to each other. I was so embarrassed when one of the girls told me they weren't married.

After apologising, I discovered that they don't have any children and nor are they

engaged. Puzzled, I asked the couple how they qualified for SFA. To my complete surprise the response I was given was: "My partner gets it because she's a sergeant in the APTC."

This reply left me furious, not least because Defence Estates (DE) has been telling the Service community that there is a shortage of housing in the area.

I have friends who are both serving soldiers and they have to rent privately, which is very expensive.

They have been in a loving, committed relationship for more than five years, but as they are not married or in a civil partnership, and have no children, they aren't entitled to SFA.

I have sent several letters of complaint to the Housing Information Centre (HIC), but none have been answered. — [Name and address supplied](#).

Brig Mike Griffiths, DPS(A), responds:

You are quite right to be annoyed; this should not have happened. MoD policy clearly states that SFA is provided to Service personnel who are married, in a civil partnership or who have prime responsibility for children. Under no circumstances may personnel cohabit in SFA. Following your letter to *Soldier* we are looking into the complaint.

To be clear, DE is responsible for providing SFA; it is the responsibility of the chain of command to approve all applications for SFA and to verify the personal status category of the applicant. In this case the original application was not followed up as it should have been. An email complaint was received by HIC and answered the following day. This is the only known correspondence on the issue.

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HOME TRUTHS

A PERSONAL view from Julie McCarthy, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation. Log on to www.aff.org.uk for more information on the Army Families Federation



Flying the flag: Homecoming parades can often mean mixed emotions for youngsters who have been exposed every day to an unfolding operation – Julie McCarthy is calling on the Government to do more to ensure children who share the highs and lows of military life are well supported Picture: Cpl Adrian Harlen, RLC

Army kids deserve very best when parents deploy on ops

THIS month is a time for celebration, a time for family gatherings and – perhaps most importantly – a time for children. So it is understandable why those who find themselves serving away from their loved ones over Christmas can find the separation a tough test.

It always seems to be the small things in life that make me miss my husband most; a Sunday lunch and parents' evenings at school to name but two. And although our children have not yet had a festive season without their dad, I know it's just a matter of time in this day and age.

To be a "pads brat" means a unique upbringing, not least because one or both parents may leave home for exercises and operations where the risk of death or injury is part and parcel of daily life.

Alongside this is the reality of being uprooted from school, friends and home to follow the drum to a new area. Anecdotally, most youngsters cope with these pressures well, but we all know families where children have found it difficult to handle even the everyday vagaries of Army life.

What has never been done is a full study into how Forces life affects a child, their development and their relationships with

family and friends. However, a report by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund has gone some way towards addressing this. The paper suggests that we are "sitting on a ticking time-bomb of problems for children whose parents have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan" and I tend to agree. The document, while focused on the offspring of Navy and Marines personnel, raises points of interest to all Forces parents.

Firstly, the study estimates the number of children with a parent in the military at 175,000.

But this cannot be confirmed because personnel don't always enter the correct details on their JPA records.

Shockingly, the report also suggests that 85 per cent of people thought that the deployment of a parent on ops would not significantly affect his or her children. What planet are they living on?

Coping with the emotions of parting, watching the war played out 24/7 on the news and having to come to terms with the reality that people do get hurt on operations all take their toll. And the pain of dealing

with such a huge mix of emotions on homecoming is difficult enough for most adults, much less children who are still learning how to manage their feelings.

Life as a Service child is not all bad, which the report also acknowledges; the community spirit found on military patches gives both children and their parents strong friendships that can last for a lifetime and a great feeling of belonging, no matter where in the world they happen to be based.

So should we be concerned by the findings of the report? Yes. But acting on them should not just be a matter for the MoD, it is a task for

wider Government and the issue should be considered ripe for inclusion in the Service Personnel Command Paper.

The Army is doing more and more to support kids while a parent is deployed.

But longer term, there is a need for greater understanding about the effect of operations and Service life generally on children, their development and their education. Youngsters need – and deserve – the full support of their country. ■

‘Youngsters need and deserve the full support of their country’



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TEN details have been changed on this photo of the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency's Ashchurch depot. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the panel to **HOAY 817, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by December 31.

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 February issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

October competition: First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Sgt S McQueen**, 3 LSR, Dalton Barracks, Abingdon. Runners-up **Mr W Rimmer**, CCF, Pocklington School and **Mr Marcus Selvey**, Milverton, Taunton, each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: illuminated light bulb; instrument dial; yellow markings on round; two allen screws on plate; towing eye; union flag; information plate; torch; handle in hatch; wrist watch.



PRIME Minister Gordon Brown might have plenty on his plate back in Blighty, but you can always depend on him to make time for British troops (picture below right).

However, while you might be able to take the man out of politics on an overseas operation, it seems that you can never take the politics out of the man.

For our legion of loyal captioners, the sight of the PM shaking hands with soldiers at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan was simply another opportunity to raise the issues that have dogged Gordy from one end of the globe to the other.

Strong contenders for the prize this month came from Sgt Shane McLean of APHCS (NE), who quoted the Serviceman in the picture as saying: **"Yeah, I got sent here after I voted for the other guy."**

But the winning entry was penned by LCpl Jones of RAF Linton-on-Ouse, who believed the PM had said: **"Sorry son, but**



On the catwalk of the Army fashion show, the lightweight desert uniform was creating quite a stir

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo above and send it to us by December 31.

The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Silken Dalliance*, a novel set in Cold War Germany by John Ogden, which is reviewed on Page 91.

with the Defence cuts DPM beanie hats are out of the question."

LCpl Jones's highly-amusing offering wins him a copy of Allan Mallinson's acclaimed military history title *The Making of the British Army: From the English Civil War to the War on Terror*.



Picture: Mike Weston

Picture: Cpl Rupert Frere, RLC

BULLETIN BOARD

DEFENCE DIRECTORY

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

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

Army Benevolent Fund: 0845 241 4820

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

Army Families Federation: 01980 615525

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

Career Transition Partnership: 0207 766 8020

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

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

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

Family Escort Service: 0207 463 9249

Forces Pension Society: 0207 820 9988

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office: 94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group): 07962 023654; www.mutualsupport.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office: (0900-1700); 24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853; www.ngvfa.org.uk

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

Royal British Legion: 0845 7725 725

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

St Dunstan's charity for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women: 0207 723 5021; www.st-dunstons.org.uk

South Atlantic Medal Association: 01495 227577

Services Cotswold Centre: 01225 810358

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

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

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

WRVS: 02920 232668

DEFENCE DIARY

Until further notice: War Boy: The Michael Foreman Exhibition. Exploring the themes of the World Wars and the civilian connection with the Army. National Army Museum, Chelsea, London. www.national-army-museum.ac.uk

December 2009: Student Film Festival. A festival of thoughtful, imaginative and satirical films on war and related themes by amateur and student filmmakers. Imperial War Museum, London. Enquiries: 0207 416 5000

Until January 2010: The Children's War. Imperial War Museum, London. Admission free.

Until October 2010: Horrible Histories: Terrible Trenches. Unmissable First World War family exhibition. Imperial War Museum, London. Enquiries: 0207 416 5000.

Until October 2010: A Secret Life: Odette Hallows Special Operations Executive and the Nazi pistol. Imperial War Museum (North), The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Manchester M17 1TZ. Tel: 0161 836 4000.

February 12, 2010: The Ministry of Food Exhibition. The story of food from farms and gardens, to shops, kitchens and canteens. Imperial War Museum, London. Tel: 0207 416 5000.

SEARCHLINE

Val Burberry is searching for her brother **Douglas Cowx**. Last known to be working in recruitment, based in a TA unit in Cambridge. Served in Northern Ireland before retirement in 2007. He was commissioned into the Adjutant General's Corps. Contact Val at 29 Cygnet Walk, Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO22 9LY or email burberry147@btinternet.com

Callum Graham is looking for his father **Colin "George" Davis**, ex 2 Para. Mr Davis served in the Army until 1989 and is now believed to be residing in the Reading area. Contact Callum by email feedthegoat99999@hotmail.com

Eileen Wade nee Clifford is trying to find old friend **Philip J Daniel** who was born in 1939 and served in the Royal Signals in Catterick from 1958-59. His Army number was 23545955. Contact Amanda Taft by email twobonkers@aol.com

A researcher is currently writing a book titled *Flying Kites in Thunderstorms*. A collection of short stories, poems, drawings and photographs, the purpose of the book is to show the world the impact of war through the eyes of everyday soldiers who are fighting in it. Leon Mitchell is asking soldiers to send him their content with their consent and he will transform it into a beautiful book. Each and every submission will be credited to the soldier with name, rank, date and event. Contact Leon Mitchell on 07814 048522 or email leon@oceanfall.com

Peter Lawrence Dykes, born December 26, 1943 at Bovington Camp is searching for his father **Lawrence Taylor**, a Cpl (841086) in the RAC. Contact Mrs G Dykes, 6 Ridgeway, Ashcott, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9PP.

Maj Andy Fisher is looking for those who joined B1 Troop (**Lt Tim Hall**, **Sgt Charlie Packham**, **Sgt Bob Biddle**), B Squadron, Junior Leaders Regiment RAC in September 1974 and passed off in December 1975. He is hoping to organise a reunion in December 2010 to mark the 35th year since his troop passed off. Contact Maj Fisher by emailing andylynfisher58@hotmail.com

80th (Cheshire Yeomanry) Signal Squadron. This unit will be disbanding in the near future. If anyone made a presentation to the unit and would

like to reclaim it, please do so before the end of the month. After this date the items will be auctioned and monies raised donated to charity. Contact Capt Chris Hopkins on 01928 715809 or email 33sr-80sqn-psao@mod.uk

Peggy Bolger nee Carstens is looking for Normandy veteran **Herbert Mortimer**, last known address 89 Claude Road, Leyton, London. Probably aged 88. He also had relatives in Yorkshire. Peggy met him in 1948 when he was a compositor at Stratford Railway Printing Company, London. Contact Peggy at Flat 5, Royal Court, Bedford Road, Babbacombe, Torquay, Devon TQ1 3LJ.

Eileen Hobson is looking for former colleagues from 4 Squadron, 16 Signal Regiment who served in Bielefeld, Germany between 1972-1975. Eileen was promoted to sergeant during her tour and would like to find **LCpl Steven Weatherall**, **Royal Signals**. Contact Eileen by email at ehbsn@btinternet.com

Michael Peter Gates is looking for **Darren Crutchley (RLC)** who he served with between September 1995 and May 2002. Darren joined the Army in 1977 and is believed to be a SSgt based in Germany. Contact Helen Walton by email HelenWalton@cestria.org

Forces Reunited, a TV show to be presented by Fiona Phillips showcasing the dedication of those who served and are still serving in the British Armed Forces, is looking to speak to current or former Servicemen and women and their friends and family. The theme of our series is reunions, so we are looking to speak to people who haven't seen old friends for a number of years and are looking to get in contact with them again. If you would like more information on the series or would like to take part, then contact Alice Brooksmith by email at alice.brooksmith@leopardfilms.com

REUNIONS

57 Battery 32 Regiment/39 Regiment: All ranks reunion, December 5 at Wagon Lines, Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill. Contact LBdr Russell, 57 Bty, 32 Regt RA, Robert Bks, Larkhill, Wilts SP4 8QU, phone 01980 845055 or email 57bty@yahoo.co.uk

GSUOTC Alumni Dinner: A dinner is to be held on December 18 at the Officers' Training Centre in Glasgow for all past members of Glasgow University Officer Training Corps. Contact the Adjutant by phoning 0141 339 6611 or email glasgowotc-adjt@mod.uk

Queen's Royal Lancers: Dinner dance for 16/5 Lancers, 17/21 Lancers and all attached is being held at Telford on January 30, 2010. Contact Bill Cook for further details on 01952 740411 or email member@fivegables.fsnet.co.uk

Singapore Schools: Reunion for former pupils of all military schools, to be held on March 20, 2010 at the Ramada Hotel, Hatfield. Contact singaporeschool.reunion@googlemail.com or visit www.singas.co.uk

RAMC Reunited: Reunion for former RAMC members (National Service, Regular, TA or widow(er)). You and a partner are invited to attend on February 12-14, 2010 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. Contact Mick McCran, 132 Nightingale Crescent, Lincoln LN6 0JZ enclosing a C5 SAE or email michael.mccran@ntlworld.com

723 (CS) King's Squadron RM: 1959-60, 50-year

reunion on March, 19, 2010 at Portsmouth. Details from Taff Prichard on 02920 790322.

410 Independent Plant Troop RE: Second reunion to be held during April 2010 in Blackpool. For further details, contact Mick (Scouse) Ramsay on 0151 648 2896 or email mick@rommel.plus.com

COMPETITIONS

Nintendo Wii & Mad Dog McCree, winner: JS Lee Thompson, AFC Harrogate.

Looking for Eric, winners: D Fleming, Trowbridge; Col P Madej, Polish Army, Warsaw; SSgt Clarkson, BFPO 49; B Slater, Yatton, Somerset.

Snuggpak, winners: CSgt Calderwood, 7 Scots; Ms T Hulston, Birmingham; LCpl O'Brien, RAF Linton-on-Ouse; LCpl S Smith, Tadcaster; P Rendall, 39 Signal Regt; T Evans, Ilminster; W Croall, Old Kilpatrick; K McMurtie, 224 MI Section; M Prockter, Bletchley, Milton Keynes; T Barnes, Ipswich.

Overcome Fear of Flying, winners: Ms L O'Brien, Falkirk; Mrs J Hawkes, Malvern Wells; Maj A Fisher, BFPO 11; M Hall, Tonbridge; C Long, Grimsby.

I Look To You, winners: W Baker, Grantham; V Bannister, London; Mrs A Neilson, 145 (S) Bde; Mrs P Crandles, Edinburgh; Captain J A'Lee, BFPO 17.

Big Fat Important Movie, winner: E Gough, BFPO 39. **Runners-up:** J Milne, Princess Royal Bks, Deepcut; Ms L Whittaker, 21 MI Coy, Abingdon; G Baxter, BFPO 40.

ROADSHOW DATES

The Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to attend its dynamic roadshow, which begins with a reception, is followed by a presentation and question-and-answer session and finishes with a finger buffet. Military personnel will answer all your questions about the British Army. Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com

December: No presentations. **January:** 19, Chester; 20, Runcorn; 21, Blackburn.

OP REINDEER'S HOOFF

SOLDIER has teamed up with some of Britain's top companies to offer our readers the chance to win a sackful of prizes in an Advent calendar like no other.

Starting on December 1, Operation Reindeer's Hoof will see everything from CDs and clothing to family days out and holidays given away via our burgeoning Facebook fan page, which can be found by visiting www.tinyurl.com/reindeershooft or by searching for *Soldier* magazine on the site.

The competitions will keep coming right up until Christmas Eve and entry is open to any member of the group – subject to age restrictions on certain prizes.

Managing editor Andrew Simms explained: "At *Soldier* HQ we repeatedly find ourselves reporting on what others are doing in support of our Servicemen and women and felt it was long overdue that we followed that example.

"What started off as a quick raid of our contacts' stores snowballed into an epic goodie-gathering campaign, and the generosity of those who have pledged prizes is testament to the high regard in which our readers are held by the public they serve so well."

A full list of prizes will be published in our January issue.

CHRISTMAS COMMUNICATIONS



Hi-tech holidays

IT'S not until you're thousands of miles away from home at Christmas that you realise how much you miss the small things that make it such a special time of year.

Seeing the delight on children's faces as they realise Santa has visited, watching your family open their presents, gathering around the dining room table for lunch – Christmas is truly a magical period.

Skype is a great way to stay in touch with friends and family when you can't be there, so there is no need to miss out on the celebrations.

With more than 520 million registered users around the world, Skype is used every day to make free video and voice calls, send instant messages and share files such as pictures with friends, family and loved ones. They also use Skype to save loads of money on calls to landlines and mobiles at home and abroad.

It is simple to set up, easy to use and a great way to save money on – or completely eliminate – long distance call charges so no matter where you are, you can still feel close to your nearest and dearest.

All you need to do is download Skype onto your computer. Once you have set up an account, find your family and friends online and you are ready to make free calls with the click

of a button. It's as simple as that.

To make the most of your Skype call experience it is recommended to use a Skype Certified headset, which provides much better sound than built-in or stand alone speakers and microphones. And for an even more special connection, you can use a webcam to make free video calls to the entire family so there is no need to miss out on wishing anyone a Happy Christmas face-to-face.

Skype has teamed up with *Soldier* to keep military families connected this Christmas and has ten great prizes up for grabs. Each winner will receive a Skype Certified Philips webcam Pro as well as a FREETALK Everyman USB Headset (pictured above).

To have your chance of winning simply answer the following question:

● Approximately how many registered users does Skype have?

Answers by postcard to *Soldier*, Parsons House, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) to reach us by December 31.

● *Soldier* readers can download Skype to your computer (Windows, Mac or Linux) or mobile phone at www.skype.com free of charge. ■

Soldier's army of worldwide readers can catch up with their award-winning magazine online by visiting the free-to-view digital edition via our homepage at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

Web watch

SERVICES

www.armylibraries.mod.uk

Access to full-text online information resources including Jane's, the ALIS catalogue to search for articles, books, CDs, DVDs and request items online, details of specialised information services and locations of all Army Library and Information Centres.

www.recoverynpn.niceboard.com

A site where REME recovery mechanics and friends, serving and retired, meet for chat and banter.

www.forceshomes.co.uk

Finding homes for military personnel. We organise your mortgage, search for your ideal property, manage the complete purchase, arrange the letting if required, and we pay all your professional and legal fees.

www.army.mod.uk

The information provided contains practical advice on health-related topics and guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles.

www.baff.org.uk

British Armed Forces Federation, an association aimed at representing staff in the three Services.

www.armedforces.co.uk

Over 2,000 pages of Defence information, including defence projects and equipment, technology information, military books and defence supplier's details.

www.armywivesunited.co.uk

Free community site with message boards on a vast array of subjects that affect Army wives. Offering advice, friendship and support. Army Wives United has been online for three years and has around 1,000 active members.

www.sftf.mod.uk

The Service Families Task Force website contains useful tri-Service information.

www.aff.org.uk

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is the independent voice of Army families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families around the world - on any aspect that is affected by the Army lifestyle.

www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service community since 1916.

www.hmforces.co.uk

New unofficial online HQ for the British Army. Free - featuring active forums, benefit updates, military news and videos. Plus civilian jobs by Monster.co.uk

www.forcesequine.co.uk

Welcome to Forces Equine.co.uk the online Equine site dedicated to Combined and Individual Services Equestrian. Here you will be able to find the information & links you need to keep you up to date with what's going on.

www.nfassociation.org

The "Not Forgotten" Association for disabled ex-Service personnel aims to provide entertainment and recreation for war-wounded personnel to alleviate the tedium of their lives and give them something they can look forward to.

www2.armynet.mod.uk/armysafety

This Chief Environment and Safety Officer (Army) website provides up-to-date advice on safety and environmental issues affecting the Army.

ArmyNET
www.armynet.mod.uk

- > Secure e-mail
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BOOKS

www.militaryhistorybooks.com

Specialists in new and used military books. Visit our website, or for a printed catalogue call 01303 246500.

HELPING HANDS

www.wrvs.org.uk

Supporting thousands of young single soldiers in the British Army. Offering a listening ear and practical help 24 hours a day.

www.tnauk.org.uk

National talking newspapers and magazines. Difficulty reading the printed word? *Soldier* can still be enjoyed in audio format. To receive a free audio sample of *Soldier* contact the National Talking Newspaper Service on 01435 866102 or email info@tnauk.org.uk

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx

The Army Welfare Service provides confidential, comprehensive and professional support to Service personnel and their families
www.veterans-aid.net
Tel: 020 7828 2468, info@veterans-aid.net

www.erskine.org.uk

Erskine, caring for ex-Servicemen and women. The charity is currently caring for more than 1,000 veterans, young and old, throughout Scotland.

www.blesma.org

National charity for limbless ex-Servicemen and women, their dependants and widows.

www.nivets.org.uk

The Northern Ireland Veterans' Association, providing advice, support and assistance to veterans and families of those affected by the Troubles.

www.starandgarter

The Royal Star and Garter Homes caring for the ex-Service Community since 1916.

MARKET PLACE

www.ukms2000.com

UKMS2000 manage a series of Militaria, Arms and Armour Fairs in the UK - see you at the next event.

www.shibumijewellerydesign.co.uk

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www.malcyart.co.uk

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CLOTHING AND KIT

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www.Military247.co.uk

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www.shopagc.co.uk

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www.army-surplus.org.uk

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www.fob-uk.co.uk

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www.expedoutdoors.co.uk

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OPPORTUNITIES & BUSINESS

www.forcesreunited.org.uk

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Squaddie Wives - British Army wives & girlfriends Site for women only.
www.squaddiewives.co.uk

MOD LINKS

www.army.mod.uk

The Army's public facing website, carrying information ranging from corps and regiments, news, features, operations and deployment to kit, welfare and training.

www.armyaviation.co.uk

A privately-run forum dedicated to Army aviation. The forum is for ALL cap badges associated with Army aviation and all are welcome. Membership is comprised of mainly AAC personnel but we would like to see more REME faces on the site.

www.doing-alright.army.mod.uk

A website for soldiers, do you know about the benefits you're entitled to? Are you Doing Alright?

www.armyrugbyunion.mod.uk

The latest information on match reports, fixtures, ticket and equipment sales, and contact details for all Army Rugby Union teams. See how the most popular and successful sports team in the Army is doing.

www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support/welfare-support.aspx

Support available to Army personnel and their families is given through the Army Welfare Service (AWS).

MUSEUMS

www.rememuseum.org.uk

REME Museum of Technology.

www.armymuseums.org.uk

The Army Museums Ogilby Trust website, approved by the MoD as the definitive guide to regimental and corps museums.

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com

King's Own Royal Regiment Museum, Lancaster.



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PEN PALS

TO ADVERTISE FOR A PEN PAL

Please send for details enclosing a stamped addressed envelope to:

Soldier Magazine, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU

Or visit **Soldier Magazine** online at **www.soldiermagazine.co.uk**

Email: **hshekyls@soldiermagazine.co.uk**

All pen pal adverts must be prepaid
ONLY UK OR BFPO RESIDENT CAN APPLY.

Lady, (47), petite with brown hair. Enjoys walking, yoga, swimming, the theatre and general socialising. Seeking pen pals, 45-60. P070

Jo, 5'6", (24), slim, outgoing blonde who has always got a smile on her face. Loves going out on her motorbike and keeps fit by running, cycling, walking or going to the gym. Seeking pen pals serving overseas, 22-35. P073

Just looking to raise a chuckle if possible. Not interested in dating, been there done that, been spat out, just a nice pen pal would be good. A DJ and children's entertainer part time and an Office Manager full time. Just hopes she can help in a small way. P074

Belinda, 5'4", (28), slim, strawberry blonde hair with blue/green eyes. Enjoys the cinema, walking, swimming, meals out, meeting new people, travel, pets, writing letters and music. Seeking to make new friends, please no time wasters, 25-36. P075

Debbie, a young 44 year old, single mum with average looks. Enjoys motor racing and looking for male pen pals/friends/relationship, any age group. P076

Sue, 5'4", (44), slim build attractive lady with light brown hair. Enjoys walking, travel, creative writing, history, horses and photography. Seeking pen pals, 45-55. P077

Lucie, 5'2", (24), single mum, enjoys socialising, the cinema, DVDs, music and chilling out. Seeking male soldier pen pals, any age group. P078

Louise, 5'6", with brown hair. Enjoys walking, swimming, country pubs and real ale. Single mum seeking pen pals, 35+. P079

Julia, 5'3", (32), slim blonde with green eyes. Enjoys reading, walking and keeping fit. Loving, loyal GSOH, fun and truthful, seeking pen pals, 28-45. Photographs appreciated. P080

Kelly, (25), blonde hair and blue eyes. Enjoys music, travel, the internet and loves nights out with friends. Bubbly, Nursery Nurse seeking pen pals, 20-35. P081

A Primary School Teacher in Leeds, loves watching sport, especially rugby union and football. Enjoys going out with friends, the cinema, eating out, holidays abroad (when she can afford them) and reading. Seeking pen pals, any age group. P082

Janet, (31), enjoys walking, pop music, watching sports specially football (Arsenal and Cardiff fan), loves going to nature reserves, listening to BFBS radio. Seeking male and female pen pals, would like to boost morale in Afghanistan for UK troops. Seeking pen pals, 28-35. P083

Janine and her predominantly female Slimming World Group want to send food parcels to troops on tour. Are you an individual soldier who would like to be the recipient of goody parcels from us? We are a great bunch and have lots of fun. As a group we understand and appreciate the support we give to each other and we would like to extend that support to you. Parcels are ready to be sent, they are guaranteed to put a smile on your faces. P084

PEN PAL REPLIES:

To reply to a pen pal, write a letter and send it to: **Soldier Magazine, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2DU**

- * The box number must be clearly written in the top left corner of all your replies.
- * Replies should consist only of letter and photograph if requested.
- * Replies received more than three months after the cover date, large, heavy or poorly addressed envelopes will not be forwarded.

FOR SALE

BRITISH ARMY CAP BADGES. Many scarce. 01797362216. **A LARGE RANGE OF MILITARY WATCHES:** 01797363761. Phone: Enquiries: Catalogues. www.webbmilitary.co.uk

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Greeting cards featuring current Army regimental badges, colours and mottos, can be personalised if required, in packs of five postage paid. Available from www.richardwestcott.co.uk



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Silk or polyester ties made to order. Please call **08451 29 29 00** for further information. For individual ties visit our website www.SmartTurnout.com or email Sales@SmartTurnout.com

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HOLIDAYS

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Cornwall. All Army personnel are very welcome for short or long breaks (discount always given), just off harbour side. Free parking. Come and stay in lovely Looe. Tel. 01503 262474 – Email: littleharbour@btinternet.com

NOTICES

"35 (M) Signals Regiment will disband on 31 March 2010. Any officer who would like to reclaim presentation items presented to the Officers' Mess should contact the property member on 02476 854913 prior to 1 December 2009."

The HQ Land Forces Sergeants' Mess at Erskine Barracks, Wilton will be moving to Andover to form a new combined Sergeants' Mess reflecting the makeup of the new Army Headquarters. In preparation for the move an audit of mess property has been completed and a number of presentation pictures identified that will not be suitable for transfer to the new mess. These pictures are available to be reclaimed by the donor or if unclaimed will be auctioned and monies raised will be donated to the Help for Heroes charity. Ex-members who wish to reclaim a presentation should contact the Mess Manager on 01722 433478 by 31 Dec 09

TO ADVERTISE IN SOLDIER TELEPHONE: 01252 347352

WANTED

Chef/Kitchen Manager required for Private Members Club. Busy lunch time trade. Occasional catering for evening and weekend functions. For job description and application form please contact conslub@tiscali.co.uk 020 8304 4664.

Opportunities exist from Feb 2010 for serving or retired APTC or PTIs to join **Scotland's most exciting residential boot camp provider.** You will be well organised, personable and able to motivate de-conditioned adults to achieve weight loss and fitness. Contracts are self-employed for 1 week in any 4, full board and accommodation provided on-site with excellent rates of pay. Further details from Alistair Duncan 01862 871606 or 07510 889908, or visit www.scottishbootcamp.com

VACANCIES WITH THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE DEMSS Kineton, Warwickshire INSTRUCTIONAL OFFICERS (Band D) – various posts


Would suit applicants with a Service explosives technical qualification (ATO/AT Class 1, RAF Weapons Technician, RN Air Mech (Ord) or equivalent) including a wide practical experience of relevant ammunition technical matters of at least 5 years at SNCO level or above.

For further information visit www.mod.uk or call **0800 345 7772**
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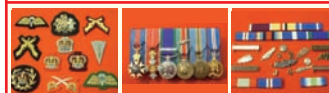
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P88 MUSIC **ROCKIN' AROUND THE XMAS TREE**

P90 BOOKS **STOP THE CAVALRY**

P92 TOP GEAR **WINTER WONDERLAND**



Familiar face: *Top Gear's* Jeremy Clarkson joins Eric Bana for an emotional ride in documentary *Love The Beast*, out on DVD now

Bana and the Beast

Aussie actor Eric gets behind the wheel in a perfect production for petrolheads

Review: Stephen Tyler

FOR many years, Sunday night television seemed to exist only to make the impending start of the working week even more dreary. Laden with period dramas and repeats of *Poirot*, the viewing schedule for the last remnants of the weekend held little appeal for anyone under the age of 60.

Thankfully for those with slightly more modern tastes, the broadcasting landscape was changed forever by the booming popularity of the BBC's *Top Gear*.

Obviously a chance for three adults to mess about in cars for an hour, the programme has captured an audience ranging from those too young to drive to motorists who should be old enough to know better.

Aside from saving Sunday evenings, the show's other achievement is in taking the love of cars and motoring out of the garages of the few and onto the highways of public consciousness.

The new-found appreciation for the wheeled mechanical wonders has seen a slew of vehicle-based releases, but Hollywood star Eric Bana has

stepped things up a gear with the release of *Love The Beast* – a title fittingly billed as the story of “the ultimate car obsession”.

The documentary follows Australian Bana and his three closest childhood friends as they restore the actor's 1974 Ford GT Falcon Coupe – the Beast of the title – in order to enter it in the insanely dangerous Targa Tasmania Rally.

But while the car is the star, Bana explained that he wanted the movie to add up to a lot more.

“The most difficult part of making this was trying to explain to people that I was making a film about a car that wasn't a car film,” he said. “As much as I am obsessed with all things mechanical, not even I found the story of someone owning the same car for 25 years that interesting.”

“The thing that I was interested in was that objects, in this case a car, have the ability to transcend their materialness.”

Love The Beast certainly throws a spotlight onto just how much a car can mean to a person.

From the opening gambits explaining how important automobiles are to Australian teenagers – “Since I can remember I have been connected to the earth through an inflatable tyre,” said Bana – the film does not shy away from getting under the bonnet and talking in technical terms.

The autophilia is so overpowering that at times it is hard to believe this release could appeal to anyone but the staunchest of petrolheads.

American talk show host Jay Leno provides further car porn by showing Bana around his unfeasibly large vehicle collection, but it is the appearance of *Top Gear's* Jeremy Clarkson, allied to Bana's personable nature, that adds the required spark to proceedings.

The pair's banter will be instantly familiar to viewers of the BBC programme and it serves to provide the softer edge which the Australian admits he wanted to portray.

“We go through a lot of twists and turns as people and very few things stay constant in our lives,” he said. “The fact that my car had survived this most tumultuous period of a man growing up told me that the story would need to be as much about how we as humans relate to the world around us as it would about anything.”

“The car had become a campfire for me and three of my closest friends; it had become the excuse for us all to get together until the small hours and, in doing so, it has proved my theory.”

While not a film for everyone, anyone who has laughed along at Sunday night TV's saviour will appreciate this offering. ■

From a little-known Spielberg comedy to an explosive war film, we check out December's new movies...

1941 out on DVD on Dec 28

AN all-star cast headed up by **Dan Ackroyd** and **John Belushi** and featuring a cameo from a young **Mickey Rourke** fear for their lives in this **Steven Spielberg**-directed effort about the paranoia stemming from a potential Japanese attack on Los Angeles in the wake of Pearl Harbour. Despite a strong plot and stellar acting talent, the comedic potential is never realised. For fans of slapstick, *1941* will undoubtedly raise a few chuckles. For the rest of us, however, it is an example of why the multi award-winning director's career has steered clear of the comedy genre since this film's 1979 release.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



Five Minutes Of Heaven out now

A DARK and powerful insight into the emotional turmoil still endured today by the protagonists and victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles. Joe Griffin (**James Nesbitt**) is the tormented brother of a cold-blooded 1975 Ulster Volunteer Force murder victim. Alistair Little (**Liam Neeson**) is the murderer, since released under the Good Friday Agreement. Joe is understandably hell-bent on revenge and plans to exact his *Five Minutes of Heaven* during the filming of a TV documentary. A well-researched reminder of the fall-out of the Troubles, powerfully and impartially delivered by a convincing cast.

Capt Neil Johnson, AAC



The Bronx Warriors Trilogy out Dec 7

TOGETHER for the first time on DVD, this collection includes each of director **Enzo G Castellari's** post-apocalyptic films set in the now-lawless New York suburb of the Bronx. Unbelievably cheesy – although that is forgivable considering the period in which they were released – the films borrow liberally from others in the genre, most notably *Escape From New York*. The collection – which includes *The Bronx Warriors*, *Escape From The Bronx* and *The New Barbarians* – is probably best left to fans who enjoyed the films the first time round and the limited edition tin box will sweeten the deal.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*





Op Bana: Hollywood star Eric dismantled and reassembled his beloved 1974 Ford GT Falcon Coupe to prepare it for the tough Targa Tasmania Rally

Hurt Locker out on DVD from Dec 28

THE spectre of roadside bombs has held particular relevance in modern conflicts and this intense **Kathryn Bigelow**-directed film does a powerful job of portraying the danger and emotions of the brave specialists tasked with disarming them.



Following new team commander SSgt William James – brilliantly played by **Jeremy Renner** – and his two subordinates through the streets of Iraq, the viewer is left on the edge of their seat thanks to the clever way in which the film brings the nerve-jangling reality of an EOD squad's work to life. *The Hurt Locker* is a stunning release that ranks near the top of the war movie pile.

Stephen Tyler, Soldier

The Hangover out on DVD from Dec 7

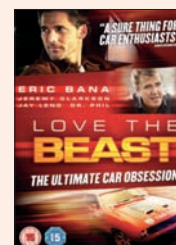
THIS is the latest offering from director **Todd Phillip** – the brains behind *Road Trip* and *Old School* – so you can expect lad humour aplenty here. The film follows a wild stag night in Las Vegas as two friends and a slightly disturbed, soon-to-be brother-in-law manage to lose the groom just hours before his wedding. Phillip certainly delivers in terms of comedy – a wild tiger roaming a hotel bathroom, a fine cameo from **Mike Tyson** and an ultra camp Chinese gangster are among the many highlights – but you have to wonder if he has fallen into the comfort zone, given the obvious similarities to his earlier work.



Richard Long, Soldier

Love The Beast competition

AN undeniably attractive Ford GT Falcon Coupe steals the show in *Love The Beast*, an entertaining look at Hollywood star **Eric Bana's** obsession with his first automotive love. **Jeremy Clarkson** also makes an appearance in a documentary-style film that will appeal to fans of *Top Gear*. To celebrate the release, *Soldier* has five copies of the film on DVD to give away. To be in with a chance of winning one, simply tell us the answer to this question: **Which superhero did Eric Bana play in a blockbuster film in 2003?** Answers on a postcard to the usual address or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk).



Closing date December 31



Top Deck: *DJ Hero* looks set to become one of the best titles of the party season with its realism and ultra-cool music repertoire

Mixing from scratch

Rise from rookie DJ to become the king of clubs in dance music extravaganza

Review: Stephen Tyler

THERE is no denying that the stereotypical image of a video games-enthusiast is not one to be admired.

The unwashed, overweight joypad junkie usually – and perhaps unfairly – associated with consoles means that some players keep their love for gaming a closely-guarded secret for fear of becoming a social outcast.

But while slaying goblins in your underpants and supping lager from a tin may not win you many friends, loading *DJ Hero* and spinning the title's solitary wheel of steel almost certainly will.

The game's novel turntable controller – complete with crossfader and effects switch – makes even the most portly player look cool and the crowd-pleasing musical mixes are nothing short of inspirational throughout.

That *DJ Hero* is as polished and innovative a title as *Soldier* can ever remember getting its hands on is no surprise. Geniuses at developer FreeStyleGames spent two years bringing it into being and are understandably proud of the critical acclaim that greeted its launch.

Music director Daniel Neil and his team started off with a hit-list containing 5,000 tracks and had to whittle those down into a set of mixes covering a wide range of musical genres.

"We didn't want to restrict ourselves and so made a decision not to just have hip hop or dance music," he told *Soldier*. "What we have got is something new and fresh where you have Marvin Gaye alongside Daft Punk.

"We didn't really care about sales figures – it was about choosing records that were prime examples of their genres."

The resulting mixes are a genuine treat to listen to and leave a smile on the face of all within earshot. Ever wondered what Blondie would sound like mixed into some Beastie Boys or how Vanilla Ice and MC Hammer would work when spliced together? *DJ Hero* has the answer.

To keep the mixes flowing, players have to hit coloured buttons, scratch the turntable and flick the crossfader in time with on-screen prompts and, despite the track running throughout, it always feels like you are in control of the sound.

Several guest DJs – including big names such as Grandmaster Flash, DJ Jazzy Jeff and DJ Yoda – all contribute their spinning skills to the title, but most of the tracks were brought into being by

ultra-talented turntablist DJ Blakey.

For someone obviously adept at mashing up tunes on the ones and twos, how does *DJ Hero*'s mixing experience stand up in comparison?

"When you get to expert level, the scratching becomes pretty similar to the real thing," he said. "You have directional scratches and some of those are just as tricky to pull off."

As an unashamedly social beast, one of *DJ Hero*'s biggest plus-points is the fact that players always get to finish the mix, no matter how terrible their DJing skills.

"We decided we weren't going to kick people out of the mixes if they did badly," explained Neil.

"The social punishment from everyone in the room is enough."

If ever there was a reason for a console addict to have a wash, invite their friends round and puff their chest out in pride at their addiction to video games, this is it.

We have a copy of the game for Xbox 360 plus a turntable to give away. To stand a chance of winning these prizes, tell us the real name of DJ Fatboy Slim. Send your answer on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or email comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk. Closing date is December 31. ■

Vengeful agents, failed states and motor mayhem feature in a diverse line-up of December contenders...

Borderlands for Xbox 360 & PS3

A FAST-paced action game in the mould of the classic *Fallout 3*, *Borderlands* is a fine offering that has a tendency to draw you in for hours. Best described as a first-person shooter with role playing elements, the game is set on the alien world of Pandora where players find themselves stranded among a community that is forced to scavenge for survival. Amid the chaos, you take on one of four playable characters and try to stay alive. *Borderlands* has plenty going on and there are lots of sub-missions to keep you immersed. Graphics are outstanding and the overall gaming experience will have you hooked.



Lee Franks

Need For Speed Shift for Xbox 360 & PS3

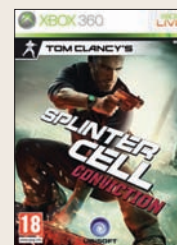
THE Electronic Arts racing game series continues apace with the latest incarnation offering all the newest vehicles, environments and music to live out your supercar fantasies. Virtual petrolheads will not be disappointed with *Need for Speed Shift*, which offers top-notch graphics, an adrenalin-pumping soundtrack and an unforgiving physics engine that will keep you on your toes. There are plenty of game modes too, ranging from free driving to career, so you can get involved according to your mood. Anyone with a passion for driving games should not let this one pass them by.



James Hamilton

Splinter Cell Conviction for 360 & PS3

TOM Clancy's unsavoury agent Sam Fisher finds himself well and truly stitched up by his former paymasters in *Splinter Cell Conviction*, the darkest instalment of the series yet. On the run, and forced to ditch his hi-tech toys and improvise with anything he can find, players are placed in control of a man out for vengeance and willing to use any means necessary to achieve his goals. A greater emphasis has been placed on action in this new game and there is more freedom to enable you to complete your missions as you see fit. From the demo we saw, the new title could win a few more converts with the change of operational tempo.



Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Wheels of steel: *DJ Hero* gives armchair musicians the opportunity to mix it up with the clubland elite by transforming their console into a turntable

Red Steel 2 for Wii

THE sequel to one of the launch titles on the Wii, this first-person combination of swordplay and shooting is a considerable improvement on the original. Shunning Japan for a city that looks like a cross between Las Vegas and Tokyo, players use a combination of the Nunchuck and Wii MotionPlus controllers to shoot and slash their way through opponents. *Soldier* sampled an early demo of the game and it is as slick as it is graphically impressive. The key concern of the first title – the difficulty in replicating the fencing moves with the controller – has been addressed and the overall package looks good.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Football Manager 2010 for PC & Mac

THE ever-popular management title has found the back of the net with a number of improvements. *Football Manager 10*'s most dramatic move has been to introduce a complete overhaul of the user interface, with a tab system at the top of the screen replacing the traditional sidebar. While this creates some initial confusion it makes navigation of the game much easier. A new tactics creator allows bosses to change the shape of their team with a click of the mouse and the 3D match engine is a welcome enhancement. One of the best *Football Manager* titles yet, this game is a must-have for fans of the franchise.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



WIN: Mario and Sonic for Wii

FANCY some winter sports this Christmas but can't afford the air fare? Stay at home instead, put the kettle on and let the entertainment come to you with a little help from *Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games*. *Soldier* has five copies of this acclaimed Wii title to give away, in which players can try sports including snowboarding and skiing. To enter, answer this question: Which country is hosting the 2010 Olympic Winter Games? Answers on a postcard to the address at the front of the magazine or by email (comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk). Closing date is December 31.

Courtesy of Sega





Forces fans: Kevin Jones, brother of Stereophonics' diminutive frontman Kelly, once served in The Royal Welch Fusiliers

Calming influence

Welsh rockers put global troubles to one side in positive-sounding new album

Interview: Joe Clapson

WITH a stuttering economy and the spectre of global terrorism on society's shoulders, the latest Stereophonics offering is a wake up call for those feeling sorry for themselves.

Keep Calm and Carry On takes its name from an unused Second World War poster drawn up by the British Government when the future was anything but certain.

In conversation with *Soldier*, 'Phonics frontman Kelly Jones spoke incisively about his motivation for penning the hard-hitting album.

"The title was from a poster that Churchill was going to put out if the Nazis had invaded Britain," he said. "It's a phrase that can mean something to everyone and can help you through a difficult time. For me it became quite appropriate."

With a departure from the intense guitar sound of *Pull The Pin*, there is a definite focus on engaging lyrics which look to the bright side in otherwise stark situations.

"I suppose the album is about the state of the country and the music industry," said Jones.

"It's about dealing with a trying time and coming through the other end – keeping your head and pulling through."

For Jones, a proud working class Welshman, the issues of the day impact on everyone and he believes they can be tackled with old-fashioned humour and positive thoughts.

"The album is kind of a tongue-in-cheek stance on the current situation – when times are troublesome people can use music to escape," said the former amateur boxer.

"I was brought up in a working class environment and people looked forward to the weekends. They didn't moan about their problems, they made the most of what they had."

The album's lyrics certainly reflect that positivity – "Just pick yourself up from the street/ And get up on your feet/We'll walk on" – is belted out over a rousing drum beat on *Beerbottle*.

The end product is a record which will undoubtedly please the loyal army of 'Phonics followers as well as a crowd of converts, drawn in by the wise words of a rags-to-riches icon.

But although *Keep Calm* is sure to shift shelf loads of copies, Jones – known for his contempt for manufactured pop music – was realistic about chart positions.

It was released in the same week as the pop machine regurgitated Robbie Williams back on to the scene and *X-Factor* cash cow Leona Lewis launched her latest work of heartfelt insincerity.

"You almost have to sacrifice a number one album in order to make the sales – it's the nature of the beast," conceded Jones.

But for the frontman, the measure of success is not topping the charts, it's whether you offer something a listener will return to.

"Pop music is good for a few minutes, but if you have a good lyric it will stand the test of time," he said.

Fans will be able to sample the new tracks at concert dates in Europe in January and in Britain in March.

An exclusive gig for troops in Afghanistan might also be something for the future, with Jones eager to show his appreciation to the Army.

"My brother Kevin was in The Royal Welch Fusiliers and a lot of my friends went in to Army. Seeing troops in Afghanistan is definitely something we would like to think about doing.

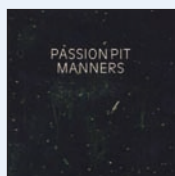
"I think it should be said that back home people are thinking about all the soldiers in Afghanistan. Just stay as safe as you can and keep your heads down until you finish your shift." ■

From Bob Dylan going festive to Passion Pit's high-pitched vocals, we check out December's releases...

Manners by Passion Pit

MY feelings towards this quirky feel-good dance album are akin to my wife's feelings towards prawn crackers; she can't decide whether she likes them or not so keeps sampling them to work it out. Having listened to *Manners* quite a few times there is no doubting that it is extremely catchy in places due to the band's excellent use of recognisable samples, notably *Little Secrets* and *Sleepyhead*, but is let down by its falsetto approach to vocals throughout. While I suppose it may be interesting listening for some, if we are being completely honest it should be strictly **Bee Gees** territory. High-pitched vocals aside, this is still worth a punt if you like your pop synth-driven and upbeat.

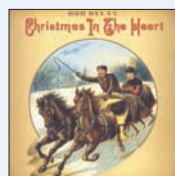
Capt Fraser Dowling AGC (ETS)



Christmas in the Heart by Bob Dylan

BOB Dylan and festive carols are like Christmas pudding without brandy sauce – unthinkable. However the '60s icon has brought out a collection of seasonal favourites. *Winter Wonderland*, *Little Drummer Boy* and *The First Noel* were all delivered in his trademark drawl. After some sceptical reservations I actually found this compilation an enjoyable experience. Backed by clever musicianship, it brings a refreshing slant to the traditional arrangements of Christmas tunes. His attempts to turn them into three-minute songs are creditable. There will be an outcry among purists that Dylan has ventured into this kind of territory, but the assortment is what Christmas is about – fun.

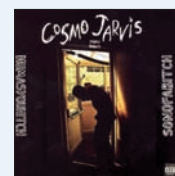
Steve King, MoD



Humasyouhitch/Sonofabitch

COSMO Jarvis, a singer/songwriter originally from New Jersey, offers an album full of upbeat, acoustic tracks that beg for the attention of fans who have previously followed artists such as **Jamie T**. The image of this angry looking adolescent, with his beaten up acoustic guitar, begs the audience to listen to the upbeat disc of *Humasyouhitch* but to then sympathise with the drearier songs of *Sonofabitch*. Light relief is found in the form of *Jessica Alba's Number*, but a more serious side is offered in *Mummy's Been Drinking and Problems*, which are loosely based on Jarvis's own life. This fusion of indie-rock with hip-hop promises to propel this 19-year-old to bigger and better things.

Tash Salmon



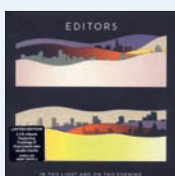


Long-lasting: Unlike the short careers of today's disposable pop stars, the evergreen Stereophonics have returned with their seventh studio album

In This Light and On This Evening

EDITORS return with a new release after their fantastic second album *An End Has A Start*. Fans will be divided as to whether this is progression or regression for the Birmingham group, and I fall into the latter category. Despite being a superbly rich and challenging record, I much preferred the sound of the last album and notably *Smokers Outside the Hospital Door*. There is no such crowd-pleaser on this offering and fans may be disappointed. The group have broken away from their trademark sound and now deliver a more electronic vibe with haunting vocals throughout. Where *An End Has A Start* is *Star Wars*, this is *Blade Runner*, same genre but distinctly darker.

Capt Jim Berry, R Irish



Battle Studies by John Mayer

LIKE arriving at the Christmas dinner table and being told the turkey has been replaced by nutroast, *Battle Studies* is a frustrating tale of squandered potential.

Mayer's previous albums did a good job of showcasing his exceptional guitar playing, but this offering is top-heavy with limp love songs which offer little more than a glimmer of the artist's talent. By no means a complete write-off – first single *Who Says* is catchy enough and *Assassin* and *Crossroads* contain elements of Mayer at his prime – but this record packs nowhere near the punch its title would have you believe. Stick to the artist's last offering *Continuum* for now.

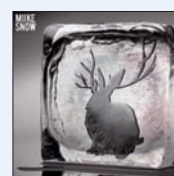
Stephen Tyler, Soldier



Miike Snow by Miike Snow

SWEDISH production duo Christian Karlsson and Pontus Winnberg combine with singer/songwriter Andrew Wyatt for a highly polished debut offering under the name **Miike Snow**. This self-titled album is filled with piano-led, synth-heavy pop songs that make perfect chill-out listening and, rather curiously, would not seem out of place in a nightclub. The singles *Animal* and *Black and Blue* are instant favourites, proving easy to listen to and setting a perfect tone for what follows. The only slight criticism is that there is a sense of similarity between a number of the tracks as the album draws to a close, but on the whole this is one snowstorm you don't want to miss.

Richard Long, Soldier





Top tale: *Attack State Red's* co-author, Col Richard Kemp, is the most senior officer to write an account of the conflict in Afghanistan

Commanding read

Former Royal Anglian officer delivers a no-holds-barred tale of Vikings' valour

Review: Maj Mike Peters AAC

HAVING been repeatedly tasked by *Soldier* HQ to run the rule over literary accounts of the fighting in Afghanistan, I have to concede that the prospect of flicking through yet another offering left me feeling distinctly cold.

After all, with a wealth of titles already in circulation, surely there is little left unsaid about Op Herrick and certainly not enough to sustain a reader's interest for 460-plus pages. How wrong could I be?

Recounting 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment's 2007 tour of duty, *Attack State Red* – defined as explosive entry, assault with grenades and firing – is true to its title.

The opening sentence, which throws the reader straight into a contact alongside the battlegroup's lead section, had me hooked and the story of the Vikings' aggressive fight in the Sangin Valley can only be described as gripping.

A collaboration between the battalion's former commanding officer, Col Richard Kemp, and *Daily Mirror* journalist Chris Hughes, who was embedded with the battlegroup in Sangin, the

book represents an outstanding unit history that has raised the bar for any future work of this kind.

The balance of riveting narrative, clear maps and excellent photographs is bang on, with the co-authors using their collective understanding of the battalion to tell the Vikings' story from the inside-out.

One of the book's many strengths is its ability to switch the reader's focus from behind an individual rifleman's sights and zoom out to a strategic view of the battle, and in doing so it provides an unrivalled overview of the tactics used by a British Infantry battlegroup.

The chapters contain detailed sketch maps and document the use and effects of the full array of weapon systems employed in Afghanistan. During their campaign in Sangin the Vikings used everything from snipers to attack helicopters in anger and the advantages, impact and any drawbacks of each are explored.

It is, however, the first-hand accounts of those who found themselves in the thick of the action that make *Attack State Red* such an engaging read.

The words of those found isolated by enemy fire and those of their friends trying to reach them are unflinching. So too are the graphic descriptions of being trapped in a burning vehicle

and the effects of modern weapon systems on friend and foe alike. The collective pain felt by the Vikings at the loss of every casualty is tangible.

Remarkably, amid all of the dust, blood and bullets of battle, the humour and character of men such as LCpl Watson (11 Platoon, 1 R Anglian) shine through: "Watson's section now came crashing through the compound door, Taliban bullets cracking into the dirt at their feet as they ran across the open ground.

"Watson was on fire, smoke pouring from him. He tore off his day sack and webbing and dropped them smouldering onto the ground. 'What happened to you?' asked Wilan.

"Still pouring sweat and breathing hard from his run into the compound, Watson replied, 'I threw some red phos to cover our extraction, and the grenade bounced off a tree and got me, just as I was about to run! Never was much good at cricket anyway,' he grinned."

The market may well be at saturation point when it comes to Afghanistan-related reading, but there is always room on the shelves for a high-quality book such as this.

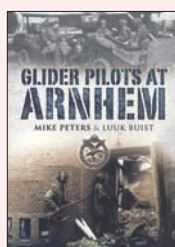
Attack State Red sits proudly at the top of the pile having nudged aside Patrick Bishop's excellent *3 Para*. ■

From Major Mike's masterpiece to rogues on the Rhine, a scan of this month's literary releases...

Glider Pilots at Arnhem

THIS title exposes the huge contributions made by the men of the British Army's Glider Pilot Regiment to some of the Second World War's most daring operations. After delivering their payloads, the pilots re-rolled as infantry soldiers, defending their landing zones before fighting alongside their comrades in 1st British Airborne Division. The regiment suffered heavy casualties and was never reconstituted after Operation Market Garden. *Soldier* reviewer **Maj Mike Peters (AAC)** and **Luuk Buist** have produced an exceptionally thorough account which gives additional insight into the conflict's most audacious endeavours.

Maj Eddie Elms, AGC



England's Last War Against France

COLIN Smith's light yet detailed touch superbly outlines a wasteful and depressing story – the Allied campaign to militarily neutralise Vichy, France. The Royal Navy's reluctant destruction of the French capital ships off Oran, which inflicted 1,200 casualties in a matter of minutes, is well known, but less so is the action in Madagascar and the Middle East. The considerable and unnecessary death toll concluded after two years with the Operation Torch landings in North Africa. With split loyalties at play, the ferocity of Vichy's fightback may surprise the reader. A quality read with many political and military twists and turns.

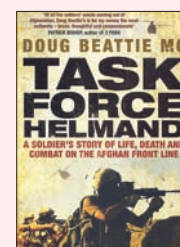
Lt Col Andy Gladen, RE



Task Force Helmand by Doug Beattie

THOSE who have read **Doug Beattie's** first book, *An Ordinary Soldier*, will instantly recognise the easy-going style that characterises *Task Force Helmand*. Persuaded to take his commission and postpone leaving the Army, the veteran soldier again deploys to Afghanistan in a mentoring role to the Afghan National Army. Ranging from the mundane routine of camp to life-or-death fighting against the Taliban (often handicapped by the Afghans he is training), Beattie's attention to detail is rewarding and vivid. Consistently well-written, humble and descriptive, this tale of a Herrick tour is a fantastic read.

LCpl Chris MacCallum, Int Corps





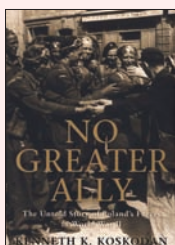
Anglian action: Col Richard Kemp's former battalion played a key role in operations to remove Taliban influence from Sangin

Picture: Cpl Adrian Harlen, RLC

No Greater Ally by Kenneth Koskodan

YOU can feel the patriotism and passion bursting from every word that **Koskodan** uses to record the extraordinary tale of Poland's forces in the Second World War. While one-sided in its accounts of actions, the title effectively articulates campaign plans and strategies into an easily understood and relevant context. The story of the Armia Krajowa – an underground struggle that endured with vigour and massive sacrifice – is particularly fascinating. Manoeuvring through Krakow's sewer system and outrageously outnumbered, their fight against the Germans and Russians is the stuff of legend.

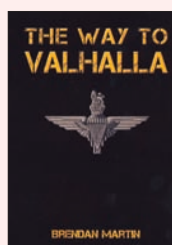
Capt Jim Vincent, RLC



The Way to Valhalla by Brendan Martin

THIS gritty, fictional tale follows paratrooper Jimmy Curtis on an emotional journey from his hard upbringing in Belfast, through tours of Northern Ireland and a stint as a mercenary in Africa to the cold conventional fighting of the Falklands War. The different phases of Curtis's life are woven together skilfully throughout, captivating the reader and keeping you hungry for more. This is a first-rate account of the times which boasts a fast-moving and gripping plot. The Northern Ireland sections of **Martin's** novel are detailed and descriptive and indicative of the dramatic violence that was a common occurrence in the Province.

Sgt Anthony Silvey, KRH



Silken Dalliance by John Ogden

AS a veteran of Cold War soldiering, the author does an excellent job of bringing to life the military world of a fictional Infantry regiment cloistered in Germany and playing out the last rites of the "old days". A great read and highly recommended to anyone who would like to get a really good feel for what time in uniform was like for those who served in the British Army of the Rhine. **John Ogden** provides superb psychological insights into the motivations of his characters and, having spent my early commissioned years in Germany, I was certainly able to relate *Silken Dalliance* to stories I had heard of life on the "Eastern Front".

Maj Matt Hayward, Scots DG





Winter warriors: Originally formed as a rope manufacturer in 1862, Mammut is now a big name in outdoor clothing

Ice-cold comforts

Specially-designed Alpine-proof underwear provides welcome winter warmth

Review: Stephen Tyler

ANYONE who has spent any time in Afghanistan during the country's cruel winter months can testify exactly how cold it can get.

Forget the couple-of-degrees-below-zero chill that strikes England for a few weeks each year – when Afghanistan gets cold, it gets really cold.

With temperatures dropping as much as 15 degrees below zero at times, staying warm requires a fair amount of effort.

But while Softie jackets are perfect items to wrap up in around a forward operating base, they have to be shed as soon as the call comes for front-line Service personnel to head out of the gates on foot patrol.

This is where sound tactical nous comes in. Put on too many layers and you end up sweating profusely at the earliest sign of effort. Don too few, however, and you run the risk of developing potentially-dangerous cold-related injuries.

The answer to the question of how to stay warm enough without risking overheating lies in layered clothing, and more specifically thermal underwear.

Long johns may have an old-fashioned reputation, but leading outdoor clothing companies are wising up to the benefits of well-designed base layers.

Swiss company Mammut places such great stock in the quality of its undergarments that boffins spent the best part of three years developing its Alpine Underwear range.

The firm's claims about the long sleeve top and long pants are certainly impressive. Realising that the surface closest to the skin is going to have to do the most work, Mammut has used a high proportion of ultra-warm merino wool in key areas of the clothing.

As well as providing protection against the cold, the fabric maintains heat even when wet – making it ideal for parts of the body requiring extra insulation such as the knees and elbows.

Realising that areas that are less sensitive to heat – the armpits, backs of the knees and the back – would generate too much heat if covered in thick wool, Mammut has used 100 per cent microfibre in the underwear which wick sweat away from the skin before it has a chance to lower the user's body temperature.

As good a job as the specialists have done in selling the benefits of the underwear on paper,

Soldier decided to put the top and bottoms to the test against the elements.

In the absence of sub-zero temperatures and snowdrifts, assistant editor Joe Clapson volunteered to put the gear through its paces by wearing it during a rugby training session.

He said: "Training in standard kit in the winter can lead to colder, tighter muscles, but the Mammut underwear kept me at a decent temperature. Usually I start cold and have a few layers on but after ten minutes I'm too hot and end up carrying the clothes and pouring with sweat."

"In comparison I was surprised at how effective the Mammut kit was. It kept me warm but not to the extent that I needed to strip off."

It may cost more than you thought you could ever spend on pants, but Mammut's Alpine Underwear is hot stuff.

● **Mammut's long sleeve top (SRP £50) and long pants (£45) are available from retailers nationwide. Call 01625 508218 or visit www.mammut.ch for more details.**

● ***Soldier* wants recruits to put top gear through its paces. Apply by emailing styler@soldiermagazine.co.uk** ■

Soldier wraps up warm and takes on the elements in the latest winter gear...

Arc'Teryx Strato Jacket

AS anyone who knows anything about being outside in the coldest of weather will tell you, the secret to staying warm is layering up. This jacket – made with snowsport devotees in mind – allows you to do just that thanks to its relaxed fit and low-profile, stretch-knit cuffs. The impressive-sounding Polartec Pro Cobble recycled fleece used in this desirable garment also uses up 7kg less of CO2 in its production than a similar jacket.



£130, www.arcteryx.com

The North Face El Cap Top

THE North Face has long been the label of choice for fans of the outdoors, as much for its prestige as for its technically outstanding designs. Now the company has added another string to its bow by going green and using 100 per cent recycled polyester to make its new El Cap base layer. Available in a range of colours to suit all tastes, this quarter zip top is quick-drying, extremely breathable and easily packable for far-flung expeditions.



£50, www.thenorthface.com

Peak Performance Women's Top

BY their very nature, base layers tend to spend most of their lives buried under other clothes and rarely seeing the light of day. That small fact has not stopped Peak Performance from getting a bit arty and adorning its latest base layer with a funky paisley print. Aesthetics aside, women wearing this top will benefit from the ultimate protection provided by the Polartec Power Dry recycled material used in its creation.



£55, www.peakperformance.se



Joe cool: Assistant editor Clapson modelling Mammut's Alpine Underwear, which took the prestigious Swiss company's scientists three years to perfect

Berghaus Smoulder Hoodie

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ARMY FLIES HIGH
Kitesurfers make
waves in Wales



On the rise: An Army ace prepares for take off in the Inter-Services kitesurfing championships in Rhosneigr

Picture: Graeme Main



Picture: British Broadcasting Corporation

Match made in Helmand

Interview: Matthew Simms

FOR someone more accustomed to a round of golf than a round of bullets, the comfort zone of the *Match of the Day* studio must have seemed a million miles away for Gary Lineker as he took his first steps in southern Afghanistan.

The former England striker, who plundered 48 goals in a glittering international career, discovered a new meaning to the word attack when he visited British troops in Helmand.

Joined by Ashes hero Andrew Flintoff, the 48-year-old BBC man flew into Camp Bastion to present the UK Joint Forces Medical Group with a Pride of Britain Award.

On his return Lineker was singled out by Conservative Party leader David Cameron as the perfect patron for Tickets for Troops, a new initiative offering Armed Forces personnel free passes to major sports and entertainment events.

Speaking exclusively to *SoldierSport* at the scheme's official launch under the dome of the O2 Arena, the former Barcelona and Tottenham Hotspur forward said he was honoured to give his backing to such a worthy cause.

"I don't think anyone would want to pass this up," he added. "It gives me great pleasure to support something which I strongly believe in."

"I recently spent a few days out in Afghanistan which was really quite a humbling experience."

"However tough you think it might be, it is actually harder being out there and seeing the conditions."

"It was one hell of a week, but it was a unique opportunity to experience something like that."

"I'm really glad I went out because it brought home what they are doing, how tough it is and how brave they are."

"From speaking to the men and women who are fighting for our country, there are only a few things they talk about. The first is generally the next time they come home and then secondly it is sport and music."

With scores of leading clubs already committed to offering free entry and a list of patrons that boasts Sir Ian Botham and Lawrence Dallaglio, Tickets for Troops is going from strength to strength.

"I hope everyone will get behind this," Lineker said.

"It's really important that we show our appreciation for our troops and this is a small way to show them that we really do care and respect the sacrifices they make for our country."

And with Lineker's beloved Tottenham Hotspur among the many teams backing the scheme – as *SoldierSport* reported

in October – it is only natural the conversation switched from Helmand adventures to covering the Premiership from the *Match of the Day* studio.

"It has been a terrific start to the season," said the former England captain. "The average of goals has gone up, there has been some exciting games, we've seen the emergence of Manchester City and the Tottenham squad is getting bigger."

"Obviously with Manchester United losing Ronaldo it has pulled them back a little bit and the other top teams have not really brought in that many big players, so it seems to have opened up slightly at the top."

"You would still think Chelsea or Manchester United would win it this year, but we've had some unpredictable results which makes a nice change."

Lineker will be fronting the BBC's coverage of the 2010 World Cup in

South Africa and while this seems like a dream job for most, the predatory striker hinted he would much rather be in the penalty box than up in the commentary box.

"It is an awful lot of work," he said. "For the first two weeks we are doing two broadcasts a day and even when we are off air we are writing."

"But for me it's a wonderful way of being able to stay in football without being a manager."

"I think we [England] have got cause for optimism. It is a long way to go until we get there, but we have qualified and quite comfortably as well."

"The manager clearly knows what he is doing and he has got the side very well organised."

"He's brought back the discipline I think has been missing and that will have a good effect on the squad."

"The important thing is that we keep our star players fit. For the last three or four major championships we've been missing one or two big names."

"We've got a bit of strength in depth but we just can't afford to lose any of our top stars."

"I'm as excited as every other England fan and my ambition as a broadcaster is to say the words 'England have won the World Cup'. Hopefully this time around that will come true."

● Service personnel can now apply online for free tickets to a vast array of top class sporting events, shows and music concerts.

Among those giving their backing to Tickets for Troops are Premiership giants Arsenal, Manchester United and Chelsea, the O2 Arena, opera star Katherine Jenkins, *The X-Factor* and singer Joss Stone.

The scheme will be run as a non-political organisation and charity.

For more information or to register, visit www.ticketsfortroops.org.uk ■

'This is a small way to show them that we really do care'



Surf's up: Capt Martyn Jones (REME) took maximum points from his individual heat at the Inter-Services kitesurfing championships in Rhosneigr, North Wales

Sinking feeling for wave riders

Report: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

ARMY riders were tested to the very limit in the first-ever Inter-Services kitesurfing championships as gale-force winds battered competitors on the North Wales coastline.

Despite a strong showing in far from ideal conditions at Rhosneigr, the Service suffered an agonising defeat after finishing tied with the Royal Air Force on 15 points from seven heats.

The contest was decided on the results from the top seeds, where the airmen's number one triumphed over Army star Cfn Adam Hogarth (REME).

Rhosneigr was a venture into the unknown for the soldiers but the team was delighted with its performance and is now looking forward to the challenges of future championships.

WO1 Sammy Samanjoul (REME), secretary of the Army Kitesurfing

Association, told *SoldierSport*: "We had a competition with the Royal Navy in June which ended as a draw so we had no expectations or pre-judged opinions of what might happen in this event.

"The weather was unbelievable, it was absolutely blowing a gale. We had gusts of up to 40 knots and in normal circumstances we would not have gone out.

"The winds made it very challenging and everyone was pushed out of their comfort zone.

"However, they tested themselves to the limit doing moves they had only just got to grips with on eight-foot waves, so they did really well."

The championships saw seven riders from each Service going head-to-head in a seeded competition.

Each rider had ten minutes to

perform a variety of freestyle tricks such as jumps, twists, spins and board offs with scores judged on technicality, the power of the move, style and landing.

Capt Martyn Jones (REME) and Capt Jim Edwards (RE) both scored maximum points in their heats while Samanjoul, Hogarth, WO2 Kev Main

(R Anglian) and Sgt Wayne Thomas (AAC) all secured second places.

Kitesurfing is a rapidly emerging sport within the Army and plans are in place to ensure its expansion in 2010.

Thomas, who combines riding with his role as the association's information manager, said: "It is definitely getting more competitive. Kitesurfing, much like skiing and snowboarding, was frowned upon in the early days but we have got beyond that now."

'Kitesurfing was frowned upon in the early days but we have got beyond that now'



"There is quality tuition and instruction going on, whereas before there was virtually nothing.

"This competition was a real eye-opener and there are a lot of good people out there with more to come through. Now they know we exist hopefully we will continue to grow."

Thorney Island Water Sports Centre will host an instructor's course from March 8 to 12 next year followed by courses for beginners on June 21 to 25 and August 16 to 20.

To book a place call Jon Metcalfe at the centre on 01243 388315.

● The Inter-Services tournament was also the setting for the closely-fought Army championships.

Lt Col Mark Smyth (REME) won the big air competition, Hogarth took the title in the freestyle event and Jones was the overall heat winner.

Capt Mark Jeffries (REME) was best novice and Main best veteran. Thomas had the dubious honour of winning the wooden spoon award.

● For more information on Army kitesurfing visit www2.armynet.mod.uk/sports/asa/kitesurfing ■

Charity cash is Leven sent

Interview: Matthew Simms
Picture: Graeme Main

WITH the football season well under way, the impressive goal haul that has helped fire Milton Keynes Dons up the League One table is not just good news for illustrious manager Paul Ince.

Thanks to a generous gesture from midfield ace Peter Leven, Help For Heroes will receive a £5 bonus for every time the Dons breach their opposition's defence during the 2009/10 campaign.

"I've always been an admirer of the British Army," the former Rangers and Kilmarnock man said during an interview with *SoldierSport* at Stadium:MK.

"My grandfather was in the Scots Guards and his brother Billy was shot down over Holland during the Second World War.

"There's just not enough credit for what the British troops do for our country and with people being fans of what I do on the park, hopefully I can get that message across to them.

"I've never considered a career in the Army myself but if I got the call I would go. I think it would be the biggest honour to fight for your country."

After being inspired by the Sky One series *Ross Kemp in Afghanistan*, Leven approached MK Dons officials to see how

he and the team could play their part in making a difference for the brave men and women injured in combat.

"It has been going for about 22 days and I've raised more than £1,200 so far," the 25-year-old said. "Whatever I get Betfair are going to match, but it is not just about the money, it is about raising awareness for what the British troops do.

"Club captain Dean Lewington, Luke Howell and Stephen Gleeson are all helping me as well, but hopefully by the end of the year I can get a dinner and auction going to raise even more money and publicity for the troops."

After narrowly missing out on promotion last season – the club lost to Scunthorpe in the play-off semi-final – Ince has now banned use of the P word.

However, Leven remains confident the Dons can go one better this time round.

"It is going to be very difficult, especially when you look at teams like Leeds, Southampton, Charlton and even Norwich who were all in the Premier League not that long ago.

"They've still got big fan bases and the big stadiums so it is going to be tough, but that's who you want to play against week in, week out. It can only be good for the club."

● To support Leven in his fund-raising, visit www.justgiving.com/peter-leven ■



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Welsh warrior: Martial arts master Cpl Roger Sainsbury (1 Rifles) slams Sgt Graham Thomas (APTC) into the mat during a training session at Basingbourne

Sainsbury checks out

Interview: Richard Long
Picture: Graeme Main

JUDO star Cpl Roger Sainsbury (1 Rifles) will bid farewell to the spotlight of international competition next month when he steps off the mat in Singapore.

The 32-year-old will be part of the Welsh squad that will travel to South East Asia for the Commonwealth Judo Championships, a competition that sees players from all corners of the globe going head-to-head.

Sainsbury is hoping to improve on the bronze he won at the same tournament in 2006 before effectively retiring from the sport to pursue a new career in the Army Physical Training Corps.

SoldierSport met the South African-born lightweight in his training gym at Basingbourne Barracks to talk about his judo background and his expectations for Singapore.

"I am hoping to bring a medal back, that would be great," Sainsbury said.

"But it is a tough field. I will be up against Peter Cousins, who is a European champion and world silver medallist. There will be players from the African nations, Canada and Australia and at least 36 countries will be represented so it will be difficult."

The senior NCO has a 20-year pedigree in the sport and toured the world representing the South African national team at tournaments in countries as far-flung as South Korea and Uzbekistan.

His efforts took him to the brink of qualification for the Sydney Olympics in 2000 but a bronze medal at the African Championships was not enough to secure his place on the team.

Sainsbury swapped life on the world judo circuit for a career with the Army in 2002 but continued in the sport and went on to represent the Combined Services team.

He also caught the eye of the Welsh selectors after training with various clubs in his adopted homeland.

"My father served with the Royal Marines in the 1950s. I had a British passport and that seemed to be Welsh enough for them."

"In 2006 the Welsh team did not really speak to me until I was in the bronze medal match but there is a great spirit there now."

After competing in Singapore the player will focus his attentions on joining the APTC but he hopes to continue in the sport as a coach.

He is also predicting a bright future for the Army's judo stars.

"With the full-time schemes at Bath and Dartford the guys are training for four or five hours every day," Sainsbury said with a touch of envy in his voice.

"The training is phenomenal and the soldiers are very much conditioned for judo. I am 32 now and have missed out on that but it is a great system. Hopefully we will see some promising guys coming through." ■

'I am hoping to bring a medal back, that would be great'

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Man in black: Maj Danny McDermid (RLC) has a quiet word with MK Dons skipper Dean Lewington

Major in the middle

Interview: Richard Long

HAVING experienced the rigours of Army discipline during a 27-year career, Maj Danny McDermid (RLC) is well placed to control the prima donnas of professional football.

The 43-year-old is a regular fixture as a top Football League referee, a role he successfully combines with Service life.

Like many referees, McDermid

turned to officiating after his playing dreams were dashed and it was the Army who introduced him to the black strip.

"It came about from me playing. I got injured but kept going to watch," he told *SoldierSport*.

"I ended up being given the flag and one of the referees said I had the potential to be good at this, so I went and did the Army course."

"It was while I was posted in Northern Ireland. I got a lot of very good training with the Army and the mentors were fantastic."

McDermid made a name for himself as an official in the Yorkshire and District League after being posted to Catterick Garrison.

He rapidly climbed the refereeing ranks and is now in his seventh year of officiating in the Football League.

During his time in the professional

game he has taken charge of a relegation decider between Southampton and Leicester City and has sampled the atmosphere of matches at Elland Road and St James' Park.

Operating in such a pressured environment leads to the question of whether Service life prepares referees for battle on the pitch.

"I used to be an Army chef so you need a good sense of humour as you get a bit of abuse in that job," McDermid said.

"In terms of the management side my career in the Service can be a bit of a hindrance, in the Army you can be more disciplined and I have had to tone it down on the pitch."

Despite hitting the bright lights of the Football League McDermid still remembers his roots and was due to officiate at a REME match last month.

However, the Army man still harbours loftier ambitions.

"I am 43 now so the chance of getting to the Premiership is very limited. They are looking for young people but it is still an aspiration," he said.

● McDermid will be involved in the Army's basic referees course, to be held in Aldershot from January 18-22. Email graham.brookland@armyfa.com ■

'I got a lot of very good training with the Army and the mentors were fantastic'

SPORT SHORTS

MORE than 2,000 horses and riders will be galloping round Ascot Racecourse next year as part of a new Help For Heroes fund-raising initiative.

Horses For Heroes will see 2,010 steeds leave the venue for a ride round Windsor Great Park before returning to the course on Saturday, July 10.

For more details visit www.horses4heroes.co.uk

ALL six members of the Army canopy piloting team have been selected to represent Great Britain at this month's World Cup.

The Service squad, which boasts national skydiving champion Maj Alastair Macartney (RLC) and Cpl Deane Smith (RE), will be leaping 5,000ft in their bid to claim glory in South Africa.

Fresh from setting a world record of 32 base jumps in 24 hours in Malaysia to raise money for Help for Heroes, the duo will be joined in the team by WO1 Spencer Hogg (RLC), Cpl Stuart Storey (R Signals), Cpl Alan Westley (AAC) and LCpl Sean Sutcliffe (RE).

The event runs from December 1-6.

ARMY fighters struggled to make an impression against their military rivals at the Combined Services Boxing Association Novice Championships.

Only three boxers were victorious in the 11 bouts but coach Sgt Tony Davis (APTC) told *SoldierSport*: "It was a good measure of where we are and the guys now know the standard that is required."

The Army will host the Amateur Boxing Association novice semi-finals at Aldershot's Maida Gymnasium on December 12.

Davis hopes to have five fighters on the card and admission is free. The action starts at 1400.

WOMEN boxers are being invited to test their skills with the Army team.

Aldershot's 27 Regiment Gymnasium will host a training camp from January 18 to 29 for anyone interested in sampling the sport.

Team spokesman Capt Lydia Ratcliffe (AGC) said: "The whole point of the camp is to select girls for the ABA championships late next year. It does not matter what experience they have."

For more information on the training camp email lydiar@armymail.mod.uk

RECORD-BREAKING rower Maj (Retd) Ian Couch has his sights set on conquering the Atlantic Ocean this month.

The former Royal Anglian Regiment officer was part of an eight-man crew that set the world record time for rowing across the Indian Ocean in May.

He will now skipper an attempt at the Atlantic Ocean record, which currently stands at 33 days and seven hours.



Services tame Barbarian horde

Report: Richard Long
Pictures: Graeme Main

INSPIRED performances from Army big guns Pte Apo Satala and Pte Jack Prasad (both 1 Scots) guided the Combined Services to a close-fought victory over the Barbarians in the annual Remembrance Day fixture.

The flying Fijians were a constant threat to a talented Baa Baas side and both scored fine tries as the Services recorded a 22-19 win at Aldershot's Army Rugby Stadium.

The world famous Barbarians included players from seven different countries in their 22-man squad and they took the lead in the opening minute when Cardiff Blues flanker Rhys Shellard crashed through the hosts' defence to score on his debut.

Fly half David Blair kicked the

conversion to open a 7-0 lead and with the Baa Baas showing teasing glimpses of their famed attacking game there were suggestions the invitational team could run riot.

But with the early threat neutralised the Services established a foothold in the match through a penalty from fullback WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC).

With the momentum clearly shifting, the attacking instincts of Prasad became more prevalent and the skilled fly half created his side's opening try as he evaded would-be tacklers with a dynamic switch inside before offloading to Satala who powered home.

Roberts added the extras to establish a 10-7 lead but the Barbarians came

storming back with a prolonged spell of pressure as the interval approached.

Scottish international Simon Webster, who was superb on the wing, looked destined to score on the stroke of half time but an outstanding tackle from Cpl Greg Barden (RM) ensured the narrow lead remained intact.

Prasad scored a try of his own on 56 minutes, collecting a pass from Capt Ian Martin (3

Yorks) to touch down near the posts, and when Barden crossed to cap a fine night's work a Services victory was seemingly guaranteed.

But with minutes remaining Richmond second row Henry Head emerged from a maul to drive home through a melee of muddled bodies.

'We defended with real enthusiasm and we always had guys running back to guts it out'



And when replacement fullback Frankie Neale scored in the corner moments later the Services had to dig deep to protect their slender advantage.

The Army had a strong presence in this year's squad and Prasad was at the fulcrum of all their attacking play.

Satala made a succession of big hits on the day he was named in the Fiji squad to face Scotland and Roberts was outstanding at fullback, relieving the early Baa Baas pressure with a series of booming kicks.

Speaking to *SoldierSport* after his side's nail-biting victory, head coach WO2 Andy Price (WG) said: "The performance tonight shows the great way in which the squad has come together and they thoroughly deserve to come away with the win.

"I was particularly impressed with the committed effort we showed in defence. When the Barbarians broke through our line, which we knew they would, we defended with real enthusiasm and we always had guys running back to guts it out.

"Greg Barden did a lot of unsung

work as did Mark Lee. Satala and Prasad will take the headlines but I thought those two were magnificent, as was the entire front row."

The match was Roberts' last appearance in a Combined Services' shirt and the 32-year-old, who retired from Army rugby following the Reds' clash with the Navy earlier this year, was delighted with the outcome.

"To beat the Barbarians was a great way to sign off, it could not have happened any better," the 26-cap Army veteran said.

"I do not want to carry on for another

two or three years and become known as someone who hung around for too long. I wanted to go out on a high and it all fell into place. I would be a fool to say I will not miss it but I have my civvy rugby to keep me ticking over.

"It will be tough not being out on the pitch when the Army vs Navy match comes around next year but I have made my decision." ■

Services' stars, from left: WO2 Mal Roberts (RLC) lines up a kick during his final military match; the Combined Services line-out; Pte Apo Satala (1 Scots) offloads; flying winger Spr Gus Qasevakatini (RE) goes on the rampage

COMBINED SERVICES 22 - 19 BARBARIANS

Combined Services: Roberts; Qasevakatini; Barden; Nacamavuto; Magnus; Prasad; Pasco; Lewis; Dwyer; Budgen; Green; Ball; Satala; Lee; Evans. **Subs:** Matthews; Dowding; Scarf; Koroiyadi; Martin; Lloyd; Coetzer.

Tries: Satala; Prasad; Barden.

Conversions: Roberts (2). **Penalties:** Roberts (1).

SoldierSport man of the match: Pte Jack Prasad (1 Scots, right).



final word



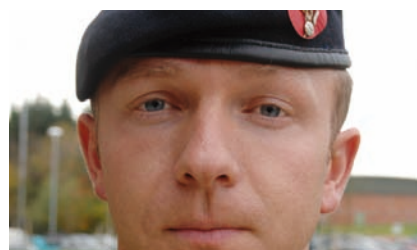
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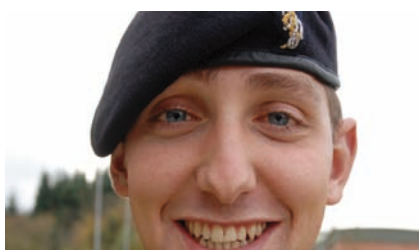
Tpr Rich Willcock (RDG)

I am really enjoying it. When you come in from a long day at work you can chill in your own room and you do not have to share a shower with six other people. The Richmond Centre with its bar, restaurant and shop is top class. It is a great facility for the soldiers. I had a four-man room in Germany, which was ok as I got on well with the lads, but I definitely prefer what I have got now.



Sgt Chris Kipling (REME)

It is the best I have ever had. I have just come from the foundation college at Harrogate but the rooms here are so much bigger with walk-in wardrobes and plenty of storage space. With the amount of kit you have these days it is great to have somewhere secure to store it. I have also been impressed with the standard of furniture, the Army stuff is normally quite old.



Lt James Sewell (REME)

This is my first posting as a lieutenant so I do not have much to compare my accommodation to. I have an en suite room and there are wardrobes for my military and civilian gear. I have everything with me; this is home, so I need the space. The facilities are also very good; we have a decent bar, coffee room and television area, so I have been really impressed.



Pte Dale Leadbeater (3 Yorks)

I love it here. I have really enjoyed the physical training, I just got stuck in and it has been great. The accommodation is very good – I was in a room of eight but as the platoon has got smaller there are now only three of us. I've got my own lockers and the bathrooms are spot on. When I finish here I'm off to the Falklands and then it's straight to Kenya. I cannot wait.



Kgn Mark Geoghegan (Lancs)

I think it has been fantastic. We have good access to showers and bathrooms. I am in an eight-man room, which sounds fairly cramped, but it is very spacious. I haven't got any complaints really. From here I am going to Cyprus for training ahead of operations in late March. I have trained hard during my time at Catterick and I cannot wait to go to the battalion.



Kgn Jeffrey Rowan (Lancs)

I am in week 20 of my training and the accommodation is very good. We have internet access, snooker tables and other things to keep us entertained. There are eight lads in the room and we all get on, we have lockers and showers. I am a 24-year-old with a daughter at home and when I first came here I found it quite hard but now I can get back at weekends, which really helps.



LCpl William Green (RDG)

In Germany I was in a four-man room so when you finished work it felt as if you never really left. Here you go home to your own private space. We have excellent facilities, we are not arguing over washing machines and wardrobes and we can cook our own food if we want. It also gives us the reassurance that we have somewhere secure to leave our kit.



Lt Nick Crocker (REME)

When I was on my young officers course I stayed in seven messes before coming here. On my arrival I found it absolutely amazing. I came when it first opened so it was a little sterile to begin with, but now it feels like home. It is a joint mess with the sergeants and we also share with the medics so there is a nice atmosphere in the evenings with a lot of banter.



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