

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

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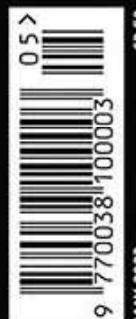
THE RISE
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THE PERSONNEL BEHIND THE
PAGEANTRY OF THE KING'S CORONATION



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Golden age



AS THOUSANDS prepare to play their part in this month's Coronation ceremony (pages 7 and 30), it is worth considering the type of Army that will serve a newly crowned King Charles III compared to his mother back in 1953.

Headcounts, operational experience... the differences on paper are stark. But it was "strength of character" on my mind as I read over this edition's proofs.

Military missions have changed mind-bogglingly over 70 years – as the Serviceman to the left seems to encapsulate in a single snapshot. But in the words of the King at this year's Sovereign's Parade (page 18) "people remain at the heart of all we do".

Reading through our interviews with injury overcomers (page 13), fundraisers (page 16), artillery innovators (page 39) and leadership gurus (page 44), it becomes clear that the determination and commitment of today's troops is not so different to that of previous generations. Problems may be different, but the mindset required to tackle them – not so much.

If the Service personnel inside this month's magazine are what a competitive edge looks like in 2023, our new monarch can feel as proud on May 6 as all those serving King and country will no doubt do.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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Pictures: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

Mounted regiments began conducting overnight rehearsals last month

SOLDIER

Editor Sarah Goldthorpe
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor/Sports Editor Richard Long
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor Becky Clark
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Assistant Editor Cliff Caswell
ccaswell@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Art Editor Tudor Morgan
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Designer Martin Gannon
mgannon@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Photographer Graeme Main
01252 787103 (94222 7103)
gmain@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Advertising Heather Shekyls
07789 034748
advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Subscriptions/Enquiries
07789 034748
subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Email: news@soldiermagazine.co.uk
soldiermagazine.co.uk

Managing Editor Steve Muncey
smuncey@soldiermagazine.co.uk



The tasking of a lifetime

Troops form up for Coronation ceremony magnificence

FINAL preparations are under way for the Coronation of King Charles III, with more than 6,000 personnel set to be on parade in London to mark the historic occasion on May 6.

Soldiers from the Sovereign's Escort of the Knightsbridge-based Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will accompany the monarch and Queen Camilla from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, where the ceremony will take place.

A much larger procession on the return journey will then see troops marching as Their Majesties travel in the gold state coach via Parliament Square, along Whitehall, around Trafalgar Square, through Admiralty Arch and down The Mall.

On their arrival back at Buckingham Palace, the King and Queen will receive a royal salute and three cheers from all

those on parade.

Ceremonial planners began initial work on the format in November – among them Kestrel Simson (ex-QRH) of Home Command, who said that while this month's celebrations would be much smaller in scale than the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the 1953 event provided a blueprint.

"Clearly we couldn't deliver the 25,000 troops that were on parade, nor the four-and-a-half mile processional route from 70 years ago," added the retired lieutenant colonel.

"But we calculated that two per cent of the Armed Forces were involved in 1953 and our solution in 2023 is about two-and-a-half per cent, so we have replicated the principles, if not marginally exceeded them."

> **continued page 13**



“
It has been
absolutely
mammoth
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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. GEORGIA KIT CHECK

A STINT at Fort Benning saw personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment continue their work testing cutting edge tech.

Burma Company joined counterparts from the Netherlands and hosts America for the seven-week Army Expeditionary Warfighting Experiment, where they trialled 36 pieces of kit – including loitering munitions, new drones, robotic soldier systems and biometric monitoring.

The role of British Army experimentation battalion was assigned to 2 Yorks in 2020.

2. CALIFORNIA FORTUNE FAVOURS THE WAVE

A GRUELING ocean voyage looms for a four-man team from 1st Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment set to row 2,800 nautical miles from California to Hawaii.

Maj Simon Farley, WO1 Chris Barnes, Capt Chris Bailey and Capt Sam Morris are in the final stages of training for next month's Pacific Challenge – the inaugural race in a new event staged by the

organisers of the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge.

They will tackle the route from Monterey Harbour to the island of Kauai in two-hour stints, raising money for a number of good causes in the process. To follow their progress and support them go to pacific-one.co.uk



3. FALKLAND ISLANDS AVIATORS PAY HOMAGE

HISTORY buffs from HQ Army Air Corps headed 8,000 miles south to discover more about the Falklands War.

The battlefield tour saw seven personnel visit sites where fighting raged with occupying Argentine forces in the 1982 war – encompassing places such as Goose Green, San Carlos and the heights around the capital Port Stanley. There was also a wreath laying ceremony at Pleasant Peak – where an AAC Gazelle crashed with the loss of two crew members during the campaign.



Picture: Graeme Main



4. CYPRUS GOING GREEN

TROOPS from the Bulford-based Household Cavalry Regiment are setting up for peacekeeping duties in the Mediterranean on Op Tosa.

A 260-strong cohort – including Royal Yeomanry Reservists plus gunners from 5 Regiment, Royal Artillery – are settling into the long-running UN deployment, patrolling the Green Line separating the Greek and Turkish areas.

They replace colleagues from 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic



Regiment and have responsibility for the sector covering the city of Nicosia.

Household Cavalry Regiment second-in-command Maj Paul Chishick said soldiers had been looking forward to the tour after preparing for any situations they might encounter on deployment at the Mission Ready Training Centre.

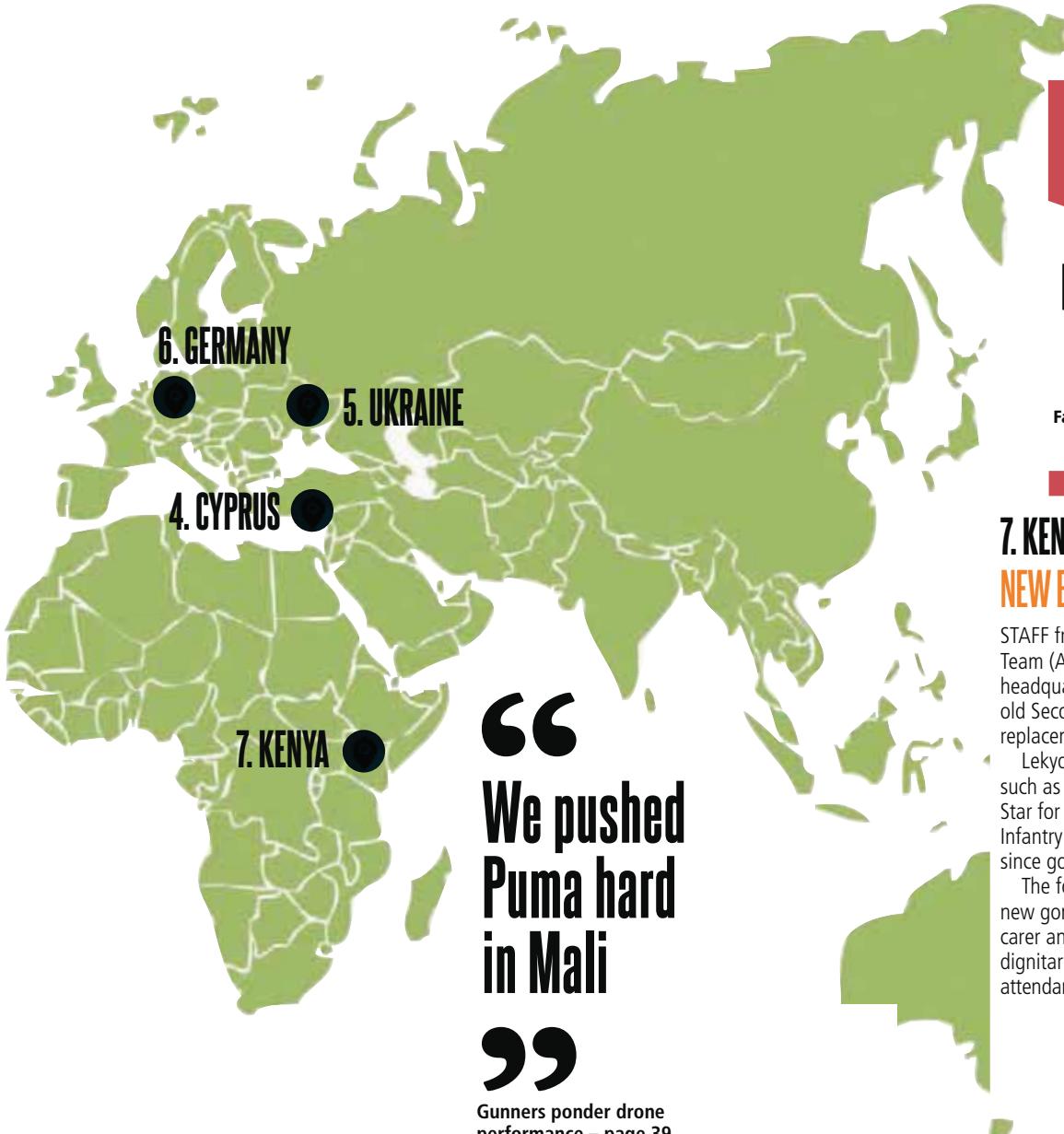
"The role will require both tact and professionalism to help prevent any activity that could disturb the Cyprus peace process," he pointed out.

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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Gunners ponder drone performance – page 39

5. UKRAINE

ALL GUNS BLAZING

COURAGEOUS artillery crews have been returning to their home country – reuniting with colleagues on the front lines in the fight against Russian forces.

The soldiers – who trained with British instructors on the AS90 self-propelled gun as part of Operation Interflex – will be responsible for taking the 32 platforms gifted to their country into battle against the Kremlin's army.

In addition, a contingent of personnel have been honing the skills needed to operate the Challenger 2 tank – some 14 of which have also been handed over to assist the war effort.

Royal School of Artillery training boss Lt Col Ed Botterill said the visitors had soon become familiar with firing and maintaining the AS90 gun. He added:

"I knew they would be thirsty for knowledge but – goodness – from the moment they got off the bus we had to slow them down.

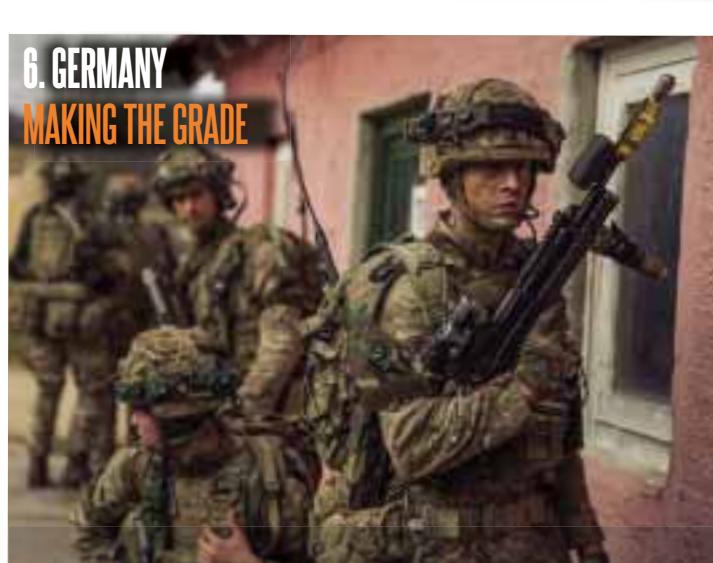
"Our trainers have done an incredibly good job – I would like to thank them for all their hard work as I know the Ukrainians have really benefited from it."



Picture: Graeme Main

6. GERMANY

MAKING THE GRADE



OFFICER cadets from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst honed their urban drills at Hohenfels, Bavaria. The US-hosted Exercise Dynamic Victory was their final training package before commissioning and taking part in the 200th Sovereign's Parade at the Berkshire institution (page 18).

Picture: Spc Nick Bryant Jr, US Army



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Cutting-edge kit set for take-off

Funding boost means concepts will reach infantry troops quicker



Pictures: Graeme Main and Cpl Eden Cameron, RLC

EFFORTS to integrate infantry troops into the digital battlefield have been boosted by a ten-year £60m funding package.

The cash is going to SoldierWorks, a small organisation previously known as TommyWorks that's staffed by around 20 civil servants, specialist contractors and Army officers.

The team works closely with the Futures Directorate, experimentation battalion 2 Yorks and the Combined Arms Manoeuvre and Infantry Battle Schools to deliver new kit for dismounted personnel.

The money will be used to buy items that accelerate the development of new concepts such as 3D printers for making "in-house" prototypes.

"The funds will also help us form an engagement team to go out to units and symposiums to demonstrate what we do and find out what issues need fixing or gather new ideas," said the

head of SoldierWorks, Lt Col Gareth Davies (pictured right).

The range of innovations currently being explored feature portable power packs to supply the foot soldier's ever-increasing number of electronic devices.

Factors being considered include where and how they can be charged, and whether situational awareness tools could be plugged in to charge and receive data downloads.

"We're looking at new Virtus webbing with integrated wiring so devices can be powered easily on the move," added Lt Col Davies.

"But we have to accommodate the human factors, too – the impact of weight from batteries and where to position that, for instance.

"We are, effectively, a systems integrator, and this financial boost will help us drive the development of more concepts more quickly and in a more integrated and coherent fashion." ■

We're looking at webbing with integrated wiring



UNCLAIMED PENSIONS PUSH

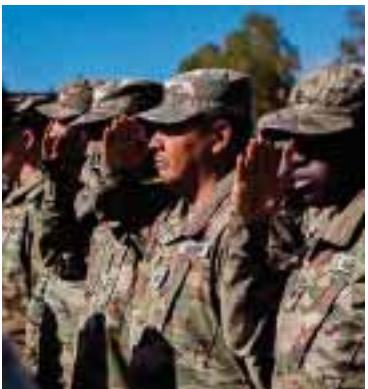
■ FRIENDS of ex-soldiers have been asked to nudge pals and encourage them to check if they are owed a cash windfall.

Latest figures show some 4,000 military pensions were unclaimed between June 2020 and May 2022 with sums running into many thousands of pounds.

Maj Gen Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pensions Society, said those serving after April 1975 and now aged 60 or over could have unclaimed money but stressed they may need to apply as awards may not be made automatically.

"We can all play our part in encouraging veterans to come forward if they have not claimed preserved pensions or preserved lump sums," he added.

Visit support.veteransgateway.org.uk and see the finances section of the website for assistance.



Picture: US Army

STRUGGLING FOR NUMBERS

■ IT IS not only the British military who are battling to fill their recruitment pipelines.

The US Army is bringing back its famous "Be All You Can Be" advertising campaign, first aired back in the 1980s, in an attempt to turn around what's been dubbed by American media as the worst recruitment crisis since the end of the Vietnam War.

Job competition from the civilian sector, the cost of living crisis and deficient military healthcare were cited as possible factors.

Gen Joseph Martin, vice-chief of staff for the US Army, said there could be a shortfall of 20,000 soldiers by the end of 2023.

GREEN LIGHT FOR ECO-DRIVE

■ BLOCK life at Glencorse Barracks, Midlothian is set to get greener with the award of a £690,000 government grant.

The cash from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund will provide air source heat pumps, draught proofing, ceiling insulation and LED lighting in a 72-bed single living accommodation facility.

Some 46 tonnes of CO2 will be saved every year over the next decade as a result.



UNIT MARCHES PROUDLY INTO ARMY'S ROYAL FAMILY

■ THE Yorkshire Regiment has assumed a new identity after the formation was bestowed a royal title by King Charles III.

The announcement coincided with the monarch's visit to the county last month and comes into force with immediate effect. There will be no cap badge design changes resulting from the move.

Colonel of The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, Maj Gen Zac Stenning, said: "We are acutely aware the award of this title is a singular honour.

"It will cement our soldiers' pride and identity in belonging to a unique, county-named Infantry regiment, committed to service and duty to our nation."

Formed in 2006 by the merger of The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire, The Green Howards and The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, the unit can trace its history back 338 years to 1685.

Since the amalgamation its soldiers have deployed on 20 operations overseas including three tours in Iraq and 12 in Afghanistan – the most recent of which was Op Pitting in August 2021.

The regiment has two Regular battalions as well as a Reserve element.

Picture: Steve Dock

BEASTS IN THE BLOCK



PET owners in single living accommodation can now have more of a say on bringing their animals in to live with them, MoD officials have confirmed.

A guidance overhaul means troops are able to have the likes of dogs and cats in their block – unless there is a strong reason for them to be excluded.

Previously, accommodation bosses had discretion on banning animals. But changes to bring the military rules in line with landlords on civvy street mean the rights of pet-owning troops must now be given priority.

Personnel have welcomed the changes, which it is hoped will bolster morale and provide companionship for those living on base. But defence chiefs have warned that not all pets are permitted – and that soldiers should read the rules carefully first.

While the approved list includes species such as rabbits and birds, reptiles, rats and insects all remain off limits – as well as creatures that eat live food.

Permission must still be granted for a pet to stay in SLA – and animals have to be registered with a local vet and fully insured for their tenure on the base.

They must also be up-to-date with vaccinations and microchipped if possible. And consideration must be given to who will care for the animal if the owner is away – as well as whether fellow residents have any allergies.

Cpl Matt Broomhall (RAVC, shown above), whose dog Rex lives with him in his block, welcomed the change but stressed there was lots for single soldiers to think about, especially the issue of pet-sitters during periods of absence.

“I had to do something to help”

A cause close to home

Senior NCO tackles mega-tab for ‘fantastic, resilient’ Ukrainians

A DETERMINED senior NCO from 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment is set to take on a 120-mile tab in memory of his father and in tribute to the people of Ukraine.

CSgt Stuart Collins will walk from his formation’s headquarters in Lichfield to London, non-stop, at the end of this month in a bid to raise £4,000 for causes that are dear to him – the British Heart Foundation and charity British Ukrainian Aid.

The 44-year-old lost his dad, Paul, to coronary heart disease in 2019 and aims to spread awareness of the importance of healthy living.

Having served on several short-term training teams under Operation Orbital in Ukraine in 2017, he also wants to support those suffering in the war-torn Eastern European country.

“I worked with various Ukrainian units and I had such a good bond with them,” explained the senior NCO, pictured above.

“I kept in touch with some of the

soldiers and interpreters and when Russia invaded, I had to do something to help.

“They are fantastic, resilient people – I knew that then and now the whole world knows it.”

CSgt Collins was awarded a medal by the Ukrainian military for his efforts on Orbital – the first overseas soldier to receive the honour.

Having undertaken a similar 80-mile tab last year, the dad-of-five decided to up the ante and complete the longer route in 48 hours alongside colleagues CSgt Shaun Mills and CSgt David Tomlinson (both Mercian) – with his wife, Reservist Cpl Louise Clark (QARANC), providing medical support.

To boost his fundraising efforts scan the QR codes below. ■



■ A NEWLY-RESTORED Second World War armoured powerhouse will be seen for the first time at the Tank Museum in Bovington next month. The British Centaur – which was converted to a bulldozer to plough through bombed out cities – has been returned to its original form as a gun tank. It will be showcased at the venue’s Tankfest event from June 23-25. Owned by the Bannister Collection, the rare vehicle appeared in the US TV drama series *Band of Brothers*. Visit tankfest.com for more information on the upcoming event.



COMEBACK CALL

Picture: Graeme Main



AT activities such as mountain biking are open to FTRS troops

Rallying cry for troops to rejoin and help plug the manning gaps

FORMER Regulars are being asked to dust off their uniforms and rejoin as full-time Reservists, in a move to bring back much-needed experience to the Army's ranks.

Top brass say those signing up will help plug some recruitment gaps, while getting a say over where they are based in the country.

And they will be re-trained if they want a different cap badge.

Soldiers enlisting under full-time Reserve service (full commitment) will also get most of the entitlements available to Regulars – including military healthcare and perks including adventurous training outings.

Army workforce planning boss Lt Col Glenis Maloney (R Signals), who has been overseeing the recruitment campaign, said she hoped the flexibility would appeal.

The Andover-based officer told *Soldier*: "This type of Reserve service

gives troops an opportunity to continue serving without rejoining as a Regular.

"We have slots available in pretty much every cap badge, with the exception of some niche roles for which specialist experience is required.

"Geographically, it may also be possible to tailor the job to a particular location and there will be accommodation on offer as well."

It is also hoped that FTRS will appeal to Reservists wanting to accrue more military experience – and those considering the Regulars in future, Lt Col Maloney added.

"We are hoping we can provide a raft of opportunities for soldiers, and in return the Army will benefit from their wide range of experience," she said.

Those enlisting will be expected to give two to three years of service. Visit findforcesjobs.mod.gov.uk for details. ■

We have slots available in pretty much every cap badge

Reflections on signing up
— page 74



Coronation continued

> from page 7

With the plan endorsed by the palace, industry partners set about producing four new state colours bearing the King's crest, as well as many thousands of cap badges, and rank insignia, along with 1,500 sets of number one dress for non-Household Division regiments.

"It has been an absolutely mammoth task which took an awful lot of hard work," continued Simson.

"Normally it takes about a year to deliver such items, but using emergency procurement procedures we have done so within four months."

A huge logistical effort involving some 1,500 further personnel and led by 101 Operational Sustainment Brigade will underpin the ceremonial display.

Maj Rob Charlesworth (RLC, pictured) said those taking part would be transported from a number of South East hubs.

"The real complexity of this is where we're accommodating people, how we feed and look after them," he explained.

"Then we're responsible for moving them into London and getting them to the start line. It is very much a joint endeavour across all the Services, as well as the Met Police, British Transport Police and industry."

Together with his colleagues, the officer brings a wealth of experience to Operation Golden Orb, as the Coronation is known, having overseen the support to both Prince Philip's and the Queen's funerals, as well as the Platinum Jubilee.

"My first day in my current role was the day the Duke of Edinburgh passed and my last day with this unit is the day after the Coronation," he added. "It's an honour to play my part and something I never thought I would do – having never had much to do with the ceremonial piece as an RLC officer."

"So to be involved behind the scenes is really quite powerful." ■



■ AN EX-SOLDIER has been going through final preparations as he attempts to become the first double above-the-knee amputee to climb Everest.

As this issue went to press, Hari Budha Magar (ex-RGR) and his team were waiting for suitable weather to begin the ascent.

It is the latest in a line of challenges for the former corporal, who lost his legs after an IED blast in Afghanistan.

He is already the first double, above-knee amputee to climb a mountain over 6,000 metres – the mighty Mera Peak in the Himalayas – while numerous other outings have included Mont Blanc.



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Pictures: Graeme Main

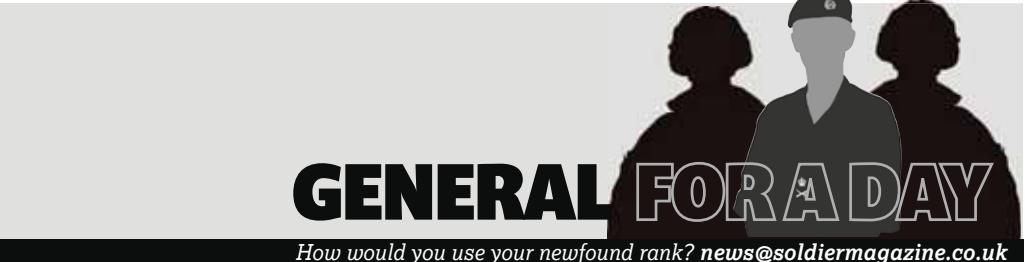
A JOB FOR JAVELIN...

■ PERSONNEL on the Army's various mortars, machine-gun and anti-tank commanders' courses came together for a testing final exercise on Salisbury plain.

The package saw some 100 troops hone their skills in the tactical deployment of their specialist weapons.

It was staged by the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School, which delivers specialist weapons training to officers and soldiers across the Field Army.

Check out future issues of *Soldier* for more anti-tank intel.



How would you use your newfound rank? news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

THE thing that I think is crazy in the Army is how much stuff we contract out to others.

If I was a general, all my efforts would go into changing that.

Civvy contractors come in and have us over a barrel. But we are an organisation of electricians, engineers and so many other trades.

At the moment we're in a situation where a qualified electrician finds a lightbulb out on camp but can't go down to the stores or buy another – they have to wait weeks for a contractor to come

hours straight working on it and fixed it up.

We give our people these qualifications but then they don't get to use them unless deployed.

If we're not overseas, why not get soldiers to do this sort of stuff?

By doing the work themselves troops would be building up their own experience and logbooks too.

It would also boost retention because people would want to join to get these qualifications.

Yes, we do that now, but many credentials still aren't recognised on civvy street. So I think it could help a lot.

I know soldiers who have signed off recently, saying their skills were being wasted and that they felt bored.

And you don't have to look far to see why.

Tank transporters can only be driven by soldiers on UK roads if they're empty – otherwise it's civilians. And there are no loggies in our clothing stores either.

Similarly, they took Army chefs out of cookhouses and brought in contractors. The result? Terrible food.

The bottom line is that if you are the one living in an environment, you are far more motivated to take time and care over the jobs there.

Some of the contractors

I've observed have been awful – a quality I'd never allow in my own home. I put in a request to get our offices painted recently and they came in, but it was a bare minimum job. And I had no heating in my office all winter.

Workers came in, said they would fix it, but it never happened.

Many of these people are probably on minimum wage, but those at the top of these businesses are taking a big cut and making a lot of money out of the Army. And that's so demoralising.

I would use my rank to try and put us back in charge of our buildings, so that we can take better care of them in future.



“ I would use my rank to try and put us back in charge of our buildings ”

and do it for them.

But why can't the Army exist self-sufficiently? We do it on operations.

When I was in South Sudan our generator got hit by lightning, taking out all the power on camp.

There were no contractors there, no spare parts to be had – but our Royal Engineers spent 24

Name:

Sgt Luke Cutler

Cap badge:

AGC (RMP)

Role:

Fox Platoon sergeant at ATR Winchester, providing rehab and remedial training to recruits

Age:

28

Years in:

10

Deployments:

Op Trenton, 2019, plus postings to Kenya, Poland and Canada

CHURCH SUPPORT

■ ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury Justin Welby will signal the Church of England's support for Service personnel when he signs up to the Armed Forces Covenant during a visit to troops, it has been confirmed.



The religious leader will give his personal endorsement to the move in a service at Salisbury Cathedral in June – soon after meeting soldiers at MoD Lyneham.

Garrison chaplain, Rev Nathan King, told *Soldier* the senior cleric was keen to find out more about Army padres.

"We're really looking forward to the visit – I know he's interested in our role and keen on exploring further opportunities," he said.

Picture: Jaqui Sze

BABY BRAINS

■ CANNY Army officers have used their military problem-solving skills to create a baby-changing bag inspired by front-line kit.



The "Bag Daddy" is rugged and weatherproof with the functionality of webbing and ammo pouches.



Founder Maj Freddie Macnair (Scots, shown above with his daughter) said such kit was usually aimed at mothers.

"We want to support dads to feel good about themselves," he added.

Visit bagdaddy.co.uk to see more.

STUCK IN THE PAST

■ VISITORS to the REME Museum in Lyneham will be able to experience a snapshot of life in the 1940s at the Wartime Britain re-enactment event this month.

Taking place over the weekend of May 13-14, the showcase will feature period vehicles, artillery demonstrations and actors in costumes from the era.

Tickets must be booked in advance at rememuseum.org.uk



“
It is more
planet-friendly
”

Iconic poppy goes *green*

THE renowned symbol of remembrance has been given an environmental upgrade – making it plastic free and easy to recycle.

It is the first revamp of the poppy in 28 years and will be available in time for this year's appeal.

Shown above, it will now be made entirely from paper, with no single-use plastic stem or centre. As a result it can be recycled through ordinary household collections.

The Royal British Legion has been developing the plastic-free alternative for the last three years as part of its bid to be more sustainable and less impactful on the environment.

The new design features a traditional shape with a black centre embossed with the words "Poppy Appeal", and a leaf with a crease.

It can be fastened with a pin in the

stem or worn in a buttonhole. A stick-on version is also available.

"After years of design work, creating new paper and machinery and road-testing it for durability and colourfastness, we have been able to eliminate single-use plastic and create a poppy that is an enduring symbol of respect and remembrance as well as being more planet-friendly," said Andy Taylor-Whyte, the RBL's Poppy Appeal director. ■

IN NUMBERS

40

Percentage reduction in carbon footprint from the new design



FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



WEDDING WARM-UP

AN ENERGETIC Army clerk is preparing to wed his partner after persuading her to complete a 200km speed march with him around the country.

Cpl Hayden Broun (AGC (SPS)) and other half Cherie Jones put in a daily 10km over 20 different routes across the country to raise money for less fortunate

Funds raised:
£551
For: SSAFA

Armed Forces colleagues – pushing their toddler in his buggy to add to the challenge. The couple were inspired to complete the endeavour as a tribute to the care they received after complications following their son's birth.

Pictures: Graeme Main



Rambahadur Limbu meeting members of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles back in 2014

'An exemplar of bravery'

Personnel pay tribute to Gurkha VC hero after his death, aged 83

FRIENDS and colleagues have paid tribute to the last Gurkha veteran to receive the military's highest gallantry award after his death in Nepal.

Rambahadur Limbu was handed the Victoria Cross for his actions under contact with Indonesian troops during the so-called Borneo Confrontation.

Confirming that the 83-year-old had died in Lalitpur on April 22, the Gurkha Brigade Association paid tribute.

"Officers and soldiers extend their deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to his family and friends," a statement said.

"He has been a figurehead and exemplar of bravery for generations of Gurkha recruits and soldiers."

"His loss will be profoundly felt by all he inspired."

Having been selected for the Army in the late 1950s, Limbu had been serving as a lance corporal with 2nd Battalion, The 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha



Rifles when he deployed to Borneo.

In November 1965 a battle saw him brave heavy fire to extract two wounded comrades before grabbing a machine gun to support troops.

After receiving the VC from Queen Elizabeth II in 1966, the Serviceman went on to retire as a captain after serving 26 years. He was also appointed a member of the Royal Victorian Order for his work as a Queen's Gurkha orderly officer.

He retained his close ties with his brigade and was a strong supporter of charity work and initiatives to help recruits and veterans. ■

RAINBOW the bear has enjoyed a busy end to the football season as part of his fundraising bid to visit as many non-league grounds as possible. The brainchild of Cpl Anthony Caird (Scots), the initiative was designed to support North Tyneside charity Pathways 4 All, which runs the Tim Lamb Centre for disabled children. Rainbow's adventures will continue over the summer, when he will serve on board HMS Tyne to raise money for Grace House, a similar facility in Sunderland. Search "rainbow bear" at donate.giveasyoulive.com



“
He has been a figurehead for generations
”



NEW SLA DROPS IN

THE first units of high-spec modular digs have arrived at Imjin Barracks in Gloucestershire.

When completed this summer, the new single living accommodation block will provide 69 ensuite single bedspaces, along with communal living and kitchen facilities.

Manufactured off-site, the pods feature modern interiors, central break-out spaces and increased natural daylight – as well as smart technology to reduce energy use.

As reported in *Soldier* last September, the contract with construction specialists Reds 10 was signed just 12 months ago, representing an unusually speedy turnaround by the normal standards of defence procurement.

The project is part of a wider £1.2 billion investment across the Army estate which will deliver 8,500 new bedspaces over ten years.

A further 8,000 new and refurbished SLA bedspaces are being provided under the defence estate optimisation programme over the same timeframe, bringing the total to 16,500 new units.





IN NUMBERS

40,000



Cadets to have passed out from Sandhurst since 1947 when it took on the title of the **Royal Military Academy Sandhurst** – before that it had operated under different titles since its inception in 1801

“
People remain at the heart of all we do
”



King Charles talks leadership

Monarch marks new era for Sandhurst at first Sovereign's Parade

His Majesty The King rang the changes at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) for the 200th Sovereign's Parade.

It was the first time he had attended the ceremony as reigning monarch – he represented the late Queen at the event in 2015 – so new colours were blessed and presented to the institution, while those belonging to the Queen were marched on to the parade ground with cadets saluting a statue of her.

The ceremony saw 171 officers commission, 26 of them international – and the value of foreign alliances dominated the King's speech.

“The conflict in Ukraine has reminded us of the importance of partnerships, not only across Nato but globally – including with non-

traditional allies,” he said.

“Such partnerships have been strengthened over the course of the past year, perhaps most evident through Finland's accession to the Nato alliance which reinforces the enduring strength of our collective resolve to stand up to illegal and unprovoked aggression.”

The monarch also referenced the significant developments taking place inside the academy's walls to modernise the syllabus and create a more inclusive learning environment.

“People remain at the heart of all we do,” he said. “They are our competitive advantage, and we must continue to transform our culture and training to retain this, at the same time as continuing to deliver capable officers for the future.”

Commandant of RMAS, Maj Gen Zac Stenning, told *Soldier* he thought King Charles' speech was both powerful and appropriate.

“It included some great points about leadership and what's going on in the wider world – all important things for our young officers to consider,” he added.

“We need to deliver relevant leaders for the security challenges we face but also the culture and diversity of who they are leading, so I'm really excited about the journey we're on.” ■





Ground view

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

MORE than 20 years have passed since I began my military career.

In the late 1990s the Army was much larger, Kosovo was the focus of international attention and we were soon to embark on long-term, brigade-level operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Life is different these days – we have a smaller Regular force and a Reserve with a much higher profile. But as Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine has shown, we continue to live in a volatile world.

In this environment it is critical that we bring on board, and retain, the best talent.

And as soldiers, I'd like to see us help more on these fronts. We can play our part in promoting the Army and telling potential joiners about all that it can offer.

I'm not suggesting we deploy high-pressure sales tactics, but in many respects our uniform already makes us recruiters.

Explaining Service life is an important part of our role in an era when many civilians do not have links to the Forces.

In the same way as any job, we can acknowledge that ours is far from perfect. You can be separated from loved ones for long periods of time and it's

unlikely to make you hugely rich.

And there are always areas for improvement – issues with accommodation being a high-profile case in point.

But in the current climate of uncertainty, we can attest that the Army does provide a secure job with opportunities for personal development and formal qualifications.

There are chances to embark on adventurous training, travel the world and compete at the highest levels of sport. There are very few civilian jobs that offer anything similar.

In addition, we can help dispel myths – modern Army life is not all about marching up and down the parade square or being shouted at constantly.

In the same way, I'd like to see our NCOs step up and help keep retention rates strong.

I want junior leaders to keep an eye on those under their command and try to identify any problems early on.

If you can provide help to somebody who is, for example, having a hard time in their personal life, they are more likely to stay on.

We are still one of the best trained and versatile armies in the world. Our soldiers are at the heart – we need the best.

“
Our uniform already makes us recruiters
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q How are you feeling about taking part in the Coronation?

A I'm elated – and I don't want to let the team down



Phase one recruits train at ATR Pirbright



Picture: Graeme Main

On point in Pirbright

THE quality of personnel coming through phase one training really hit home during a recent pass out parade I attended at Army Training Centre Pirbright.

Every generation of soldier comes in for criticism as not being of the same standard as those of times past.

But from all I am seeing, we are continuing to recruit good candidates – those destined for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and Royal

Signals I met in Surrey certainly had the makings of fine soldiers.

It was good to hear that on recent courses instructors have also been trialling a revised syllabus, with the aim of focusing on the activities most relevant to current service.

I will be interested to see the conclusions of these pilots which, I hope, will enable us to make the best use of our time in future.

We must, above all, remain agile.

CORONATION QUEST...

■ THIS month marks a once-in-a-generation event as our soldiers take centre stage during the Coronation of King Charles III at Westminster Abbey.

We have not seen an event of this kind for 70 years and I'm well aware of the hard work troops have been putting in to ensure perfection on the day.

I know we will show our ceremonial excellence to the world.

To all taking part – and I shall be marching with you alongside the other Service warrant officers – I hope you take pride in your contribution to this special occasion for the nation and you will have many memories to share.

Long live the King!





THE BIG PICTURE

Salisbury Plain, UK

Letting go

UNMANNED aerial vehicles are becoming increasingly heavy, sophisticated and expensive so one of the best ways to safely launch them in high winds is using a large elastic band for a so-called bungee launch. Soldiers of 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery have been getting to grips with their new platform, the Puma, which offers superior range and endurance compared with the outgoing Desert Hawk III as well as a gyro-stabilised camera mounted on a gimbal for higher quality video feed. Read all about their training activity on page 39.

Picture: Graeme Main

TO T E L E V I S I O N

NUTRITION | HEALTH | MENTAL HEALTH | FITNESS

100

Prep for game day starts well in advance. Aim to maximise muscle glycogen by eating foods high in carbs and moderate in protein in the days leading up to kick-off

Opt for meals and snacks that are low in fat and fibre to minimise gastrointestinal issues. Stick with food you are familiar with

BEFORE

► WITH the annual crunch between the Army's rugby stars and their Navy rivals at Twickenham imminent, teams will be aiming to hit peak form when it counts.

Whether you play sport at an elite or amateur level – or just have a long day looming – this nutritional advice from England Rugby will help you go the distance...

**Ensure
you are well-
hydrated.** Aim
to drink 6-8ml per
kilogram of bodyweight
in the two hours
before kick-off

Avoid larger meals too close to training – you don't want to feel uncomfortably full. Studies suggest that 150g to 300g of carbohydrate around three hours before can improve performance. In the hour before, a small snack will reduce hunger

At half time or during breaks, have a snack of between 20-30g of carbohydrate – for example, a 500ml sports drink or a large banana

Drink regularly

– anywhere between 250ml to one litre per hour, depending on the environment and your sweat rate

DURING

Rehydrate.
Track how much fluid you have lost by weighing yourself pre- and post-training. **For every one kilogram you drop, drink 1.5 litres of water or sports drink**

To aid recovery, aim to consume 60-90g of carbs and 20-30g of protein before you leave the dressing room. Smoothies, milkshakes, fruit or protein bars are good options. Follow this up with a proper meal loaded with all the food groups

AFTER

My match day on a plate

By Army rugby star Sgt Connor O'Reilly (RHA, pictured)

“I'll have a big breakfast – three poached eggs on two slices of wholemeal toast, followed by a bowl of mixed fruit. **This covers everything I need in terms of protein, fibre and energy.** But it's important not to eat so much that the food sits heavy.

My pre-match meal is typically **chicken and pasta**, but nothing with too much spice or flavour as I don't want it repeating on me. It is usually a buffet, so there can be a lot of food available. But again, I don't want to overdo it and feel too full.

I'll drink water in the build-up. Once in the changing room I'll have an **iPRO hydration drink** and **a couple of cans of Red Bull**.

It's about finding the right balance for you. I try to keep the same routine for every game, not just Army-Navy. **Post-match I'll be off to see the colonel – it's KFC every time for me.”**

For more sports-specific nutritional advice head to englandrugby.com/participation/playing/food-for-rugby

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk MAY 2023 23

Wee worries

3 reasons why it's unhealthy to hold it in

► YUP, Servicewomen being too embarrassed to go to the toilet in the field is a thing.

Lack of privacy and needing to partially undress are just two factors that make the process more of a mission for females than men.

But there could be serious consequences to holding in pee – outlined below, along with some of the measures being put in place to support personnel...

1 **An individual suppressing the urge to wee will be distracted and irritable** – they may struggle to focus on what they are doing and could be more prone to mistakes.

2 **Bladder problems further down the line.** Ignoring the body's signals could eventually lead to an overstretched, weak bladder. In turn this could cause difficulty holding urine in, a need to wee more often, an inability to fully empty the bladder and even incontinence.

3 **Deliberately dehydrating yourself brings its own issues.** Some women resort to drinking less fluid in a bid to avoid peeing. But this can cause headaches, as well as poor mental and physical performance. Within the bladder itself, more concentrated urine can irritate the muscle and trigger a build-up of bacteria – which in turn can lead to painful infections of the urinary tract.

Thankfully, organisations such as the Army Servicewomen's Network have been working to put the issue on commanders' radars. As well as better planning around toilet facilities, urination support devices (USDs) are now available through the system.

The USD: How it works

A plastic and silicon funnel, it is inserted through clothing and held against the vulva to collect urine, which is channelled away through a spout.

It is flexible for easy storage and long enough to direct the wee into a toilet, urinal, bottle or onto the ground.

Designed to prevent the growth of bacteria, it should be wiped or rinsed after use before being stored within its discreet pouch.

Top tip: Practise using it at home before you need it in an operational setting.



Information taken from the *Servicewomen's Health Handbook* – a guide aimed at all female MoD personnel, their male colleagues and line managers. As well as urinary health, it covers topics such as periods, sexual health, menopause, contraception, pregnancy and more. Search for it on Defence Connect.

Have a word with yourself

How a positive pep talk could boost your mindset



‘IT’S DOABLE IF YOU WORK AT IT’



Service women get real on passing PTI course

▶ ONLY a small fraction of personnel currently qualified as all-arms physical training instructors are female – 116 out of more than 4,300, or less than three per cent.

But while such stats – along with the exacting entry requirements (see page 28) – might put Service women off applying, the latest cohort to pass the course say would-be PTIs shouldn’t be deterred.

Soldier asked which elements they found the most demanding, and how they adapted their training to compensate...

LCpl Georgia Cummings, QARANC**Age:** 26**Years served:** Six**Favourite phys:** Powerlifting – member of the Army team

Biggest challenge: For me the green side was a bit more difficult – the role fitness test (RFT) – because I'm not exposed to it as often in my cap badge. Tabbing 4km with 40kg and the 2km best effort with 25kg is a bit harder for females than men

Remedy: Because of weightlifting I was already quite strong, but cardio wasn't my friend, so I had to focus on that. Cardio sessions with added weight helped me get leaner and faster

Top tip: *Throw yourself into it and push out of your comfort zone. It's having that mental resilience to keep going. Once you know you can achieve it, it becomes easier*

**LCpl Ollie Swales, RAMC****Age:** 19**Years served:** Three**Favourite phys:** Running

Biggest challenge: Having the right balance between strength and cardio fitness. I've always been good at running because there's nothing on me, but my upper body strength needed to improve

Remedy: Bench exercises – like pushing and pulling. I'd go to the gym with the lads and they did things I wouldn't necessarily have thought of. It's nice – from week one to now I look at myself and think, "fair one, you've got some arms"

Top tip: *Believe in yourself. If you want something, give it your all. And speak to your unit PT staff – mine were really helpful. I don't think I'd be where I am now if it wasn't for them*

**LCpl Sadie Spencer, RLC****Age:** 22**Years served:** Six**Favourite phys:** Swimming

Biggest challenge: Believing that I was fit enough. I've always been into my phys, but I didn't think I could meet the standards, especially the 2km run on the soldier conditioning review (SCR) and RFT

Remedy: Lots of interval training on cardio machines as well as running 6 x 400m once a week. That helped me get my run time down from around 9min to 7min 50sec

Top tip: *All you can do is make sure you're well prepared. It took me about six months to get to the required standard. It's doable if you work at it*



FITNESS CONTINUED

LCpl Ella Baker, AGC (RMP)

Age: 21

Years served: Four

Favourite phys: Running and CrossFit



Biggest challenge: The obstacle course because I went through basic training during Covid and we didn't get to do it, so I was starting from scratch. The rope swing, monkey bars and 12ft wall were tough

Remedy: Having confidence and just getting myself over the obstacles. It was just a mental block – the more I did it, the more I realised it wasn't as bad as I thought

Top tip: Get to know the entrance standards and work towards them – if you can meet them you know you'll be okay on the course. My unit put me through the SCR most weeks before I came. I also ran three times a week and got my 2km run time down by about 45 seconds



Pte Addy Carter, RAMC

Age: 21

Favourite phys: Running

Fact file: First female soldier to pass all-arms pre-parachute selection, also known as P Company



Biggest challenge: Coming off the back of P Company, which was all about running and tabbing, my body was still recovering, so I found the RFT at the start quite tough. Carrying 40kg – two thirds of my bodyweight – is a lot, but I got through it

Remedy: Getting back into the gym, which I enjoyed. Although, at the same time I was training for the London Marathon, so I was doing quite a lot of mileage. If we had done a heavy weight session I would feel a bit fatigued, but I just had to manage my training so that I didn't burn out

Top tip: This course is achievable if your heart is set on it and you put the work in. I've always wanted to show that women can meet the same standard as men.



Can you cut it?

As well as completing the role fitness test (soldier) to non-ground close combat standards and the military swim test, prospective all-arms PTIs must meet the following minimum requirements:

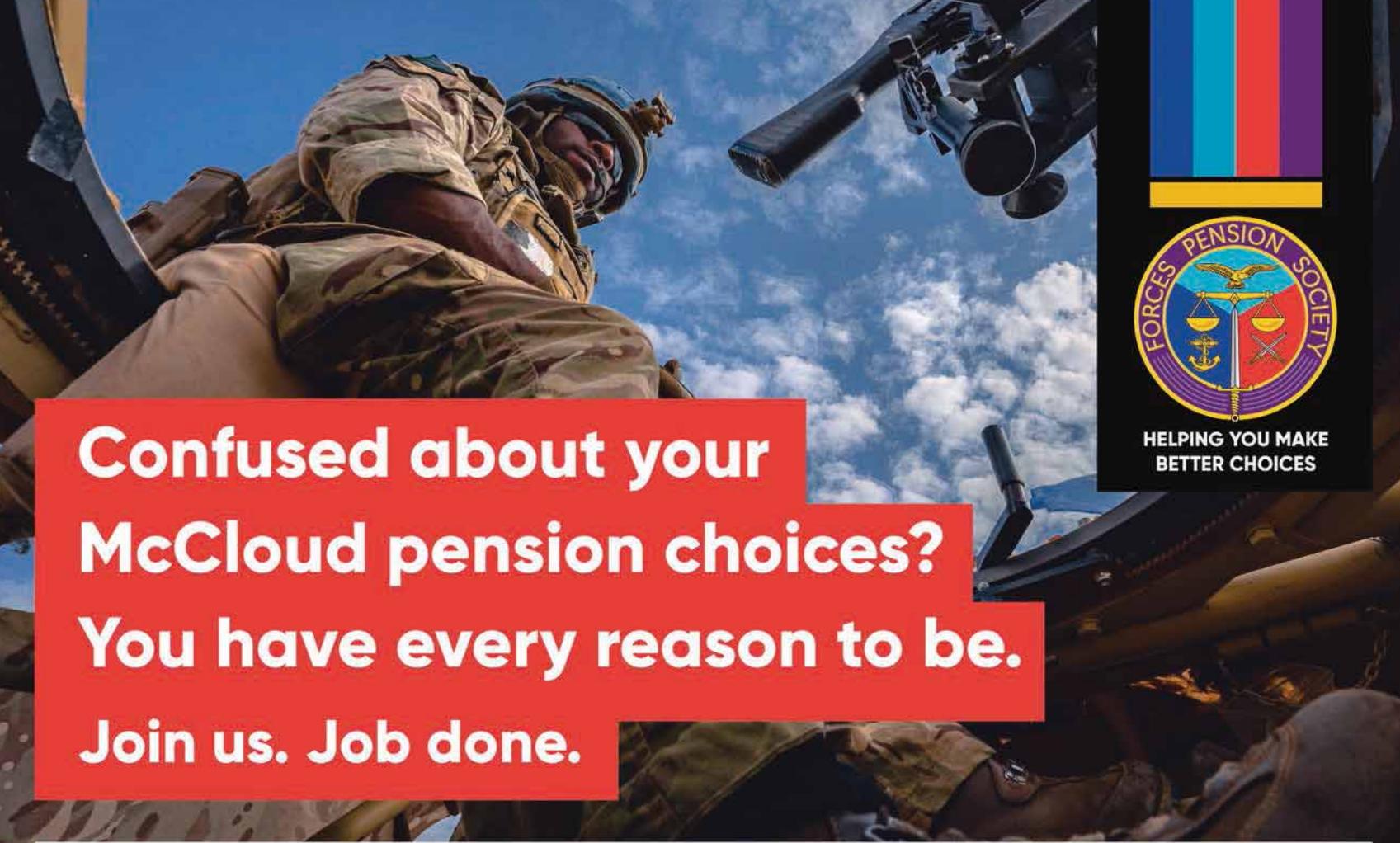
Broad jump – 170cm

Seated medicine ball throw – 320cm

Heaves – 3 reps

Agility sprints – 23.2sec

2km run – 8min 30sec



HELPING YOU MAKE
BETTER CHOICES

Confused about your McCloud pension choices? You have every reason to be. Join us. Job done.

From October this year, all those affected by the AFPS15 Remedy (McCloud) will be faced with making complex choices about their pension entitlement. This will involve complicated calculations, the details of which the Government is still working through. Right now, this is the position.

The AFPS15 Remedy will be delivered in two stages- the prospective remedy, followed by the retrospective remedy. The prospective stage saw all affected personnel still serving moved to AFPS15 on 1st April 2022. The retrospective remedy will allow personnel to choose their preferred benefits for the remedy period when they access their pension or Early Departure Payment.

Eligible members who have already left, or will leave between 1st April 2015 and 1st October 2023 with a pension payment or EDP, and eligible dependants, will be contacted by Veterans UK within 18 months from 1st October with details of remedy options.

But you can eliminate confusion. Join the Forces Pension Society and stay fully informed until you decide if you need the guidance of our Forces Pensions Consultants.

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Independence is vital to our work, calling governments to account whenever we spot unfairness or injustice in the system. We also give you a voice where it counts, on the representative bodies for Armed Forces and Public Sector Pensions.

We are funded by our Members' subscriptions. Any surplus helps fund our outreach programmes of Roadshows, Webinars and our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs.

Visit: forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just £43. You will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual e-newsletters and magazine, Pennant.

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King's Company grenadiers
gear up for Coronation spectacular

Making history

Report: Becky Clark Images: Graeme Main and Cpl Rob Kane, RLC



LL eyes turn to London this month for an event last seen 70 years ago. Back in May 1953, post-Second World War food rationing had yet to be fully lifted and cities across the UK still bore the scars of the Luftwaffe's bombs.

Internationally, British troops were fighting in Korea and the onset of a nuclear arms race between East and West raised the grim possibility of global Armageddon.

Against this gloomy backdrop, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II promised to inject some much-needed colour and pageantry into national life.

Nearly 30,000 troops would take part in the spectacular parade

on June 2, as their new monarch pledged to govern the country "in law and justice, in mercy" – an oath she kept for the next seven decades.

The world may have changed significantly during her reign, but with the war in Ukraine and a cost-of-living crisis dragging on, a climate of uncertainty prevails once more as her heir prepares to be crowned.

While the Coronation of King Charles III is set to be smaller in scale, many will find reassurance in the display of time-honoured ceremonial traditions, with the Army again very much at the heart of proceedings.

More than 6,000 personnel will be on parade across two processions, accompanying the King and Queen from



Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey and back, with a total of 50 regiments represented.

Among them will be guardsmen with a special connection to the new sovereign.

Tracing its history back to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, The King's Company of the Grenadier Guards has the reigning monarch as its company commander and changes title in accordance with their gender.

Traditionally the tallest and smartest members of the battalion, the formation's personnel are ceremonial subject matter experts and no strangers to high-profile occasions.

As The Queen's Company, its soldiers stood guard as Her Late Majesty lay in state as well as forming the bearer party during

her funeral.

The past two years have also seen them take part in the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh and the Platinum Jubilee – alongside fulfilling their Infantry commitments on the likes of Operation Shader in Iraq and exercises in Kenya.

They were due to be presented with new colours as this issue went to press – part of a huge effort behind the scenes to ensure all regalia bears King Charles's crest in time for the Coronation (see page 7).

With rehearsals about to begin for another history-making gig, *Soldier* caught up with four of the company's number to talk about their royal connection, regimental pride and life in the ceremonial spotlight. »



“

*Immensely
proud*

”

This month's cover star, 20-year-old Gdsm Ben Hunt is one half of the third set of brothers from his family to join the Army since the First World War. His sibling serves in The Parachute Regiment, while his father and uncle were both in The Household Cavalry Regiment.



*A*s the sovereign's company we feel really close to them because they are our company commander and we are immensely proud to serve them.

It's massive to be around for the change in name because it has been such a long time since we were called The King's Company.

We were all honoured to be part of Her Late Majesty's funeral and while the Coronation is obviously very different, we will continue doing our jobs 100 per cent.

My dad was involved in lots of ceremonial stuff when he was in the Household Cavalry, so he always gives me a pep talk about keeping my chin up and my shoulders raised.

In the moment we are just focused on being the best we can be, but I think in years to come we'll look back and realise how lucky we were to be part of it all and really embrace the memories.

“

*Once-in-a-lifetime
opportunity*

”

Gdsm William Jenkin, aged 34, was born into a British Army family in Germany and served as a paratrooper in the Bundeswehr before relocating to the UK and joining the Grenadier Guards



*W*as brought up with a sense of Britishness and watching Trooping the Colour on television, but I would never have imagined actually doing it myself.

It's why I joined the Grenadier Guards – I wanted to serve in a quintessentially British regiment.

I love the mix of green soldiering and public duties – when you do one you start to miss the other, so it's a good blend.

I'm extremely excited to be part of the Coronation – the last time it happened was 70 years ago so it really is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that not many people can say they have been involved in.





“ *A close relationship* ”

Gdsm Ben Brown joined the battalion having been inspired by his rugby coach, a former Grenadier. The 21-year-old took part in last year's Platinum Jubilee celebrations before boarding a plane to Kenya 12 hours later to deploy on exercise. He was also a reserve pallbearer at the Queen's funeral.



“ *The start of a new chapter* ”

Gdsm Will Stark followed several generations of his family into the Army – including his brother, a fellow-Grenadier Guard in Inkerman Company. Their cousin, LSgt David Greenhalgh, also of The Queen's Company as it was then, was killed in an IED strike in Afghanistan in 2010. Gdsm Stark was a pallbearer during the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh in April 2021, as well as taking part in the state visit of former US president Donald Trump in 2019.



L can't wait for the Coronation. Not only is King Charles our company commander, but Queen Camilla is the colonel of the battalion, so we have a close relationship.

They are always very interested in what we do and our lives – they like to get to know as many of us as possible when they visit. It's quite incredible and it's a massive privilege for us.

I was part of the Jubilee pageant and it was brilliant. I've never seen anything like it – there were people lining either side of the road.

Being involved in the Coronation will be a good story to tell the grandkids and something I'll carry with me through my whole life.

L think for the big state occasions you have to be able to be quite calm under pressure. The rehearsals for the drill help a lot in that respect because we go over it so many times.

I actually enjoy it – it's a good discipline to have and when it comes together it looks very smart and professional.

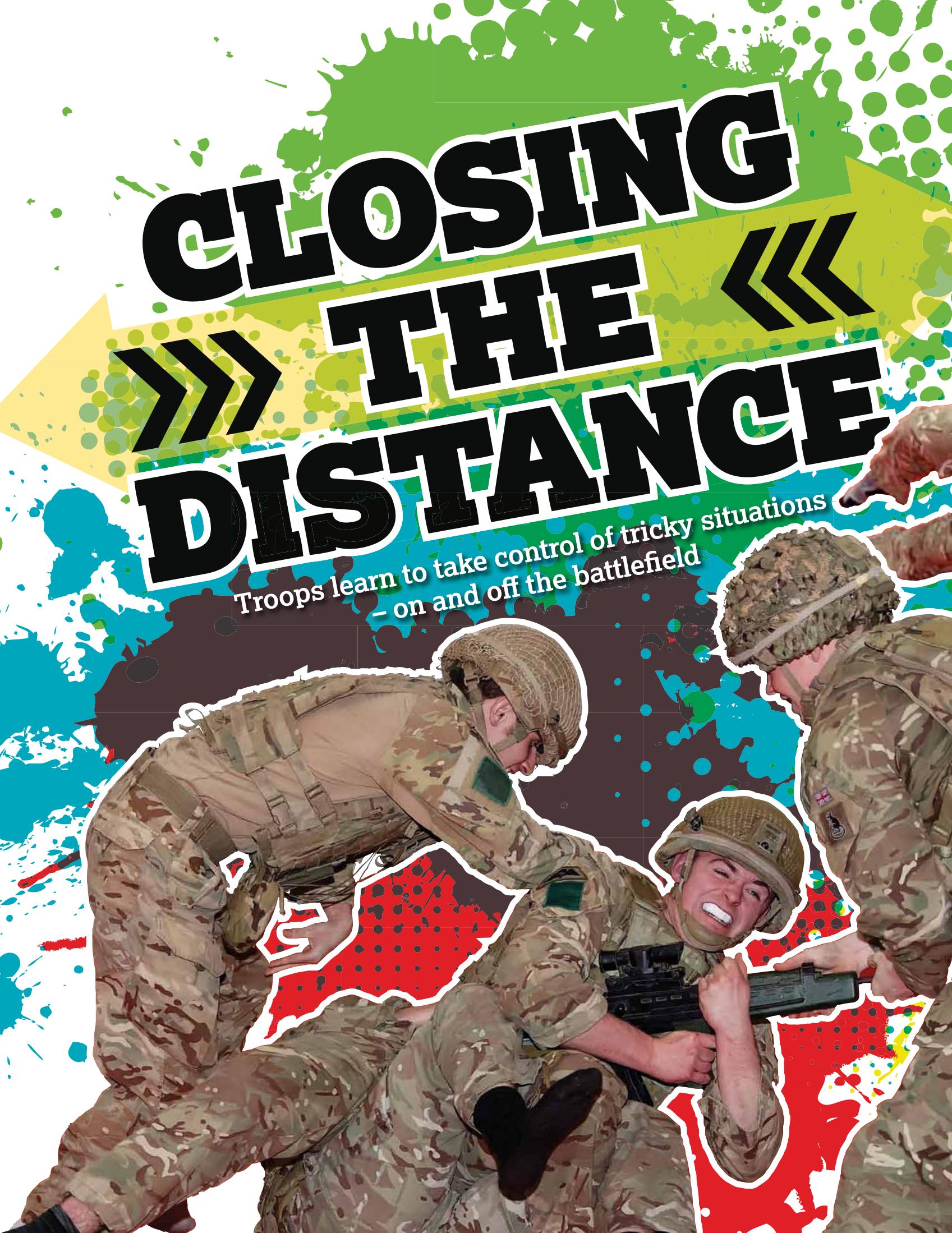
Physically, it can be demanding – not as much as a section attack or anything, but if you're on parade for a long time in hot weather in ceremonial gear it's quite arduous.

The Coronation will be extremely momentous. For the company it is historically very significant. It's like the end of an era as well as the start of a new chapter.

My cousin was an immensely proud Queen's Company man – and I think he'd be proud of both me and my brother.

CLOSING THE DISTANCE

Troops learn to take control of tricky situations
— on and off the battlefield



W

HEN dismounted soldiers find themselves caught up in confrontation, they generally have three options – shoot, threaten to shoot, or do nothing.

But as many have learnt on deployments from Northern Ireland to Kabul, there are times when none of these options is right; when shrewdness and a few wise moves are more what's required.

Enter WO1 Matt Connelly (RAPTC, shown in grey below).

As the lead on human performance and soldier optimisation for the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team – and a veteran of ops from Afghanistan to Eastern Europe – this Serviceman knows all about the complexity of military missions.

As a result, he is now on a quest to address a skills gap across the Field Army.

“I want personnel going into an environment with more than just the option of shooting someone,” he tells *Soldier*.

“Perhaps they’re clearing a building, greeted by agitated civilians in the doorway. In that position it’s vital to try and maintain momentum.”

The thing that can make all the difference in these sorts of scenarios, WO1 Connelly says, is tactical training known as dismounted close quarters survivability (DCQS).

Put simply, it teaches personnel how to regain weapons distance and tackle obstructive individuals without the use of lethal force.

It is about distance control, not fighting. And thanks to the senior NCO and his team it is now being delivered to troops across the Army’s rapid reaction force.

Course participants are taught how to gain the upper hand with a combination of psychological and physical techniques.

This is underpinned by lessons in situational awareness and how to over-ride the body’s alarm response system, which fuelled by stress and anxiety could be responsible for a bad decision on operations.

At one end of the spectrum, a tactic could be as simple as asking someone their name in order to regain control of a

Pictures: Graeme Main

Report: Sarah Goldthorpe



» peacekeeping mission. At the other, participants discover how to use gravity to their advantage when an individual is trying to wrest away their weapon.

"As soldiers, we are always in situations where we are reacting to someone else," the project lead continues. "That already puts you on the back foot, so anything that gives us an ability to regain that distance is vital."

"The only thing we have to address that gap is skill acquisition, and using that as a force multiplier."

And as the images on this page show, the physical aspect of this package can be punishing, with course instructors coaching troops in moves drawn from several different martial arts in order to control their adversaries.

"We're giving soldiers options to respond beyond shouting or shooting," WO1 Connolly says.

And with so many military taskings now involving urban patrols and unruly crowds, it's easy to see the benefits this could bring to a rapid response formation.

At Kabul Airport on Op Pitting in 2021, for example, members of 16 AAB were massively outnumbered by panicked civilians. These are the sorts of high-stress environments where the wrong call is easy to make – quickly turning chaos into catastrophe.

However, the senior soldier's thinking goes a step further than this.

He believes his three-day course in DCQS (combatives) could equip British troops with lifelong skills that are just as valuable in civvy street as they are in battle.

"There is a real confidence-building element to this," he says. "Especially for females, for example."

"On this course they can understand how, even with a 220lb man over them, there are ways to

What it's all about

Dismounted close quarters survivability (combatives)

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

"Good situational awareness gives you four options," WO1 Connolly says. "Observe, evade, contact or intervene. The most important part of this programme is the first two hours, when we explain how all of this is underpinned by situational awareness. This isn't about fighting, it's about seeing what's coming and mitigating."

WEAPON DISTANCE

Personnel are taught various techniques to help them retain – or regain – their weapon's range during heated scenarios and therefore stay in full control of operational situations.



deal with it.

"These skills could also be used to avoid confrontations on a night out. Because we have a duty of care to look after our soldiers in the civilian space as well."

At Merville Barracks in Colchester, and on various operations around the world, more than 500 Servicemen and women have already benefited from this package.

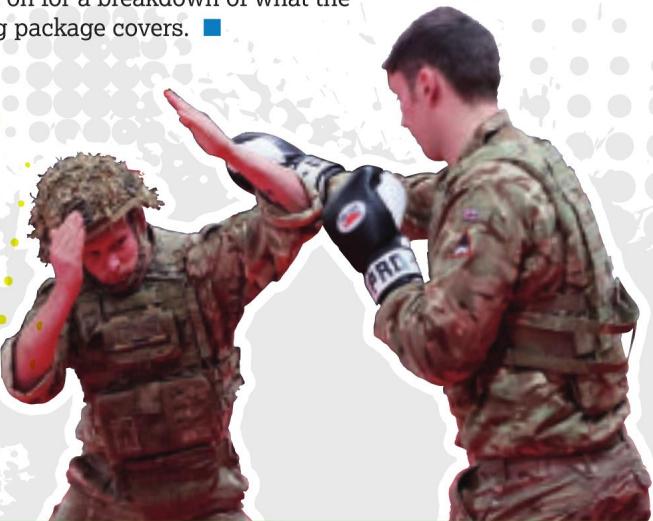
Around 28 instructors have been trained so far, with plans for another 28 to be brought into the fold over the next year.

"Everyone believes in this programme, it has widespread support," WO1 Connolly adds.

"Ultimately, we want to see the lessons going into basic training. But that is a decision for Commander Field Army.

"It is another tool in the box for soldiers, which can only be a good thing because poor performance in our world means someone is going to hurt you."

Read on for a breakdown of what the training package covers. ■



MANAGING THE BODY ALARM SYSTEM

Heart rate plays a huge part in our actions. At more than 175bpm, the body alarm system becomes over-aroused and feelings of irritability or being on edge can follow. Troops learn three ways to mitigate against this – with breathing, visualisations and stress inoculation training (pictured).

TACKLING OBSTRUCTIONS WITHOUT LETHAL FORCE

Instructors are quick to point out this is not unarmed combat. "It's a tactical concept, not a physical one," WO1 Connolly explains. "This is not about fighting, winning or losing, but about control and buying time." A set of physical tests sees students try to settle their body alarm system and regain control amid repeated blows to the head, having a weapon taken from them and being pinned down by a group. Not easy, but success here means a better chance at doing it for real under pressure. "The response needs to be automatic," the senior NCO adds.



CO VIEW

Lt Col Will Hunt of 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment is pleased with the deeper level of self-awareness DCQS encourages. "This gives us something to use between lethal force and nothing," he said. "It's a useful life skill for soldiers across the full spectrum of what they do, and including at home. Most of the battalion has been through it and that gives me real confidence."

SURVIVABILITY SOUNDBITES...

Soldier asks DCQS course participants how they got on with its serials...

"Everyone, especially the Infantry, should know this stuff. I worked in crowd control on Op Pitting where it would have been really useful. The bit that stood out was the stress inoculation. I was practising the breathing techniques during that and it really works. If you control your breathing it stops you panicking."

Cpl Ben Scott, Para



"I had three people trying to take my rifle off me, and at first the aggression took over. But then you ground yourself, control your breathing and react. With more training you'd be able to think even more clearly. I might not ever get into a situation like that because of my role, but this is still good for confidence and for helping you feel in control."

LCpl Jacon Upton, AGC (SPS)





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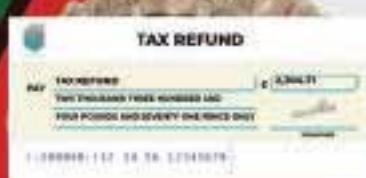
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SOARING SPIRITS



Gunners enjoy UAS spending spree, which has brought cleverer and more lethal systems into play on the battlefield

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main

ASHORT while ago the Desert Hawk III drone was quietly retired from British Army service, ending a relationship that began in 2006.

There was no grand ceremony or commemorative flight, but for many within 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery the occasion was momentous.

This drone had, after all, been a faithful companion in Iraq »

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You’re going
to identify
threats more
effectively
”



» and Afghanistan, enhancing reconnaissance capabilities and helping to save lives.

Still, as with many divorces, the shock of the split has been softened by the chance to hook up with some exciting new partners.

For the foreseeable future, the regiment's personnel will be mainly using two versions of AeroVironment's highly capable Puma unmanned aerial system (UAS) – the AE and the larger high endurance LE.

As the Army's only unit dedicated to operating smaller UAS 32 Regt will also have access to the American manufacturer's Wasp platform, in addition to Parrot Anafi micro-drones for short-range tasks.

Also, by early 2025, the formation is scheduled to reach full operating capability with the incoming Stalker fixed-wing and Indago 4 rotary-wing drones – additions that will create a formidable and flexible fleet of remotely piloted air systems for the Service to exploit (see panel).

“Our regiment needs lots of different aircraft to carry out various tasks so, ideally, we can cherry-pick from a range of assets to obtain the best one for any given situation,” says commanding officer Lt Col Simon Briggs (RA).

“Different platforms allow you to get different sensors into various parts of the battlefield under different conditions.

“For example, Stalker is bigger than the Puma, with more sizeable payloads and an endurance of more than eight hours, so we would use those two systems differently.”

The AE has been employed by the Army in limited numbers since 2016, mainly for deployments such as Op Newcombe in Mali. But the decision to purchase more Pumas to replace the Desert Hawk was triggered by the launch of the LE, together with the introduction of a new long-range tracking antenna and fresh funding for the Royal Artillery's drone capability.

“The DH III had started to be seen as a bit of a burden by battlegroups,” Sgt Michael Cupper (RA), an instructor with 32 Regt, tells *Soldier*.

“I think its performance and outputs had fallen below people's expectations – it had become unreliable and its footage was often pretty shaky. It was showing its age, I guess.”

The procurement of more Wasp and Puma drones has been timely for the unit because it is being expanded from three batteries to four to meet increasing demand for UAS capability from across the Field Army.

And the good news for brigade combat teams deploying on operations or exercises is that the Puma will give them pan-battlefield coverage, with an operational range extending to 40km or more and long endurance that will help provide crucial intelligence on enemy formations' movements.

In fact, its figures beat the Desert Hawk III's in every category, with both AE and LE models enjoying superior flying performance, range and payload.

“It's a much cleverer bit of kit too,” explains Bdr Joshua Greatrix (RA).

“For example, it can work out for itself the speed it should cruise at to get the best endurance from its battery, and its picture quality is loads better thanks to impressive electro-optical and infra-red sensors and the gimbal and gyro, which stabilise the images.”

Sgt Cupper adds: “I flew the Puma AE in Mali a couple of years ago as a detachment commander and it was great to use.”



Wasp



Desert Hawk 3



"We pushed it hard, scouting ahead of the Long-Range Reconnaissance Group to observe isolated villages, nomads and any other signs of life out in the desert.

"We often flew 20km over the course of two-and-a-half-hours in more than 40 degrees Celsius and it never failed us.

"The system offers so much more to a battlegroup than the Desert Hawk ever could because if you're soaking an area for a few hours and viewing high quality feed, you're going to get a much better picture of the pattern of life and be able to identify threats more effectively."

The fact that the Pumas are, for now, the mainstay of 32 Regt is already creating a ripple of interest across the Service, says Lt Col Briggs.

One outstanding feature their predecessor lacked was the technology to help artillery guns and rockets zero-in on targets.

"Once the necessary training and permissions have been cleared we'll be in a position where our Puma teams can

call for fires by sending an eight-figure grid directly to the gunlines," continues the officer.

"You need a lot of training to do that for safety reasons because there is huge potential for blue on blue, especially on a fluid battlefield, but some of this drone's kit is game-changing for us.

"It allows us to see on screen where a round lands and with two clicks get an automatic correction for the gunline.

"Every single time we've trialled this feature we've enjoyed great success – it's no surprise visiting personnel are always impressed by the power of Puma's array of Istar capabilities."

The regiment is now looking at a well-funded and busy future – a situation that has been helped by the proliferation and innovative use of drones in the Ukraine war and other recent conflicts including Nagorno-Karabakh, not to mention their successful use by the British Army on deployments including Mali and Kosovo.

A large stock of Pumas is now »

Puma AE



ARMY UAS

	Model	Weight KILOGRAMS	Length METRES	Wingspan METRES	Endurance MINUTES	Range KILOMETRES	Speed KPH	Operating altitude	NOTE
WHAT'S IN	Puma AE	7	1.4	2.8	150	20	49 76 dash	Up to 10,000ft	Can carry 1.8kg payload
	Puma LE	10.7	2.2	4.6	390	40	47 76 dash	Up to 10,000ft	Long-range tracking antenna extends range to 60km
	Wasp	1.3	0.8	1	50	5	43 83 dash	Up to 10,000ft	Can be parachuted in with air assault teams
WHAT'S OUT	Desert Hawk 3	3	0.86	1.2	90	15	92	Up to 11,000ft	Endurance 30 mins longer than original version
WHAT'S COMING	Stalker VXE30	20	2.5	4.88	480+	Up to 100	58 93 dash	Up to 12,000ft	Can take off vertically
	Indago 4	2.27	0.3	Quadcopter	45	13	48	Up to 500ft	Can be folded up and carried in a backpack



SURVEILLANCE GROUP

THE Army's increasing investment in drone capability is reflected by the creation of the Surveillance Group around a year ago.

This team was, initially, part of 1st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade, but under the Future Soldier reforms that formation was split up. A single command was established to manage 32 and 47 Regts, RA and a new land image intelligence company. Initially known as the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group, it was then split into the Understand Group (Intelligence) and the Surveillance Group.

"The potential of UAS technology is phenomenal and we needed to up our game and devote more time and resources to this niche area in order to fully exploit it," comments Surveillance Group commander Col Craig Palmer.

"This group was formed to ensure we stay abreast of developments and guarantee the highest standards of competency, training and safety."

» in place at the unit and conversion training has begun in earnest.

On the day *Soldier* visited the regiment, drills were being practised on Salisbury Plain to hone bungee launches and manually controlled landings. The latter is carried out when GPS jamming, aircraft damage or weather conditions make the drone's automated landing procedure impossible to execute safely.

"The session is going really well, everyone's enjoying it," notes Sgt Cupper, who completed a train-the-trainer course for the system in the US last year.

"We're developing our capability, our flying skills and learning how to counter an enemy's ground fire.

"We did some trials in Wales with the Infantry trying to shoot the Pumas down and not many were hit because of their size, speed and the altitude they fly at.

"And we're learning more about hiding the electronic signal we connect to the drone with, which can give away your position on the ground because trackers can latch on to the source."

Troops are also exploring lots of new ideas to explore the boundaries of the Pumas' potential, something that's being encouraged among all the personnel,



Indago 4

says Lt Col Briggs.

"I recently set my signals team the task of securely streaming live full-motion video from a Puma flying in Kenya back to Colchester in as close to real time as you can get," he adds.

"The crew needed to work out how to encrypt the feed in Kenya, then send it to the UK, convert it into useful intelligence and send that data back to the point of relevance on the battlefield.

"One of my staff sergeants came up with a viable solution by, basically, joining together bits of existing kit the Army currently uses.

"It's that kind of innovation and lateral thinking that will help keep us and this capability relevant – and in an environment as fast-moving as the world of UAS, relevance is everything." ■



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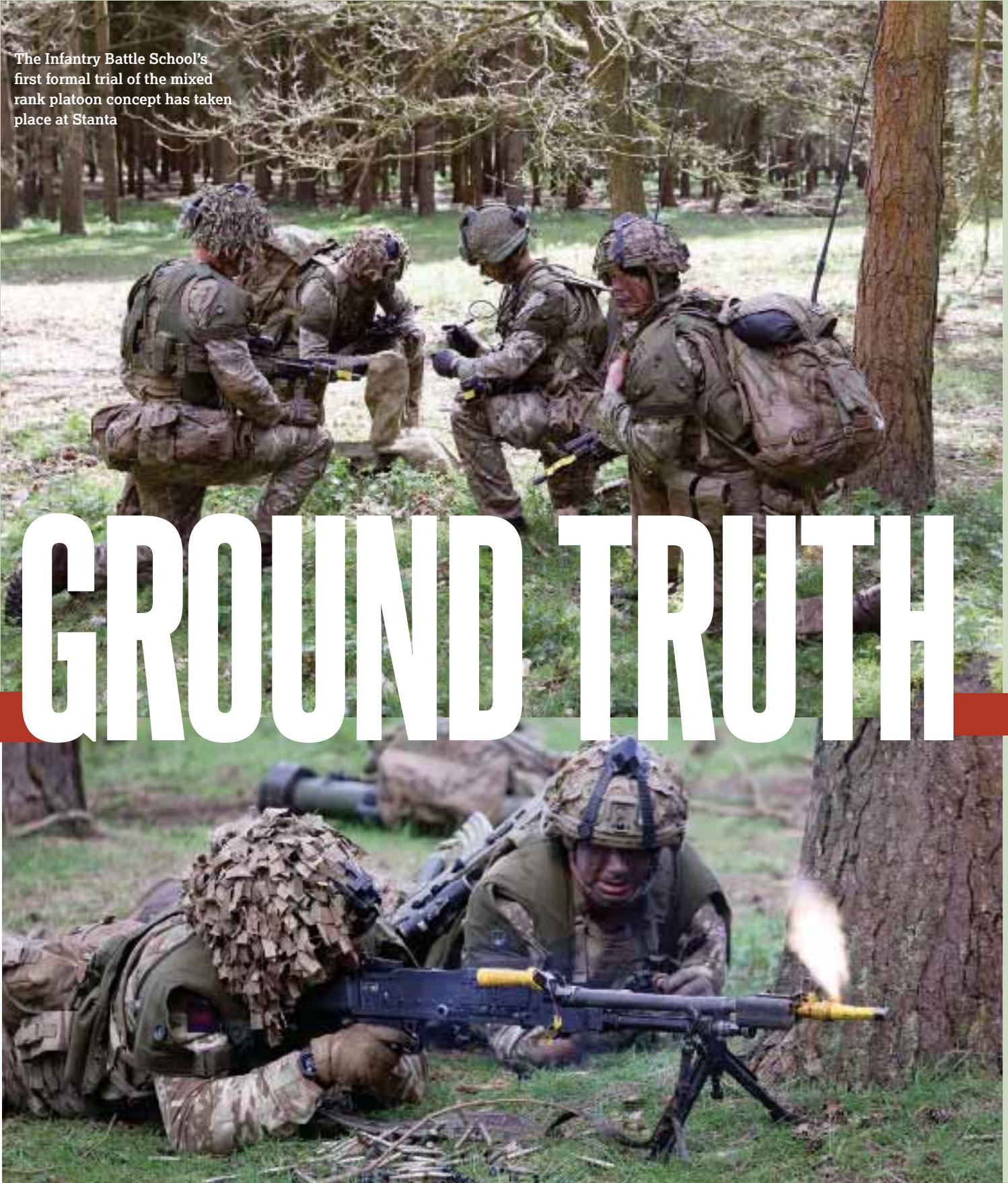
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The Infantry Battle School's first formal trial of the mixed rank platoon concept has taken place at Stanta

GROUND TRUTH



Infantry Battle School helps leaders learn better lessons



“In the British Army there are no good units and no bad ones – only good and bad officers and NCOs. They make or break the regiment.”



Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main

THESE are the words of Field Marshal Bill Slim, who commanded the Fourteenth Army in Burma during the Second World War.

But it's a maxim that the Infantry Battle School (IBS) has taken to heart and follows more than 70 years on.

The constant push to churn out leaders of the highest calibre means the school hasn't been afraid to innovate to stay ahead of recent doctrine and emerging tactics from conflicts around the world, especially Ukraine.

And the changes are already being felt by personnel going through the career courses for platoon commanders, platoon sergeants and section leaders.

Starting this summer, all junior NCOs on the section commanders' battle course will gain drone operator qualifications, flying them during serials and on the final exercise. It means they will return to their units able to proficiently operate these now-critical situational awareness tools in theatre.

That initiative is just one part of the school's optimisation programme for 2023, which will see a number of other »

PLATOON POINTS OF VIEW

Course students give their verdict on mixed IBS validation serials



PLATOON COMMANDER

“It’s the first time we’ve worked this closely with experienced soldiers and they are very capable and switched on – they know exactly what their role is.

They have taught me that simplicity is often the key. As officers, we tend to overcomplicate things sometimes and the NCOs are good at saying, ‘just stop a minute, identify the priority right now and let’s address that before anything else’.

They also think a bit differently – section commanders, for example, look first at their team’s route in and out of an attack and how that will potentially pan out.

Their experience means they are thinking further ahead than we do, quickly calculating what the alternatives are if the attack fails, for example, and that’s great learning for us.

In 15 months of training I’ve probably

talked to only half a dozen soldiers, so to have the chance to interact with these NCOs and find out what they care about has been invaluable.

Obviously, they want someone who’s competent, but they also want to know their career isn’t going to stall because the platoon commander only wants to impress his OC. They want a leader who cares and helps them get the courses and qualifications they want.”

2Lt Felix Turk, Para

PLATOON SERGEANT

“This new structure provides more time to focus on the job role we are being assessed in – it’s early days but it seems to be working well.

What’s been good is working alongside personnel with a huge mix of life experiences, as well as different ranks, in an open and honest environment. It means you get to know

» changes brought in.

The most significant ones revolve around combined arms manoeuvre, which used to be covered in one short module on the three career courses.

Now, however, it is subject to three weeks of theory and serials covering manoeuvre, lethality, and survivability.

That stage is immediately followed by the two-week validation exercise, Grim Warrior, which is evolving to accommodate more combined arms manoeuvre content and will be renamed Combined Warrior later this year (*Soldier*, March).

“These changes will upskill commanders in contemporary tactics,” says Maj Daniel Cole (PWRR), operations and training officer at IBS.

“Our aim is to ensure future leaders are comfortable being a central pillar in the integration of capabilities across a combined-arms manoeuvre battlefield.”

From this summer, the courses will also conclude together, with junior and senior NCOs and officers having joined up to form working platoons.

Previously, these personnel would only spend a few hours in the roles they were being assessed on during the programme.

But not anymore.

Now, they get considerably more time – days even – in the appointments they are qualifying for, whether at officer, sergeant or section level.

Soldier was on hand to see the first run-through of the new format, which took place during the final validation exercise for the platoon commanders’ battle course.

“It’s a huge step in the right direction,” says Capt Ollie Sutton (PWRR), the IBS instructor overseeing the experimental mixed rank platoon.

“The idea is that each division does the initial stage of their specific course on their own and then by coming together for the manoeuvre, lethality and survivability serials, followed by the final exercise, the candidates can enjoy longer stints in their appointments.”

The new-look final exercise will see students assessed for 24 hours in the role they are training for, in addition to several serials. This is an improvement on the previous model which featured just one tactical action command appointment.

The leaders will also get stuck into their command roles during the preceding lethality, manoeuvre and survivability

the other cohorts as people.

I've been in the Army for ten years now and done lots of exercises in places such as Canada and Kenya and I'm finding the platoon commanders do need a steer, or to be reined in, but the great thing about this new system is that it creates a place where you feel you can give your advice freely.

Back at my battalion, one of my first responsibilities will be to take a new platoon commander under my wing, so the experience of working next to them and learning what they know and how they think has been very useful.

I've managed to gauge their knowledge levels but I also feel reassured they are getting a good grounding here from working besides experienced soldiers.

I honestly feel they are going to be



better than they might otherwise have been when they reach their unit because of this new format."

Sgt Craig Payne, RG

SECTION COMMANDER

"It has been good to have platoon sergeants alongside me when I'm in role as a section commander because I've been able to pick up a lot of knowledge from them.

They've obviously been screws for four-to-five years and when they are not in their appointment they are acting as privates so I've had the chance to ask them what they would have done when an attack didn't quite pan out as planned and learn from that.

It's also good to work with the platoon commanders because in this environment we are a bit more chilled than back at our unit, so we can get to know them better and get a feel for how

they think and what they know.

We try to give them as much knowledge as we can and if we think there's a better way of doing something then we'll tell them – and they actually use our advice, they seem to value our experience.

I was on Op Cabrit in 2020 and I'm just back from Kosovo, where I was an acting section commander. We did lots of reassurance patrols and it was really good experience for me and gave me a lot of confidence as we had to face some hostility from certain ethnic groups out there.

The directing staff here really invest in you and we all help each other out – we're all in the same boat at the end of the day and I think this format can only help make better performing units for the Army."

Cpl Tate Sessions, RRF



“

If we think there's a better way of doing something then we'll tell them

”



teach weeks.

"One major benefit of the new format is they get to administer the platoon in the harbour area and lead the enabling actions for longer rather than just turning up at the start line of an attack, seeing it through and handing it over," explains Capt Sutton. "They will get more all-round experience than before."

No longer having to ship in Regular infantry soldiers for the final exercise is another obvious efficiency for an increasingly stretched Army.

According to IBS staff, however, the most significant outcome is the positive effects derived from mixed ranks working together over a few weeks.

"You can see many of the young platoon commanders watching, learning and realising what they can expect when they get to battalion," says IBS division sergeant major WO2 Dave Peake (Mercian).

"They see how the more experienced NCOs wear their kit, how they conduct themselves and realise they are going to have to up their game."

All the candidates are encouraged to help each other, be honest, but give advice in a respectful manner – something

»



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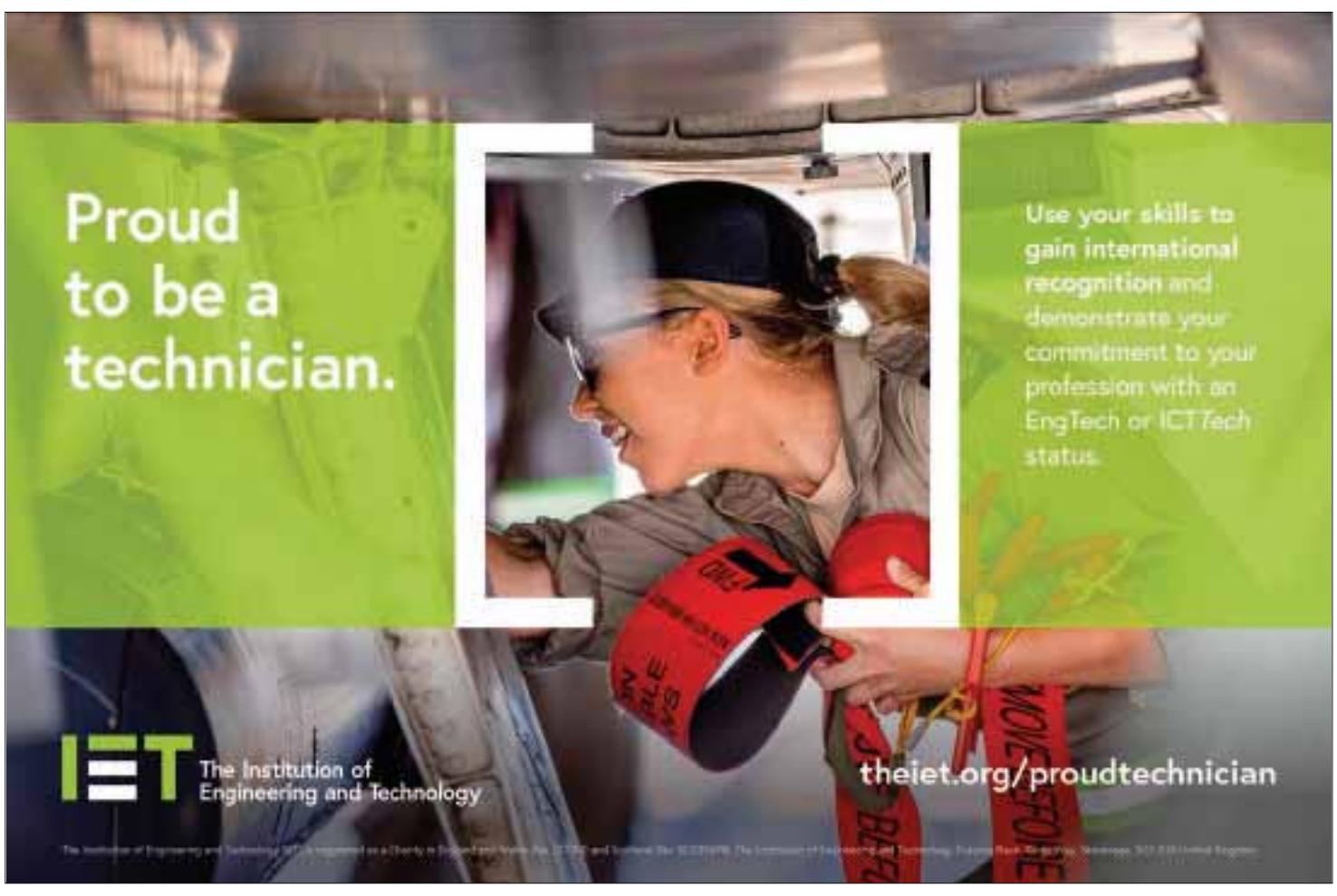
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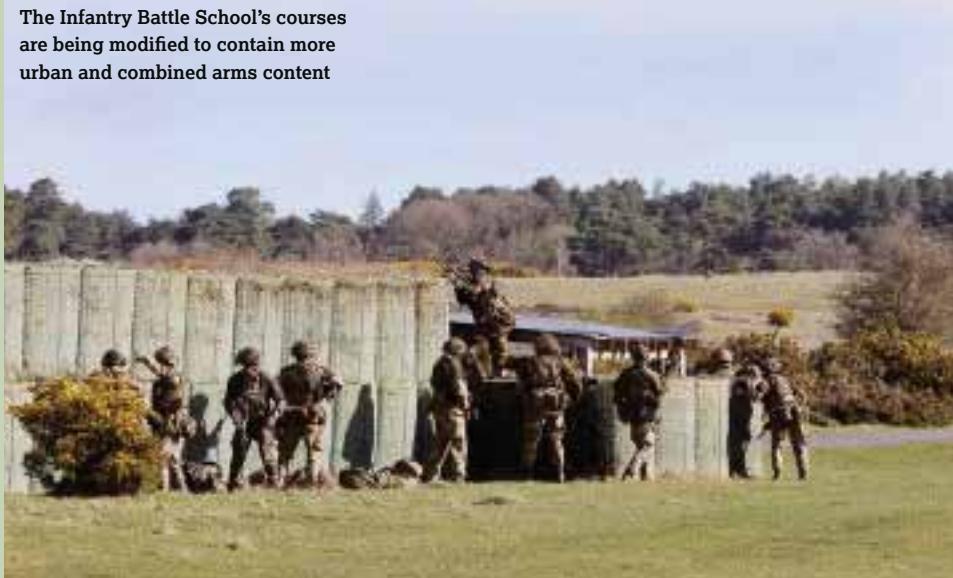
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The Infantry Battle School's courses are being modified to contain more urban and combined arms content



» that's a must in a place where experienced NCOs are working alongside young officers.

"Everyone here, regardless of experience, knows this is first and foremost a learning stage, so if I caught a section commander or senior being overly robust with a young officer, I'd tell them to think again and ask themselves what they can teach them," WO2 Peake continued.

"When platoon sergeants leave here they will be given a platoon commander and expected to nurture them so they need to know what to expect, how to behave and be prepared for creating that positive working relationship.

"But I think both NCOs and officers will be better when they get to battalion due to this revised format.

"The officers will be a lot more understanding of the troops they are going to receive and they'll know what good looks like because they will have worked up close with the best of the best.

"The juniors, meanwhile, will go away knowing the platoon commanders a lot better – and section and platoon commanders have the closest working

relationship in an infantry platoon. They are the ones who take the mission forward and make the decisions that win or lose the battle – so understanding what the platoon commander thinks and knows should make for much greater cohesion at unit level."

The only potential drawback appears to be from having all candidates assessed at the same time – if one makes a mistake it could impact on the performance of the others.

"The fall-out from that is still being looked at but adjustments can easily be made and that's where we, as directing staff, can provide context and the bigger picture," explains Capt Sutton.

"Overall, I think the positives outweigh the negatives and it's been brilliant for the personnel to work with each other in an environment where they can be honest and make mistakes.

"Any shocks the officers experience from working alongside experienced troops here means they won't make those same mistakes in front of their own soldiers back at their unit." ■





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'Coronation club' is wrong

RUMOURS abound that the Coronation Medal will only be issued to those involved in the event itself.

If the final decision has yet to be taken, on behalf of everyone serving may I make an urgent plea to the powers that be to avoid this course of action at all costs.

Medals are an important part of military life. If you are old and crusty like me, you'll probably have collected a few, but for the post-Afghanistan and Iraq

generations the opportunities to earn new ones are few and far between.

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In my civilian career the predicament I found myself in would be unacceptable.

I recently had a large overpayment into my pay packet and I wanted to repay this immediately rather than have it coming out of my account in increments for endless months.

After unit colleagues checked **JSP 754** on how to do this, I had to complete an appendix to send to the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow.

This must be signed by the commanding officer and requires a

cheque for the correct amount to be posted with it.

My gripe is that my unit CO was away on operations so this became a single point of failure.

Not only that but most people do not have a cheque book these days as they do bank transfers.

Also, my CO was not back in time to sign the paperwork and get it to Glasgow before my next pay day, so the delay caused more problems down the line.

Why, in this electronic age, there isn't an automatic system to remedy issues like this is beyond me.

– Name and address supplied

STRUCK BY INNOVATION ON DISPLAY

GLANCING at last month's Big Picture "Snowy stealth" I can't have been the only one who immediately spotted the unconventional method of camouflage the paratroopers had employed on their rifles.

As somebody who proudly sports the humble Army laundry bag on his helmet scrim – sprayed green, obviously – it made me feel seen. I'm not sure what message it sends about the state of the MoD's coffers, but may I applaud another fine example of improvisation. "Adapt and overcome", as they say. – Name and address supplied



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

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk



CAREERS

The Open University Disabled Veterans' Scholarship Fund has opened for 2023. With 50 places available from autumn, successful applicants will receive up to 360 credits – equivalent to a full honours degree – to study short or longer courses. Visit open.ac.uk

JobOppO House is an app containing career resources and introduction opportunities for Service leavers. There are already more than 2,000 people in its community. It can be downloaded now from the Apple/Google stores.



COMPETITIONS

March 2023

HOAY (Toff London wristwatch)
winner: Chris Skews, Shrewsbury

Spine line (HoverBar Tower)

winner: Capt SA Hurst, Wimbish



SEARCHLINE

Armed Forces charity Little Troopers has opened a therapy programme for teenagers feeling the impact of family life in the military. It offers one-to-one sessions with a qualified therapist for those up to age 18. Referrals can be made by a parent, school, community group or welfare worker. Visit littletroopers.net

The University of Chester's Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans wants to learn more about the experiences of former British Army personnel from the Indian subcontinent and West Indies. The research – funded by charity The Forces in Mind Trust – is examining how service shaped the lives of ex-troops and their loved ones. Contact veterans@chester.ac.uk



WELFARE

If you have a problem, your **chain of command** and **unit welfare teams** are always a good starting point. They may also be able to help you find local support groups not listed below. **Padres** can provide individuals with

pastoral care and moral guidance, whatever their faith. Here are some other national organisations that can offer help:

Army HIVE

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

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

A free and confidential telephone helpline and email service for Regulars, Reserves, ex-Forces and their families. 0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Army Welfare Service

Contact directly via rc-aws-iat-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882051/2053

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline 0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

0306 770 7691 or mil 96770 7691
army-mediation-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Army Speak Out Helpline

0306 770 4656 or
mil 96770 4656
army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Defence BHD Helpline

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

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support 01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been

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

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

A not-for-profit, independent military pension watchdog and enquiry service 020 7820 9988

forcesspensionsociety.org

Joining Forces Credit Union

Saving and affordable loans for the Armed Forces community from not-for-profit financial cooperatives

joiningforcescu.co.uk

Money Helper

Government-backed money and pensions guidance with a wealth of in-depth guides, tools and calculators

moneyhelper.org.uk

National Debtline

A charity that can talk through your options and help you take back control 0808 808 4000

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice 0800 138 1111

stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

Free information, support and counselling for problem gamblers in the UK 0808 8020 133

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

A network of people who have been through a similar tragedy, giving you the opportunity to talk through your emotions with an understanding compassionate group

supportgroups@ssafa.org.uk

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information

07814 612120

rc-pers-jshao-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

A first point of contact for veterans seeking support

veteransgateway.org.uk

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

can be found across the UK. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence Connect or email

rc-pers-arc-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs

A network of clubs to enjoy breakfast and banter, while combating social isolation

afvbc.net

Samaritans

Someone to talk to, night or day, for free and without judgement 116 123

samaritans.org

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and support services

0808 802 8080

britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone to talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. Charities and organisations that can also provide support include:

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline

0800 138 1619

Headspace

All British Army personnel and civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address

work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity

0300 123 3393

mind.org

NHS

General mental health support

nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

Op Courage

A specialist NHS service for Armed Forces leavers, Reservists, veterans and their families. Search for "Op Courage" on nhs.uk to find your local team.

Samaritans

116 123

samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

A self-help support network for relatives of physically or psychologically injured troops and veterans

0333 900 1028

theripplepond.org

Togetherall

A safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health

togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

Safety and support for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking 02394 216 816

aurorand.org.uk

ManKind

Support for male domestic abuse victims

01823 334244

mankind.org.uk

Relate

Relationship support relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The Army Apprentices National Association

celebrates 100 years of Army apprentices on May 13-14. Contact info.armyana@gmail.com

25th Anniversary of the Artillery Clerks' Association in Larkhill on June 23-25. Visit artyclerkassn.org

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 972

WIN

A pair of
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gaming headphones!

uk.turtlebeach.com



TEN details have been changed in this picture of the latest group of young officers to graduate from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, at the institution's 200th commissioning parade.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 972, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by May 31.

A photocopy is 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

The first two correct entries drawn after the closing date will each win a pair of Turtle Beach Recon 500 gaming headphones in a fitting camo trim for troops – worth £50.

Recommended by gaming industry gurus, the Turtle Beach product range excels in providing virtual battlespace clarity in everything from high-intensity attack helicopter simulations to real-time strategy classics.

The Recon 500s offer exceptional audio quality plus a TruSpeak noise-cancelling mic and a snug fit. Find out more at uk.turtlebeach.com

The winners' names will appear in the July issue and all the usual competition rules apply.

Good luck!



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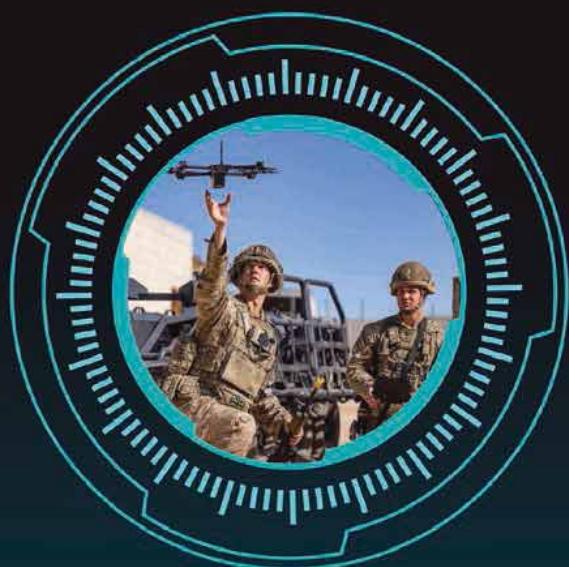
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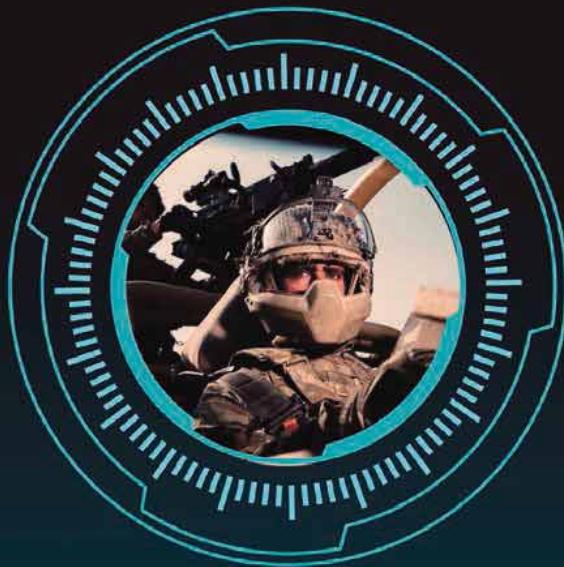
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THREE EVENTS ONE PURPOSE

TELLING THE ARMY'S STORY THIS SUMMER...



RUSI LWC 26-27 JUNE
CHURCH HOUSE, LONDON



ARMY EXPO LONDON 18-20 JULY
WELLINGTON BARRACKS, LONDON



DSEI 12-15 SEPTEMBER
EXCEL, LONDON



REVIEWS

GAME OF THE MONTH

The Great War: Western Front

Real-time strategy takes to the trenches in gritty outing

For PC

► WHEN the First World War erupted in the summer of 1914, the British Army and wider public were ill-prepared for the devastating conflict that ensued.

In an era in which technological advances on the battlefield were rapid – with the machine gun and a new generation of long-range rifle just two key developments – insufficient consideration had been given as to how the kit might influence a campaign with a similarly-equipped peer enemy.

Thus, a clash that began with the likes of cavalry charges soon evolved into a bloody trench-based stalemate.

Military thinking would need to be redefined to break the deadlock in four bitter, intense and costly years of fighting.

The static nature of the conflict – with success often measured in yards of territory – is potentially the reason for the dearth of PC games based on the era.

Unlike the more fluid campaigns that came later, this was a grinding battle of attrition which, as important as it remains in lessons of leadership and human cost, does not lend itself to a mainstream strategy product.

Great War: The Western Front, however, seeks to challenge this status quo and is successful in its delivery for a couple of reasons.



MOVIES



Firstly, the real-time strategy offering is delivered by the experienced team behind the innovative 1990s *Command & Conquer* titles – and their approach provides a depth of control over the whole picture from developing new technology to tactical battles.

The second is the input of the Imperial War Museum, which has had a clear influence in the game's evocative historical overview as well as setting out the complex political backdrop that spawned a tragic clash of empires.

Combined with a tactile point-and-click interface, these elements make the game a detailed yet highly accessible affair.

Players can prosecute the war with either the Triple Entente forces led by Britain and France or the German-Austro Hungarian alliance in a variety of modes.

In addition to taking on the whole campaign from 1914, would-be generals can try their hand at single battles during any stage of the conflict or set up a skirmish for a more straightforward combat experience.

There are essentially two factors to controlling the fighting – the strategic overview is delivered via a hexagonal map, where decisions on the wider picture are taken across the French and Belgian theatres.

As well as establishing objectives, there are opportunities here to develop tech such as air support and armour with success measured in a "national will" indicator – essentially the populace's willingness to stump up the cash that is required.

Meanwhile, clashes with the enemy at the tactical level take place on the now familiar mouse-controlled battlefield that enables troops to be directed in real-time. Both aspects combine well to offer a deep and complex experience.

Players have access to an encyclopaedia

throughout the game, giving them the heads-up on any issues they might encounter as they progress in a war that changed significantly through the years.

The result is a solid and highly enjoyable offering that provides both a deep strategic outing as well as ground-level battles for those more interested in the tactical experience.

Units are well rendered, with players having to manage both front-line fighting troops and the supporting elements critical to their effectiveness. Intelligent use of artillery, and later aircraft, is also a cornerstone of success as commanders attempt to become masters of the combined-arms battle.

The experience is – at times – emotive too. The effectiveness with which even a modestly-armed defending force equipped with a machine gun or two can take on significantly more numerous attackers is particularly sobering.

Seeing the mounting casualty levels, even in fictional form, is a frightening insight into the realities of a conflict that changed the course of history and which continues to resonate powerfully into the present day.

Great War is, in summary, a solid outing from a team with a strong track record in the real-time strategy field.

Providing plenty of gameplay hours and food for thought, the title is as polished as it is sensitively delivered. ■

VERDICT:

An impressive war game, well executed



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER



WIN DREDGE

Top survival offering: out now

» *SOLDIER* has this month joined forces with esteemed publisher Team 17 to offer two copies of the most innovative titles we've seen in quite some time.

Dredge puts players in the boots of a fisherman who, having been saved from a shipwreck by residents of a small, isolated coastal community, begins trading in the local area.

Initially trapped by paying off the debt owed for a new boat, they soon find out that all is not as it seems to be – and that the mysterious seas around them conceal disturbing secrets and awful hazards.

Produced by independent developer Black Salt Games, we played this offering to destruction – and can testify that it's as addictive as it is unsettling.

While on one level it can be experienced as a basic trading game, anyone tempted to scratch the thin veneer of normality will find a far more terrifying experience awaiting them.

Dredge looks the part too. The three-dimensional world is well constructed and the action accompanied by a beautifully-rendered soundtrack while the multi-layered story offers exploration aplenty.

The plot plays out in the style of a thriller akin to a Stephen King novel – and even the character artwork has a twisted and deeply unpleasant edge.

If you'd like to try your hand at survival in this strange world and win one of our codes for the PC, PlayStation or Xbox versions of the game, tell us the name of the boat in the film *Jaws*, in which the three main characters attempt to track down a great white shark.

Email your answers to **comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk**, specifying the format you would like, by May 31.

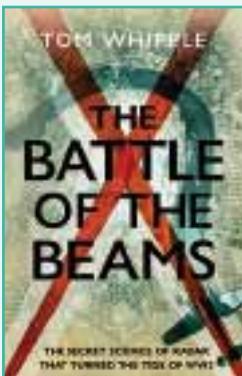
All the usual rules apply.

MORE TOP PICKS



Project Wolf Hunting

Out now on DVD and Blu-Ray



The Battle of the Beams

By Tom Whipple



Shock and War: Iraq 20 Years On

» BILLED as a "no-holds-barred action horror", this South Korean nautical-themed outing has apparently been receiving rave reviews in the press. But – to be honest – I was left wondering why there has been such a fuss.

Centring on a group of hardened criminals being extradited overseas by ship, the film tracks their coordinated escape attempt that soon descends into a brutal showdown with the guards. Predictably, it is not long before there is lots of gruesome violence as the battle between the two parties begins to take shape.

Unfortunately, however, the cons have not accounted for the special guest on their floating jail – a zombie-like former soldier who proceeds to wipe out everyone in his

path, creating further mayhem and yet more gruesome gore.

This film has a certain feel to it – similar to the popular *Squid Game* – which is evident in the acting style and expression of some of the actors.

It is, mercifully, subtitled rather than dubbed, and the cinematography is sound. But the violence is overdone and ultimately loses its impact – even if there are some particularly wincing moments as characters are despatched.

Overall, it was probably about 30 minutes too long – and it isn't one I'd ever put myself through again unless it was shorter and the huge amount of fake blood spraying from the numerous wounds was substantially dialled back. ■

MOVIES

VERDICT:
A passable horror flick that's over-egged and far too long
★★★★★

Review:
Sgt Ben Maher, RLC

» THIS is an excellent book which belies its rather discouraging title – it is definitely not a "wiggly amps" special, aimed at an audience of technical experts. Rather, it is an extremely well researched and readable account, full of fascinating, anecdotal evidence of how, almost single handedly, the young radio scientist, RV Jones, worked out how the Germans were painting the night skies over Britain with electromagnetic crosses, enabling them to drop their bombs with accuracy.

He gleaned intelligence from multiple sources – radio intercepts; scraps of information obtained at enormous risk by

allied agents; transcripts from code breakers in Bletchley Park and from the work of his scientific colleagues throughout Britain.

Having deduced what the Germans were up to, with Churchill's support Jones harried the Air and Naval staff at the highest levels to introduce the countermeasures he calculated would eventually – and did – defeat the Axis' bombing system.

The author (pictured) wisely leaves out the really technical details which could have crept into such an account, resulting in an absorbing and enjoyable read which doesn't delve into the weeds. I highly recommend it. ■



BOOKS

VERDICT:
Reads like a well-paced spy thriller
★★★★★

Review:
Alistair Clark, ex-R Signals

» FOCUSING on one of the most contentious military adventures of recent times, BBC security correspondent Gordon Corera unpicks the Iraq campaign in this insightful series of programmes to mark the war's 20th anniversary.

Originally broadcast on Radio Four, the collection of ten 20-minute podcasts is now available as a set – and makes for compelling listening throughout.

Seasoned journalist Corera explores a different aspect of the war in each of the segments – explaining the US thinking on the thorny question of the belligerent Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and early plans to confront him.

He later highlights how the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington

accelerated the march to invasion but ultimately heralded a disastrous lack of planning for peace. The upshot was the rise of a new radical Islamist faction with Isis – and the region spiralling into civil war.

Arguably one of the finest sharp-end reporters in broadcasting today, Corera's forensic analysis on the conflict is second-to-none throughout the series.

Drawing on a range of interviews, personal experiences and the hindsight of two decades, he presents the US rationale behind the campaign without pulling punches about how and why it went badly wrong.

The podcasts also shine a light on the British Army's costly Op Telic contribution, which was ultimately far more nuanced than has hitherto been reported. ■

PODCASTS

VERDICT:
A great series with some surprising insights
★★★★★

Review:
Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

SIDE BY SIDE



The Side By Side - Aramark team have launched a new brand identity providing catering, retail, leisure and facility management services across the Defence, Judicial and Government sectors within the UK. We stand together with our clients, customers and partners delivering a high quality service each and every day. As part of the launch we have a new website and LinkedIn packed full of up-to-date news, trends and market leading innovation.



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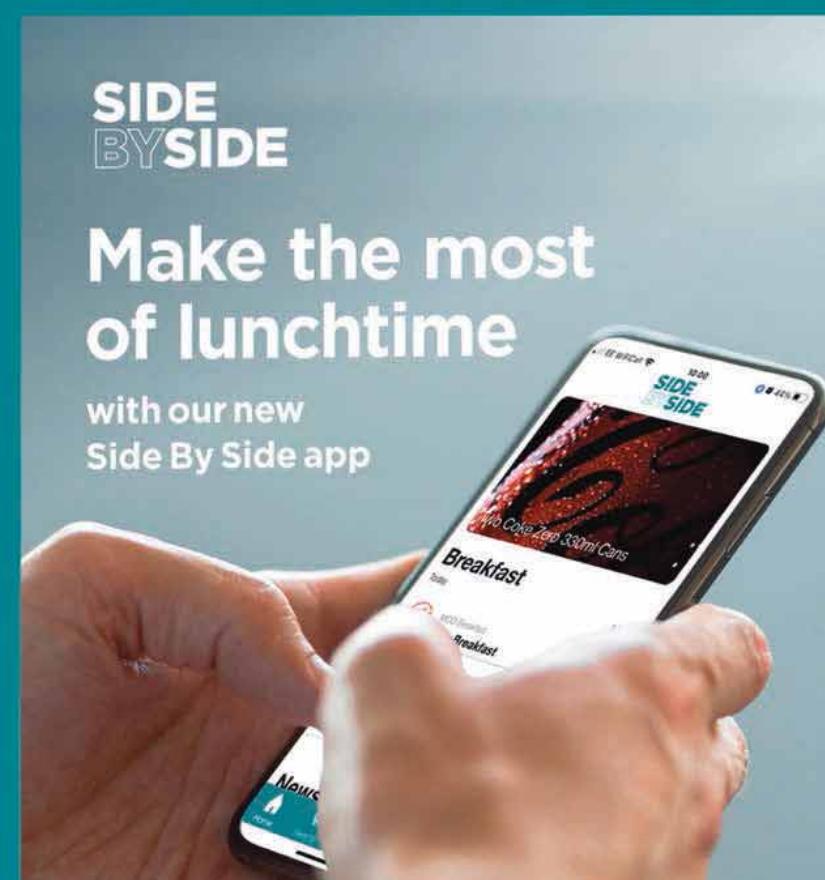
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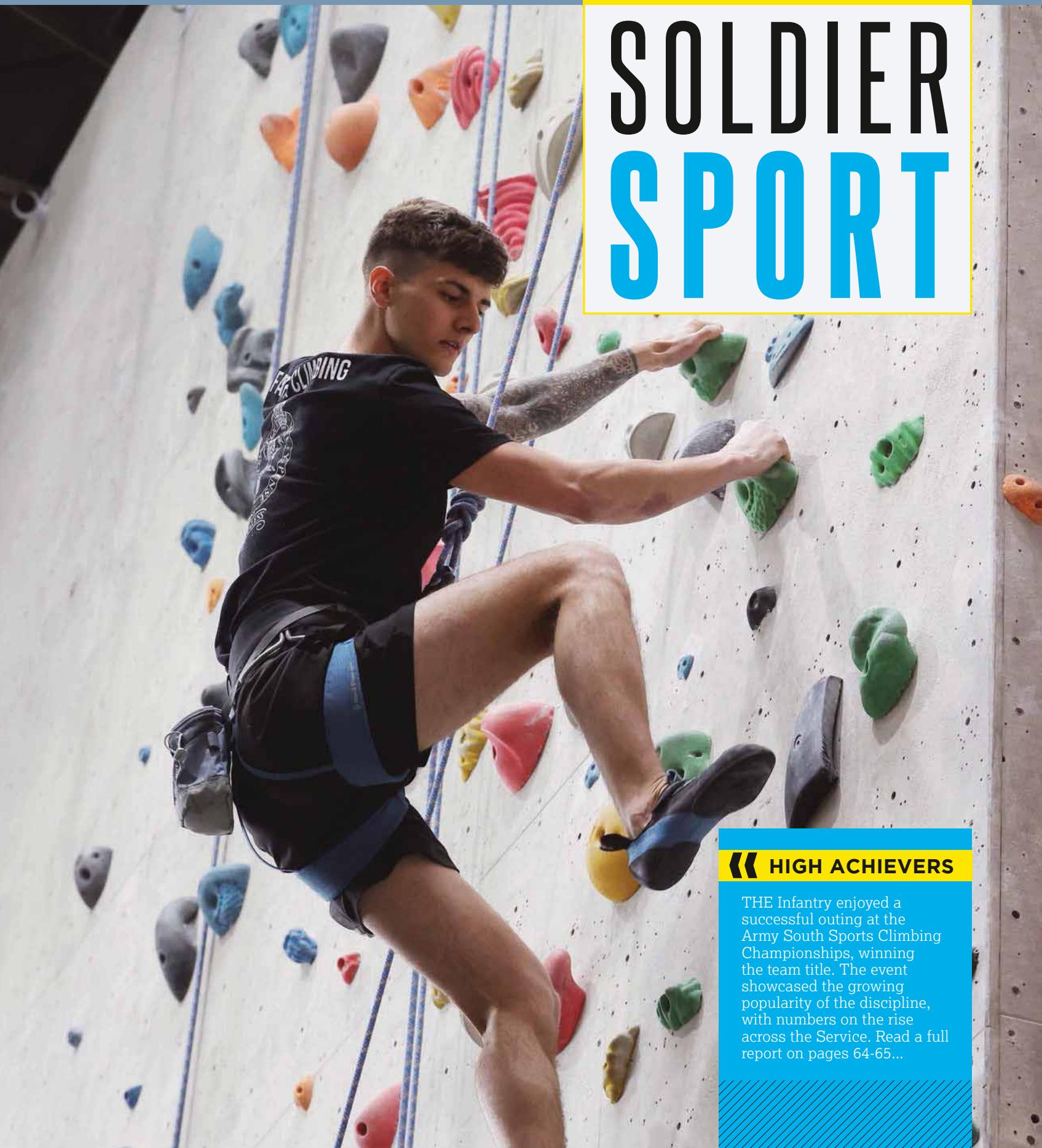
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SOLDIER SPORT



HIGH ACHIEVERS

THE Infantry enjoyed a successful outing at the Army South Sports Climbing Championships, winning the team title. The event showcased the growing popularity of the discipline, with numbers on the rise across the Service. Read a full report on pages 64-65...



SELECT YOUR SEAT: THE MEN'S AND WOMEN'S MATCHES WITH THE NAVY WILL BE HELD AT TWICKENHAM ON MAY 13. VISIT ARMYRUGBYUNION.ORG.UK FOR TICKETS



CUP FINAL AWAITS

HEAD coach Lt Col Tim Osman (RA) told *SoldierSport* his team is now preparing for another "cup final" at Twickenham following victory over the RAF.

"We were confident heading into the game," he said, while reflecting on the result at Kingsholm. "The squad had been together for around three weeks in the build-up and the boys had really started to gel; you could see the cohesion and they had belief in the gameplan.

"The first half was quite scrappy; we tweaked a few things at the break and then managed to keep hold of the ball. Our defence created pressure and when you have ball in hand rugby is an easier game.

"As a team we played very well but I have to single out debutants like Qorowale and Ackers; they were superb."

Attention now switches to Twickenham and Osman insisted his players will be ready for the test to come.

"We have another mini training camp to bring everyone together," he added. "We will look at what was good, and bad, in terms of our performance against the RAF but it all comes down to which team takes the opportunity on the day."



Pictures: Align Photography

REDS CROWNED KINGS OF KINGSHOLM

INTER-SERVICES
RUGBY UNION

ARMY

48

RAF

17



THE Army men head into this month's Twickenham clash with the Royal Navy in confident mood after completing a 48-17 demolition of the Royal Air Force in their opening Inter-Services fixture.

The Reds crossed for seven tries in a blistering performance at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium and will run out at the home of English rugby on May 13 as favourites to retain their title from 2022.

While the outcome proved convincing, the soldiers found themselves in a fierce first-half battle with the RAF and their rivals took the lead in the third minute when prop Jonathan Taylor crashed over.

A smart pick and go from the base of the scrum saw Gnr Senitiki Nayalo (RA, pictured above) draw the Army level moments later, before a scintillating break from Rfn Vereimi Qorowale (Rifles) created the opportunity for Capt Samuel Ackers (Rifles) to run in under the posts on the half-hour mark.

The light blues hit back as the pack again punched a hole

in the Reds' defence, AS1 Sam Sheppard touching down this time, and they were firmly in contention as they trailed 14-12 at the interval.

But the soldiers accelerated through the gears after the break and fired a signal of intent with a superb team try that was rounded off by skipper Capt Stu Cross (Yorks) in the 53rd minute.

Fullback Maj Will Reeve (RGR) was the next to cross as he intercepted a loose RAF pass and kicked ahead, chasing the ball downfield and eventually profiting from a defensive error to score.

A burst from Bdr Pete Austin (RA) then sparked a flowing cross-field passing move that was rounded off by Qorowale on the right and the award of a penalty try saw the lead stretch to 43-12 in the 73rd minute.

The RAF completed their scoring as skipper SAC Isaac Norton went over in the corner before Cpl Ifereimi Boladau (R Signals) – in his 25th Inter-Services game – sealed the rout on the stroke of full-time when he ran home following a quick tap penalty. ■



Pictures: Alligin Photography

EARLY BLOW PROVES NO OBSTACLE AS RAF SUFFER

ABRACE from Pte Courtney Pursglove (RLC) helped the Army women overcome a tense opening quarter and reign supreme in their Inter-Services showdown with the Royal Air Force.

A string of early mistakes saw their opponents take an 8-0 lead thanks to a try from Welsh international Carys Williams-Morris that was followed by a successful penalty kick.

The soldiers waited until the 18th minute to find any kind of rhythm when Pursglove – the breakout star of last season's campaign – brought them back into the contest as she rounded off a slick attack that was launched from the scrum.

While their first score came from pace out wide, the second was a direct result of the strength of the pack, with Lt Sally Bellhouse (RAVC) punching a hole in the lines that was eventually capitalised on by hooker SSgt Rae Metters (REME).

A moment of Pursglove magic then saw the Reds assume

control. Collecting the ball on the Army 22, the wing chipped ahead and gathered on the bounce before outstripping the RAF defence and sprinting home for a sensational solo effort.

Sgt Sarah Batley (AGC (SPS)) crashed over to extend the lead to 26-8 at the break and cap a remarkable turnaround following their struggles at the start.

Pursglove (pictured right) slotted a second-half penalty to stretch the advantage before replacement Pte India King (RLC) charged to the line for a converted try to complete the scoring.

"I had no idea how the game was going to pan out, or what the RAF would bring, so I was quite nervous beforehand," head coach WO2 Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) told *SoldierSport*.

"After the first 20 minutes I was digging myself into a hole in the coaching area thinking 'what is going on here?'. At that point I was not expecting it to be so comfortable at the end.

"Our leaders definitely stood up after they scored their try. You

INTER-SERVICES RUGBY UNION

ARMY

36

RAF

8



could see the likes of Bdr Beth Dainton (RA) and SSgt Jade Mullen (AGC (SPS)) calming the others down and, while that initial spell felt awful, the RAF didn't really put us under pressure – it was our mistakes.

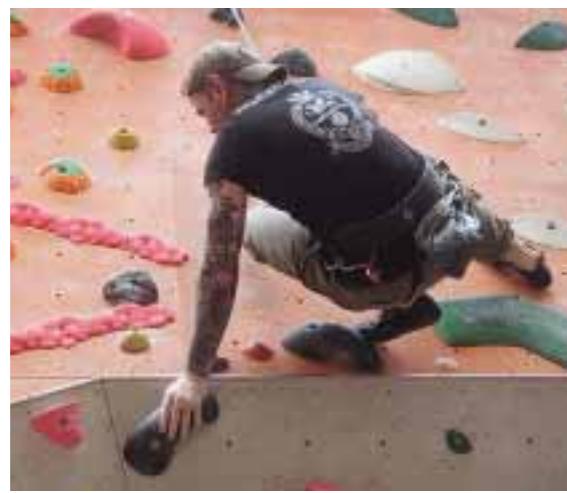
"Once we got possession we scored – that settled the nerves.

"It wasn't so much a relief at the end, but the celebration of a good win."

The Reds now head to Twickenham to face the Royal Navy on May 13 in what has traditionally been the easier of the two Inter-Services ties – they won 68-0 last year – but the coach is taking nothing for granted.

"We will watch the footage back from the RAF game as there were a few things that did not go well, such as our lineout, and we cannot allow them to happen again," Mitchelson explained.

"Selection is going to be hard as nobody wants to miss out. There are people who will not even make the bench who could be part of that squad, which shows the depth we have." ■



SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

REGIONAL TEST IS PERFECT PROVING GROUND FOR CLIMBING'S EXPANDING COHORT

SPORTS climbing showcased its growing popularity in the ranks as more than 70 athletes took to a series of challenging indoor walls for the Army South Championships.

The event followed on from an earlier northern-based equivalent and served as the second qualifying round for next month's full Service competition in Wales.

Novice, open and elite-level climbers were all in the thick of the action at Parthian Climbing's Reading facility and Maj Jordan Dickinson (RLC), secretary of Army Sports Climbing, said the discipline is in good health, with numbers up on previous years.

"I think a lot of that is down to videos posted on YouTube and the climbing films you find on platforms such as Netflix," he told *SoldierSport*. "People see it on TV and then want to have a go."

"Often their expected ability is more than it transpires to be, but they come with enthusiasm and are keen to get involved and push themselves."

"We have seen some surprise results, particularly in the open category, and those who perform well here will go on to Army squad training."

"There has also been a good level among the newcomers who have not competed before and some of them will go forward as well."

"We had to shut down for two seasons during Covid, so everyone went to climb outside. This is our second year back and numbers are on the rise at each competition."

The Inter-Services will also be staged next month, and the

Army's top performers have the prospect of competing at the European Military Championships, which will be held in Sheffield in May 2024.

"Those now qualifying for the Army squad will train over the next 12 months with an eye on that event," Dickinson added.

"In terms of the Inter-Services, we have been the dominant force for the past four years and are looking to retain that title this year."

Among those hoping to boost the soldiers' cause at the Forces showdown is Reservist and Army team member, Lt John Stubbs (Yorks).

He started in the discipline at school and was able to pursue it further while serving with Sheffield UOTC, which has a keen climbing cohort.

"There are some incredibly strong climbers in the other teams," he said as he reflected on the challenges to come at the Inter-Services.

"But what works to our advantage is the fact we run more training events and have such a tight-knit group. That said, availability is a massive issue, and we still have defence taskings to fulfil."

"There are skilled climbers all around the military so we cannot be complacent."

Stubbs said events like the Army South Championships can form an important stepping stone for those with ambitions to reach the upper echelons of the sport.

"It is one thing to start climbing among friends, but it is completely different to step up into a competitive environment with points to be scored," he explained.

"I'm always impressed by

those who turn up and push to reach that elite level; they make me stick to my training regime."

The Infantry – winners of the team competition, with two members selected for the Army squad – were well represented in Reading in a further sign of what has been a rapid progression in the sport.

Lt Ben Thomas (PWRR, pictured near left), who only started climbing 18 months ago, has been a driving force behind the growth and secured £10,000 of funding from Infantry Headquarters to help restore a neglected indoor wall at ITC Catterick.

"We now have one of the best walls in the Army to train on every day," he said.

"Climbing is huge in the Infantry; the difficult thing is finding people to go with."

"Every unit will have climbers and all you need is something like a group chat to bring them all together."

"I love the sport. You require courage as well as physical strength and endurance. It is perfect for the Infantry and every battalion should have a team. We want to get as many people involved as we can."

"We already have 60 personnel of all abilities across the different cap badges and are trying to run an expedition every year, as well as regular training camps and meets, to attract even more."

For details on how to get involved follow the Army Climbing Team Instagram page, visit the Army Mountaineering Association page on Defence Connect – where the Infantry team also has a page – or click on the "climbing" link at armysportcontrolboard.com



**"WE
HAVE
ONE OF
THE BEST
WALLS
IN THE
ARMY TO
TRAIN ON
EVERY
DAY"**



LIGHT BLUES ON TOP

THERE was double disappointment for the Army's footballers as this season's Inter-Services Championships reached their conclusion.

Having downed the Royal Navy 3-0 in their opening match (pictured above) the men travelled to Shrewsbury to face the Royal Air Force in confident mood.

With the airmen earlier drawing 1-1 with the Senior Service a point was enough for the soldiers to lift the silverware and they looked to be on course for just that as ATpr Scott Hynd's (AAC) header cancelled out Aaron Eyett's stunning first-half strike.

However, defender Sam Rawlings planted a free header past Army keeper Cpl Luke Cairney (RE) in the second period to seal a 2-1 victory as the defending champions retained their trophy.

A 5-2 defeat to the Navy (pictured below) meant the odds were firmly stacked against the women's team as they faced an RAF side that triumphed 3-0 over the same opposition last time out.

LBdr Anna Birtwhistle's (RA) shot from distance, aided by a goalkeeping error, gave the Reds a first-half lead but their joy was short lived as Pip Wilson's hattrick steered the hosts to a 4-1 win.



REDS RALLY FOR EARLY LORD'S TEST



**"THERE
ARE
SOME
GREAT
PLAYERS
IN THE
ARMY"**

THE headline fixture in the Forces' cricket calendar makes an early season appearance this month as Lord's plays host to the Inter-Services Twenty20 Championships.

With the prestigious venue hosting a bumper summer of domestic and international action the military teams will take to the hallowed turf on May 10, when defending champions the Army will look to retain their title from 2022.

The soldiers embarked on a week-long training camp last month as preparations for the big day gathered pace and skipper Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) told *SoldierSport* bringing the date forward has created some challenges.

"It feels a bit strange and it is a case of having to hit the ground running," he explained. "We have no idea of what the weather is going to be like in the early part of the campaign; potentially we could have guys going into the biggest games of the season off the back of just one match."

"But that is what Lord's have given us and we do not want to lose this opportunity."

"We'd like to get more people coming along to watch. The first year we played there we had 8,000 in the crowd, and I would love to get that number of spectators in again so we can showcase the talent we have."

"There are some great players in the Army who, if they hadn't signed up, could have had careers as professionals."

Boynton recently returned from a tour on Op Cabrit and already faces a selection headache as star batter Sgt Graham Wiseman (RA) misses out due to work commitments, while fellow big hitter LCpl Tade Carmichael (RLC, pictured above) is an injury doubt.

However, with the development team showing their skills on a tour of Corfu last month the captain (pictured left) believes there is no shortage of talent to fill the void.

"There are some brilliant players coming through," he added. "You may start the season with a list of 40 individuals but end up with just 15 available; the Army is busier than ever."

"When I first started I'd be playing cricket all summer." ■

John and Jordan
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SPORT SHORTS



Matthews returns in style

TRIATHLON ace Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC) marked her return to action with a third-place finish at the Ironman 70.3 Oceanside event.

The officer suffered a broken neck when she was hit by a car while training in Texas in September, an incident that saw her miss last year's Ironman World Championships.

In her first race back she clocked a time of 4hr 12min 27sec to claim the bronze medal.

"I expected to suffer and get embarrassed," Matthews said. "I knew there was some training data that was good, but it wasn't that good. I think it was emotion driving me on."



Development delight

ARMY players celebrated success on court at the Inter-Services Tennis Development Championships.

Having shared the honours with the Royal Air Force last season, the women claimed top spot by winning seven of the 12 rubbers.

The men's competition was a closer affair, with the Army and RAF tied on five rubbers each. The contest was decided on a set countback, with the soldiers prevailing 13-11.

Team captain Sgt Dave Perry (REME) led by example with a record of four wins from four matches, a feat mirrored by Cpl Hannah Bacon (AGC (SPS), pictured) in the women's draw.

FAREWELL TO MOBBS MATCH

TRIES from Gnr Senitiki Nayalo and Sgt Connor O'Reilly (both RHA) were not enough to give the Army rugby union team victory in their final appearance in the Mobbs Memorial Match.

The duo's efforts saw the Reds firmly in contention in the clash with Bedford Blues before a yellow card for Rfn Vereimi Qorowale (Rifles) tipped the contest in their rivals' favour.

Bedford, who included a number of Northampton Saints academy players in their ranks, went on to win the fixture 38-10 in what was the soldiers' last run out ahead of the Inter-Services.

Relaunched in 2012, the Mobbs Memorial Match has seen the Army take on Bedford and Northampton in alternating years, but the pressures of the professional game have made it increasingly difficult for the opposition clubs to commit to the tie in its current mid-season berth.

They will now play the match as part of their pre-season preparations.

Edgar Mobbs starred on the field for Northampton, England, the Barbarians and East Midlands and lost his life in the First World War while serving as a lieutenant colonel in 7th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment.

"It has been an important and special fixture for us and with this being the final iteration involving the Army, it has been a touch more poignant," said head coach Lt Col Tim Osman (RA).



Picture: Align Photography

**"IT HAS
BEEN A
SPECIAL
FIXTURE
FOR US"**



DEFENDING champions the Army women were in action in the final of the England Hockey Tier Three Championships as this issue went to press. A 2-1 victory over Nottingham University's third team saw the soldiers – who lost to the Royal Air Force in this season's Inter-Services (pictured) – progress to the showpiece at the Lee Valley Hockey Centre.

Picture: ASCB/Andrew Fosker

MONTH IN SPORT

May's key fixtures...



WHAT: Army FA Cup final

WHEN: May 10 (1900 kick-off)

WHERE: Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: The Army football

season reaches its pinnacle with this showpiece fixture – now in its 122nd year. Who will take the crown from 2022 champions 4 Regt, RLC?



WHAT: Army female unit box cup

WHEN: May 11

WHERE: Combat Sports Centre, Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: With female participation at an all-time high Army boxing reflects the growing popularity of the sport by staging this inaugural competition at its headquarters



WHAT: Inter-Unit Squash Championships

WHEN: May 16 to 18

WHERE: Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: This event comes on the back of a successful outing for the Army at the Inter-Services – winning three of the four team titles. Will stars of future squads be unearthed here?



ZUGER HAPPY TO ANSWER SWISS CALL



"A LOT OF PLAYERS DIDN'T GET INVITED BACK"

RUGBY union ace Sgt Tom Zuger (REME) has spoken of the thrill at being able to show his skills on the international stage after he was drafted into the Switzerland squad.

The soldier, who qualifies for the country through his grandparents, was invited to a series of training camps after answering an appeal for players in a magazine, with his efforts leading to a subsequent call-up for matches in the Rugby Europe Trophy.

Zuger, who has played at corps level for the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and rugby league for the Army (pictured above), was a second-half substitute in a 59-32 win over Ukraine and was also part of a 32-22 triumph against Croatia.

"My parents came out to watch me and I had goosebumps on the back of my neck," he told *SoldierSport* while reflecting on the honour of pulling on a Swiss jersey.

"Switzerland have rapidly gone from being ranked 55th in the world to 27th and are

making a real push to jump to the league above.

"I had never considered the opportunity to play internationally until I saw that magazine advert.

"I've fitted in quite seamlessly; to get my second cap was a big achievement as there were a lot of players who didn't get invited back.

"It is quite difficult as we don't get together that often, but when we do it is a very professional set-up and the coaches make the most of the time we have."

With the season now over Cyprus-based Zuger, who plays at fly half or centre, is already looking ahead to the new campaign and helping Switzerland in their ongoing quest for promotion.

"The aim for next year is to fully establish myself in the team," he added. "My immediate ambition is to get to ten caps, and we'll see what happens from there."

"One of the biggest problems is the language barrier so I'm now learning French to try and bridge that gap." ■



FENCERS ON FAMILIAR GROUND AS ACTION RESUMES

THE Army Fencing Championships represented a welcome return to normality for the sport as a strong field of competitors assembled to test their skills with the blade in the week-long showdown in Aldershot.

For the first time since Covid, the set-up was able to stage a two-day beginners' course in the build-up to the main event and the effort to reintroduce the programme paid off as 20 novices sampled the pursuit for the first time.

Their progress was boosted by the provision of three international-level coaches, who were on hand to offer expert guidance in the foil, sabre and epee disciplines.

“During Covid we were restricted quite a lot by guidelines from the national governing body,” Army Fencing Union (AFU) secretary Lt Hannah Walsh (RE) said.

“We ran the championships in 2021 and 2022 but it was just

for experienced fencers within the AFU.

“So this is the first year we have been fully back to normal. It was a successful week and we've had a lot of positive feedback – having three world class coaches showed the beginners what they can potentially go on to achieve.

“On the back of this we've had people asking where their local Army clubs are and how they can get involved at unit level, so the move has definitely worked to our advantage.”

The competition proved to be a happy hunting ground for LCpl Luke Mason (R Signals), who won the sabre and foil events on his way to being crowned men's master at arms.

Gnr Sam Mitchell (RA) triumphed in the epee.

In the women's draw, Capt Mhairi De Sainte Croix (RAMC) topped the standings in the epee and foil to claim the master at arms prize, while Maj Naomi Donaldson (REME) was



**"WE ARE
FULLY
BACK TO
NORMAL"**

victorious in the sabre.

The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers secured the Inter-Corps honours ahead of the Army Medical Services and Intelligence Corps.

“It was a really good mix in terms of standards,” Walsh, who finished third in the sabre and epee disciplines and runner-up in the foil, continued.

“We had the beginners, but we also had individuals who participate on the national fencing circuit. Naomi Donaldson competed at the Commonwealth Veteran Fencing Championships last year and we have athletes in the top 50 in the country.

“We are hoping, with the coaches we have managed to bring in, to encourage the newcomers to keep coming back and eventually help boost our results even further.”

Attention now turns to the Inter-Services Championships, with soldiers facing their Forces rivals in Shrivenham in July. ■

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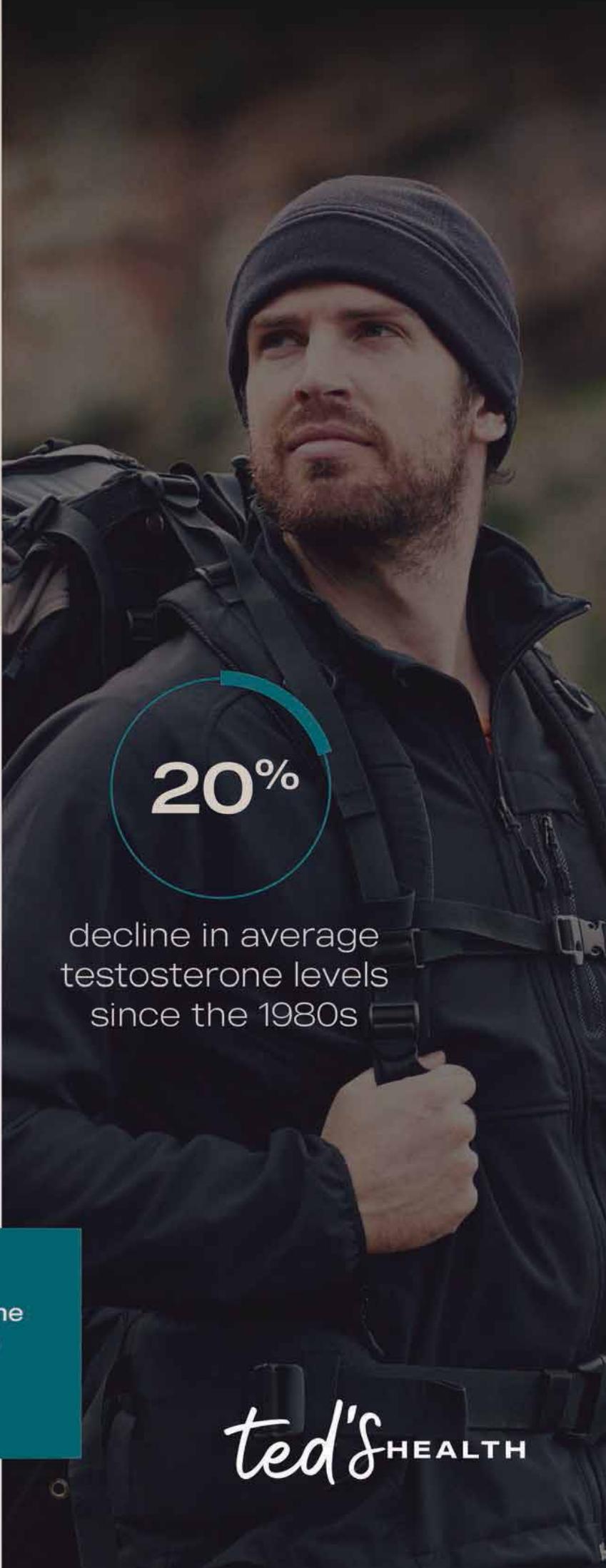
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» TABLE TENNIS



LEAGUE LEADS OFF

NOVICE to Army-level players took to the tennis court for the opening round of the Inter-Corps Summer League.

A total of 11 formations were represented and the Royal Signals made a promising start to their title defence by winning three matches from three – a feat replicated by the Royal Engineers.

The competition stages four further rounds over the course of the summer and concludes in Aldershot on September 6.

The sport has a busy season ahead, the highlight of which will see the Army compete in the Inter-Services Championships at Wimbledon in early August.

Efforts are also being made to boost numbers at grass-roots level and, following a successful debut in 2022, the women's festival of tennis – open to players of all abilities – returns to Aldershot on May 20.

The inter-unit competition celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, with organisers appealing for as many teams as possible to take part. Entry forms for the event on June 16 can be found on the tennis page at armysportcontrolboard.com, which also has contact details for anyone interested in getting involved in the sport.



TABLE TOPPERS TOAST DOUBLE DELIGHT



"WE GOT THE PAIRS SPOT ON"

THE Army rose to the occasion at the Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships to win both of the team titles on offer.

Victory for the men's A team ended the dominance of the Royal Air Force, who had reigned supreme at the event since 2016. However, their triumph came by the narrowest of margins as the scores were locked at 5-5, with the soldiers securing the silverware via a 22-19 countback on sets.

The B team also had success, finishing third overall.

"We are thrilled," captain 2Lt Ben Avery (RLC, pictured left) told *SoldierSport*. "We lost the last two games on deciding sets but overall, did enough."

"We got everyone together, working as a team two days before the competition and that

played a big part. Another crucial element was the doubles; we got the pairs spot on and that was vital as we won both matches.

"The B team also did very well with a couple of relatively new players, which shows the quality we now have."

The women's title was claimed in more routine style with an 8-2 win over the RAF.

Lt Levi Hood (AGC (SPS)), secretary of the Army Table Tennis Association, was part of the victorious squad and said results in Portsmouth highlighted the current strength in the game.

"We have got some really good players at the moment," she said. "A lot of that is down to our recruitment and getting newcomers involved."

"The Army Championships generate a lot of interest, and everyone is so committed." ■



● ARMY boxers LCpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) and Pte Jerry-Lee Palmer (RLC) celebrated claiming domestic honours as this issue went to press.

The duo were victorious at the England Boxing National Amateur Championships finals, with Stuart (pictured) securing the under-63kg title and Palmer the under-75kg equivalent.

Read the full story on their success in the June issue of *Soldier*.

Final Word



McDonald's was my civvy employer before joining up – I wanted a career that gave me something active and now I'm joining the Royal Engineers. But enlisting was an issue for me – I was deferred four times for medical reasons and it has taken me three years to get to this stage.

Rct Ruby Musson



I came from Fiji to join the Royal Logistic Corps, having previously been a teacher. The Covid pandemic made life tough in my country and I needed a change. At the age of 35 I am older than the others here but as a qualified rugby coach I'm pretty fit. The financial cost of joining was my main barrier – I had to pay for a return flight of more than £5,000.

Rct Kaveni Talemaivalagi



My life had reached a point where I needed to make a firm decision about my career – I decided to join the Royal Engineers before I had any other commitments. But I experienced issues relating to the medical, which delayed the process by six months.

Rct Ryan Channon



I chose to join early on – I'm 17 and off to the Royal Artillery. Phase one training at Pirbright has been tough but this is something I always wanted to do.

Rct Evie Litchfield



Life at Pirbright is a bit different to being a dog training assistant, which is what I was as a civilian. In my experience you have to really want this if you're going to pass phase one.

Rct Ajeet Vchai

Being separated from loved ones has been the hardest element of joining for me. But I have enjoyed the course here at Pirbright and the people around me.

Rct Ajeet Vchai

Self service

We asked recruits at ATC Pirbright about the highs and lows of the enlistment process...

I'd advise anyone coming up against barriers with their application to keep trying because it is worthwhile once you are in. Joining up was, thankfully, straightforward for me – I'm joining the EOD field in the Royal Logistic Corps.

Rct Mark Dubras

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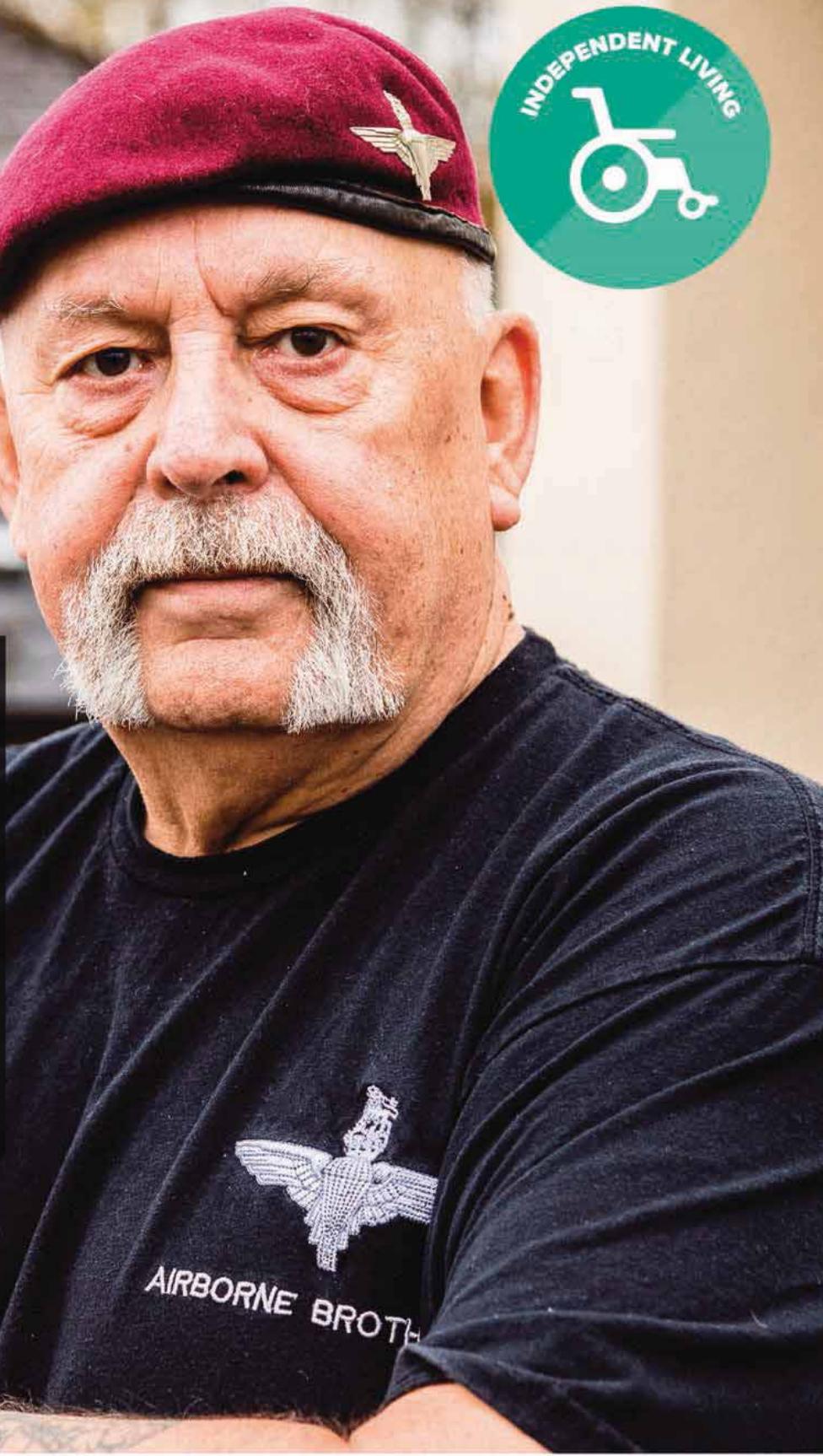


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