

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



INSIDE

ALL THE LATEST
NEWS, VIEWS
AND REVIEWS

RISE OF THE CHEAP DRONE

What it means
for your unit

SUMMER INTEL

Stay ahead in the heat



PAIN GAME

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If you have any questions or are ready to sign up to a session please contact: Natasha King - PMO Information Exploitation (IX), natasha.king123@mod.gov.uk

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Advances that need attention



OUR fascinating feature on page 30 examines how off-the-shelf drones are drastically changing tactics on the modern battlefield. It's mindblowing stuff, which impacts upon every serving soldier, so I recommended readers of all ranks take a look and consider visiting the Army Knowledge Exchange afterwards for more details.

An article on page 36 looks at another game-changer for the troops of 2023 – urban fighting. Anyone who has seen the video footage coming out of Ukraine will realise how fundamental this kind of warfare has been to the overall conflict there. But do you know your stuff? An urban package will soon become part of the individual training requirement for all soldiers, so with that in mind we found out more about some of its lessons from the experts at the Infantry Battle School's lethality wing.

A slightly less obvious area where troops are also being asked to ensure they are in peak condition is with their "social fitness". It's an odd-sounding term, but if gaming, scrolling or weekends alone in the block have ever got you down, you are already familiar. Learn more on page 42.

Enjoy the summer break if you're lucky enough to get one.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

► Printed copies

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► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

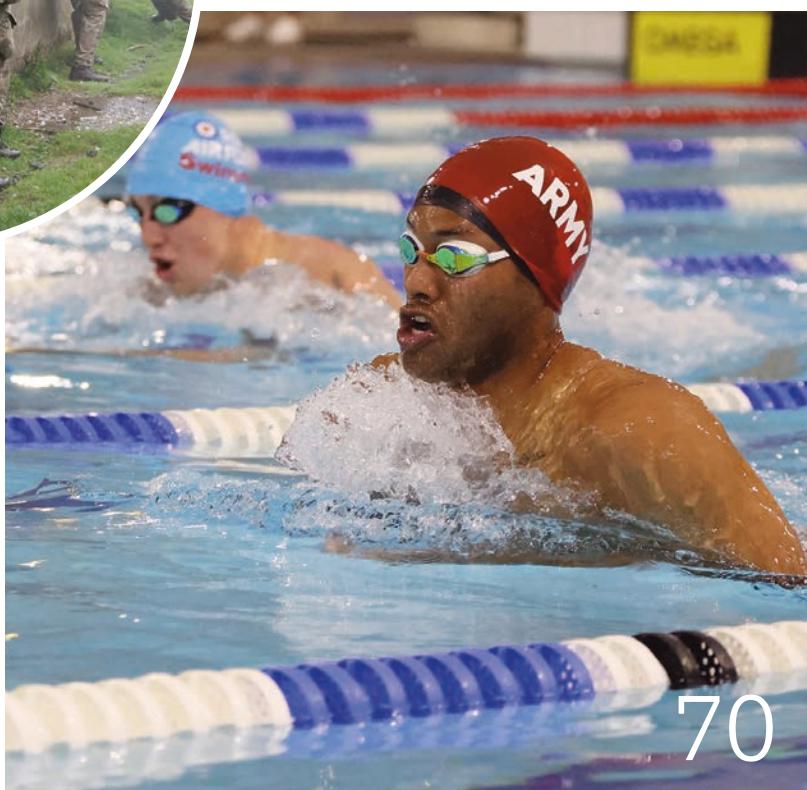
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► Online

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Pictures: Graeme Main

Get your mate through the gate

Troops to pocket £500 for every recruit they get to basic

WITH applications to join both the Regulars and Reserves below the numbers required to keep the Army at full strength, the Service is asking all personnel to support recruiting by encouraging people they know to become soldiers.

The nominator will receive a taxable bounty of £500 when their sponsored applicant starts basic training as either a Regular or Reservist.

There is no limit to the number of applications that both other ranks personnel and officers can sponsor. However, the payment applies only to the recruitment of soldiers, not officers.

"This is commercial best practice – it's already been proven as a method that works in the private sector," commented Lt Col Toby Gray (Coldrm Gds, pictured) from Home Command and the developer of the scheme.

"The project will be assessed on a monthly basis and we have high hopes that it will prove highly effective very quickly.

"The more people an individual gets in, the more they get paid.

"There's no limit on that."

The bounty payment, which is subject to income tax and National Insurance, will be made through the JPA payroll system within eight weeks of the applicant starting basic training.

But there are conditions and

exclusions to note.

Sponsored candidates must apply to join the Army within 30 days of being enrolled onto the scheme, otherwise they will "time out" and have to start the process over again.

Also, the bounty does not apply to rejoinders, transfers from other Services or lateral entry.

Personnel must be in service to receive the bounty, while those working in Recruiting Branch and Recruiting Group, regimental mentoring support officers and individuals in recruiting, retention and mentoring teams are not eligible to participate in the scheme.

To sponsor and enrol a potential applicant visit the online form at rbs.army.mod.uk ■

DAD'S THE WORD

Soldier asked two Coldstream Guards who had influenced their decision to join up...

"Several members of my family were in, including my dad, so they were probably my biggest influence. I'm the father now, and the Army is all my youngest son talks about."

Lcpl Anthony Woodward

"Family was the reason I joined. My stepdad was a platoon sergeant in our 1st Battalion and served in Afghanistan. He told me all about his experiences and was my role model – my grandad was also in the regiment."

Gdsm Luke Bungay



It's proven as a method

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 Sheklys
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



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GLOBAL SITREP



Picture: Atlantic Campaigns

A FOUR-MAN outfit from The Royal Yorkshire Regiment completed a 35-day seaborne feat of endurance as part of the "World's Toughest Row – Pacific 2023" event.

Maj Simon Farley, Capt Chris Bailey, Capt Sam Morris and WO1 Chris Barnes battled 2,800 miles of open water, departing Monterey in California in June and arriving at Hanalei on the Hawaiian island of Kauai on July 18.

Describing the conditions they encountered along the way, Maj Farley spoke of "incredible nights

of stars that you wouldn't believe, biblical rainstorms and 40ft swells to days of glassy calm".

"It's every emotion that you can possibly imagine, from one extreme to another," he added.

Known as the Pacific One team, the personnel were also raising money for charities St Michael's Hospice, Give Them a Sporting Chance and Young Minds.

The row was the inaugural race in a new event staged by the organisers of the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge.

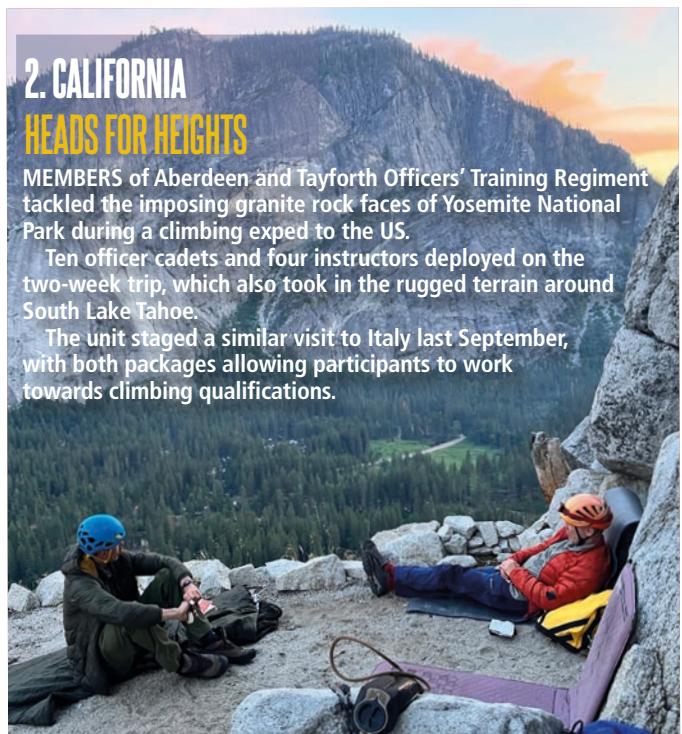


2. CALIFORNIA HEADS FOR HEIGHTS

MEMBERS of Aberdeen and Tayforth Officers' Training Regiment tackled the imposing granite rock faces of Yosemite National Park during a climbing exped to the US.

Ten officer cadets and four instructors deployed on the two-week trip, which also took in the rugged terrain around South Lake Tahoe.

The unit staged a similar visit to Italy last September, with both packages allowing participants to work towards climbing qualifications.



3. KENYA RESERVISTS GET STUCK IN

THE green fleet at British Army Training Unit Kenya will be running smoothly thanks to the efforts of part-time specialists from 103 Force Support Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Over the course of four months, fitter sections will deploy in turn to work alongside locally employed civilians to fix and maintain the station's wheeled vehicles.

The 50 soldiers involved in Exercise

Haraka Phoenix, as the tasking is known, are part of the Babcock sponsored Reserves scheme – which sees them combine their day jobs at the defence contractor with Army service.

"The team have been making a positive impact with their impressive engineering experience and thirst for more work," said the battalion's commanding officer, Lt Col Dave Haslam.



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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Facebook: facebook.com/soldiermagazine
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6. UK

GONG FOR CRISIS RESPONDERS

A NEW medal has been announced recognising humanitarian service in the UK and abroad.

King Charles approved the decoration, which will be awarded to troops and civilians deployed in response to the likes of conflict-related crises, epidemics or natural disasters.

Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden called the step "a fitting tribute to heroes".



4. GERMANY

FAMILIAR TERRITORY

THE ranges at Bergen Hohne rang to the sound of Challenger 2 once more as Exercise Iron Storm kicked into gear.

Members of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh battlegroup, including the Royal Tank Regiment (pictured) travelled to the former British training area to conduct combined arms live firing.

As this issue was going to press the action was switching to Altmark in eastern Germany, which includes Europe's largest urban training facility.

Run by the Combat Ready Training Centre (Germany), the package offers both a stern test of armoured infantry drills and of the logistics of moving personnel and vehicles between the two locations and Nato Forward Holding Base Sennelager.



Picture: Duncan Campbell



5. POLAND

LANCERS LEAD THE WAY

A CROSS-BORDER show of readiness, interoperability and innovation saw troops from The Royal Lancers scout a 1,100km route from their base at Bemowo Piskie, through the Baltic states to Estonia.

Operation Alival Surge mimicked a short-notice deployment of Nato's US-led enhanced forward presence battlegroup in Poland, which as well as the British cavalry contingent includes Croatian and Romanian elements.

In a major test of planning, logistics

and manoeuvre drills, a multinational reconnaissance group of some 50 personnel and 20 vehicles moved by road into Lithuania, then Latvia and on to Tallinn, linking up with the respective Nato battlegroups along the way.

Maj Guy Parker (RL) said practising readiness was "more powerful than talking about it".

He continued: "Interoperability and innovation is best done in the field, with teams working together to overcome barriers."



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2023

Proudly supporting those who serve.

We are proud to announce that we have been recognised for the Gold Award 2023 for the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

We are proud of partnerships and work with Reservists, Cadets, dependants and the whole Armed Forces Community.

The Side By Side - Aramark UK team participated and completed the 13 Bridges Challenge on 24th June on Armed Forces Day. The 20 strong team from across defence and UK business enjoyed the sunshine in London crossing 13 historic bridges travelling over 10 miles. The comradery and energy amongst the team was excellent, raising over £3,000 on the day.



www.sidebysidesfm.co.uk

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We Move Together As One



INSURANCE CHANGES

THE MoD has introduced replacements for the Pax personal accident and life insurance schemes.

Brokers The Risk Factor, who specialise in insurance in the public sector, have been awarded the new contract, which is called personal accident and life (Pal).

The personal accident element has automatically been extended to the new scheme on a like-for-like cost and cover basis via payroll deduction. However, personnel can advise unit HR staff if they do not wish to continue.

Pax life insurance is now closed to new members, but those with existing policies will be covered until the end of their current terms.

Those wanting to apply for life insurance need to do so under the new scheme. Read **ABN 011/2023** for details.



DRONE KILLER

Game-changing Smash sights rolled out to close combat troops

VERY high readiness units are to be equipped with a gun sight specifically designed to shoot down drones.

The snappily-named SmartShooter Smash Smart Weapon Sight Fire Control System boasts impressive software that recognises an uncrewed air system (UAS) and automatically tracks its progress through the skies, displaying a box around the target object in the viewfinder.

It can maintain a lock on the UAS even if the user moves position or if the drone flies behind objects such as trees or people.

The kit, supplied by Harrogate-based Viking Arms, was tested by the Army's

experimentation unit, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, last year and enjoyed some impressive results.

Initially, it will be fitted to the SA80 A3 assault rifle but can also be attached to other in-service weapons as it mounts on standard rails.

Minister for Defence Procurement, James Cartlidge, said: "The importance of uncrewed aerial vehicles on the modern battlefield is undeniable.

"Alongside procuring, developing and deploying this technology in a range of different ways, we must also be proactive in ensuring Armed Forces personnel can protect against their use by adversaries."

Turn to page 30 for more on UAS. ■

“
The importance of UAVs is undeniable
”

INSPIRED BY VCS



ROYAL Irish Regiment soldiers past and present teamed up across several timezones to honour the deeds of their forebears.

From Ireland to India at 1100 locally, a worldwide day of commemorations saw wreaths laid at the graves of 18 Victoria Cross holders from the formation's antecedent units.

Former CO Col (Retd) Tim Collins travelled to Khayat Beach War Cemetery in Israel, where Pte Norman Harvey of the 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers is buried.

Decorated for conspicuous gallantry on the Belgian front in October 1918 – aged just 19 – the Serviceman was later killed in Palestine during the Second World War.

Paying tribute to the infantee, Collins said he represented "a great generation," and had selflessly re-enlisted "in the face of the racist threat, knowing full well what to expect."

Former captain Tom O'Brien, chairman of the Warminster branch of the Royal Irish Rangers Veterans Association, which organised the project, added: "To our knowledge, this is the first time any regiment has carried out an activity such as this, especially at one unique moment in time."

"We did it to draw from the inspiration of those who went before and to help soldiers and families suffering the effects of PTSD today."

Other locations visited included cemeteries across the Western Front and Gallipoli in Turkey.

FLYING THE FLAG



SMILES were out in Falmouth when the coastal town led this year's Armed Forces Day celebrations. Now in its 15th year, the event featured a tri-Service parade of more than 1,000 troops and veterans, with flypasts from the Red Arrows plus the A400M, Merlin and Avenger aircraft. One in five people in Cornwall has a personal or family connection to the military.



“
We were
looking to take
it to the next
level
”

Reserves put to test



Collective training package saw 186 troops upskill in Estonia

TRAINING focused on operationally deploying blocks of Reservists will be developed next year after a successful outing in Eastern Europe. Commanders said they were

delighted with the roll-out of Exercise

Baltic Fist, which saw nearly 200

volunteers assembled and put through

their paces in Estonia – working with

Nato allies in an examination of

their core military skills.

Built around the 20 Armoured Infantry Brigade Combat Team backbone of 7th Battalion, The Rifles; 3rd Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, the

infanteers were supported in the

field by specialists including medics

and sappers.

The two-week package near Tapa

– which was developed from Exercise

Spearpoint, held on Salisbury Plain Training Area last year – featured serials such as trench clearance, weapons handling and battlespace manoeuvre.

Maj Nicholas Hedges, senior planning officer with 7 Rifles, said he was pleased with the overall success of Baltic Fist, adding that he would now be assisting with how the exercise could be further enhanced for next year.

The officer continued: “The aim was to prove Reservists can deploy and work together as the Army requires – all carried out in the context of an operational environment.

“Following Spearpoint – delivered by 5 RRF – we wanted to take the training to the next level out in Estonia.

“We have really gone back to basics,



OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Reservists give their views on Baltic Fist...

“It's been really good for leadership opportunities. As well as soldiers from my own cap badge, my platoon has included Fusiliers and members of the US National Guard.”

Sgt Sam Chamberlain, PWRR

“This is the first time I've had chance to work on armour. Normally I'm responsible for wheeled vehicles but I've been hands-on with Bulldog and Warrior. It's been enjoyable.”

LCpl Julie Kilby, REME





in Eastern Europe



looking closely at section activity and building cohesion before taking this to platoon level."

Equipment from The Queen's Royal Hussars battlegroup – deployed in Estonia on Op Cabrit – was also used to assist the effort.

In addition, Brits worked with US colleagues while getting the chance to fire less-familiar weapons on the range, including the Heckler and Koch HK416 assault rifle used by the French.

Opportunities for adventurous training, with a sea kayak and canoeing package, completed the offer.

"We are pleased with the way everyone performed," Maj Hedges pointed out.

"All of the soldiers involved had to be fully up-to-date with their fitness, medicals and admin and they have really impressed."

The sobering fact that the war in Ukraine was being fought nearby – and that the UK-led battlegroup was standing ready to counter any would-be aggressor threatening Estonia – had

not been lost on the Reservists.

"Some of the personnel here are on their first exercise – yet they are conducting training in an operational theatre and close to the Russian border," he added.

Lt Col Guy Lock (pictured left), who took over as commanding officer of 7 Rifles as Baltic Fist was mounted, shared the sentiment of his colleagues.

He explained the troops had shown their mettle in training.

"It has been an impressive demonstration of our capability – and underscores to soldiers the importance of our role and why we put our uniform on," he said.

Last month senior Reservist officer Maj Gen Aidan Smyth, Deputy Commander Field Army, told *Soldier* he wanted future annual deployment exercises to include a large collective training element.

As well as providing valuable hands-on experience, it is hoped the opportunity for more overseas travel will help boost recruitment. ■

"The exercise has been phenomenal – 100 per cent a great experience. It has all come together, from getting everyone assembled at Brize Norton through to the serials. It has set me up really well – I've just finished my degree in international relations and I'm going to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst soon to try for a Regular commission."

2Lt Will Bowman, RRF

"It's gone very well – the trench clearance serial was a real high point for me, but there's been a lot in the two weeks. Being involved in a mock attack at company level was interesting; it was great to work with other troops and coordinate activity together."

Rfn Ben Steed,
Rifles



CALLING WW2 VETS

■ MEMORIES of those who lived through the Second World War – as well as photos of personal effects from the era – are being sought by Oxford University for a project aiming to present a digital showcase.

Matthew Kidd, leading the Their Finest Hour initiative, said: "It's good to have stories – even if they are only a few paragraphs or a picture – for future generations."

Visit theirfinesthour.org

BIGWIGS HIT BIG SMOKE



“
The exercise
has been
phenomenal
”

■ WELLINGTON Barracks assumed a theatrical backdrop as it was transformed into the location for Army Expo London.

The three-day event was used to showcase the value the Service brings at home and overseas, while outlining its vision for the future.

An audience of ministers, defence leaders and industry partners visited stands demonstrating a variety of hi-tech equipment such as the Boxer mechanised infantry vehicle, the Apache AH-64E and Ajax (above).



SUMMIT AHEAD

■ THE largest defence and security exhibition in the world is being staged at London's Excel Centre next month.

Defence and Security Equipment International runs from September 12 to 15 and will be divided into five zones – land, maritime, air, business development and cyber.

Each will host daily seminars and a theatre will welcome major speakers, with the chief of the general staff presenting his keynote speech on the afternoon of the opening day.

The event is open to all personnel. For details on how to register read ABN 025/2023.



YOU CAN TANK US LATER

A UNIQUE Second World War tank experience competition has been jointly launched by The Tank Museum and American Heritage Museum.

The lucky winner will ride in the commander's seat of the only running Tiger I in the world (shown above) at the former's Tiger Day event in Bovington in April 2024.

They will then cross the pond to drive the M4 Sherman and M24 Chaffee tanks at the US attraction in Massachusetts.

The prize also includes \$3,000 of expenses to cover travel.

Visit tankmuseum.org and see the news section for details of how to enter.

The sweepstake ends on October 13, with a winner announced two weeks later.

DIARY DATE

September 15 and 16

A FESTIVAL at Broad Town Brewery, Swindon, will raise cash for EOD charity the Felix Fund. The event includes live music, bar and catering, with camping also available. Tickets cost £40 per person. Over-18s only. Visit felixfund.org.uk

MILITARY SITE SOLD



WATERBEACH Barracks – a former home to Royal Engineers personnel – has been sold by the Ministry of Defence.

The 293 hectare Cambridgeshire site, which closed to the military back in 2013, will now make way for a 6,500 home development.

It has been bought by a company called Urban and Civic, part of the Wellcome Trust, which plans to develop the site in stages over the next two decades.

Job done



Picture: Graeme Main

A SIX-YEAR, 19,000-mile charity tab has come to an end at long last for Chris Lewis – the former paratrooper who in 2017 set out to walk the entire coastline of the UK. Having recruited a dog, a fiancee, a baby son – and legions of fans – to his trekking team along the way, the 43-year-old was approaching Llangennith beach on the Gower Peninsula as this issue went to press. "What an insane feeling to finally see Swansea Bay again," said Lewis, who has so far raised more than £330,000 for SSAFA. "That was a truly epic moment. Hard work, determination and a positive mindset can make us achieve anything."

Army gamers go west

THE Army's video gaming elite have been limbering up for action as they prepare for a major clash with British and American opponents.

Bosses at the Service esports team confirmed troops had begun preparations for the *Call of Duty* Endowment Bowl – where they will take on teams from the UK and US Armed Forces stateside on the first-person shooter.

The annual event, backed by gaming giant Activision Blizzard, raises money to help charities place veterans in jobs on both sides of the Atlantic.

Around two million online viewers watched the Royal Air Force claim the bowl last time, and it is hoped more will log on this autumn.

The contest is expected to be held on America's west coast, although details of the location and dates were still under wraps as this issue went to press.

Army Esports chairman Maj Tim Harcourt (Rifles) said team members have already started rehearsing tactics.

The officer told *Soldier*. "The *Call of Duty* Endowment Bowl is one of the largest gaming events for us and spectator figures are clear testament to its popularity."



"Troops are already meeting online to begin their training and it's likely everyone will come together for a session in Blandford. This will probably take place over a couple of days later this month or in September."

Having grown its membership to 3,500 people, the esports community now has an array of gifted players it could call upon for competitions, Maj Harcourt added.

He continued: "We have a current squad of around 200 soldiers from which we can choose – each specialise in different games and types of event."

"We are still getting a steady flow of people coming into the community and are looking at ways of growing esports further in future." ■

● **Final Word – page 74**



Pressure on pay plods on...

Picture: Graeme Main



A five per cent rise has been confirmed – but how much will it help?

SOLDIERS have given a mixed response to a new pay deal after it was finally given the green light by the government.

While personnel said they were broadly pleased at the five per cent uplift in salary – which is being backdated to April 1 and will appear in August's pay – some voiced fears the extra cash would quickly be swallowed up by rising living costs. And they pointed out that troops still faced a brisk operational tempo.

The latest concerns were aired after senior ministers accepted the increase recommended earlier in the summer by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body.

As well as the salary rise across the board, personnel up to and including one-star rank will be handed a £1,000 boost to their pay scale.

It means the combined effect of both rises equates to a 9.7 per rise for the most junior ranks and 5.8 per cent for officers at one-star rank.

The X-factor payment, recognising the unique conditions of military life, remains unchanged.

Meanwhile cookhouse food prices have been frozen and, on the accommodation front, only the cost of single living accommodation has seen a small rise.

The deal was announced alongside a settlement for police and prison officers, who receive a seven per cent rise, while teachers will get 6.5 per cent.

Army personnel – all of whom wished to remain anonymous – told

Soldier they accepted public finances were tight and appreciated the extra money. But some remain worried about the rising cost of essentials such as food.

A sergeant in the Royal Artillery said: "The fact is we don't have the ability to mount industrial action in the same way as some other people.

"Even though soldiers have supported in crises when needed, our pay award is less – and you only have to look around to see that everything is going up."

A Reservist cavalry captain – who recently retired from the Regulars – believed the pay award would ultimately be welcomed.

"It is always a boost when you are given extra money," he added.

And a sergeant in the Royal Signals said the cash would help the household finances – particularly as her husband was also serving.

"I'm aware some of my younger colleagues have been grumbling but I can't complain given our own circumstances," she added.

Ongoing money worries are likely to concern top brass after the latest Armed Forces continuous attitude survey found that a third of military personnel are now unhappy with their basic salary. ■



Picture: Ssgt Dek Taylor, RIC

■ AN OFFICER-BROTHER duo has made it a double after taking the helm of two prestigious infantry outfits in the 4th Light Brigade Combat Team at the same time.

Lt Col Will Wells, aged 43, is now completing his tenure as commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, The Rifles, while 41-year-old sibling Fred is the boss at 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

"We were both madly keen on the Army when we were young," said Lt Col Fred Wells, who commissioned in 2005 – three years after his older brother originally entered 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets.

"We have both served on many of the same operations, including Herrick, and often asked each other for advice."

The officer, who is shown above left with his brother, added: "I'm not sure there have been many brothers that have served as COs at the same time and in the same brigade."



EDINBURGH EXCELLENCE

■ PROUD personnel have again been parading in force for King Charles III at two events confirming the royal family's special links with Scotland. Soldiers first took centre stage at Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh for the Ceremony of the Keys, when they marked the beginning of the monarch's three weeks north of the border.

Later, they helped in the presentation of the Honours of Scotland with a parade from Edinburgh Castle to St Giles' Cathedral.



Picture: Cpl Danny Houghton, RLC

IN THE WORDS OF GURKHAS



A PLAN to capture more battlefield stories of Gurkha soldiers in their own words has won lottery backing.

The Gurkha Museum in Peninsula Barracks, Winchester, has secured a £300,000 development grant for a multi-million pound programme that will see it preserve more first-hand accounts for future generations while refitting the museum to make it modern and accessible, as well as digitising its archive.

In Nepal, stories and traditions are often told verbally rather than being written down.

Museum director Daren Bowyer (ex-RE) said "oral history capture" would therefore become increasingly important, with personnel from the Brigade of Gurkhas leading the overhaul and its fundraising efforts.

"Undertaking this major redevelopment is a hugely exciting privilege," he commented, adding that an outreach programme would also allow his staff to "take the museum and its important stories beyond its walls".

Find The Gurkha Museum on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok or log on to thegurkhamuseum.co.uk

Its summer exhibition, *With Due Ceremony*, tells the story of Nepalese involvement in state and ceremonial occasions over 200 years and runs this month. Entry is free upon purchasing a museum ticket.

The Royal Gurkha Rifles parade through Falmouth on Armed Forces Day and, below, a soldier's push-up fundraising challenge to support the project

Top picture: Sgt Jimmy Wise, RAF

“
We have
nailed storage
space
”



New rooms on the block

First in wave of 16,500 bed spaces complete at Imjin Barracks

THE first block in a wave of brand new prefab single living accommodation (SLA) was being opened by Army chiefs as this issue went to press.

En-suite bed spaces for 69 officers (named Carne Block and shown right) have been completed at Imjin Barracks in Gloucestershire – the first to be built there since 2010 – with new inhabitants due to get their keys sometime after October 20.

Around 75 and 136 junior NCO rooms are also set to be completed at Stafford and Kinloss, respectively, in the coming months.

The new quarters are part of a £1.2 billion project to improve block life for single personnel.

Speaking to *Soldier* ahead of a naming ceremony at Imjin, Head of Infrastructure Plans, Brig Richard Brown, said he was proud to see the first bed spaces open just as he left post.

"Not only has this been delivered on time but around 40 per cent quicker than a standard military infrastructure project," he said.

"I have a huge amount of pride in the team that we pulled together to deliver this.

"I am confident I'm leaving the programme in a really good place.

"We have a fantastic product here. Soldiers have seen the prototypes, tested and adjusted them. And we will continue to refine.

"However, we will need to have a full cycle of living through summer, spring, autumn and winter before we determine if there's anything else that could be done better."



But the officer (shown below left) believes any changes will be minor.

"I think we have nailed storage space," Brig Brown added. "These rooms have a huge amount of space. It's hard to think what we have missed."

Read the September 2022 issue for full details of the programme, which will replace around a third of all Army SFA in total.

Highlights of the prefab designs include more sociable communal areas, kitchen facilities, full-sized double beds, improved storage facilities and a carbon net-zero construction with features such as solar energy harvesting. ■

In a new block? Tell us what it's like at news@soldiermagazine.co.uk





Pictures: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC

Centre stage in London

TWAS a night to remember for guitarist LCpl Rory Crummy (RCAM, shown above) when he not only performed as a soloist for the first time – but got to do it on the roof of Horse Guards in front of 4,000 people.

The Irish Guards bandsman had been part of the Household Division's military musical spectacular, "Orb and Sceptre", which he told *Soldier* was "100 per cent one of the best things I've done in the Army". He said: "It was interesting to look down on the same parade ground where I'd usually be." ■



“
It was
interesting
to look down
”

GENERAL FOR A DAY

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

THE first thing I would do is reduce the number of last-minute trawls coming into regiments, or at least speed up the passage of information so the personnel affected have more time to prepare.

Some people want to deploy all the time, especially those in single living accommodation, but that's not always possible, for example if the tasking calls for a specific trade or qualification.

For families it's hard when someone suddenly has to go away for weeks at short notice. They might have holidays booked and it can really bring morale down at home when plans are cancelled.

The next thing I would look at is the fleet of Land

“
There's more
going on
than our own
problems
”

Rovers and Bulldogs.

Constantly having to repair vehicles that are more than 60 years old is demoralising. Why not look at a contract similar to current white fleet arrangements for the green side too?

We could lease 4x4s on a

long-term basis to use where the terrain and task allows, with the supplier managing spare parts and repairs.

This would take a lot of pressure off.

My last point is something close to my heart. I'd empower commanders at all levels to make sure their troops are better informed about the bigger picture – what's going on in this country and around the world.

From the war in Ukraine to the plight of vulnerable people at risk of poverty or homelessness, I think we could all do more to understand the issues facing others.

As the father of a child with additional needs I've seen some of the difficulties families like mine encounter and it's made me appreciate the importance of empathy.

We take a lot for granted but there is more going on than our own problems.

It would be difficult to implement. However, having a wider perspective might encourage personnel to look after each other more – and ensure everyone is given the chance to thrive in their careers and in life.

Name: LCpl Josh Branley

Cap badge: Royal

Engineers

Role: Defence

communications

technician by trade,

currently serving as

orderly corporal for 6

Headquarters and Support

Squadron, 22 Engineer

Regiment

Age: 30

Years in: 14



HUMBLING START FOR RESERVIST MAYOR

LORD Mayor of Hull, Sgt Kelvin Neal (R Yorks), has been reflecting on a busy start to his year in the ceremonial role.

The 58-year-old Reservist was formally installed in late May and has already completed a wide range of visits – including being front and centre at the Beverley Armed Forces Day celebrations in Leconfield.

"The highlight so far was being involved in Refugee Week," he told *Soldier*. "I did quite a few events around that, one of the nicest of which was visiting a mosque, which dispelled a few myths.

"It was a chance to talk about refugees and meet people who have been through that process. I was treated like royalty – they were so welcoming.

"Another important one was a loneliness forum at the University of Hull, that was a real eye-opener and felt relevant to the military."

Sgt Neal joined the Army Reserve in 1983 and deployed on Op Telic in 2004 and was part of the Op Rescript response to Covid in 2020.

He serves with 4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment's recruit mentoring team and has been a local councillor for 14 years.

"My kids have all grown up and I felt this is the right time for me," he said, reflecting on becoming mayor.

"I wanted to do it while I was still fit and active, so I could fulfil the role 100 per cent.

"Apart from having my family, nothing can surpass this."



Picture: Neil Holmes Photography



Pictures: Cpl Liam Derbyshire, RLC

I was a bit shocked



Fuelling camaraderie Unsung heroes praised for cookery skills

HEFS were tested to their culinary limits in the Service's annual catering competition.

Exercise Army Sustainer saw the cooks compete in 15 categories, including individual and team events that challenged their creativity and adaptability.

The title of Senior Army Chef of the Year went to Reservist Sgt Nigel Young (RLC), who said he was "delighted" to have been acknowledged for his menu (shown right). Junior Chef

of the Year went to Pte Tushumba Hepburn (RLC, shown left), who added: "When I heard my name I was a bit shocked. I was up against good chefs."

The event at Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham was organised by 167 Catering Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps.

Commenting on the importance of military catering, CO Lt Col Mike Dyas said:

"When people eat together, they build relationships. If you can sit and talk over a nice meal you start to build the camaraderie that the British Army is so well known for." ■





Ground view

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

SOLDIER has covered a fair few stories about the recruitment shortages in recent issues – it would be entirely fair to say that all is not well on this front.

We are under strength, both in the Regulars and Reserves, facing up to a problem affecting other allied armies as well as our own. It is far from ideal when we are as busy as ever – and when the world is a more uncertain place in light of events such as Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Against this backdrop we all have an important part to play in bringing the next generation of troops on board.

We know our Service and all it can offer better than anyone and, if we can articulate our experiences to others, we can help attract new talent.

Personnel can now benefit financially too. The launch of the recruiting bounty scheme (page 7) means those bringing in new recruits can bank themselves £500.

It's a healthy sum at a time when we're all feeling the financial squeeze.

Interested parties should take note – this payment is not an easy win. It is not a matter of simply sending somebody down to

the local recruitment office and leaving them to their own devices. You'll have to coach and help your candidate first.

They'll need to pass the Army selection process and enter phase one training for you to qualify for cash.

This makes the endeavour as much a test for the recruiter as the would-be recruit.

Understanding the demands of becoming a British soldier is the easy part – being able to impart this knowledge to a third-party is another matter entirely.

But it is a key opportunity to hone some useful skills for a wider Army career.

Mentoring is a discipline in itself – it requires patience and persistence as well as a commitment to see the process through to its conclusion.

As soldiers, we can often take our own knowledge for granted – particularly if we've served for a little while – and assume civilians will know about the Army in the same way. But this is often not the case, so we must be prepared to go back to basics and think how we can help.

I have often said we are all recruiters in a British Army that has much to offer. This is an organisation with opportunities few other employers can match.

“
We can take our knowledge for granted
”



Pictures: Niven Photography and Freepik

Happy trails up north

I'M pleased to report that the 2023 Cateran Yomp – an event in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity – was a great success, with more than three times the number of serving personnel taking part compared to last year.

This demanding challenge – a walk across the Cairngorm Mountains in Scotland – is based on a legendary long-distance training march.

It takes place over a

day and night with routes of 22, 36 or 54 miles available to participants.

Despite putting in the training hours, it proved a real test for me. But it was great to meet and chat to some of the 300 soldiers who signed up.

We have all been talking about social fitness recently – the bonds that connect us (page 42).

While I felt physically tired, it was mentally refreshing.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q What kind of social occasions do you most enjoy?

A Less formal ones – I'd rather a mess barbecue than a mess dinner



ALLIED INSPIRATION

■ IT WAS great to join the US military's recent Command Sergeant Majors' Convention – where senior soldiers joined forces to discuss thorny issues in service life.

Along with colleagues from Canada, Australia and New Zealand, I was able to contribute to discussions on topics affecting us all – from recruitment to mental health – and come up with some ideas to help tackle them.

Each of the American senior sergeant majors had taken responsibility for a subject area well in advance of the conference and had conducted some thorough research. This meant there was a high standard of discussion.

I'd like us to learn from this approach – so the questions that we will be addressing at our Regimental Sergeant Majors' Convention in November will be put out well in advance.

My expectation is that we devote some quality thinking time to them. It is important we are all as prepared as possible.

THE BIG PICTURE

Lulworth Range, UK

On track to act

THE Challenger 2 "Megatron" – used by the Armoured Trials and Development Unit to test future kit – gives a demo to defence chiefs last month. As well as showing off some cutting-edge military equipment, the event gave visitors an insight into integrated tactics and combined arms warfare. It marked the publication of a new plan to improve the UK's fighting readiness – the *Defence Command Paper Refresh*.

Picture: Cpl Tim Hammond, RAF







NEED TO

Feeling the

How hot is too hot when it comes to phys on leave?

► THE Army has strict rules in place to ensure collective fitness sessions are safe, with PTIs carefully monitoring the heat index on any given day.

However, those working out alone might be tempted to ignore official advice. And as climate change increasingly nudges UK summertime temperatures upwards, you don't have to be overseas to encounter weather that could prove dangerous to your health.

But is there such a thing as too hot to train? Yes and no, explains Mac McKie (pictured), head of performance at Resilient Nutrition.

"There's a whole lot of factors involved," says the exercise physiologist. "Whether you're acclimatised, the type of workout you are doing, how fit and how well hydrated you are and so on.

"It's all relative to the body's ability to cope with the heat."

Even more reason to think carefully about the conditions when planning your personal phys. Follow McKie's top tips below...



Take time to adjust

Give the body as much time as possible to get used to the heat – ideally days or weeks, not hours. Also bear in mind that the higher your body fat percentage, the more susceptible you will be to overheating. Exercise uses energy, therefore creating heat, while fat acts as insulation. And remember, those who have had heat illness in the past are prone to experiencing it again.

Mitigate where

possible. Make the most of that air-conditioned gym, dress appropriately and exercise in the shade – or in the early morning and late evening to avoid

the hottest temperatures. Swimming is a great way of working out while also staying cool.

Stay well fed and

hydrated. Prioritise a slightly higher carb intake than normal – ideally through fluids, so you kill two birds with one stone and the carbohydrates are absorbed more quickly. Sugary drinks aren't always that bad – it just depends on the context in which you're consuming them.

Ease back if you can.

Unless you are training for a specific event and can't alter a session, be

burn

prepared to take it easy. A scale called the "rate of perceived exertion" runs from one to ten, with ten being absolutely flat out, and one being in bed asleep. If you would usually work at eight, dial it back to between five and seven – whatever is appropriate to you. It's about being honest with yourself and not pushing too hard.

Check your urine to track how hydrated you are. Wee should be straw coloured, but don't forget the water in the toilet will also have diluted it. Basically, if you are thirsty, drink. Generally, two to two-and-a-half litres of water a day is pretty normal, but in a hot climate you might need up to four.

Go easy on booze. It dehydrates you, not to mention contains empty calories. If you've had a few drinks the night before, you should at least attempt to take on fluids and you might need to leave it a few hours before you try to exercise.

Know when you've overdone it. Signs include feeling shaky, dizzy or sick. You may stop sweating or go pale and you probably won't feel thirsty – that's a key sign. To prevent this, I recommend setting a timer to remind you to have a drink or a little bit of food at intervals during your workout.

Rest and recuperate. Rehydrate after exercise – milk is an excellent mix of proteins and carbohydrates. If you are dehydrated to the point of feeling hungover you may also benefit from rehydration salts like Dioralyte. And if you have got too hot, keep yourself cooler for the next 72 hours.



Human performance specialists Resilient Nutrition (resilientnutrition.com) are offering readers a 15 per cent discount in their online store. Enter "SOLDIER" at the checkout to take advantage of the deal

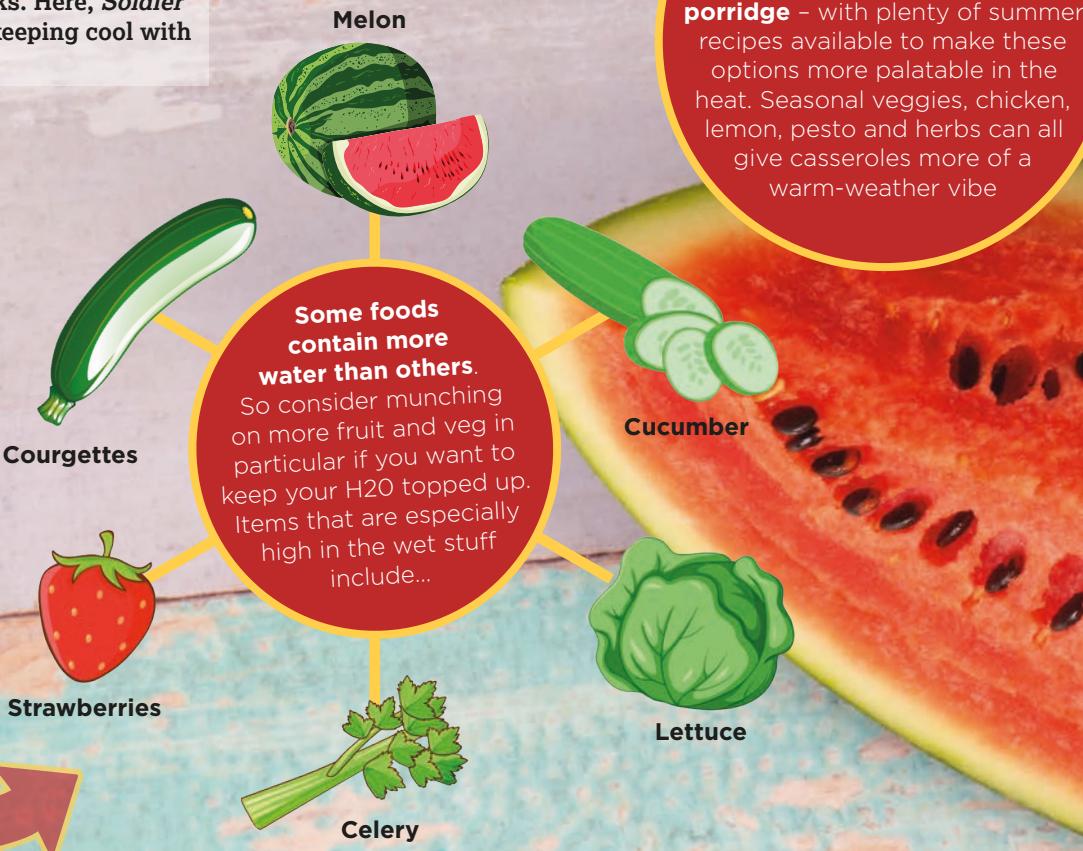
Eat through the heat

How to adapt your diet to the warm weather

► DEHYDRATION and reduced appetite can leave us scratching our heads about what to eat during the summer weeks. Here, *Soldier* offers some inspiration for keeping cool with your cuisine...

On hot days you lose more water through sweating so the requirement to replace lost fluids goes up

The best way to do this is by drinking water. But **foods can account for 20-30 per cent of our fluid intake**



Safe travels

Square your security so you can relax on holiday

► WHILE many British soldiers will enjoy a break from the day job this month, their adversaries will not. Here is a rundown of how to stay secure when travelling overseas... and keep the rest of the UK safe as well.

Remember restricted countries

These are places that Armed Forces personnel and MoD civil servants are banned from visiting – or transiting through – because of the risk to them and defence. Exceptions can only be made with written permission from local security teams. Read **JSP 440** leaflet 2C for more details.

Watch your IT

Leave your MoD IT at home – it is only allowed to be taken abroad on annual leave in exceptional circumstances. Think about how people could access any of your devices. For example, a hostile actor may compromise a public USB charging point at an airport to infect your phone with harmful software.



Consider the bigger picture

Recent comments from the former PM of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, stating that British public officials are a “legitimate military target for Russia” highlight that **everyone is at risk of being singled out**.



Don't go OTT on visa application forms

Data on these can be used by adversaries to identify people who have access to information that interests them. So keep details of your role and department generic, but truthful, to **avoid giving away needless information to others**.

Read the lit

Google “foreign travel advice” to access the latest information, by country, from the **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**. The *MoD Overseas Travel Handbook* also contains important security advice.

Slurping cold snacks like slushies and ice lollies can also **help you stay cool** on the very hottest days



Did you know?

Some foods that require more effort to digest – like those high in protein, sugar and fibre – are thought to generate more body heat. Try countering this by using **citrus marinades on meat to break down the protein structure** or by **soaking grains to make the fibre more digestible**

FOODIE FACT:

One reason our appetite can vanish when we’re feeling hot is that the body tries to regulate its temperature by cutting down on heat-generating functions like the digestion of food



Brain Rin'R

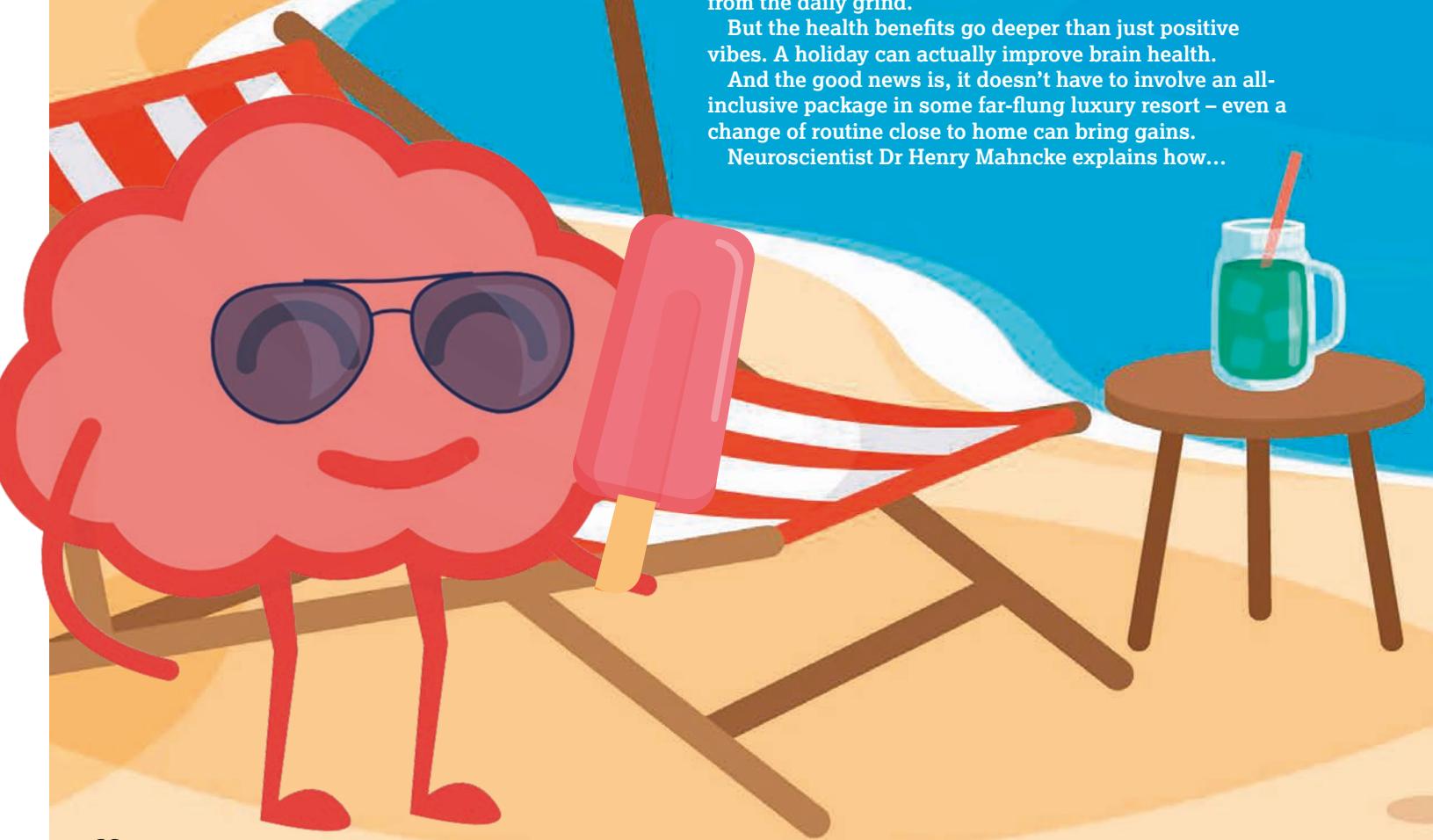
Why time out from the nine-to-five
super-charges you

► THE mood boosting, de-stressing effects of annual leave are no secret – it's why most of us crave time away from the daily grind.

But the health benefits go deeper than just positive vibes. A holiday can actually improve brain health.

And the good news is, it doesn't have to involve an all-inclusive package in some far-flung luxury resort – even a change of routine close to home can bring gains.

Neuroscientist Dr Henry Mahncke explains how...



1 A break from the norm

Sometimes our brains can be over-optimised for specific tasks and not particularly good at others. It's a bit like someone going to the gym and only doing bicep curls, then finding they can't do a push-up. We want our brains to be good at many things, and research shows that going on holiday does exactly that. We're doing something different.

2 Lightening the load

In our daily lives we are constantly thinking, making decisions and balancing risk and reward – in other words, our cognitive load is high. But spending time in nature provides stimulation to our brains in a way that is consequence free. It's why we enjoy staring into a campfire, watching the wind blow through the trees or the waves break on the sand. Our brains are getting input, but we are not required to act. And that helps restore function.

3 Less stress

We know that short-term stress improves our performance, but chronic stress does the opposite. It's terrible for brain health because it directly damages the hippocampus, which is the seat of learning and memory. So if you can put it aside for a week or two, that gives the brain a chance to rebuild itself.

4 A shift in mindset

Mental processes and mood are closely related. If we are struggling with mild depression or anxiety we can get stuck in rumination. But if you remove the everyday triggers – your inbox, the fact the house needs tidying or whatever – your brain is forced to think of new things. Being somewhere different allows other aspects of our brain to bloom and that's healthy.

5 The novelty factor

Humans have evolved to have big fancy brains because as a species we are adaptive. A certain amount of repetition is good for learning, but ongoing sameness stops the brain pumping as many neurochemicals. Being in a new environment boosts those chemicals, which in turn revives brain plasticity, cognition and mood.

6 Why post-holiday blues are no bad thing

That out-of-sorts feeling is evidence of a real neurological effect. The brain is constantly rewiring itself in response to what we ask it to do. And just like a soldier in peak physical shape might find that first run after a week off more difficult, our brains also drop back a bit when everyday pressure goes away. Rather than being a bad thing, it's a sign that our brain has reallocated resources to other stuff.



Dr Henry Mahncke is the CEO of Posit Science, producer of online brain training platform BrainHQ (brainhq.com)

Summer Savers

Spend less on leave with these Defence Discount Service offers

► WITH a cost-of-living crisis dragging on, holiday plans have taken a hit for many. But the folks at the Defence Discount Service have got your back. Check out their latest deals to save cash on getaways this month and beyond...

UK STAYS

- **Away Resorts** – save up to **15%**
- **Booking.com** – get up to **6%** cashback credit
- **Butlins** – exclusive savings, plus an extra **£20** off
- **Expedia** – save **10%** on UK hotels
- **Forest Holidays and Hoseasons** – both up to **10%** off
- **Hotels.com** – **10%** off
- **Parkdean Resorts** – savings of up to **12%**
- **Travelodge** – save **5%**



SUN AND BEACH

- **Canvas Holidays** – save up to **15%**
- **Eurocamp** – up to **50%** off
- **Jet2 Holidays** – **£25** off per booking
- **Lastminute.com** – savings of up to **£50** (minimum spends apply)
- **Top Villas** – **£50** off selected breaks
- **Walt Disney Travel Company** – save **5%**



HIRE CARS AND PARKING

- **APH parking** – up to **15%** off on airport parking
- **Holiday Extras and Purple Parking** – save up to **30%** on selected airport parking
- **Enterprise Rent-A-Car and Europcar** – up to **10%** off

Since its launch in 2012, the Defence Discount Service has partnered with more than **9,000 brands** to offer the military community savings on **tech, travel, fashion, days out, utilities and more**.

● For further information visit defencediscountservice.co.uk, where you can buy a Defence Privilege Card (£4.99 for five years) to access these high street bargains.





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We believe it's essential that those on the front line have the best equipment available to meet the hazards and challenges they face.

That is our mission.





Report: Steve Muncey

Pictures: Cpl Nathan Tanuku and Sgt Donald Todd, both RLC; Graeme Main; Shutterstock

ON THE RISE

Cheap, off-the-shelf drones have changed the face of conflict for good – as every Field Army unit is about to discover

LIKE flak, kamikaze and Blighty, “dronation” is a word born out of conflict. It became part of the vernacular last year when the Armed Forces of Ukraine took the extraordinary decision to launch a national appeal for the civilian population to hand over their hobby drones as well as crowdfunding the purchase of new ones.

Russia has reportedly conducted a similar campaign since, revealing just how desperate both warring sides are to acquire large numbers of the off-the-shelf gadgets.

The motivation for this astonishing ploy becomes clearer once you examine the major impact these devices are having on the battlefield.

They've boosted situational awareness to levels that were unimaginable a few years ago, added battle-winning lethality to both artillery and infantry capability and have been adapted to become disposable yet highly effective weapon systems in their own right.

Their pervasive presence has rendered certain traditional military tactics almost useless. And it has left defence chiefs around the world scratching their heads as they have realised some of their doctrine and TTPs developed over many years, and at great cost, have been left floundering in the wake of a small plastic quadcopter.

“Every army you speak to – and I speak to lots of them in my role – says exploiting and countering uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) is now its main development focus,” says Maj Steve Watts (Rifles) from the Combat Manoeuvre Centre.

“To say small drones have changed the way we operate would be a massive understatement.”

Large and expensive UAS designed to do a specific job from high altitude, such as Predator and Watchkeeper, have been around for decades. But the adaptation of their handheld, battery-powered cousins for a growing range of battlefield tasks is a relatively recent phenomenon.

They first came to prominence in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia in 2020. The conflict in Ukraine moved things on again, witnessing small devices being deployed so effectively their presence dictated how troops fought in the so-called near surface (generally considered the bottom of a trench to the highest point infantry ammunition can reach).

Maj Watts is one of a small team in Warminster who have spent the past couple of years tracking innovations in the use of such drones in conflict to inform the British Army how it should be exploiting them. One of their recent tasks was to develop training packages that troops throughout the Service could use to quickly become proficient and savvy operators of these increasingly important assets. »

“

The way
soldiers operate
must change
- no longer
can they fight
a battle in 2D,
they have to
think in 3D

”



» "We reviewed who should be using UAS in the Army," the officer explains. "It used to be reserved as a specialist role, and it still is for the larger platforms such as Watchkeeper and for 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery with their sophisticated Puma system."

"But the Field Army will soon be widely distributing, down to section level, what we classify as S1 UAS – those below 25kg in weight, which includes models like the Parrot Anafi."

"That means you're going to have drones of different sizes and capabilities operated by sections, platoons, companies, battlegroups and divisions."

"As a result, the way personnel operate must change – no longer can they fight a battle in 2D, they have to think in 3D."

Those at the Combat Manoeuvre Centre have been absorbing lessons learnt in Ukraine as well as feedback from training packages and operations from units across the whole of the UK Armed Forces.

"We are now in a good place to establish our tactical doctrine, SOPs and TTPs for non-specialist personnel using small drones," says Maj Watts.

The team's work has informed the British Army's first ever official UAS strategy, which is due to be published soon and prescribes exactly how soldiers in different roles should train for and operate these aerial assets.

"Overall, I think the Service has done a great job in staying abreast of developments and is being very proactive with regard to setting up training packages and assessing the latest kit," the officer adds. "It has really picked up the pace in calculating these platforms' potential and how best to counter them."

"In 12 months' time there will hardly be a person in the Army who's not been touched by our expanded UAS capability in some way."

To date, small drones have predominantly been used for Istar and command and control, but other functions continue to be evaluated.

"We're looking at where we can adapt and employ this kit and I've been talking to the Royal Engineers, for instance, about potentially using them for route clearance and checking vulnerable points," explains the officer. "Some



small UAS can now be fitted with sensors for subterranean scanning, so they can detect mines and IEDs planted below ground. That's a game changer in terms of reducing risk to personnel.

"They can also be used as loitering munitions, of course, and we're looking at anti-drone versions that kill other similar platforms."

The mass deployment of UAS by the British Army will almost certainly be mirrored by potential adversaries and that means troops will need to learn about the persistent threats they can pose as well as the advantages they offer.

The danger from hostile platforms has also sparked a reassessment of certain traditional practices and the incorporation of fresh drills, some of which will be covered in the new strategy document.

"The changes and lessons that virtually all soldiers in combat and support arms will have to take on board over the next year or two regarding using drones and how to counter them will be extensive," says Maj Watts.

Below are the four main areas where the push to build a cutting-edge small UAS capability throughout the Field Army will be most keenly felt:

NEW TRAINING

The Combat Manoeuvre Centre is the British Army's training delivery authority for UAS, providing doctrine and advice. According to Maj Watts, one of its most important achievements to date is a redesign of the Service's UAS training syllabus.

"Before, this was a technical course that taught you to take off, land and fly around safely, but now the focus is firmly on tactical employment," he explains. "And it's been specifically reworked so we can rapidly increase the number of operators throughout the Army."

In the not-too-distant future all training schools providing tactical courses will deliver this module to qualify junior NCOs as system commanders who can then train colleagues as UAS operators back in their units.

"The Infantry Battle School already has this package in place on its infantry instructor training course and it's a template we want to spread across the Field Army," continues Maj Watts.

"I recently talked to the Royal School of Military Engineering about how to integrate it for their students and I'm due to assist the School of Infantry very soon, while the Royal Armoured Corps Training Regiment have already said they will introduce it imminently."

An introduction to the tactical use of drones and the countermeasures used to negate them will also be included in basic training at locations such as Pirbright.

In addition, the Combat Manoeuvre Centre now has an Army Knowledge Exchange page full of training material

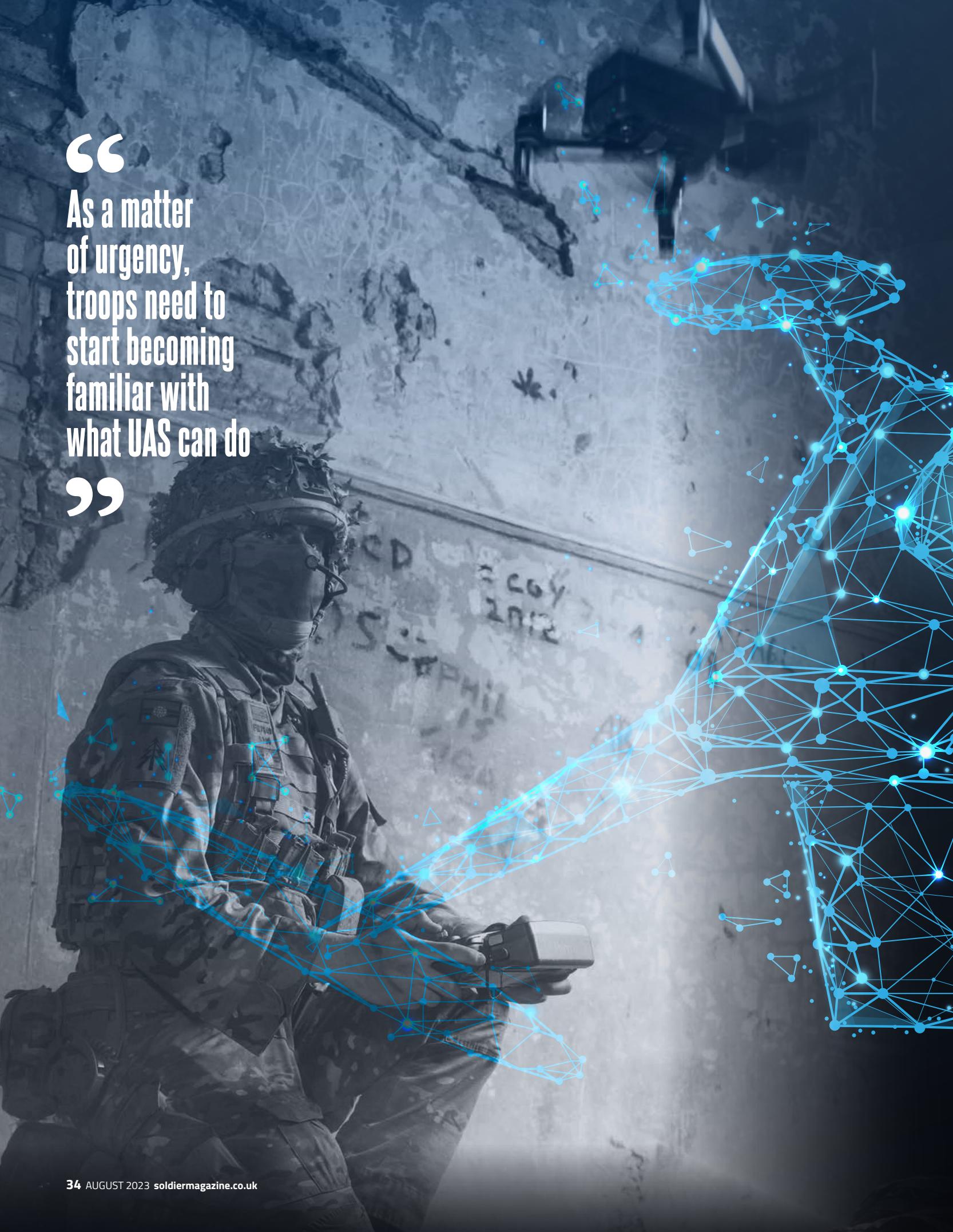


Maj Steve Watts, Rifles

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As a matter of urgency, troops need to start becoming familiar with what UAS can do

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» specifically for operating UAS that personnel can easily access via Defence Gateway.

"I would recommend everyone in the Field Army reads it," says Maj Watts. "Even if you're a military police detachment protecting a crossing point, an aerial system could provide a large outer cordon, for example, by patrolling a designated route without risking personnel."

"Or if you're a logistician doing resupply these platforms can provide flank protection and route clearance."

"As a matter of urgency, troops need to start becoming familiar with what UAS can do and gain a greater appreciation of the threats and opportunities."

TACTICS REVISED

The conflict in Ukraine has shone a light on the valuable roles these small, cheap gadgets can play in combat situations. As a result, their influence on SOPs and tactics will be felt in every sector of the Field Army.

"When you use small UAS to provide a sensor-to-shooter link – as they have in Ukraine – what you get is the ability to very quickly find the enemy at short range and provide information to someone who can kill that system," explains Maj Watts.

"That changes everything because now it becomes a race to find the opponent and kill them before they kill you."

The fall-out from that, says the officer, is the need for the British Army to operate in a much more dispersed way to reduce the effectiveness of enemy drones.

The days of doing large logistic moves and setting up dedicated areas in clearings to park combat support vehicles and a headquarters tent are well and truly over.

"Dispersal is more important than ever," he adds. "You can't afford to have a large visual footprint and in an urban environment or port area HQs will need to be set up in covert locations such as garages, Iso containers or warehouses."

"Camouflage is more important than ever and that becomes very taxing when you consider both individual and unit-level concealment. For example, hiding main battle tanks from the air is a huge challenge."

"The problem has always existed, but in years gone by it



was more straightforward because you'd have large UAS or surveillance aircraft flying over at a fair speed and scanning a large area using its sensors, probably for strategic targeting.

"Now at a tactical level you have unit on unit, conducting find-and-strike missions with their own integral aerial kit."

"In the future we'll also see each of our tanks with its own UAS in order to locate enemy assets and that applies to other capabilities on the battlefield, too, such as mortar teams."

"This equipment has turned battlefield conflict into a deadly game of cat and mouse."

TRADITIONAL METHODS REVIEWED

UAS have changed the way armies traditionally do some of their business, including practices that have been around for many decades.

"We are having to rethink the long-established ways we do defence, for example," explains Maj Watts.

"Digging trenches in interlocking arcs in open areas on a reverse slope to engage an advancing enemy is no longer viable because you'd be extremely vulnerable to being spotted by drones directly linked to artillery, mortar or air assets."

"Also, posting sentries is as old as the concept of an army itself, but in Ukraine there are now areas secured with no sentries at all because patrolling drones have taken over the role. They cover more ground, their sensors can detect a wide range of threats, day and night, and they also reduce the risk to personnel."

"All doctrine regarding these procedures is being reviewed and it's a direct result of the many innovations and emerging threats from UAS that we are now witnessing in places such as Ukraine."

OLD SKILLS REGENERATED

The proliferation of small drones in the battlespace is reinvigorating some almost-lost arts of warfare, too.

"Because of these platforms and the sensors or weapons they can carry, the things that possibly weren't vital to most combat troops a few short years ago now are," says Maj Watts. "These include camouflage, concealment, deception, energy management and the threat from electronic warfare. These are all really high priorities."

"Deception, for example, has been a part of general military practice in the past but it has not been used as much at the tactical level as we need to be doing now due to the direct threat from small UAS," he adds.

"For security reasons I obviously can't reveal what our tactics would include, but the aim is to not just make the enemy think you're somewhere you're not, but to make them unmask their weapons for a strike so they reveal their positions and you can kill them."

Other skills that have been identified as requiring a dust-off include counter-UAS techniques such as firing a GPMG mounted on a larch pole, a skill the Army let fade years ago.

"We virtually stopped doing all-arms air defence in general, but we now know it's a discipline we must very quickly revive," admits the officer. ■



GIVE YOUR URBAN SKILLS A LEG-UP

Streetcraft has
never been
more important
to a soldier's
survival...



RBAN warfare has been part of the individual training requirement (ITR) for all British soldiers in combat roles for some months now – and it doesn't take a genius to work out why.

Ukraine may be a vast country, but it has been the relatively small areas of land covered by its cities that have characterised the war there so far.

With battles in Kyiv, Mariupol, Kherson and Bakhmut filling our TV screens, professional soldiers from across the world will have concluded – if they didn't know it already – that this type of conflict is here to stay.

As a result, it is not just combat personnel included in the British Army's push on urban skills. Back in April this magazine reported how combat support and combat service support units will also be required to provide the training from March 2024.

The challenges amid buildings, rubble and poor comms are many. So *Soldier* decided to take a closer look at what sort of thing the ITR syllabus entails.

It covers an array of topics, from movement in the urban environment (see overleaf) to camouflage and concealment, fire control and target indication, house clearing, building defence, doorway entry, rifle carriage, clearing stairs, use of ladders and NLAW.

CSgt Chris Smith (Lancs, shown below), a senior instructor in the Infantry Battle School's lethality wing, said some drills may be new to non-combat roles.

"Certain methods must be used when moving through built-up environments," he said. "And failure to apply these leaves soldiers exposed."

The senior Serviceman has therefore put together an urban tactics pamphlet as a handy reference for instructors delivering the lessons back at unit.

Urban Tactics Syllabus: Battle Lessons and Exercises can be accessed by anyone in uniform on the electronic Battle Box or Army Knowledge Exchange.

"It is predominantly aimed at instructors, but I would encourage all personnel to take a look, particularly with the ITR in mind," he added.

"Soldiers should speak to their chain of command if they think they need more training or would like to attend the urban operations instructors' course."

Maj Shaun Clarke, head of the Urban Operations Centre in Warminster, said the handbook was "only the beginning". "All arms need urban-specific tactics and we expect to develop combined arms lessons over the next year," he added.

Here is a flavour of what the ITR package has to offer...



MOVEMENT THROUGH THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

WALLS

Movement across walls should be covered by fire and only conducted if the other side is clear. When moving, roll over the wall quickly, keeping a low silhouette. This will deny the enemy a target. But it requires practice.

CORNERS

The area around a corner should be observed before moving into it. A common mistake is to allow a personal weapon to stick out, signposting your position.

WINDOWS

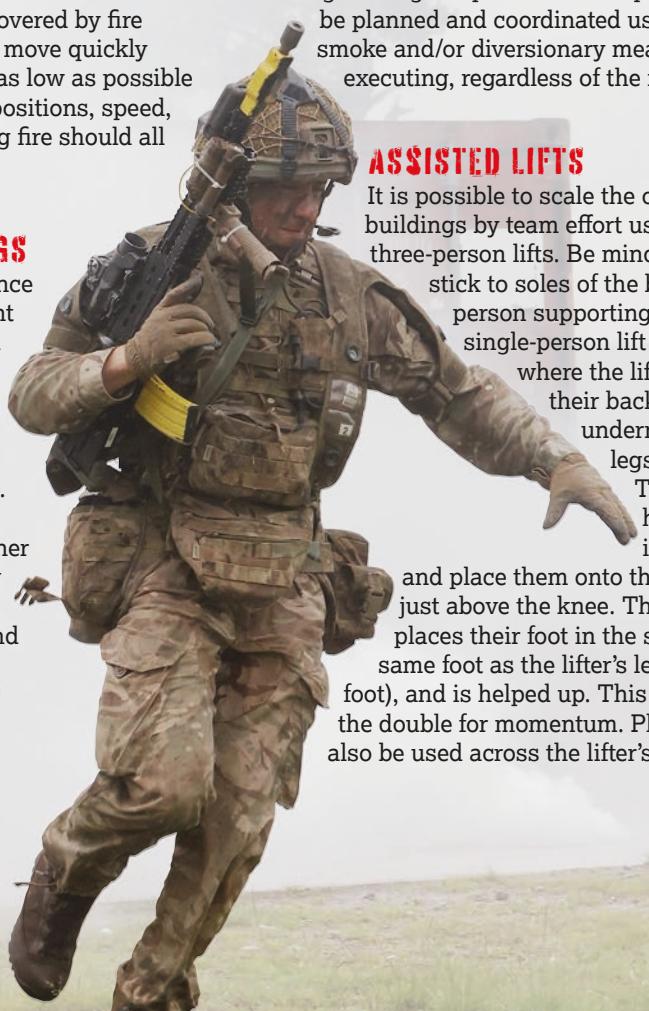
Passing windows presents hazards; the most common being exposure of your head. Stay below window level if possible. Look out for basement windows too, and either avoid them or step or jump past.

DOORWAYS

Avoid these if possible. They may be covered by fire or booby-trapped. If you must use one, move quickly through to your next position, staying as low as possible to avoid silhouetting. Pre-selection of positions, speed, a low silhouette and the use of covering fire should all be employed.

MOVING PARALLEL TO BUILDINGS

Troops will not always be able to advance on the inside of buildings, so movement outside may be necessary. This should be concealed and covered by smoke and covering fire. Soldiers should “hug” the side of the building, stay in the shadow, present a low silhouette, and move rapidly to their next position. If an enemy inside the building fires, they expose themselves to attack from other fire-team and section members. Enemy further away or to a flank should be engaged by flank sub-units or direct and indirect fire support.



CROSSING OPEN AREAS

These types of places, including streets and alleys, cannot be avoided. They are natural killing areas, but can be crossed safely with:

1 Preparation. Before moving, select the next well-covered position and the route which offers best concealment and speed.

2 Least exposure. Use the shortest route, covered by smoke from hand grenades to conceal movement – the cover provided by walls should be exploited for as long as possible.

3 Direct covering fire support.

SCALING OBSTACLES

Ladders, assisted lifts, drainpipes, vines, helicopters, or the roofs and windows of adjoining buildings may be used to reach the top of a building. In some cases, one soldier can climb onto the shoulders of another and reach high enough to pull themselves up. All actions must be planned and coordinated using covering fire, smoke and/or diversionary measures before executing, regardless of the method used.

ASSISTED LIFTS

It is possible to scale the outside of buildings by team effort using two- or three-person lifts. Be mindful that glass can stick to soles of the boots and cut the person supporting. The simplest single-person lift is the stirrup lift where the lifter stands with their back against the wall underneath with their legs slightly bent. They cup their hands – but not interlock fingers – and place them onto the supporting leg, just above the knee. The entry person places their foot in the stirrup, using the same foot as the lifter's leg (left leg, left foot), and is helped up. This can be done at the double for momentum. Planks of wood can also be used across the lifter's legs to assist. ■



“
I would encourage all personnel to take a look through, particularly with the ITR in mind

”



Want to know more?

The urban tactics pamphlet – *Urban Tactics Syllabus: Battle Lessons and Exercises* – can be viewed on the Battle Box or Army Knowledge Exchange. The urban operations instructors' course is open to all arms – from lance corporal to captain – and is three weeks long



ABF THE SOLDIERS' CHARITY: CATERAN YOMP GOLD DISTINCTION AWARDS 2023

**This year, ABF The Soldiers' Charity introduced the
GOLD DISTINCTION AWARD to the annual Cateran Yomp.**

Exclusive to the Army, the Gold Distinction Award challenges teams of four or more, to start together, battle through 54 miles of Scottish wilderness, and finish together, all within 24 hours.

The award showcases the values of the modern British Army: preparation, training, camaraderie, team-work, and resilience. It's only those teams that work together, across the route, who are able to start and finish together.

ARMY vs THE CATERAN YOMP 2023

We challenged the Army to take on the Yomp, walk to gold, and finish as a team – and the Army rose to the challenge! Here are the stats:

**220 walkers (23 teams), left the start line with the intention of achieving Gold Distinction
56 walkers (10 teams) had what it took to receive Gold Distinction!**

ABF The Soldiers' Charity is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146420) and Scotland (SC039189) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (07974609).



Congratulations to all of the successful teams, particularly 1 Rifles for receiving the first event CATERAN YOMP GOLD DISTINCTION

1 Rifles

5 Regt AAC, 655 (Scottish Horse) Squadron

11 EOD&S Regt RLC, 721 Squadron, CSAT

13 Signal Regiment

42 Regiment Royal Engineers

47 Regiment Royal Artillery

254 Signal Squadron (SGS)

Cadet Training Centre Frimley Park

Gurkha ARRC Support Battalion

E Squadron, The Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry

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PALS FOR LIFE?

Why the Army
wants you to
think about your
“social fitness”



IF ADVERSITY forges the strongest friendships, then soldiers must be onto a winner. Few other walks of life can replicate the bonds fostered while standing shoulder to shoulder through initial training, tough exercises and combat operations – so much so that the Army based an entire recruitment campaign on that sense of belonging.

But camaraderie doesn't happen automatically, especially with single living accommodation and text messaging reducing the time that troops spend interacting.

That's why Service chiefs have recently launched a campaign encouraging all personnel to work on what they are calling "positive social fitness" – in other words, nurturing personal relationships and getting to



know colleagues better.

LCpl Keaton Peppiatt (RHG/D) is in no doubt how important peer support can be.

The 25-year-old (pictured below) now has nine years in The Household Cavalry under his belt, but admits things would have been very different if his mates from phase one training hadn't talked him out of quitting military life.

"Three times I had written my letter to the commanding officer and three times I ripped it up," he explains.

"There were multiple reasons why I wanted to leave. I was young and missing home, and felt like I didn't fit in with the others because we all came from very different backgrounds.

"I spoke to my 'battle buddy' – they're basically your pal while you're at Harrogate.

"You sleep opposite them and bash-up with them on exercise.

"Even though I was adamant, he and my corporal both encouraged me to set the letters aside and give it some time, as well as asking me what I would do instead if I did leave."

Almost a decade on from those difficult early days, LCpl Peppiatt is set on a full career in the Army – and now finds himself having similar talks with recruits he teaches at Combermere Barracks training wing.

"When they say they want to transfer or sign off, I ask them exactly the same



questions," he continues. "Where will they live, how will they afford rent and so on.

"I point out if they stay, they will have friends who will support them and pick them up if they are struggling."

The junior NCO also draws on his own experiences to help young troopers develop socially and fulfil their potential.

"I was quite shy and kept myself to myself, but certain people helped me come out of my shell and become more self-confident," he recalls.

"I've seen it in the trainees too – they start off introverted but once we've pushed them out of their comfort zones a bit, suddenly they're the gobbiest people ever.

"That's what this is all about – getting them to show us their true colours. Being able to talk and express your feelings is so important in a high-intensity job like the Army.

"Soldiers need that release – if you



THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP...

SGT KALVIN NEAL, R YORKS

“You can be in a room full of people and still be lonely if you feel you don't belong. That could be Service leavers moving to a civilian workplace where they don't fit in – or it could be someone coming into training or moving between units. It's that sense of feeling like you're not involved in the conversation.

“One of the things that grates on me in the Army is people just calling each other by their last names. There's a time and a place of course but it's very impersonal. Being a good leader is knowing your people. How can you know someone properly if you don't know their first name?



Pictures: Sgt Robert Weideman and Cpl Dekt Taylor, both RLC; Peter Davies; LCpl Kat Dixon, RWxY; Graeme Main

» have friends to chat to after work or go for a beer with, it means your stress starts to come down and you will be more relaxed and inclined to do well in your role.”

Combatting isolation

The link between friendship and good mental health is well documented. Studies have shown that social isolation increases the likelihood of developing anxiety and depression.

But according to comedian and writer Max Dickins, society may be heading in the wrong direction on this front.

The author, whose book *Billy No Mates* charted his efforts to make more friends (see panel), points out that wealthy Western countries in particular are becoming more individualistic.

“There has been an ideological or cultural shift, which has started to see privacy as the ultimate luxury good,” he told *Soldier*.

“A successful person owns a big house. They have a lot of private space. And inside their private space they spend a lot of money on consumer goods to spend their leisure time alone or in the company of fewer people.

“You can be very comfortable and lonely with a huge flat screen telly watching Netflix all day.

“It is the opposite to what we had in the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s, when there was much more of a communal mindset, embedded in communities.”

THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP...

TPR OLIVIA SELLERS, LG

“I think quality is more important than quantity when it comes to friends. You might barely see each other but if you’re there for each other when it matters, that’s all you really need.

If you both want a friendship to carry on through hard times, it’s going to work.

You need friends at work and outside it, so I make an effort to keep in touch with mates at home as well, although a few have dropped off.

I think you mature a lot quicker in the Army and you notice the difference when you go back and see them.”

THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP...

CPL FRASER HILLS, RRF

“As a Reservist I notice a different dynamic of friendship between my Army and civilian friends. In the military, if something happens the lads tend to group round more.

I think it’s because you’ve gone through training and the crapper times together, learnt to work on close-knit teams and to look out for each other.

If someone has one too many drinks on a night out, the others will carry him home. That doesn’t necessarily happen on civvy street.”



In the Army, the shift towards single living and pay-as-you-dine, both of which cut down on the amount of time troops spend in each other’s company, would seem to mirror this societal trend – which is sometimes to the detriment of well-being.

Aside from the Service-wide social fitness campaign, it is an issue that units have been grappling with at a local level for some time.

At The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, communal spaces were kitted out with the likes of pool tables, TVs and coffee machines to promote mixing, and recently the formation launched an app – *Fusiliers Connect* – aimed at bringing its

serving and veteran cohorts together.

Welfare officer Capt Dave Barton (RRF) says it is hard to pinpoint why personnel tend to withdraw from socialising, but believes that smartphones and pandemic lockdowns have contributed.

“Young soldiers are now more content to sit in their rooms at night because in single living accommodation they can lock themselves away,” he explains.

“And that’s been compounded by Covid because people were forced to do that anyway.

“It’s not just a problem in the Army – it is normal now to chat via text instead of having those face-to-face contacts.

“Four-man rooms weren’t great for privacy but at least if you or someone else had a problem, people were more likely to overhear and could talk to you about it.

“That’s partly what we are trying to help change, but there’s always more we can do.”

In his previous role as regimental sergeant major, Capt Barton says he also became aware of the number of personnel who stay on camp at the weekends and during block leave.

“We produced a spreadsheet of those staying behind at Christmas,” he says.

“I always associated holidays with being happy times that you go and spend with family, but not everyone has that.

“And it wasn’t just the foreign and Commonwealth personnel, who live far from home.

“We see more staying now at



weekends too, especially those who live in the north because of the distances involved and the cost of petrol.”

For Reservist – and newly appointed Lord Mayor of Hull – Sgt Kalvin Neal, the social fitness campaign is a timely reminder that everyone can do their bit to reach out to friends and colleagues during times of separation.

Having served with 4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment for the best part of 40 years, the 58-year-old tells *Soldier* he has always felt more at home in military circles than civilian, even if he sees his Army comrades less.

“Things such as this are needed to try and get people to open up and talk more,” he says of the initiative.

“It could help if you have that thought process that you need to contact each other on leave.

“You could even have a round-robin system where I ring Tom, Tom rings Lee, Lee rings Phil and so on.

“It’s easy enough to do and it’s about checking whether people are okay and them having a net to fall into if something is amiss.”

For Regulars and Reservists, new recruits to veterans – in barracks or at home – the sense of someone having your back through thick and thin is a powerful one.

And whether you call it “positive social fitness” or just being a good mate – in an organisation that thrives on teamwork, it’s what keeps the wheels turning. ■

5 WAYS TO MAKE MORE MATES

Author Max Dickins (pictured below right) realised his social circle needed an overhaul when he got engaged and couldn’t think of anyone to be his best man – as described in his book, *Billy No Mates. Soldier* asked him about the practical steps Servicemen and women can take to improve their friendships...



1 Be the Sherpa in your social network.

A mate of mine has loads of friends and when I asked him his secret he said, “if I didn’t organise everything, we’d never see each other.” So be that person – arrange the meet-ups, text your friends. Often people are waiting for someone else to take leadership.

2 Think about where friendships happen. Generally, we make friends when we spend time with people who are similar to us. The Army is clearly one of those spaces, but what do you have outside of that? I joined a CrossFit gym and have made friends accidentally without even trying. It makes it less artificial and intimidating.

3 Expand your chat. Humour is very much part of life in the Army, and that can be its own form of intimacy. But do you have angles that can take the conversation somewhere more personal? Revealing something about yourself so that someone sees you in all your dimensions turns a superficial friendship into something deeper.

4 Remember, you’re not alone in loneliness. It can feel quite scary to admit that you don’t have the social life you want. But a huge number of people are in that position. It shouldn’t be embarrassing. Like mental and physical health we can build habits that make good social health more likely.

5 Appreciate what you have in the moment. It’s fantastic to have the sort of friends you have in the Army because you have a shared purpose that is hard to recreate in the civilian world.

Sometimes friendships become thinner as you get older. Ask yourself how you are going to fill that space. Find something that energises you and you’ll meet friends on the journey.



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‘OUR NEXT CAMPAIGN IS CRUCIAL’

Why is recruitment such a struggle for the Army at the moment?

It is challenging – as it is for most Western militaries and across the public sectors – and 2022/23 was the first time in four years that we didn't hit our Regular targets. There are several reasons. One was an outage of the recruiting IT system for a significant chunk of the recruiting year. It inevitably occurred at the most inconvenient time in March 2022 just as applications had spiked in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But more broadly we've had to deal with the continuation of a very long-term trend of reducing numbers of applications. Demographics is a factor, as the traditional cohort from where we recruit is getting smaller. The jobs market is also very buoyant, with record low unemployment and a lot of private sector positions vacant. On top of that there has definitely

been a societal shift as a result of the pandemic, where people's expectations of work and desire for travel and adventure are different. We don't know yet whether this is a temporary blip and things will bounce back, or if it's a new normal.

How worried are you about the general picture?

I feel positive that we can improve our recruitment numbers. First, despite what I've just mentioned, there's still a huge amount of interest in joining the Army. It's not like applications have fallen off a cliff – they are just below where we need them to be. Also, we are not outliers. Many of our friends are in a similar position and we're doing a lot of work with our sister Services across the UK and our Nato allies to work out what we can do better, how we might operate



differently and communicate more effectively as society changes.

So what are your immediate plans for tackling the problem?

We need to increase the number of applications and convert a greater percentage of those applications into recruits who start basic training. The heart of the problem, our research shows, is around half the people in our target demographic groups don't know the British Army is recruiting. A lot of the news is about the Service being made smaller,

Soldier grills Maj Gen Thomas Bewick, head of Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command, about faltering figures and the way forward

Pictures: Graeme Main, WO1 Rupert Frere, RLC

Interview: Steven Muncey



» the process of joining easier to stop people dropping out during the application period. For many people joining the Army is a massive step into the unknown and while most sail through relatively easily, for some it can be quite difficult – it's not like many other jobs. We've got some very high standards, especially on the medical side, and getting the scrutiny done requires help from busy GPs and perseverance on behalf of candidates. So we're doing a lot of work to make it a more streamlined journey which is mostly about re-engineering the system to make it work better from the candidate's perspective.

Do you think people have been put off joining by court cases involving veterans and their actions decades ago?

I don't think it's the biggest factor for the mostly young people who might want to join the Army, but where those cases may have had an effect is on their gatekeepers – people whose opinion they respect or who guide their choices and are influenced by any negative media. I think especially of the family member or friend who was in the military and is a positive role model. We need to reach them and keep our serving soldiers and veterans positive about the Army.

Others say that recruiting is struggling because the Army doesn't have as many interesting postings abroad as it used to. Do you agree?

No. For a start, we have literally thousands of soldiers based in exciting places around the world on any given

day – the opportunities for travel, adventure, excitement and something vastly different to most jobs are all still there. I think your question can be appreciated by someone my age who has seen the Army change over the years, but it's far less of a factor for the cohort who are joining today. It might, like the bad press we discussed earlier, influence gatekeepers a bit but that said, I don't believe it's even a major factor for rejoinders due to where they often are in their lives. We're doing a lot of work in that area too – we have more than 1,000 people in the Army who have returned after leaving and we want to attract more ex-Service personnel by making the whole process more enticing. That applies to everything from advertising vacant jobs more effectively to making the admin process a lot more user-friendly.

What's the problem with it at the moment?

It can be a very clunky system for what, at the extremes, can be a complex process. But for the vast majority it should be relatively simple. You have a whole range of applicants, from those who want to go back to the same unit in the same region, to those who want to go somewhere different or those who want to re-role into something completely new. So we are developing a new system with the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow that allows us to quickly establish where the vacancies are and what the specific training pathway is for rejoinders to fill them. Obviously, if you were a private and are returning in a similar role then it's a relatively simple process. But if you're rejoining as an NCO or an officer and



changing roles it can be more complicated.

Are some of the previous marketing campaigns to blame for sluggish recruitment?

Our adverts now, just like previous campaigns, are not designed to appeal primarily to either the serving or veteran communities, or even those highly likely to join anyway. They are, broadly speaking, aimed at those who might want to join the Army. That said, for the next campaign we are determined to ensure all our adverts are credible to the serving and veteran community because they are the ones who are most influential and will be able to amplify the message we're putting out. I'm certainly not going to criticise what's gone before. They were produced for very good reasons. The

next campaign is going to look great to those who already want to join, our "core intenders", but its primary role is to reach out beyond that cohort to the people who are considering joining – and also influence the gatekeepers, which as I said is so important to the recruitment picture. Also, we don't want people who are not very familiar with the Army to think of it as only combat arms. People join for different reasons, many to learn technical skills or to help people. There are more than 200 different roles and we need good people for all of them if we're going to sustain a full-strength British Army.

You want serving soldiers to help with recruitment but how will that work in practice?

Regular and Reserve soldiers can talk to mates when they're

at home or back on leave and the Army will continue to make itself visible and approachable at major events around the country, which allows units to engage with the public directly (see panel). A significant surge will happen over this summer and beyond at venues where lots of potential recruits gather. As mentioned, serving personnel can also sponsor candidates to join through the recruit bounty scheme.

Can you tell us anything about the next Army recruitment campaign?

Not much at the moment, but its slogan is “You Belong Here” and it will be launched next month. It’s also important I am including the Reserve in this conversation. It is one Army and we are recruiting for both. Both have ground to make and many of the things that attract people to join the Regulars also attract Reservists – they are just choosing to serve in a different way.



One reason mooted for low Reservist numbers is the training demands placed on them...

We are working on that by developing several different training options in order to fit around Reservists’ day jobs. At one end of the spectrum we have the chance to go from zero to hero as quickly as possible. That’s why this month, we’re staging a summer challenge trial, a three-week consolidated basic training course that allows Reservists who have got the time to smash all their basic training in one period. Demand is high – we filled the maximum 36 places we had straight away and we will expand the concept next summer if the trial is a success.

What if troops don't have enough time for that?

At the other end of the spectrum, there are many Reservists whose work and family commitments mean



they have to spread out their training over weekends and holidays, so we have a pathway that covers that. We’ll develop them at Reserve centres and local training units and then bring them together for a consolidated package. In between we’ll have a range of training to meet the needs of individuals depending on what their time commitment allows them to do. The aspiration is that as much training as possible will take place locally so the individuals can build friendships, develop the habits of travelling in and turning up at Army Reserve Centres, and build a sense of

belonging and camaraderie.

How many prescribed options will Reservists have?

We’re looking at five but we’re still working through the details. The work will be completed by the end of the summer.

Anything else you would like to say to soldiers?

Yes. I would like to thank the Army’s whole force for the role they have played – and will continue to play – to support recruitment across the Service. ■

Engage to Recruit events in 2023

Date	Location	Event
6 Aug	Headingly, Leeds	Rhinos ABF Fixture APDT
12-13 Aug	Blackpool	Blackpool Air Show
16-21 Aug	Farnborough	British Motor Show
17-20 Aug	Eastbourne	Eastbourne Airbourne
25-27 Aug	Laverstoke	CarFest
30 Aug – 3 Sep	Bournemouth	Bournemouth Air Festival
8-10 Sep	NEC Birmingham	INSOMNIA 71
8-9 Sep	Ayr, Scotland	Scottish Air Show
26-27 Sep	Bristol	National Apprentice Show
7-8 Nov	NEC Birmingham	National School Leaver Festival
14-15 Nov	Ascot	National School Leaver Festival
21-22 Nov	Newcastle	National Apprentice Show
23-24 Nov	Liverpool	National School Leaver Festival

ARMY WHITE FLEET CHANGES

Book your car
as early as possible

The Army is spending significant amounts of money on avoidable vehicle rentals while failing to fully utilise its lease vehicles. A transformation programme is underway targeting poor utilisation. To be successful we require a change in personnel behaviours. Do you know...

PRINCIPLES

This optimisation will be supported by adhering to the following principles:

- Units are vehicle custodians, not owners
- All transport requests must be conducted via Clarity FMIS
- Transport requests must adhere to required planning timelines

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT

- Book your car as early as possible to enable better planning by the MT teams
- Return your vehicle on time
- Return it with a full tank of fuel
- And make sure you return your vehicle to a nominated individual

FLEET AVAILABILITY

- You may have to collect an Army lease car from a nearby unit for your booking
- Lease vehicles will always be used before a vehicle is hired
- The White fleet optimisation programme has been designed to benefit the end user experience
- Operational needs of the Army will always be supported



The Army has launched a new management system to provide a better user experience and ensure we increase use of our lease fleet. Further information can be found in the new ACSO 4423 using the following QR code.





3 Para troops come under fire from the Taliban near Kajaki in 2008

'Why do past deeds go unrecognised?'

AT PRESENT there seems to be no system to reassess incidents where individuals on operations have been overlooked for gallantry awards.

As a young soldier on Op Herrick I witnessed a guardsman carry a mortally wounded colleague more than 400 metres while under constant fire from the Taliban and with no cover.

He never sought recognition for what he did but his actions are well known within my unit. I consider him the bravest man I have ever had the pleasure to work with.

However, he was never put forward by our chain of command for any form of gallantry award. Yet during the same action a soldier, who was attached to our platoon, carried the same casualty the last 200 metres to the patrol base and was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross after being nominated by his own unit's senior officers.

I raised this with my commanders recently to which I was told the Army will not look at awarding people gallantry medals for past actions. Can you confirm this is the policy and, if so, why? — **Name and address supplied**

Maj Joshua Moyle from the Personnel Directorate at Army Headquarters replies: The policy for awarding gallantry medals is tri-Service so the Army does not have the authority to issue these decorations by itself.

The policy is contained in **JSP 761**, which states that medals will only be considered for actions that have occurred relatively recently.

Generally, the Armed Forces operational awards committee (AFOAC) will not consider citations for actions more than a year

before, unless there are particular circumstances such as new information that was not immediately available to the initiating officer.

However, this is limited to a maximum of five years after the event.

Citations need to be initiated as soon as possible after the act of gallantry so that the initiating officer can verify all aspects of the action while everyone involved is still present and events are fresh in their minds.

Due to the nature of the battlefield, incidents are sometimes only witnessed by a few people. Thus, anyone can draw the attention of their commander to acts of gallantry.

The very essence of the citation system is that all those involved should be well versed with the events described, so that fair comparisons can be made by the AFOAC in the process of selection for awards.

Even a short time after the incident, this process can become challenging thanks to perceptions and memories changing, making these judgements more problematic than they could be.

While I realise that this will not provide a resolution in your particular case, I hope that it at least explains the rationale for the policy.

“
He never sought credit for what he did
”

YOUR letters provide valuable insight but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (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 in, you should first try to get an answer via your chain of command.

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or WhatsApp us on
07973 614782

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THEN WHY NOT GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST?

✉ mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk
Or you can WhatsApp us on
07973 614782

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



COMPETITIONS

JUNE 2023

HOAY winners (Anita Active sports bra): Steve Osborne, Wiltshire; Jennifer Buck, Ripon; Malcolm Hawkins, Edinburgh

RULES: Winners chosen at random from all valid entries. Except where stated otherwise, competitions are open to readers aged 16 or over only. We have no responsibility for incorrect, incomplete, lost or delayed entries. Any winner will be bound by the terms and conditions attached to a prize. Where we are unable to contact a winner within one month, or any prize cannot be taken up or is declined or returned undelivered, a substitute winner may be drawn. At that point, the original winner shall cease to be eligible. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. *Soldier* is compliant with the Data Protection Act. We will not pass on your details to any third party without your prior consent. Automated entries, bulk entries or third-party entries will be disqualified. Competitions are not open to *Soldier* employees, competition sponsors or anyone else connected with the competition, or the immediate families or agents of the foregoing. We have the right to verify the eligibility and identity of any entrant. Prize winners acknowledge and agree that neither *Soldier* or any competition sponsor(s) or any of their employees, agents or subcontractors shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the winner's use and/or possession of the prize.



SEARCHLINE

Calling all Staffords! Did you serve, or know anyone who served, in the 1944 Normandy campaign with the North or South Staffords, 59th (Staffordshire) Division? August 2024 will mark the 80th anniversary of their finest hour, the first successful crossing of the River Orne, which will be commemorated in France. Contact Peter Collins on 01543 434394 or curator@staffordshireregimentmuseum.com for more details.



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-0mailbox@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-0mailbox@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 forcespensionsociety.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 though 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-0mailbox@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-0mailbox@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
togetherall.com

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE
Aurora New Dawn

Safety for survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence, 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

Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies, The Wessex Regiment 76th post-war reunion lunch will be held on Saturday, September 23 at the Winchester Royal Hotel in Hampshire. For more information – or to attend the event – contact Jim Cooper on 0239 2816 165 or email rhwsxtar@yahoo.com

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

No. 975



WIN

...a £100 car care bundle

TEN details have been changed in this picture of soldiers from 5th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland on parade in Edinburgh last month.

The proud personnel from Balaklava Company were included in a tri-Service guard of honour at the presentation of the Honours of Scotland to the King and Queen at St Giles' Cathedral (page 15).

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 975, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by August 31.

A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to

comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date will win a £100 cleaning bundle courtesy of Armor All – the number one car care brand in the USA.

Including a range of cloths, wheel brushes, wipes, sprays and foams, this comprehensive set should be enough to make even the grubbiest of cars ready for that summer trip.

To find out more about the impressive Armor All range – or to purchase one of their high quality and easy to use items – visit your local Halfords store (where Defence Discount Card savings are also available) or else log on to halfords.com

The winners' names will appear in the October issue and all the usual competition rules apply (see opposite page).

Good luck!





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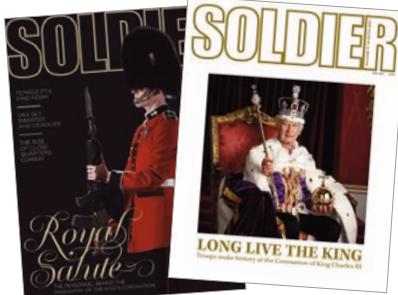


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RECRUIT BOUNTY SCHEME

Are you a serving Army soldier?

The Army is offering £500 to any serving soldier or officer who encourages (sponsors) someone to join the Army as a Regular or Reserve soldier. There is no limit on the number of people you can sponsor.

To get involved, simply scan the QR code and access the online electronic sponsorship form that you and the person you are sponsoring must complete to enrol on the scheme.

Go to <https://rbs.army.mod.uk> or click the QR code for full details



Creative Media Design - ADR011231



EX RACING ICE

Igls, Innsbruck, Austria



Try bobsleigh, luge or skeleton with the Army. It will be an experience you won't forget in a hurry!

This is an annual event run in order to introduce novices to the ice sports of bobsleigh, luge and skeleton. It provides an excellent opportunity to afford soldiers the chance to experience one of these three exhilarating disciplines.

These activities demand concentration, courage, physical fitness and decision making under pressure.

Week 1

15 - 21 Jan 24

Flights from London Gatwick

2 Person Bob	16 places
Skeleton	15 places
Luge	12 places

Week 2

21 - 27 Jan 24

Flights from London Gatwick

2 Person Bob	16 places
Skeleton	15 places
Luge	12 places

£550 for UK personnel | £450 for Germany based personnel

Up to five Army Sport Lottery (ASL) tickets can be used to get £125 off (£25 per ticket) your entry fee. You must become an [ASL member](#) and buy your tickets **NLT by the end of Nov 23**.



Successful candidates will be informed of their selection by **5 Dec 23** via email. Joining Instructions and Admin Order will be published by 31 Oct 23.
POC - WO2 Graham Holmes on luge@awsa.org.uk



www.awsaw.org.uk

REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH

Putin's Prisoner

British volunteer in Ukrainian military reveals appalling brutality as a Russian captive

MEDIA coverage of conflicts seem to follow a definite pattern.

After reporting the initial shock and awe, an ever-hungry rolling news machine seeks local angles, usually with UK combatants who have volunteered to join the fighting.

A legion of books then follow as warriors turn authors, satisfying an apparent demand for the combat memoir genre.



The Ukrainian port of Mariupol under Russian control in April 2022
Picture: Shutterstock

BOOKS

Despite a diversity of backgrounds among the irregulars – ranging from ex-military types to no-experience civvies – there are very few standout tales on a scene dominated by a mix of mediocrity and literary vanity.

Putin's Prisoner, however, shatters this mould with a narrative that is both engaging and horrifying in equal measure – and it features some appalling scenes that will live with the reader days after they have turned the final page.

A reflection from British citizen Aiden Aslin – a veteran of fighting against Islamic State during the Syrian civil war – the story charts his later journey to Ukraine.

In an unusual move, he had joined his host country's marines in 2018 as a means of achieving citizenship.

But when Putin launched a full-scale invasion of its western neighbour some four years later, Aslin (pictured above) found himself in the eye of the storm during the first conventional war in Europe for decades.

Overwhelmed by enemy forces following a four-week siege at the Mariupol steelworks, he was taken hostage with fellow troops. And after enduring relentless inhuman treatment by his captors, he was sentenced to death – only being spared after an exchange of prisoners was agreed.

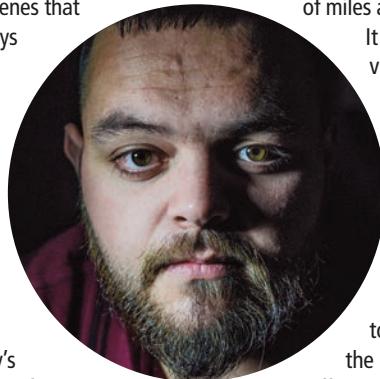
His vivid and harrowing account is set well apart from other releases in a crowded genre for a couple of reasons.

Firstly, the story is far from the usual battle fare – the author's tenure in Ukraine's military extends well beyond the most recent conflict and his wider insights are underpinned by a depth of experience.

Second is the influence of co-author and BBC reporter John Sweeney, whose assistance in the structuring of the book and high quality of the writing is very much present throughout.

While uncomfortable reading – there are no punches pulled in the depiction of beatings and other tortures meted out to Aslin and his comrades – it also offers a broader insight into emerging trends in modern war.

It lays bare how digital technology has helped proliferate false narratives on a huge



scale through social media platforms, while a more traditional Cold War-esque battle is being fought in trench systems on the ground.

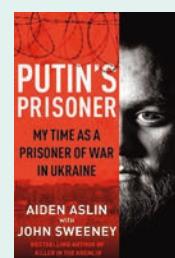
Of particular note is the way the writer's personal comms are deployed against his loved ones – in one case, photos of a vulnerable Aslin are sent via social media to family members hundreds of miles away at home.

It is a deeply disturbing vision of an entirely new type of atrocity, and one which is likely to be replicated many times across this emerging battlespace.

His experiences also suggest that the war is drawing UK citizens to the Russian side – with the pool of hired personnel offering professional expertise in fields such as journalism, as well as actively fighting the Kremlin's cause on the ground.

It all adds up to a compelling, if extremely disturbing, outing. *Putin's Prisoner* is as much a commentary on contemporary warfare as it is a worthy personal memoir.

A difficult read, but there is plenty here for reflection and further discussion. ■



Putin's Prisoner, by Aiden Aslin, is published by Bantam and priced £20

VERDICT:
A powerful story and insight into modern war
★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

GAMES RELEASES



Ride on the Edge 3

Out now on all formats

THE Isle of Man TT may be over for another year, but digital racing enthusiasts can replay the event to the desired outcome in the latest instalment of this long-running series.

Ride on the Edge 3 delivers an immersive experience that does not disappoint. Offering decent graphics, realistic physics and challenging competition, it stunningly captures the essence of the world's most demanding two-wheeled road event.

Soldier sampled the Xbox version and can testify that developers have recreated the 37.73-mile Snaefell Mountain course complete with treacherous curves and narrow roads in all its glory. Realism is impressive, with a sound physics engine and bike handling well rendered.

Gameplay options are abundant too – a career mode is matched with a variety of challenges, motorcycles and customisation options to keep wannabe racers coming back for more.

Although there is a steep learning curve that will not be to everyone's taste, perseverance definitely pays off and fans will not be left wanting. Strap on your helmet, rev your engine and prepare for a heart-pounding ride...

WO2 Rupert Frere, RLC



The Lara Croft Collection

Out now on Switch

SOLDIER has encountered the heroine of this title in the flesh before – when model Karima Adebiye became the face of the digital explorer and turned up at Aldershot's Maida gym for a publicity shoot with the Army's PTIs.

Back then in the mid-2000s, Lara Croft was a cultural sensation, her *Tomb Raider* series routinely topping the charts and even making the cut as a Hollywood movie starring Angelina Jolie.

Although the franchise had long disappeared from the mainstream, this Nintendo revival serves as a reminder of why it was so influential.

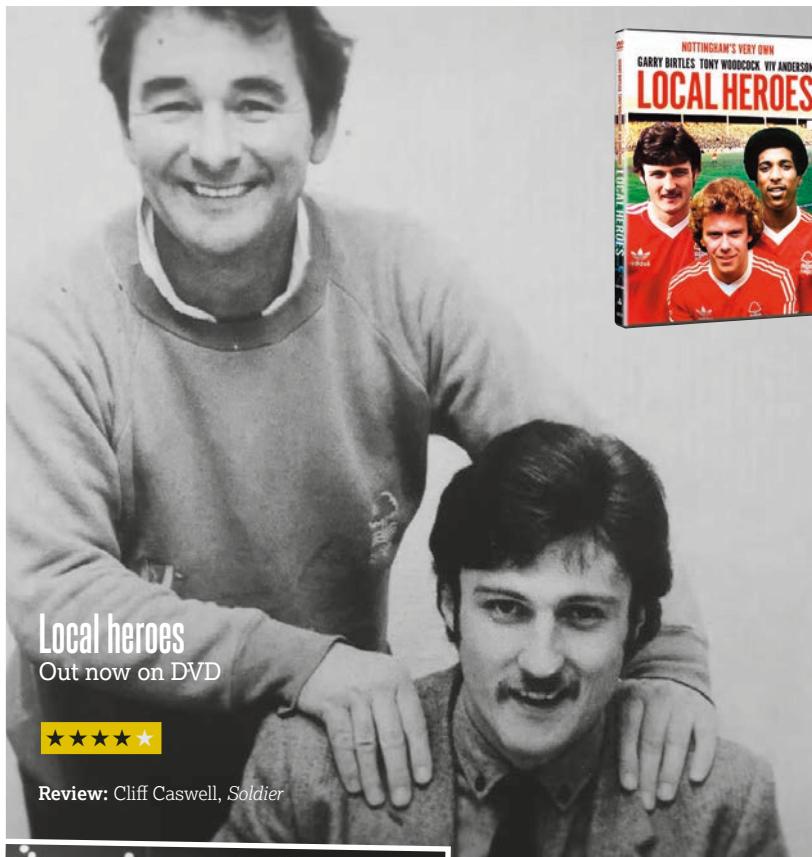
The package features two later offerings – *The Guardian of Light* and *The Temple of Osiris* – both of which have been soundly remixed for the Switch and require a combination of combat brawn and puzzle-solving brains.

Graphics and sound are top notch, the control interface works perfectly and both titles are challenging without proving frustratingly impossible. At £20 on the Nintendo store, the pack offers excellent value for money and might yet attract the iconic Lara a new generation of fans.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

MORE TOP PICKS

MOVIES



Local heroes

Out now on DVD



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



AGAINST a 1970s backdrop, with a scene of rising unemployment and societal unrest, *Local Heroes* tells the story of three legends of the beautiful game.

Viv Anderson, Garry Birtles and **Tony Woodcock** played in a Nottingham Forest side that went on to win the European cup twice under the management of the charismatic Brian Clough. Their accounts are well told in this documentary that is as much a social commentary as it is a football tale.

Particularly sobering is the identification of a causation chain that started with the building of fences to prevent pitch invasions and fights between rival fans, which ultimately contributed to the 1989 Hillsborough stadium disaster.

Yet the story remains uplifting. The trio in *Local Heroes* are worthy of attention – with Anderson achieving notable success as England's first black player. ■



PODCASTS



The Human Advantage

THE Centre of Army Leadership's latest podcast, *Building Teams in the Margins*, grills the Service's most senior soldier WO1 Paul Carney on his change in approach as he climbed the ranks. This man knows what grinds his soldiers' gears – and the personal challenges they face. In discussion with presenter Capt Ash Bhardwaj (Rifles), he hammers home the importance of getting to know the people you lead and being willing to have tough conversations. An insightful episode, but with talk of reports, workplace rows, mess politics and posting headaches, this certainly isn't one for your day off. ■



Review: Sarah Goldthorpe, *Soldier*

MUSIC



Diary date: August 4

MILES Kane's long-awaited follow-up to 2018's *Coup de Grace*, *One Man Band* will be of interest to any indie rock fans (he has compared the album to The Libertines and The Strokes). Get it on the holiday playlist and give *Soldier* your thoughts on any recent musical releases via reviews@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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SOLDIER SPORT



PODIUM PRIDE »»

MEN'S winner Cpl Sean Dodsworth (Lancs) has spoken of his delight at topping the standings at the Army Cycling Road Race Championships. The rider made an expertly judged break from the pack before cruising to victory. Read more on pages 62-63...



VICTORS IN THE VALLEY

ARMY CROWNS NEW ROAD RACE CHAMPIONS AT THE HOME OF OLYMPIC SUCCESS

ARMY cyclists tested themselves in the shadows of the London 2012 Olympic Park as they took to the saddle for their annual Road Race Championships.

Staged on Lee Valley VeloPark's road circuit – just a stone's throw from where the likes of Sir Chris Hoy, Laura Kenny and Victoria Pendleton won gold on the track – the event proved to be a happy hunting ground for Cpl Sean Dodsworth (Lancs), who claimed the men's title in style.

The Army rider broke clear of the peloton with around five laps remaining and the move paid dividends as the chasing pack failed to close the gap, allowing him to cruise down the home straight in relative comfort before crossing the finish line.

Infantry teammate WO2 Ian Evans (PWRR) claimed second spot, with Cfn Jimmy Smith (REME) winning the sprint for the final podium place.

"I was so nervous coming in and really wanted the victory," Dodsworth said. "I decided to take the race by the grip of the neck and go all in."

"It is the first time I have raced here but I probably did my 500th lap of the course as I did a lot of recce work on YouTube in the build-up."

"To win, with my little boy watching on, means everything to me."

Dodsworth suffers with axial spondyloarthritis, a form of arthritis in the back, and while the condition has impacted on the day job it has not failed to halt his progress on the bike.

"I got diagnosed three years ago while serving at ITC Catterick," he explained. "That

made me get into cycling as the impact stuff had to stop.

"My career was up in the air, so I invested all my time and energy into this – I have tried my hardest."

Dodsworth is also a key part of the Army men's road race team and will captain the outfit when they face the challenge of their Forces rivals at next month's Inter-Service Championships in Wiltshire.

"Winning that is always the main aim for the season," the soldier continued.

"The Army has more manpower compared to the others, so we are always expected to dominate."

"The team is in great condition with new management coming in, but the old structure was strong as well. We are confident."

Frustratingly, the women's race attracted a much smaller field but that did not detract from the pride felt by Sgt Laura Furness (RLC, pictured right) at winning her first title.

A relative newcomer to the sport, she battled with LCpl Kimmae Payn (Int Corps) and Sgt Megan Andrew (REME) at the head of the field before pulling clear on the final straight. Reservist Payn was second, with Andrew third.

"I've raced with these girls before, so I knew their strengths and weaknesses, and them mine," the winner said. "There were a couple of cheeky corners and some sweeping bends, so it was an interesting course."

"It is somewhere new and a long way from home, but it was definitely worth the drive."

"I missed out on the Army title in 2022, when I finished second, so I wanted to go one



**"YOU
CAN
ONLY
RACE
WHO'S
THERE
ON THE
DAY"**

better this year.

"I would have liked to win in a bigger field, but you can only race who's there on the day."

Victory formed the latest chapter in a rapid rise for Furness, who initially started cycling via Zwift to stay in shape during lockdown.

After posting some impressive times she was selected for the Army team and travelled to Finland the day after her success at Lee Valley to compete in the European Masters Games.

"I was going to start triathlon," she said, as she reflected on her introduction to the sport.

"My OC was Zwifting and said I should give it a go so I did, and I started winning races."

"I didn't think I would make the corps team, let alone the Army team, but the support I've received from everyone has been amazing."

"I've never really had a sport to focus on until now; I'd compete with the men on runs in our PT sessions, but I'm really enjoying this."

The season continues on August 30 at the sixth round of the Army Cycling Road Race Series in Colchester, with legs in Leicester, York and Redbridge to follow in September.

The Inter-Corps honours will be decided in Gravesend on October 11 as the campaign draws to a close.

For more updates from the world of Service cycling follow **@britarmycycling** on Twitter or Instagram. ■

SPORT SHORTS



Triathlon titles secured

THE Army claimed both team prizes at this season's Inter-Services Triathlon Championships in Oxfordshire.

Having missed out on the collective honours last year, the Army men packed the top ten to regain the trophy despite a dominant display from individual champion Mne Sam Wordley (RM), who was almost five-and-a-half minutes clear at the front of the field.

Capt Rosie Wild (RHA, pictured) led the women's charge and her first-place finish formed the basis for a commanding team win.



Invitation gladly accepted

IT proved to be a weekend to remember for Army teams at the London Invitational Sevens.

After finishing top of their pool on points difference, the senior men's squad went all the way to the final – where they defeated Rugby for Heroes 17-0 to lift the trophy.

The development team enjoyed an impressive run in the plate competition which culminated in a 36-10 victory over their Nigeria Exiles' equivalents in the final. The Army women also reached their respective final but lost 27-7 to the Wild Dogs Alpha Pack.

Picture: Allign Photography/Cat Gony

HIGH ACHIEVEMENT IN WALES



THE Army's sports climbers rounded the season off in style with a resounding victory at the Inter-Services Championships in Wales.

Dominant wins in the open categories saw the soldiers claim the men's and women's team prizes, with LCpl Andrew Mawhinney (RE) and Capt Emily Palmer (RAMC, pictured) taking the respective individual titles.

However, the Army and Royal Air Force could not be separated in the under-25 competition, meaning the honours were shared.

"It was pretty convincing," team manager and climber Cpl Matt Price (REME) told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"I know the Royal Navy are struggling for numbers due to constant deployments, but we seem to be doing very well. Sports climbing has become more popular since Covid and the Infantry have started their own team, which has worked to our advantage."

"We have found a lot of new talent."

Action resumes with the opening round of the Armed Forces Bouldering League next month, with athletes looking to catch the eye ahead of the European Military Championships in 2024.

"Some of the best climbers in the world will be there so it will be a hard competition," Price added. "But we will keep pushing and training for that is now the aim."

"There are six rounds in the bouldering league and from there we will look to recruit people for the Army team."

"They will be invited to training meets and we will select from there."

Follow [@british_army_climbing](#) on Instagram for more details or visit the organisation's page on Defence Connect. ■

**"WE
HAVE
FOUND A
LOT OF
TALENT"**



INFANTRY cyclists mounted a successful attempt of the gruelling Dragon Devil ride in Wales. The 312-kilometre route took the riders over the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains, completing a total elevation of 4,786 metres – with two climbs featuring gradients between 24 and 30 per cent.

MONTH IN SPORT

August's key dates...



WHAT: Inter-Services Tennis Championships
WHEN: August 1 to 2
WHERE: Wimbledon
NEED TO KNOW: Army

players return to the lush courts of SW19 to resume battle with their Forces foes. Convincing wins last year will see them start as favourites



WHAT: Inter-Services 50-over Cricket Championships
WHEN: August 1 to 3
WHERE: Portsmouth
NEED TO KNOW: A late afternoon downpour dampened the Army's victory celebrations in the Twenty20 competition at Lord's. They'll be hoping for fine weather to boost hopes of a double win



WHAT: Army Outdoor Archery Championships
WHEN: August 17 to 20
WHERE: Cranwell
NEED TO KNOW: This event comes on the back of the set-up's summer training camp and a strong showing at the European Masters Games. Athletes will be looking to hit the target ahead of next month's Inter-Services



PEAK PERFORMANCES CATCH THE EYE



"THE ARMY SQUAD IS AT SUCH A HIGH LEVEL"

ARMY fighter LCpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) has stepped closer to the international stage after she was named in the inaugural England Boxing senior performance programme.

The soldier caught the eye at two separate assessments and will now attend monthly training camps with the set-up while continuing to sharpen her skills with the Service squad in Aldershot.

"It is amazing," she told *SoldierSport*. "I felt the assessments went well and it is great that they want me to be part of their senior squad."

"I'm thrilled to be working with their coaches; hopefully I can gain knowledge and move up a level to compete internationally."

Stuart was victorious in the 63kg division at this year's England Boxing National Amateur Championships and went on to the Elite Three Nations competition, where she lost to Army teammate Cpl Meg Reid (RLC), of Scotland, in the final.

"If anything, that result has helped me," she continued. "Meg has been on the Scotland team for a long time and has fought internationally."

"I lost on a close call after only boxing for two years. I gave a good account and know where I need to improve."

Moving forward, Stuart said she will be getting the best of both worlds by training with the Army and England and hopes to progress to Team GB.

"The Army squad is at such a high level, everything is so well thought out and linked to what England and GB are doing," the former kickboxer explained. "My aim is to keep creeping up that ladder."

However, her efforts have not detracted from her role as an aircraft technician with 1 Regiment, Army Air Corps and the day after fighting Reid she was back working on helicopters in Yeovilton.

"While I love boxing, I have to be sensible and try to progress in my career," Stuart said. "It's great being back at work and seeing what I can do to better myself." ■

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Picture: Brian Leung



EQUINE EXCELLENCE

MEMBERS of the Army Equitation Association have been excelling across the board with the season now in full swing.

The campaign started with the crowning of new champions in the Army Grassroots League, where Cfn Cerin Mason (REME) took the honours in the dressage and Gnr Annabel Hobbs (RHA) the combined training.

Attention then switched to the Royal Air Force Championships comprising dressage, show jumping and eventing classes – the first leg in the Loriners Inter-Services competition.

The soldiers took the overall win, with riders securing nine of the top ten places in the London International Horse Show qualifier.

A strong showing at the Royal Windsor Horse Show followed, where Army teams finished second to fifth in the Queen's Plate – missing out on the top prize by just 1.8 seconds. SSgt Louise Hoyle (AGC) was the highest placed individual.

And military working horse Revenge has been representing the Army eventing team, finishing sixth at the Tweseldown Horse Trials with jockey SCpl Anthony Glass (RHG/D).



Pictures: Army Sport/geraint Ashton Jones

RECOVERY PLAN MOVES FORWARD



**"THERE
IS NO
STREAM
FOR
AGE OR
ABILITY"**

THE Service's kendo set-up continued its post-Covid recovery at the latest beginners' course and Army Championships in Aldershot.

With a number of experienced individuals stepping away from the sport for a variety of reasons the squad is on a mission to regenerate, and 14 novices were welcomed to the fold for the week-long camp.

"The idea is to speed people through a training pattern that would normally take three to four months at a civilian club," Maj Chris Jones (RAMC), OiC of Army kendo, told *SoldierSport*. "They are then in a position where they can compete, at a basic level, in the championships."

"We had 20 students in total, of which 14 were novices. Our focus now is on retaining those people and getting them to come back. Kendo is a sport that benefits from an investment of time, it is not easy to pick up and you have to keep returning."

Unlike other disciplines, newcomers can soon find themselves testing their skills against seasoned performers

and Jones believes this is key to attracting fresh talent.

The officer added: "On the British kendo circuit you fight against internationals.

"They are of an exceptionally high level, and you would perhaps not get that in other sports or martial arts. There is no stream for age, ability or grading – so a relative novice can take on a decorated international."

Attention now turns to defending the Inter-Services title next month, with the top performers from the Army Championships in contention for selection – including champion Maj John O'Neill (AGC (RMP)).

A number of tournaments follow later in the year and a date has already been set for the next beginners' course in February.

"Kendo is a sport rooted in military training and is the modern equivalent of how samurai trained for battle hundreds of years ago," continued Jones.

"Men and women compete against each other, and age is no barrier. Regardless of experience, there are opportunities in the Army to push ahead." ■



TALENT SEARCH: BOTH TEAMS ARE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR NEW ATHLETES. EMAIL JKILLORAN@ASCB.UK.COM TO GET INVOLVED



LEADERS ON THE TRACK AND AHEAD OF THE FIELD

DOMINANT displays on the track and in the field saw the Army surge to resounding victories at this season's Inter-Services Athletics Championships in Aldershot.

The men's team posted 182 points from 19 events to finish 55 clear of main challengers the Royal Air Force in second. The Royal Navy were third on 82.

And it was a similar story in the women's competition, where the soldiers closed on 179 points – 41 ahead of the RAF on 138, with the Senior Service on 75.

LCpl Mavric Pamphile (RE) spearheaded the men's assault on the track as he took gold medals in the 100, 200 and 400 metres.

His most dramatic win came in the shortest format, where a photo finish saw him defeat Flt Lt Mike Measter (RAF) by the narrowest of margins.

In a sign of their dominance, Army athletes topped the podium in all but one of the track events,

with the RAF claiming a one-two in the 1,500 metres.

Spr Daniel Eugene (RE) secured the 800 metres title, while Cpl Dean Williamson (REME) triumphed over Capt Max Walker (RLC) to retain his crown in the 5,000 metres.

Walker (pictured above) went one better in the 3,000 metres steeplechase, while there were victories for Gds Peter Moreno (Coldm Gds) and Cpl Storms Menri (RAMC) in the 110- and 400-metre hurdles respectively. The soldiers also reigned supreme in the 4x100- and 4x400-metre relays.

Multi-event star Sgt Osman Muskwe (RAPTC) again delivered in the field with wins in the long jump, discus and shot put. The veteran added further points to the tally with a bronze medal in the pole vault and a fourth-place finish in the high jump.

A leap of 12.37 metres saw LCpl Wendell Modeste (RLC) take

triple jump gold, while Moreno was joint top in the pole vault with an effort of 3.90 metres.

Maj Jake Matthews (RAMC) claimed silver medals in the discus and shot, while the Army enjoyed one-twos in the javelin through Pte Keston James (RLC) and Cpl Eoin Brown (RE), and in the hammer courtesy of WO2 John Osazuwa (RLC) and SSgt Ben Jones (RE).

"We faced weaker RAF and Navy teams and brought a strong squad, the home advantage was also helpful," team manager Capt Carl McMullen (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"I did not expect it to be so emphatic; we have a quality bunch who deserve the win."

The officer also said a pre-season training camp in Brisbane helped lay the foundations for their success.

"It was a complete immersion in athletics and was the first time we have been able to do that in a



long while," he explained.

"It was about training and preparing for the season ahead and we saw a lot of personal bests today.

"Our throwers have never been as good in my time in the Army. We have two athletes ranked in the top-ten discus athletes in the country and they should do well at the national championships."

The throwing events also proved to be a happy hunting ground for the Army women, with Maj Helen Broadbridge (AGC (ALS)) posting a new competition record of 54.61 metres to claim gold in the hammer.

She also topped the standings in the discus and claimed bronze in the shot put – which was won by Maj Lucy Rann (AGC (ETS)).

Multi-eventer Lt Hayley Perrin (RAMC) triumphed in the 100-metre hurdles, high jump and long jump, while Lt Kate Olding (Int Corps, pictured bottom left) was victorious in the 800 and 1,500 metres.

Capt Laura Clark (REME) secured the 200 and 400 metres crowns, and also anchored the victorious 4x100- and 4x400-metre relay teams, while Pte Jess Woffinden (RLC) triumphed in the 400-metre hurdles to go with the bronze medal won in the shorter format.

Cpl Roanna Vickers (RAMC) destroyed the field in the 2,000 metres steeplechase after taking silver in the 1,500 metres. ■



ATHLETICS IN NUMBERS

SUCCESSIVE DOUBLE WINS BY THE ARMY MEN'S AND WOMEN'S TEAMS

9

EVENTS COMPLETED BY SGT OSMAN MUSKWE - INCLUDING WINS IN THE LONG JUMP, DISCUS AND SHOT PUT

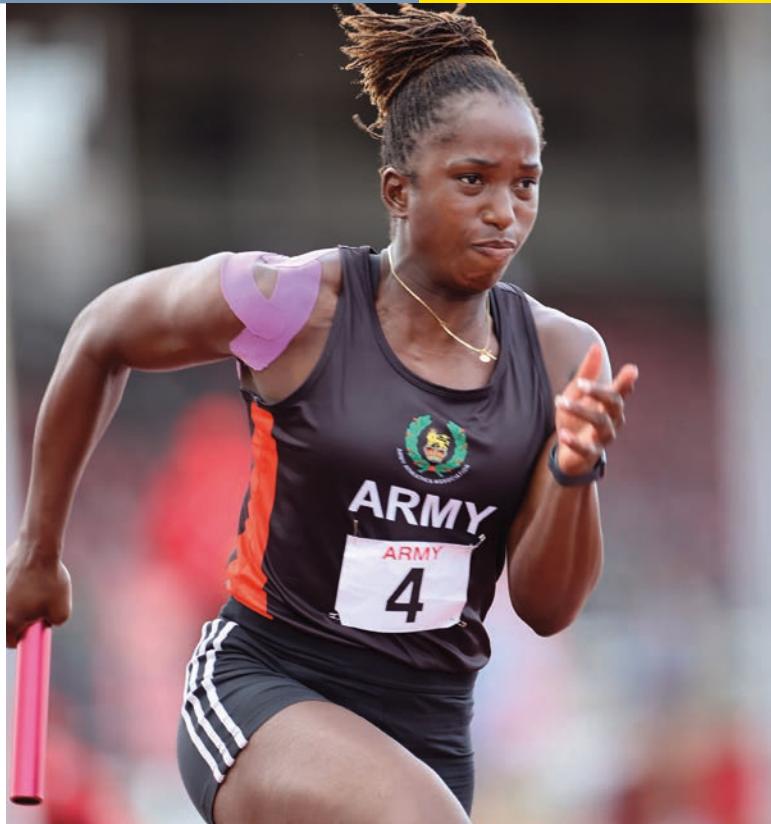
5

RECORDS IN TWO YEARS FOR MAJ HELEN BROADBRIDGE IN THE HAMMER - BEATING HER 2022 BEST BY 4.62 METRES

2

WEEKS SPENT BY ARMY ATHLETES AT A PRE-SEASON TRAINING CAMP IN BRISBANE

2



DISLOCATION TO DREAM DEBUT

NEWCOMER Capt Kitan Eleyae (AGC (ALS)) enjoyed an Inter-Services debut to remember as she took gold in the 100 metres, triple jump and 4x100-metre relay, along with silver in the long jump.

The officer dislocated her shoulder earlier in the season and the event marked a successful return to action.

"I'm still recovering," Eleyae told *SoldierSport*. "But it has been fun, and I'm hoping to come again next year."

"I wanted to win the long jump as that is my main event. I saw the Inter-Services record stands at 6.02 metres, and that's what I'll be aiming for next season."

Eleyae was one of a number of personnel who proved their versatility over multiple events and women's team manager Capt Laura Barnes (QARANC) said such efforts played a crucial part in the Army's win.

"Considering we didn't have all our top athletes available, it was a brilliant performance," she added.

"People were stepping up to do events they would not normally do; we've had several personal bests and I could not be happier for them."

"Pte Jess Woffinden (RLC) took three seconds off her best in the 400-metre hurdles, while Maj Helen Broadbridge (AGC (ALS)) set a new competition record in the hammer."

"Last year we went in not knowing what our opposition would look like but this season we knew what we were up against. We have some phenomenal throwers, and our field athletes are now on a par with those on the track."

"We have the old and bold who have been doing this for 20 years, but also have the grassroots talent coming through and it's important we keep developing that." ■

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Allijin Photography/Lee Crabb



Osman stays on

THE Army Rugby Union have named Lt Col Tim Osman (RA) as head coach of the men's senior team.

The officer took charge on an interim basis midway through the last campaign and said he was excited to take the job full-time.

"It's a great opportunity," he added. "Having jumped into a process last season that was pre-planned it now gives us the chance to prepare in the way that I want. I'm not saying what was done before was wrong, but everyone does things differently."



Masters' medal rush

THE European Masters Games proved to be a happy hunting ground for Army athletes who returned from the two-week sporting spectacle with a haul of 202 medals.

A total of 168 personnel competed in 16 disciplines in Tampere, Finland, with athletics and orienteering contributing heavily to the success.

The Service's archers were among the debutants at the championships and 13 soldiers tested their aim in conditions ranging from sunshine to heavy rain.

LCpl Sarah Roderick (Int Corps, pictured), winner in the women's barebow, said: "Archers support each other so you get a lot of tips and advice about kit and techniques.

"I'd love to do it again."

POOL STARS MAKE BIG WAVES



RECORDS tumbled in the pool as the Army claimed a second successive team double at the Inter-Services Swimming Championships.

A total of 19 competition bests were set on a thrilling day of action – 12 of which came from the soldiers as they sealed the men's and women's crowns in style.

Pte Kieran Preston (Para) was among the star performers as he set new records over 100 metres in the breaststroke and butterfly, while Fus Cameron Allison (Scots) clocked new fastest times in the 200 and 400 metres freestyle.

The men's 4x50-metre medley relay team took two seconds off the competition record posted last season, while the women celebrated a new best in their equivalent race.

Pte Sian Harkin (RAMC) was another to excel, breaking the record in the women's 100 metres freestyle.

Team manager Maj Marcus Roberts (Scots) told *SoldierSport* confidence was high going into the contest but he did not predict the scale of his swimmers' success.

"I could not believe that so many records were broken," he added. "We have a strong team ethos, together with a huge amount of talent.

"We also have several swimmers we can put into different events, depending on where the gaps are."

"Our captains, Cpl Kath Baker (QARANC) and Capt Lawrence Oxborough (AGC (RMP)), are exceptional leaders who bring everything together. They instil that ethos behind closed doors and ensure everyone is ready to compete on the day." ■

**"WE
HAVE A
HUGE
AMOUNT
OF
TALENT"**



● THE final of the Walter Tull Memorial Trophy was worth the wait for 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment. Work tempo saw the tie shift to the summer and goals from Pte Lewis Kennedy, Cpl Ashley Rowley-Johnson, LCpl Watitemwa Mkandawire, Pte Ryan Jordan, CSgt Will Saunders and LCpl Paul Kennedy saw them defeat 5th Battalion, The Rifles 6-0.



WINNER: GOLD

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Since its launch, over 13,000 people have taken part from all over the world, walking over 860,000 miles and raising over £550,000 for soldiers and veterans in need. With a thriving Facebook community, Operation Bletchley has also won a gold award after being voted 'The most innovative event in the UK'.

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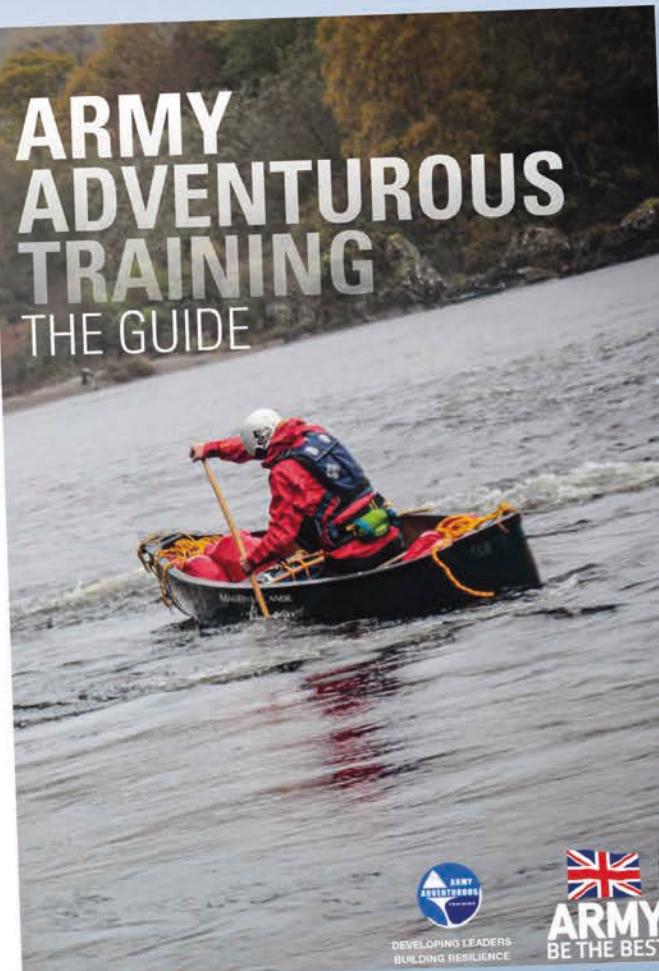
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COMPLETE CONTROL

THE Women's Inter-Services 40-over Cricket Championships went firmly to form as the Army recorded resounding victories over their rivals to seal another crown.

Having already won the Twenty20 title, the soldiers made short work of the opposition as they bowled first in both matches and then chased modest totals with ease.

SSgt Amanda Potgieter (REME, pictured) recorded figures of 4-11 off eight overs, and Cfn Shema Wright (REME) 3-17, as the Royal Navy crumbled to 98 all out in the Reds' opening game.

Sisters LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) and Lt Connie Cant (RA) put on 55 for the opening wicket in reply. When the former perished, Potgieter – who brought up 6,000 runs for the Army earlier in the season – came to the crease and blasted 30 off just 15 deliveries to see her team home in style.

The Royal Air Force offered less resistance with the bat as SSgt Emily Wall (R Signals) ripped through the middle and lower orders to finish with 5-13 as they were skittled for just 52.

The soldiers shuffled their batting line-up and despite losing three wickets, reached their target midway through the eighth over.



NEW VENUE BOOSTS PADDLE CAUSE



**"IT IS
ALWAYS
CLOSELY
FOUGHT"**

THE River Thames played host to the Army Canoeing and Kayak Sprint and Marathon Championships.

It was the first time the event had been staged from the Army Boat House in Abingdon and it proved to be a fitting venue as around 30 personnel took part.

"We have seen significant investment from Army Sport and it is great to have a dedicated facility on a fantastic stretch of water," Lt Col Alex Burt (AGC (ETS)), the organisation's chair, told *SoldierSport*.

"It is safe for novices, but also has some challenging portages for our higher end paddlers. It is a brilliant location."

Spr Oscar Griffiths (RE) – winner of the singles category in the Devizes to Westminster race earlier in the season – claimed the marathon crown, while Spr Owain Herbert (RE) joined forces with his father, WO2 Doug Herbert (RAPTC), to triumph in

the sprint doubles.

Capt Lena Beardsell (AGC (ETS)) was the peak performer in the women's field, taking the sprint and marathon titles.

"Oscar was a top junior athlete who joined the Army to further his sporting and career interests," Burt added.

"He will be a leading light at the Inter-Services.

"Lena was also a promising junior and is someone who has come back to the sport, which we're seeing more and more of. But we also welcome those who want to come and have a go."

"We attract ranks from private all the way to two-star general; it is such an inclusive sport and there is a good mix of male and female participation."

Attention now turns to next month's Inter-Services, with the Army looking to retain their sprint and marathon titles from last year. "It is always closely fought," Burt said. ■



PLACES on Ex Racing Ice I – the Army's annual camp for novice bobsleigh, luge and skeleton athletes – are up for grabs.

The exercise is running two separate weeks – January 15-21 and 21-27 – at Igls in Austria, with 16 spaces on the two-person bobsleigh, 15 on the skeleton and 12 on the luge available for both.

The cost is £550 for UK-based personnel and £450 for those in Germany, with successful candidates notified by December 5. Scan the QR code to apply.





I've been playing games on various consoles for 25 years and in that time I don't think there's anything that hasn't been digitally replicated, from driving an armoured vehicle to flying a helicopter. First-person shooters of all types are always popular.

Sgt Foggy Moore, RA



Although I'm now the OC of the Defence Modelling and Simulation School, I was once an ammunition technical officer. There is probably a good title in the investigation element of this field – examining evidence at the scene of an attack to find out who might be responsible. But it would be a downbeat experience.

Maj Tom Mouat, RLC



I wouldn't want anything that replicates my day job – I'd never sit down to play a REME workshop simulation! Generally, I think people want escapism in their games.

LCpl Jess Cutter, REME

Pictures: Graeme Main

Interviews: Cliff Caswell



You can replicate leadership and decision making well in video games – real-time strategy titles do this quite well already, such as the *Command and Conquer* series.

Capt Tim Harcourt, Rifles



An amusing title around military admin might be interesting. You could base it on the life of a staff officer, where you have to deal with pen pushing while battling with Army policy. It would probably end up being a cross between the PC game *Papers Please* – where you're a passport controller – and fighting title *Mortal Kombat*.

LCpl Jack Beale, RHA

Maybe a *Super Mario Bros* clone in which two moustachioed sergeants in a crazy store have to deal with increasingly testing demands from soldiers. Players would have to look up the Nato reference number and deliver the set items until they run out of time...

Capt Laurence Roche, QOY



Electronic warfare

We asked video gamers what Army job would make for a great console title...

Combat and tactical situations lend themselves well to video games – I've been playing *Hell Let Loose*, a Second World War shooter, which is amazing. But you could simulate pretty much anything from the military now, given the tech on offer.





LEVEL
PEAKS



MISSION CONFIGURABLE

It's all about Open Architecture. Our approach to product integration results in systems with components that work together seamlessly and allow the end user to focus on the mission at hand - not their equipment setup. Our system products are designed and engineered to easily integrate and work with Gentex Corporation and other third-party components. This approach gives end users limitless freedom for customisation.

For more information, please email info@levelpeaks.com



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD

Proudly supporting those who serve.

WE SUPPORT SOLDIERS, VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN NEED

Our whole person, whole life approach ensures we are here to support members of the Army family through all of life's challenges – whether that involves bereavement, injury, getting back to work, elderly care and much more.



To learn more about our work and to discover all of the ways you can help us raise funds for soldiers, veterans and their families visit SOLDIERSCHARITY.ORG

ABF The Soldiers' Charity is a registered charity in England and Wales (1146420) and Scotland (SC039189) and registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (07974609).