

# SOLDIER

SPINELINE  
COMPETITION  
BUTLER, FERNANDEZ,  
MONTGOMERY,  
SHUTTLEWORTH



## Watchkeeper

Troops advance  
the Istar asset

## Smoking

Barracks ban kicks in

## Equality

What next for  
our Servicewomen?



# SOARING HIGH

Tigers return to the skies



**“THERE'S A MASSIVE  
BUZZ FOR THIS ONE”**

– Army parachutists talk getting  
back to business





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- 3 If your issue cannot be solved at the time then contact the dedicated help desk.
- 4 If you are unhappy about the resolution from your Industry Provider then talk to us direct on [RC-Sp-Army-Eats-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RC-Sp-Army-Eats-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk)



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# CONTENTS



Cover picture: Tigers Parachute Display Team

## FEATURES

### COVER STORY

**28 Sky's the limit**  
Tigers freefall team set for comeback

**32 Culture change**  
Diversity chief reacts to Servicewomen report

**36 One of the team**  
Female personnel on equality battle

**40 Flying forward**  
Gunners explore Watchkeeper's potential

**45 Joining the docs**  
Medics welcome game changing tech

## REGULARS

**7 The Informer**  
Top stories from across the Service

**20 Need to Know**  
Essential tips for today's personnel

**51 Bullet Points**  
Troops' intelligence assets

**57 Reviews**  
Games, books and movies to fill your downtime

**74 Final Word**  
Service athletes mull lockdown motivation

## SOLDIERSPORT

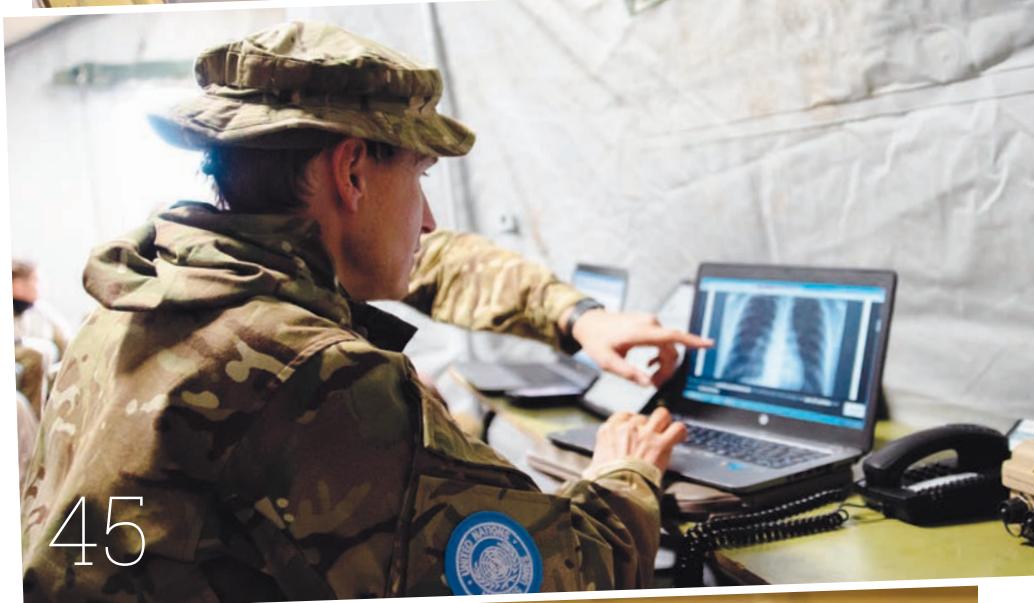
**64 Boxing**  
Artingstall reflects on Olympic success

**67 Shooting**  
Clay team identify new talent

**68 Mountain biking**  
Cross-country season closes at Minley

**71 Karate**  
Major tests loom after mat return

**72 Cricket**  
Record-breaking day for Army women



66

Morale was very high and there was a real sense of jubilation at being out jumping again

99

The sky's the limit – page 28

44



72



27



68



## Call for culture change



IN an organisation that is rightly obsessed with gadgets and emerging tech, it is easy to think the answer to all our problems lies in buying more stuff.

But as we mark World Suicide Prevention Day (page 7), and in the wake of some terrible scenes in Afghanistan (page 9) and a grim report into women in the military (page 32), it seems some of the Army's biggest challenges right now are the human ones.

Culture change – a big rethink on how we all act and look out for each other – is being called for. And as well as the mental health of mates, it is the Army's effectiveness on ops that is at stake if ignored.

Huge thanks to the courageous family of Spr Bradley Parks-Duckett (page 7) and to members of the Army Servicewomen's Network (page 36) for talking so frankly to us this month.

We would love to hear your thoughts on the issue of culture change over the coming months.

**Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor**

### WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY RECOMMENDED

**READ:** *Reasons to Stay Alive* by Matt Haig



## Where to find *Soldier*

### ► Printed copies

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

### ► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

### ► Online

DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at [www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](https://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk). Just click on the "read it now" tab.

### ► Purchase

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



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# 'Please know you are cared for'...

Picture: Graeme Main

## Parents of sapper who took his own life have an important message for soldiers

**A** COUPLE whose 21-year-old son took his own life at Swinton Barracks, Tidworth in 2019 are calling on soldiers and their leaders to check up on each other regularly – even when they don't suspect a problem.

With post-lockdown health data showing record levels of mental health problems across the UK, the message from the parents of Spr Bradley Parks-Duckett (RE) is timely.

And they say the issue can just as easily affect personnel who have a good awareness of mental illness.

"Bradley was someone who stressed how important that topic was," Rachel Parks (pictured right) told *Soldier*.

"He spent more time looking after other people than himself.

"We didn't know of any issues until he went downhill very quickly.

"He had lost two Army friends, one in an accident and another who took his own life, and that affected him."

In the UK, men are three times as likely as women to die by suicide.

September 10 is World Suicide Prevention Day and the Parks family, who are working with SSAFA to raise awareness of mental health, think soldiers should know the impact suicide has.

"It completely breaks you as a family," Rachel said. "Every day you wake up and think 'here we go again, he's not here'. "You can't get over it.

"People think that you have a funeral, you grieve, and that's it. But that grief is there for the rest of your life. It's every day and it never leaves.

"Struggling soldiers need to remember there are always people who love you.

"Sometimes they feel worthless and like no one cares – I don't think Bradley



Spr Bradley Parks-Duckett with his parents, John and Rachel Parks

realised how many people cared for him. His friends miss him like a brother.

"But if anyone else is feeling this way, please know you are cared for. If you take your own life, someone will miss you."

Military suicides have received a lot of media attention in recent times.

Jim Wilde (ex-RAOC), founder of the Veterans United Against Suicide action group, said that "buddy checks" were particularly important for those inside single living accommodation.

"When it comes to mental health, a lot of people in defence are sitting in front of spreadsheets looking for answers, when the answer is staring them in the face," he added. "Talk to the guys and girls."

The Parks family agree this is vital.

"We think people higher up the chain of command should be doing the same too," Rachel explained. "Soldiers are more likely to listen to their superiors if they tell them to get help. Because I think sometimes they're afraid for their careers."

John said: "Before Bradley died he bought a new car; he was loving life and making plans to go to the football. Nobody knew or saw what was to come.

"We can't bring him back but if our words stop anyone else from making the same decision, we will be glad." ■



**“**  
The grief  
never leaves  
“

# SOLDIER

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**SOLDIER – Magazine of the British Army**  
Ordnance Barracks, Government Road,  
Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU

SOLDIER is published by the Ministry of Defence and printed by Walstead (Roche) Ltd.  
Print contract managed by CDS.

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# GLOBAL SITREP

## 1. USA

### PARAS STRIKE HARD

MORE than 5,000 troops, including Reservists from the UK's airborne fraternity, converged on the National All-Domain Warfighting Centre in Michigan for a major shake-out of soldiering drills.

Hosted by the Michigan National Guard, Exercise Northern Strike is one of the American military's largest reserve readiness packages, focusing on expeditionary skills, command and control and joint integrated fires.

Along with members of 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and attached arms, personnel from Latvia and Liberia also got in on the action during the two-week test.



1. USA



## 2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

### LOUD AND CLEAR

SOLDIERS from the Royal Signals have been mapping radio sequences across the South Atlantic territory in a move to identify where coverage is poor.

Project Blackspot has seen the troops working to provide a comprehensive digital and physical map of transmission

quality – helping to keep the islands connected.

Most recently they gave Armed Forces colleagues based at Mount Pleasant Complex the once-over in the full suite of communications equipment.

The signallers showcased their range of disciplines available to commanders on exercises – from establishing a Bowman set-up to creating internet access in remote areas.



## 3. SIERRA LEONE

### PROUD PIONEER

A YOUNG woman has marched into the military history books after becoming the first female from the West African state to pass out of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

The newly appointed 2Lt Luckey Morson graduated from the Berkshire establishment after completing the demanding 44-week commissioning course.

It was the fulfilment of a lifelong dream for the soldier, from the capital Freetown, who applied to join her country's army the moment she finished her school exams.

She beat off tough competition to join 42 other international cadets from 22 countries at Sandhurst, and has now taken her place in Sierra Leone's military ranks.

The officer told reporters after the Sovereign's Parade (page 13): "I will use all I have learnt to inspire others to be better".



Pictures: Graeme Main

## 4. UK

### ALL AT SEA

SEAFARING novices have been circumnavigating the country as part of two separate sailing expeditions.

Exercise Northern Coastal Bayonet saw troops from various Infantry cap badges complete a 1,400-mile voyage from the Tyne, anticlockwise around the country via the Caledonian Canal.

Ten six-person teams, made up of mostly junior commanders, took turns tackling complex waters and changeable conditions on board the Infantry yacht, Bayonet.

They also competed at Cowes Week, becoming the most successful Army boat at the event.

Maj Charlie James (Rifles) said the exped had provided participants with a break from the norm after a difficult 18 months. He added: "The opportunity to take a well-founded boat offshore, with a novice crew, reminded us all of the challenges that

## 2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

lie beyond the horizon."

Meanwhile, personnel aboard the Royal Artillery's yacht, St Barbara V, will be welcomed back to Gosport this month following a similar voyage around the British mainland.

A flotilla of small craft will accompany them back to base after several weeks at sea during Exercise Dragon Magellan.

The package has tested 12 crews from different cap badges and with varying experience levels. Several personnel gained formal qualifications in the process.



## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Picture: LPhot Ben Sheard, RN

4. UK
6. AFGHANISTAN
3. SIERRA LEONE
5. SINGAPORE



### 5. SINGAPORE NAVAL MISSION CONNECTS SOLDIER WITH FAMILY'S PAST

A NAUTICAL deployment to the Far East has seen a sapper chart the same waters his grandfather risked his life to cross in the Second World War.

LCpl Charlie "Shaka" Hislop, of 42 Engineer Regiment (Geographic), is serving aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, which took part in multinational maritime drills in the Pacific last month.

As a geospatial intelligence specialist, the junior NCO

creates mapping products for the UK Carrier Strike Group, but along with the professional challenge, the fleet's route through the Straits of Malacca brought echoes of a dramatic chapter in his family's history.

His grandfather, Capt Bill Hislop (pictured below), was a



member of the Jat Regiment – an Indian Army formation based in Malaya – when the Japanese captured Singapore in 1941.

Cut off by the enemy's advance, Capt Hislop and his fellow officers mounted a daring escape with the aid of a

lighthouse keeper, who helped them reach the neighbouring island of Sumatra. From there they made their way to Sri Lanka and then home.

Reflecting on his own voyage, 80 years on, LCpl Hislop said: "It is my first time heading this far east, and great to be in the same part of the world where my grandfather's story took place.

"I am particularly keen to see the lighthouse."

Having joined the crew for pre-deployment training last year, the Royal Engineer added that he was enjoying life on board an aircraft carrier.



### 6. AFGHANISTAN

#### KABUL EXIT SPARKS MENTAL HEALTH FEARS

THE Army's strategic adviser on mental health has called on senior leaders to deliver "not words, but action" to support those distressed by the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan.

Col Tim Boughton said proper coordination and signposting were needed to help serving and former personnel struggling in the wake of the Taliban's resurgence.

As this issue went to press, troops from 16 Air Assault Brigade were trying to ensure the safe evacuation of British nationals and eligible Afghans, while insurgents surrounding Kabul airport looked on.

Amid desperate scenes of people clinging to planes as they took off and women throwing their babies over barbed-wire fences, Col Boughton said he had received numerous messages from troops and veterans talking of their despair.

"People are asking, 'was it worth it, why did I bother, why did I lose my friend, why did my son die?' and some are saying they don't know where to turn," he explained.

"Let's stop just pushing out tweets about how it's okay not to be okay and put something meaningful in place.

"We need to be united on this.

» **continued on page 11**

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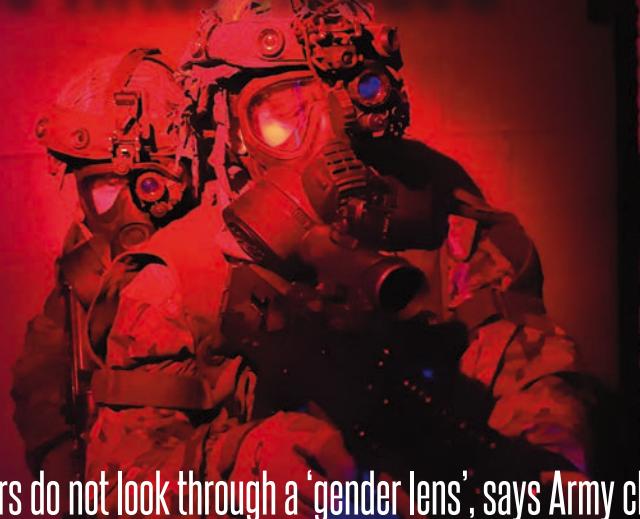
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# No filter needed



**Soldiers do not look through a 'gender lens', says Army chief**

**T**ODAY'S troops do not see each other through a "gender lens", but judge colleagues on whether they make the cut professionally, Chief of the General Staff, Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, has stressed.

The top officer (shown below) said soldiers were happy to fight alongside members of either sex, provided they were skilled and could be relied upon to do the job. He added that many female personnel were more than a match for their male counterparts, and there was an "excellent" level of competition.

The general's remarks come after a highly critical report on women in the Forces was released by the House of Commons defence select committee.

The document – *Protecting Those Who Protect Us* – criticised the MoD for missed recruitment targets for women as well as slow progress on tackling unacceptable behaviour and female-friendly uniform.

It highlighted the stories it unearthed as "truly shocking". But the Army's head of diversity and inclusion has vowed to pay close attention to its findings (page 32).

Gen Carleton-Smith's views were aired during an interview on the ABF charity's monthly

podcast, *General Talk*.

Asked about how troops felt about all Army roles being open to females, he added: "There is almost no distinction between our young men and women.

"They don't look at each other through a gender lens, but through a pure and simple metric – are you up to the job, and can I trust and rely upon you?"

Before ground close combat roles were opened up across the board, the senior officer said he had asked troops returning from Op Herrick whether they would accept being flanked by females under contact "in an irrigation ditch".

Gender did not matter if fellow personnel were loyal and capable, they had replied.

He said the calibre of female soldiers was impressive.

Elsewhere in the interview, CGS praised the Army for its role during the Covid-19 pandemic and discussed the implications of the Integrated Review.

While the restructure proposed cutting Regular troop numbers by 10,000 to 72,500, he pointed out this force would remain credible if equipped with state-of-the-art kit.

And it would also be backed by 30,000 Reservists.



**'Army culture is not broken'**

- page 32



**Servicewomen talk gender**

- page 36



## WARNING TO VETS OF AFGHANISTAN

**continued from page 9**

» "It is an opportunity for the three Services to come together and have a coherent plan that supports not only our serving and transitioning people and their families, but also the ex-military community via the various regimental associations.

"The Army isn't equipped to deliver mental healthcare to the whole cohort of veterans, no matter how much you think it should be, but we can make available to them the tools we have within the serving fraternity – such as OpSmart – and signpost them to credible organisations that can actually make a difference."

Increasing awareness of Op Courage – the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service – throughout the NHS would also be crucial, emphasised Col Boughton.

Meanwhile, social media channels were flooded with comments from current and former personnel expressing their dismay.

WO2 Rupert Frere (RLC) who completed three tours of Afghanistan between 2009 and 2013 as an Army photographer, said that while he was trying not to dwell too much on the current situation, he acknowledged it would be a trigger for some.

"I've been speaking to a lot of people and many feel frustrated and angry," he added. "With the media pumping stuff out all the time it is going to drag them down, especially if they are feeling low already."

"My personal view is we did what we could out there, but it couldn't go on forever."

"Moving forward we need to reach out to those affected and listen to them, while doing our best to support the Afghan people – I can't imagine what they are going through."

"Everyone who deployed there made a difference in the local communities where they served."

"The schools we opened, the villages cleared of IEDs, the shops opened for women, and the lives we changed in that time – we have to try and hold on to those positives."

The new Army sergeant major, WO1 Paul Carney (RE), urged troops to speak out if they were upset.

"There's always help available in the Service, whether it's about Afghanistan or any other operation or issue," he said. "That's not just now, that's always. But now is the time to talk if you want to."

He also highlighted the resources available via the health and wellbeing page on Defence Connect.

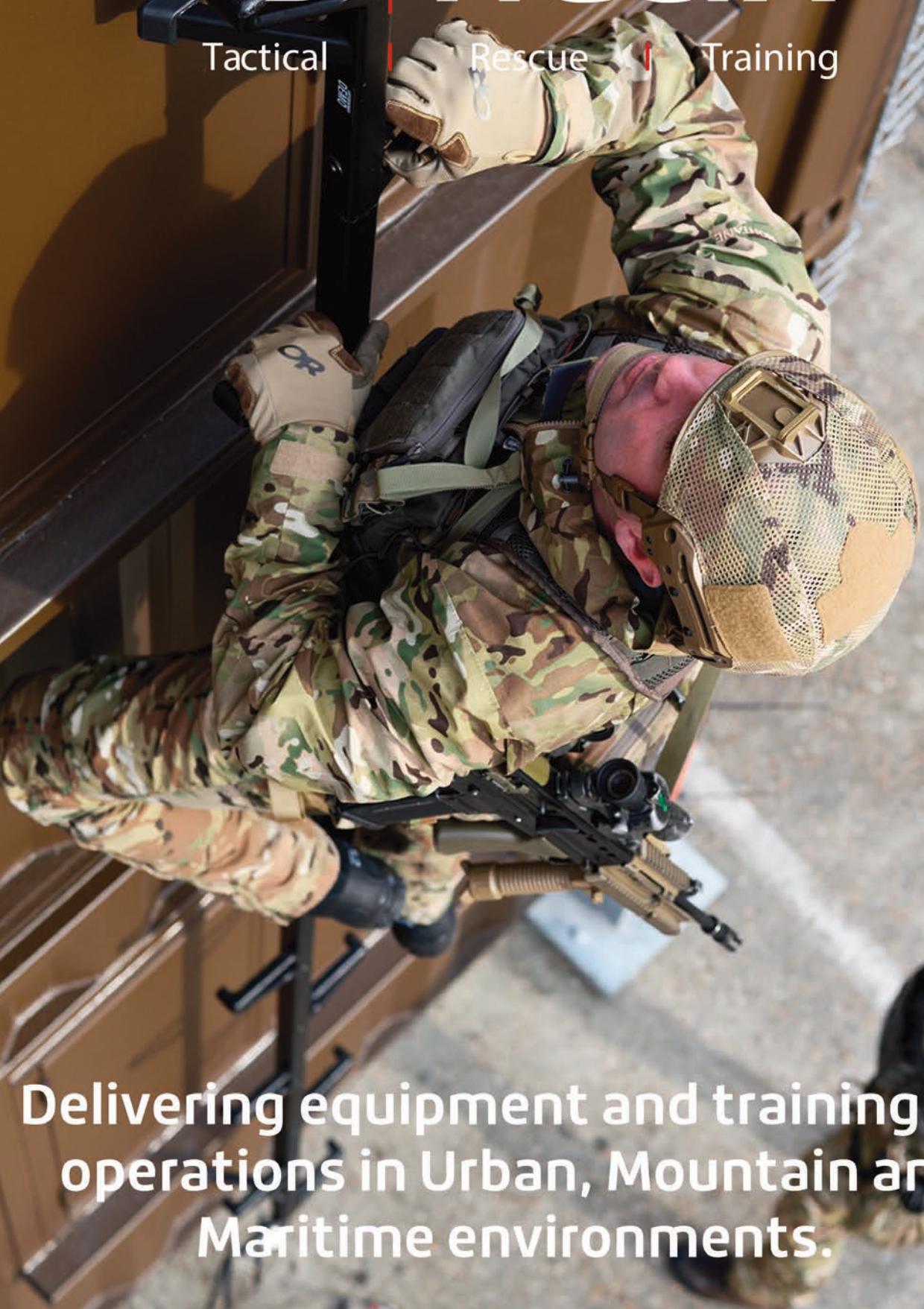


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THE Sovereign's Parade at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst saw 243 officer cadets from the Senior Division turn out on a drizzly Old College Square to mark the culmination of 44 weeks of gruelling training Picture: Graeme Main



## Fitness facilities on the way

**S**TRENGTH and conditioning centres are to be constructed at bases around the country as part of the Field Army's drive to reduce musculoskeletal injuries.

The facilities will be equipped with the kit required for soldiers to train effectively for the requirements of the Service's physical training system, delivered by Royal Army Physical Training Corps instructors and tailored to a unit's role and commitments.

Lt Col Dave Miller (RLC), the Field Army's lead on health and deployability, said the aim was to provide personnel with world-class training facilities.

"We want to improve the lived experience and unit deployability," he added. "We have to tackle the long-running issue of musculoskeletal injuries, which is the single largest

avoidable loss of people to the Army.

"We need to reduce such incidents by increasing capacity for our troops to prepare for the Army physical training system, which we know builds a better, stronger chassis and helps to reduce the number of people being broken."

"In the past gyms were considered an easy cut to make so we conducted a survey last year to determine where the most need was."

The results of that appraisal mean that some barracks will have these facilities housed in new, hangar-style structures erected on car parks or other hard standings.

"The survey helped us determine whether we could refurbish existing buildings and where we can't do that we build standalones, which are solar powered," commented Lt Col Miller.

See right for dates and locations.

**“**  
We want to  
improve unit  
deployability  
**”**

**Completed:** Bovington; Alma Lines, Catterick; Alival Bks, Tidworth; Picton Bks, Bulford; Elizabeth Bks, Pirbright

**Due this month:**  
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**Due October:** Vauxhall Bks, Didcot; Beacon Bks, Stafford

**Due November:**  
Lyneham; Leuchars Stn

**Due 2022:** Fort George; Alan Brooke Bks, Larkhill; Ward Bks, Bulford; Cambray Lines, Catterick; Brawdy; Marchwood; Kendrew Bks, Cottesmore; Regional Hub, Sennelager; Hermitage



## KIRBY'S COVID ACCLAIM

A SOLDIER who raised £8,000 for charity in memory of his mother has been nominated for a national "Coronavirus Hero" award.

Cpl James Kirby (Lancs) tabbed 154 miles from Preston to Catterick and back in aid of Blesma after his mum, Denise, died of Covid (Soldier, June).

He has now been shortlisted from 300 nominees in the Amplifon Awards for Brave Britons 2021, with the winner due to be announced next month.

## THE STUFF OF SCI-FI

THE jet-pack has blasted its way from science fiction into the real world.

Boffins from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory demonstrated a specialist jet-suit that allows wearers to zoom through the air like Marvel superhero Iron Man.

The brainchild of Richard Browning of UK firm Gravity Industries, it is being examined for possible military uses, including to board ships at sea.



## LONELY CALLS

NUMBERS of personnel and veterans seeking help for loneliness and isolation saw a big rise during the Covid lockdowns, a military charity has revealed.

SSAFA Forcesline said its staff fielded 65 per cent more contacts from those struggling with these problems compared to the 12 months before the pandemic.

More people also shunned picking up the phone in favour of online services, with use of the charity webchat up 260 per cent.

## IN NUMBERS

Cash donated to seven charities by high street discount scheme **Blue Light Card**



**£100k**

in recognition of the dedicated work of its military, NHS and blue light users during the Covid crisis. SSAFA was the Forces recipient.



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## SPINE LINE COMPETITION

LAST month's spine line clues – (Maj Olaf) Dudley, (Lt Tom) Garrod, (Sgt Andy) McArthur and (LCpl Will) Tolman – were interviewees in our feature "Engineering the Future". This month,

we have teamed up with online sports bra store Boobydoo ([boobydoo.co.uk](http://boobydoo.co.uk)) to offer three readers an Air Control Deltapad manufactured by Anita Active.

Retailing at £67, this garment represents a new concept in breast support, thanks to a patented foam cup which is triangular in shape and anchored in three places with power mesh for optimum ventilation.

To be in with a chance of winning one, tell us what links the words on the spine of this magazine. Answers, including telephone numbers and preferred size (30-42 AA-E, 30-38 F-G, 30-36 F-H), to the usual address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by September 30.



## PENSIONS EXPLAINED

THE MoD is aiming to improve soldiers' understanding of pension benefits with an awareness week from September 13 to 17. During this period factsheets will be published on Defence Connect explaining the advantages of the scheme.

On Tuesday, September 14 and Thursday, September 16 the Forces Pension Society will host a Q&A session and live presentations describing the steps Service personnel need to take to plan better for retirement.

Further information on the week will be available via the Army Facebook page, Chief of Defence People's Twitter feed and Defnet.

**“**  
It gives a  
glimpse into  
his mind  
**”**



## Monty the bath-dodger, and other revelations

A NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN letter in which Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery muses on life in the desert has been donated to the Tank Museum in Bovington.

In the note to his brother Harold from Africa, the *Soldier* founder (shown above) says he is enjoying being on ops and has "never felt better".

He also politely declines an invitation from his sibling and sister-in-law Betty to stay at their home as a guest, stressing "at present it is quite out of the question".

He then admits: "I have not had a bath for over a month but it seems to make very little difference.

"I am convinced now that we all wash too much."

The officer adds: "As a result, I presume, of no baths, I now have no colds – normally in England I have regular colds.

"I have never felt better in my life."

The correspondence, dated October 6, 1942, was received ahead of the pivotal clash with Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's German troops at El Alamein – a defining moment of the Second World War.

On the same day the British commander issued orders to his troops

stressing they must not surrender if the fight went against them.

Tank Museum curator David Willey (shown below with the letter) said the two-page, handwritten note offered some fascinating insights into the officer and his personality.

In thanking Hugh Fenzi – Harold's son – for donating the document, he added: "To have a letter from this hugely important period is wonderful.

"It gives a glimpse into the mind of the great field marshal and how he intended to get a grip on the situation. Despite the enormous pressure he is still able to discuss family news."

Willey added: "We already have some important items belonging to Montgomery, including the famous black beret that appears in many photographs of him.

"This letter is a great addition."



CROWDS descended on Bovington to see the world's only operational Tiger I at a sold-out Tank Museum event. The legendary platform was showcased alongside other Second World War fighting vehicles at the centre's Tiger Day, held twice a year in Dorset.



# Helping vets hit with legal action

**A**NATIONAL network of visiting officers has been set up to give veterans caught up in historic legal processes "gold standard" welfare support.

Part of the Army Operational Legacy Branch, the team is spread around the country to assist those contacted by coroners or investigators.

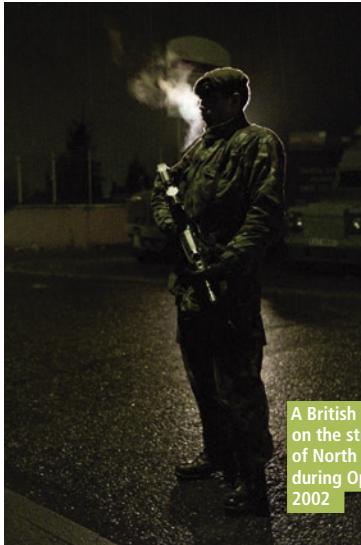
As well as accompanying them to court if they have to give evidence, its personnel work closely with organisations such as Veterans UK, regimental headquarters and Service charities to direct veterans to other help.

Capt Rich Hind (R Anglian) is among three full-time Reserve service officers recruited to the role so far – all of whom have been selected for their military experience and empathy.

The 52-year-old explained how his primary role was to offer reassurance during a time of potential stress.

"A lot of them are wary," he said. "They get a brown envelope through the door saying 'something happened in the 1970s and we want you to go to court in three months', so the critical thing is gaining trust and telling them we are here for them, and our care package is gold standard."

"They are proud and often say they don't need support, but when you scratch the surface you find out they may have had problems for decades and never even spoken about it to their partners, and then the legal proceedings bring it all back."



A British soldier on the streets of North Belfast during Op Banner, 2002

"They are in a sea of uncertainty and then you wrap this life-jacket around them and there's a sense of relief."

While most cases are linked to Northern Ireland, veterans of all past operations are eligible for help, including free legal advice provided separately by the branch's lawyers.

Department head Col Arwyn Lewis said: "The Army recognises the service and sacrifices these veterans have made and we are dedicated to providing comprehensive, long-term support for every individual".

To contact the team, call 07813 007392 or email [apsg-aolb-op-legacy-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:apsg-aolb-op-legacy-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk)

“They are in a sea of uncertainty”



Picture: Lcpl Anthony Halliwell-Martin, Rifles

**■** MEMBERS of 5th Battalion, The Rifles proved they could hit back hard against any enemy during training on Castlemartin Ranges. The package saw troops sharpen their mounted live-firing skills from Challenger 2, Warrior, and Scimitar. They also completed dismounted drills with mortars and the next generation light anti-tank weapon (pictured). The high tempo looks set to continue for these soldiers over the coming months, with Exercises Gaulish Eagle in France and Joint Endeavour in Ukraine in the pipeline, as well as the annual Army Warfighting Experiment.



Picture: ATDU

## CONSIGNED TO HISTORY

**■** THE upgraded Warrior 2 prototype will take pride of place at the Tank Museum in Bovington after the project was abandoned following a government review.

The ultra-rare variant of the platform (shown above) features a more advanced turret and other kit.

It is now being stored at the Dorset venue's conservation centre after being handed over by the Armoured Trials and Development Unit.

As previously reported in *Soldier*, the upgrade programme was canned this year after consideration by ministers and defence chiefs.

## WARNING OVER FUTURE SKYBORNE THREATS

**■** NATO must beef up air and missile defence capabilities if it is to counter the threat posed by potential enemies, analysts have said.

A study by the Royal United Services Institute found that member states lacked a joined-up approach, which was hindering the Alliance's "ability to project power and provide for the safety of its population".

The paper suggested the creation of a new system to counter hostile skyborne assets.

## CGS IS NO SCROOGE

**■** CHIEF of the General Staff Gen Sir Mark Carleton-Smith will be among the VIPs browsing the wares at ABF's Early Early Christmas Fair at Tedworth Park, Tidworth, from September 28-29.

Visit [eefair.org.uk](http://eefair.org.uk) for more information on the fundraising event, which will feature 120 stalls plus other exciting attractions.



SOLDIERS have recently graduated from the University of Portsmouth – the first ever cohort sponsored by the Army to study a chartered manager degree apprenticeship. The scheme aims to upskill personnel in business skills such as operational strategy and project management.

Illustration: Freepik

IN NUMBERS

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Picture: Shutterstock

# The deadliest of threats

## DSTL scores in fight against antibiotic resistance

IT MIGHT not sound like something to keep deployed soldiers awake at night, but the problem of antibiotic-resistant germs is one of the scariest threats that humanity faces.

The stench and agony of First World War field hospitals seems unimaginable today, yet military historians cite this as an example of the worst-case scenario should the issue go ignored over the coming years.

Lucky for British soldiers, then, that boffins at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) are working hard to find new ways of treating bacterial diseases.

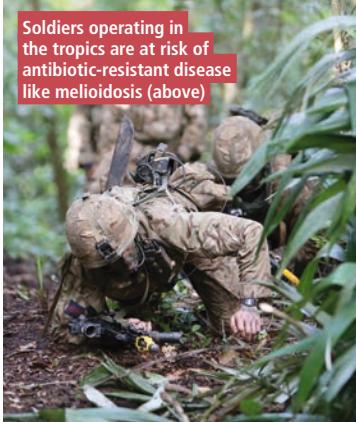
And their latest research has revealed some promising results.

Working with the microorganism that causes the deadly tropical disease melioidosis (above), civilian scientist Adam Taylor has found that antibiotics can be made more effective by directing them at infected immune cells using antibody therapy.

He explained how this approach could be a good solution.

"It can reduce the quantity of antibiotic and length of therapy needed to treat the disease, reducing the risk of antibiotic resistance," he said.

"Additionally, the targeting of antibiotic to the site of infection means the antibiotic should work better



Soldiers operating in the tropics are at risk of antibiotic-resistant disease like melioidosis (above)

and there is less killing of the normal beneficial bacteria present throughout the body."

Melioidosis kills 90,000 people across the globe every year, and with a British Army that is set to be deployed overseas more often in future, it is easy to see how any breakthrough could benefit troops.

Taylor added that the results were "really exciting".

"Sometimes you don't believe what you've seen, so you do the test again, but it's a great feeling when you have discovered something that could really make a difference," he said. "This work is absolutely crucial."

“  
Sometimes  
you don’t  
believe what  
you’ve seen  
”



Picture: Chris Connolly/GB Boxing



**Q&A**

Soldier quizzed DSTL scientist Adam Taylor

### Why is antibiotic resistance a problem for troops?

Infectious diseases can mean a soldier is too ill to work, resulting in temporary leave, medical discharge or even death. Some diseases have limited cures available and antibiotic resistance can make treatment difficult, so it is important to find and test new ways of protecting personnel. Troops can become infected accidentally – for example, through air or drinking water – or through deliberate release of a bacteria or virus.

### Why focus on melioidosis?

It's caused by a bacteria present in tropical countries and people can become infected by inhalation or contamination of cuts. Therefore it poses a risk to British soldiers deployed to these areas. The disease has also been seen in past conflicts such as American veterans returning from Vietnam.

### Is this a breakthrough?

Antibody-antibiotic therapy is an emerging technology and there are a few other examples from the past five years where it has been developed for other bacterial diseases. This is the first time it has been developed for melioidosis and, if successful, it could be a breakthrough in the treatment of this and other diseases of concern to UK military personnel.



## IN NUMBERS



6

Medals won by Team GB's boxers at the Olympics – the first of which was secured by Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA). Read about her Games campaign on pages 64-65



# Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, offers his take on Service life...

**I** WILL be honest from day one here – taking on this job feels a bit like a dream and I keep pinching myself to remind myself it is really happening.

It is a true honour to have been appointed as our Service's senior soldier and a privilege to represent you with senior commanders.

My predecessor Gav Paton has done a great job over the last few years and I'm looking forward to picking up where he left off.

Although we've known each other for some time, our backgrounds are very different. Whereas he is an infantryman and rifleman through-and-through, I'm a sapper and my career has been served out as a combat engineer in many different units.

In my last role I was the Field Army sergeant major.

Warrant officers tend to have been around for quite a while and I am no exception.

My first tour was in Kosovo in early 1999 – soon after this we saw how fast everything in the world could be turned on its head with the 9/11 attacks.

Along with many soldiers of my generation, I served on several tours of Iraq and Afghanistan.

These ops might be over now but there is still a fair bit going on.

We've had some challenging deployments in Africa with South Sudan and, more recently, Mali.

In Europe we've been working in Estonia and Ukraine while the pandemic has kept everyone occupied in the UK.

We are again experiencing a time of change with a lot happening in the world.

A few months ago the government published the Integrated Review and its follow-on paper talks about the Army being more deployed.

We will have to wait and see how this works out but there could be some exciting times ahead.

Most people still join the Army to go on overseas ops – it is the one opportunity you are never going to have in civvy life.

I'd never flown before I joined and I jumped out of the first plane I boarded.

Many people travel these days but a deployment remains our exclusive offer.

I want our troops to have every opportunity when they emerge from being recruits. I'd like to see them develop and become NCOs, to go on ops and use all they have learnt to bring on others.

And when their careers end, I want us to have prepared them for civvy life.

**“**  
**I want our troops to have every opportunity**  
**”**

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

**Q** What did you do on your last day off?

**A** Kayaking



**I** WILL be sharing some of my ideas with you in future columns, but here are some initial thoughts.

Like my predecessor, I'm passionate about the role of junior NCOs and giving them a share in the training of young soldiers.

But we need to empower them – words are not enough – and I am looking forward to seeing our young leaders being used in this way when I am out and about visiting units.

I know some places are doing this better than others, but we need to empower those on the first rungs of the promotion ladder.

Longer term, I'll be continuing the work to formalise NCO education and the development of an NCO academy, which has already been started by WO1 Paton.

Secondly, it's important we all take the time to understand our people.

If we get to know our soldiers, we can make better decisions based on

individuals.

If somebody has a sports injury, it is an obvious choice to rest them from PT rather than risking further damage. In the same way, noticing changes in behaviour or mood means that you can spot less obvious problems early on.

It is important that you let me know your views – so let's keep the comms open and tell me about any issues you have.

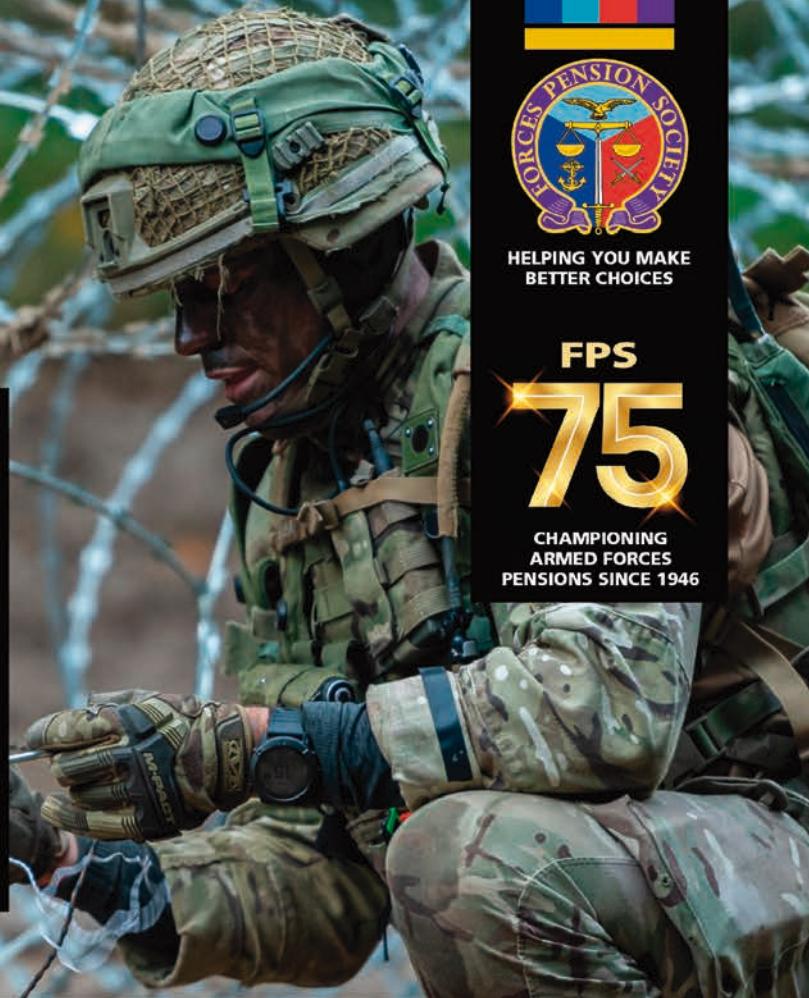


WO1 Paul Carney

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# WEED TO

DRILLS / SKILLS / HEALTH / EXPERIENCE

FITNESS

# 'It was a feeling of OUTRAGE'

Army medic's eyewitness account of 9/11, 20 years on



► IN 2001 Lt Col Peter Hale (RAMC) was in the final year of his Army-sponsored medical degree and seconded to a US Navy trauma team at Washington Hospital Centre.

The then 21-year-old (pictured below right, and above today) was one month into his stint in the busy ER when word came through that a passenger plane had hit the Pentagon...

**G**I remember it vividly. We were sitting in the staff common room having a meeting and a coffee and our pagers went off with a code orange, which meant a major incident had happened.

Looking out of the window across the city, where the Pentagon was on the other side of the Potomac River, you could see a big column of smoke rising up.

And then we started to see on the television what was happening in New York with the Twin Towers and rumours started spreading that a plane had also hit the Pentagon.

It was very worrying and uncertain because we knew three aircraft had crashed and we didn't know how many more there might be.

We quickly ran down to the ER to receive casualties but there was actually quite a significant delay before we

Picture: Getty Images





got the first one – it's a good ten miles from the hospital to the Pentagon and it was pandemonium on the streets, so ambulances couldn't get through.

Air traffic was also shut down for an hour because of security concerns so the hospital's helicopters couldn't fly.

Ours was one of the main trauma centres in DC and we received about 100 casualties over the course of three days.

A lot of what we dealt with was burns and injuries from the rubble. We didn't stop, we were grabbing sleep on sofas where we could.

At one point President Bush came to the hospital to visit patients and the medical team

got to meet him.

It was a traumatic thing for the nation. In terms of the insult to their country, for the Americans it was worse than Pearl Harbour, which was in the context of a world war and in quite a distant outpost.

Whereas on 9/11, never before had their homeland been struck in this way.

That feeling of outrage is like nothing else I've ever experienced.

However, the sense of friendship and the appreciation for me as British military working with them was also incredible. I don't think I bought a drink for the rest of my time there.

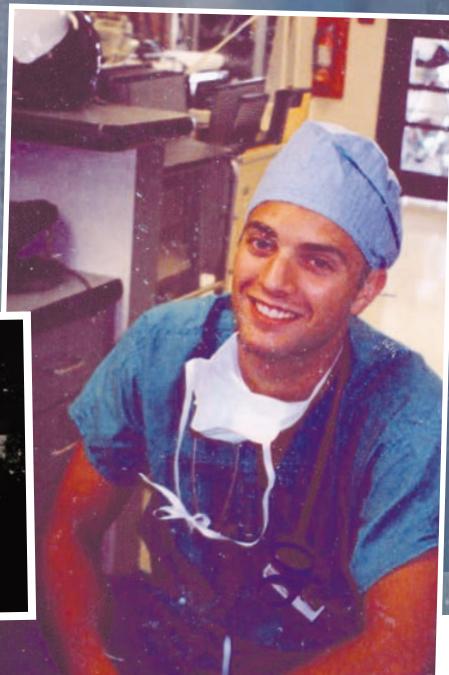
And of course, that spirit of kinship and partnership continued through operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I went on to do my officer training in 2003 and the day I finished I reported to RAF Brize Norton because my job was already in Iraq as the doctor of 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment on Telic 4.

That journey for me started on 9/11 because that was the beginning of the War on Terror. I did two tours of Iraq and one of Afghanistan, so the majority of my career was dominated by those events.

I do think about it often and on the anniversaries I definitely remember those times and the colleagues I worked with.

Two decades have now passed and it feels just like yesterday to me. It was very difficult, but it was extraordinary to see history unfolding.



# Smoke-free force

Lighting up will soon be banned on Army camps – the Service's senior health psychologist explains why



TIME'S up for smokers – from next month the Service is starting the roll out of its tobacco free working environment plan.

Headquarters establishments will be the first affected, with most other locations following on from January.

*Soldier* grilled Dr Nicola Sides from the Army Health Department to find out more about the policy...

## Why is this being done?

Because there's nothing good for you about smoking – the leading cause of downgrading in the military is musculoskeletal injury and you're significantly more likely to get an MSKI as a smoker. Your recovery will also be slower. Then there is the risk of lung cancer for both smokers and passive smokers

## How do smoking rates in the Army compare to civvy street?

An average of 25 per cent of soldiers smoke, but some units are as high as 40 per cent. Meanwhile, only 14.1 per cent of the general population smoke

## So what are the rules?

You won't be able to smoke anywhere on camp in the UK. That includes all military and civilian personnel, contractors and visitors. The only exception is people who live on site. Smoking shelters will remain for their use

## Which locations will be first to go smoke-free?

All four- to one-star headquarters formations will start next month, with the bulk of the rest following between January and March 2022. It's an addictive behaviour and not something that you can switch off overnight, so we need to give people as much time as possible to prepare for it

## It seems quite harsh...

This has been directed by the government, but we're not just doing it because we've been told to – it's for the benefit of individuals and the operational effectiveness of the organisation. But it's important to say we aren't telling people not to smoke – it's their decision, they just can't do it in their place of work. The idea is we reduce smoking prevalence

## Is what you are doing legal?

Yes. You have no legal right to smoke. But you do have the right to a private life, which is why people who live in can still smoke



## What about vaping?

E-cigarettes are not included in the ban. The current national guidance is that they are 95 per cent less harmful than actual cigarettes and are a very successful way for people to stop smoking

## Will troops be able to smoke on exercise?

Training areas, for example Salisbury Plain, are not exempt from this. However, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation is still working through its approach, in consultation with us, with roll-out in late 2022 likely

## Are other organisations doing something similar?

Yes, the NHS, and prison service have already successfully gone smoke-free and so have the RAF and Royal Navy



## What evidence do you have that this will actually help people to stop smoking?

When it was banned in pubs in 2007 there was a huge drop in smoking prevalence because of the extra effort involved in going outside to have a cigarette. It's what we call environmental restructuring – making it more difficult to do what we perceive as the wrong behaviour and easier to follow the desired behaviour

### 2 more reasons to be a quitter

#### **COLD HARD CASH**

The average smoker spends £38 per week on fags – the same as two large takeaway pizzas. Quit and in a month you could **save yourself £154 – or £1,382 per year**.

By your second year you could fund a luxury holiday worth **£3,700** and in ten years you could save a staggering **£18,513.60** – potentially enough for a house deposit.



#### **BETTER FITNESS**

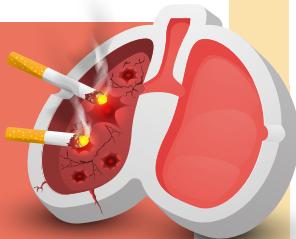
By giving up cigarettes you can **reduce your risk of injury by 60 per cent** and **your chances of getting a cold or flu by 50 per cent**. Smokers have reduced bone density with slower recovery in both soft tissue and fracture healing, so by stopping you could become stronger, run faster and exercise for longer.



## ▶ HEALTH

### Post-tobacco timeline

The positive changes to your health kick in pretty quickly when you stop smoking...



**20 mins**

your pulse and blood pressure start to lower



**8 hours**

oxygen levels begin to return to normal and the carbon monoxide in your blood reduces by half



**48 hours**

improved sense of smell and taste; mucus clearing from lungs



**72 hours**

you'll find it easier to breathe, and have more energy



**2-12 weeks**

your circulation will be better as fatty deposits in your blood vessels decrease



**3-9 months**

by now your lung function should have measurably improved



**1 year**

after 12 months your risk of dying from heart disease will have halved



**10 years**

a decade on from ditching fags your risk of death from lung cancer is 50 per cent lower



For full details on the Army policy scan the QR code

### GET SUPPORT

For help quitting smoking speak to your medical officer or Defence Public Health Unit. Further information is available via the Smoke-Free National Helpline on 0300 123 1044 and Action on Smoking and Health (ash.org.uk)

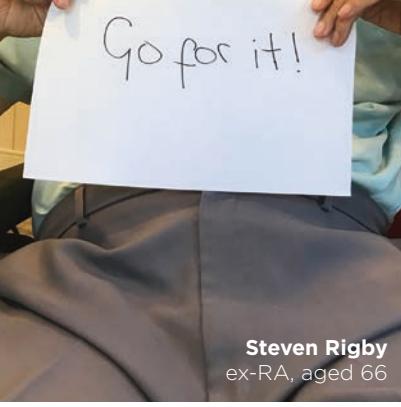
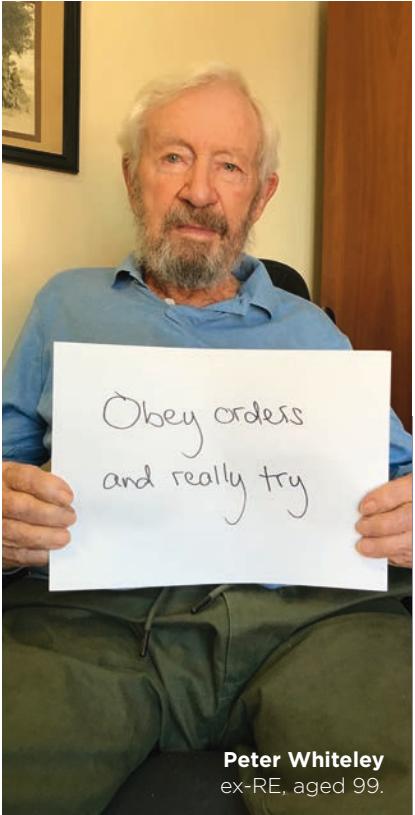
# Words of Wisdom

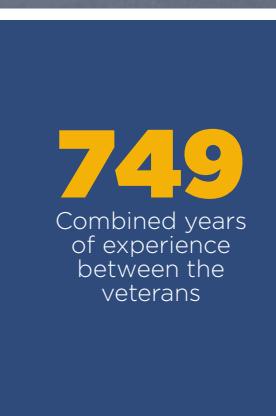
Veterans offer advice for the class of 2021

AS the latest batch of 750 recruits pass out of initial training at Harrogate's Army Foundation College, we asked residents from the Royal Star and Garter care homes for their top tips for soldiers starting out...



## ► SKILLS & DRILLS

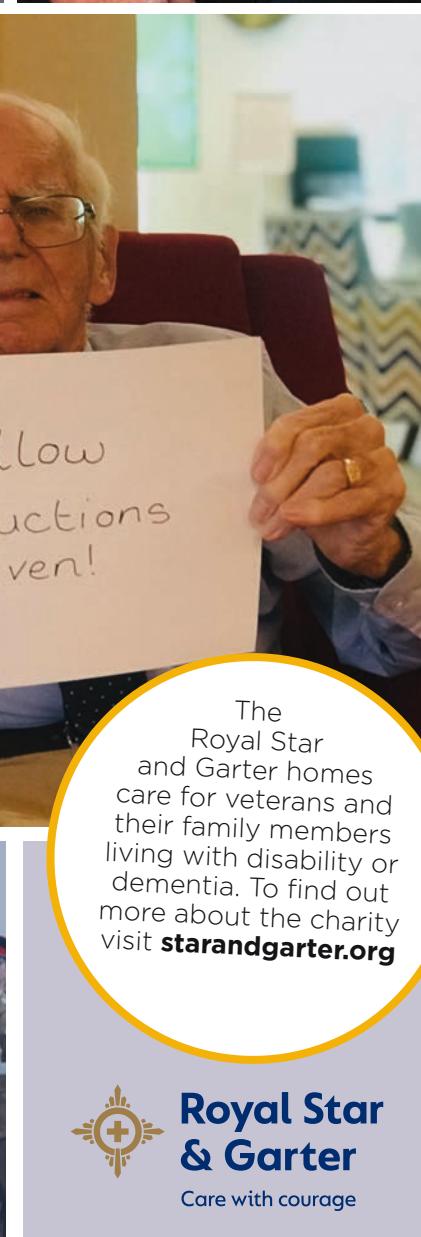




# 749

Combined years of experience between the veterans

**Michael Mossop**  
ex-RAPC, aged 91



**Royal Star & Garter**  
Care with courage

► WE'VE all been there. You finish a great workout in the gym or smash a new personal best out running and sure enough, wake up the next day feeling like you've been hit by a truck.

Regardless of your level of fitness, delayed onset muscle soreness – or Doms as it is commonly known – strikes when someone ups the intensity of their sessions or does a new type of exercise.

Any training, particularly resistance-style or weight training, creates micro-tears in the muscles, essentially causing inflammation. And it's as the body tries to repair itself that the pain sets in.

But according to Laura Burke, online fitness and nutrition coach and ambassador for supplement brand Wiley's Finest, there are a few steps you can take both before and after a workout to speed up your recovery.

### First off, rest

People have a tendency to over train, but the benefit of a workout is seen most when the body is allowed to recover and repair.

If you don't rest adequately you risk fatigue and potential injury. Active recovery is fine – going for a light walk, stretching or yoga. Doing nothing is okay too.

But in terms of nutrition, it's important to be consistent and not treat rest days like a day off. When the body is repairing itself, it needs all the good nutrients just as much as when we are training.

### Sleep!

This is hands down the most important part of post-workout recovery. Getting seven to eight hours will contribute to muscle repair and reduce inflammation.

If you are suffering with broken or poor sleep this is the first thing to try and improve on above all else. Small things like not eating too close to bed, wearing blue light glasses in the evening if looking at screens and not being on your phone in bed will all help you.

# Bounce back

...from delayed onset muscle soreness with these pro tips

## Stretching

I do this daily. Five minutes in the morning is a great way to wake the body up and contribute towards faster recovery.

Stretching pre- and post-workout is important too, focusing on dynamic stretches beforehand – anything that mimics the movements you are about to carry out – and then static stretches afterwards, where you hold a particular position for a few seconds

## Mobility training

Incorporating mobility and flexibility sessions, such as yoga, into a fitness regime can make you less susceptible to soreness and aid recovery time

## Foam rolling

This is fantastic pre-workout to warm up the muscles and get blood flowing, and on a rest day to help break the muscles down again. Avoid doing it directly after a workout when the body is inflamed and tender

## Sports massage

I highly recommend this as a form of rehab on rest days and to aid recovery. It is a great way to soften and lengthen the muscles and reduce risk of injury

## Nutrition must be on point

I often see people not eating enough to fuel their training because they don't know their macronutrient and calorific needs.

Those who train regularly or intensively

must ensure they are eating well and taking the relevant nutritional supplements if necessary. Two of my favourite ones are...

### ● Vitamin C

In general, this boosts our immunity and in turn our ability to respond to inflammation. It also helps the body produce more collagen, a type of protein that facilitates muscle repair and recovery

### ● Omega 3

I am a massive fan of this nutrient, which is found in oily fish such as salmon and mackerel but can go overlooked as it's hard to get enough from our diet – particularly if you're not keen on fish. It's crucial for hormone, joint and heart health, as well as regulating blood pressure. Research from the University of Westminster also showed people who took Omega 3 had a lower inflammatory response and less muscle damage after intense exercise, compared to those who took a placebo. Look for products high in fatty acids known as DHA and EPA



Follow @lauraburkefitness on Instagram for more workout and nutrition advice

# THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

Tigers set for comeback display at south coast showcase

Report: Richard Long | Pictures: Graeme Main, Tigers Army Parachute Display Team



IT IS billed as one of the biggest air shows in Europe, with crowds packing the beach fronts and clifftops to gain a prime viewing position of the action in the skies above.

The backdrop is the obvious playground for the Royal Air Force and with the Red Arrows, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and Typhoon multi-role fighter among its headline acts, this month's Bournemouth Air Festival promises to be a weekend to remember.

But it will also prove to be a key moment from a Service perspective as the Tigers Army Parachute Display Team will jump

on each of the event's four days in their first major outing since the easing of Covid restrictions.

Having seen their 2020 schedule completely wiped out, it represents an eagerly anticipated return for the personnel – who largely stem from 1st Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment – after a lengthy spell on the ground.

"There is a massive buzz for this one," Officer Commanding Capt Oliver Soord-Gurney told *Soldier*.



"We've already supported the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers on some displays, but Bournemouth is the big one.

"It is the size of the event. Normally we would do one stint at a show, but with this it is two displays a day, for four days.

"It is huge, and there are so many different things going on.

"Covid was a very frustrating time for the team. We did a lot of online training, and it was quite admin heavy, but the most important thing is maintaining those jump numbers.

"Waiting for the Army's parachute centre to reopen was one of the biggest issues we faced. We do not have our own aircraft, so are reliant on them, but we managed to start again in the spring.

"We were training with the REME Lightning Bolts and Royal Logistic Corps Silver Stars and did a number of jumps, culminating in a practice demonstration over the polo pitches in Tidworth.

"Morale was very high and there was a real sense of jubilation at being out jumping again.

"Normally, everyone would be current and compliant in March, so it has taken a lot longer than usual, but we have fully caught up and are ready to go."

While the current line-up is now up to speed, plans to recruit the next generation of parachutists have also been impacted by coronavirus.

The team stages an annual expedition in the United States as part of its hunt for fresh talent but, like planned displays in the likes of Denmark and Malta, the latest trip had to be shelved.

Capt Soord-Gurney, a Reservist with 3 PWRR, said he hoped the next camp will go ahead later this year and it will be a vital exercise in terms of the set-up's long-term future.

Those who progress from the expedition with a desire to join will have to undergo an intensive programme at the Army Air Wing, where they will complete 200 jumps to earn the required C license qualification.

A two-year posting with the team then follows, although members have the option to extend that further.

"Most come and enjoy it, and then end up staying longer," the officer, who has served for 15 years, added. "To maintain our capability, we need people to keep going up."

"For example, to participate in a display with a big flag you need to be a tandem instructor – and that comes with 600 jumps.

"So we need them to continue, which means almost sacrificing their careers.

"I had never done parachuting when I took over as the OC – I had no idea what to expect.

"I have a background in AT, with qualifications in mountaineering, skiing, and climbing, and I thought this would be a really interesting job. It is completely different to anything I have done in the military.

"When we go overseas, I'm often the most senior ranking military officer there and will find myself talking to high-profile politicians and defence attaches – even the queen of Denmark.

"We are there representing the Army, and Britain as whole – it is really exciting.

"We also have a lot of privates and lance corporals doing jobs they would never normally expect to do. They are responsible for maintaining and rigging the parachutes of three teams, running official social media accounts and we have a rifleman serving as our tandem jump coordinator, dealing with members of the public daily."

The latter reference serves to illustrate the evolving nature of the Tigers, which is no longer just the domain of 1 PWRR.

It boasts members from 2nd Battalion, The Mercian Regiment and The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers – whose commanding officer, Lt Col Rob Arter, is a strong supporter of the team given it is based at the same camp as his unit.

Personnel from 3 and 4 PWRR also supplement the ranks.

With the tempo now ramping up, the soldiers are looking ahead to a strong end to 2021 before focusing on the challenges to come next year – which already look considerable.

"It is looking like a busier period than we would normally have," Capt Soord-Gurney added.

"It will be brilliant, especially if we can get overseas to places like Croatia, Slovenia and Malta. We have good ties with the Canadian display team and there is a possibility of doing something in LA with the US Army team, which will be amazing. It promises to be an exciting time." ▶

**“Morale was very high and there was a real sense of jubilation at being out jumping again”**



## TIGER TALK

Personnel offer an insight into life on the team

**Name:** Pte Will Sims

**Unit:** 1 PWRR

**Age:** 23

**Years on the team:** 4



### Tell us about your jump background

"I managed to do the US expedition in 2017 – I loved it and thought it was incredible. I then did a couple of years back at my unit, but always wanted to join the team. I went to the Army Air Wing to get my jump numbers up and moved over in November 2019."

### What do you enjoy about the pursuit?

"It is the thrill and excitement of jumping out of a plane. I'm now on my 380th jump, but I still get that buzz. I was a total novice and never thought I'd be doing something like this – it has really opened my eyes."

### How did you pass the time during lockdown?

"We were having Zoom meetings with our team leader to go through different safety elements. Every time we do something different, we need to have a brief – some of which can be quite in-depth. We were also involved in the Covid testing effort in Folkestone, working with the hauliers. It was good to be part of that and show we could do something to help."

### How easy has it been to get back into the routine of jumping?

"We've done a lot of team training to get our numbers up. It has been quite straightforward, because we had those Zoom calls we never really forgot about the safety aspects – the only thing we missed was the adrenalin of the jumps. I'm glad to be back – I've really missed it."

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Members of the Tigers Army Parachute Display Team deployed on Op Rescript and helped carry out tests for cross-channel hauliers during the third national lockdown

- The team offers tandem skydive experiences for civilians and military personnel
- It can also deliver one-jump day courses as an adventurous training package for soldiers in The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment
- The annual expedition to the US is open to troops from across the Queen's Division

● **For more information visit** [thetigersfft.co.uk](http://thetigersfft.co.uk) **or search** Tigers FFT **on social media**





**Name:** LCpl Daniel Hurst

**Unit:** 1 PWRR

**Age:** 34

**Years on the team:** 4



**Tell us about your jump background**

“I did the expedition to America and then went on a second one as an advanced jumper, which is when I really got into it. I went to Cyprus for three years but once I got back to the UK, I wanted to join the team.”

**What do you enjoy about the pursuit?**

“I’m an adrenalin junkie. It is the fear factor and I thought ‘why not give it a go?’. I struggle with heights and that first jump was pretty bad. However, the second was worse as I knew what was coming. But after that I fell in love with it.”

**How disappointing was missing out on the 2020 season?**

“It was a huge drawback as we were not doing what we can in front of crowds. We were able to do some jumps, but it was just training. Some of us were getting dangerously close in terms of currency numbers so it was frustrating. But at the same time, it was a good thing as it allowed us to do extra training and we now have high hopes for next season. We were also able to enter our first formation skydiving competitions. That was great experience, especially for me as I was filming the four skydivers and had to get close enough to provide a clear picture for the judges.”

**What are your thoughts on the team’s return to Bournemouth?**

“It is one of our busiest shows and, representing the British Army in front of so many people, your sense of job satisfaction goes through the roof. It is an amazing feeling when you come



in. We’ve got a few new members on the team this year and it will be nice for them to get some fillers in beforehand, so when it comes to Bournemouth Air Festival, they will not be thinking about it too much.”

**What are the benefits of performing at events like these?**

“No matter where we go, people always want to talk to us. We give out a lot of information, not just about the PWRR but the Army in general. We even have Armed Forces personnel asking how they can get on to different courses. The engagement side of it is very important and an event like Bournemouth hits all the targets the Army wants in terms of recruitment.”

**How does being part of the Tigers display team compare to other experiences in your Service career?**

“When I first joined the battalion I served at Woolwich, doing the Queen’s Guard. Kenya has always been great in terms of exercises and my time in Cyprus was amazing, but this is definitely the best when it comes to job satisfaction. Skydiving is something I may have done outside the Army, but the opportunities I’ve had here are second to none.”

**Finally, what do you say to those who see postings such as this as a career fail?**

“I guess it is, to a degree. I’m eligible for promotion but because I’ve not been back at my unit, I haven’t been able to pick up. However, it balances out and I’m willing to risk staying here a little bit longer as the job satisfaction is so good. I feel like I’m making more of an impact for the Army here than I would be by stagging on.”

# ARMY CULTURE

**A**WHITE, hetero, middle-aged, married man with two kids – in many ways Brig Christopher Coles is not the obvious candidate to oversee diversity for the British Army.

But when I interview him about a recent parliamentary report criticising the military's treatment of, and attitude towards, women (see page 34) he is at pains to point this out himself.

Everything he has to say on gender comes with a health warning.

"You can never walk in someone else's shoes," he cautions. "Life has taught me that if you pin your ears back and listen, there is a lot to learn."

"There is no getting away from the fact that in this report, Servicewomen shared some incredibly unpleasant experiences that I would like to think are not a part of life in the Army today."

"In my view, and from what I can see, the situation is certainly improving. But I would never deny the negative experiences of any woman, and we certainly have more to do."

His words set the tone

## Head of diversity and inclusion reacts to grim report on women in the military

for how the top brass seem to be approaching this report.

It may contain some uncomfortable findings from serving and former Servicewomen – tales of groping, unwanted sexual advances from senior colleagues and bullying for refusing them – but the Army is listening.

Brig Coles admits the document was a "difficult read". But he maintains such experiences are an exception to the rule, and being eradicated more and more successfully with special inclusion training for leaders and new reporting tools for women themselves.

"If you are a female who served 30 years ago and was treated badly, it's no real comfort that the situation has improved now," the senior officer concedes.

"But the ground is changing significantly.

"There's

a really telling line in the report that says nearly 90 per cent of those questioned would recommend the Forces to other women, and I take some good from that."

*Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life* covers many areas, from the military justice and complaints systems to health and female representation at the highest ranks (spoiler alert – there isn't much).

But it is the need for culture change across every area of Army life that comes across most strongly.

The report defines the problem like this: "Within the military culture of the Armed Forces and the MoD, it is still a man's world.

"Although many Servicewomen are able to cope with this, we do not think they should have to.

"If the MoD is serious about making the Forces more representative of UK society, it needs to be proactive in making more space for under-represented groups, including Servicewomen, and reforming the prevailing culture."

Brig Coles agrees that making women feel like they truly belong will be a huge step in getting more of them through the door.

"If you get inclusion right, you get to diversity," he says.

"But despite our genuinely good efforts to argue the case for diversity, some personnel still do not want to know.

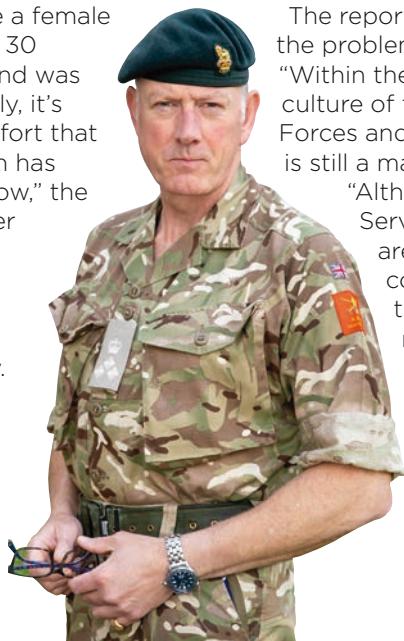
"Do those people have a place in today's Army? Not really.

"It all comes down to understanding that the more genuine diversity a team has, the greater its strength on operations.

"If you stop to listen to the members of diverse teams, what you will hear is lots of different takes on how to solve a problem – one that you might have thought could only be solved one way.

"This is about success, as much as doing the right thing."

However, leaders will



# IS NOT BROKEN



need to help if the Army is to stand any chance of meaningful change.

Brig Coles and his ten-strong team cannot do this alone.

"It's for leaders at all levels to close that gap between what we say and how we behave," the officer adds.

"Of course, there will

be individuals who are not representative of the bigger picture.

"But my experience is that senior leaders understand the challenge and are determined to make a difference."

I ask whether the Service's current "a soldier is a soldier" recruitment campaign is at odds with

this attitude, claiming female fighters need no different treatment on operations.

"Gender is not something we expect women to leave at the front door," he replies. "It's a welcome difference. What you bring with you is what the Army values.

"But 'a soldier is a

soldier' works for me.

"This is about understanding difference to allow people to give of their best."

He continues: "Our culture may need to change, but Army culture is not broken.

"It has a long and proud history that is built on strong teams. And those are the result of inclusion."

So what should serving troops make of the report?

"They must draw from their own experiences of Service life," he says. "And when those are anything other than good, they must have the confidence to speak up.

"We try to create the means and channels for people to do this, but it's an ongoing battle to instil confidence in them.

"The Speak Out helpline is brilliant, and I could reel off a list of other things we are doing with mentoring, unconscious bias training and more in order to effect change.

"My team also has really close contact with the Army Servicewomen's Network too (see next page).

"We have three dedicated staff whose job is to give our networks a voice. These groups tell us what we do not know." ▶

Having been on a campaign footing since last year, the Diversity and Inclusion Team is set to be busy over the coming months.

"I think the thing the report outlines is the need to get on with all this now," Brig Coles concludes.

"The Army intends to respond as progressively as possible.

"Uniform and kit - both of these are very much on the cards for attention now too."

He cautions, though, that while some elements can be hurried along, culture change itself cannot happen overnight.

"It takes time," he says.

"And we won't fully realise any of the change that's been effected now until further down the line.

"But this is a welcome challenge, and such a worthwhile thing to do."

So what will success look like?

"Having Servicewomen tell different and better stories is one measure," Brig Coles continues.

"We will also look at what people say in the continuous attitude surveys and sexual harassment surveys."

As the senior officer who was in charge of soldier welfare in the wake of the Deepcut Barracks deaths, Brig Coles is well aware of the impact when things go wrong for personnel and they are not properly looked after.

Eyes will not just be on his team, but every part of the Army, over the coming months to see that it doesn't just talk a good game on gender equality, but puts its money where its mouth is.

# REPORT FINDINGS

*Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life* had the following to say on some important topics...



## BULLYING

"There is too much bullying, harassment and discrimination - including criminal behaviours like sexual assault and rape - affecting Service personnel (both male and female), and the MoD's own statistics leave no room for doubt that female Service personnel suffer disproportionately.

We were alarmed and appalled that the Army's sexual harassment survey of 2018 found that 21 per cent of Servicewomen had either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment at work in the previous 12 months.

Such a figure should have raised major concerns in the Army but appears not to have done so.

The stories that we heard are truly shocking and they

gravely concern us.

They are also disappointing given the MoD's commitment to ending unacceptable behaviours and the rollout of initiatives like bystander training.

In particular, we are disturbed by repeated examples of senior ranks failing those they command, by not responding appropriately or even engaging in these behaviours themselves.

Some of the language we heard from senior leaders also concerned us, as it appeared to imply Servicewomen wanting to progress need to learn to put up with these behaviours.

Let us be clear: this behaviour is harming the health, careers and operational effectiveness of our Service personnel and has no place in the military.

It also damages the reputation of all Service personnel, the majority of whom conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism.

The Forces and the MoD must continue to root out these behaviours and must respond better when they occur."

## CHILDCARE

"The MoD should roll out the wraparound childcare scheme to all bases and to all Services by the end of 2022, following the pilots.

In the roll-out, the MoD should work closely with the Department for Education and equivalent in the devolved nations, and local authorities."



## KIT

"We support the MoD's recent steps to provide more appropriate uniform and equipment to female Service personnel, including redesigning aircrew equipment and trialling better-fitting body armour.

However, women have been able to serve in all parts of the military since late 2018, and at least seven out of ten roles in each Service have been open for years longer.

We find it extraordinary that uniforms and equipment are still a problem across all Services.

Thousands of female Forces personnel, already facing the dangers of military duty, are at greater risk of harm due to basic failures in their uniform and equipment, which can have consequences for their combat effectiveness and health.

Fixing these problems is one of the simplest ways that the Forces can demonstrate they value Servicewomen."



## FEMALE VETERANS

"Many feel their Service is not recognised.

Furthermore, ex-military women do not always access male-focused transition and veterans' services.

In our survey, three-quarters of veteran respondents said the MoD was not helpful in their transition; over half said that their needs are not being met by current veteran services.

Despite notable examples (such as the Salute Her service and the WRAC Association), there are very few specialised support services for female veterans in the UK."

# SIERRA ALPHA VICTOR ECHO



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# ONE OF THE

Times may have changed but day-to-day life still has its issues for females in this organisation

*Soldier* caught up with members of the **Army Servicewomen's Network** to find out what more needs to be done to make the military a rewarding career for everyone...



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main, Steve Dock, Peter Davies

**I**MAGINE a senior officer visiting your unit on exercise and acknowledging every soldier in the field except you.

At best you might conclude you had been accidentally ignored. But at worst it could leave you feeling seriously alienated.

If it happened once, perhaps you might forget it. But if the incident was repeated every time someone visited the battalion, your confidence would likely take a hit – followed by self doubt. If you aren't seen as one of the team, perhaps you aren't up to the job?

This is just one example of how the seemingly harmless actions of one person can make a colleague's life really uncomfortable.

And it will be a familiar story to any Servicewoman whose team is regularly addressed as "lads" or "sirs" by the boss.

It might not be the worst sort of behaviour that commanders are required to root out, but nevertheless it is something the Service is tackling in order to encourage more females into the ranks and – vitally – have them stick around.

"The Army has been doing a lot of work around improving our organisational culture," Lt Col Rachel Emmerson (RLC) tells *Soldier*.

As well as being a member of the Army Servicewomen's Network, the officer works in the Diversity and Inclusion Team at Army HQ, allowing her to help inform new policies that will support the one-in-ten soldiers who are female.

"We have been focusing on the lower-level stuff; helping people to understand what unacceptable behaviour looks like," she continues.

"It is all about ensuring





# TEAM

individuals have a good lived experience in the Army and feel like they belong on the team."

It is work that certainly needs doing, as the Army's senior leaders have conceded (page 32).

A recent study by Anglia Ruskin University (*Soldier*, July) underscored that the culture of military life must be addressed to make women feel included.

Internal surveys, focus groups and online feedback have also flagged that outdated attitudes still prevail around some barracks.

Then came a damning defence committee report (*Soldier*, August), which said that bullying and harassment of women continues to be too much of a problem in the Armed Forces community.

But rather than acting as "thought police" – a criticism sometimes levelled at those seeking to change attitudes among Service personnel – the Army wants to encourage more honest conversations about some of the unintended actions that could be ostracising female troops. And this begins with challenging inappropriate language.

## CALLING IT OUT

"One of the frustrations for anyone that belongs to an under-represented group is when it is left to them to

call something out," Lt Col Emmerson explains.

"It shouldn't always be up to women to point out that not everyone in that room is a 'sir'.

"It's about treating people with respect."

Fellow network member Capt Jessica Watts (REME) agrees.

"It gets tiring when it's constantly you saying 'come on, that's not okay,'" she adds.

But after seeing junior soldiers voice their objection to inappropriate jokes from more senior staff recently, she and others in the network are confident life is changing.

Bystander training, available to anyone through the Defence Gateway, helps soldiers to recognise what is classed as unacceptable and why, and gives them the confidence to speak up when they witness it – even to superiors.

And a network of unit diversity and inclusion advisers as well as voluntary diversity "allies" are also helping to challenge sexism. The ally awareness course is open to all ranks but is especially aimed at junior personnel and those with influence at the tactical level – again, revolving around empowering troops to talk.

"You find that people walk away from »



» those sessions and say 'I had never seen things through that lens', Lt Col Emmerson adds.

Capt Julie Simpson (REME) agrees that such grass-roots work is making its mark.

"The younger generation are far more confident at speaking out if they hear inappropriate language - more than I ever was as a young lance corporal," she adds. "And that holds commanders to account.

"You also hear leaders saying 'actually, I didn't mean it that way', whereas previously they would just have been on the defensive."

#### TAKING THE BOSS TO TASK

Making leaders responsible for how their unit treats women is a key part of the drive. And this is important because experiences can vary hugely between trades and sub-units. Lt Col Emmerson discovered this fact when she became deputy chief of staff of an armoured infantry brigade not too long ago.

"Before I had even got to the job people were saying they were surprised the role had been given to a woman," she recalls. "But I was not the first, and I had been selected for my experience - my sex didn't come into it."

However, commanders now have tools to help

them gauge the mood of their units. The introduction of "climate assessments" by Army HQ's Unacceptable Behaviours Team sees online surveys and focus groups carried out to give them the real story on what everyday life is like for their troops.

And a new online reporting tool to help the Army learn lessons from all areas of its work will in future let personnel share experiences they might not otherwise have done.

#### IN NUMBERS

**9.8%**

Proportion of Regular force that is female

**14.2%**

Reserves

For leaders like WO1 Kelly Caswell-Treen (RAMC) - co-chair of the Army Servicewomen's Network and the first female appointed as a company sergeant major at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst - this extra intel will be invaluable.

"In the past people thought there was no way to address these kinds of issues without a Service complaint," she explains, adding that many are intimidated by the formality and seriousness

of this option.

"The women in this organisation want to do well and perform, and that can put extra pressure on you as well.

"Do you want to speak out to the boss? You don't want it to be at the detriment of your career.

"I have about a 50/50 split of men and women filling the roles in my unit at 22 Field Hospital so I have never thought that, culturally, we were challenged at all.

"But for me, as a senior soldier, I will have a different view."

#### ONE TEAM

Despite the considerable challenges, Lt Col Emmerson believes it is important to acknowledge that the Army has moved a long way in a short space of time.

"We have come so far since I turned up to my first unit in Germany and there were all those pictures of women on the walls of the restroom, and the language, the behaviours," she recalls.

"There is a tendency to beat ourselves up about this. But in some areas we are doing really well.

"Women are still very under-represented, but when I look at my male counterparts I feel that I have always been given the same opportunities."

Capt Watts agrees but points out that change cannot be forced and must be driven by soldiers.

"It's about trying to get everyone to have those difficult conversations and be honest," she adds.

Grace Milner, a 21-year-

old recruit at ATR Winchester, stresses that individual behaviour has the potential to make a big difference.

"I knew it was going to be very male here and that wasn't a big deal for me when joining," she continues. "It's more how people treat you individually that matters."

Recruit Peddie Reid, 22, adds: "In my previous retail career women never seemed to be given promotions or opportunities, and comments were made about whether they should focus on their families instead.

"But after reading up on the Army and seeing females in different positions, I realised that whatever role you want to do here, you can."

While this might not be the case for every single Servicewoman, WO1 Caswell-Treen firmly believes more change is on the horizon.

"This is already a very different organisation to what it was five years ago, let alone ten," the senior soldier says.

"We just need time." ■

#### Being treated poorly at work?

If you don't want to talk to the chain of command you can contact the Speak Out helpline on 0306 770 4656 or [army-speakout@mod.gov.uk](mailto:army-speakout@mod.gov.uk) and your unit diversity and inclusion adviser





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# FLYING FORWARD

Royal Artillery explores Watchkeeper's potential with help of a new base

WITH the Army reshaping itself around more deployable forces that can be supported at reach, commanders will need intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (Istar) assets that are agile and flexible.

This fact is not lost on 47 Regiment, Royal Artillery, who over the past few months have set their Watchkeeper batteries a series of new challenges, taking pilots and ground crews completely out of their comfort zone.

Normally based at Boscombe Down, the home of military aircraft testing and evaluation, the unit decamped to a former Royal Air Force base at Keevil Airfield earlier this year.

It's a world away from their regular home, which bristles with the infrastructure and support services that would grace a regional airport.

Keevil, on the other hand, has one runway, a dilapidated control tower and lots of rabbits.

The regiment's personnel had to establish every operational and safety function that was needed to turn this tranquil corner of Wiltshire into a facility that met all the rules for operating in UK airspace.

"There have been an incredible number of low-level challenges to overcome," says Maj Russ Proctor (RA), officer commanding 10 (Assaye) Battery.

"We are operating in a place where there is no air traffic control, so we have to provide air surveillance for ourselves.

"We've also had to develop procedures for security, access and ground movement control in addition to refuelling provision,

Pictures: Graeme Main

Report: Steve Muncey



“  
It's an  
amazing  
location  
for us  
”



power generation and distribution, data connectivity and communications, airfield works, fire and rescue services and wildlife management.

“We've even had to train and deploy air sentries who warn us of any aircraft, gliders or drones straying close to the airfield.

“At Boscombe or Akrotiri, where we do lots of training, all that is provided by the integral services of the site.”

Avionics technician Cpl Siddartha Gurung (REME, pictured below) believes the move has been a huge challenge for everyone involved, including support personnel.

“We had to set up everything from scratch here and the weather was really awful back in April when we arrived – it rained every day,” he adds.

“But we didn't stop because there were so many additional things we had to tackle.



“Maintenance is more of a problem in this type of location and sorting the logistics chain was key.

“We also had to get to know the landmarks and terrain to secure good connectivity with the air traffic systems and the aircraft's sensitive sensor links with the ground data terminals.

“We had to change a lot of tactics and procedures and it took us a good month to sort everything out because this was our first time doing this.

“It's been great, though, because after repairing the platforms or doing routine maintenance on them, they go out and fly which doesn't happen so much at Boscombe. So that's made being here very rewarding.”

The fact that Keevil's environment closely mimics the conditions they will almost certainly encounter when Watchkeeper is deployed on operations is no coincidence.

“It is supposed to be a tactical system, operating in an austere or semi-austere environment,” explains Maj Proctor.

“Here we have a basic strip – it's virtually a farmer's field – and our only luxury is that it has a tarmac runway.

“Everything else we are using here we've brought in – even inflatable hangars. You can literally pick this facility up and stick it down virtually anywhere in the world where it's possible for us to fly from.

“Thanks to this airfield we have, for the first time, had the opportunity to develop, test and refine procedures for doing exactly that.”

The cherry on top of this is Keevil's close proximity to Salisbury Plain, accessed via a short and uncluttered flight path over the training area itself.

“The problem with Boscombe is that Amesbury is in the way, so if you want to fly to Salisbury Plain there are no-fly zones and airspace restrictions,” explains Lt Henry Loxdale (RA). ▶

“  
**We had to set up everything from scratch**  
”



“It's also a busy airfield, but we can operate unhindered here with no other air traffic usually in the area.”

Moreover, being so close to the Plain provides an opportunity to log lots of flying hours mixed with high-quality training. Watchkeeper has been participating in exercises such as Wessex Storm on a scale that's never been feasible before.

“Out of the range of advantages of being here, the integration has been the most valuable of all,” says Maj Proctor.

“Flying around the Mediterranean Sea near Cyprus is great for getting crews familiar with the systems with low risk, but it's not why we exist.

“Here we have battlegroups training just over the hill, so we've spent this summer developing the potential of the platform, working out what we can do with it.

“And that is not just pressing buttons in a ground control station and flying it around but actually integrating with Field Army training to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and drive commanders' decision-making.

“We've been testing the processes for that and they include things like data dissemination and generation of image-analysis products, with intelligence analysts based at Keevil and more out on the ground with deployed formations and units.”

One notable first has been the launch of Watchkeeper integration teams – personnel who can view and interpret images and data from the UAV's array of sensors in real-time.

These troops are deployed with tactical Bowman systems and a remote viewing terminal interface unit, which is a tablet that displays the same feed that ground control stations see.

“The integration teams go wherever the land commanders need them, be it in the headquarters or forward with the fighting echelons,” explains Maj Proctor.

“Being located at Keevil has given us the perfect opportunity to really push ourselves and develop procedures for better integration.

“During Exercise Urban Strike we worked with 26 Regiment to test procedures where we find a target – they then run through the targeting cycle, brief the commander and receive engagement authority. The decision is then made on how the target is prosecuted.

“We're also doing integration work with 1 Regiment, Army Air Corps, figuring out ways to link with their Wildcats.

“The latest technology allows these platforms to operate together and we've also spent time with 3 Regiment, AAC refining how we locate a target and hand it over to their Apaches to strike.”

With such a rich and relevant environment in which to practise their skills, it's no wonder the regiment would like to maintain a presence and continue to rotate batteries through the site as they do at Akrotiri.

By the end of the four-month stint at Keevil, the unit will have amassed more flying hours with Watchkeeper than they've logged in total from Boscombe Down – and it started operating there back in 2018.

The high-quality training on offer could prove essential if 47 Regiment's specialist teams are to fully exploit this piece of kit – an asset that would seem a perfect fit for the sort of missions the British Army is preparing itself to tackle in the future. »

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# "TOP TRAINING"

WATCHKEEPER has just received upgraded systems, making it an even more potent Istar weapon on the battlefield.

This has had an impact on 47 Regiment's training burden, which is already considerable as pilots and ground crews need to be certified regularly on the sophisticated UAV.

Operating from Keevil for the past four months, however, has eased the load considerably.

"The great thing about being here is that we control the airfield," says SSgt Tanith Alexander (RA), a gunnery instructor from the Royal School of Artillery who has been overseeing training personnel on the new systems at Keevil.

"We've had changes to the software we use for pre-flight checks and diagnostics.

"My primary role has been to get level three and four technicians qualified to operate with that new kit.

"To complete that job

we need a minimum of three take-offs or ground starts and it takes about 25 minutes to go from a standing start to the engine firing up.

"In Cyprus we train at night because that's the only time we can get sufficient hours on the runway, and in Boscombe it usually means very early or late starts.

"Here, we don't have to vie for runway space so even if there is bad met, for example, our schedule

can be recovered because we can wait it out and fly later.

"And even if there is a no-fly day due to weather we can get the platform out on the runway and rehearse an engine start – and do it over again if we want to.

In Cyprus or at Boscombe that's just not possible."

The senior NCO (pictured) believes Keevil has doubled her productivity, with more than 20 personnel trained up and qualified on Watchkeeper's upgraded systems in just a couple of months.

"Even in an assured location like Cyprus I estimate we'd only have conversion-trained something like ten personnel in that time," she adds.

"Overall, it's been an amazing location for us." ■





# JOINING THE DOCS

Technology that connects medical experts anywhere in the world is transforming healthcare in the field

**W**HEN 12 German soldiers were recently flown into the main medical centre in Gao, Mali with a range of injuries following a suicide attack on their base, British Army medics were uniquely placed to provide immediate, long-lasting pain relief.

They were the only team equipped with a *Butterfly* – a handheld ultrasound tool no larger than a computer mouse that does something a machine the size of a refrigerator would have been needed for a few years ago.

Such is its compactness – it is battery operated and connects to a smartphone or tablet to display detailed imagery – it negates the awkward process of moving patients to dedicated wards equipped with wired-in ultrasound machines.

“It proved unbelievably useful,” said Sgt Dan Lewis (RAMC), who was on the scene and is in Mali as part of the UK’s contribution to the United Nations’ stabilisation mission in the African state.

“In this case, the *Butterfly*’s ability to reveal exactly where an inserted needle is positioned inside the body enabled nerve blocks to be applied to the personnel just a few minutes after they arrived.” **»**

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Cpl Matthew Simms, QDG

» These injections of anaesthetic have to be deposited extremely carefully – right next to a nerve – in order to take effect almost instantaneously.

The *Butterfly* made all the difference during this delicate procedure, but it was just one piece of equipment in a suite of advanced kit the British medical team were furnished with thanks to a Defence Medical Services (DMS) initiative called Project Lara (*Soldier*, November 2020), which upgraded field medical apparatus and their connectivity.

The deployment of the gear to Mali represents the first time this full suite of capabilities has been used on a real operation.

## CONNECTIVITY BOOST

The issued kit consists of a satellite communications device, so personnel do not have to rely on a terrestrial mobile network, which is often lacking in rural areas or might be damaged during a conflict. It has global reach and provides secure connections for internet access, Wi-Fi, a Pando medical messaging app, Modnet laptops and Proximie augmented reality clinical support.

The latter includes cameras for remote surgery and enables people in different locations to interact in a way that mimics them working in the same operating room – they can show each other where to make an incision or use physical gestures to illustrate a technique.

Thankfully, Proximie hasn't been required in Mali yet, but Sgt Lewis (pictured top, opposite), a radiographer by trade, has been wowed by the tools he has had a chance to work with.

"I'd never seen this equipment until I got into theatre, but I had two days' worth of handover training from my predecessor to learn about how it works and it's amazing," he added.

"Some of the technology has proved an absolute lifesaver, especially the connectivity back to the UK.

"As we have no deployed radiologist, I use the sat comm kit to access the internet and connect to a server in Birmingham. I load X-ray images directly onto it from here because we are mandated to get a report on each scan and this tech speeds up the process.

"We can get consultant radiologist reports back to Mali in minutes, faster than most NHS hospitals, potentially keeping troops on the front line for the maximum amount of time.

"The *Butterfly* is very impressive too, but I can't even describe how valuable Pando has been with its reach-back function."

Pando is an app that allows deployed users to connect with a community of some 1,500 other military medical personnel around the world to securely exchange advice, data and images. The experts being consulted might be in the UK or deployed in another country – it's down to whoever is best placed to provide the required expertise at a particular time.

"While we have a regimental medical officer – a general practitioner – with us, they don't have the knowledge and expertise of specialists or consultants, so having access to that wealth of knowledge has been invaluable," added Sgt Lewis.

"Out here we received burns and surgical advice from the UK within four minutes and microbiology feedback within 12 minutes – you'd normally struggle to get someone to read an email in that time."





“  
Some of the technology has proved an absolute lifesaver, especially the connectivity

”

## OUT IN THE FIELD

But the cutting-edge kit really comes into its own when personnel go out into the desert on extended patrols.

The British Army's role in Mali is to provide the UN mission with a long-range reconnaissance capability and this is currently being supplied by 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment following the departure of The Light Dragoons (*Soldier*, August 2021).

The 25-strong British Army medical team that supports the 300 or so soldiers based in Gao is also charged with providing medical cover during these recce tasks, which can last for up to three weeks. A large company-sized formation usually travels out into the desert, and with a dangerous enemy lurking and temperatures hitting some 49 degrees Celsius the need for easy access to high-quality care is paramount.

To satisfy this requirement, a fresh concept called a ground manoeuvre surgical group (GMSG) is drawn from the staff based in Mali.

Modelled on the set-up developed for 16 Air Assault Brigade ops, the team travels with the patrol and is poised to provide close support to meet clinical timelines for lifesaving treatment

out in the field. The group can reach initial operating capability in 15 minutes for damage control resuscitation and full operating capability for surgery in 45 minutes.

The concept is so new the doctrine for it has not yet been formally agreed and is still being refined. However, at the moment it calls for around 15 personnel, including doctors, nurses and technical support staff, and the full suite of advanced medical gear goes with them.

“Considering the results of the Integrated Review, there is an increasing likelihood we'll be deploying smaller groups of forces further forward into more isolated locations,” explained Lt Col Oli Bartels (RAMC), the DMS lead on medical information systems.

“As a result, the requirement for UK defence is going to be less on big field hospitals with a hundred doctors and nurses and very much more on something like the lighter version we are employing in Mali.

“However, being small means they can't take every kind of expert along with them so they need to be able to connect with specialists – and that's where our new set of equipment proves so valuable.” ▶

## 'NEW AND FANTASTIC'

The mobility and connectivity of the medical support group has had a discernible effect on the thinking of troop commanders too.

"Having this capability on wheels in this type of situation and having it so close to us is both new and fantastic," Lt Col Will Meddings (R Anglian, pictured below right), commander of the UN's long-range reconnaissance group, told *Soldier* by video link from Tin-Hama in the Ansongo region in south-east Mali.

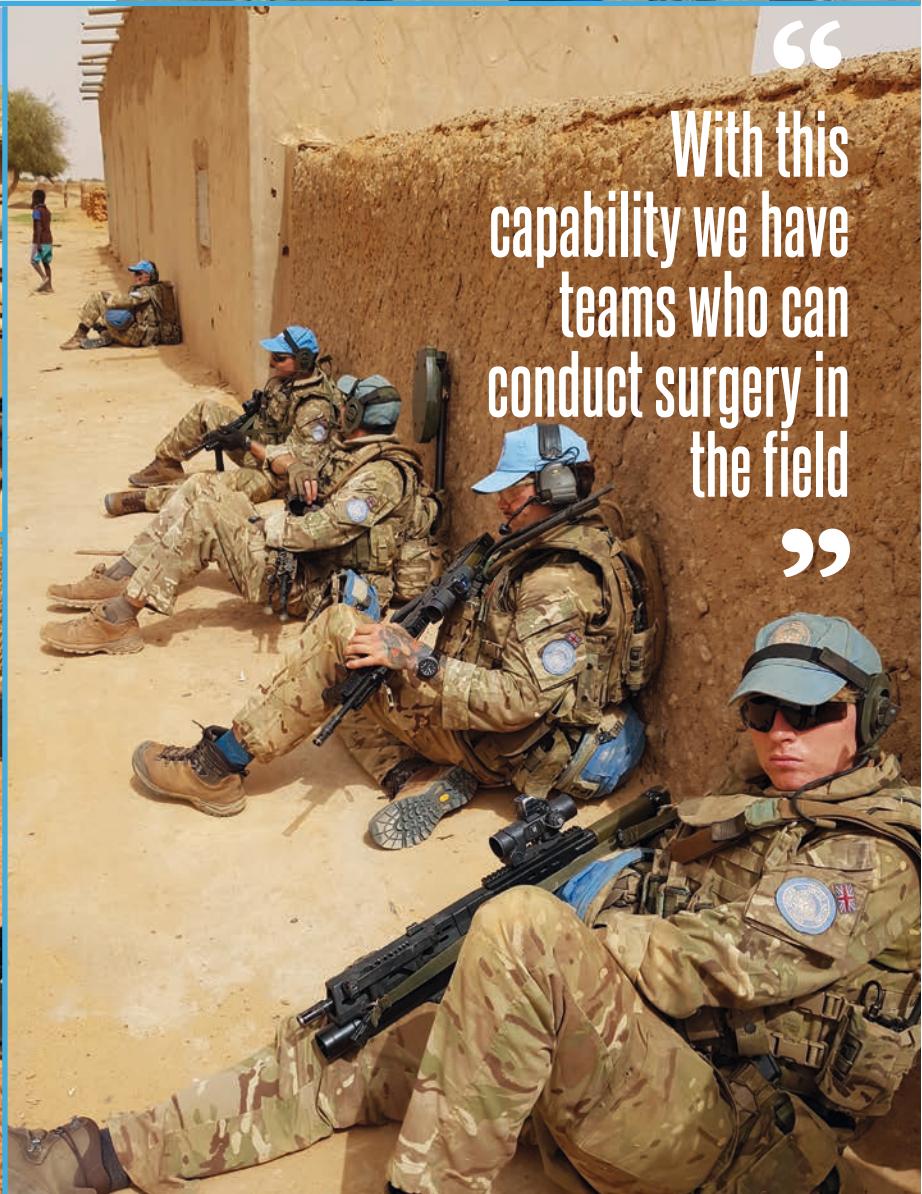
"What it offers me is the ability to go further with more confidence than we would have done before."

"It's taken four days to reach our current location from Gao but throughout this journey I know I can have a soldier in surgery in a relatively short space of time with a link back to any specialist who is needed."

"Without this kind of medical support, we'd have to do what we did in Afghanistan and pick up a casualty from the point of wounding and fly them back to the main hospital."

"But with this capability we have teams who can conduct surgery in the field with expert back-up online and, crucially, hold a post-surgical patient stable for 24 hours."

"So the GSMG, with the tech they have, doesn't allow us to take more risk, but it does allow us to take the same amount of risk at greater distances than we would have considered previously." ■



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### CAREERS

#### The Recruit for Spouses Career Academy

Virgin Red has joined forces with Virgin Red to offer a free mentoring programme to military spouses. Mentors from the company will include employees in areas such as business development and portfolio management. For more information about the initiative visit [recruitforspouses.co.uk/spouses/career-academy](http://recruitforspouses.co.uk/spouses/career-academy)

**Veterans into Logistics CIC** is a not-for-profit organisation based in Greater Manchester dedicated to training and supporting ex-military personnel for new careers within the transport and logistics industry. Visit [veteransintologistics.org.uk](http://veteransintologistics.org.uk)

**Forces Families Jobs** is a platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit [forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk](http://forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk)



### DIARY

#### September 4: Irreverent Warriors

**Silkies Hike** in London. A 22km fundraising and awareness-raising walk from the US-run organisation ([irreverentwarriors.com](http://irreverentwarriors.com)) which seeks to improve mental health and prevent veteran suicide through camaraderie and humour. Open to all British military personnel and veterans.

#### September 9: Veteran Support Partnership develop event

– an online seminar focused on development opportunities available to the Armed Forces community. Speakers include representatives of high-profile civvy firms while agenda topics range from business ownership to coaching and mentoring. Register your interest at [vspdevelopment.eventbrite.co.uk](http://vspdevelopment.eventbrite.co.uk)

#### September 17: London Pacific

**Fashion Week** event SS22 at the Royal Horse Guards Hotel, London. Designers and Army wives Silpa Gurung and Ana Lavekau collaborate for a special showcase. To attend or find out more visit [londonpacificfashionweek.com](http://londonpacificfashionweek.com)

#### September 17-20: Tankfest 2021

– the best display of historic moving armour in the world. Guest vehicles, living history encampments and demonstrations, plus a mini arena and

lecture stage. Open 0900-1800. Find out more at [tankmuseum.org](http://tankmuseum.org)

#### September 18: Fijian Bula

**festival**. Personnel from all three Services are joining with the public to celebrate diversity and inclusion in the Armed Forces. The event, which takes place at Queen's Parade in Aldershot from 1000-1630, will also celebrate the country's culture with talks, presentations and fun events as well as a formal act of remembrance.

#### September 28-29: The ABF Early, Early Christmas Fair

at Tedworth Park, Tedworth. Some 120 stalls plus other attractions. An online festival with further deals follows the live programme. See [eefair.org.uk](http://eefair.org.uk)

#### October 5: The Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum

**biennial conference** hosted by the MoD. Contact [anda@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:anda@ssafa.org.uk) for details.

#### November 6: Militia fair and auction

in association with Duke's Auctioneers at The Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. Lots go on display November 3-6. The auction will also be live-streamed on the museum's YouTube channel.

#### Until further notice: World War 2: War Stories

– an exhibition at The Tank Museum in Bovington. The story of the Royal Armoured Corps through a series of campaigns, 1940-45.



### DIRECTORY

#### ABF The Soldiers' Charity:

020 7901 8900;  
[soldierscharity.org](http://soldierscharity.org)

#### Armed Forces Buddhist Society:

Chaplain 020 7414 3411;  
[afbs-uk.org](http://afbs-uk.org)

#### Armed Forces Christian Union:

01793 783123;  
[afcuk.org.uk](http://afcuk.org.uk)

#### Armed Forces Muslim Association:

Chaplain 020 7414 3252;  
[afma.org.uk](http://afma.org.uk)

#### Armed Services Advice Project:

0808 800 1007;  
[adviceasap.org.uk](http://adviceasap.org.uk)

#### Army Families Federation:

01264 382324;  
mil 94391 2324;  
[aff.org.uk](http://aff.org.uk)

#### Army LGBT Forum:

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

**Army Libraries:**  
01252 340094

**Army Ornithological Society:**  
[armybirding.org.uk](http://armybirding.org.uk)

**Army Welfare Service:**  
01904 882053;  
[army.mod.uk/welfare-support](http://army.mod.uk/welfare-support)

**Big White Wall**, now **Togetherall**:  
[togetherall.com](http://togetherall.com)

**Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:**  
020 8590 1124;  
[blesma.org](http://blesma.org)

**Blind Veterans UK:**  
(formerly St Dunstan's)  
020 7723 5021;  
[blindveterans.org.uk](http://blindveterans.org.uk)

**Care After Combat:**  
[careaftercombat.org](http://careaftercombat.org)

**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

**Centre for Veterans Health, King Edward VII Hospital:**  
020 7467 4370;  
[cdunne@kingedwardvii.co.uk](mailto:cdunne@kingedwardvii.co.uk)

**Children's Education Advisory Service:**  
01980 618244;  
[dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk](mailto:dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk)

**Combat Stress:**  
0800 323 4444;  
[combatstress.org.uk](http://combatstress.org.uk)

**Defence Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination 24/7 Helpline:**  
0800 783 0334

**Erskine:**  
0141 814 4569;  
[erskine.org.uk](http://erskine.org.uk)

**Family Escort Service:**  
020 7463 9249

**Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:**  
07713 752901;  
[felixfund.org.uk](http://felixfund.org.uk)

**Forcesline:**  
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Germany – 0800 1827 395;  
Cyprus – 080 91065;  
Falklands – #6111;  
from operational theatres –  
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(CSL operator will call back) – 0044  
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**Forces Pension Society:**  
020 7820 9988  
[forcespensionsociety.org](http://forcespensionsociety.org)

**Help for Heroes:**  
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01980 846 459;  
[helpforheroes.org.uk](http://helpforheroes.org.uk)

**Heroes Welcome:**  
[heroeswelcome.co.uk](http://heroeswelcome.co.uk)

**HighGround:**  
[highground-uk.org.uk](http://highground-uk.org.uk)  
07951 495 272

**Humanist, Atheist and Non-religious in Defence Network:**  
[defencehumanists.org.uk](http://defencehumanists.org.uk)

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:**  
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**Medal Office:**  
94561 3600 or  
0141 224 3600

**Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):**  
[mutual-support.org.uk](http://mutual-support.org.uk)

**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:**  
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;  
[ngfa.org.uk](http://ngfa.org.uk)

**PoppyScotland:**  
0131 557 2782;  
[poppyscotland.org.uk](http://poppyscotland.org.uk)

**Regular Forces' Employment Association:**  
0121 236 0058;  
[rfea.org.uk](http://rfea.org.uk)

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01451 850 341;  
[remount.net](http://remount.net)

**Royal British Legion:**  
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[britishlegion.org.uk](http://britishlegion.org.uk)

**Royal British Legion Scotland:**  
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**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:**  
01622 795900;  
[rbli.co.uk](http://rbli.co.uk)

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

**Stoll:** 020 7385 2110; [stoll.org.uk](http://stoll.org.uk)

**The Not Forgotten Association:**  
020 7730 2400;  
[nfassociation.org](http://nfassociation.org)

**The Poppy Factory:** 020 8940 3305;  
[poppyfactory.org](http://poppyfactory.org)

**The Royal Star and Garter Homes:**  
020 8481 7676;  
[starandgarter.org](http://starandgarter.org)

**The Veterans Charity:**  
01753 653772;  
[info@veteranscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@veteranscharity.org.uk)

**Troop Aid:**  
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;  
[troopaid@icloud.com](mailto:troopaid@icloud.com); [troopaid.info](mailto:troopaid.info)

**uk4u Thanks!:** 01798 812081;  
[uk4u.org](http://uk4u.org)

**Veterans Welfare Service:**  
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);  
[gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service](http://gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service)

**WVRS:** 02920 232 668

## REUNIONS

**23/144 Parachute Field Ambulance Old Comrades' Association** dinner event at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry, October 15-17. Email [royhatchbem@gmail.com](mailto:royhatchbem@gmail.com)

**The Cheshire Yeomanry Association** is planning a dinner in Chester on April 23, 2022 to mark the outfit's formation 225 years ago. Email [kingsbr@gmail.com](mailto:kingsbr@gmail.com) for info.

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Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 952, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than September 30. A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

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

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The winner's name will appear in the November issue. All the usual competition rules apply.

**July's winner:** Paul Merry, Folkestone, Kent.





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# REVIEWS

## GAMES

### Hell Let Loose

Developers look east for the latest phase of Second World War PC actioner

› IT WAS a battle of attrition fought in the most horrific conditions – an apocalyptic clash of ideologies on which the destiny of the free world hung.

Hitler's decision to launch Operation Barbarossa – the invasion of the Soviet Union – in the summer of 1941 proved a turning point in the Second World War. Having managed to conquer most of Europe, the Nazi regime turned their attention towards the East and their communist nemesis.

But after making a series of unprecedented gains in the opening months of the campaign, the bitter fighting marked the beginning of the end for the Third Reich.

The Battle of Stalingrad – which raged during 1942 – saw German and Russian troops engage from street to street at point-blank range. Despite taking huge numbers of casualties, the Red Army prevailed to encircle the opposition before senior officers took the surrender of more than 90,000 Axis personnel.

It is the ferocity of this encounter that Black Matter – the studio behind the PC Second World War squad-based title *Hell Let Loose* – has sought to replicate in their first build of the acclaimed game after its early access demo phase.

The work has certainly paid off, with the product well worthy of the acclaim it has so far received since it was first played by *Soldier* in the summer of last year.

"Stalingrad was actually bombed extensively even before the Germans entered the city," says Max Rea, who has been



P59

BOOKS

P60

MOVIES

# GAMES

leading the game's development. "A wasteland of rubble was all that remained – along with the shells of factories and other structures that had stubbornly refused to crumble under the attacks.

"This is the landscape that faces players in *Hell Let Loose* – a network of streets typical of the era's Soviet city planning that have been reduced to ruins."

Stalingrad – along with a separate map for the 1943 Battle of Kursk – provides a new experience in the Second World War title, which has been underpinned by a loyal community from its earliest demo incarnations two years ago.

The game has since undergone a number of refinements, although the action has hitherto all been focused on France and post D-Day fighting between US and German troops.

The shooter allows some 50 players per side to take part in pitched battles, divided into smaller squads of up to six personnel. Virtual soldiers can assume infantry and armoured roles while each of the groups is tactically overseen by a commander.

Rea – an ex-movie special effects guru who has worked on titles including the Mel Gibson film *Hacksaw Ridge* – says introducing the Eastern Front was a logical step. Stalingrad and Kursk were the two obvious points of focus.

"The latest version of the game was an opportunity to introduce the Russian theatre, which was different both in character and scale to the war in the West," he continues.

"The way the campaign was conducted was brutal and the scale of the suffering was not lost on our team as we carried out our research into the period.

"When you look at Stalingrad alone, up to 80,000 people were trapped in the city – survivors lived in appalling conditions as the fighting raged all around."

Determined to provide players with an insight into the nature of the environment faced by those caught up in the fighting, Rea deployed Russian colleagues to research the era's history and geographical character of the locations.

But a combination of a secretive Russian state, which continues to closely guard its records, and Covid mayhem made this task a tough undertaking.

"We would like to have visited Volgograd – modern day Stalingrad – but the pandemic meant this was not possible," he adds. "So we instead had to trawl through online archives.

"This was a long process, but it seems to



have paid off as feedback from our community of players living in and around the area has been really positive.

"We also worked hard to recreate Kursk, which offers a very different dynamic," Rea adds. "Predominately a tank battle, it was fought on steppes – or plains – with distinctive yellow grasslands punctuated by small dachas."

Elsewhere, the developers worked on recreating the kit for the Russian forces – the communist troops have a full suite of equipment including anti-tank rifles among some 20 accurate items. In addition, both sides have access to support from assets including air power during the campaign.

The results are impressive.

Black Matter has produced a title which, as well as being a solid tactical outing, is underpinned by a strong measure of historical integrity. And its popularity looks set to grow when it debuts on the new generation of PlayStation and Xbox consoles soon.

For Rea, firing interest in the era is a key aim. "It might sound a cliche, but this project is far more than a job for us," he concludes. "And if we can get people interested enough to pick up a book and learn more, I'll be happy." ■

## VERDICT:

An absorbing offering that combines tactical and historical credibility to great effect ★★★★

INTERVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

## View from the front



Name: SSgt Christopher McGhee, RE

Favourite titles: *Red Dead Redemption, Squad*

First gamed on: Amiga PC

Overall verdict: An amazing mix of team play and full-on shooter

Best bits: It's easy to grasp and play from the off

Needs to improve: Players can get snagged on low-level debris



Name: Tpr Tom Bamford, RY

Favourite titles: *Battlefield and Total War series*

First gamed on: Xbox

Overall verdict: It's great – new updates have made a huge difference

Best bits: It looks superb and has a wide range of diverse weaponry

Needs to improve: Gameplay suffers if teamwork is poor – a mic is a must



Name: LCpl Mike Galloway, REME

Favourite titles: All sorts

First gamed on: Xbox

Overall verdict: Good game and not too control heavy

Best bits: Weapon interaction and period feel are good

Needs to improve: The lag on certain maps is annoying

## GAMES RELEASES

### Destroy All Humans!

For Switch



A COMEDIC salute to American B-movies of the 1950s when America had intergalactic invasion on her mind, this third-person actioner captures a slice of post-war paranoia. Casting players as an unpleasant extraterrestrial called Crypto, who has more than a passing resemblance to the aliens of the fabled Roswell conspiracy, they face a succession of tasks from their orbiting boss as they build up to an invasion of Earth. A Switch remix of a title from the mid-2000s, this retains its sense of fun but is let down by over-fussy controls and unforgiving gameplay that punishes casual thumb slips with a hair-rippingly tedious return to the beginning of levels.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier

### Olympic Games Tokyo 2020

For Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC



HELD amid a global pandemic, the strangest ever Olympiad may now have taken its place in history, but cyberspace competitors can still go for gold in Sega's digital version. Some 18 sports from the real-life festival are included in this compendium, with the line-up ranging from track and field events to rugby sevens, BMX and climbing. All require different combinations of button bashing and joystick finesse to master, with the overall package reminiscent of a classic coin-op arcade experience best played online with friends. Some amusing and customisable athlete avatars add to the fun.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier

# Eleven Bats

**A story of combat, cricket and the SAS**

► CONFLICT – for all the horror, depravity and misery that it spawns – occasionally throws up some charming stranger-than-fiction stories.

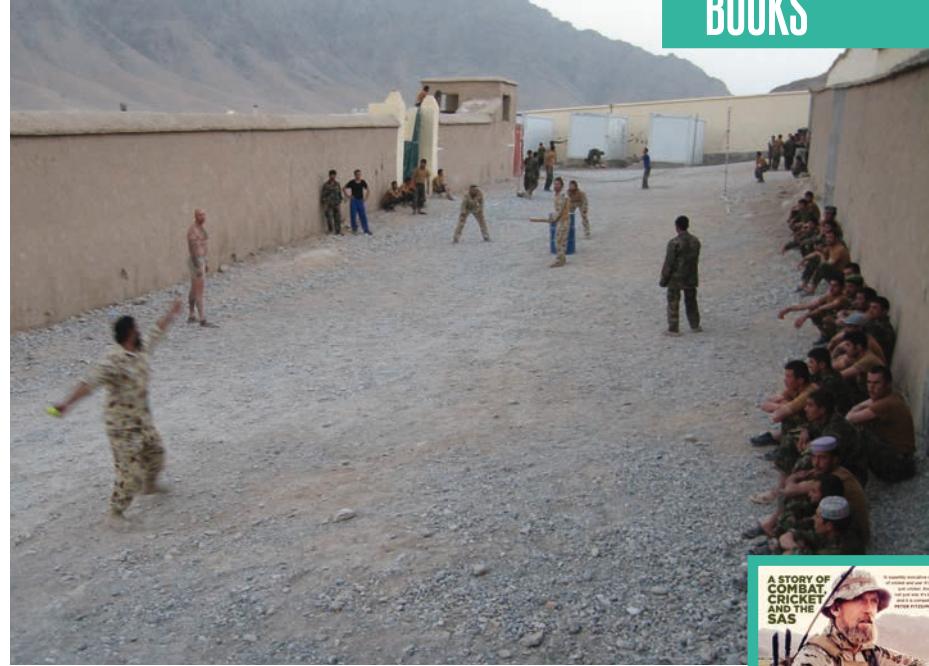
Whether it is First World War adversaries having a no-man's-land kickabout in Christmas 1914 or a Second World War Luftwaffe pilot escorting a stricken US bomber from danger, these encounters are written into the scrolls of military folklore.

As with any legend, they can see embellishment in their constant retelling. But the story of how a cricket obsessed soldier hosted makeshift matches in the world's most dangerous places has seen no such treatment.

In *Eleven Bats*, former Australian special forces soldier Anthony "Harry" Moffitt recalls how he presided over games where the players ranged from troops and local civvies, to politicians, royalty and even fugitive rebel leaders. And as the smack of leather on willow reverberated through the likes of Afghanistan's badlands, the surreal nature of war hit home.

"Often while we were playing these games, Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters were watching from the hills, talking about us to each other on their radios," the veteran of 30 years' experience recalled of the matches. "For some reason they were less interested in shooting at us than badmouthing our technique."

It is, by any measure, an extraordinary tale. Starting out during the so-called war on terror in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Moffitt recalls hosting the earliest matches with soldier friends as a way of letting off steam.



Having managed to procure a bat with pooled funds of \$100 and a risky shopping trip by an interpreter, the troops played at Bagram Air Base during the hunt for Osama bin Laden.

But the pastime took on a new dimension when Moffitt ventured outside the wire with his cricket kit. With the game a national obsession in Afghanistan, it became apparent this was a way of establishing some common ground.

In the years that followed, the bat became a potent weapon of unity during ops from Iraq to East Timor. The book recalls 11 of these missions in turn, each

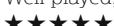
underpinned by their own unique story over a decade of his military service.

The resulting collection is an amazing piece of personal soldiering history as well as a lesson in how sport – and its ability to secure a sense of unity – can play a significant role in achieving stability in the face of conflict.

A powerful and well-crafted piece of writing, *Eleven Bats* offers an insight into military actions at global flashpoints as well as the tools of one man's unique peacekeeping mission. ■

## VERDICT:

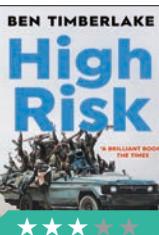
Well played, Harry Moffitt



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, *SOLDIER*



## BOOKS RELEASES



### High Risk

by Ben Timberlake

THIS is the autobiographical tale of Ben Timberlake, a war journalist, adventurer and Special Forces Reservist – or “barely diet SF”, as he calls it – who attacks life with a philosophy of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. He travels to the world's dodgy areas – Iraq, Afghanistan, former Yugoslavia, the Outer Hebrides – and while in London he explores BDSM sex and explains in superb detail how drugs messed and meshed with his global experiences. My favourite quote, “there are worse places to come off heroin than West Cornwall”, would add a whole new dimension to TripAdvisor. This is a difficult and dark read from a Jekyll and Hyde character who occasionally appears unbelievable. But he offers fascinating insights into neurobiology and narcotics. The perfect gift for anyone in RHQ or compulsory drugs testing teams.

**Barry Jenkins, ex-RA**

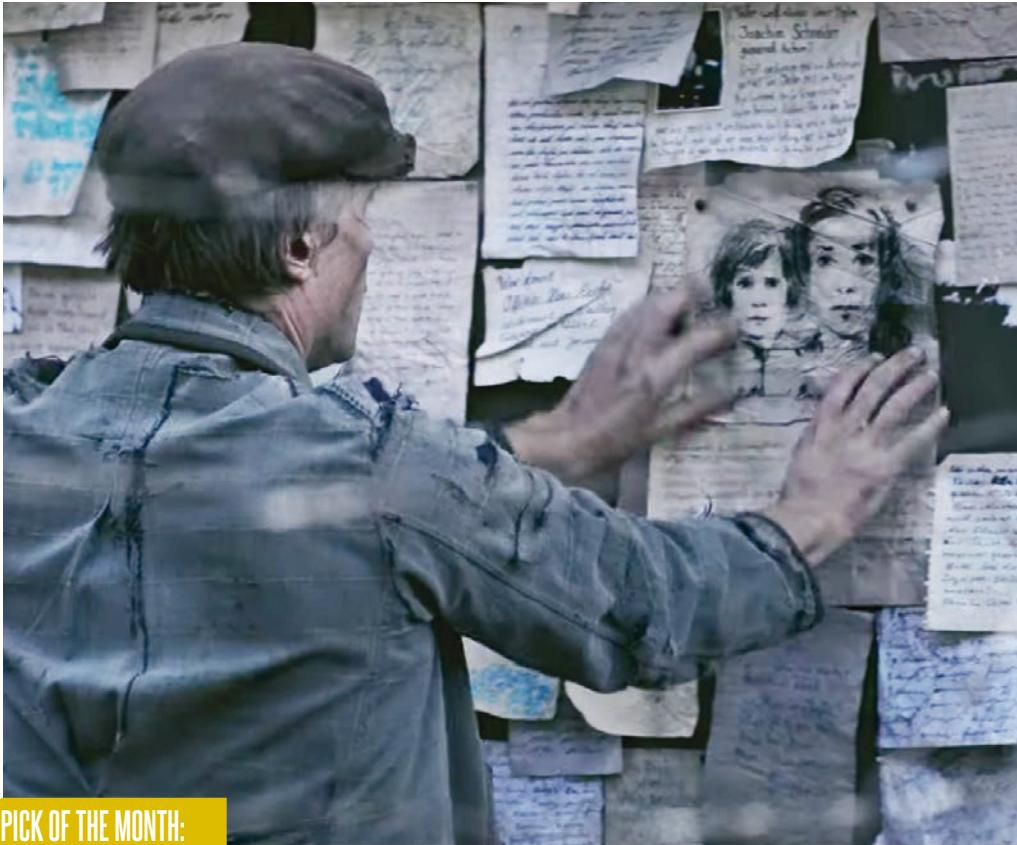
### Unholy Alliance

by Simeon Hughes

A VISCERAL journey through desperate attempts to defeat a potential terrorist plot, this gritty thriller explores the psychological rollercoaster

of both the hunter and the hunted. The former is a new UK security agency always one step behind those who wish to conduct mass atrocities on mainland Britain. The latter is the titular “unholy alliance” of fundamentalist Islamist terrorists and Northern Irish republican gang lords. Drawing on his soldiering and close protection background, as well as his time conducting surveillance ops against some of the country's most hardened criminals, the author expertly pulls the reader in. The twists come thick and fast and constantly keep you on the back foot – be careful, as you don't know who the real heroes are.

**Maj Sven Gronn, R Signals**



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## Plan A

### Israeli brothers bring Holocaust revenge story to light

IN the well-trodden genre of Second World War movies, it's rare to come across a tale that genuinely breaks new ground.

But that is the case with this retelling of a largely forgotten plot by Jewish Holocaust survivors to avenge their brethren by killing six million Germans.

Written and directed by Israeli brothers **Doron** and **Yoav Paz** (*The Golem, Jeruzalem*), *Plan A* reveals how, in 1945, a group calling itself Nakam – the Hebrew word for revenge – attempted to poison the water supply systems in cities across post-war Germany.

**August Diehl** (*Inglourious Basterds, Allied*) heads the cast as a man whose family were exterminated by the Nazis and becomes consumed by thoughts of retribution – turning down the chance to start over in Mandatory Palestine in order to join the conspirators.

It's no spoiler to say that their scheme was unsuccessful, but failure alone doesn't explain why the chapter has fallen into obscurity.

According to the Paz brothers, the story

is not widely known even in Israel – in part because the country's founding fathers promoted a policy of renewal over retribution.

And that is a central theme of the film, which uses a combination of real-life and fictional characters to explore how people pick up the threads of their lives – or not as the case may be – after surviving the unthinkable.

Military viewers will quibble over the usual suspects – corporals saluting each other, misshapen berets aplenty – but these are trifling concerns in an otherwise pretty well-executed offering.

Readers of *Soldier* may also be interested in the involvement of the Jewish Brigade, a mostly unsung British Army formation made up of volunteers from Mandatory Palestine.

All told, *Plan A* does a good job of shining a light into history's overlooked nooks and crannies, while raising interesting philosophical questions about the limits of an-eye-for-an-eye justice.

It certainly piqued this reviewer's curiosity enough to get on Google and find out more about real events.

As such, this film is well worth others checking out. ■

REVIEW: BECKY CLARK, *SOLDIER*

## Q&A with writer-director Doron Paz...

### How did you come across the story?

Growing up in Israel you think you know all the Holocaust stories – and then a friend of ours started telling us about his grandfather, a survivor who just before he died started saying weird things about coming back home after the war and killing the guy who told the Nazis about his family. We thought this was a great angle for a personal revenge story. So we started researching and found out about Plan A – and that really blew our minds.

### Why do you think so few people have heard about it?

The government here didn't want people to know about this revenge story – it's not nice or heroic. People spoke about the Warsaw uprising and surviving the Nazis, but no one talked about pure, filthy revenge. It was terrorism and you don't want to build a country based on those values. We screened the film in Israel, and everyone came out saying they'd never heard of it before.

### What kind of research did you do?

We spoke to some of the surviving members of Nakam. They are an amazing group of people. The interesting thing is that they all said: "Don't judge us by today's moral standards. Put yourself in our shoes as young, hot-blooded people who had lost everyone around them – parents, brothers, sisters, no one survived – and then ask what you would do." And that's the question we raise in the movie. Would your revenge take a destructive path, like them, or a constructive one, like building a country and starting a new family?

### How did you strike a balance between historical accuracy and storytelling?

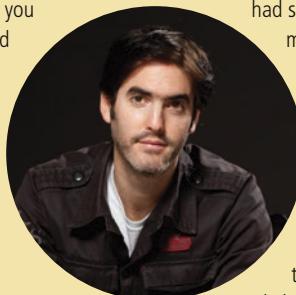
There's a thin line – we really felt the responsibility to do it carefully and be as accurate as possible while telling an interesting, dramatic story. The historical facts are there. Abba Kovner really came to Israel to get the poison – that all happened. So while the main character is fictional, he is living through real events. We worked with Prof Dina Porat, chief historian at Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, and Kovner's biographer. She helped us a lot with the details.

### Where did filming take place?

All the big war scenes and reconstructed cities were filmed in Ukraine and we also shot in Germany. It was a great experience, and we had some very emotional moments with the actors, who came to us and told us stories about their grandfathers being Nazis and participating in the war. All Israelis, when they meet Germans, in the back of their heads are thinking 'what did this person's grandfather do in the Army?' So there was a lot of closure.

### What's the main message you would like viewers to take from the film?

The bottom line, putting politics to one side, is that these people, who had suffered and gone through hell, decided their revenge would be building a country – a safe space for Jews. And even for Israelis it's easy to forget that this is the only place on Earth that is safe for Jews. After 75 years there is still antisemitism around the world. In a way the state of Israel, with all its flaws and all its problems, is our positive, constructive revenge. This is the main conclusion.



**Plan A** is in cinemas and out on digital on September 3



**VERDICT:**  
A thought-provoking insight into a turbulent period  
★★★★★

## DIGITAL/DVD RELEASES



### Shock Wave: Hong Kong Destruction

Out now

A MILDLY entertaining action movie with some over-the-top and badly executed CGI sequences. The story revolves around

a bomb disposal officer who gets injured and eventually becomes an intermediary between the police and a terrorist organisation determined to destroy parts of Hong Kong. As is typical in this genre of film, it is too long and has a meandering plot with a few action scenes thrown in to spice things up. If you can suspend belief for a couple hours and have some spare time then jump in.

Andrew Cranston, ex-REME



### Scare Me

Out now

WHEN struggling author Fred (Josh Ruben) finds himself cooped up in a remote log cabin with successful writer Fanny (Aya Cash) after a

power cut, the pair decide to do what any early thirty-something couple would do... regale each other with scary tales to show off their storytelling talents! What follows is a somewhat entertaining game of one-upmanship, complete with sarcastic top tips for each orator on how to improve their well-trodden clichés and characters. Add in a random pizza delivery boy for good measure, and the pair have an audience for their yarns. Is this offering a comedy or horror film? I'm still not quite sure, but either way it is neither funny nor scary. An hour-and-a-half of less-than-entertaining time-filler.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

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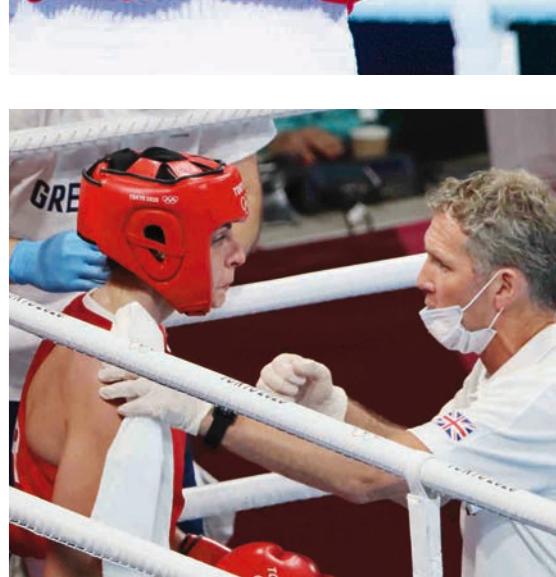
# SOLDIER SPORT



## PODIUM PASSION »»

BOXER Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) enjoyed a medal-winning Olympic debut as she secured bronze in the women's featherweight ranks in Tokyo. Read more about the soldier's Games adventure, as well as her hopes for future campaigns, on pages 64-65...

Picture: Chris Connelly/GB Boxing



# BOMBER BAGS BRONZE

## ARTINGSTALL DELIVERS ON OLYMPIC DEBUT AS TEAM GB'S BOXERS HIT NEW HEIGHTS IN TOKYO

**B**RONZE medallist Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) has told *SoldierSport* of her desire to return to the Olympic ring and fight for amateur boxing's premier prize after a sensational debut at the Tokyo Games.

With the Paris showcase just three years away the soldier vowed to continue her remarkable run with Team GB, which has also seen her win medals at the European and World Championships in her short time with the elite set-up.

The 26-year-old came agonisingly close to fighting for gold in Japan – losing her semi-final encounter with home favourite Sena Irie on a split decision – but insisted there is more to come as she now focuses on new targets.

"I've only been on the team for two-and-a-half years and look what I've achieved already," Artingstall added.

"I've got medals to pick up at the Commonwealth and European Games and then at the next Olympics I expect to improve on the colour I win, if it's not gold then silver."

"I would be a fool to say the result in Tokyo did not hurt, but I cannot fault myself. I have done everything the coaches have asked of me and it has paid off."

"As a medallist, I will now have my face on the wall of the GB Boxing gym in Sheffield, alongside double Olympic champion Nicola Adams."

"It has been an amazing experience so far."

Artingstall, nicknamed Bomber due to her powerful punch, secured a unanimous verdict over Botswana's Keamogetse Kenosi in her

opening featherweight bout and went on to defeat third seed Jucieleen Romeu, of Brazil, and Australian Skye Nicolson to set up a semi-final clash with Irie.

Reflecting on her early contests, the soldier said she was in a "completely different mindset" to the qualifying competition in June, when she suffered a shock loss before securing her Games place in a winner-takes-all box-off.

"I'm a boxer who performs better the longer the tournament goes on," she explained.

"I enjoyed every minute of it and was thinking 'I'm an Olympian, what will be will be'. I treated every fight as if it was my last and was never looking that far ahead.

"Kenosi was quite awkward and unorthodox. My jab was not beating hers, but I threw some back hands, landed clean shots, and felt like I was getting through to her body. I thought I won that fight comfortably."

"The first bout is always a bit iffy but in my second I boxed a lot better. She was the third seed, and a lot of people were asking me how I felt about that in the build-up."

"But numbers don't really mean anything to me; she was a good opponent and we got the game plan right."

"Nicolson's style was very different to the other girls. She didn't throw much but was clever in the way she was countering what I was doing – if I made a mistake, she made me pay. It meant I had to get forward, but I got the job done."

The result guaranteed Artingstall at least a bronze medal and, looking back, she said that outcome impacted on her approach to the Irie clash.



"**TREATED  
EVERY  
FIGHT AS  
IF IT WAS  
MY LAST"**

The athlete added: "Ahead of my other matches I was quite nervous, and I was performing off those nerves."

"But because I'd already medalled, I was calm. I then made a slow start and she won the opening round 5-0, which ultimately cost me the fight."

"I will never make excuses for losing, but I thought I'd just scraped it."

"I was absolutely heartbroken."

"In future, when I go to big tournaments and break through the medal stages, I will make sure I do not switch off like that again – I have to stay alert."

Artingstall's efforts helped Team GB's boxers to six medals at the Games and she has praised the support she received from the wider Army community as she progressed through the tournament.

"It has been unbelievable," she continued. "I have never experienced anything like it in my life. The Army boxing team had me in stitches at some of the videos they sent and I had messages from brigadiers, colonels, generals, the RSM and my CO. It was fantastic."

The medallist is now enjoying some well-deserved downtime before resuming training later this month.

"I cannot stress how important it is for athletes to refresh mentally, as well as physically," she said.

"You are nervous ahead of each bout and overthink things on a daily basis, so I will have a few weeks off and then head back to the gym." ■

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## QUALITY ON COURT

THE Army made a triumphant return to the tennis courts with a resounding victory at this season's Inter-Services Championships.

Staged on the hallowed turf of Wimbledon, the contest saw the soldiers make short work of their rivals as they won all 12 ties in both the men's and women's competitions to secure the titles in style.

"For the women, it was very convincing, and the other Services did not win a set," men's team player Capt Reece Munnery (RTR) told *SoldierSport*.

"But it was not as straight forward for us. We came through a few three-set matches and the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force had some match points, but they could not capitalise."

Munnery said the team's cause was boosted by an emergence of new talent – such as Pte Marco Wright (Para) – meaning there is now real strength in depth across the board.

"They have come in to take the top spots, which has knocked everyone else down the order," the officer explained.

"But before they came in the others were winning anyway, so it has made us so much stronger."



## CLAY SCENE TARGETING NEW TALENT



**"WE HAD TO TURN A LOT OF PEOPLE AWAY"**

THE Army clay shooting team is hoping for an increased presence on the ranges following the phenomenal success of its inaugural women in sport event.

Organised in partnership with British Shooting, the day was designed to introduce female personnel to the clay target discipline and identify those with the potential to progress further, while also encouraging greater participation in the pursuit.

With interest levels proving particularly high, WO2 Phil Parks (AGC (RMP)), secretary and member of the Service team, told *SoldierSport* the number of entrants had to be capped at 100 – but it could have been higher.

"We had to turn a lot of people away – this was totally unexpected," he added. "It is the biggest response British Shooting has had in terms of a women in sport event – we were quite overwhelmed."

"We advertised widely and, clearly, people wanted to come and have a go. We want to shake

off the image that this is a sport for stag dos and old men in caps, and the fact it is an Olympic discipline helps.

"There was a mix of abilities, including those who had never shot before, and a number piqued the coaches' interest.

"We will look to develop them further and it was a very successful day."

Army and British Shooting coaches and athletes were on hand to deliver a thorough introduction, with instruction provided in English sporting, skeet and trap disciplines.

Another, Service-wide introductory session has been organised for September 14 and Parks hopes more soldiers will join a set-up that has excelled in recent years.

"We have three or four members who have been selected for England and are now going down the elite route," he said.

"This pathway was created by the Army team captain and we want to get more people involved with it." ■



## YORKS DOUBLE UP

WITH the new season getting under way later this month, the Army's rugby union players got back into the matchday groove during a keenly contested Community Sevens finals day.

Following regional competitions across the country, the Service's top performing unit teams arrived in Aldershot for matches in four pool stages, ahead of some scintillating knockout fixtures.

After already winning the regional north leg, the soldiers of 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment progressed from a group that included 30 Signal Regiment, the Army in Scotland and 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment before making their way to the final in the main draw.

And they added another short-format trophy to their haul by defeating 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh 26-5.

Elsewhere, 1st Battalion, Scots Guards enjoyed a slender 17-10 win over 8 Training Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the plate final.

The annual Corps Festival will be held on September 15 ahead of the opening round of Corps Championship fixtures on September 29.



# SEASON SIGN-OFF AT MINLEY



**"IT IS A CLASSIC COURSE WITH LOTS OF TIGHT TWISTS"**

THE curtain came down on the shortened cross-country mountain bike season with a hard-fought Army Championships in Minley.

At the end of a pulsating men's race, just a second separated champion Rfn Sam Chatwin (Rifles) and runner-up Maj Simon Richards (AMS). Maj Natalie Taylor (AMS) secured the female honours.

The event – together with the Army Cross-Country Series – capped a successful year for the sport, which was among the first to resume as coronavirus restrictions eased, and organiser WO1 James Cooper (REME) is hoping to build on the momentum in 2022.

"Minley is a classic cross-country course with lots of tight twists and lung-busting sprints," he said. "And it was hotly contested at the front.

"The ethos of mountain biking means it doesn't matter if you're first or last as there will always be someone to battle with.

"Having not had any activity for 18 months our plan was to set up as quickly as possible and regain momentum.

"We have seen the numbers creeping up throughout the season, with different people attending different events, and we will take that into next year."

The series has also crowned its winners with Pte Tobias Turnham (RE) topping the under-23 standings, SSgt Steve Jacobs (REME) the seniors, WO1 Jason Betts (RE) the masters and WO2 Brian Firbank (RLC) the grand masters.

OCdt Ellen Bayne (EMUOTC) took the women's prize, while 24 Commando Royal Engineers were major unit champions. ■



● AFTER a lengthy layoff due to Covid-19, the Armed Forces Parachute Championships made a welcome return to the skies above Netheravon. Excellent weather ensured the event was a huge success, with 146 competitors completing 1,499 jumps in five different disciplines over the course of the week. The Royal Engineers secured the overall corps trophy, with Sgt Jase Hughes (RE) finishing as the highest placed individual.

# MONTH IN SPORT

## September's key fixtures...



**WHAT:** Men's Inter-Services Twenty20 Cricket Championships

**WHEN:** September 10

**WHERE:** Arundel

**NEED TO KNOW:** With

Lord's unable to host, the action switches to the South Downs as the Army look to add a second Forces title to their haul after already winning the 50-over format



**WHAT:** Army Tennis Championships

**WHEN:** September 11 to 15

**WHERE:** Aldershot

**NEED TO KNOW:** The competition celebrates its 100th anniversary and promises some fierce battles, particularly in the men's draw, where a host of new players will be vying for top spot



**WHAT:** Inter-Unit Mixed Netball

**WHEN:** September 22

**WHERE:** Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre

**NEED TO KNOW:** After almost 18 months without any Army netball, players return to the court for a more relaxed tournament ahead of the sterner tests to come later in the season

## BOXING IN NUMBERS

**FIGHTERS WHO REPORTED FOR INITIAL TRAINING - THE NUMBER WILL RISE TO 15 AS THE SEASON RAMPS UP**

**11**

**ATHLETES WITH THE DEVELOPMENT SQUAD WHO WILL TRAIN ALONGSIDE THE SENIOR SET-UP FROM THIS MONTH**

**15**

**BOXERS WHO PREVIOUSLY FOUGHT AT ELITE YOUTH LEVEL IDENTIFIED AS FUTURE TEAM MEMBERS**

**7**

**NATIONAL AMATEUR CHAMPS IN THE SPACE OF FIVE MONTHS DURING REARRANGED SEASON**

**2**



## GYM OPENS FOR BUSINESS

**T**HE Army's boxers are on a mission to make up for lost time after finally returning to the gym following an 18-month absence due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Head coach Sgt James Allen (REME) welcomed the fighters to the squad's Aldershot base for initial fitness testing and strength and conditioning work – and more are expected to join the fold as the tempo ramps up.

While enthusiasm levels have been high, Allen told *SoldierSport* the focus has been on gradual progression to avoid the risk of injury – and peaking too early – with a host of challenges to come.

The rearranged National Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) Championships will be held at the back end of the year and several shows have been organised in the build-up.

The flagship tournament will then return to its traditional April slot in 2022 – following on from the UK Armed Forces Championships – meaning the soldiers face the prospect of an

intense eight-month run.

“It is going to be a long season,” Allen added.

“We wanted to return at a nice, steady pace as there will be back-to-back ABA Championships to come.

“The boxers are really keen, and while we don't want to curb their enthusiasm, it is a case of calming them down, otherwise they will be spent.

“We were not allowed to do any sparring up until a few weeks ago. It's okay to be keen, but we want them to have faith in the process.”

The break has also allowed the team to focus on attracting new talent, with the Army's full-time programme an attractive draw.

“There are a lot of kids who want to be part of a set-up like this,” Allen added.

“Perhaps they have fallen just short of Team GB, or other home nation programmes, and are looking for an opportunity.

“As a squad, we have perhaps started to age a bit so it is important to have that pathway in place.” ■



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# MAJOR TESTS LOOM AS KARATE MAKES MAT RETURN

**H**AVING missed 18 months of competitive action, the Army karate team will return to the elite level of their sport this month with the GB Open and World Championships following in quick succession.

The events come on the back of a two-day training camp at Aldershot's Combat Sports Centre, where the squad was reunited for the first time since early 2020 for a series of fitness tests and skills sessions.

Coach and team member Cpl David Johnston (AGC (RMP)) told *SoldierSport* there was a real buzz in the camp as the athletes arrived, with personnel keen to make up for lost time.

"It is about easing them back in," he added. "We are using this as a refresher as they have not been on the mat for so long, but it will also serve as team selection for the upcoming season."

"We have focused on kumite, working on combinations and

reaction times, and will then move on to fight-offs for places in the squad.

"They have been a lot better than I expected – whatever they've been doing during lockdown, I'd say keep doing it."

"We are one of the most successful sports teams in the Army and you don't join a set-up like this without an intense selection process."

"Yes, we've had 18 months off, but that has been time to train."

"We will head into that first competition with high expectations. Regardless of lockdown, we should be keeping our fitness up and training hard."

Teammate LCpl Micheala Foster (RAMC) is thrilled to be returning to action but said she is not setting any initial targets.

"It is good to have competitions back and I'll go to the GB Open and see where I'm at."

"You can do all the training in the world, but 18 months is a long



**"IT IS  
ABOUT  
EASING  
THEM  
BACK IN"**

time without competing."

While their absence during the pandemic proved frustrating, progress was still made.

Members joined online training sessions organised by the World Union of Karate-do Federations and three athletes were included in the latest intake of the Service's Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS).

A further eight were selected for sports scholarship awards.

One of those joining TASS for the first time is Gdsm Jack Howe (Coldm Gds).

"I'm over the moon," he said. "I think it will help me as an athlete, while benefiting my Army career as well."

"I'll have a nutritionist who can set me on a plan to stick to, and a strength and conditioning coach who can help with the explosive side of karate."

"The others who are involved have really improved – hopefully I can do the same." ■

# GAME BRIEF

**COMPETITION:** Women's Inter-Services 40-Over Cricket Championships

**VENUE:** Army Cricket Ground, Aldershot

**ARMY 448-4:** G Cant 181, Dean 61, C Cant 60, Potgieter 52

**RAF 36:** Dey 12, Potgieter 3-2, Vaggers 3-3, Polson 2-6



DESPITE seeing individuals excel across the board, Army skipper Lt Connie Cant (RA) was quick to praise the collective effort after seeing her side secure another Forces crown.

"It was real team performance," she told *SoldierSport*. "Normally we have a few top players leading the way, but this season we have been flying from one to 11."

"The fact Georgie was able to hit a new record of 181 shows the strength we now have. Amanda Potgieter (pictured above) is still an amazing player, but it is so good to be building a team that can play alongside her at the same standard."

"We came into the season wanting to secure an Inter-Services double and I'm proud that we have achieved that in such a defining manner."

"We are now looking to organise some indoor cricket over the winter and hopefully all three teams can come back next year for a competitive season."



## RECORDS TUMBLE AS REDS RUN RIOT



**O**PENING batter LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps, pictured above) smashed a new Army individual record score as the Reds emphatically dispatched the Royal Air Force in the final of the Women's Inter-Services 40-Over Championships.

The heavy hitter blasted 23 fours and three sixes in a blistering innings of 181 from 137 deliveries – an effort that formed the bedrock of a daunting Reds' total of 448-4 after their rivals won the toss and elected to bowl.

The gulf in class between the sides was obvious from the outset as Cant, together with sister and captain Lt Connie Cant (RA, pictured left), put on 142 for the first wicket in quick time – an effort that was helped by a succession of dropped catches in the field.

Despite losing their skipper for 60, the Army maintained their rapid progress as team stalwart Sgt Amanda Potgieter (REME) cracked a half-century from 27 balls before being run out for 52 – a fate also suffered

by Maj Mel Vaggers (AGC (SPS)) when she was dismissed for just nine.

But the runs continued to flow as Cant and 2Lt Georgina Dean (REME) added a further 147 for the fourth wicket before the former fell late on with a double century in her sights.

Dean finished with an unbeaten 61 as the Reds closed the innings with a new tournament record team total.

In reply, the RAF offered little resistance as Potgieter ripped through the top order on her way to impressive figures of 3-2 from five overs.

Vaggers also claimed three wickets, while WO1 Lisa Newburn-Johnson (AMS) and Capt Liz Polson (RLC) took two each, as their rivals limped to a miserable 36 all out in the 18th over – losing by a staggering 412 runs.

The victory secured an Inter-Services double for the soldiers, who lifted the Twenty20 trophy with an equally emphatic win over the RAF in Arundel. The Royal Navy elected not to field a side for the 2021 season. ■

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# Final Word



My civvy club was holding regular fitness sessions on Zoom – everything went online. I was also fortunate to have a boxer living on camp; we started training together and that allowed me to stay motivated and maintain the right mindset.

**Lt Cpl Hannah Rees, RA**



**The Army team allowed me to join Repton Boxing Club in London. I was training there three times a week and that kept me in a good place – I needed that purpose.**

**Sgt Shamim Khan, RLC**



**Pictures: Graeme Main**  
Interviews: Richard Long  
Our battalion phys is quite tough, with lots of weighted runs, and runs in general. I also deployed on Op Tosca and doing my fitness in the heat of Cyprus was great for my conditioning. My infantry training has given me a good base fitness to work from with my karate.

**Gdsm Jack Howe, Coldm Gds**



I worked on my strength and conditioning and made sure I kept my endurance levels up with gym sessions. That was important to prevent injuries when I finally came back.

**LCpl Micheala Foster, RAMC**



We thought the initial lockdown would only last for a few weeks, but once we realised how bad it was we coaches organised regular Zoom meetings and sessions for the team. We also sent out individual training programmes. There was only so much we could do as some had equipment and others didn't, but in general they have done well.

**Cpl Martin Stead, RLC**

**It was about staying disciplined. Our strength and conditioning coach set up a team-builder app and we would have weekly calls to talk about the things I could do in my own time to maintain fitness. I also did a charity challenge of running four miles every four hours for 48 hours – it was good to have that to focus on.**

**Pte Lily Devlin, RLC**

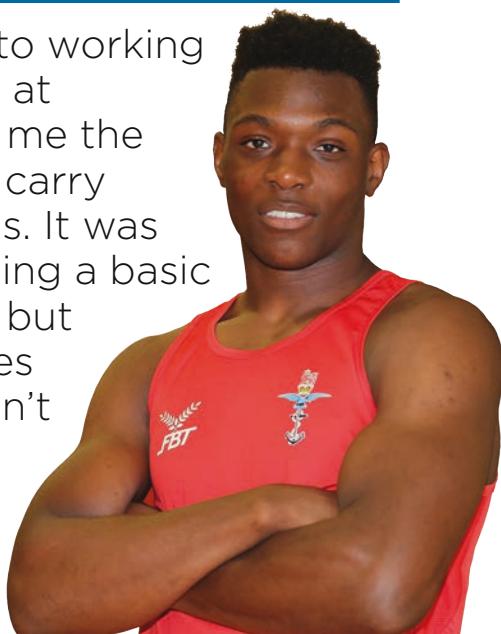


## Sporting stamina

Karate and boxing were among the last Army sports to resume after lockdown. We asked personnel from each discipline how they stayed physically and mentally fit during their 18-month absence...

I had to adapt to working from home but at least that gave me the opportunity to carry on with my runs. It was about maintaining a basic level of fitness, but there were times when we couldn't do much.

**LCpl Carnell Brown, AGC (SPS)**





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