

# SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

MAY 2017

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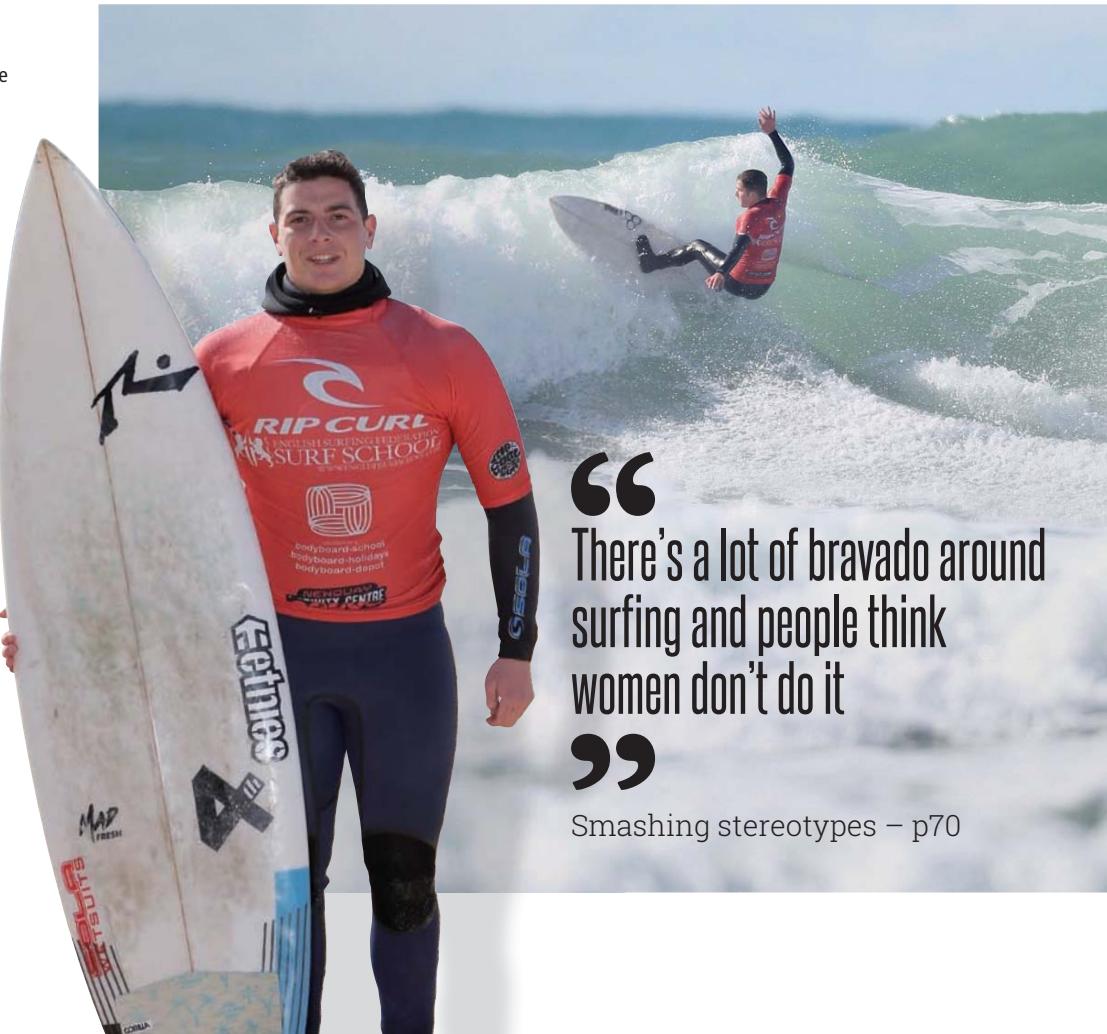
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There’s a lot of bravado around surfing and people think women don’t do it  
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“Guys have relished having the time, space and resources to build their teams”

3 Scots take on Jordan – p24



## The call from hell



EVER wondered what it is like to be the soldier who has to make the dreaded knock on the door of a family who have just lost their son or daughter?

If you are facing the daunting task of being a visiting officer – or you know someone who is – read more in our feature on page 41.

In it, we speak to those who have been on the receiving end of “the knock” to find out what Service personnel can do to make things easier for military families in their hour of need.

Also this month, troops from Scotland’s Black Watch go back to basics in south Jordan.

Don’t miss our stunning photographs from the exercise, as well as a host of other news and sport stories from across the globe.

Netballers impress on page 73 and check out our updates on Bowman (page 12), future military drones (page 17) and a “golden hello” for Signals recruits (page 11).

**Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor**

### Where to find *Soldier*

#### ► Printed copies

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

#### ► Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

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

#### ► Online

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

#### ► Purchase

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

# NEED TO TALK?

SSAFA's Forcesline is a free and confidential helpline providing advice and guidance for serving personnel, reserves, veterans and their families. It is completely independent of the chain of command.

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Lines open 9.00 to 17.30 weekdays

Or contact us online [ssafa.org.uk/forcesline](http://ssafa.org.uk/forcesline)





Picture: Shutterstock

# 'The NHS will see you now'

**Bid to prevent mentally ill soldiers and veterans being passed around the system**

**A**SERVICE has been launched by NHS England to help veterans and soldiers nearing discharge to deal with mental health problems.

The initiative – or the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Mental Health Service, as it is known – aims to get troops faster treatment by making sure they are directed to the right place first time.

Soldiers can either refer themselves or ask a GP or military charity.

Once this has happened they will be offered a face-to-face assessment with a nurse who has an expert understanding of Armed Forces life and culture.

This will happen within a fortnight, and means soldiers get a single point of contact.

"We have spent a huge amount of time on this; I'm optimistic it will make a difference," said Dr Jonathan Leach, a former British Army doctor who advises NHS England on issues affecting the Armed Forces and their loved ones.

The retired colonel said that the scheme will help to tackle a broad range of issues including anxiety, depression and alcohol dependency as well as the more widely publicised

problems of battle trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"This is part of a range of initiatives to raise the profile of veterans and make sure they get a better hearing," he continued.

"By having a nurse do the assessment we will be able to get a clear view of what's needed.

"It will help in terms of going to the right place first time rather than bouncing around the system, but I can't duck the fact that the NHS is under significant pressure generally."

To that end, any resulting treatment will vary according to local services and waiting lists.

In another development, NHS England is also working with the Royal College of GPs to create a number of veteran-friendly practices.

“  
I am  
optimistic it  
will make a  
difference  
”

## GET SEEN

VETERANS living in England can access the **Transition, Intervention and Liaison Mental Health Service**, as can those serving soldiers who have been given a discharge date. Mention it to your GP or search "TILS" at [www.england.nhs.uk](http://www.england.nhs.uk)



## SOLDIER

**Editor** Sarah Goldthorpe  
01252 787096 (mil 94222 7096)  
sgoldthorpe@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Sports Editor** Richard Long  
01252 787098 (94222 7098)  
rlong@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Assistant Editor** Becky Clark  
01252 787099 (94222 7099)  
rclark@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Art Editor** Tudor Morgan  
01252 787100 (94222 7100)  
tmorgan@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Designer** Maddie Marchment  
01252 787101 (94222 7101)  
mmarchment@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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

**Photographer** Steve Dock  
01252 787103 (94222 7103)  
sdock@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Advertising** Heather Sheklys  
01252 787106 (94222 7106)  
advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Subscriptions**  
01252 787107 (94222 7107)  
subs@soldiermagazine.co.uk

**Managing Editor** Steven Muncey  
01252 787095 (94222 7095)  
smuncey@soldiermagazine.co.uk



## ARMY

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

**All enquiries:** 01252 787107 (94222 7107)  
**Fax:** 01252 787110 (94222 7110)  
**Email:** news@soldiermagazine.co.uk  
[www.soldiermagazine.co.uk](http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk)

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A taste of Army events across the world

# GLOBAL SITREP

Picture: Lcpl Ian Cain, Para



## 1. CALIFORNIA FREE-FALLING

THE Parachute Regiment's free-fall display team, the Red Devils, have launched their 2017 season following a challenging training package in California.

The two-week serial saw the outfit complete some 100 jumps and rehearse a number of complex manoeuvres.

"We did some cross training with the US Navy team, the Leapfrogs, and we had the

opportunity to jump onto the deck of the decommissioned aircraft carrier USS *Midway* in San Diego harbour," said officer commanding Capt Joseph Palmer (Para).

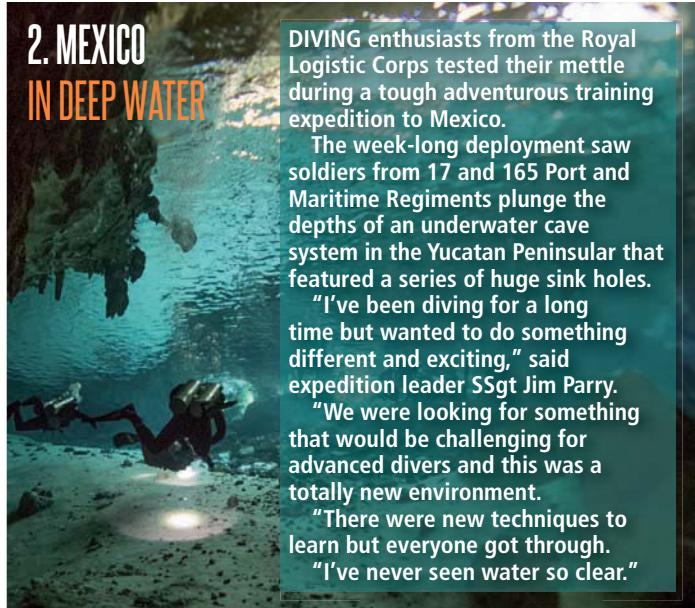
"It was a real privilege to do an out-of-the-ordinary jump."

Three squad members qualified for the team for the first time during the package.

Hours after landing back in the UK the Servicemen performed their first display of the season at a school in Amesbury, Wiltshire.

● Eat, sleep, jump, repeat – page 38

## 2. MEXICO IN DEEP WATER



DIVING enthusiasts from the Royal Logistic Corps tested their mettle during a tough adventurous training expedition to Mexico.

The week-long deployment saw soldiers from 17 and 165 Port and Maritime Regiments plunge the depths of an underwater cave system in the Yucatan Peninsula that featured a series of huge sink holes.

"I've been diving for a long time but wanted to do something different and exciting," said expedition leader SSgt Jim Parry.

"We were looking for something that would be challenging for advanced divers and this was a totally new environment.

"There were new techniques to learn but everyone got through.

"I've never seen water so clear."

## 1. CALIFORNIA

## 2. MEXICO

## 3. PANAMA

## 3. PANAMA

### RIDERS HIT ROUGH PATCH

SIX Servicemen riding the Pan-American Highway by motorbike had reached Panama as this issue went to press.

They were trying to become the first team to ride from Tierra del Fuego to Prudhoe Bay in Alaska in one continuous journey but security issues in Colombia forced them to leapfrog the country.

“It's not like you expect a desert to be”

Jordan shakes up the Scots – page 24



## 4. MOROCCO DESERT ENDURANCE

WELSH Guards officer Capt Tom Evans made history with a third-place finish at the Marathon des Sables – the highest position achieved by a British athlete at the event.

The Serviceman battled endless dunes, rocky jebels, white-hot salt plains and temperatures in excess of 50 degrees Celsius to complete the 250km course in record time.

Capt Evans was racing in his first multi-day competition and has now been invited to compete on the Ultra Trail World Tour.



## 5. UK TASK FORCE FIT FOR ACTION

THE Army's Air Assault Task Force has proved its readiness to deploy on short notice operations worldwide after a year of build-up training.

Some 2,000 troops, more than 400 vehicles and 12 helicopters from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment battlegroup took part in Exercise Joint Warrior, which was held over two weeks across the south of England.

Simulating a mission to help an allied country tackle a state-backed insurgency, the package saw personnel first secure Keevil Airfield on Salisbury Plain, before inserting by parachute and helicopter to attack enemy strongholds at locations in Woodbridge, Suffolk and Stanford Training Area in Norfolk.



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## 6. GERMANY BUILDING BRIDGES

SAPPERS from 35 Engineer Regiment demonstrated their bridging capability at Sennelager Training Area by deploying their vehicle-launched bridges for German Leopard 2 tanks to cross.

Exercise Hector's Response tested the regiment's readiness for possible future deployments by putting the engineers through various personal and equipment assessments, as well as providing an opportunity for them to foster closer ties with Panzerbataillon 203, based in nearby Augustdorf.



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

## 2 YOKS GEAR UP FOR OP TORAL

Afghanistan mission looms – page 20

Picture: Cpl Georgina Coupe, RLC



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Picture: Steve Dolk



# Signals' incentive for new recruits

**L**OWER-THAN-EXPECTED recruitment levels into the Royal Corps of Signals has resulted in the launch of a "golden hello" financial incentive for some newcomers.

Those who commit to four years' service with the corps as communications systems operators or engineers can expect to receive a single payment of £5,000 after the completion of their phase two training. Rejoiners and personnel transferring are not eligible.

"We've introduced this financial incentive to help increase recruitment in what has been a very competitive environment," corps colonel Simon Hutchinson told *Soldier*.

The Royal Corps of Signals is

undergoing a significant restructuring as part of 'Army 2020 refine' to keep us at the forefront of developments in information technology and cyber, so we really need to maintain a good inflow of quality recruits.

"This financial measure will help against some stiff competition from the civilian IT sector."

The scheme will run until March 31, 2019 or until annual phase two output reaches 95 per cent of the training requirement.

The payouts will be taxable and subject to National Insurance.

Applications can be made using the form in the administrative instruction, which is available from recruiting staff and training establishments.

**“This will help against some stiff competition”**

## SUPERCamps kick off

**■** TEENAGERS in Yorkshire were given a taste of military life when the Army hosted its first "supercamp".

The pilot scheme saw 60 youngsters take part in a series of challenging tasks that included camouflage and assault courses.

The programme is expected to roll out across the country later this year in a bid to educate the next



generation and help the military build lasting ties with communities.

## BOOST FOR BLIND VETS

**■** A NEW facility offering support to veterans that have lost their sight, limbs or both has opened in Llandudno, Wales.

The centre is a joint venture between Blind Veterans UK and Blesma and provides a rehabilitation environment that will help former personnel learn the life skills needed for independent living.

It will have a specific focus on assisting those who are at risk of becoming homeless and has been financed by a £1.25 million grant from the Veterans Accommodation Fund.

**7,000**

Number of books distributed to Service children by charity Reading Force since 2011. The organisation has recently received a grant of **£32,465** from The Royal British Legion to enable it to continue its work helping military families read together at home and when deployed.

## CORPS COMMEMORATION

**■** FORCES charity The Royal British Legion is inviting all current and former Servicewomen to attend a commemoration marking 100 years since the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was formed.

A drumhead ceremony will take place at the National Memorial Arboretum on July 7 to honour all female personnel who have served since 1917.

Online registration is open at [www.britishlegion.org.uk/women100](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/women100) and the closing date for applications is May 24.



## "It's a very high-tempo, professional squad"

– Red Devils take flight, page 38



### ECSTASY ON STAGE

■ A THEATRE show about a controversial therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) arrives in Aldershot later this month.

*Give Me Your Love* tells the story of a mentally ill ex-soldier whose friend offers assistance in the form of the illegal party drug MDMA, or ecstasy.

The play was researched with war veterans from the UK, USA and Australia, some of whom have been involved in American trials which are treating PTSD with the drug.

It will be performed at the West End Theatre on May 17. For more show dates visit [www.ridiculusmus.com](http://www.ridiculusmus.com)

### EXPLAIN YOURSELF

■ CHANGES have been made to the posting preference proforma (PPP) to allow soldiers to go into more detail about their suitability for a role.

The document tells the Army Personnel Centre which assignments Regular troops wish to be considered for.

From now on senior NCOs and officers up to the rank of lieutenant colonel will have more space to write about any prior experience that would qualify them for a job and their long-term career aspirations.

It brings the system in line with the PPP already being used by members of the general staff.

### BROWN SOLDIERS ON

■ AN Iraq war veteran who was blinded in the conflict has won the People's Choice accolade at the seventh annual Soldiering On Awards.

Simon Brown (ex-REME, pictured) was nominated for the honour by Blind Veterans UK and scooped the prize after a public vote conducted by the *Sunday Express*.

"I'm absolutely overwhelmed," he said.

Other winners included the Row2Recovery team, adaptive snowboarder Owen Pick (ex-R Anglian), double amputee Adam Francis (ex-PWRR) and Horseback UK, an organisation that uses horsemanship to inspire recovery.

I'm getting mixed messages

Readers vent their spleen

**TALKBACK**  
PAGE 49

 news@soldiermagazine.co.uk  
Tell Soldier what you think



## Keeping comms current

THE final upgrade of the Bowman tactical communications system is on its way.

BCIP 5.6 will reach the first military units from next summer, after which the Service will move to a new generation of kit that uses industry standards and more commercial off-the-shelf hardware to make it easier to keep up with new technologies.

Maj Robbie Hicks helped to trial the latest software during three battlegroup planning exercises.

The 2iC of 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers said it was a big improvement on what is currently used.

"It makes a massive difference," he told *Soldier*.

"It's much more like a Windows-based system and is far more intuitive to use."

"Although a lot of time was set aside for training on it, most people didn't need that."

"We could jump straight in, and by the second or third time of using it, it had significantly sped-up the planning process."



## FREE DEGREES FOR VETERANS

■ THE Open University has launched a scholarship fund to offer free degree courses to disabled veterans. The institution wants to raise £2.5 million to provide academic support for 100 ex-Servicemen and women. If successful, it is hoped the scheme can then be expanded to include other veterans and their families. "Some former military personnel, particularly those with disabilities, can face real barriers and frustrations in realising their ambitions," said OU Vice-Chancellor Peter Horrocks. "We want to remove those barriers." Details of the application process will be announced later.



Picture: Shutterstock



Picture: Matt Austin and Apex

# Powerful tribute to Somme's lost

A CROWDFUNDING campaign will begin this month to create a thought-provoking tribute to the fallen soldiers of the Somme.

Somerset artist Rob Heard (pictured) wants to create 72,396 hand-stitched figures that represent each of the British Servicemen whose bodies were never recovered.

It is an extension of his 2016 display, where he created and laid out 19,240 figures to signify those killed on the first day of the battle.

Some £150,000 is needed to fund

the latest installation, which is due to go on display in London next year to mark the centenary of Armistice Day.

The artist is already working around-the-clock to hand-make the figures, and for more details visit [www.shroudsofthesomme.com](http://www.shroudsofthesomme.com)



“  
Education  
was not the  
only worry  
raised  
”

Lady's first...



Picture: Steve Dock

THE first female officer has commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment. Her identity has not been revealed by the Army, but a statement confirmed that she would shortly begin her training to qualify as a Royal Armoured Corps troop leader.



A personal view from  
Sara Baade, Chief  
Executive of the Army  
Families Federation...

## VITAL FEEDBACK

OUR staff recently held the first AFF Scotland roadshow.

It was an honour to meet so many people to try and understand better what a posting to this part of the UK really means.

A great turnout highlighted the passion that Service families have for finding solutions to their problems.

And the big issue of the day was education.

We were made aware of concerns around accessing school places, differences in the curriculum compared to England and the impact of the later starting age for schoolchildren.

Thanks to families' feedback, we know this is something that needs further investigation.

Our education specialist has begun drafting a report that will be used to inform policy and hopefully instigate change.

However, education was certainly not the only worry that was raised.

Other concerns included the effect of Brexit and possible future independence for Scotland, and the impact this may have.

As the independent voice for all Army families, we will do everything we can to provide answers where there is uncertainty and support where it is most needed.



[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)



## “This is them no longer operating as lone sniper pairs”

– Sharp shooters, page 30

### NO CASHING IN

■ THE amount of money that personnel can withdraw from Forces Post Offices using the chip and pin facility has been capped.

From this month, customers will not be able to take out any more than £250 per day or £1,000 per month.

The rule has been introduced to stop anyone unfairly benefitting from exchange rate changes by making large cash withdrawals.

Emergency requests above these new limits will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be directed to local welfare teams.



### SOUTH SUDAN TASKING

■ ANOTHER 300 British troops will be deployed to South Sudan in support of the United Nations' efforts to increase stability in the country.

Around 100 Royal Engineers have been carrying out building tasks at UN camps there in preparation for the main deployment over the coming months.

This includes the construction of a hospital in Bentiu that will support more than 1,000 UN peacekeepers and staff.

Other planned engineering projects include a helicopter landing site in Malakal, facilities to improve water supply and drainage to prevent flooding.

### HAPPY SNAPPERS SOUGHT

■ ENTRIES are being sought for the 2017 Army Photographic Competition.

The closing date is September 27 and for entry details visit [www.army.mod.uk/photocomp](http://www.army.mod.uk/photocomp)



## Cadets cut it on Moroccan mountain

OFFICER cadets demonstrated their military potential when they rescued a stricken climber on a mountainside in Morocco.

The team (pictured), from East Midlands and Northumbrian Universities Officers' Training Corps, were on their way down from the 4,167m summit of Mount Toubkal – the highest peak in the Atlas Mountains – when they encountered a Colombian woman with a broken leg.

They applied a splint and carried her down to a refuge point, where she was then extracted on a mule.



### Bears and Bandits

■ A SEVEN-strong team of injured Servicemen and veterans completed a 250-mile skidoo expedition in northern Norway with military charity Pilgrim Bandits. The group battled temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius to complete the challenge and saw polar bears in the Svalbard archipelago.



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## "Army netball is in a great place"

—Sport's success, page 73

# FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

In aid of: Help for Heroes



## Peak pedalling power

TWO former Grenadier Guardsmen are starting out on a gruelling mission to cycle the length of Britain and climb its highest points to mark the tenth anniversary of a comrade's death. Sean Brindley and Ashley O'Sullivan were embarking on the Land's End to John O'Groats bike ride as this issue went to press and aim to complete the National Three Peaks Challenge immediately afterwards. The feat will see them cycle more than 1,000 miles and hike 27. As well as paying tribute to Gdsm Daniel Probyn (Gren Gds), who died in Afghanistan in 2007, the pair will be raising money for Help for Heroes. To support them visit [www.ep1challenge.com](http://www.ep1challenge.com)

“  
The service is still not good enough  
”



Picture: Shutterstock

## Housing 'doesn't measure up'

THE Army Families Federation's (AFF) latest report, *Army Families' Concerns 2016*, claims there is still much work to be done when it comes to providing satisfactory levels of Service accommodation.

The AFF received 1,454 queries in 2016 about CarillionAmey's maintenance work, an 18 per cent drop from 2015, which was a record year for complaints.

However, this was still 35 per cent higher than in 2014, the first year of the company's contract.

"This clearly shows that, even if there have been improvements, the service to our families is still not good enough," commented AFF chief executive Sara Baade.

"We will focus our work in 2017 by continuing to push for

improvements from CarillionAmey but also by challenging the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to review the current and future contract to ensure accommodation is getting the investment and resources needed to make it acceptable to Army families."

The report also disclosed that the AFF received nearly 700 complaints about the combined accommodation scheme, primarily over differences between estimations and final charges, while 321 families contacted them to express anxieties over initial future accommodation model proposals.

The main concern was that a move away from clustered housing and "patch life" would erode families' welfare support.

● **Home Truths – page 13**

## Knockout contribution

In aid of: Felix Fund



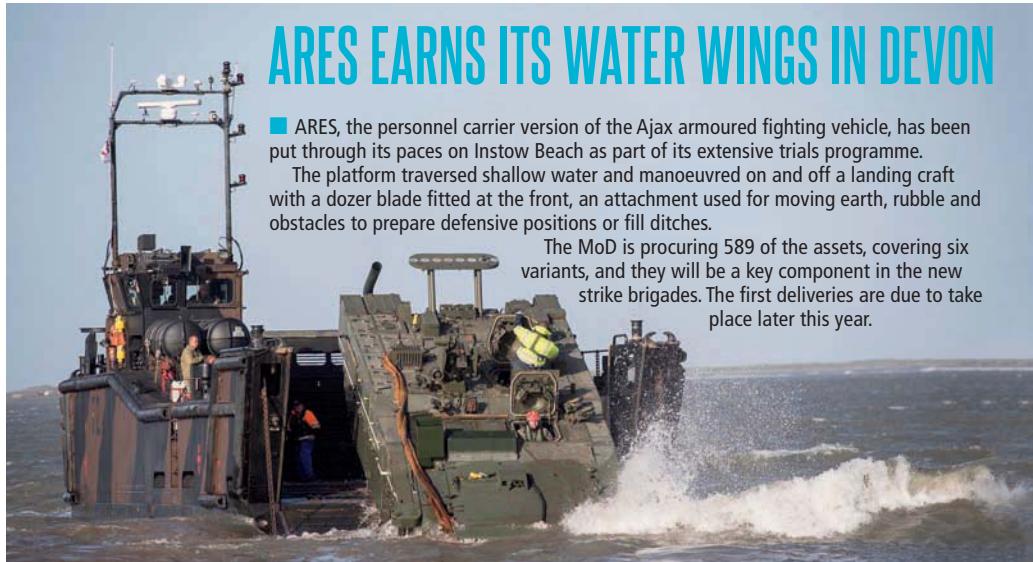
FELIX Fund, the bomb disposal charity, and the Autism Research Trust have both received cheques for £25,000 following a "Sappers versus Gunners" charity boxing match and auction evening organised by 101 (City of London) Engineer Regiment (EOD).

## ARES EARN'S ITS WATER WINGS IN DEVON

■ ARES, the personnel carrier version of the Ajax armoured fighting vehicle, has been put through its paces on Instow Beach as part of its extensive trials programme.

The platform traversed shallow water and manoeuvred on and off a landing craft with a dozer blade fitted at the front, an attachment used for moving earth, rubble and obstacles to prepare defensive positions or fill ditches.

The MoD is procuring 589 of the assets, covering six variants, and they will be a key component in the new strike brigades. The first deliveries are due to take place later this year.





# Off-the-shelf robot recce

THE MoD has asked the private sector to submit ideas for autonomous vehicles that could resupply front-line troops.

The newly launched Innovation Autonomy Challenge will provide £3 million to help develop potentially viable concepts.

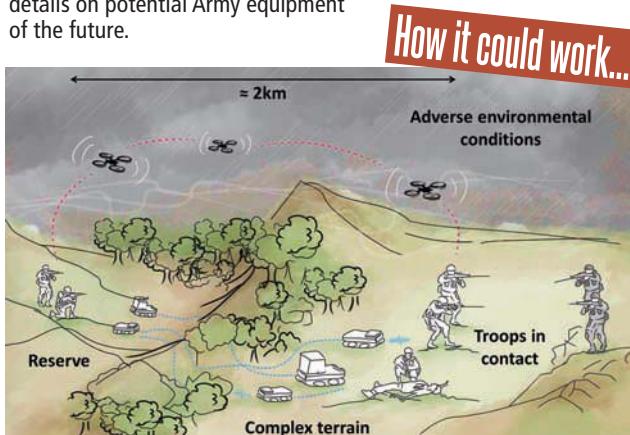
A spokesman for the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, which is leading the project, said the initiative was especially keen to talk to developers of commercial drone delivery services and robotic agriculture devices.

Last year retail giant Amazon made its first commercial delivery in the UK using a drone (pictured above), which can fly at up to 400ft (122m) and is capable of carrying 2.7kg.

It is hoped that by drawing on these sort of developments, a similar

technology could be used in combat scenarios (see below).

The initiative is part of a wider move to develop innovative military technologies. Turn to page 34 for more details on potential Army equipment of the future.



## Ant announces new challenge...

ELITE operator-turned-TV star Ant Middleton is the latest celebrity ambassador of Forces charity SSAFA. Recently seen on the Channel 4 show *Mutiny*, Middleton served in the military for a number of years including a spell with the Royal Engineers. "I know from personal experience the difficulties that befall many of our men and women and I'll do all I can to raise awareness," he said.



## IN MAIL INCOMING

SERVICE personnel can sign up to the system that has replaced e-blueys.

INTouch was introduced last month. It allows troops to upload letters, high quality photos and documents to a website, which can be securely printed and issued to deployed troops.

To register for the new service, which can take up to 48 hours to activate, log on to [www.neopost.co.uk/intouch](http://www.neopost.co.uk/intouch)

## TIME FOR A BREW?

SSAFA has announced the dates for this year's Big Brew Up.

The annual event encourages friends, family and colleagues to come together and host a tea party while raising funds for the military community. Events will run from June 19 to 23. For fundraising packs visit [www.ssafa.org.uk/bigbrewup](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/bigbrewup)



## SPINE LINE COMPETITION



WIN

LAST month's spine line clues were inspired by the rugby union showdown at Twickenham.

(Owain) Davies, (Rhys) Dimmock-Williams, (James) Farrell and (Gareth) Rees all scored tries in the 2016 match.

This month *Soldier* has teamed up with the sock specialist Heat Holders ([www.heatholders.co.uk](http://www.heatholders.co.uk)) to offer two readers a year's supply of footwear – 12 pairs in a range of models and colours to keep your step strong in all seasons.

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

Answers to the usual address or [comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk](mailto:comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk) by May 31.

# LAND, SEA OR AIR? GET A DISCOUNT ON THE ROAD

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#### Important information

Official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Ford Focus ST-Line range: urban 33.2-67.3 (8.5-4.2), extra urban 60.1-83.1 (4.7-3.4), combined 46.3-74.3 (6.1-3.8). Official CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 140-99g/km.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results (EU Directive and Regulation 692/2008), are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

\*Military Saving programme available to current and ex-Service Personnel. Including veterans and retired members of the UK Armed Forces. Customer savings of 5% to 20% off the On The Road price available across the Ford range (excluding KA+, Mustang, Focus RS and selected Mondeo, Edge and Ranger models) on vehicles contracted from 1st April 2017 and 30th December 2017 and registered between 1st April 2017 and 30th June 2018. Retail customers only. This promotion cannot be used in conjunction with other manufacturer promotions or incentives. At participating Ford dealers – for terms and conditions, including the eligibility criteria, eligible models and customer savings visit: [www.ford.co.uk/militarysales](http://www.ford.co.uk/militarysales)



Picture: Andrew Linnett

# Taking stock of new store

FORCES personnel are to benefit from a new state-of-the-art logistics facility that it is claimed will deliver an Amazon-style service for the military community.

The Defence Fulfilment Centre in Donnington, Shropshire spans the size of ten football pitches and will form a central hub for the MoD's estimated £30 billion inventory.

It will give soldiers quick access to the commodities they need at home and on operations overseas.

Included among the items to be stored will be spare parts, food, clothing and medical supplies, while 21st century IT support will ensure stock levels are accurately managed.

The centre replaces outdated facilities at the site that were largely built during the Second World War.

"This will transform the way we support our Servicemen and women," said Lt Gen Paul Jaques, Chief of Materiel (Land) at Defence Equipment and Support.

"Contribution to operational readiness through the provision of supplies and commodities to our Armed Forces will be on a par with industry best practice."

The facility cost £83 million but its streamlined distribution and storage system is expected to create savings of some £500 million by 2028, according to the MoD.



## Poppy art goes public

An art exhibition marking the sacrifice of soldiers who fought in all conflicts since the First World War has gone on display at the National Memorial Arboretum.

The War Poppy Collection by Jacqueline Hurley (left) features 41 expressionist works and was inspired by the death of her friend Mne Neil Dunstan (RM), who was killed in Afghanistan in 2008.

It can be viewed for free in the arboretum's new Remembrance Centre until July 9.

“  
This will  
transform the  
way we support  
our Servicemen  
and women  
”

“

## MINORITY REPORT

THE Army's policing community has launched a new scheme aimed at boosting the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) troops in its ranks.

1st Military Police Brigade has appointed two junior NCOs to act as so-called reverse mentors.

The pair will be responsible for sharing knowledge and views about diversity up and down the chain of command.

Lcpl Pamela Joseph, a Reservist with 116 Provost Company, 3 RMP, is one of those who volunteered for the post.

"For BAME initiatives to be successful they must encompass the views of all participants," she said.

The scheme is part of wider plans to increase the overall proportion of BAME troops in the Army to ten per cent by 2020.

**IN NUMBERS:**

**25%**

Proportion of soldiers who apply to be a sniper who actually make the grade. Find out more about the sniper commanders' course on page 30.

## DITCH THE DOCTRINE

THE Army Warfare Branch has launched a doctrine amnesty as part of plans to create a new centralised library.

Units are being urged to send any out-of-date publications, as well as current literature they no longer need, to the branch's new librarian Hayley Williams at Army Warfare Branch, HQ Field Army, Land Warfare Development Centre, Waterloo Lines, Imber Road, Warminster, BA12 0DJ.

The amnesty will be used to create an archive of British Army doctrine dating back to the early 20th century.

## A NEW CHALLENGE

JUNIOR soldiers on phase one training at Army Foundation College Harrogate can now study for a BTEC in public services.

The level three qualification was introduced to give new recruits already proficient in literacy and numeracy an academic challenge.

It covers topics such as government, policy, teamwork, leadership and health.

Picture: Mark Owens



## "It's a chance to see what could be"

– Future tech, page 34

### GOOD DRILLS

#### MUSIC AWARDS

DRUMMER sergeant Sgt Callum Marr (AGC (RMP)) and pipe major WO2 Peter MacGregor (Scots) have been ranked among the best musicians in the Service. The former was named top drummer at the Army Piping and Drumming Championships in Edinburgh, with his counterpart scooping the best piper accolade.



Picture: Shutterstock

#### MEDICAL MARVEL

A SOLDIER from 1 Armoured Medical Regiment passed one of the US Army's toughest tests. Pte Aaron Eastman (RAMC) received the Expert Medical Field Badge after 120 hours of casualty care, fitness and military skills.



#### EXTREMIST INTEL

GERMANY'S military is investigating claims of right-wing extremism in its ranks. According to a letter to parliament from the country's defence minister, 53 incidents have been logged this year and 143 cases in 2016, including allegations of soldiers performing Nazi salutes and making racist remarks.



#### BAD DRILLS



Picture: Steve Dolk

**Aiming high:** Training for the first Op Toral tour has been intense

## Keeping tempo up for Kabul

TOOPS from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment have been focusing on the mental as well as the physical aspects of training as they prepare for their first stint on Operation Toral.

Around 450 personnel are set to deploy to Kabul in two rotations beginning in August.

Each tour will last four months and the battalion will form the core of the Kabul Protection Unit, enabling the Nato mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces.

"While out there they may have to

make big decisions rapidly and on their own," commanding officer Lt Col Sam Humphris told *Soldier*.

"As such, we are pushing personal responsibility and judgemental training very hard as underlying themes throughout our preparations."

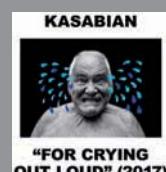
The Service personnel have already undertaken live-firing in Otterburn and Warcop (see page 22) and their training will be capped by urban and night-driving packages plus stints at the combined arms tactical trainer and command and staff trainer at Warminster's Land Warfare Centre.



## IN THIS MONTH'S REVIEWS



"The use of CGI doesn't fully pay off"



KASABIAN

"FOR CRYING OUT LOUD" (2017)



PAGE 61

RANGE ROVER EVOQUE. DISCOVERY SPORT.



# MILITARY SAVINGS AT WESTOVER



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Introducing our most versatile compact SUV to date. The Discovery Sport is perfect for the great outdoors. A generous storage space of 1,698 litres and clever 5+2 seating makes for a great indoors too. If you're a full-time serving member or former serving\* member of Her Majesty's Forces, you're entitled to preferential prices on any new Land Rover.

Models shown are the Range Rover Evoque and the Discovery Sport. Official fuel consumption figures for the Discovery Sport in mpg (l/100km): Urban 38.2 (18.3) – 40.4 (8.5), Extra urban 49.6 (9.7) – 50.4 (7.0), Combined 44.8 (12.8) – 46.3 (7.5). Combined CO2 emissions g/km: 166 - 162. Range Rover Evoque Fuel economy figures in mpg (Coupé/five-door) Combined<sup>†</sup>: 68.8/65.6 - 36.2/36.2 Combined CO2 emissions g/km: 181 - 109.

All data subject to official tests and certification. A vehicle's actual fuel consumption may differ from that achieved in such tests and these figures are for comparative purposes only.

\*Terms and conditions apply. Savings correct at time of print.





# THE BIG PICTURE

WARCOP, CUMBRIA

## IN THE FIRING LINE

TROOPS from 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment conduct live-firing as part of their training for a deployment to Afghanistan on Operation Toral later this year (see page 20). They will form the core of the Kabul Protection Unit for trainers, advisers and mentors to the Afghan security forces, who were recently subjected to one of the deadliest Taliban attacks in years when insurgents struck an army headquarters in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Picture: Steve Dock



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# SPACE AND TIME

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## Black Watch troops break with routine and get back to business in the desert

**T**HERE are no distractions to be found out here," says Maj Rob Smith (Scots) as his personnel disperse across the sandy and mountainous expanses of south Jordan.

"The ranges are amazing and it has fantastic scenery with demanding terrain, which we wouldn't necessarily get in the UK – especially with training areas being so busy."

The officer commanding Delta Company of



Report: Sarah Goldthorpe

Pictures: Graeme Main







66

**The ranges are amazing and it has fantastic scenery with demanding terrain**

99

→ 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland might well be pleased.

Not only has he helped to pull off an interesting overseas trip for the 80-odd soldiers who make up his composite company, but he has ticked some serious boxes when it comes to brushing up on the basics.

Over four weeks, Exercise Olive Grove tested the troops on all their light infantry skills, from ambushes and section attacks to defensive operations, urban fighting and counter-IED.

A live-firing package was also included.

"Jordan offers something completely different," the officer adds.

"We are doing training and it's good training – which isn't always the case in barracks, where other priorities can unpick your plans."

It seems the experience has been rewarding in many ways – not least by giving them the gifts of space and time.

"Talk about fantastic opportunities," continues Maj Smith. "I'd never have got 48 guys through their team medic training in such a short time frame in the UK."

He continues: "The emphasis has been on building section cohesion by improving our basic skills and our junior commanders."

For some, it was a welcome taste of a →



**"Fantastic opportunity":** The exercise allowed The Black Watch's reconnaissance, sniper and rifle platoons to operate collectively and progress to a joint training phase with members of the Jordanian Armed Forces

→ very different environment – and not just because of the Jordanian troops they found themselves working alongside.

"It's not like you expect a desert to be, where it's hot constantly," comments Pte Ryan Braes (Scots).

"There's been a couple of nights where we have been stuck on a mountain and it's been cold with torrential rainfall.

"But it's better than the UK, put it that way."

At a time when the battalion has various commitments, both at home and abroad, the chance to escape the day-to-day has been as good for morale as anything else.

"The Jocks have really enjoyed being out here as a company," Maj Smith adds.

"The feedback that we have received is that the section commanders and junior leaders have appreciated having the opportunity to train ourselves.

"Normally, you wouldn't have a company going away by itself, you'd be assisted by an external unit.

"But this presented a fantastic opportunity for something that's going to benefit us in the long-term.

"Guys have relished having the time, space and resources to build their teams." ■





## OLIVE GROVE: THE VERDICT

There's been a lot of getting back to basics and getting down to the bread and butter of infanteering. It's been good to do section attacks and some live-firing

It's been great to come over to a different country and experience a different type of environment and training

LCpl Joe Bosman (Scots)

LCpl Anthony Broatch (Scots)



# 5

## WAYS TO STAY ON YOUR GAME IN THE DESERT

Advice for troops training in warmer climes

### 1. STAY HYDRATED



+ Becoming as little as two per cent dehydrated can decrease your ability to perform and make you prone to heat injury. During exercise in the heat drink between half and one litre per hour. A litre should also be drunk one to two hours afterwards and it's important to keep eating to replace electrolytes lost in sweat.

### 2. WEAR YOUR SUNSCREEN



+ This is an essential part of admin in hot environments. Sunburn can lead to discomfort, pain and, in serious cases, hospital admission. Most people do not apply sunscreen correctly – it should be applied 30 minutes before being exposed to the sun and again immediately before.

### 3. COVER UP



+ Although sunscreen will help protect you, the best prevention is to cover up. Wide brim hats can prevent sunburn to the neck and face, and provide a cooler environment around your head. Rolling sleeves down will protect the skin on the arms too. Helmets and body armour can increase your risk of heat injury so remove them when safe to do so.

### 4. REMEMBER FOOT ADMIN



+ Blisters and skin infections in the feet are more common in hot environments. Changing your socks daily and keeping feet clean and dry will help. Remember to check your boots for bugs too.

### 5. RECOGNISE THE SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS



+ It can be life-threatening but early treatment helps. Symptoms can include agitation, unusual behaviour, vomiting, staggering, cramps, disturbed vision, confusion and dizziness. If these are identified, stop all activity and lie the casualty down, elevate the feet, strip them to their underwear and sponge or spray them with cool water and fan the skin. If conscious, give them water and seek medical help.





# UNDERCOVER COMMANDERS

Snipers step up for leadership role

Report: Becky Clark Pictures: Steve Dock

**B**EING a sniper is a tough gig. Tabbing for miles with 40kg of kit while trying to remain hidden from the enemy; lying motionless in a cold, damp hide for hours on end; carrying out complex mathematical calculations for one shot at a target 900 metres away – it's not for everyone.

In fact, only around a quarter of those who apply make the grade.

But for the personnel who do, and have proved themselves in the field, the next step is to train as a sniper section or platoon commander.

At Warminster's Specialist Weapons School a new course has been introduced to give soldiers and junior officers alike the skills to lead from the front.

Run twice a year, the training is open to Infantry and Royal





### FLEXIBLE FIREPOWER

THE practical phases of the sniper commanders' course take place across the UK to expose the students to a range of different environments.

Rural packages are staged in Otterburn and Spadeadam in Cumbria, while the ranges on Salisbury Plain Training Area offer a variety of target distances (above and below).

Urban drills are conducted at Fort Blockhouse in Gosport, where snipers practise skills such

as concealment (right) and loophole shooting (bottom right). This method involves aiming through a gap in a wall from a position further back, requiring a series of complicated mathematical equations to calculate angles and distance correctly.

The final test exercise is held at Caerwent Training Area and consists of a week-long counter-sniping package.

Working as a platoon in a built-up setting, the would-be commanders must protect a company-strong friendly force from enemy marksmen.





66  
They are  
working as part  
of something  
bigger  
99



**Above:** The sniper commanders navigate towards their objective across boggy terrain at Spadeadam in Cumbria.

**Left:** Watching a target from an observation post within an urban environment

**Think you might  
have what it takes?**  
Speak to your unit's  
courses clerk and  
consult the *Infantry  
Courses Handbook*  
for dates

→ Armoured Corps troops, as well as the Royal Marines and RAF Regiment, and features a demanding combination of classroom and practical work.

Over 12 weeks (eight for the officers) the students undergo an intensive package of classroom lessons and range work, in addition to challenging exercises in different urban and rural environments.

NCOs on the course will also complete a four-week instructors' package, qualifying them to teach newer infantrymen the dark art of sniping.

Capt Alistair Bexon (R Welsh), officer commanding the school's sniper wing, explained how the emphasis is on understanding where the students' own units fit into the bigger battlefield picture.

"This is them no longer operating as lone sniper pairs and instead working as part of something bigger," he said.

"They learn about the section or platoon in a battlegroup context, and where it fits into the Istar capability, for example, or how it can support the recce platoons and so on.

"It also tests their ability to carry out command and control, as well as to conduct combat estimates and plan

their own missions."

With the pilot packages successfully completed, organisers are now keen to build the course's profile and increase take-up.

"Not that many people are aware of it yet, so we are currently only filling about half of our available slots," explained Capt Bexon.

"To be accepted onto the training you need to be a qualified sniper and have done the relevant Brecon course for your rank.

"We're also looking for guys with some prior experience of leadership in a rifle company and who are tactically astute in addition to having the confidence to brief and advise the chain of command."

After months of gruelling mental and physical tests there's no doubt the graduates of this course will have earned their place among an elite group.

And while they may be small in number, their ability to lead troops in this niche field means they will continue to punch above their weight on British Army operations around the world for the foreseeable future. ■



# GLIMPSE into the FUTURE

Troops have their say on proposed new equipment

If you think the Army Warfighting Experiment (AWE) is a sort of window to the future where soldiers zip around on pumped-up quad bikes, supplies are transported to the front line by giant unmanned aerial vehicles and section leaders control the battlespace exclusively on screen... well, you'd be right.

Don't expect to be issued with this array of high-tech items any time soon, though.

Many of the devices trialled on Salisbury Plain during this event are years away from combat-readiness and even when they are fully developed there's no guarantee they will fit the MoD's requirements of the day.

What the AWE was really about was bringing together a group of leading manufacturers and Armed Forces personnel.

"This was a superb opportunity to see how industry can work with us," said Lt Col Nick Serle (Lancs), commanding officer of the Infantry Trials and Development Unit, which organised the event with Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S).

"It's a chance for the Army to see things that could be available in the near future and we also use it as a training opportunity.

"Staff who procure equipment are here as well as personnel from Army Headquarters, who set the requirements."

A few months ago defence companies were invited to submit products for the trials and from 275 initial submissions 72 were selected.

They were put through their paces over four weeks in a range of scenarios by around 200 personnel from 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment, 51 Squadron, RAF Regiment and 45 Commando, Royal Marines that culminated in a day of demonstrations and displays at Copehill Down.

The results were then fed back to the manufacturers and MoD procurement teams to jointly solve capability challenges.

Here's a flavour of the wide range of kit that came under scrutiny at the event...



## Armoured casualty evacuation rescue system

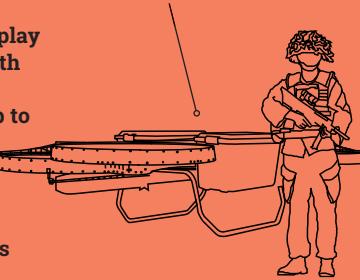
"This is my highlight of the trials," said Sjt Marcus Williams (Rifles), attached to the Armoured Trials and Development Unit. "The winch and pulley system is superb, allowing personnel to be pulled out of the top of the Warrior quickly while a padded chute enables the driver to be extracted through the rear door and provides a smooth interior path to prevent further injury at the same time. "It can take a quarter of an hour to get an injured driver out of this vehicle normally but with this system that process is cut to just a couple of minutes."



## Pilotless flying supply vehicle

This autonomous, low maintenance logistics supply vehicle, called the Marshal UAS, was only on static display but it has real potential. With a footprint of a small car, it can carry a 130kg load at up to 100mph over a range of 120 miles. Electric or petrol-powered, it could be used to carry supplies to troops over buildings, rivers and mountains.

The Marshal UAS can lift 130kg and can fly at nearly the same speed as a typical light helicopter



## Off-road load carrier

A potential replacement for quad bikes, the Can-Am Outlander is a two-person machine and has an extended load bed. It can carry 360kg of stores and pull a trailer weighing 750kg. It also has a front-mounted winch and run-flat tyres. "This really fits in with our 'fight light' philosophy because it could carry kit right to the front line," said LCpl John Forester (Mercian). "It covers ground very well and its 20-litre fuel tank means it can go all day without the need for refuelling."

## Magnetic shoulder mount

This piece of kit enables one-handed magazine changes and firing, amongst other benefits. Pte Bradley Pegg (Mercian, pictured) praised it. "This is great for close-quarter combat," he told *Soldier*. "You can let the gun hang down off your chest, giving you two free hands but can swing it up into a firing position really quickly when you need to."





66  
This is an opportunity  
to see how industry  
can work with us  
99

### Urban vertical access kit

This lightweight gear is based on commercially-manufactured rock-climbing kit and is designed to allow troops to safely escape a building up to 15 metres high with no assistance on the ground. Just two days' training is required and the compact system weighs less than two kilograms.



### Portable solar panel

The Rapid Roll T can deliver around 100 kw per hour of power (enough to run 2,000 50-watt light bulbs) and can be moved by vehicle, trailer or underslung on a helicopter. A motorised spool enables it to be rolled up in just five minutes. It runs silently and on an operation it could power a 120-bed mobile clinic.



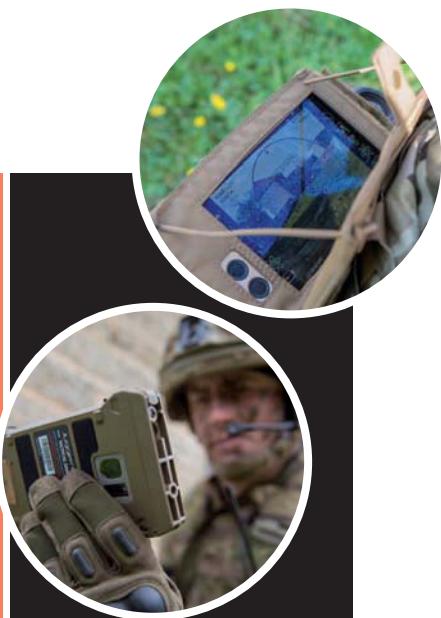
### Thermal targets

Conventional targets obviously cannot be used for night exercises but a new model developed by Qinetiq can. It is equipped with its own power source and the design means it can use the electric current to replicate the heat signature of a human body when viewed through a thermal imager (pictured above), making it perfect for such training. It can also sustain high levels of ballistic damage.



### Water generator

Imagine being able to produce 1,000 litres of drinking water per day out of thin air. The Veragon V10A10 does just that by extracting water particles out of even a dry desert atmosphere, offering a viable alternative to natural sources. It is built to a robust specification, allowing it to be deployed on a C-130, underslung on a helicopter or mounted on a trailer or flatbed.



### Battlefield management system

There were several situational awareness tools being trialled by Service personnel during the AWE, and one of the favourites was the Rheinmetall Argus Integrated Soldier System featuring a radio plus a smartphone-style device running battle management software. The user can see tactical data overlaid on maps and indicate friendly or foe positions or guide section commanders around the combat zone. One of the testers, Sgt Paul Simmonds (Mercian), said: "I can still get net comms in my ear but even when I'm in cover I can understand where my men are, where they need to go and coordinate their movements without the need for vocal commands."





"THE FUTURE OF  
CASUALTY  
EVACUATION IS HERE"



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## (R)-LIFT SYSTEM

LIGHTWEIGHT  
INTEGRATED  
FIELD TRANSPORT

In critical situations the right equipment can make the difference between success and failure. Whether it's casualty evacuation, scaling walls or carrying equipment MATBOCK has created a single, multi-purpose operational tool: The LIFT System.

The LIFT SYSTEM utilises the collapsible Combat Carbon Poles that provide the user a range of configurations:  
The LIFT ladder, Extension Pole, R-LIFT (rigid litter) and S-LIFT (semi-rigid litter).

Designed to be as light as possible, they collapse small enough to be worn on the back of any plate carrier. These poles shed weight without compromising capability for transporting loads up to 180 kg (400 lbs).

Utilising the R-LIFT stretcher configuration, the LIFT System can be used for rapid casualty evacuation. Deployed in seconds, the stretcher can support a fully loaded soldier with additional straps and inflatable bladder for head support.

Whatever the use, the LIFT system is the lightest rigid or semi-rigid expedient medical litter-stretcher-ladder solution available.

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LEVEL  
PEAKS  
ASSOCIATES

# EAT, SLEEP, JUMP, REPEAT

Interviews: Becky Clark Pictures: Steve Dock and LCpl Ian Cain, Para



Being a Red Devil requires serious skills and dedication. With another action-packed season underway, *Soldier* caught up with three freshly qualified team members to find out what it takes to make the cut in the world-famous outfit ➤



## Sgt Dean Walton

Age: 31

**Profile:** As well as being a display jumper, Sgt Walton is the team's sergeant major, responsible for bookings, planning and discipline.

Nothing compares to being in the Red Devils. It's 100 per cent the best job in the world. Qualification takes place in California, where we have to successfully complete around 100 jumps to be certified. The misconception is that we're out there having a good time but that's not the case at all. The pressure is on from the start and if you have one bad landing or you miss your target that could mean you don't make the team. It's that strict and that's because we do the most difficult displays in the world. Everything's new so you don't know how it will go – on my first jump with a flag, for example, I didn't know how it was going to affect the canopy or the landing. It really put me out of my comfort zone and forced me to learn new skills. We're always pushing the limits and I like that. I'm so happy to have qualified this year.



“

## Cpl Tom Blakey

Age: 45

**Profile:** Having previously been a member of the team from 1999-2003, Cpl Blakey called time on his commitment to deploy on operations. He left the Army briefly in 2014 before becoming a Reservist and has now rejoined the squad as the first ever full-time Reserve service member.

Even though I left the Red Devils in 2003 I continued skydiving with the Royal Logistic Corps and The Royal British Legion so I've never really been away from the sport. This is a brand new post and I'm super-chuffed about it. It's a very high-tempo, professional squad and an amazing opportunity to represent the regiment and be part of the world's most famous parachute team. It's a dream job.



## Pte Ivan Jacobs

Age: 26

**Profile:** South African by birth, Pte Jacobs followed in his father's footsteps when he joined The Parachute Regiment five years ago.

My dad was a paratrooper in the South African army and it's something I always wanted to do. It's been my ambition to become a Red Devil since I joined up. I have a lot of mates back at battalion who aspire to it too. The training camp in California was tough – we were doing seven or eight jumps a day from 13,000 ft to start with, down to 1,500 by the second week. It takes its toll on your body. At the end of the day you grab some food and go straight to bed and then it starts again at six the next morning. I'm proud to have qualified and I think my family are too.

## IN NUMBERS

# 100

Jumps completed by each Red Devil on their two-week pre-season training package in California

# 5,000

Size, in square feet, of the largest Union flag used during displays. The Red Devils are one of the few teams in the world qualified to jump with a flag of that size



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Words: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Steve Dock and Graeme Main

# THE DREADED KNOCK

Families describe the moment their world fell apart, and the Service personnel who helped them through...



“**I** SAW two people outside, and an MoD ID,” recalls Rachel Prosser. Her voice starts to break. “I thought, ‘it’s going to be ok, he has just been injured and is being brought home early.’”

The partner of WO2 Pez Thomas (R Signals) had been busy writing an e-bluey when the shattering news of his death in Afghanistan arrived at her front door.

“All they could tell me was that he had been killed at 1500,” she adds.

Helena Tym, mother of the late Rfn Cyrus Thatcher (Rifles), likens this awful moment in time to being hit in the face with a sledgehammer.

“I will never be the person I was the minute before that knock,” she tells *Soldier*. “It changes you forever.”



66

I thought, 'it's  
going to be ok,  
he has just been  
injured'

66



→ "I know people who screamed, or who refused to believe it."

"But I don't really remember much of what was said to me."

"Two blokes turned up at the door, and it was when I heard the words 'is there somewhere we can sit down?' that I knew."

Brig (Retd) Mike Griffiths relives the dreaded knock on his door in 2010 with similar clarity.

His son Capt Andrew Griffiths (Lancs) had been seriously injured in an explosion in Helmand province and would later die of his wounds at Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

"It was 0730 and the doorbell rang," he recalls.

"Unusual, but I didn't think anything of it."

"I looked down the stairs and saw it was my boss, and immediately I knew this wasn't going to be good."

"I knew he was here to say something important and my wife, who was getting ready for work, needed to sit down."

"He said 'it's bad news, Andrew stood on an IED'."

The ex-officer falters.

"I'm sorry," he says, quickly composing himself. "But I can still see my wife's face."

It seems no one can return to this experience without unravelling for a second.

So it is understandable that the soldiers tasked with delivering tragic news to families and supporting them in the aftermath of a death or very serious injury pretty much dread the day when they must step up.

After the initial call by a casualty notification officer, visiting officers (VOs) quickly arrive.

Acting as a link to the many organisations that can support bereaved families, the troops assist with the relentless admin that follows a military death, and any concerns or worries there may be – all after just three days of training.

"It's one of the scariest things I've ever done," admits WO2 Andrew Luckhurst (RA), who undertook the VO role last year. "I would rather have gone back to Afghanistan for six months."

"Ask any soldier who has done VO duty, and they will say the same."

"It's fear of the unknown; you don't know what you're walking into."

"And no training can

prepare you for an angry, grieving father smashing up his living room."

With at least one visiting officer drafted in to support the next of kin of every soldier who dies – 51 in the British Army last year – these personnel are in demand.

But understandably, it is not a role many volunteer for.

"It must be exhausting; dealing with other people's grief is one of the hardest things you can do," continues Rachel (pictured left), who works with the Army Widows' Association to help prepare students on the VO training course.

"But I can't express how important it is."

"They step into our lives at a time when everything has crumbled."

For this reason, the burden is ultimately a very worthwhile one.

"Most visiting officers I have spoken to say they find it hugely rewarding," says course tutor Amanda Pearce.

The package that her and her colleagues in Army Personnel Services Group put together for potential VOs takes them through everything from the procedures around police investigations, inquests and repatriations, to the soft skills needed to deal with emotional trauma.

At the end of the training, actors are brought in so that the Servicemen and women can test themselves in a "real-life" bereavement scenario, which sees them challenged to deal with things humanely rather than professionally.

Amanda explains: "There are two things I say to students – firstly, be yourself, and secondly, in the last moment before you knock on that door, consider how you would want your own family to be dealt with."

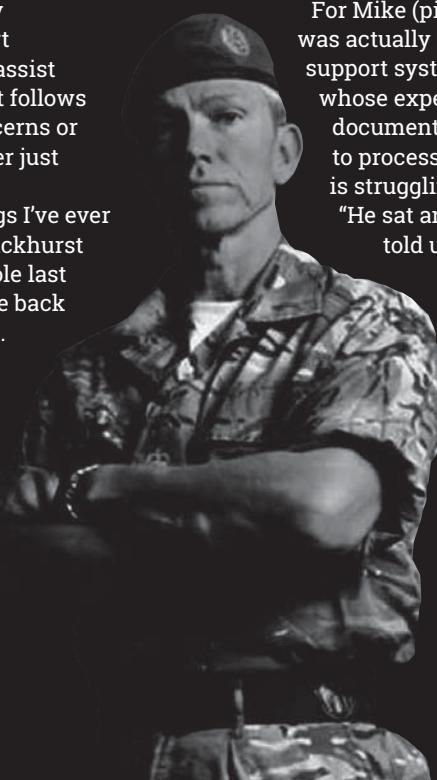
For Mike (pictured below left while serving), who was actually in charge of the Army's bereavement support system when his son was wounded and whose experiences were captured in the BBC documentary *Our War*, VOs are vital in helping to process information at a time when the brain is struggling to function.

"He sat and took notes while the doctors told us about everything they had done, so when we asked questions later, he had it all," the retired officer explains.

"That was so important."

"There was a lot of medical and technical jargon thrown at us."

"But he just kept organising things, and making it work. That allowed us to concentrate on one thing: our son."



# “I’ll never be the same person I was the minute before that knock”



### READING TIP

Helena Tym's account of her loss, *Chin Up, Head Down: A Mother's Journey of Madness and Grief*, is out now



“He coped with seeing a family he knew really well come apart – and we really did come apart.

“But quietly, in the background he helped us to make all the right decisions.”

Helena (pictured above) agrees: “VOs have to pick up the pieces and carry us through.

“There are all these forms to deal with, asking for the date of death, age of death, cause of death.

“You are just so emotionally spent that nothing makes sense. And you’re just thinking, ‘he’s dead, what does any of this matter’.

“But my VO came along with a little black book and a pen, and was calm and very, very practical.”

According to those running the training course, one of the most important parts of the job is honesty.

How did this happen? Did their soldier suffer? Who is to blame? The questions in these first weeks can be endless, but VOs must only confirm what they know to be true.

One of the other more difficult tasks they must assist with is the return of personal effects – an important process that all three interviewees make a point of mentioning.

“What my VO didn’t quite account for was how upsetting that would be,” Rachel reflects.

“But to have Pez’s Bergen arrive without him absolutely broke me.

“Everything had to come back to me – even his dirty washing. It’s all part of the story of what happened to him, so it had to happen.”

Supporting families through their very worst hours like this is part of what is known as the “moral component” of the British Army’s fighting power.

Troops know that if the worst happens their families will be taken care of by their country and, importantly, by serving colleagues – who may even have known them.

“In my unit two people had been VOs so I leaned on them for support and guidance,” continues WO2 Luckhurst.

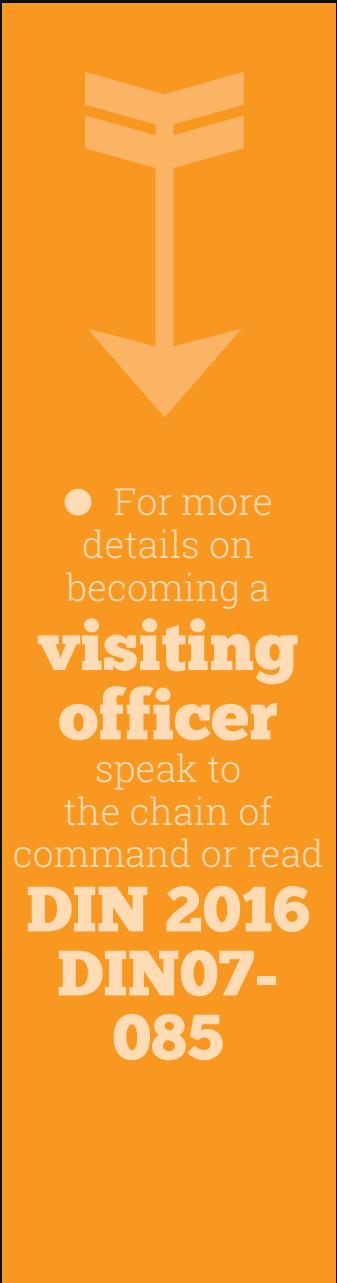
“People understood I was giving a lot of my time for this so they helped with my workload too. Sometimes I was in the office until 2300 getting things done.

“And there were times when I would go into work and have to just shut the door and gather my thoughts – I was emotionally drained.”

The role may be a challenging one, but for some it is the final thing they can do for a fallen comrade.

“The phrase that all widows hate to hear is ‘I’m being stood down’,” Rachel says.

“What you do as a VO really does have a lasting effect.” ■



● For more details on becoming a

### visiting officer

speak to the chain of command or read

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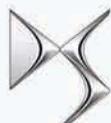
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## ► THE BEST EXERCISE IN THE WORLD IS LAUGHING

When you laugh your body is like a volcano, and you blast out all the debris of worry, heartache and stress. I try to make people laugh. People are too serious. It's a short life so enjoy every minute.

## ► CREATE A GAP BETWEEN EVENT AND RESPONSE

A lot of guys who come out of the Army jump straight into something, but you could widen that gap and give yourself some thinking and breathing space. I get tremendous joy when people ring me up and say they are feeling much better because of that simple philosophy.

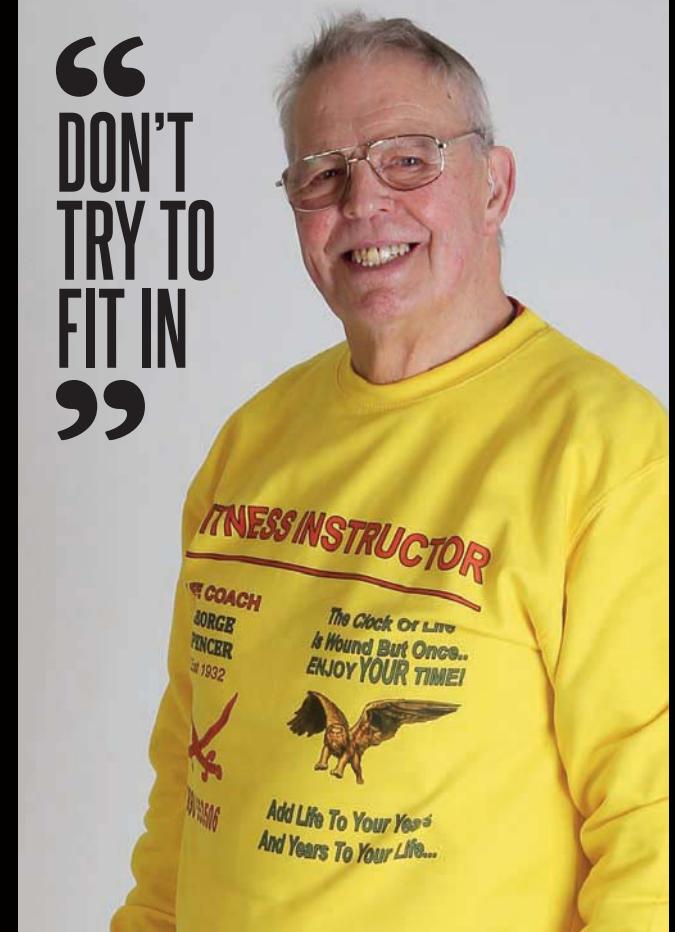
## ► PEOPLE CAN ONLY UPSET YOU IF YOU GIVE THEM PERMISSION

So withdraw your permission. Nobody can annoy me – it's impossible. This morning in my car a guy cut me up, and was effing and blinding at me. I wound the window down, listened to him and looked at him. I kept the "calm switch" on and widened the gap between event and response. And he settled down.

## ► I USE ADVERSITY

I love it. I want hardship because you can use that to strengthen yourself, like lifting weights, which I do every day to strengthen my body.

“  
DON'T  
TRY TO  
FIT IN  
”



# HARD-WON LESSONS

Army PTI-turned-life coach tells *Soldier* what life's ups and downs have taught him

## ► LANDING ON THE ALIEN PLANET CALLED CIVVY STREET IS A SHOCK

I did a lot of jobs, from being a waiter to building work. Then I realised I could do what I was born to do – be a fitness instructor. You are special, you are an individual and you are unique. So don't try to fit in.

## ► ACCEPT REALITY, LOOK AT WHAT YOU CAN DO BETTER AND BE PATIENT

I have hit many granite blocks in my life. A few years ago I was in a wheelchair and had leg ulcers. But I got myself training and walking again. Visualising myself as fit and healthy sped up that healing process. It's about positive thinking. You have to work at it, but eventually it becomes second nature.

**Name:** George Spencer

**Age:** 84

**Dates of service:**  
1962-1974

**Cap badges:** Coldstream Guards then Army Physical Training Corps

**Current status:**  
Volunteering his time as a life and fitness instructor, "the man in the yellow top" is a familiar face to many in Fleet, Hampshire. The octogenarian can often be found coaching people at the gym or giving talks at his local Sunrise care home.

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## 'Reserve system missing targets'

THE April edition carried an article mentioning the new Reserve attendance and pay service (RAPS), a system that is causing disquiet.

This is partly because of the lack of information. Briefings have raised questions that subject matter experts have been unable to answer.

The service appears to have been designed to meet the needs of the manned training days management tool, Churchill, with not much consideration for the realities of unit administration staff or Reservists.

The idea that an event is created and people log on to agree to attend and then get paid may work for the majority of situations. However, it doesn't seem to be flexible enough to take into account other working practices, such as Reservists working from home, attending events at very short notice or where people have had to change their plans at the last minute.

It also assumes access to the internet, which is a reasonable assumption for the majority of people but not everyone – and the connection is notoriously poor across the training estate.

Most Reservists will welcome RAPS but the fear remains that we'll end up with a system that isn't designed to do the job it's needed for, which will either impact on training or, more likely, mean that workarounds will be found that fudge it – **Name and address supplied**

**Lt Col Britt Haggerty, RAPS project manager, responds:** From the start, development of RAPS has been user-driven with a number of workshops held last year to ensure soldiers' concerns were addressed; many of the project team are Reservists with considerable experience.

Most Reserve centres now have Wi-Fi, but where none exists units have been advised to submit business cases to address this.

Mobile data usage is also extremely low – typically using RAPS for a week will be less than using Facebook for one hour.

The system is being developed in phases. The first is aimed at around 80 per cent of Reservists, while the next one will concentrate on those with different working practices, such as staff officers.

### Why Hogan helps

● I HAVE just read the article on Vicky-Marie Hogan in the April issue, 'I decided to be me', and as somebody who identifies as part of the transgender spectrum I find it great that she has been able to come out and offer support to others. I wish her well in the future and hope that through her example other LBGT Service personnel get the support they deserve. – **Mr J Kirby, London**

“  
It doesn't appear to be flexible enough  
”

‘  
RAPS  
’

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## RANT OF THE MONTH



Get it off your chest and on social media

Last month's April Fool's story on the 100th Army-Navy rugby match, "Teetotal at Twickers", caused a few dry mouths...



[www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine](http://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine)



**Garrie 'Grumps' Negus**

Brig Sam Adams... nice one whoever pennen it. Gave me a chuckle. Glad to see a decent April Fool for a change.



**Elaine Forman**

Funniest thing I've read on Facebook, ever.



**Luke Brown**

Brigadier Sam Adams, can't be real. May as well call him Carling McCarlingface.



**Gareth 'Parky' Parkinson**

They sneak one in every April. A few years back there was an article saying they were going to introduce gender neutral ranks; 'guardsperson' instead of guardsman etc, and a lot of people believed it.



[www.instagram.com/soldier\\_magazine](http://www.instagram.com/soldier_magazine)



**armyrugbyunion**

Anyone fall for the brilliant April Fool in *Soldier* magazine?



**gautamuk1**

I was kicking off when reading that article. Good one.



**debbiejeff**

Ha ha how funny. I was in total disbelief to start with, LOL, nice one.

**Your time cannot be counted**



**No one serving on these contracts is eligible**



## Tosca tour triggers confusion

I WOULD like to receive clarification on the criteria for the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal.

Having just returned from Operation Tosca in Cyprus, I'm getting mixed messages about the time served on this tour counting towards the decoration.

Our unit administration officer believes it does due to the wording of the relevant JSP but my chain of command says it doesn't. – **Name and address supplied**

**Lt Col (Retd) Kestrel Simson, SO2 Ceremonial, Operational and Service**

**Awards, replies:** The United Nations' decoration for those who are deployed on its peacekeeping force in Cyprus can be worn alongside other British honours.

Your time on this tour cannot be counted towards the 720 days of campaign service that are required for the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal because repeat deployments are marked with numerals on the medal and ribbon for each subsequent 180-day period of duty.

## THE JUBILEE LINE IS...?

● I LEFT the Army in 1993 and want to know if I'm eligible for any of the Jubilee medals and can wear them legally. I'm still working for the MoD and have been at the British Embassy in Berlin for 16 years. – **Name and address supplied**

**Lt Col (Retd) Kestrel Simson, SO2 Ceremonial, Operational and Service Awards, responds:**

There have been three medals celebrating an anniversary of the Queen's coronation; the Silver Jubilee Medal of 1977 (left), the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and the Diamond Jubilee, issued in 2012.

The Silver Jubilee Medal was awarded to specific individuals and the latter two to everyone in the Armed Forces who had served for five years or more.

As you left the military in 1993 you do not qualify but it is possible embassy staff are eligible so check your own regulations.



## AM I ENTITLED OR NOT?

● ARE full-time Reserve service (home commitment) personnel entitled to the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal or clasp if they served as a Regular before switching over?

They usually serve on three- or five-year contracts with the majority of these personnel extending their time beyond ten years. – **Name and address supplied**

**Lt Col (Retd) Kestrel Simson, SO2 Ceremonial, Operational and Service Awards, replies:** Currently, no one serving on this contract is eligible for that medal because it specifically rewards 15 years of service as a Regular.

Those who remain part of the Volunteer Reserves may be eligible for their Service medal and can use some of their time served as a Regular towards the ten years of service required for that decoration, although the regulations are now under review.

# BULLET POINTS

## CAREERS

**SSAFA** has teamed up with online learning business New Skills Academy to offer serving personnel, veterans and their families free training. Among more than 160 accredited packages on offer are courses in Microsoft Office and Sage Accounting, as well as digital marketing, business and horticulture. Visit [www.newsksacademy.co.uk](http://www.newsksacademy.co.uk)

**Veteran Employment Transition Support programme (VETS)**, aimed at connecting ex-Forces personnel with employers. For details visit [www.veteranemployment.co.uk](http://www.veteranemployment.co.uk)

**Transition Force** uses a combination of technology and events to provide personalised career support for ex-Service personnel nationwide. To register visit [www.transitionforce.com/events](http://www.transitionforce.com/events)

**Ex-Military Recruitment** helps former Service personnel from specialist technical regiments who are trained in electrical and mechanical engineering, logistics and telecommunications find similar civilian careers. For details visit [www.xmr.co.uk](http://www.xmr.co.uk)

## COMPETITIONS

**Spine line winner:** Mike Booth, Arnold, Nottingham.

## DIARY

**May 6:** **Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo** at King's Hall, Kingsway in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity. The show will feature The Military Wives Choir, pipes and drums and massed military bands. Doors open at 1730, performance starts at 1830. Tickets £10. Call 01782 206000.

**May 15:** **ID your stuff.** A free workshop from 1400 at the National Army Museum, London. Get help identifying artefacts, medals or military photographs. Visit [www.nam.ac.uk](http://www.nam.ac.uk)

**May 17:** **Give Me Your Love.** A new hour-long play about a controversial therapy for PTSD using MDMA at West End Theatre, Aldershot. Tickets £12. For details of other dates and venues visit [www.ridiculismus.com](http://www.ridiculismus.com)

**May 24:** **Annual fundraising 5km race** in aid of SSAFA's Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan branch. Two additional races will take place on June 21 and July 26 at Bute Park, Cardiff. For more

details on any of the events email [jnalrag@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jnalrag@hotmail.co.uk)

**May 27-28:** **Duxford Air Festival.** The first of three air shows at IWM Duxford in its centenary year. Tickets must be booked in advance and for more details visit [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

**July 14-16:** **The Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford** featuring a variety of flying displays, including the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and the Red Arrows. Tickets start at £34, under-16s go free. Visit [www.airtattoo.com](http://www.airtattoo.com)

## DIRECTORY

**ABF The Soldiers' Charity:**  
0845 241 4820

**Armed Forces Buddhist Society:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;  
[www.afbs-uk.org](http://www.afbs-uk.org)

**Armed Forces Christian Union:**  
01252 311221; [www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

**Armed Forces Muslim Association:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;  
[www.afma.org.uk](http://www.afma.org.uk)

**Armed Services Advice Project:**  
0808 800 1007; [www.adviceasap.org.uk](http://www.adviceasap.org.uk)

**Army Families Federation:**  
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[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

**Army LGBT Forum:**  
[www.armylgbt.org.uk](http://www.armylgbt.org.uk);  
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

**Army Libraries:** 01252 340094

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

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

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

**Blind Veterans UK:**  
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**Care After Combat:**  
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**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

**Children's Education Advisory Service:**  
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**Help for Heroes:**  
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;  
[www.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk)

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

**HighGround:**  
[www.highground-uk.org.uk](http://www.highground-uk.org.uk)

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:** 01252 787574

**Medal Office:**  
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

**Mutual Support (Multiple Sclerosis group):**  
[www.mutualsupport.org.uk](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk)

**National Ex-Services Association:**  
[www.nesa.org.uk](http://www.nesa.org.uk)

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

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

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

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

**Royal British Legion:**  
0808 802 8080;  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

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**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:**  
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**Scottish Veterans' Residences:**  
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**Stoll (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation):**  
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**The Not Forgotten Association:**  
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[www.nfassociation.org](http://www.nfassociation.org)

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[www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

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## INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at [www.armynet.mod.uk](http://www.armynet.mod.uk)

**ABN 43/17:** Civilian performance management and approach to reward 2017/18

**ABN 42/17:** Royal Corps of Signals golden hello financial incentive

**ABN 41/17:** Changes to recruiting and retention payment (flying)

**ABN 40/17:** Armed Forces Muslim Association Conference

**ABN 39/17:** Individual development evaluation and assessment dashboard

**ABN 38/17:** Honorary suffix title for The Royal Lancers

**ABN 37/17:** Introduction of Churchill planning demand service – military vehicles

**ABN 36/17:** 2017 Armed Forces pay review body pay award

**ABN 35/17:** Pay 16 pay protection

**ABN 34/17:** Delegated authority for substitution pay applications approval

**ABN 33/17:** Army Photographic Competition 2017

**DIN 2017DIN01-079:** 2016 Pay award for MoD community development officers

**DIN 2017DIN01-077:** Regular Army officer return of service policy on commissioning

**DIN 2017DIN01-076:** Opportunities for Defence Medical Services personnel to serve with the United Kingdom Special Forces Medical Group

**DIN 2017DIN01-075:** Army Medical Services Reserves global manning process guide

**DIN 2017DIN01-074:** Board and offer policy for the conversion of Army officers from SSC/SSC(LE)/SC to IRC/IRC(LE)

**DIN 2017DIN01-073:** Changes to Her Majesty's Passport Office rules for first adult British passports issued to Service personnel

**DIN 2017DIN01-072:** Revised mess and single accommodation charges for MoD civilians temporarily residing in Service messes in the UK

**DIN 2017DIN01-071:** Use of the Disclosure and Barring Service update service

**DIN 2017DIN01-070:** Defence contribution to Pride In London 2017

**DIN 2017DIN01-069:** Employment of full-time Reserve service (full commitment) personnel within the Army and other TLB

**DIN 2017DIN01-068:** Late entry commission in the Royal Artillery

**DIN 2017DIN01-067:** Civilian staff specifically recruited for overseas service – annual uplift to accommodation charges for civilians based overseas liable to pay accommodation costs

**DIN 2017DIN01-066:** The 66th International Military Protestant Convention, June 22-25, 2017, Mejannes-le-Clap, Gard, France

**DIN 2017DIN01-065:** Civilian permanent transfers – withdrawal of average property price lists

**DIN 2017DIN01-064:** Use of fee earner

**DIN 2017DIN01-063:** Revision of maximum figure for car import duty

**DIN 2017DIN01-062:** Operational deployment allowance

**DIN 2017DIN01-061:** Dental treatment rates overseas

**DIN 2017DIN01-060:** Amendments to the Armed Forces pension scheme 75

**DIN 2017DIN01-059:** 2016 Pay award for MoD community development workers

**DIN 2017DIN01-058:** MoD civilian medical practitioners pay award 2016

**DIN 2017DIN01-056:** Misconduct and recruitment – the cross-government internal fraud initiative

**DIN 2017DIN01-055:** Joint Personnel Administration: amendment to ethnicity categories

**DIN 2017DIN01-054:** Defence humanists annual general meeting 2017

**DIN 2017DIN02-004:** JSP 440 *The Defence Manual of Security, Resilience and Business Continuity* – publication of version 6.0

**DIN 2017DIN02-003:** Submarine security – access control policy

**DIN 2017DIN03-012:** Combined Aerial Target Service – user information

**DIN 2017DIN03-011:** Provision of meteorological and oceanographic support to MoD exercises and operations

**DIN 2017DIN03-010:** Publication of JSP 364 *Joint Services Explosive Ordnance Disposal and Search Manual*

**DIN 2017DIN03-009:** Exercise Saxon Warrior 17, Warfare Commanders' Conference, May 2-5 and 24-25, 2017

**DIN 2017DIN04-068:** Potential alternatives for PR1425 and PS870 sealants that are affected by Reach

**DIN 2017DIN04-066:** Anti-gravity treadmill

**DIN 2017DIN04-065:** Transfer of Defence Equipment and Support responsibility for management of Defender, Islander and Shadow air systems to the Air Support Operating Centre

**DIN 2017DIN04-064:** Declaration of obsolete NSNs within DMC CH (PLCE) spares for repairs

**DIN 2017DIN04-063:** Susat lamp change instruction

**DIN 2017DIN04-062:** Declaration of obsolescent and obsolete NSNs within DMC CH (PLCE)

**DIN 2017DIN04-061:** Air Commodities Team managed refuelling vehicles and equipment fleet, support contract

**DIN 2017DIN04-060:** Vitalograph Alpha IV 6000 Spirometer

**DIN 2017DIN04-059:** Notification of incorporation of population and human health factors into environmental information assessment regulations

**DIN 2017DIN04-058:** General service respirator sub-component availability

**DIN 2017DIN04-057:** Susat serial number duplication error

**DIN 2017DIN04-056:** Procedures for requesting a visit to Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers project at Rosyth Dockyard

**DIN 2017DIN04-055:** Publication of water safety equipment log block amendment 85

**DIN 2017DIN04-054:** Provision of a multimodal UK and worldwide commercial surface movements service

**DIN 2017DIN05-005:** Transitional records management direction for MoDnet

**DIN 2017DIN05-003:** The process and priorities for the provision of A4 Air Combat Service Support Unit assistance

**DIN 2017DIN05-002:** Records management – the 20-year rule

**DIN 2017DIN05-001:** Defence Attache and Loan Service Centre

**DIN 2017DIN06-009:** Process for calibrating and bump testing the Zellweger/Honeywell impact gas monitor (K102-6665-99-969-2136)

**DIN 2017DIN06-008:** JSP 403, volume 2, *Range Safety Notice 17-01, Changes to NLAW Range Infrastructure*

**DIN 2017DIN06-007:** Release of JSP 317, version 6.1, *Joint Service Safety Regulations for the Storage and Handling of Fuels, Lubricant and Associated Products*

**DIN 2017DIN07-059:** The Underwater Escape Training Unit

**DIN 2017DIN07-058:** Adventurous training – planning expeditions to Nepal in 2018

**DIN 2017DIN07-057:** Relocation of RAF-delivered fuels training

**DIN 2017DIN07-056:** Military annual training tests and workplace induction programme policy update

**DIN 2017DIN07-055:** Joining instructions for personnel attending chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and damage control and first aid courses at Triumph Squadron, HMS Raleigh

**DIN 2017DIN07-054:** Employment training administrative instruction for Royal Army Medical Corps environmental health technicians/practitioners

**DIN 2017DIN07-053:** Royal Air Force Centre of Aviation Medicine aviation medicine survival equipment course details, April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018

**DIN 2017DIN07-052:** Instructions for the all-arms Commando course

**DIN 2017DIN07-051:** United Kingdom and international events available to members of the UK volunteer Reserve Forces

**DIN 2017DIN07-050:** RAF opportunities for postgraduate study

**DIN 2017DIN07-049:** Army unit adventurous training officer – future training provision

**DIN 2017DIN07-048:** Exercise Pacific Longbow

**DIN 2017DIN07-047:** Royal Navy Intelligence Symposium, May 18

**DIN 2017DIN08-002:** Provision of ad hoc clothing including corporate/team identity clothing

**DIN 2017DIN09-009:** Minister (DP) Acquisition Awards 2017 – calling notice for nominations

**DIN 2017DIN09-008:** The Oliver Sword 2017

**DIN 2017DIN09-007:** The Alan Hirst Memorial Prize

**DIN 2017DIN10-025:** Army overseas sports visit

**DIN 2017DIN10-024:** Army Inter-Unit Cricket Cup Competition 2017

**DIB 11/17:** Launch of the new performance management framework for civilian staff for the 2017/18 reporting year

**DIB 10/17:** New chip and pin withdrawal limits at Forces Post Offices

Continued on page 54

## Intelligence continued

**DIB 09/17:** Imail INTouch hybrid mail welfare communications for deployed personnel

**DIB 08/17:** Armed Forces pay award 2017

**DIB 07/17:** New employment model: JPA career management information

**DIB 06/17:** A message from the permanent secretary and chief of defence staff on operational security

**DIB 05/17:** Combined accommodation assessment system for Service family accommodation overseas recovery plan outcomes

**DIB 04/17:** Defence secretary announces Iraq Historical Allegations Team to close this summer

## REUNIONS

**Army Apprentices National Memorial Trust annual reunion**  
weekend on May 6-7 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.  
All ex-apprentices welcome. Email [mohope118@gmail.com](mailto:mohope118@gmail.com)

**The Royal Pioneer Corps Association reunion** from June 30 to July 2 at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry. For more information contact 07999 947612.

**8 Regiment, RASC/RCT/RLC** 16th anniversary weekend, October 20-21. The event is open to any ex-member of the regiment, with their partner or guests, and any cap badges who served in the unit between October 1964 and July 2012. The venue for October 20 is the Army Reserve Centre, Wigan, with The Village on the Green Club in Aspull, Wigan, playing host the following day. For details contact Jimmy Aspinall via [jimmyasp@hotmail.com](mailto:jimmyasp@hotmail.com)

## ROADSHOWS

**The Army Engagement Team** wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. The event starts with a reception, is followed by a presentation, questions and culminates with refreshments. There will be a range of military personnel on hand to answer any of your questions. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to

[armymediocomm-aeg-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:armymediocomm-aeg-mailbox@mod.uk) with the event you are interested in attending.

**May:** 2, Dumfries; 3, Hamilton; 4, Perth.

## SEARCHLINE

Free photography workshops available to troops or veterans in Devon and Cornwall living with mental illness as a result of service. Visit [www.positivefocus.org.uk](http://www.positivefocus.org.uk)

Ian Sinclair is seeking memories and information about RAF Mafraq, Jordan circa 1945/46, where his grandfather Archibald Sinclair served as a staff sergeant in the Royal Engineers. Anyone with details is asked to contact him via [ian\\_js@hotmail.com](mailto:ian_js@hotmail.com)

Military charity SSAFA is taking bookings for its short breaks – free, week-long adventure holidays for the Forces community. A siblings and young carers trip will take place in Staffordshire from May 28, and a break for families with a child with an additional need or disability will run in Exmoor from July 29. For more details or to apply contact Hannah

Wiltshire on [hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk) or call 0207 463 9275.

The Royal Signals Amateur Radio Society is looking for enthusiasts to join its ranks. With its HQ in Blandford, the group would welcome serving and former signals trade specialists from any cap badge. Email general secretary John West on [g4lrg@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:g4lrg@yahoo.co.uk)

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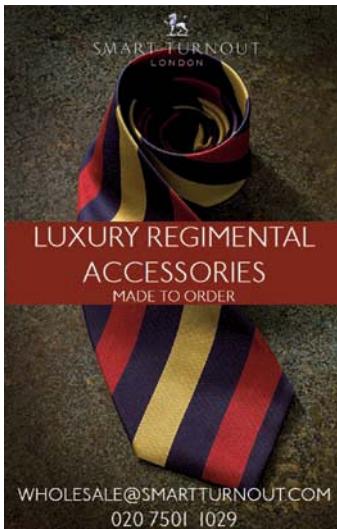
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This extremely low, termly, parental contribution of £895 means we rank as one of the most competitively priced schools for UK Forces. Childcare Vouchers also accepted.

**→ QE College is league table ranked as the 2nd best UK boarding school for academic results, our Faculty is 7th.**

We accept a broad ability range. As one parent said "QE can turn a youngster into well above average academically and have them also turn out as happy and well-rounded." 95% of Year 13 go to University with majority to Oxbridge, Ivy League or Russell Group universities.

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All bedrooms have private bathroom plus phone, voice mail, large plasma TV/DVD player + gaming port (on timer), a Sony PS3, fridge, microwave, trouser press and hot drinks facilities. House staff are friendly and caring.

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**UK's 2016 Top 20 Independent Schools % A\*/A A level (Sunday Times)**

Ranking of Schools taking boarders		
Nationally Ranking all type schools		
		%age A*/A at A level
1	St Paul's Girls' School	93.8
2	Magdalen College School	88.7
3	North London Collegiate	88.5
1	Westminster School	88.0
2	Queen Ethelburga's College	86.9
3	Winchester College	86.1
4	Wycombe Abbey School	86.0
8	King Edward's, Birmingham	85.6
5	Sevenoaks School	85.2
6	St Paul's School	84.7
11	Guildford High School Girls	84.3
12	Haberdashers' Aske's Girls	83.8
7	Faculty Queen Ethelburga's	83.7
14	James Allen's Girls' School	82.5
8	Eton College	81.9
16	Withington Girls' School	81.4
17	Godolphin & Latymer Sch	80.2
18	St John's College, Cardiff	80.2
9	Brighton College	79.8
20	Haberdashers' Aske's Boys'	79.6

**→ £100m invested in new facilities in the last 8 years.**

Why choose an independent school education if you qualify for CEA?

If you made a list, the same reasons would keep appearing. We think the list might include: happy children, top ten academics, a personalised approach, top quality teachers with specialised expertise, good discipline, latest technology and superb facilities, excellent pastoral care, amazing sport, first-class boarding accommodation, diverse experience, small classes, university success, excellent career prospects and first-class confidence and self assurance. If you want the best for your child, and to stand a chance of achieving most of this list, we believe you would need to pick one of the top 10 UK independent boarding schools as ranked by the Sunday Times. BUT, most importantly of all, we unashamedly also offer TLC - tender, loving care!

**Other Schools' Results % A\*/A A level (Sunday Times)**

5	QE College	87%
13	Faculty of QE	84%
76	Kingswood School	61%
94	Bromsgrove School	56%
136	Monmouth School	51%
n/a	Gordon's School	48%
171	Cheltenham College	47%
177	Dauntsey's School	47%
209	Kingham Hill School	44%
245	Dean Close School	41%
277	King's Sch Bruton	37%
288	Monkton Combe	36%
n/a	Welbeck College	34%
317	King's Coll Taunton	31%
328	Stamford School	30%
336	Millfield School	28%
349	Warminster School	26%
375	Royal Hospital Sch	21%
376	Licensed Vict Ascot	20%
378	Barnard Castle Sch	19%

# REVIEWS

GAMES

## WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

*Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Wildlands* for  
PS4, Xbox One and PC

UBISOFT have a talent for creating vast areas to explore and assert your authority in, all while upgrading your gear to look the part in fashionable magnificence. They also have a knack for making these vast areas visually stunning.

In terms of looks, the developers have maintained their signature splendour in *Ghost Recon Wildlands*, a tactical shooter that boasts an enormous landscape where the optics are simply sublime.



**P61**

GAMES

**P62**

BOOKS

**P64**

TOP GEAR

**P66**

MOVIES

**P66**

MUSIC



## GAMES



### VERDICT:

Battling Bolivian drug lords never looked so good



» This is especially true once you start to explore the more distant regions, of which there are many. From dusty deserts to snow-topped mountains, there's plenty to see and do here.

The premise here is simple – you and your team are tasked with bringing down a drug cartel and helping out the local militia.

In return you get some cool weapons and equipment, unique skins for some select hardware and a range of unusual attire.

Obviously, you can't just walk up to the man at the top and relieve him of his brain. You have to take his business out piecemeal – one boss at a time.

The campaign can be enjoyed in single player, with three other AI-controlled characters. Much of this mode is fairly straightforward, such as head here and take out this group or this individual.

But there are also side missions

that provide additional benefits and experience boosts, allowing you to unlock extra perks and equipment, or even weapons.

While *Wildlands* offers a lot of freedom there are plenty of reminders to embark on such tasks and they are far from a nuisance. In some cases these operations keep you on track so you don't get lost in exploring Bolivia, where the action is set.

But on the whole the campaign is not a complicated matter.

Though your AI-controlled teammates can prove useful, mainly because they never miss a shot, they are prone to exposing themselves too early and compromising tasks.

Real human counterparts, however, are the way to go here.

Overall, *Wildlands* is an enjoyable romp through the fictional, but beautiful Bolivian countryside, with plenty to do and a lot of extras and upgrades to earn. ■

REVIEW: DAVID MODOUGALL, EX-LI



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

### SEVASTOPOL'S WARS

Retired general plots the history of Crimea

» A LITTLE over three years after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, British soldiers are in Estonia and Poland as part of the largest build-up of Nato forces in Eastern Europe for decades.

Vladimir Putin's decision to send troops into the Ukraine in March of that year has been variously interpreted as a reaction to growing Western encroachment on his sphere of influence, or a means of distracting his countrymen from domestic troubles by boosting their patriotic pride.

But according to a new book by retired major general Mungo Melvin, to truly understand events in the region it is necessary to delve into its complex past.

In *Sevastopol's Wars*, the former Royal Engineer charts the peninsula's history since Catherine the Great first seized it from the Ottoman Empire in 1783 to the modern day.

"The history of Sevastopol tells us a lot about its enduring geostrategic significance and maritime importance to Russia, and the reasons why the much fought-over city has aroused such patriotic, if not reverential, sentiment," he told *Soldier*.

"Likewise, the original annexation of Crimea not only secured a valuable bastion in the Black Sea region, but also became from Tsarist times through the Soviet era to the modern day a popular tourist destination in the sun, and a favoured spa location.

"So in many ways, both Sevastopol and Crimea represent Russian 'jewels in the crown'."



**MUNGO MELVIN**  
**SEVASTOPOL'S**  
**WARS**  
CRIMEA FROM  
POTEMKIN TO PUTIN

BOOKS

Over the course of some 700 pages, the book explores well-studied periods such as the Crimean War and the Second World War, as well as lesser-known episodes, including the city's founding in 1783, the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the civil war of 1918-20.

Melvin travelled to the region frequently to gather information and interview Soviet veterans but with his freedom of movement curtailed by the events of 2014, he tasked a Crimea-based researcher to carry out additional work.

The result is an encyclopedic but highly readable account of the region's troubled past.

However, while the author believes history shapes the present and future, he cautions that cannot be used to reliably forecast what comes next, not least on the complex question of

**VERDICT:**  
A detailed, readable history of a complex region  
★★★★★

Russian-Western affairs.

"Relations are at an all-time low since the end of the Cold War so right now the omens do not look good," he said.

"I think it will prove very challenging for both sides to come to any form of political consensus as to the world order and balance of power in Europe.

"Any such agreement, however, would need to be based on a pragmatic recognition of the UK's, the wider European, Russia's and – not forgetting – Ukraine's vital interests.

"It may require some very reluctant compromise but nonetheless it will need to be found otherwise tensions will rise and the risks to peace will increase yet further.

"Therefore it is a time for all parties to exercise sound statecraft following sensible, long-term strategies."

The situation in the Crimea looks set to remain no less complicated in the 21st century as in the past 230 years.

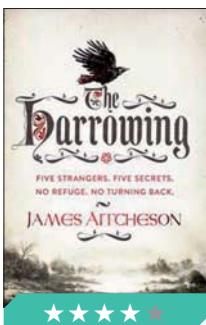
For anyone wanting to understand the root causes of the current unrest, this book is a great place to start. ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER

“  
**Sevastopol and Crimea represent Russian 'jewels in the crown'**  
”



## BOOK RELEASES



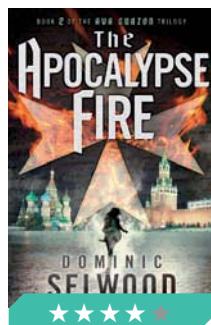
### The Harrowing

James Aitcheson

SET in 1069-70, the period just after William the Bastard conquered England, this

novel mixes fiction with fact both in characters and storyline. The author has done a fine job and has produced a very readable book. "The Harrowing" was William's vicious and determined put-down of the rebellious tribes in the north of England. In this title the story is told through the observations of four people and recounted by a priestly narrator. Their intimate perspective on events makes this a particularly compelling read for any fans of historical fiction. Once the characters are set it becomes a real page-turner.

**Andy Kay, ex-RS**



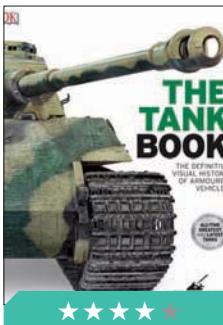
### The Apocalypse Fire

by Dominic Selwood

IMAGINE the best of James Bond and The Da Vinci Code rolled into one and

that's what you get with this book. After the Turin Shroud is stolen it's down to Ava Curzon, a former MI6 operative and archaeologist to solve the crime. With various intelligence agencies, the Vatican and an ancient order of knights on her tail, she travels the world on her search for a devious Russian oligarch and his cult. En route there are references to religious books, Rasputin, conspiracy theories and the threat of a third world war, making for a thoroughly enjoyable read from the first page to last.

**LCpl Scott Roberts, Rifles**



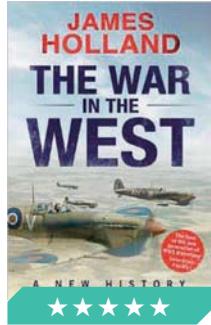
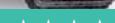
### The Tank Book

by David Willey

ANYONE looking for a book that includes everything imaginable

about armoured vehicles – from Leonardo da Vinci's experiments through to the Cold War platforms of the 1990s – would have to go a long way to outdo this offering. David Willey is the curator of the Tank Museum and this title literally covers the whole subject, showing the exterior, interior and engines of more than 400 examples. The detail is mind-blowing and I'm confident this beautifully illustrated title will become a must-have for any enthusiasts of military vehicles. In fact, this is more of an encyclopedia than just a book about tanks.

**Tony David, ex-RE**



### The War in the West

by James Holland

THIS second volume of the author and broadcaster's Second World War history (published

this month) easily reaches the benchmark set by its predecessor. Once more, the narrative linking the full spectrum of strategic, economic and political events to the military during this period is seamless. The style is crisp, engaging, absorbing and, again, complemented with a comprehensive array of maps and photographs that perfectly illustrate the points made. Advertised as a new history, it really does have the feel of a fresh and revisionist perspective on the momentous events that occurred between 1941 and 1943.

**Mike Peters, ex-AAC**



## TOP GEAR



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## DISCO FEVER

### Land Rover takes iconic model to new heights

FROM the outside the new Land Rover Discovery looks like a completely different vehicle compared to the previous model.

But rest assured, if you want a stylish and ultra-practical sports utility vehicle this new version possesses every attribute the previous model has and a lot more besides.

Despite the smoothed-off exterior, the character that endeared legions of repeat buyers to the old, boxy Discovery are still evident; a powerful engine, cosseting ride, imperious driving position and the load space of a small van.

Apart from a Warrior or Stryker, there are few vehicles that can cover almost any terrain while transporting seven adults but the new Discovery is one of them thanks to the introduction of a third row of proper grown-up seats.

And the Discovery's electric system of stowing away or deploying its two rows of rear accommodation, which can be split, is ingenious.

They can be put down in 14 seconds from a set of switches located just inside the rear hatch. This control panel also lets you raise and lower the entire suspension to ease loading.

Land Rover says you can also adjust the seats via its widely publicised smartphone app although we didn't have the opportunity to test this.

When the third row is in use it doesn't compromise storage space as much as you might imagine, with 258-litres still free to use. That's as much as many small hatchbacks.

Keep those seats up, though, and you can move some seriously big loads.

There's 1,137 litres of cube-shaped void behind the second row and the rear hatch measures 854mm high and 1,150mm wide, enough to load an average chest of drawers or a washing machine.

If more space is required, folding all the rear seats provides more than 2,400 litres of space.

Furthermore, an electric fold-down panel has been added to the boot lid to mimic the split tailgate of the old version. You can perch on it for a picnic or use it to slide heavy shopping into the rear.

Once you're behind the wheel you won't be disappointed either. Land Rover's renowned off-road technology gives it the ability to tackle mud, ice and gravel while extensive use of aluminium in the bodywork, reducing its weight by nearly 500kg compared to the earlier version, has improved its

Want to join our review team?

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performance on the road.

Fuel economy is no better than average for the class of car.

Our three-litre diesel engine test vehicle only just topped 30 miles per gallon – although you can also order an impressive two-litre four-pot diesel that is slightly slower but more fuel-efficient.

That's mainly because this is still a bit of a beast – measuring five metres long and weighing in at slightly more than two tonnes.

As a result it leans into corners slightly but the standard air suspension does a superb job of blending decent handling with a suppleness that absorbs all but the biggest ruts and potholes impressively well.

Inside, the ambience is better than ever; the quality of the cabin really has been elevated to luxury car-level and while you can specify lots of goodies for additional cost even base versions have a decent level of kit including tyre pressure monitoring system, heated windscreen and door mirrors, eight-speed automatic transmission and touchscreen controls for all major functions such as audio, navigation and heating.

But the cost reflects the specification and this Disco is now priced like a Range Rover, while similarly specified German-made equivalents can be purchased for less.

Don't let that put you off, though. This is a cracking all-rounder and probably the best family car on the market. ■

REVIEW: STEVE MUNCEY, SOLDIER

#### VERDICT:

A great all-rounder with high purchase price and running costs the only potential drawbacks



## SPECIFICATIONS

### SD6 six-cylinder diesel

Trim levels: SE, HSE, and HSE Luxury  
258 bhp

0-60mph: 7.7 seconds

Top speed: 130mph

CO2: 189g/km

Official fuel consumption (mpg): urban 34, extra urban 43.5, combined 39.2

### SD4 four-cylinder diesel

Trim levels: S, SE, HSE, and HSE Luxury

237 bhp

0-60mph: 8.3 seconds

Top speed: 121mph

CO2: 171g/km

Official fuel consumption (mpg): urban 36.2, extra urban 48.7, combined 43.5

### Si6 six-cylinder petrol

Trim levels: SE, HSE, and HSE Luxury  
340 bhp

0-60mph: 6.9 seconds

Top speed: 130mph

CO2: 254g/km

Official fuel consumption (mpg): urban 19.9, extra urban 30.4, combined 26.0

- Marshall Land Rover Military Sales offer special discounts to Service personnel on all Land Rover vehicles, with up to 15 per cent available across the range. For the new Discovery introductory pricing register at [www.landrovermilitarysales.co.uk](http://www.landrovermilitarysales.co.uk) or call the dedicated military sales team on 01733 213231.

## MOVIES

### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## GOING ROGUE

Star Wars spin-off sets pulses racing

WHEN Disney bought Lucasfilm, the company behind the *Star Wars* movies, for £2.5 billion in 2012 it came as no surprise that expansion plans for the intergalactic franchise swiftly followed.

For diehard fans the news was met with wild excitement but sceptics saw the move as a ploy to milk the cash cow and gain an early return on such a significant investment.

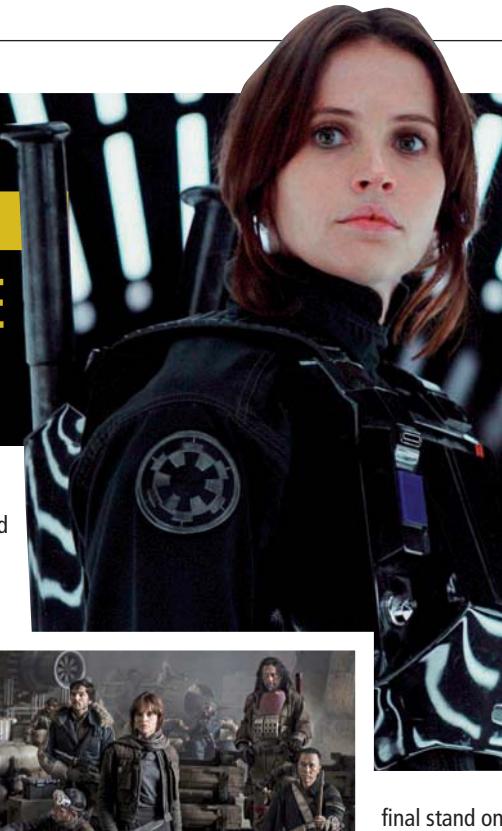
However, these concerns were soon allayed with the release of the series' seventh instalment, *The Force Awakens*, which marked a stunning return to form following the disappointing prequels delivered by **George Lucas** at the turn of the century.

So with the appetite for all things *Star Wars* firmly whetted, the promise of further adventures in a series of spin-off stories meant there was no escaping the power of the Force.

The first chapter, *Rogue One* (out now on DVD and digital), serves as a backdrop to the original 1977 film. It charts the construction of the lethal Death Star and how rebel fighters, led by Jyn Erso (**Felicity Jones**), lay the foundations for its downfall.

The casting of Jones, and indeed **Daisy Ridley** in *The Force Awakens*, proved controversial for some, who questioned the lack of a strong male lead to build the plot around.

But these objections prove futile and the star more than holds her own as the action rapidly switches from planet to planet before culminating in an epic



otherwise known as the Maldives.

Jones is not the only one to shine and **Ben Mendelsohn** delivers a truly evil turn as the Empire's fanatical administrator, Krennic, and **Diego Luna** and **Forest Whitaker** head an impressive supporting cast.

Those longing for some *Star Wars* nostalgia will not be disappointed if they look hard enough and while the use of CGI to recreate past characters doesn't fully pay off it is the return of the fearsome Darth Vader that offers the greatest cheer.

The sceptics may have feared the worst but *Rogue One* more than justifies Disney's decision to move in a new direction.

With the main franchise's eighth instalment due to be released later this year and another spin-off now in the making, these are exciting times in the galaxy far, far away. ■

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, SOLDIER

#### VERDICT:

A worthy addition to the intergalactic fold

★★★★★

## MUSIC

### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## IN FULL VOICE

Kasabian roar back to life

HAVING seen Kasabian live on their 2014 tour I was able to witness first-hand a band cementing their status as one the best British acts of the 21st century.

On that night in Nottingham they performed with verve and swagger, firing their way through a set-list crammed with contemporary classics and giving their all in what was a truly memorable gig.

Now, two-and-a-half years later, the rockers are back with their sixth studio release *For Crying Out Loud* – an offering packed with main stage contenders for the group's already impressive repertoire.

"I decided to give myself six weeks to write an album like they used to do back in the day and that became really inspiring," guitarist and songwriter **Serge Pizzorno** explained.

"I made sure there was no fat on anything. It was going to be classic songs with no self-indulgence; nothing was going on there that shouldn't."

"I'd heard **Berry Gordy** had said if you've not got them in the first four bars then you're finished, so I went in with this old school attitude of songwriting."

Pizzorno's previous efforts have spawned four UK number one-albums – with more than five-and-a-half million sales worldwide – and it is difficult to see that trend not being repeated here.

*III Ray (The King)* kicks proceedings off with an angst-driven rock edge before comeback single *You're in Love With a Psycho* embarks on a more mainstream pop diversion.

On the first listen this track felt a little overwhelming but it gradually improves with each play. That said, there are no such concerns with *Bless This Acid House*, a sure-fire hit that will have fans jumping in adulation as Kasabian embark on a string of festival appearances this summer.

After the electronic leanings of previous release *48:13* the band have made a concerted effort to return to their guitar roots and songs such as *TwentyFourSeven* and *Come Back Kid* see them doing what they do best.

A more chilled-out vibe can be found on the likes of *All Through the Night* and *Put Your Life on It*, making this a versatile offering that ticks all the boxes.

Kasabian are back with a bang. ■

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, SOLDIER



## MUSIC RELEASES


**Imagined Hymns and Chaingang Mantras**  
by The Little Unsaid

THE Little Unsaid is a project fronted by multi-instrumentalist, producer and songwriter **John Elliot**, who catalogues his experience of PTSD while caring for a loved one who attempted suicide. In this intriguing collection of personal songs he lends the listener a glimpse into his torment. Opener *Imagined Hymn* is a lovely song that combines soft floating vocals over a fingerpicked acoustic soundscape. The single *Symptomatic* is a deep and intimate account of Elliot's battle and the sweeping and pulsating backing track adds to the atmosphere. While I have to admire the introspective leanings of the tracks, I found myself hankering for something a little uplifting towards the end. That said, this is an affecting and deeply personal album that will challenge listeners and keep them engaged.

Damian Hern, ex-AGC (SPS)


**Love in the 4th Dimension**  
by The Big Moon

THIS debut album from all-girl band **The Big Moon** is pretty impressive to say the least. Formed by **Juliette Jackson**, they seem to have found a niche in the music industry of today by regenerating the sound of the 90s indie scene. It's difficult to pick any standout tracks as the whole record vibrates with a cool professionalism that shows these girls have worked extremely hard to deliver the style they've set out to conquer. There's a wonderful mix of guitar riffs and the moody vibe associated with indie music in general, a pattern that is evident from opener *Sucker* to the hypnotic final song, aptly named *The End*. The whole journey is one of pure enjoyment. By sticking to what made their previous EPs and singles so sought after they have reaffirmed a winning formula.

Tony David, ex-RE


**Be Myself**  
by Sheryl Crow

AFTER a brief flirtation with country music **Sheryl Crow** has reunited with 90s collaborators **Jeff Trott** and

**Tchad Blake** for the release of her tenth studio album, *Be Myself*. The soft rock/folk formula that served her so well in the past represents a welcome return to form and while this offering lacks anthems in the mould of *All I Wanna Do* or *If It Makes You Happy* there is still plenty to enjoy. The subject matter underpinning the tracks is more hard-hitting than what has gone before, with the US election and issues surrounding depression among the many themes covered. Musically, it is good to see Crow getting back to her best and having survived a recent cancer scare she proves she still has plenty to offer as she enters the latter stages of an already-impressive career.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



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# SOLDIER SPORT

Sports Editor: Richard Long  
Photographers: Graeme Main and Steve Dock



## RIDING HIGH

THE Army's enduro stars have been put through their paces at a gruelling pre-season training camp. Read about their hopes for 2017 on pages 80-81...





**CATCH A WAVE:** ARMY SURFING IS KEEN TO ATTRACT NEWCOMERS TO THE SPORT. FOR DETAILS ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED LOG ON TO [WWW.ARMSURFING.ORG](http://WWW.ARMSURFING.ORG)

# BOARDING PASS

## SOLDIERS JET INTO AUSTRALIA FOR FORCES CLASH AS ARMY SURFING CONTINUES ITS UPWARDS SURGE

**T**HE Army's surfers will test their skills in one of the sport's premier countries when they land in Australia later this month.

On their arrival down under the soldiers will battle their rivals from the Royal Air Force and Australian Defence Force for the right to be crowned kings of the military waves.

The trip underlines the growing popularity of the pursuit among personnel, with around 120 members currently on the books.

They showcased their ability at the recent Army Championships in Newquay before going on to break the RAF's stranglehold at Inter-Services level.

Such success has not happened overnight and is testimony to the hard work of those charged with developing surfing within the ranks.

"As a club we are growing every year," Capt Clyde Bundy (RAMC), secretary of Army Surfing, told *SoldierSport*.

"We host a beginners week at the start of each season and the numbers are always increasing; they then come down for the Army Championships.

"The men's team is the strongest it has been for a long time. We recently had a professional surfer join the Service so to have him onboard is a real bonus for us.

"We are now trying to attract more females to the sport.

"There's a lot of bravado



**"THE  
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HERE  
ARE  
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KEEN  
AND  
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ON THE  
WATER"**

around surfing and people think women don't surf – that is not the case."

A further sign of the progress being made can be found at the British Inter-Club Championships.

The Army finished 13th in 2016 – their debut campaign – and are hoping for an improved performance later this year.

One man looking to help the cause is newcomer Pte Josh Hughes (RAMC).

He surfed professionally up until the age of 22 and competed for the British junior and Welsh senior teams.

Having also been a lifeguard in Newquay he was aware of the Service squad and on joining up he was keen to get involved.

"I used to see the Army guys out in the water so I knew the opportunity was there for me," Hughes explained.

"I liked the medical side of being a lifeguard but you're only on the beach for six months of the year. That's why I wanted to become an Army medic.

"I've only just come out of training and had leave to go and surf at last season's Inter-Services competition.

"The standard is really coming on and the people here are super-keen. Everyone is competitive and that shows out on the water. They knuckle down and try their hardest to get on the waves."

Despite boasting such impressive credentials Hughes was beaten to top spot at the

Army Championships by 2nd Lt Mark Spencer (AAC), who claimed the long board and open titles.

As a Devon native he has been surfing for more than 20 years and found out about the Army club when passing through the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

"I didn't have much time for surfing while I was there but it was the first thing I did on leaving," he said.

"The Army Championships are probably the best event I've been to in terms of organisation. It is run by a great group of people and everyone is so enthusiastic.

"I was surprised to win both events. I entered a few competitions while at university but didn't do too well so I was just hoping to gain some experience.

"The guys I beat in the final probably deserved to win and I was lucky to get two really good waves on the day."

Luck aside, Spencer and Hughes have proved the future of Army surfing is looking bright and with exciting overseas tours and competitions on some of the best beaches in the country to come it is hoped that further talent of the same standing will soon join the fold. ■



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## » NETBALL



# REDS GAIN SERVICES REVENGE

**H**AVING let their grip on the Inter-Services trophy slip in 2016 the Army's netball stars made a return to winning ways in this season's military showdown in Aldershot.

The resurgent Reds made short work of the Royal Air Force in their opening match before triumphing in a hard fought title-decider against the Royal Navy.

Goal shooter Cpl Ellie Naweles (AGC) and goal attack LCpl Melissa Price (R Signals) spearheaded the soldiers' assault and the duo were in fine form as the team signalled their intent.

The offensive pair shared the goals as the Army opened a 10-3 lead at the end of the first quarter against the RAF and the trend continued throughout the remainder of the match.

This ruthless form at the net formed the bedrock of a 52-20 victory and the champions-elect were far superior across the court, with their speed of play and slick passing proving too hot to handle. ■

"The RAF played a tough game which is good for us as we always like a challenge," skipper Sgt Nordia Master (AGC) told *SoldierSport* at full-time.

"We have come here to showcase the netball we know we can play."

"We had 60 or 70 girls turn up for training in the build-up to this competition so we've all had to work really hard to earn our places in the squad. Army netball is in a great place and we have an exciting future."

With an early win on the board the Servicewomen headed into their clash with the Navy on a mission to avenge their 32-23 defeat last year.

As expected, the game proved to be a tight affair and the hosts battled hard to open a slender 16-12 lead as the sides headed to the half-time break.

But with Naweles and Price (pictured above) again finding their range the team kicked on in the closing stages to seal a 37-22 victory and regain the title. ■

## INTER-SERVICES NETBALL ARMY

52

RAF

20



Pictures: Cpl Jonathan Lee van Zyl, RLC

## LEADING LOGGIES

TOP boxing talent from across the Royal Logistic Corps did battle in the ring at the formation's annual championships in Aldershot.

With interest in the competition proving particularly high this season the organisers staged 31 bouts over two preliminary days as around 90 soldiers took part.

As a result, each regiment was represented in the finals and with the contenders trading some brutal blows the evening offered some fantastic entertainment.

Fighters from 27 Regiment claimed three victories in three different weight categories, while 17 Port and Maritime Regiment were crowned male champions.

The RLC corps team has gone from strength to strength in recent times and manager Maj Darrell Foster was an interested spectator as the action unfolded.

He said: "We have a lot of novices coming through and are trying to maintain our open class fighters at the same time.

"There have been some brilliant boxers throughout our history and we have eight soldiers, both male and female, who are currently representing the Service.

"This competition is a chance to identify more potential."





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**DOUBLE DELIGHT: THE ARMY MEN ADDED THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES CUP TO THEIR INTER-SERVICES TITLE AS THEY DOWND THE AMATEUR FA 3-1 IN THE COMPETITION FINAL**

## » FOOTBALL



# SOLDIERS SIGN OFF IN STYLE

**A**FTER missing out on Inter-Services glory the Army women ended the football season on a high with a 3-2 win over Sussex in the Southern Counties Cup final.

Goals from Cpl Libby Dixon, LCpl Abi Hart (both AGC) and LCpl Jemma Dinning (REME) sealed the silverware for the Reds, who ended their campaign with an unbeaten record.

The only blot in the 2017 copybook came in the Forces showdown, where two drawn matches were not enough to claim the title.

However, the setback failed to deter the soldiers as they lined up against Sussex and Cpl Zoe Stewart (AGC (SPS)) signalled their intent with a dipping half-volley that was tipped behind by keeper Leah Samain.

Phoebe Leitch hit the post from close range as the visitors eased their way into the contest before Army stopper Gnr Jess Horsley (RA) produced a smart save to thwart Kellie Larkin.

With Sussex gaining momentum the hosts struck a decisive blow as skipper WO2 Kristina Wright (AGC (RMP)) won the ball in midfield and played in Dixon, who rifled a shot past Samain at the near post.

Further chances were at a premium until the early stages of the second half, when the Army effectively sealed the contest with a clinical double strike.

Hart was the first to profit as she latched onto a smart through-ball to prod home and Dinning then raced clear of a static Sussex defence before calmly finding the bottom corner.

The forward came close to adding to her tally but narrowly missed the target with two shots across goal and the champions-elect squandered a further opportunity as SSgt Juliette Brown (RLC) fired wide from the penalty spot.

Late goals from Larkin and Leitch reduced the arrears but the Servicewomen held firm to seal a famous win. ■

### SOUTHERN COUNTIES CUP FINAL

ARMY

3

SUSSEX

2



## UP FOR THE CUPS

FOOTBALLERS from the Adjutant General's Corps and 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment have added further silverware to their haul as the season heads towards its conclusion.

Strikes from Cpl Natasha Grattan, Cpl Libby Dixon (pictured below) and LCpl Abi Hart helped the AGC to a 3-2 win over the Army Medical Services in the final of the Edwards' Corps Challenge Cup.

The match had added significance as Fifa referee Almira Spahic, of the Bosnian Army, took the whistle.

The goals continued to flow two days later as 1 Yorks downed 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers 6-2 in the Infantry Cup final.

Pte Jake Sanderson and Pte Erick Dosa both scored braces, while further strikes from Cpl Patrick Carrig and LCpl Luke McLaren completed the rout.

The Warminster-based outfit were hoping for further success when they locked horns with 30 Signal Regiment in the Army Challenge Cup final as this issue went to press.

## » BOXING



### WELSH WONDERS

SERVICE fighters LCpl Ashley Williams (R Welsh) and LCpl Kyle Morrison (RLC) stepped up their bid for a place at next year's Commonwealth Games by winning their finals at the Welsh Amateur Boxing Association Championships.

Williams (pictured above), a bronze medallist in 2014, stopped his opponent with a body shot in the final round while Morrison eased to a unanimous verdict in his bantamweight clash.

"My opponent was quite a big guy but that is nothing to me these days," the former said.

"We didn't really have a game plan as he had not boxed for five years so I wanted to go in there and wear him down. I hurt him early on and the final shot came with 20 seconds remaining in the third round.

"I'm still trying to prove myself at 52kg. I've had three fights at this weight now and have stopped two fighters so it's going well."

The contest came hot on the heels of the Scottish elite finals, where Cpl Junior Burton (Scots) lost on a split decision but has since joined the national squad.



DETERMINED DOZEN: THE ARMY HAD 12 FIGHTERS IN ACTION IN THE LATER STAGES OF THE ENGLISH AMATEUR BOXING ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIPS AS THIS ISSUE WENT TO PRESS

# REDS MADE TO SWEAT



**"IT WAS  
SO CLOSE  
BUT WE  
DESERVED  
TO WIN"**

LAST bout victory for LCpl Natty Ngwenya (Gren Gds) secured a 34th consecutive Combined Services title for the Army's boxers on a challenging night in Lympstone.

Fighting at the Royal Marines Commando Training Centre, the soldiers found themselves trailing 4-2 with just two contests remaining but a stunning knockout from LCpl John Marvin (PWRR) stopped the rot before Ngwenya took the heavyweight honours.

With the Royal Navy failing to field an athlete at super heavyweight, LCpl Chez Nihell (PWRR) was handed a walkover win to seal a 5-4 triumph and ensure the trophy returned to the team's Aldershot base.

There was little sign of the drama to come when LCpl Shamim Khan (RLC) claimed a unanimous verdict in the night's opening contest after outclassing his rival.

The Navy secured their first

point as Spr Sam Webster (RE) lost on a split decision but skipper Gnr Ryan Fillingham (RA) restored the lead when he beat Robbie Matthews.

However, the hosts hit back in style and defeats for Cpl Martin Stead (RLC), Gdsdm Josh Plummer (Coldm Gds) and LCpl Liam Jones (REME) put them on the brink of a famous victory.

Marvin (pictured left) brought their charge to a spectacular halt and Ngwenya took his bout on a split decision, despite being in total control.

"I genuinely believe we only lost one bout and that was Liam Jones at 81kg," coach SSgt Jason Browning (RAPTC) told *SoldierSport* afterwards.

"The crowd was brilliant. They really got behind the boxers and it was so close but we deserved to win."

"The Navy made it really competitive, which is what we want. On home turf they are serious about winning and they nearly did it."

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# AIRMEN SUFFER IN FORCES ROUT

THE Army's rugby union stars emphatically banished their recent Royal Air Force hoodoo with an energy charged first-half showing that laid the foundations for a comfortable 35-14 victory in Aldershot.

Having been regular conquerors of the airmen the Reds have seen their dominance slip over the past two seasons as back-to-back defeats scuppered their Inter-Services hopes.

But normal service was resumed in their latest campaign as an early avalanche of points set the team on their way.

LCpl James Dixon (RE) opened the scoring as the Army's first venture downfield yielded a penalty before LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) set pulses racing with a superb solo try.

With the soldiers' scrum holding firm on the halfway line the Bath flier received quick ball from Sgt Tom Chennell (RAPTC) and embarked on a storming run that left the RAF defence in tatters and ended with elaborate celebrations in the corner.

The visitors opened their account courtesy of Sgt Andy Byrne's boot but their hopes of a foothold in the game were swiftly diminished.

A slick passing move involving Sig Ravai Fatiaki (R Signals), Lt Will Simpson (QDG) and Rokoduguni threatened the line and from the resulting phases Cpl Mathew Dawson (Int Corps) broke clear to touch down.

An exchange of penalties pushed the score to 20-9 before a Rokoduguni burst created the platform for Pte Junior Bulumakau (Scots) to score.

Dixon slotted another kick to give his side a 28-9 half-time lead and after excelling as an attacking force it was the soldiers' defensive resolve that was tested after the break.

A prolonged spell of RAF pressure midway through the half was successfully repelled and the pattern was repeated until Fg Off Rob Bell eventually stretched to the line.

But the Army had the final say as Capt Rob Lennox (Scots) crashed home at the death. ■

## INTER-SERVICES RUGBY UNION

ARMY

35

RAF

14



## TITLE IN SIGHT

A RAPIDLY improving Royal Air Force outfit proved dogged opponents for the Army women who were pushed to the limit in a 35-26 Inter-Services victory.

Having thrashed the Royal Navy 72-0 a week earlier the challengers were in confident mood and struck an early blow as SAC Kate Edwards intercepted a stray pass and sprinted home.

However, the Reds fired an immediate response as the impressive Cpl Louise Dodd (QARANC, pictured above) broke through the lines to allow Cpl Carrie Roberts (REME) to score.

Their opponents came storming back as England international AC Amy Cockayne punched a hole in the defence before SAC Rhi Walton touched down in the corner.

But, as before, the lead did not last long as Dodd rounded off a slick cross-field move and the Army edged ahead in the 32nd minute when the same player pounced on a loose RAF pass and surged to the line.

LCpl Chelsey Snead (REME) crashed over to extend the advantage before Cockayne, Sgt Bianca Dawson (AGC (RMP)) and SAC Kathryn Dale exchanged tries after the break.



# MONTH IN SPORT

## May's key fixtures...



**WHAT:** Inter-Unit Boxing finals  
**WHEN:** Wednesday, May 3  
**WHERE:** Cpl Budd VC Gym, Colchester  
**NEED TO KNOW:** Fighters from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment and 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps will do battle in Service boxing's flagship competition



**WHAT:** Army Ice Hockey Championships  
**WHEN:** Wednesday, May 3 and Thursday, May 4  
**WHERE:** Ice Sheffield  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The finest players from across the Army lock horns on the ice in a bid to determine the top corps team in 2017



**WHAT:** UK Armed Forces v Bath United  
**WHEN:** May 10 (1930 kick-off)  
**WHERE:** The Rec, Bath  
**NEED TO KNOW:** The military's top rugby stars join forces to take on a select side from Bath. The game is a rearranged fixture from November, when bad weather saw the remembrance clash cancelled

## KARATE IN NUMBERS

ENGLAND STARS IN THE ARMY SQUAD

7

MEDALS WON AT THE LAST EUROPEAN CONTEST

10

TEAM AWARDS IN 2016

2

DATE, IN JULY, OF THE NEXT FORCES SHOWDOWN

15

FIXTURES IN 2017

18

## » KARATE



## KARATE CAMP KICKS OFF

**H**AVING won the Army and UK Armed Forces team of the year awards in 2016 the Service's karate stars have big shoes to fill as the new season gathers pace.

To prepare for the challenges ahead the set-up recently held a selection camp in Aldershot where around 20 fighters were put through their paces in a series of kata and kumite drills.

With tournaments held across the country throughout the coming months there is no shortage of competitive action, while a strong contingent will boost the England squad at a host of events including the World

Championships in October.

"Army karate is looking really healthy," team member and England international Capt Karen Owen (AGC (ETS)) told *SoldierSport* during a break in training.

"Everyone here will be invited to the Army Open later in the year but before that we want to regain our Inter-Services crown.

"The Royal Air Force just beat us to the title last year but we are determined to win that back."

For more information on how to get involved in the sport, as well as all disciplines in Army Martial Arts, email [mathew.frost252@mod.uk](mailto:mathew.frost252@mod.uk) ■

● FOUR Army players took to the field as the UK Armed Forces rugby league team lost 24-18 to Halifax Reserves. The clash formed the start of the side's preparations for this year's Defence World Cup and coach Flt Lt Damian Clayton was pleased with what he saw. "This game and level of competition is exactly what we needed," he said. "It was a tough encounter and the lads showed plenty of effort."





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# READY FOR ACTION

## ENDURO RIDERS WELCOME NEWCOMERS TO THE FOLD AS PLANS FOR NEW CAMPAIGN TAKE SHAPE

**H**AVING seen riders forge a name for themselves on the national and international stage the Army enduro team is taking steps to ensure the conveyor belt of talent keeps rolling.

The set-up has just completed its first ever week-long training camp to help new riders progress and with 50 soldiers taking to the saddle the sport's future is looking bright.

The initiative was the brainchild of team manager CSGt Dean Hughes (WG), who devised a programme to develop skills on the bike and improve physical fitness ahead of the new season.

Based at Pirbright, the sessions featured expert guidance from five Auto Cycle Union-registered coaches as well as crossfit drills from gym instructors at the site.

Further challenges were posed at the Bagshot test track before personnel travelled to Dorset for a day of gruelling work at the Rogers Hill Raceway (pictured).

The venue is among the best facilities in South East England and the riders were pushed to their limits on a full-size motocross track along with a five-mile enduro loop.

Former champion rider Daryl Bolter was also on hand to pass on some coaching tips and help with suspension set-ups.

"In many ways this has been our pre-season training camp," Hughes told *SoldierSport*.



**"PEOPLE DO NOT REALISE HOW WELL BACKED THIS SPORT IS"**

"We need to recruit new riders to the fold and there were 20 fresh faces that we had not seen before.

"That was very encouraging.

"The physical side is an important part of what we do and is something we haven't really focused on before. On the whole it was a very good week.

"Most people did not realise how well supported this sport is within the Army, so it was a great eye-opener for them."

Hughes was particularly pleased with the trip to Dorset, which offered a challenging test for his soldiers at a new and exciting venue.

"As a centre they are quite supportive of the Armed Forces," he added.

"You can ride around a training area all day long but this was a chance to sample a proper enduro track while also learning about how an enduro race is set up.

"That experience could be invaluable for us."

With the training now complete attention will turn to the off-road action and as events run from now until November there will be no shortage of opportunities.

While the Army team fixes its attention on the International Six Days of Enduro later in the campaign, the Service's corps sides will be competing on the domestic scene.

Hughes explained that a friendly rivalry exists between the various squads but they pull

together behind the scenes to ensure the machines are firing on all cylinders.

The top performers will then go on to represent the Army at the international showdown – which is seen as the pinnacle of the sport.

The Servicemen made history at last season's race in Spain's Navarra region when they returned with an impressive haul of three gold medals.

More than 750 riders accepted the challenge posed by extreme obstacles and rugged terrain, all of which were tackled in stages that lasted up to eight-and-a-half hours a day.

To make life more difficult entrants have to carry their own spare parts and tools and must complete any repairs without outside assistance.

In 2016 the Army racers regularly posted times ahead of their professional counterparts to finish tenth in a field of more than 120 teams and were also the second-ranked UK outfit in the competition.

"This year we are looking to bring back a host of gold medals," Hughes explained.

"Our aim is to achieve a top-ten finish and be in the top five teams from the UK."

"It will be a tough task but we have the riders to do it."

» ENDURO



# Final Word

Interviews: Becky Clark and Richard Long  
Pictures: Steve Dock



## LCpl Rich Hamer, Para

It's very important that the Army puts itself out there on social media. I do this for the Red Devils and it's such an easy way to get our messages across to audiences of all ages.



## Maj Ronnie Harley, RAMC

There are well-known problems with accommodation, particularly for married personnel, so that should be looked at if recruitment and retention is to improve.

# What would you do?

Soldier asked troops what the Army could best do to boost recruitment and retention



## Cfn Samuel Willis, REME

When I joined up I went to the cap badge I wanted but now it seems as though people are being pushed towards certain roles. Having a serving soldier or a veteran on hand as a candidate support manager would really help.



## Pte Ivan Jacobs, Para

My mind is set on staying in anyway but I think operational tours would encourage more people to stick with it. It's important to have goals and work towards them.

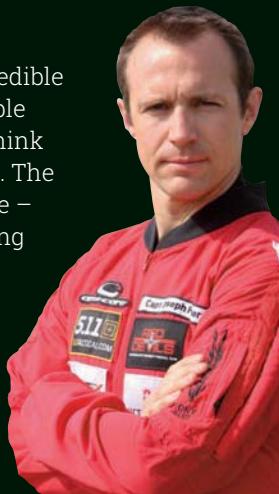
## Sgt Dean Walton, Para

Recruiting always drops off in peacetime, but we try and get out there to show people there's so much more to the Army than operations.



## Capt Joseph Palmer, Para

The Army has always done an incredible amount to keep soldiers in but people look at it as glass half-empty and think things will be better on civvy street. The opportunities I've had in the Service – from kayaking in Kenya, to skydiving or scuba diving – yes, they came at the cost of arduous operations or exercises but the payback is fantastic. If you measure it on the highs and lows and what you're willing to put in, then for me there's no better job in the world.



## Cfn Lynette Whitehouse, REME

Recruitment could be improved if the sporting opportunities within the Army were better advertised. I was in the Regulars at 18 and heard about the karate set-up but I had no idea who to contact.



**"Three short paragraphs, all of which I understood, written in plain English and very much appreciated."**



Jonathan Elliott, FPS Member



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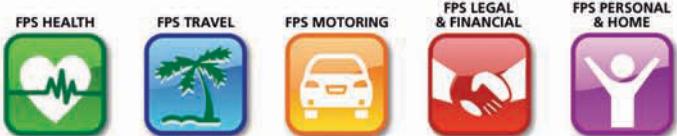
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